
The Integrity and Provenance of Religious Education:

Modernism, Deconstruction
and Critical Realism

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on contemporary religious education within the state system of England and Wales. It explores the influence upon religious education of epistemology, theological and religious formulations, and educational philosophy in the context of the decline of modernism and concurrent emergence of programmes of post-modernism and critical realism. Within this developing context the question of the ability of religious education to make possible the emergence of authentic religious understanding is asked. In Part One, the provenance of religious education between 1944 and 1988 is identified as being that of the tradition of liberal modernism that grew out of the Enlightenment. The basic dualistic epistemological contours of modernism are identified, and it is shown how these give rise to a liberal experiential-expressive understanding of the nature of religion. In similar fashion, modernism engenders specifically modern forms of educational philosophy. Religious education has elected to work within this modernist provenance, making uncritical assumptions that are dependent upon modern philosophical, religious and educational debate, and as a result is unable to uphold the integrity of its subject matter. In Part Two, the nature of deconstructive post-modern responses to the limitations of modernism are outlined, together with the understanding of the nature of religion that such a reaction produces. It is suggested that the implementation of a programme of religious education within this alternative setting would also fail to do justice to the integrity of religion. In Part Three, the response of critical realism to modernism is set out, and the implications of this for an understanding of the nature of religion are explored. A philosophy of education within critical realism is proposed, together with a revised framework for religious education, one able to uphold the integrity of religion, both in terms of its intrinsic diversity and its intrinsically realistic self-understanding.

The Integrity and Provenance of Religious Education

Modernism, Deconstruction and Critical Realism

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Analytical Summary

Chapter One aims to sketch a number of key contours within modernism that resulted from the process of differentiation: i) it is suggested that a fundamental flaw within modernism is the failure to differentiate its own method, resulting in the transformation of method into ontology; ii) the process of differentiation created a lifeworld focused on the image of the dislocated self; iii) the problem of the relationship between the self and the world was resolved by the picture of the mind mirroring nature; iv) this in turn led to a dualistic distinction between subjective and objective worlds; v) the politics of liberalism served to cement together these two domains.

Chapter Two considers the nature of religious and theological understanding within the contours of modernism: i) a typology of the relationship between faith and modernism is proposed, distinguishing the paths of assimilation, accommodation and isolation; ii) the failure of deism to establish religious faith within modernism resulted in a polarization of atheistic assimilation and fideistic isolation; iii) the subjectivism inherent in Kant's philosophy, together with the broad romantic movement, laid the groundwork for a process of accommodation; iv) this resulted in a liberal experiential-expressive model of religion; v) a critique of this model questions its ability to achieve an accommodation with modernism without undercutting the integrity of the realistic claims of religion.

Chapter Three outlines the formative educational tradition out of which contemporary religious education operates: i) it identifies two broad strands within educational philosophy and suggests these are both dependent upon modernism and unable to do justice to the integrity of religion; ii) Locke's educational policy is taken as representative of a traditionalist model, operating within mainstream modernism, of education as cultural tradition; iii) Rousseau is offered as an example of progressive education, operating within a romantic framework, concerned with the autonomous development of selfhood; iv) a description and critique of confessional forms of religious education is made; v) Loukes' challenge to confessionalism both points the way towards the emergence of a specifically modern religious education, as well as sowing the seeds for its future demise.

Chapter Four considers modern religious education since 1944, and defends the thesis that it is dependent upon the philosophical, religious and educational contours of modernism outlined in the preceding chapters: i) the controlling drive within modernist religious education is identified as the desire for legitimation within modernism; ii) Goldman, Smart and Hay are identified as key figures in the debate, representing respectively implicit, phenomenological and spiritual forms of modern religious education; iii) each in turn is shown to be dependent upon the experiential-expressive model of religion, a romantic hermeneutic, the dialectic of traditionalist-progressive educational philosophy, and further each introduces a foreclosure of the question of realistic religious truth; iv) it is concluded that modern religious education fails to do justice to the integrity of religion, operating instead to reinforce an uncritical and paternalistic acceptance of the legacy of modernism.

Chapter Five outlines the contours of post-modernism's deconstruction of the modernist heritage: i) a consideration of the diversity of readings of Wittgenstein's later philosophy suggests a typology of reactions to modernism against which post-modernism may be orientated; ii) the fundamental moral imperative of post-modernism utilized the Enlightenment's notion of emancipation as a means of achieving freedom from the logocentric limitations of modernism; iii) whilst Foucault sought such emancipation via a transcendence beyond reason, Derrida found freedom within the immanence of language itself; iv) Rorty suggests a pragmatic focus within this flow of language, in which liberal values are kept alive through the human solidarity attained within unlimited conversation; v) a critique of post-modern programmes suggests that their identity is parasitical upon their reaction to modernism, and as such remain reliant on modernist themes, in particular in reinforcing modernism's problematic relationship with realistic accounts of reality.

Chapter Six considers the understanding of religion that emerges within post-modernism: i) Cupitt's transition from a liberal to a post-modern theological position is offered as a case-study, drawing out the fundamental moral and theological agenda within programmes of deconstruction; ii) the Shoah is discussed as the key instance of the possibility of positive moral affirmation in the face of nihilism, the limitations of post-modern religious affirmations of value are outlined, and against this background two broad programmes within post-modern theological discourse are identified; iii) firstly the emergence of a naturalistic a-theology; iv) secondly, an apophatic negative theology; iv) the implications for religious education are outlined, and the thesis defends the fact that post-modernism fails to offer a framework capable of doing justice to the integrity of religion.

Chapter Seven considers the reactions to modernism of critical realism: i) it is suggested that critical realism seeks to preserve and extend critically the primary legacy of modernism via a non-reductive realism -- grounded in the notion of contingent rationality -- that fundamentally challenges the secondary sub-structures of modernism; ii) critical realism affirms the centrality and necessity of historical tradition in any process of understanding; iii) it moves beyond the image of the dislocated self, and affirms the communal, public nature of selfhood; iv) it accepts the ontological grounding of metaphorical statements of value; v) the distinctive contours of critical realism's search for a critical and realistic wisdom that transcends the reductionism inherent within modernism are outlined.

Chapter Eight considers the nature of realistic theology in the context of critical realism: i) it takes the development of realistic theology within recent Protestant thinking as a case-study and asks whether such a theology is able to make truth claims within the public arena; ii) Barth's turn to the objective claims of revelation are defended within a critically realistic, rather than fideistic, framework; iii) Pannenberg's concern with the critical appropriation of revelation is understood as being complementary to Barth's programme; iv) Jungel's reading of the ontologic referent of tropic language suggests the possibility of an internal coherence within realistic theological discourse grounded in critically appropriated revelation; v) Gunton's reflections on the claims of Trinitarian discourse are understood as supporting the possibility of a theology -- internally coherent, critically appropriated and grounded in revelation -- making legitimate claims to realistic truth within the public domain.

Chapter Nine sets out to propose a philosophy of education grounded in critical realism and able to do justice to the realistic nature of theological and religious discourse: i) such a programme will seek to avoid the fundamentally anti-realistic thrust observed in contemporary modern religious education; ii) the contours of Hirst's programme of a liberal education grounded in the notion of realistic knowledge is outlined; iii) the eclipse of Hirst's programme within modernist educational debate is partly due to his failure to mediate between the needs of a formal, objective theory of knowledge and the relative, teleological actuality of human understanding; iv) the critical theory of Habermas together with the educational pragmatism of Dewey are appropriated within the framework of critical realism, leading to the proposal of a liberal education grounded in contingent rationality that transcends the problems of modernism encountered by Hirst.

Chapter Ten offers a proposal regarding the nature of religious education within the framework of critical realism: i) a summary of the argument of the preceding chapters is offered, together with a methodological reflection on the status of religious education within critical realism; ii) the aims of religious education should be fundamentally concerned with the intrinsic integrity of its subject matter, that is to say, with the question of realistic religious truth and knowledge, appropriated with the discourse of contingent rationality; iii) to achieve this, religion must be presented within its own diverse integrity, utilizing a variety of appropriate methodological approaches, with particular attention being paid to the dual themes of religious ambiguity and religious truth; iv) this will require the development of a critical hermeneutic focused on the notion of the development of a religiously literate society capable of responding to and living with theological and religious dimensions with the maturity of an informed integrity; v) to achieve this, religious education will need to differentiate itself from -- and so become critically aware of -- its political context.

Introduction

Agenda, Method, Structure and Evolution

1. Agenda

This thesis is concerned with a critical analysis and evaluation of the current state, and future possibilities, of the discipline of 'Religious Education'. The term 'religious education' has, of course, a broad usage: the present agenda is limited to a focus on the emergence of a specifically *modern* form of the subject in state funded, non-denominational schools within the public sector of England and Wales between 1944 and 1988.¹

A key feature of a modernist, as opposed to mythical, understanding of the world is that of the differentiation of language. In pre-modern society "the magical relation between names and designated objects, the concretistic relation between the meaning of expressions and the states-of-affairs represented give evidence of systematic confusion between internal connections of meaning and external

¹. On the historical and geographical diversity of usage and meaning cf. Astley (1994) pp.1ff, Moran (1989) pp. 87-137.

Despite the narrowness of focus, it is hoped that this thesis will be of relevance to other contexts, both geographical, temporal and institutional.

connections of objects".² In modern society, however, a linguistically constructed world view is differentiated from the actual reality of the world, and as such can be "perceived as an interpretation of the world that is subject to error and open to criticism".³ Linguistic differentiation thus makes possible a critical distance that opens up the possibility of learning and the extension of human knowledge and understanding.

A modernist religious education will thus embody a reflective, critical and differentiated attitude towards its subject matter. As such, it must be distinguished from pre-modern notions of religious education as enculturation, in which formative education fails to adopt a critically differentiated stance towards its subject matter.⁴ It must also be distinguished from critical education within the limitations of a specific religious community, aiming at a critical appropriation of faith but not extending its horizons to embrace critical issues posed from external sources.⁵ Modernist religious education thus embraces both a differentiated attitude towards religion, and also differentiation within, and between, religious and non-religious world views.

It is a distinctive feature of contemporary religious education in England and Wales that it makes the claim to have achieved such a modernist agenda. It will be argued below that this claim is only partially justifiable, and that religious education "carries with it a surplus of commitments and special concerns"⁶ carried over from the failure of western liberalism to achieve an adequate form of differentiation. The consequence of this is an education that systematically distorts the distinctive truth claims of the plurality of religious traditions and consistently fails to address the resulting ambiguity between them.

The danger inherent within modernism is that the practical success of this process of differentiation -- in terms of learning outcomes -- leads to a failure to differentiate within modernism itself. That is to say, there is the possibility that modernism will fail to heed Habermas' demand that "the cultural tradition must permit a reflective relation to itself; it must be so far stripped of its dogmatism as to permit in principle that interpretations stored in tradition be placed in question and subject to critical revision".⁷ This though, as will be argued in detail below, is precisely the trap

2. Habermas (1987b) p.49.

3. Ibid. p.50.

4. On the contrast between 'formative-encultural' and 'critical' education cf. Astley, op.cit. pp.78-107.

5. cf. eg. Groome ((1980).

6. I owe this phrase to Mr M. Totterdell.

7. Habermas, op. cit. p.71.

into which modernism has allowed itself to fall.

The differentiation of fact from value, certainty from contingency, tradition from reason, mind from world, emerged within modernism as *hermeneutical tools* which established a critical distance that made the extension of human understanding possible. However, the failure of modernism to apply the demands of differentiation to its own methodology resulted in the transformation of these hermeneutical tools into *ontological principles*. Above all, the major result of this confusion between methodology and meta-theory was the emergence of a specifically modern understanding of the self as isolated and dislocated from the world.⁸ The methodology of modernism was thus transformed into an ontology. As such it provided an undifferentiated *Lebenswelt* or lifeworld within which human understanding, action and communication was forced to operate. As Habermas points out, the essence of such a lifeworld is the mutual, subconscious acceptance of its provision of unproblematic background convictions and situational definitions.⁹

The significance of this failure for modernist religious education is opaque. Historically the discipline has always tended to operate as a second order one: that is to say, it has been dependent for its development on the assimilation of the insights of the primary disciplines of philosophy, theology and/or religious studies, and educational theory. So long as such disciplines operate within the confines of an undifferentiated modernism, the result will be the accommodation of religious education within a modernist framework. The primary concern of the first part of this thesis is to paint a picture of modern religious education as precisely the offspring of such an undifferentiated modernism. Such a thesis is of course not new in itself, having been outlined in a number of exploratory, programmatic and critical papers.¹⁰ Newbigin, for example, refers to the obligation of the modern religious educator to "expose for examination the fundamental axioms, the prior decisions about what is allowed to count as evidence, which underlie his way of understanding".¹¹ However, such attempts to develop within modernist religious education a critical awareness of its unacknowledged presuppositions are marked both by their fragmentary nature and by their conspicuous absence from the mainstream of the discourse of the discipline. In particular, a systematic treatment has, so far as I am aware, not been attempted before.

8. cf. Taylor, C. (1992).

9. Habermas, op. cit. p.70.

10. cf. Hardy (1975), (1976), (1979), Newbigin (1982), Thatcher (1991).

11. Newbigin, op. cit. p.99.

The position of modern religious education is, however, further complicated by the emergence, in the late twentieth century, of a further factor, namely the development of a differentiated critique of modernism's implied lifeworld. That is to say, in the areas of philosophy, theological and religious studies, and educational theory, there has emerged a self-conscious and critical attitude towards the limitations of modernism. This has revealed itself precisely in the realisation that the fundamental hermeneutical structures of the modernist enterprise have been incorrectly transposed into the status and function of ontological foundations. However, the constructive outcome of such a critique has resulted in a sharply defined difference of opinion. On the one hand, programmes of post-modernism seek a complete emancipation from modernism via its deconstruction, and the subsequent recovery of undifferentiated mythical thought forms. Fundamental here are Foucault's concern to retrieve an undifferentiated consciousness beyond the limits of reason, and Derrida's turn to an undifferentiated flow of language. On the other hand, programmes of critical realism seek to extend and refine the modernist programme through a turn to a holistic differentiation of modernism as hermeneutic from modernism as implied ontology. The work of the later Wittgenstein, amongst others, will be singled out for attention in this respect.

Having achieved the first, primarily deconstructive, aim of demonstrating the limitations and fundamental flaws of modernist religious education within an undifferentiated modernist framework, the second and third parts of the thesis proceed to explore the problems and possibilities for religious education inherent in the emergence of post-modernism and critical realism. It will be suggested that the former fails to differentiate within its own reactions to modernism, and thus defines itself by default in terms of its -- at times violent -- rejection of the limitations of modernism. As a result, it will be suggested, it fails to escape from the flawed heritage of that from which it seeks emancipation. Critical realism, however, in its more measured and reflective analysis, offers an alternative framework within which religious education may operate. In so far as this framework is characterised by an insistence of the priority of hermeneutics as a means of continuous critical differentiation in the face of the inevitable emergence of a plurality of ontologies, it provides the foundation for the emergence of a critically realistic form of religious education capable of transcending the flaws inherent in modern and post-modern programmes. The development of such a framework, the status of which, it will be claimed, need not transcend the level of a contingent and pragmatically preferable option, will constitute the second, primarily constructive, aim of the thesis. Again, I am unaware of any systematic attempt to develop a constructive programme of religious education within the framework of

critical realism.¹²

2. Method

The working method adopted in this thesis anticipates its conclusions: that it is say, it operates within a fundamentally hermeneutical framework of argument and analysis in the search for a critical, holistic and differentiated understanding. As such it deals with both modernism and post-modernism as it were *from the outside*. This is not to be confused with any transcendental critique; on the contrary, the critique operates from the historically contingent perspective of critical realism. It is thus both the substantive and methodological judgement inherent in this thesis that critical realism offers a better, and more illuminatory, revelatory -- one might even dare to use the term 'enlightened' -- perspective that justifies its method. It thus claims legitimation by its ongoing results: the ends justify the means, and the means justify the ends; the foundation is in the process.

The rejection of the modernist concern for certainty, objectivity, foundations and transcendent truth is thus replaced by an acceptance of the contingency of human understanding. Critical analysis is not to be confused with the myth that reductionist accounts may be equated with superior explanation. The parts must be seen in terms of the whole in the same process that the whole is understood in terms of the parts. It follows that the adopted method sought a balance between the in-depth critical analysis of the microscope and the holistic perspectives provided by the telescope.

Whilst the telescope seeks a universal image, it of course occupies a specific location within space and time: the breadth of vision is not to be equated with any transcendent claim. Rather, the attempt to distinguish cultural movements, to perceive the emergence of patterns in the development of intellectual tradition, is essentially a historical process: vision is achieved through narrative within time, rather than through that Faustian imperative for transcendence, that is not only unrealisable in human terms, but also a specific mark of modernism.

To attempt to distinguish patterns in historical development is, by the very nature of the exercise, always going to be a tentative, though entirely rational, process.

¹². Cooling has raised the question of the inability of modern religious education to deal adequately with distinctive and realistic religious truth claims within its inherently pluralistic and relativistic ideology. However, his focus is on the educational and moral rights of such positions to be given an adequate hearing, and as such is concerned more with the question of accommodation within modernism than with a fundamental critique. Cooling (1986), (1994).

The story of the rise and fall of modernism, and of the emergence of critical realism and post-modernism can never be told in terms of a single thread, rather we are dealing with a whole series of strands, which when woven together form a rope.¹³ In focusing on the theme of differentiation, specifically in terms of selfhood and the nature of human understanding we must immediately acknowledge the contingency of the procedure. It is adopted in the belief that this particular thread, like Ariadne's, will offer us safe passage through the maze of post-Enlightenment thought, but this is not to claim that our route is the only one, that alternative and equally valid stories could not have been told.¹⁴

The holistic perspective does not only raise issues of the complexity of historical discernment, it also raises the question of the necessarily inter-disciplinary nature of the thesis. The issues raised demanded a consideration of the relationships of the disciplines of philosophy, theology, and educational theory -- themselves, of course, formed by a whole series of sub-disciplines -- in the three very different contexts of modernism, post-modernism and critical realism. This demanded both a high degree of selectivity and a continuous concern to avoid generalisation and superficiality. The working principle adopted here was that each intellectual movement or thinker be dealt with within the poles of a minimum criteria that justice be done to the mainstream academic consensus, and the maximum criteria that any divergence from such a mainstream should be fully justified.

The first and second parts of this thesis constitute an extended essay in deconstruction, understood as a methodological process rather than a theme within post-modern ideology.¹⁵ Classically methodological deconstruction has proceeded

13. Wittgenstein (1968a) p.32e.: ".....in spinning a thread we twist fibre on fibre. And the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres. But if someone wished to say: 'There is something common to all these constructions -- namely the disjunction of all their common properties' -- I should reply: 'Now you are only playing with words'. One might as well say: 'Something runs through the whole thread -- namely the continuous overlapping of these fibres'."

14. The terminology to refer to this 'post-Enlightenment' legacy -- 'critical philosophy', 'modernism', 'liberalism', 'Enlightenment', 'Enlightenment legacy' -- is used interchangeably, for stylistic rather than technical reasons. Distinctions will be made between movements of thought within this general perspective, specifically: empiricism, rationalism, idealism, positivism, romanticism. Clarification of the intended meanings within this language cluster will emerge as the study progresses.

15. That is to say, 'deconstruction' here is used in a broader sense than that suggested by the French post-modernists (Derrida, Foucault, Feyerabend); the wider frame of reference includes Wittgenstein's later linguistic philosophy, Gadamer's hermeneutical theory, Habermas and the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School; this reflects the argument in the second and third parts of the current thesis that the deconstruction of modernism sets up a fundamental dispute between post-modernist and critical

not by offering counter arguments against the object of its criticism but rather by throwing light on its unacknowledged presuppositions. The process of pulling these presuppositions from the unconscious into the conscious realm serves to reveal their ambiguity and internal contradictions: no longer mesmeric, their power to illuminate is destroyed as they are drawn into the cold light of day. To borrow an image from Wittgenstein: modern religious education is like a fly trapped in a fly bottle, its ability to proceed on its journey is limited by the container of that critical philosophy that is the legacy of the Enlightenment into which it has flown; only allow it to see the bottle for itself and it will be able to make its escape.¹⁶

The third part of the thesis constitutes an extended essay in construction. It aims to tell a story, weave a narrative, that illuminates the possibilities inherent within critical realism of a form of religious education grounded in the integrity of learner, subject and educational process, that is to say, grounded in the possibility of the development of a public religious literacy focused in a fundamental concern with the question of religious truth.

3. Structure

Given the diversity of perspectives that this thesis entails, abstracts have been included at the start of each chapter in order to help focus the continuity of the argument. These have been gathered together in the analytical summary that follows the table of contents.

Part One focuses on the nature of religious education within modernism. *Chapter One* sets out to demonstrate the way in which the hermeneutics of differentiation developed into the ontology of liberalism. *Chapter Two* seeks to show how an experiential-expressive model of religion developed in the context of the need to accommodate religious belief within modernist structures. *Chapter Three* demonstrates how educational theory adopted itself to the constraints of modernism.

realistic readings of the implications of the fragmentation of the legacy of the Enlightenment; the genesis of such deconstruction is to be found within modernism itself, within a 'hermeneutic of suspicion' first applied to orthodox readings of modernism by Marx, Freud and above all Nietzsche; classically it is possible to trace deconstruction back at least as far as the exorcism narratives in the gospels: to be able to name the demon is to have power over it.

¹⁶ Wittgenstein (1968a) p. 103e.: "What is your aim in philosophy? – To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle."

Chapter Four tells the story of the way in which modernist religious education sought accommodation within liberalism.

Part Two sets out to analyse post-modernism's rejection of modernism: *Chapter Five* in philosophical terms, and *Chapter Six* in theological ones. In the process, the poverty of post-modernism is revealed to the extent to which speculation concerning the possible shape of post-modern forms of education in general, and religious education in particular, are already clearly superfluous and unnecessary.

Part Three sets out to provide a sketch of the key themes of an emerging critical realism: *Chapter Seven* in terms of philosophy, and *Chapter Eight* in terms of theology. From this perspective a proposal is made in *Chapter Nine* regarding a possible critical realist educational programme, and in *Chapter Ten* this proposal is worked out in terms of the possibilities inherent in a critically realistic form of religious education.

4. Evolution

The genesis of this thesis is to be found in a personal experience of the disparity between my own orthodox, differentiated and specifically Anglican affirmation of Christianity and modernist experiential-expressive accounts of religion. This disparity was given a specifically practical focus in fourteen years of working as a professional religious educator, eight years in secondary schools, and six years within higher education. The effect of working in a context marked by the tension between a post-liberal perspective and an established tradition of liberal religious education was to highlight the hermeneutical problems inherent in attempts to bring pupils and students to an adequate level of religious literacy. My M.A. thesis attempted to give a systematic account of my own developing practice in terms of the history of hermeneutical theory. The present thesis represents its extension and development.

Josephine Cairns provided the initial faith, enthusiasm and encouragement that challenged me to relate practice to theory. The initial stages of the thesis, in the form of an extended study of Wittgenstein, were supervised with great skill, insight, and -- as it emerged -- with enormous courage, by the late Edwin Cox. Mike Totterdell, who took over as supervisor and saw the process through to its end, offered, with great wisdom, a constructive dialogue that meant that my more imaginative flights of fantasy never really got off the ground, and that those that did were under rigorous and sensitive scrutiny. My sincere thanks and appreciation is extended to all three. I also acknowledge, with gratitude, financial support provided by the Roehampton Institute London.

Part One

Modernism and the Emergence of Liberal Religious Education

Chapter One

Enlightenment: Constructing the Modernist Project

Chapter One aims to outline a number of key contours within modernism that resulted from the process of differentiation: i) a fundamental flaw within modernism is the failure to critically differentiate its own method, leading to the transformation of method into ontology; ii) this ontology led to an assumed lifeworld focused on the image of the dislocated self; iii) the resulting problem of the relationship between the self and the world was resolved by the picture of the mind mirroring nature; iv) this in turn led to a dualistic distinction between the subjectivity of the self and the objectivity of nature; v) the politics of liberalism emerged as a pragmatic framework that sought to resolve the tensions between these two domains.

1. From Method to Ontology

The story of modernism runs from its inauguration by Descartes through to its swansong in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*.¹ The narrative is inevitably complex: there is clearly a uniqueness in the Enlightenment legacy that sets it apart from any other phase of human cultural and intellectual history. However, to adopt a reductionist approach and attempt to identify any single strand in this tradition as its essence would be naive. In choosing to focus on the themes of differentiation, the dislocated self and the resulting liberal compromise between subjective and objective worlds, the contingency

¹. Wittgenstein (1974).

of the procedure must immediately be acknowledged. It is however adopted in the belief that these themes are sufficiently central to modernism, and offer the promise of an appropriate level of conceptual clarity, to enable the ensuing analysis to claim to achieve an authentic reading of the complexities of post-Enlightenment thought.

The process of differentiating between nature and culture, the world and language about the world entailed the rejection of a magical relationship between the two spheres and hence the removal of taboo. This led simultaneously to the creation of a critical distance between humanity and the world, a critical distance which allowed for the recognition of truth and error beyond the limiting framework of magic and taboo.² The outstanding results of this essentially methodological process, observable above all in the development of modern science and technology, led to the acceptance of the universal legitimacy of occidental reason.³ The failure to subject this methodology itself to a differentiated critique led to its transformation into an ontological principle. The method of differentiation became an ontological dualism of dislocation: mind and matter, self and world, became distinguished at a meta-theoretical level.⁴ Grammatically two linguistic clusters came into being: one focused on the vocabulary of the 'world' as *objective, empirical, factual, scientific, realistic*; the other focused on the vocabulary of the 'mind' as *subjective, idealistic, value-laden, humanistic, anti-realistic*.

The *Tractatus* may be read as the last great exploration of the language of modernism. It begins and ends thus: "the world is all that is the case.....what we cannot speak about must be passed over in silence".⁵ The 'world' for Wittgenstein is the totality of facts, the object of the investigation of the natural sciences, that which must be passed over in silence is the 'mystical', the unutterable language of meaning and purpose, the realm of morality, aesthetics and religion.⁶ For the logical positivists this dualistic demarcation between fact and value marked a point of human liberation, of emancipation from the superstition of mythology.⁷ This, of course, was to

² This reading of differentiation follows that of Habermas (1987b) pp.43-53, cf. Ingram (1987).

³ Habermas, op.cit. pp. 53-74.

⁴ Dualism in the context of modernism involves a wide diversity of perspectives. It can be read in theological terms as a polarization between divinity and creation; in scientific terms as a polarization between Newton's absolute and relative time and space; in Cartesian terms as the polarization between mind and matter; as used in the present thesis the common link is the priority of the substantial over the methodological. cf. further Torrance, T.F. (1980) p.23.

⁵ Wittgenstein (1974) para. 1 and 7, pp. 5, 74.

⁶ Ibid. para. 6.45, 6.5, 6.522, p.73.

⁷ cf. eg. Ayer (1971).

misunderstand Wittgenstein, for whom such a demarcation -- however necessary given the constraints of modernism from which he was yet to emancipate himself -- could only ever be a source of spiritual crisis. Gunton attempts to articulate what Wittgenstein could only show: "the personal and physical universes we inhabit have been so divorced that the morality we should adapt to our world is a matter of scandal and confusion.....This divorce of the natural and the moral universes is perhaps the worst legacy of the Enlightenment, and the most urgent challenge facing modern humankind."⁸

The tensions between the perspectives of the positivists, Wittgenstein and Gunton, reflect the fact that the methodology of differentiation has adopted a substantive form: the issue transcends the epistemological and is fundamentally a dispute about metaphysics.⁹ This theme is given classic expression in the emergence of modern notions of selfhood.

2. The Dislocated Self

i) Cosmology: deity v. world

We need look no further for the roots of contemporary dualism than the shift from a medieval to a modern cosmology, a transition given scientific expression by Newton, "who built into his great system of the world the massive dualism between absolute mathematical time and space and relative apparent time and space that was to become paradigmatic for all modern science and cosmology up to Einstein".¹⁰

Aquinas gave expression to a limited monistic cosmos, the product of a synthesis of Aristotelian and Judaeo-Christian traditions. In it time is limited by the events of creation and eschatological judgement, while space is contained within the great chain of being that ran from God (whose existence is his essence) through to evil (whose essence is non-existence). In this system physical reality constitutes a realm of value: everything in creation is in a process of movement towards its proper place, the

⁸. Gunton (1985) p.25.

⁹. Though logical positivism claimed to have rejected all metaphysics, it is now clear that the verification principle was itself unverifiable, and hence functioned ontologically. One of the key themes of critical realism is that of the inevitability of metaphysics, and hence of the need for a continuous and non-reductionist differentiation at both methodological and meta-theoretical levels.

¹⁰. Torrance, op. cit. p.23.

achievement of harmony and purpose, understood as the right relationship to divinity. When Copernicus developed a heliocentric model of the universe, and this was substantiated by Kepler's discovery of the laws of planetary motion, the effect was to undermine the hierarchical cosmology of Aquinas at its roots. Reality could "no longer be comprehended within the clearly defined scheme which classical cosmology possessed.....in Aristotle's hierarchical cosmos".¹¹ The door was now open for Galileo and Newton: the scholastic world of harmony and meaning contained within physical reality collapses. Instead the universe is now described through the 'value free' disciplines of mathematics and geometry. If the motion of the planets is now best described in numerical rather than ethical categories, then a teleology of spatio-temporal relationships gives way to a picture of a purposeless infinity of space and time. No longer relative to the will and actions of God, time and space are themselves infinite, just as mathematical sequence extends into infinity.

Newton distinguished absolute mathematical space and time and the relative space and time that appeared as phenomena to the observer. "Through clamping down the former, regarded as an unchanging, inertial framework, upon the world of observations and appearances, characterised by relative apparent space and time, he was able to bring mathematical order into phenomena, and so expound the immutable laws of nature in terms of the causal and mechanical connections that constitute the system of the world."¹² Further, he proceeded to identify absolute space with the mind and presence of God, which he referred to as the divine *sensorium*.¹³ The reductionism involved here cannot go unremarked: God is transformed from the personal creator, sustainer and redeemer of the universe into the rational principle that ensures its scientific stability. Theism is replaced by deism, a monistic cosmology in which fact and value intermingle is replaced by a dualistic cosmology in which fact and value become polar opposites. We are left:

".....with an indefinite and even infinite universe which is bound together by the identity of its fundamental components and laws, and in which all these components are placed on the same level of being. This in turn implies the discarding by scientific thought of all considerations based upon value concepts, such as perfection, harmony, meaning and aim, and finally the devaluation of being, the divorce of the world of value from the world of facts.....The infinite Universe of the new Cosmology, infinite in Duration as well as in Extension, in which matter in accordance with eternal and

11. Cassirer (1951) p.25.

12. Torrance, op.cit. p.24.

13. Torrance categorises Newton's concept of the divine *sensorium* thus: "the mind and presence of the eternal, immutable God, as an inertial framework that contains the universe, holding it together in such a way as to impart to it rational order, consistency and stability", ibid. p.24.

necessary laws moves endlessly and aimlessly in eternal space, inherited all the ontological attributes of Divinity. Yet only those -- all the others the departed God took away with Him."¹⁴

ii) Psychology: certainty and contingency

Foucault's deconstruction of the traditional image of Descartes' calm, objective and rational search for the foundations of knowledge allows us to paint an alternative picture, in which the *Meditations* take on the form of confession, telling the story of the journey of a soul meditating on human finitude and the very real possibility of madness.¹⁵

Scholasticism, contrary to the image suggested by the formal beauty of the structure of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*, was well aware of the contingency of human thought: as finite creatures set apart from God by the fall of Adam, humanity had to accept that ultimately their reason was taken up, through grace, into faith. Making sense of reality was a process of *fides quaerens intellectum*, faith seeking understanding.¹⁶ With the sweeping away of the cosmology on which such epistemological contingency was based, Descartes was left with a vacuum that needed to be filled; a vacuum that suggested the horrific possibility of ultimate meaninglessness and hence madness. The journey of Descartes' soul thus comes face to face with what Bernstein refers to as 'Cartesian anxiety'.

"The terrifying nature of the journey is reflected in the allusions to madness, darkness, the dread of waking from a self-deceptive dream world, the fear of having 'all of a sudden fallen into deep water' where 'I can neither make certain of setting my feet on the bottom, nor can I swim and so support myself on the surface', and the anxiety of imagining that I may be no more than the plaything of an all powerful evil demon."¹⁷

¹⁴. Koyre (1957) p. 276.

¹⁵. On Foucault's treatment of the relationship between reason and madness in the context of Cartesian thought cf. Foucault (1971); for discussion cf. Boyne (1990) pp.43-50, Derrida (1978b); cf. also below, Chapter Five.

¹⁶. Anselm (1979); thus Gilson (1955) pp.128-30: "Two sources of knowledge are at the disposition of Christians, reason and faith. Against the excesses of some dialecticians, Anselm affirms that one must first become firmly established in faith, and consequently, he refuses to submit Holy Scripture to dialectics. Faith is for the Christian the given point from which he is to start. The facts that he is to understand and the realities that his reason shall have to interpret are given to him by revelation; one does not understand in order to believe, but on the contrary, one believes in order to understand" (p.129); cf. also Barth (1975a).

¹⁷. Bernstein (1983) p.17.

The significance of this retelling of Descartes' story lies in the way Cartesian anxiety led him, via his method of systematic doubt, ever onwards in his search for certainty. The contingency of the faith of the scholastics was no defence against madness, what was needed was a secure foundation for human knowledge, an unchallengeable certainty.

"Reading the *Meditations* as a journey of the soul helps us to appreciate that Descartes' search for a foundation or Archimedian point is more than a device to solve metaphysical and epistemological problems. It is a quest for some fixed point, some stable rock upon which we can secure our lives against the vicissitudes that constantly threaten us."¹⁸

What Descartes needs are clear lines of demarcation between meaning and madness, truth and falsehood, knowledge and belief. So strong is this need, so unable is he to live with ambiguity and doubt, that he is led to the acceptance of a fundamental either/or: "either there is some support for our being, a fixed foundation for our knowledge, or we cannot escape the forces of darkness that envelop us with madness, with intellectual and moral chaos".¹⁹ Alongside the cosmological dualism between the worlds of fact and value we may thus place the polarization of meaning and madness, reason and faith, certainty and contingency.

iii) Epistemology: tradition and reason

A third feature of the nexus of ideas that form our picture of western dualism is drawn from the problem of authority, specifically in the polarization of the authority of tradition and the authority of reason.

In the Judaeo-Christian tradition humanity *indwells* the world, is wrapped up within God's ongoing creation. Here there can be no direct knowledge of the absolute reality, that is, the creator; rather, truth is filtered through, and discovered within, creation itself. This does not lead to the absurd, humanity is not so much thrown into the world of Heidegger -- in which existence hovers constantly over the abyss of angst, non-being and death -- as created as part of a universe that stands under God's grace. In this situation of *indwelling* "there is no automatically safe area of human rationality. All human intellectual enterprises are necessarily fallible, but not

¹⁸. Ibid. p.18.

¹⁹. Ibid.

for that matter, necessarily mistaken. In fact the reverse is the case. Because we indwell the world knowledge can be contingent, fallible and partial without for that reason losing its claim to be knowledge."²⁰ Contingent knowledge of God is filtered through our contingent world. We must start where we are, from our particular place within time and space, from our position within a developing historical tradition. There is simply no alternative. If we indwell a tradition and history, then knowledge arises from within such tradition, there can be no direct access to a transcendent source. Authority is found within tradition, rooted in community, scripture, history, reason, however contingent and fallible. There is no short cut to truth, human reason must work on the level of contingent rationality, knowledge arises through dialogue with tradition: this monistic picture was to be rejected by the Enlightenment, which drew a distinction between tradition and reason.

What sense then did modernism make of history and tradition? Cassirer offers a possible answer: "it is customary to consider it a major shortcoming of this epoch that it lacked understanding of the historically distant and foreign, and that in naive overconfidence it set up its own standards as the absolute, and only valid and possible, norm for the evaluation of historical events".²¹ From this perspective the Enlightenment stood in tension with the authority of tradition. Contrasted with the authority of the past stands the authority of the immediately present self, abstracted and dislocated from the world, relying on its own standards of rationality. For Kant the watchword of the Enlightenment is the exhortation to have the courage to use your own understanding: "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed minority. This minority is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another."²²

However, there are tensions in modernism's relationship with the past: the picture of a blanket rejection is an oversimplification. As the child of the flourishing rediscovery of classical antiquity in the Renaissance, the Enlightenment in its turn gave birth to modern historical method. By developing a critical distance from the past it made modern historical consciousness both a possibility and a reality. It was not, then, a lack of interest in, or insensitivity towards, the past that is the hallmark of enlightenment, but the way in which the past was used. As Cobban argues, Descartes

²⁰. Gunton (1983) p.145. He derives the language of indwelling from Polanyi (1958).

²¹. Cassirer, *op.cit.* p.x.

²². Quoted in Barth (1972) p.268.

was not indifferent to history as such, merely to the use of history as a foundation for knowledge rooted in tradition.²³

Gay argues that it is entirely wrong to ignore the Enlightenment's debt to tradition: the past was both 'useful' and 'beloved'.²⁴ Its view of the past was dominated by a distinction between reverence for classical antiquity and -- at least in some measure -- antipathy towards the Judaeo-Christian tradition. A linear teleological view of history was replaced by a contingent cyclical view.²⁵ As a result the past offered no knowledge of truth in itself. What it did offer was a superficial, if inescapable, feeling of congeniality towards classical thought, to which it looked for justification, identity and support. In a sense, history had come full circle: the Enlightenment sees itself as a modern parallel of the enlightenment of antiquity. The shift from scholasticism to modernity was seen in terms of the struggle to replace Hebraic modes of thought with those of pagan antiquity. The classical thought of Greece and Rome was seen in terms of the triumph of reason over myth, while the culture of ancient Rome, especially in the writings of Lucretius and Cicero, imposed the reason of the Greeks on its world view through the adoption of the 'spirit of criticism'. This victory of reason was later to be adulterated by Christianity: Dante forces antiquity into a Christian framework, and the scholastic theologians retard the progress of enlightenment by asserting the primacy of faith over reason, making philosophy the servant of theology. Thus the Enlightenment's use of history, far from being insensitive, is eminently sophisticated. It is used to justify both its own rejection of Christianity's mythical and figurative realism and its rejection of tradition as an authoritative path to knowledge.

²³. Cobban (1960).

²⁴. Gay (1973a) pp.31-126.

²⁵. The loss of the horizontal-teleological line of transcendence is fundamental to the emergence of modernism: i) the fact-value distinction introduces absolute time within the divine *sensorium*, there is thus no end point, no eschaton, no fulfilment, no possibility of value; ii) the rejection of contingent tradition, and thus of meaning within history is linked with the Cartesian desire for certainty -- obtainable only outside historical contingency. The notion of teleological transcendence was recovered and introduced into the framework of modernism in the 19th Century by Hegel's historical dialectic, which in turn led to: i) Marx's immanent reduction of Christian eschatology; ii) optimistic liberal belief in human progress; iii) Darwinian evolutionary naturalism. In the 20th Century the legacy of Stalin and Hitler -- together with moral condemnation of the imperialism of western politics and ethics -- have led to a partial collapse of the humanistic teleology. In contrast, naturalistic teleology has been reinforced by Einstein's relativisation of time and space.

iv) Anthropology: mind and world

As well as isolating humanity from the past, modernism also sought to dislocate the self from the present. We must return here to Descartes:²⁶ at the start of the *Discourse on Method* he describes his emancipation from the history, traditions and authority of his received intellectual traditions. "The greatest profit I derived here was this: from noticing many things that seem to us extravagant and ridiculous, but are none the less commonly accepted and approved.....I learned not to believe too firmly anything that I had been convinced about only by example and custom."²⁷ Indwelling a tradition cannot give him that absolute certainty that Cartesian anxiety demands, merely a set of historically relative opinions and myths.²⁸ Descartes thus isolates himself from tradition.

Forced to turn in on his own resources and innate abilities he resorts to the first person singular, in the process founding modern philosophy.²⁹ His goal is that of

26. Descartes in the role of the 'founder of modern philosophy' can only be properly understood in so far as he himself indwells an intellectual tradition, that of the shift from pre-critical to critical philosophy, that is as essentially both instigator and follower of an emerging tradition. While few now accept his substantive claims, "there can be little doubt that the problems, metaphors and questions that he bequeathed to us have been at the very centre of philosophy since Descartes" (Bernstein op.cit. p.17). Kenny argues that Cartesianism collapses with the rejection of Descartes' substantive arguments: "It is notable how much of Cartesian metaphysics is latent in the arguments for Cartesian doubt.....They are presented in the *Meditations* as if they were arguments that anyone, Cartesian or non-Cartesian must admit to be true; and the Cartesian system is then presented as the only means of rescue from the morass of doubt to which the arguments lead. If I am right, however, the *sceptical arguments gain their full force only if the reader is prepared to entertain the Cartesian system as possible from the outset*; they leave him the option of refusing to consider it at all" (Kenny, 1968, pp.38f, my italics). On the contrary, the reality -- within modernism -- has been that even when the Cartesian system as a whole has been rejected, the underlying metaphors have still retained their full force as the paradigmatic sub-structures of the enlightened modernist legacy.

27. Descartes (1970) p.13.

28. Descartes reviews his scholastic education in a Jesuit school, tempered as it was by the Humanistic insights of the Renaissance; his study of languages, classics, history, oratory, poetry, mathematics, ethics and theology; its results are essentially negative, and he is at pains to assure himself that this is not due to any defect on the part of either himself or his teachers; further study of 'occult and rare sciences' offer no solution; yet, as he points out, "I was in one of the most celebrated schools in Europe; and I thought there must be learned men there, if there were such in any part of the globe"; "...but as soon as I had finished the whole course of studies, at the end of which one is normally admitted among the ranks of the learned, I completely altered my opinion. For I found myself embarrassed by so many doubts and errors, that it seemed the only profit.....was the progressive discovery of my own ignorance", *ibid.* p.9.

29. cf.eg.: "certain paths that I have happened to follow ever since my youth have led me to considerations and

a method that will offer truth and security, one rooted in the internalised authority of immediate apprehension. He thus finds himself embroiled in a vicious circle: the more he doubts tradition, the more he is separated from it; the more separated from tradition, the greater the need to transcend Cartesian anxiety; the more anxious, the more isolated; the more isolated, the more dependent on his own resources.

Descartes' perseverance in following through the apparent logic of his situation resulted in the method of systematic doubt: the application of a hermeneutic of suspicion to all opinions that in the past he has taken for knowledge. In the *First Meditation* he sets out in the light of "the multitude of errors that I had accepted as true in my earliest years.....[to].....make a clean sweep for once in my life, and beginning again from the very foundations.....establish some secure and lasting result."³⁰

He starts from the senses which, though clearly deceiving him at times, appear to offer him knowledge.³¹ But might he not be dreaming? Even if he is, the ideas contained in his dreams might nevertheless be true: perhaps not the composite pictures of sirens and satyrs, but at least the 'simpler and more universal things'. If so,

"we might be justified in concluding that whereas physics, astronomy, medicine, and all the other sciences depending on the consideration of composite objects, are doubtful; yet arithmetic, geometry, and so on, which treat only of the simplest and most general subject-matter, and are indifferent whether it exists in nature or not, have an element of indubitable certainty".³²

Not pausing to flirt with a reductionist empiricism, Descartes has already embraced idealism, introducing a distinction between pure and empirical science, between being in the world and being in the mind. Not only isolated from history, the Cartesian self is already dislocated from the external empirical world.

maxims out of which I have formed a method; and this, I think, is a means to a gradual increase in my knowledge that will raise it little by little to the highest point allowed by the mediocrity of my mind and the brief duration of my life.....this made me take the liberty of judging of all other men by myself, and of holding that there was no such learning in the world as I had been previously led to hope for." Ibid. pp.8f, my italics.

³⁰. Ibid. p.61.; cf. also Descartes' further elucidation: suppose, he argues, that a man "had a basket of apples, and fearing that some of them were rotten, wanted to take those out lest they make the rest go bad, how could he do that? Would he not turn the whole of the apples out of the basket, and look over them one by one, and then having selected those which he saw were not rotten, place them again in the basket and leave out the others?" Descartes, 1967, p.282; "My plan has never gone further than an attempt to reform my own thoughts and rebuild them on ground that is altogether my own", Descartes, 1970, p.18. cf. Kenny, op. cit. p.19.

³¹. "e.g. that I am here, sitting by the fire, wearing a winter coat", Descartes, ibid. p.62.

³². Ibid. p.63.

It is this focus on the isolated mind, cut off from the body, from empirical experience and tradition, this focus on the mind seeking certainty within its own reason and resources that lies at the heart of Cartesian dualism. To take the doubt further, to question the legitimacy of the mind's own reason, leads to insanity: the bedrock of reason must, therefore, be close at hand.

That $2+3=5$ is self-evidently certain, unless that is, our minds themselves are illogical and incoherent. But what if they are just that? What if a demon and not God governs the structures of my mind? What if the entire search for certainty has no ultimate ontological foundation? (What, indeed if the future post-modernists are right?). Bedrock is here achieved in the *cogito*: Descartes can doubt everything but the reality that he is a doubting being. *Cogito ergo sum*. From this bedrock, of the inner contemplation of the reasoning mind, dislocated from tradition, from the world, from the body, Descartes can begin to look outwards again, and so construct the Enlightenment enterprise.

v) The ontology of the dislocated self

We have narrated four parallel stories: cosmological, psychological, epistemological and anthropological. Common to them all is the inherent confusion of method and results. i) The differentiation of modern and medieval cosmology through the introduction of scientific method results in an ontological claim about the value of matter: the world of fact is differentiated from the world of value. ii) The differentiation of certainty from contingency produces the psychological drive to overcome Cartesian anxiety, resulting in the ontological convergence of truth with certainty: reality is forced to conform to the limitations of human knowledge. iii) The differentiation of reason and tradition leads to an epistemology in which ontological truth can only be grounded in foundationalism. iv) The methodological differentiation of self from world leads to an ontological distinction between mind and matter: the transcendent self stands over against the ongoing flow of external, immanent, reality.

There is a fundamental coherence between these stories: on the one hand modernism embraces the resulting image of the transcendent self, reliant on reason, discovering certain knowledge of the world of fact (whether that world is idealistic or empirical); on the other hand, modernism views with suspicion the immanent self, reliant on tradition and able merely to lay claim to contingent, value-laden -- and hence relative -- belief.

The shift from the Judaeo-Christian story to the modernist one is thus a turn from a theocentric to an anthropocentric world view. This revolution of ideas involved

the introduction of a set of dualistic sub-structures within modernism, operating as implicit, fixed givens. That is to say, the epistemology of differentiation transformed itself into an ontology of differentiation: The failure to turn modernism's principle of differentiation in on itself meant that this transformation went unnoticed, and passed into the subconsciousness of the post-Enlightenment lifeworld. Operating as an interlinked network of ideas, they form together the classic subject-object tension that pervades modernism and its dualistic claims of a victory of reason over mythology.

3. Truth, Meaning and the Mirror of Nature

i) Idealism and empiricism

The exact location of the mind-world polarity in relation to the other dualistic sub-structures was the concern of the tradition that ran from Descartes through to Kant. The essence of this tradition was the battle between idealism and empiricism, and Kant's ability to unite the two factions marked the watershed of modernist thought. At the heart of Kant's legacy stands an image: of the mind as a mirror of nature. The task here is to trace in outline the path that led from the Enlightenment to its culmination in Kant's work.

Two solutions offered themselves regarding the place of the mind-world dualism within modernism. i) If *mind* is placed in the objective realm, so linking it with fact, certainty and reason, then rationalism travels the path towards idealism. Facts here become logical facts, innate idealistic entities contained within the mind, and having no need of empirical support. In the process, *world* becomes linked with the ambiguity and contingency of an unstable and ever changing external empirical reality. ii) If, alternatively, *world* is placed in the objective realm, so linking empirical reality with fact, certainty and reason, then rationalism travels the path towards empiricism. Facts here become empirical facts, located in a reality external to the mind, and the focus of the attention of the natural scientist. In the process, *mind* becomes linked with subjectivity, contingency and the ambiguous authority of tradition, unless that is it can find a point of convergence with the external world.

In idealism objectivity was internal to the mind. Certainty was available as a result of the mind's ability to rationally order the ideas, or logical facts that it innately possessed. Any appeal to the external empirical world was essentially uninteresting and ran the risk of a descent into contingency. The a priori knowledge of idealism had more reality than the a posteriori knowledge of the external empirical world: the accidental truths of history and tradition could never compete with the necessary truths of reason. The ghost of Plato continues to reign. This story, in essence, is the

one told by the continental tradition that ran from Spinoza through Leibnitz to Hegel. In time it came to be understood as a story that was fundamentally flawed. The self-sufficiency of the mind made contact with the external world, and in particular with other minds, unnecessary: this was the path to solipsism, the final resting place of Descartes' dislocated self. Yet at the end of its journey the isolated and self-sufficient mind found itself face to face once again with Descartes' demon. The path from idealism to solipsism leads full circle back to Cartesian anxiety: this for the simple reason that the various idealistic systems failed to converge in the way they should have, given the thesis of the adequacy of innate reason. The objective truth of mathematics and geometry could not be extended to a single idealistic system. Metaphysics descended into pure speculation; idealistic ontology depended not upon a priori truth but on the strength of the creative imagination of the idealist philosopher.³³

In contrast to idealism, empiricism sought to ground objectivity in the structure of the external, empirical world. Certainty and truth were no longer to be found in the internal coherence of innate ideas within the mind, but in the convergence of ideas with facts in the external world. The dislocated mind, cut off from external reality, faced the constant danger of turning in on itself, of descending into solipsism, subjectivity and madness. The a posteriori knowledge of empiricism was the only source of truth; the mind is a *tabula rasa*; no ideas exist prior to experience. Objective truth is to be found within the external world, not of course in the holistic and contingent stories of historical and cultural traditions, but rather in the reductionist network of physical cause and effect described by Newtonian science. The ghost of Plato is exorcised. This story was told by the tradition of British empiricism that ran from Locke through to Hume.³⁴ However, like idealism, the story of empiricism was fundamentally flawed, as Hume clearly saw. How could the mathematical laws of causality be drawn from the mere sense impressions that enter the mind? "If all we

33. This was the central thrust of Comte's positivism: the legacy of the Enlightenment constitutes a shift from mythical-religious to rational-metaphysical thought forms; true modernism only emerges with the victory of empirical positivism over both religion and metaphysics; language has meaning only in so far as it is capable of sensual verification; the outcome, in logical positivism, thus constituted an attack on all idealist, rationalist, quasi-empirical and theological language. cf. Kung (1980) p.170: "It was humanity, this great universal being, which was developing in three stages of positivity: upon the theological-fictive poetry of myth on the part of a predominantly militarized society, there had followed the abstract metaphysics of the juridically oriented society; and finally the positive science of facts would be established in an industrial society."

34. The continental tradition of phenomenology and existentialism, developing as they did out of rationalism and idealism, sought to counter the reductionism implicit within such empiricism.

have in basic knowledge is reduced to streams of impressions or associations of sense data, then it is impossible to declare that, within any sequence of phenomena, one phenomena is cause and the other effect."³⁵ Hume's answer was to fall back on social and psychological convention, resting either upon the authority of tradition or the subjective speculations of the mind. The irony here is that, like idealism, empiricism comes face to face once again with Descartes' demon.

ii) The Kantian watershed

Kant's 'Copernican revolution' in philosophy involved a focus on the centrality of the subject within epistemology without undermining the rational objectivity of external reality. It attempted to retrieve the dualistic sub-structures without falling into the solipsism inherent in the idealistic and empirical traditions.

If Hume's sceptical position was correct, if human perceptions of causality were no more than subjective convention, then the entire rational foundation of Newtonian science, and indeed the entire modern legacy of the Enlightenment was threatened. In terms of strict logic Hume stands on the threshold of post-modernism. It was this challenge -- if not expressed in the same form -- that spurred Kant on towards his mature philosophy.

We saw above how, for Newton, the rational order of the universe is a result of God's action in creating and sustaining reality, the divine *sensorium*, and reality remains fixed regardless of the position of the human observer. For Hume this constitutes a major problem: if the existence of God can no longer, on rational grounds, be taken as given, then acceptance of the inherent rationality of the universe depends upon sense experience alone. Hume's scepticism regarding the ability of experience to achieve this meant that in essence Newton's absolute and relative space and time are torn assunder.

Kant's solution, in essence, was simply to transfer the properties of the divine *sensorium* from the deity to the fundamental structures of the human mind. The synthetic a priori of space, time and the Kantian categories effectively gave permission for the mind itself to effectively weld together absolute and relative space and time. Concepts of time, space and causality are no longer mere psychological constructions but rather the fundamental structures innate within the mind that make knowledge possible. The human mind became the absolute *possibility* of reason,

35. Torrance, op.cit. p.25.

phenomenological experience its substantial content. No longer need humanity turn to the deity to justify belief in the basic rational ontological structure of reality; such knowledge is part and parcel of the basic structure of the mind.³⁶

This programme had two important consequences to which we must return. i) While the categories offered genuine knowledge of the external world, thus escaping solipsism and Humean scepticism, such knowledge could never be of things in themselves (noumena), only ever of things as filtered through the categories themselves (phenomena). ii) The distinction between fact and value is reaffirmed in an even stronger form. Pure reason must be contrasted with practical reason: in the phenomenal world of appearances there is no room for human freedom, the possibility of transcendence is negated by the necessity of the categories. Human freedom is possible only in the noumenal world of things as they are in themselves: the world of practical reason, of morality, religion and ethics. Such a world is internalised by Kant, shorn off from the external realm of phenomena.³⁷ While Kant's instinct was to make this internal world of human freedom answerable to an idealised a priori reasoning -- as classically in the categorical imperative -- ultimately his thought "had the effect of giving rise to a romantic idealism where the the human spirit could range at will, uncontrolled by scientific evidence and knowledge".³⁸ Morality, aesthetics and religion thus become rooted in internal subjectivity. Thus the dualism of the Enlightenment takes on a modern Kantian form: "by limiting scientific knowledge to what is observable and phenomenologically determinate, Kant severed the connection between science and faith, depriving faith of any objective or ontological reference and emptying it of any real cognitive content".³⁹

36. Feuerbach saw clearly the logic of Kant's position: theology becomes anthropology; for Kant this basic ontological structure of reality was essentially moral, and he sharply opposed the reduction of such morality to naturalistic utilitarianism. As Taylor points out, the theory "has deep roots in Christian theology, and Kant remained a believing Christian. But his conception is radically anthropocentric. The proximate source of.....[his moral philosophy].....is not God, but the demands of rational agency itself which lie within me. The fact that ultimately, in Kant's view, it is God who designed things this way doesn't mitigate the central status given to human dignity", Taylor (1992) p.366.

37. "Kant explicitly insists that morality can't be found in nature or in anything outside the human rational will.....We cannot accept that the cosmic order, or even the order of ends in human 'nature', should determine our normative purposes. All such views are heteronomous; they involve our abdicating our responsibility to generate the law out of ourselves", *ibid.* p.364.

38. Torrance, *op.cit.* p.27; the romantic reading of Kant by Torrance is confirmed by Taylor, who deals with Rousseau and Kant in the same chapter, as providing the essential background to the rise of romanticism itself, *op.cit.* pp.355ff.

39. Torrance, *op.cit.* p.27.

iii) Rorty: mirroring reality

Kant thus overcomes the tension between the rival claims of idealism and empiricism. The realm of the mind is at one and the same time the realm of human freedom, and hence of aesthetic, moral and theological value, and the realm of reason. The empirical/phenomenological turn to external reality offers the prospect of clear and certain knowledge of the world, precisely because the mind itself legitimates the possibility of such knowledge. Pure empiricism and pure idealism collapse in on themselves: the mind forms the bedrock of both subjective freedom and objective fact. The link with the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* is here luminous. We come face to face with an image: of the mind as a mirror reflecting external reality; with the categories as the silver on the mirror.⁴⁰

Rorty sees this image as fundamental to modernism. "It is pictures rather than propositions, metaphors rather than statements, which determine most of our philosophical convictions. The picture which holds traditional philosophy captive is that of the mind as a great mirror, containing various representations -- some accurate, some not -- and capable of being studied by pure, non-empirical methods."⁴¹ The self is thus defined in dualistic terms: as a being whose essence is freedom from constraint, and at the same time as a being whose essence is the commitment to achieve still clearer and more certain pictures of reality.⁴² Kant is able to draw together both idealistic-coherence, and empiricist-convergent models of truth. Empirical phenomena are taken up into rational analysis, a process that does not threaten human freedom.

The history of western philosophy since Kant may be read as the story of various attempts to obtain a correct balance between the subjectivity of human freedom, and the objectivity of the rational demands of the external world; in Kantian terms, the balance between noumena and phenomena. The British empirical tradition, not surprisingly put its weight behind the latter: the linguistic realm of freedom and value, threatened by the reduction to simple meaninglessness by logical positivism, being rescued by the *Tractatus*, albeit at the cost of eternal silence. The continental idealistic tradition turned, in contrast, to the phenomenological existential tradition, concerned with the legitimation of the subjective self in the face of naturalism. The early optimism of Husserl's phenomenology gave way to the tragic vision of

40. cf. Rorty (1980).

41. Ibid. p. 17.

42. "Without the notion of the mind as a mirror, the notion of knowledge as accuracy of representation would not have suggested itself. Without this latter notion, the strategy common to Descartes and Kant -- getting more accurate representations by inspecting, repairing and polishing the mirror so to speak -- would not have made sense", *ibid.* p. 12.

existentialism, with its affirmation of the being of the self only in terms of the threat of non-being, and the resurrection of Descartes' demon in the form of existential angst.

Thus the dualistic legacy of the Enlightenment is held together by the self only at the expense of an ongoing tension between naturalism and its romantic mirror image. Its result was an entire culture grounded in a fundamental distinction between fact and value, science and art, truth and meaning, freedom and constraint. It is to a deeper exploration of this divided culture to which we must now turn.

4. The Displacement of Value

i) The place of the human sciences

If the natural sciences describe external reality, provide the methodology by which the mirror of nature is polished, so to speak, then the place of humanity becomes problematic. If the reality of the self is absorbed within the framework of natural science then human freedom is curtailed by a naturalistic reductionism and becomes pure biological behaviourism.⁴³ Kant's solution, to distinguish between the self as a noumenal rational agent and the self as a mirror of phenomenal nature offered a solution of key importance, but one within which the dualism of fact and value was fundamental.⁴⁴ The development of the *human sciences*, the *Geisteswissenschaften*, in the 19th Century may be read as an attempt to protect the self from the implications of such naturalism.⁴⁵ There was a deep irony in their development: the attempt to preserve human freedom proceeded by adopting the very scientific procedures that served to threaten it.

The implications of this tension between the natural and human sciences is to be found in embryo in the work of Descartes and Locke. In his *Third Discourse* Descartes sets out four maxims which form a provisional moral code which he advocates should be adopted until such time as his programme of systematic doubt

⁴³. See notes 13 and 18 above.

⁴⁴. It achieved a compromise between the demands of idealism and empiricism; cf. Taylor, op. cit. p.367: "Kant did at least manage to give a clear, if fragile, basis in the conception of a noumenal rational agent"; the dualism inherent in the Kantian compromise is at the roots of the contemporary crisis within modernism: "our growing inability to hold on to it creates something like a spiritual crisis in our civilisation" (ibid.).

⁴⁵. The standard, if esoteric, critique is that of Foucault (1970).

has achieved clear ethical results.⁴⁶ This code was never revised, and Descartes fails to produce either an idealistic or naturalistic moral programme: it is fair to say that issues of practical morality were never central to his thought.⁴⁷ A similar tension between morality and emerging modern reality occurs in Locke: whilst the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* suggests that morality is capable of being developed as a science capable of rational demonstration the programme is never worked through.⁴⁸

There is thus from the beginning a hesitancy regarding the place of moral value within the emerging world of logical and empirical facts. As we have seen, the deeper roots of this are to be found in the displacement of categories of value within modern cosmology. It is proposed here to consider the relationship between fact and value from the perspective of aesthetics, rather than the more familiar one of morality: this is because the issue of cognitive value of aesthetic experience is closely linked with that of religious experience, which forms a recurrent theme throughout the thesis.

ii) Aesthetics: the subjectivity of beauty⁴⁹

In the pre-modern world beauty is both rooted in transcendent reality and at the same time open -- at a contingent level -- to humanity. Its status is essentially ontological, and there is no dualistic distinction between the realms of science and aesthetics.⁵⁰

⁴⁶. Descartes, op.cit. pp. 24-30.

⁴⁷. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that this entire section of the *Discourse on Method* was composed as an afterthought, functioning as a manifesto of political orthodoxy, aimed at circumnavigating possible objections from the censor: cf. Sutcliffe (1969).

⁴⁸. Locke (1975) Bk.1, Ch.3, Para.18, pp. 548-550.

⁴⁹. The basic structure of this reading of modernist aesthetics was informed by Gadamer (1979).

⁵⁰. In the *Judaean-Christian tradition* beauty is something bestowed on creation by God, not something with independent existence. It is bound up with the vertical and horizontal lines of transcendence; derived from God's initial and sustaining creation and oriented towards eschatological completion; cf. Von Rad (1962) pp.364ff. In *Plato* the beauty in the world and in works of art are but reflections of the form of beauty itself; "supreme Beauty is being absolute and the source of all participated beauty, cannot be a beautiful thing, and so cannot be material: it must be supersensible and immaterial", Copleston (1985a) p.254. *Augustine* draws on both traditions in developing his Christian aesthetic: "Though God may be Truth, Goodness and Beauty, all intertwined in ineffable unity, we must consent to His mediating His richness to us in a variety of ways", O'Connell (1978) p.49. While *Aquinas* does not produce a formal aesthetic in the manner of Augustine, he asserts that beauty comes from God and is related to reality in proportion to the chain of being; "the beautiful consists, he says, in proportion and belongs to the formal cause", Copleston (1985b) p.422.

Dualism is not immediately apparent in the *systematic classical aesthetic* that was the initial legacy of the Enlightenment. As the shift from a transcendent to an immanent world view led to the -- at least implicit -- divinisation of nature, as itself infinite and all encompassing, so the source of aesthetic value was transferred to nature itself. As such, beauty retained an ontological foundation, but an increasingly tenuous one. Classical aesthetics may be conveniently categorised under five main headings.

i) Whilst aesthetics were never a central concern, nevertheless they were not completely ignored: "art likewise is to be measured and tested by the rules of reason".⁵¹ The reason for the relative subordination of aesthetics lay precisely in the difficulties encountered in enabling art to conform with the strict criteria of reason.⁵²

ii) Aesthetics set out to correlate art and reason. There is no sense here of art revealing new aspects of reality. The ontological groundwork has already been achieved by reason: the problem of aesthetics is thus a second order one of legitimation within the reality discovered by reason. How can art conform to the canons of reason? No longer passive in the reception of the revelatory quality of art's ontological status, the philosopher must rather actively seek to integrate it into an already existing system.⁵³

iii) The process of correlation and integration is achieved through a concept of art as the imitation of idealised nature. Art that is good and true is that which reflects the ordered and rational patterns that science has discovered in nature.⁵⁴

iv) It follows from this that it is the classical *form* of art that becomes the central concern, and artistic form reflects nature through the application of *formal rules*. A true artist is one who conforms to the rules of his or her discipline, a poor

⁵¹. Cassirer, op.cit. p.279; contra Bosanquet (1934) p.167, arguing for "the intermission of aesthetic philosophy.....from the time of Plotinus to the eighteenth century of our era".

⁵². Thus it is perhaps significant that, while Descartes has little time for aesthetics in general, he nevertheless contributes a monograph on music, precisely because of the mathematical roots of that art: Descartes (1961).

⁵³. "A correlation is now sought between the content of philosophy and that of art; and an affinity is maintained which appears at first to be too dimly felt for expression in precise and definite concepts", Cassirer op.cit. p.276.

⁵⁴. cf. Chambers (1932) p.80: "the proportions of the human figure and the proportions of the architectural order are both reducible to a regulated mathematical system".

artist is one unable, or unwilling, to submit to such ordered conventions.⁵⁵

v) Classical aesthetics had no concept of genius, understood in terms of creative originality. Individuality is to be repressed; artistic creation is an act of conformity to nature.⁵⁶ "Hence classicism is an eminently logical system, which scorns the waywardness of unschooled genius, values reason above imagination and knowledge above persons."⁵⁷

Thus, while classical aesthetics set out to combine reality and artistic value through a concept of the imitation of nature, the tensions between art and science, and the problem of the ontology of art, were already present.

The emergence of romantic aesthetics acknowledged this reality: it represented the polarization, rather than convergence, of art and science. Romanticism proceeded as the mirror image of rationalism. The subject-object dualism was invoked precisely to protect art from its subservient role within classicism. Romanticism thus replaced the classical categories of criticism, reason and nature with those of taste, imagination and inspiration, in the process setting out to "discover heights and depths of the human spirit that the older philosophy had hardly dared dream of".⁵⁸ The Beethoven of the late quartets replaces Mozart, Blake replaces Milton: in romanticism "the value and charm of aesthetic appreciation do not lie in precision and distinctness but in the wealth of associations which such appreciation comprises".⁵⁹ Rooted in the work of Rousseau, romanticism follows Hume and Kant in their subjective turn, but replaces the latter's rationalism with a mythological irrationalism.⁶⁰ "The concept

⁵⁵. Coleman (1971) p.52: "Aesthetic rules, unlike the laws of physics, can be obeyed or disobeyed. One is simply governed by the laws of one's machine and by the laws of the universe. But aesthetic laws can be broken willfully -- (by an act of flagrant bad taste or by the rights of genius), or non voluntarily (by negligence or simple ignorance)."

⁵⁶. The implicit choice here is between "either a reasonable life according to causal laws, of general truth in harmony with observed phenomena, or a life that will respond to its moral and hedonistic requirements", Bosanquet, *op.cit.* pp.172ff.; the latter option leads, within classicism, only to bad taste and false art, to an inability to mirror reality.

⁵⁷. Chambers, *op.cit.* p.80.

⁵⁸. *Ibid.* p.163.

⁵⁹. Cassirer, *op.cit.* p.300.

⁶⁰. Hume argues that "beauty is no quality of things in themselves: it exists merely in the mind which contemplates them, and each person perceives a different beauty", Hume (1898) p.268; cf. Cassirer *op.cit.* p.307.

nature has now undergone a characteristic change of meaning. For the nature of things (*natura rerum*), to which aesthetic objectivism had been orientated, is no longer the guiding star, it has now been superseded by the nature of man."⁶¹ A number of consequences of this subjective turn may be highlighted.

i) The criteria for interpreting art, or apprehending beauty, is no longer that of rational criticism but that of subjective taste. Nahm has shown how for Kant distinguishing beauty is placed on the same level as distinguishing good food; there is no external criteria, merely the internal criteria of individual preference: "I try the dish with my own tongue and palate, and I pass judgement according to their verdict, not according to universal principles."⁶² The distinction had already been made by Batteux in the 18th Century: "Intelligence considers what things are in themselves, according to their essence, without any relation to ourselves. Taste, on the contrary, occupies itself solely with objects as they are related to ourselves."⁶³

ii) Linked with the subjectivity of taste is the emergence of the concept of genius. No longer must the artist conform to the 'rules of nature', in its place is to be found a creative emancipation, the freedom for creativity grounded in immediate experience. Shaftesbury placed the issue of genius high on the romantic agenda: "he deliberately raises the concept of genius above the realm of mere sensation and evaluation, above the sphere of propriety, sentiment, delicacy (*justesse*, *sentiment*, *delicatesse*), and reserves it entirely for the productive, formative, creative forces".⁶⁴

iii) It follows from this that art and beauty become relative to the individual, in effect losing contact with external reality and abdicating any claim to ontological truth. The gulf between objective reality and subjective experience, with its roots in the image of the dislocated self, has thus led to a fundamental distinction between scientific fact and aesthetic value. As Cassirer put the matter, "all value judgements as such are concerned not with the thing itself and its absolute nature.....all sentiment is right; because sentiment has a reference to nothing beyond itself, and is always real, whenever a man is conscious of it".⁶⁵

⁶¹. Cassirer, op.cit. p.298.

⁶². Nahm (1975) p.326.

⁶³. Quoted in Coleman, op.cit. p.23.

⁶⁴. Cassirer, op.cit. p.318.

⁶⁵. Ibid. pp.306ff.

Thus the dualistic sub-structures of enlightenment dislocate the realm of value from any transcendent, naturalistic or idealistic ontological reference. Rather value, as romantic value, floats free within the subjective experience of the self. Aesthetic truth is that which is immediately apprehended internally, of a fundamentally different order to that of objective empirical reality. In the light of the threat of naturalistic reduction of the self from the latter, western thought came to place central value on the subjective arts as an effective and necessary counter to objective science. The battle between the two realms was embedded in a dualism within educational structures. In so far as romanticism pushed its battle with scientific philistinism to extremes it was faced with a claim to knowledge that was essentially gnostic: the scientist is blind because unable to penetrate the depth of artistic experience. Stories in similar forms came to form the bedrock of modernist culture, identifiable through the tension between science and value. It was liberalism that enabled this tension to be held together in a creative compromise.

5. The Liberal Compromise

i) Value and reality

The working through of the implications of the polarities of western dualism outlined above culminated in logical positivism. Here was mapped out a model of reality that brought the legacy of the Enlightenment into its final, most basic form. Verification claimed to be able to draw a dividing line between those statements that converged with external objective reality, and those that were reduced to meaningless, internal, subjective speculation.⁶⁶ The demand for certainty itself became an epistemological principle, reality had to conform to the boundaries of human ways of knowing.⁶⁷ The crucial qualification that must be made of this positivist position is that, within romanticism, unverifiable expressions of mere subjective speculation were given a positive value, functioning to draw humanity towards the heart of what is of ultimate importance. The romantic impulse remained essentially gnostic in that, given a

⁶⁶. Thus Ayer, op.cit. p.136: "in so far as statements of value are significant, they are ordinary 'scientific' statements.....in so far as they are not scientific, they are not in the literal sense significant, but are simply expressions of emotion that can be neither true nor false".

⁶⁷. Macquarrie (1971) p.95: "the champions of such claims were able to point to the relatively secure and unanimous findings of the sciences as compared with the uncertain and conflicting speculations of metaphysicians and theologians".

convergent model of truth, such value statements had no cognitive reality, no ontological grounding.

Expressed in this form, dualism leaves unanswered a major pragmatic problem. While the Enlightenment gave birth to secularization and the possibility of an objective immanent picture of external reality, it also paved the way, via the subjective romantic impulse, for the emergence of cultural pluralism, the result of the emancipation/dislocation of the self from the authority of a specific cultural tradition. How were the pragmatics of subjective freedom to be reconciled to the objective claims of scientific knowledge?

Positivism gave a clear, anti-romantic, answer to this question in the primacy of scientific statement: freedom of belief, when torn apart from the demands of scientific knowledge, becomes a meaningless and illegitimate misuse of freedom, a relic from a superstitious age that must be outgrown.⁶⁸ This response, however, does not form the mainstream of western response to the problem. This is rather to be found in the tradition of western liberalism that can be traced back to Locke. This tradition is best read as a pragmatic compromise between the claims of objective scientific reason and those of subjective humanistic freedom.

ii) Locke: the emergence of liberalism

Western liberalism is rooted in three key principles: of reason, understood in terms of scientific rationality; of individual autonomy, understood in terms of the freedom of belief; and that of tolerance. These principles were given an initial and classic expression by John Locke whose commitment both to enlightened rationalism and christian belief was linked with a practical concern to safeguard the stability and growth of newly emerged bourgeoisie society.⁶⁹

In common with Descartes, Locke was concerned to draw a demarcation line between knowledge and belief, setting out to "lay down the measures and boundaries

⁶⁸. Comte saw positivism as the culmination of a progressive development of humanity, which had been able to escape in turn from theological and metaphysical constructs of reality; cf. above, note 38; "In the theological stage, Comte argued, men explained phenomena by referring them to the arbitrary acts of spiritual beings; in the metaphysical stage, they substitute powers or faculties or essences for spirits; only in the third, positive stage do they come to see that to explain is simply to describe the relations holding between phenomena". Passmore (1968) p.16.

⁶⁹. It is important to note here that Locke's understanding of Christianity was essentially Latitudinarian and had a deep influence on the development of English deism; cf. O'Connor (1952), pp.199f, 211ff, and Mabbott (1973) pp.171ff.

between faith and reason".⁷⁰ His motivation was more pragmatic and socially focused than Descartes' inner battle with anxiety: the lack of a clear demarcation point between faith and reason "may possibly have been the cause, if not of great disorders, yet at least of great disputes, and perhaps mistakes in the world".⁷¹

Demarcation for Locke aimed at the *legitimation of belief*. He was acutely aware, and accepting, of the limitations of human reason: "the limits of human knowledge are so narrow and the probability of error on speculative matters so great that we can never know for certain that our religious opinions are correct and all others false and heretical".⁷² The legitimation of belief, within limits, was demanded both by reason, by the claims of human autonomy, and by the needs of society.⁷³

Thus Locke puts his weight behind the importance and necessity of freedom of belief. However, such freedom must have its limits if the religious enthusiast and fanatic is not to lead society into anarchy and depravity.⁷⁴ i) Beliefs may only be held if they do not come into conflict with reason; if not yet demonstrable by reason, they must at least not contradict it.⁷⁵ ii) Beliefs may only be held if they do not threaten the stability of society.⁷⁶ Thus freedom entails the demand for toleration, which must be extended to all beliefs that are reasonable and do not threaten to deprave society. In effect freedom and toleration are offered to beliefs that are essentially private, subjective, internal. "The argument turns on the conception of 'indifferent' matters.....these are matters on which there is no prescription (for or against) by natural law or by divine law."⁷⁷ In essence the religious believer is free to practise his

70. Locke, op.cit. Bk.4, Ch.18, Para.1, p.688. I have modernised Locke's style in all quotations.

71. Ibid.

72. O'Connor, op.cit. p.212.

73. Mabbott, op.cit. p.183, refers to "Locke's increasing awareness that reason cannot establish religious truth and that variations in religious belief in different parts of the world form the main ground for religious tolerance".

74. Locke, op.cit. Bk.4, Ch.19, Paras. 1-16, pp.697-706; cf. Spellman (1988).

75. Ibid. Bk.4, Ch.18, Para.5, p.692: "no Proposition can be received for Divine Revelation, or obtain the Assent due to all such, if it be contradictory to our clear intuitive knowledge".

76. O'Connor, op.cit. p.213: "The civil magistrates have the right to interfere in religious matters if the practices of any sect are unlawful in the ordinary course of life.....[that is].....contrary to human society or to those moral rules which are necessary to the preservation of civil society."

77. Mabbott, op.cit. p.172.

or her religion in a private capacity, but as soon as the implications of this practice are applied to the public sphere, toleration depends not on the internal principles of that religion, but on the demands of modernist understandings of reason and morality.

iii) The poverty of liberalism

While the value of Locke's advocacy of toleration must be accepted as constituting an enormous advance for humanity,⁷⁸ nevertheless the liberal framework on which such tolerance was grounded may be seen as being fundamentally flawed.

In order to substantiate this claim we will turn to the thought of a modern philosopher who stands firmly in the tradition of western liberalism. Karl Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies*⁷⁹ was first published in 1945 at a time when the tradition of western liberalism was under threat from the totalitarian systems of National Socialism and Stalinism. Popper's epistemology had earlier offered a weakened form of the positivistic principle of verification as a means of distinguishing truth from falsehood. His principle of refutability had argued that "a hypothesis is 'scientific'.....if and only if it is possible in principle to refute it".⁸⁰ He thus distinguished between genuine science and 'pseudo-science'.⁸¹

On this epistemological basis Popper advocates "tolerance towards all who are not intolerant and do not propagate intolerance. This implies, especially, that the moral decisions of others should be treated with respect, as long as such decisions do not conflict with the principles of tolerance."⁸² This leads Popper on to refer to the 'paradox of tolerance': unlimited tolerance leads to the disappearance of tolerance, "it may easily turn out that they [the intolerant] are not willing to meet us on the level of rational argument.....we should therefore claim, in the name of tolerance, the right not to tolerate the intolerant".⁸³ In extreme cases such intolerance of intolerance may demand suppression and even force.

78. Especially seen in the light of centuries of Christian intolerance and persecution of fellow Christians deemed unorthodox or heretical, of Muslim 'infidels', and above all the European Jewish communities.

79. Popper (1966).

80. Passmore, op.cit. p.406.

81. Examples of the latter being astrology and Marxism.

82. Popper, op.cit. p.235.

83. Ibid. p.265.

Popper's defence of tolerance is linked closely with his distinction between 'closed' and 'open' societies. Modernity marks "the transition from the tribal 'closed society', with its submission to magical forces, to the 'open society' which sets free the critical powers of man".⁸⁴ A closed society holds beliefs that are not, in principle, refutable nor open to reason, "it lives in a charmed circle of unchanging taboos, of laws and customs which are felt to be as inevitable as the rising of the sun, or the cycle of the seasons".⁸⁵ Such societies would include Marxist, Christian and Islamic ones. In contrast an open society "is one in which men have learned to be to some extent critical of taboos, and to base decisions on the authority of their own intelligence".⁸⁶ In other words, the open society is identified with that of modern western liberalism.

Alasdair MacIntyre has taken issue with Popper and the tradition of western liberalism.⁸⁷ If a society is genuinely open then by definition it must allow its very foundational principles to be questioned, yet liberalism chooses instead to affirm a paternalistic form of tolerance. Fundamental disagreements concerning both morality and ontology exist -- this is simply an entailment of pluralism -- yet "the facts of disagreement themselves frequently go unacknowledged, disguised by a rhetoric of consensus."⁸⁸

"It was a central aspiration of the Enlightenment, an aspiration the formulation of which was itself a great achievement, to provide for debate in the public realm standards and methods of rational justification by which alternative courses of action in every sphere of life could be adjudged just or unjust, rational or irrational, enlightened or unenlightened. So, it was hoped, reason would replace authority and tradition. Rational justification was to appeal to principles undeniable by any rational person and therefore independent of all those social and cultural particularities which the Enlightenment thinkers took to be the mere accidental clothing of reason in particular times and places. And that rational justification could be nothing other than what the thinkers of the Enlightenment had said that it came to be accepted, at least by the vast majority of educated people, in post-Enlightenment cultural and social orders."⁸⁹

MacIntyre's claim here is that liberal modernism had itself become a tradition, one that closed its particular concept of rationality from further scrutiny. In effect the questioning of the enlightened sub-structures had itself become taboo. Western liberalism, within Popper's own definition, itself appears as a closed society, one in

84. Ibid. p.1.

85. Ibid. p.57.

86. Ibid. p.202.

87. MacIntyre (1985) pp.93f, cf. MacIntyre (1967), (1988); cf. McMylor (1994).

88. MacIntyre (1988) p.2.

89. Ibid. p.6.

which the formalism of the underlying polarities of dualism is not open to question. The ideals of rationality, autonomy and toleration are worked into a coherent, but essentially closed, system. "Initially the liberal claim was to provide a political, legal and economic framework in which assent to one and the same set of rationally justifiable principles would enable those who espouse widely different and incompatible conceptions of the good life for human beings to live together peaceably within the same society."⁹⁰ However, to do so required the acceptance of western canons of rationality if subjective belief was to be allowed to play any role in the public sphere.⁹¹

The Enlightenment sub-structures thus form a unified world view, a closed society, holding together the tension between objectivity and the romantic subjective mirror image, and allowing non-modern culture and religion a resting place within it provided it is on modernism's own terms. Religious belief involves pre-modern ontology, in a plurality of forms. Clearly the question of the relationship of modernism and religious belief will be a crucial one in the context of religious education, and it is to this agenda that we now must turn.

90. Ibid. p.335f.

91. Ibid. p.336: "Every individual is to be equally free to propose and to live by whatever conception of the good he or she pleases, derived from whatever theory or tradition he or she may adhere to, unless that conception of the good involves reshaping the life of the rest of the community in accordance with it."

Chapter Two

The Emergence of Religious Liberalism

Chapter Two considers the nature of religious and theological understanding within the contours of modernism: i) a typology of the relationship between faith and modernism is proposed, distinguishing the paths of assimilation, accommodation and isolation; ii) the failure of deism to establish religious faith within modernism resulted in a polarization of atheistic assimilation and fideistic isolation; iii) the subjectivism inherent in Kant's philosophy, together with the broad romantic movement, laid the groundwork for a process of accommodation; iv) this resulted in a liberal experiential-expressive model of religion; v) a critique of this model questions its ability to achieve an accommodation with modernism without undercutting the integrity of the realistic claims of religion.

1. Introduction: Theology and the Modernist Legacy

That the Enlightenment posed a fundamental challenge to religious belief is readily apparent. Our aim here is to develop a picture of the precise nature of this challenge, and of the various responses to it. There can be little doubt that the emancipation from Christian tradition and clerical authority, in the name of autonomy and the freedom of the rational self, unleashed the twin movements of secularism and cultural pluralism. Theological reflection on modernism -- in so far as it chose to reject any retreat into sectarianism -- was forced to respond to this challenge: "we must accept our lot,

bequeathed to us by the Enlightenment, and make the most of it".¹ Houlden's words here are ambiguous: are they to be read in a tone of resignation or of enthusiasm? Has post-Enlightenment theology to merely fight a rearguard action, or does modernism present it with opportunities of growth through critical interaction?

In order to begin to answer these questions it is -- at a first glance -- tempting to draw on the concept of a paradigm shift from scholastic-Christian to modern-humanistic world views: Kuhn's model of development within the philosophy of science, it could be argued, may be applied to the process of the replacement of one cultural and intellectual model of reality by another.² However, Kuhn's doctrine of incommensurability -- of a radical distinction between paradigms making substantial communication between them impossible -- has the effect of imposing a premature closure of the debate concerning the interaction of theology and modernism. From a rational standpoint such a paradigm shift serves to reinforce the notion of religion being in essence superstition: both the vestiges of religion at common, folk, and civic levels, and the existence of closed fideistic religious communities, are here read as being merely the dying remnants of a past age. The transcendent Christian vision is being replaced by a new paradigm, that of the immanent rational vision of the Enlightenment. Under these circumstance any conversation with religion is ultimately irrelevant. From a theological perspective, the turn to such a model allows theology to justify itself without the need to engage in dialogue with modernism. The relativity implicit in the notion of paradigm shifts -- the fact that modernism itself is no more than a paradigm -- allows for a crude form of religious apologetic that proceeds to justify belief precisely on the grounds of incommensurability. The result is that both Christianity and modernism are free to go their own separate ways: each convinced that they possess the correct paradigm, each equally convinced of the futility of conversation with a paradigm that is fundamentally flawed.

Tempting as this approach is for the lazy and fearful, the reality is that it fails to do justice to the complexity of the interface between religion and modernism. The sociology of knowledge has shown that cultural and intellectual change is too vital and sophisticated a phenomena, more deeply entrenched within individual and group constructions of reality, for a simplistic model of a paradigm shift to do justice to the complexity of the situation.³

1. Houlden (1977) p.125.

2. Kuhn (1970a).

3. cf. eg. Luckmann (1967).

Gunton has argued against the thesis of a radical break between modernity and the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and in defence of a fundamental continuity between the two: theological issues grappled with by the early church are actually repeated over again in the modern age.⁴

Following Gunton's suggestion, the history of the early church's relationship with Judaism and Hellenism provides us with a more satisfactory interpretative framework with which to approach the interface between theology and modernism. As the first Christian theologians sought to understand, develop and articulate their faith in relation to the culture of the ancient world three dangers became of paramount concern: i) the danger of *assimilation*, in which Christianity might collapse back into Judaism, or out into Hellenism, in the process losing its specific identity and becoming yet another Jewish or Hellenistic cult; ii) the danger of *accomodation* in which Christianity could retain its identity, but only at the expense of allowing Hellenistic culture to define the frame of reference in which it was free to work and as a result importing a reductive impulse and loss of integrity; iii) the danger of *isolation*, in which Christianity could retain its identity, defined by its own frame of reference, but only at the expense of a process of radical privatisation, in which its universal claims became available only for the initiated.⁵

It is proposed to utilize this typology of the relationship of the early church to culture by applying it to the conflict between modern critical philosophy and Christianity: i) *assimilation* thus comes to refer to the possibility of Christianity collapsing into an acceptance of the main thrust of the conclusions of modernism, this is the path of atheism;⁶ ii) *accomodation* then becomes Christianity's redefinition of itself within the framework of modernity, this is the path of religious liberalism;⁷

4. Gunton (1983); cf. also Gunton (1985) and (1991).

5. From this position the emergence of a formative Christian theology in St Paul, and its development through Irenaeus and the Church Fathers may be seen as a struggle – via interaction with Judaism and Hellenism – for the establishment of Christian identity.

6. Assimilation may thus be distinguished from external rejections of Christianity. Buckley outlines the process of assimilation: attempts to ground Christian theology in a natural theology dislocated from revelation produced a fundamental alienation within Christianity itself; the theological substance of Christian faith was separated out from its new philosophical form; it was from this tension that modern atheism grew (Buckley, 1987). Note that the Enlightenment's scepticism towards religion, understood here as an external attack, was already in existence.

7. The fundamental difference between assimilation and accomodation is that the former comes to reject religious belief and embrace atheism, while the latter retains some form of belief within the modernist framework. It will, however, be argued below that, in many cases, the accomodation achieved by theological liberalism actually produced an atheistic substance in the form of both

iii) *isolation* now refers to Christianity's radical rejection of the Enlightenment legacy through a process of privatisation, opening up the path to theological fideism, and from thence to fundamentalism.⁸

Cochrane has argued that the triumph of Christianity over classical culture came about because, through avoiding these dangers, a fourth possibility was opened up, in which a bankrupt classicism was both undermined and transcended: "in face of the contradictions inherent in the classical tradition, the great Christian theologians developed a view of the world and of human society which formed a victorious alternative to classicism. Historically, that is to say, Christianity conquered, particularly in the west, because in certain respects it proved itself intellectually superior to a bankrupt alternative."⁹ The truth of this thesis is not at present an issue; what is, is the suggestion of the possibility of the production of a Christian model of reality that might transcend the intellectual limitations of modernism, so going beyond the possibilities of assimilation, accommodation and isolation in a process of creative transformation: this issue will be taken up in the third part of the present thesis. For now our concern is with the former three alternatives.

implicit and explicit anti-realistic theological statements. That is to say, the fundamental dynamic of programmes of accommodation within modernism is the thrust towards assimilation.

8. 'Fideism' is used here to refer to theological programmes that set out explicitly to ground themselves in a framework apart from that of modernism. Its Protestant origin retains the implication that such a grounding is rooted in individual faith and religious experience. As utilized in the present context the phrase seeks to embody a broader reference embracing, for example, Catholic reactions to modernism. Thus the theology of the First Vatican Council, in so far as it grounded Christianity in a scholastic (explicitly Thomistic) philosophy linked with Papal authority, may be referred to as fideistic. This opens out two further issues: i) the intellectual integrity of such fideistic programmes, in the light of the emergence of fundamentalistic stances that clearly lacked the academic claims to authority put forward by Thomistic and Barthian programmes; and ii) the relationship between fideism, fundamentalism and sociological developments, of great significance in so far as fundamentalist, and to a lesser extent fideistic, responses to the challenge of modernism utilized the social context as part of their defensive strategy. There is no space to unpack these issues here. It is intended to set on one side sociological issues and focus on the purely intellectual context: 'fideism' will be used to refer to programmes of isolation that may possibly lay claim to a level of intellectual integrity beyond the modernist framework, whilst 'fundamentalism' will refer to programmes of isolation that clearly fail to achieve any level of intellectual integrity. A useful rule of thumb here is to note the tendency of 'fundamentalism' to utilize the modernist agenda in its apologetics: for example in the reading of the Genesis creation myths as scientific literature.

9. Cochrane (1944), quoted in Gunton (1983) p.1; cf. also Butterfield (1949), and the critique of his position by Murray (1953).



2. Dualism and the Collapse of Deism

i) Cosmology: transcendence and immanence

A key feature of the Enlightenment was the emergence of a new cosmology: the transcendent reality of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, extending beyond the world of space and time, was replaced by an immanent reality, entirely encompassed by the nexus of spatio-temporal relations.

The Judaeo-Christian paradigm of reality was theocentric, transcendence was understood in terms of a creator God, and described in terms of spatial and temporal metaphors. A horizontal-temporal line looked back in time towards creation and forwards towards the eschaton. Along this plane God is to be seen both as transcendent creator and judge, behind and beyond the reality of the created world, and yet also providentially interacting with it. A vertical-spatial line looked upwards towards God as holy, standing over and above fallen humanity and fallen creation. At the opposite end of this vertical line to God is to be found Sheol, the place where God is absent. The mainstream orthodox Christian theological tradition, in particular its Trinitarian and incarnational doctrine, may be read as an exploration of the implications of these metaphors of transcendence in the light of historical revelation.

By contrast the Greek concept of transcendence lacked a theistic focal point. A key result is that there exists no concept of transcendence along the horizontal-temporal line. The contingent events within the physical world are not part of God's creation and providence. History thus lacks any teleological focus: the changeable nature of temporal reality, linked as it was with a cyclical view of time, denied the possibility of meaning being discovered within history itself.¹⁰

The scholastic synthesis of Aristotelian and Christian philosophy brought about a twofold reduction in the Patristic understanding of transcendence.¹¹ i) There

¹⁰. The denial of any possible meaning along the horizontal-temporal plane meant that in the classical world truth must always be static, never subject to change, beyond historical contingency; transcendence for the Greeks is always through the vertical-spatial line, the classic example being Plato's doctrine of the 'forms'; This, as will be seen, was to have far reaching implications for the Christian understanding of God.

¹¹. This synthesis was brought about via Augustine's Christianised Platonism, which struggled to reconcile the contrasting horizontal and vertical models of transcendence. The tension between Judaeo-Christian and classical tradition is transparent throughout his mature work, as is his struggle to reconcile them. This reaches a focal point in his treatment of time, where he deals with the classical denial, and orthodox affirmation of horizontal-temporal transcendence. In *Book Two* of the *Confessions* he achieves a solution by making time itself part of creation (Augustine, 1961). It is illegitimate to ask what God was doing before creation, because before creation time itself did not exist. The result is that the 'everlasting' God of the Judaeo-Christian tradition is

is an affirmation of the primacy of vertical-spatial metaphors of transcendence. The God of Aquinas is essentially static, and the God who acts in the incarnation stands uneasily in this system.¹² ii) Within the spatial metaphor the relationship between humanity and God is no longer a dualistic one, it is described rather in terms of one continuous chain of being.

The reductionism inherent in the medieval synthesis opened the door to modernism's view of reality as entirely immanent. If medieval cosmology had paved the way for this transition, it was the discoveries of the astronomers of the Enlightenment that gave a final impetus to the rejection of transcendence. Copernicus developed a heliocentric model of the universe and this was substantiated by Kepler's discovery of the laws of planetary motion. Thus the door was open for Galileo and Newton, and modern pre-Einsteinian cosmology was born. If the sun is the centre of our solar system, then the scholastic cosmology is undermined at its foundations. Reality could "no longer be comprehended within the clearly defined scheme which classical cosmology possessed....in Aristotle's hierarchical cosmos".¹³

What is rejected is a model of the world as a closed hierarchy of being, a world in which fact and value are one and the same. The Aristotelian notion that the motion of an object tends towards its finding its natural place in the order of being, linked as it was with concepts of harmony and purpose, is lost. Instead the world can

transformed into an 'eternal', 'timeless' God who works providentially within time. This affirmation of classical transcendence was tempered by the simultaneous reaffirmation of horizontal-temporal transcendence: while God essentially stands above and beyond the contingencies of time and space, nevertheless, it is precisely within the latter that he is to be known. Ultimately it is Augustine's doctrine of grace and incarnation and its consequence in the epistemological centrality of revelation within history that predominates. "The Greek philosophers tended to think of human history in terms of recurrent cycles. Augustine, however, was convinced that history has a goal, that it is a teleological process which moves towards an end, even if the end or goal is not fully attained within the historical process itself" (Copleston, 1972, p.43). See Augustine (1979) for his classic study of the temporal process in relation to transcendence in the form of a Christian philosophy of history; cf. also Augustine (1961) for his account of his own spiritual development within such a Christian history.

12. This fact is illuminated by Dante (1949): the *Divine Comedy* parallels the thought of Aquinas, and stands in sharp contrast with Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*; while the categories of the latter focus on the horizontal-temporal line, those of the former come to rest on the vertical-spatial plane, describing the path upwards from Hell, through Purgatory to Paradise. Thus *De Civitate Dei* ends with a vision of an everlasting city, in which the saved are citizens of heaven, while the *Divine Comedy* ends with the hope of the static beatific vision, in the eternal contemplation of divinity; cf. Augustine (1979) Bk.22, Chs. 29f, pp.507ff, Dante, op.cit. Canto 21, lines 82-87, p.243.

13. Cassirer, op.cit. p.37.

be described in terms of the value free disciplines of mathematics and geometry. It is this that marked the final stage towards a model of immanence. If the motion of the planets is now best described in mathematical rather than ethical language, a teleology of temporal-spatial relationships gives way to a notion of the purposeless infinity of space and time. Objects are best described in terms of their relationships with one another, not their relationships in the closed order of being and thus with God. Time and space are no longer relative to God, they are infinite; the universe itself is infinite: time and space go on for ever, in exactly the same way that a mathematical sequence may be extended into infinity. This open universe possesses nothing beyond it. Neither the vertical-spatial metaphor, nor the horizontal-temporal metaphor can point to a transcendence beyond infinity.

This immanent cosmology did not lead directly to atheism, but if the attributes of infinity previously predicated of God are now referred to the open universe of absolute space and time, then clearly the relationship between God and the universe becomes problematical.¹⁴

ii) Deism and the impasse of natural theology

In the face of the challenge of this new cosmology the need to clarify the

¹⁴. Two options immediately offer themselves in this situation. i) God remains transcendent, beyond the infinite universe. The strain put on language here reveals the inherent problem. If God stands beyond a universe that can be adequately explained through the constructs of natural science, what then is his role and purpose? How can God and the universe both be infinite substance? The solution offered was that of deism: God is the divine watchmaker who creates an infinity of time and space and, because he is no longer a necessary postulate for the scientist, leaves nature to work on its own. God here becomes no more than a hypothesis that in the end, with the collapse of natural theology and the rise of evolutionary theory, is no longer necessary to explain the universe and the existence of life. Thus the path from deism to atheism may be read as the logical conclusion of the triumph of immanent over transcendent views of reality. ii) The second alternative was to place God within the infinite universe of space and time itself. The path was taken explicitly in Spinoza's monism, and at least implicitly in the development of absolute idealism out of rationalism. Cassirer comments: "Nature is more than real creation; it participates in original divine essence because the divine power pervades nature itself. The dualism between creator and creation is thus abolished. Nature as that which is moved is no longer set over against the divine mover; it is now an original formative principle which moves from within. Through its capacity to unfold and take on form from within itself, nature bears the stamp of the divine. For God is not to be conceived as a force intervening from without and exerting its influence as a moving cause on matter foreign to itself" (op.cit. pp.40f). Again, we find language being strained to breaking point. If God is no longer transcendent but identical with immanent reality, then God and the universe are one substance, in which case the language of God becomes superfluous in the face of the superior explanatory power of scientific discourse. The simplest step is to abandon the language of theism, and hence accept that of atheism. In which case we come face to face again with the logical conclusion of the triumph of immanence over transcendence.

foundations and justification of religious belief became urgent. The majority of philosophers in the first stage of the Enlightenment retained for themselves the title 'Christian'. They could not however appeal to history and tradition, to the authority of church and scripture; rather they were thrown back to a starting point in autonomous reason. They turned to natural theology, using the scholastic model as their source. No use could be made of the scholastic tradition of revealed theology, since that which is revealed through the contingent and accidental truths of history could never claim the rational certainty offered by natural theology.

In turning to natural theology, specifically the traditional *arguments for the existence of God*,¹⁵ the philosophers failed to appreciate that in the process of tearing them from their original context in order to appropriate them to the new intellectual climate, they actually brought about a transformation in their nature and function. As Torrance argues, scholasticism in its marriage of natural and revealed theology "did succeed in connecting theological and scientific concepts in such a way that theology and science shared together in the developing understanding of a rationally ordered universe".¹⁶ Scholasticism took for granted God's existence, the possibility of atheism was simply not on the agenda.¹⁷ In scholasticism the so-called proofs functioned not as a demonstration of God's existence, but as part of a struggle towards a correct understanding of the nature of God. Natural theology thus functioned in the medieval period in the context of 'faith seeking understanding'.

With the collapse of scholasticism, faith could no longer be assumed, its monism was replaced by radical dualisms, both between self and world and between world and God. Torrance has shown how, in the context of dualism, natural theology is transformed by the need to create a logical bridge between God and the world.¹⁸ What can no longer be taken for granted must be demonstrated on the basis of human reason: thus *faith seeking understanding* is transformed into *understanding seeking*

15. Or *Proofs of the existence of God*: both phrases are the product of the modern academic discipline of the philosophy of religion; proof and argument are correlated with the methods of scientific investigation associated with Newton; in contrast Aquinas' demonstrations are correlated with faith and revealed theology: "The existence of God and other like truths about God, which can be known by natural reason, are not articles of faith, but are preambles to the articles; for faith presupposes natural knowledge, even as grace presupposes nature, and perfection supposes something that can be perfected", Aquinas (1920) Pt.1, Q.2, Art. 2. p.23.

16. Torrance (1980) p.22.

17. cf. Jungel (1983) pp.49ff. Placing the issue in a broader context he argues: "the question about where God is, is found in the Bible primarily in the Old Testament. There it has only marginally to do with atheism, if at all.....the biblical question, 'where is God?', finds its proper *Sitz im Leben* in the struggle for the *right* God", p.50.

18. Torrance, op.cit. pp. 75-109.

faith.¹⁹

This new context for natural theology gave birth to the traditional attempts to demonstrate God's existence on the basis of human reason alone. The classic form of the rationalist proof, arguing from the mind directly to God is to be found in the ontological argument, appropriated from Anselm and revised in turn by Descartes, Leibnitz and Hegel. The empiricists, in contrast, sought to move from the external empirical world to God, drawing on Aquinas' cosmological, teleological and design arguments. What these arguments set out to achieve was a rational foundation for religious belief. Their function was to attempt to justify the viability of religious belief in the new cultural context: to achieve this, theological authority must be replaced by autonomous reason, belief grounded in knowledge, faith provided with rational certainty. Their failure, to which we must now turn, opened the door to the development of religious liberalism.

iii) The critique of deism

a) *The philosophical critique*.²⁰ This rejection can be seen to be operating on two levels. On the primary level the arguments are rejected simply because they fail

19. Such a reading is reinforced by the fact that Barth's theological method, despite its rejection of natural theology, is in fact grounded upon Anselm's ontological 'argument', Barth (1975); cf. here Torrance, *op.cit.*, on Barth, pp.87-95, and on Anselm, pp.99f. The question of the relationship between faith and understanding is linked with two substantial issues: i) the adequacy of human reason to comprehend reality, and ii) the relationship of reason and tradition. Descartes assumed a positive response to the first issue and hence placed the authority of reason over that of tradition, with the consequence that understanding must seek faith, and the latter must conform to the boundaries of the former. Critical realism, by contrast, recovers the substance of pre-modern epistemology, accepting the limitations of human reason in the face of *being* and hence grounding the possibility of understanding within an ongoing, critically assimilated, tradition. For Christianity, such a tradition is given substantial form by historical revelation. cf. further: Kretzmann (1990), for a theological perspective on the debate; Gadamer's case for the necessity of tradition for all understanding (Gadamer, 1979); and Ricoeur's rejection of the possibility of any ultimate understanding of reality, given the limitations of human nature, grounded in his assimilation of Heidegger's critique of Descartes' failure to address directly the fundamental problem of being (Ricoeur, 1974, pp.223ff, Heidegger, 1962).

20. The fundamental criticisms of the 'proofs' from a philosophical basis, classically stated in the work of Hume and Kant, are generally accepted in most modern text books in the philosophy of religion, cf. eg. Mackie (1982). Their radical application of the axioms of critical philosophy offer no path from reason to belief and serve to illuminate the false start of the deistic answer to the relationship between the two systems. Note however the ongoing defence of natural theology by Swinburn (1977), (1979).

in their intention: natural theology simply fails to offer proof of God's existence.²¹ However, the strength of such criticism derives from a secondary level, which serves to deny a priori the possibility of a path from reason to God. The possibility of transcendent knowledge, beyond the limits of space and time, is impossible. Hume laid the grounds for this move in the sceptical turn he took in his reading of Locke's empiricism. Our knowledge of the external world is limited by independent packages of sensory data; this data has meaning placed upon it by the subjective mind, which has no way of demonstrating any objective reference. Thus even the fundamental concept of causality is derived not from objective experience but from human psychology.²² It follows that if such scepticism concerning the external world is an inevitability, then knowledge of a transcendent world becomes practically impossible.²³

Kant built on Hume's subjective empiricism by relating it to the continental rationalist tradition. He distinguishes between *things in themselves* (noumena) and *things as they appear to the perceiver* (phenomena). Rational knowledge must be content with the latter since there is no possibility of a path to the former: all knowledge is knowledge as it appears to the observer. Further, the possibility of phenomenological knowledge rests upon the categories through which the noumena become items of phenomenological experience. It is the categories of space and time that make possible phenomenological, and hence any, knowledge. Human knowledge is limited to that which is within space and time, hence transcendent knowledge is impossible, a priori.²⁴

Reality is given; deism must be rejected both because of the inadequacies of the arguments for God's existence and because transcendent knowledge is impossible. Newton's world of infinite space and time is inherently rational in itself, there is no need, or possibility, of looking elsewhere for an explanation of it. The logic of natural theology requires atheism.²⁵

b) *The theological critique.* The collapse of deism was not only the result of philosophical attacks. Christian theologians saw it as being at worst incompatible with,

21. Thus Kant rejects the ontological argument on the premise that existence is not a predicate, while Hume produces a series of cumulative arguments that undermine the argument from design; Kant (1934) pp.346ff, Hume (1947).

22. Hume (1974a), (1974b).

23. Hume here resolves the Cartesian anxiety not by appealing to a principle of transcendent order, but by accepting it as a brute fact that cannot be overcome.

24. cf. Kant, op.cit.

25. Thus Wittgenstein (1974) prop.1, p.5: "The world is all that is the case."

at best an inadequate truncation of, the traditional Trinitarian and incarnational doctrines of Christianity; criticism thus focused on the inadequacies of the deistic conception of God, the source of its knowledge, and on the possibility of such knowledge.²⁶

As we have seen, the deistic model utilizes purely rational categories of thought, and seeks to confirm post-Enlightenment humanity's understanding of reality. In contrast the theistic model derived from the Judaeo-Christian tradition requires personal categories, both ethical and spiritual, and through its concept of original sin undermines human attempts to achieve a relationship with divinity. The traditional concepts of redemption, atonement and salvation cannot be applied to the deistic God. The God of deism transcends space and time, and after the act of creation withdraws from the world and has nothing more to do with it: he leaves behind a world determined by the mechanistic laws of nature. In deism providence is ruled out from the start. In contrast, the God of theism is eternal rather than timeless, a personal being who interacts providentially within the space and time he has created. Fundamentally a deistic God is a reduction from Christian theism since it denied the possibility of providence.

We find in Christian theism a God who acts in time and space. Consequently history becomes the prime source of knowledge of God. Since history is known and transmitted through tradition, it is to tradition that the theologian must turn, specifically the traditions encapsulated in scripture and passed on by the church. Critical philosophy of course denies the possibility of the contingent truths of history and tradition being compatible with the absolute static truths of reason. Truth as being is a contradiction of truth as becoming. Unless the events of history, specifically the history of Jesus of Nazareth, are allowed to make claims to be part of ultimate truth, there is no path from deism to theism.²⁷

Finally, we consider the question of the possibility of knowledge of God. Knowledge of the Trinitarian God is ultimately beyond the intellectual, moral and spiritual grasp of humankind: "for now we see through a glass darkly".²⁸ Humanity, as fallen, can be no more than in the process of understanding God: God comes to

26. We are dealing here with a fundamental contrast between the 'God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob' and of the 'philosophers and scholars'. The former having its source in Judaeo-Christian tradition, the latter in Greek antiquity; cf. Pascal (1966).

27. In demanding that natural theology replace revealed theology, deism undermines both the Protestant principle of *sola* scripture and the Catholic medieval synthesis: the two systems are revealed as incompatible.

28. 1 Corinthians Ch.13 v.12.

humanity as a being other than his or herself; his/her holiness is ultimately transcendent of human ability. Thus it is a priori impossible for humanity to reach a clear, certain knowledge of God on the basis of reason alone. Deism, in contrast, assumes that knowledge must be certain, must stand within the limits of human reason.²⁹ Ultimately, the God of the philosophers is incompatible with the God of Abraham.

iv) Polarization: atheism and fideism

Buckley has demonstrated the clear connections between the philosophical and the theological critique: the failure to begin from the substance of religious belief, via the adopting of a starting point in abstract speculative philosophy, made the theological and philosophical failures inevitable since both are sides of the same coin.³⁰ The deistic synthesis fails in its attempts to hold fast both to traditional Christian belief and to the principles of the Enlightenment. The result was a polarization between the claims of faith and the claims of reason. If religious belief could no longer be upheld within the framework of rationalism two clear options were left: either the assimilation of Christianity within atheism, or the radical privatisation of Christian belief. i) The former demanded a viable explanation of the actuality of the cultural phenomenon of religion. This was provided by Feuerbach, for whom religion was essentially a false human construction.³¹ As such its dismissal as outmoded superstition, helped by a left-wing reading of Hegelian philosophy of history, quickly became part of orthodox humanistic polemic.³² ii) The latter option contained its own inherent logic, placing divine authority -- whether grounded in ecclesiastical dogma, scripture or pietism -- over and above the claims of reason. Its cost was a circular argument that justified faith on the grounds of faith. Shorn of any rational underpinning such fideism necessarily parted company with mainstream western culture, leading to what Bartley has termed 'the retreat to commitment',³³ and the

29. Kant (1960).

30. Buckley, *op. cit.*

31. Feuerbach (1989).

32. Thus Marx, Freud, Durkheim, Nietzsche and the Positivists all proceed on the assumption that religion is the product of immanent human culture, and as such requires explanation (cf. Kung, 1980); inevitably such interpretation -- given the assumption that the *intention* of religion was that of a transcendent reference -- tended to accept (to a greater or lesser extent) the assumed pathological nature of religion. Note, however, Cupitt's attempt to retrieve a non pathological form of anti-realistic theology (Cupitt, 1980).

33. Bartley (1964).

collective privatisation of religious belief.

3. The Foundations of Theological Liberalism: Kant and Romanticism

i) Kant: the turn to the subject

In Kant's subjective turn we encounter the foundations of a reading of religion that did indeed claim to avoid the polarization between reason and faith, between its assimilation into atheism and its isolation in forms of fideism.³⁴ The accomodation of religious belief and modernism, as religious liberalism, offered an 'experiential-expressive' model of religion which became part of received orthodoxy, common to both religious believers and the critics of faith.

Kant's rejection both of deism and of the possibility of rational knowledge of any reality transcending space and time did not lead him, as might have been expected, into atheism: "modern man has to learn to be autonomous -- to see that the needs of faith, like the imperative of duty, are in essence the fulfilment of his own nature as a rational being".³⁵ In attempting to mediate between religion and critical philosophy Kant's aim was clearly to accomodate the former within the framework of the latter. This fundamental apologetic aim is a key to the understanding of religious liberalism. Kant "helped clear the ground for its emergence by demolishing the metaphysical and epistemological foundations of the earlier regnant cognitive-propositional views".³⁶ This left the way open for the development of a religious liberalism in "the romantic, idealistic and phenomenological-existential streams of thought that have dominated the humanistic side of western culture ever since Kant's revolutionary Copernican 'turn to the subject'".³⁷

Kant's epistemology had distinguished between the world of phenomena, which we know, though only in appearance, and the world of noumena which we do not know and which transcends experience. This picture, however, must be qualified: "noumenal reality *is* disclosed to us, not through reason itself, but through humankind's experience, as rational beings, of moral obligation."³⁸ Indeed "morality is the highest sphere of rationally accessible truth.....reason in all its functions is unable

34. Kant (1934), (1960), cf. above pp.32f.

35. Reardon (1966) p.2.

36. Lindbeck (1984) p.20.

37. Ibid. p.21.

38. Fackenheim (1985) p.29.

to rest satisfied with the relative and the unconditional. In the sphere of the practical, this is the highest good."³⁹ Kant's concern was with the possibility of autonomous moral behaviour rooted in reason, understood as the categorical imperative of moral action. For this to be possible the ideas of God and immortality were required, since to be obligated to follow the categorical imperative to 'treat individuals as ends in themselves and not as means to other ends' (alternatively, 'act towards others as you would have them act towards you'), did not contain within itself any assurance of a just reward for such behaviour. Yet the highest good demanded that happiness followed in exact proportion to virtue: "what man is obligated to achieve he must be able to achieve. It is therefore necessary that the conditions exist by virtue of which he can fulfil his obligation. These conditions are man's immortality and the existence of God."⁴⁰ For justice to be genuine, as it must be, there must be a balancing of reward and punishment in an afterlife.

"Kant concludes that 'morality necessarily leads to religion' because moral obligation necessarily leads to the belief in the conditions without which it cannot be fulfilled. Religion is, on the one hand, the interpretation of moral duties as divine commands; as such it adds to autonomous morality the belief that moral duties can be fulfilled, because the author of moral law is also the author of nature. On the other hand, religion is the hope for the chance to attain holiness; as such it is rationally justified because moral reason demands that that can be realised which ought to be realised."⁴¹

Kant's argument for God's existence rests on practical, not pure, reason. The imperative to moral duty contains within itself the necessity of God, religion is rooted not in reason that looks outwards toward the world of phenomena, but inwards towards humanity's apprehension of the demands of morality.⁴² The significance of Kant's argument is twofold, and lies not so much in its material content, but rather in its formal structure.

a) It drew a distinction between the noumenal grounds of belief derived from the turn to the self and the phenomenal appearance of Christian culture. The former are primary and foundational, the latter merely second order statements, giving a particular, and not necessarily accurate, expression of the God derived from the categorical imperative. "For the Kantian enterprise consists of a great 'if...then'

³⁹. Ibid. pp.17, 19.

⁴⁰. Ibid. p.20.

⁴¹. Ibid. p.21.

⁴². For Kant's philosophy of religion cf. Kant (1934), (1960); cf. also Silber (1962/3), Walsh (1967), Zeldin (1971), Barth (1972), Fackenheim, op.cit.

sentence: if the reality of religion is confined to that which, as religion within the limits of reason alone, is subjected to the self-critique of reason, then religion is that which is fitted to the ideally practical nature of reason and that alone."⁴³ Kant explores this thesis in *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*.⁴⁴ "The religion of morality needs no dogma...still less has it any need of external trappings of religion -- priests, ceremonies and the like -- although the body of believers must think of themselves as belonging to a church, universal but invisible, and the practices of visible churches sometimes serve to stimulate or strengthen moral effort, in a way which is useful but not indispensable."⁴⁵

This divorce between the primary apprehension of the grounds of religion from its secondary expression in specific religious traditions had been anticipated to some extent in deism and specifically Latitudinarian thought. Kant's reformulation, via the turn to the subject, was to become a cornerstone in the development of the liberal experiential-expressive model of religion. The essence of religion is not to be found in external metaphysical statements, but internally in our immediate apprehension of the a priori demands of moral reason. At best external language may function to aid the internal apprehension, particularly amongst those whose powers of reasoning are not fully developed.

b) This division between realistic religious language and direct religious apprehension was grounded in a specific understanding of the nature of mind, and this turn to the self provides the core of religious liberalism. Kant's programme was significant in pointing the epistemological centre of religious faith inwards towards the self. The categorical imperative provided an ontological grounding for practical knowledge of God's existence; it constituted the claim "that the engaged standpoint of finite moral existence is metaphysically ultimate.....freedom -- which appears in reality as the moment of moral engagement -- is in fact a reality rather than a useful or necessary fiction."⁴⁶

Kant's subjective turn, as a refinement of Descartes, involves the claim that within the human subject itself is to be discovered the heart of reality. Such a metaphysic of presence moves beyond Hume's psychologism. As Gellner points out, the issue that divided Hume and Kant was that of identity. "Kant required something more substantial, more reliable, more weighty, than the mere Humean 'bundle' of

⁴³. Barth, op.cit. p.305.

⁴⁴. Kant (1960).

⁴⁵. Walsh, op.cit. p.322.

⁴⁶. Fackenheim, op.cit. p.29.

perceptions."⁴⁷ If Hume had undermined traditional notions of the self that sought identity in theological, social or natural realms, Kant's response was to seek identity in transcendence, in the noumena. The human being transcends phenomena, is ultimately under a reasoned moral obligation that is grounded in that which stands above and beyond the limitations forced upon us by the categories of space and time. That which is implicit in Descartes here becomes explicit: humanity as the source and ground of that which is ultimate.

This does not, of course, lead us directly into the world of Schleiermacher: "to close Kant's book and open Schleiermacher's *Speeches on Religion*, which made its appearance only six years later, is to enter a new world of thought."⁴⁸ Nevertheless by offering an explicit metaphysic of presence, and by drawing a division between religious apprehension and religious expression, in such a way that theological metaphysics is contrasted with theological epistemology, Kant laid the foundational structures for theological liberalism. From now on any religious attempt at accommodation with modernism must follow two precepts: i) start by turning inwards to the self by invoking a metaphysic of presence, and ii) look beyond the limitations of language for the essence of religion, in so doing avoiding a battle with the realism of scientific naturalism.

ii) The romantic mirror image

Kant would have rejected Schleiermacher's "belief that religious feeling can be speculatively or morally cognitive".⁴⁹ It was romanticism that provided the bridge between the formal structure of Kant's argument and the material content of Schleiermacher's liberal theology. Romanticism's 'mirror-image' of enlightenment rationalism effectively stripped the Kantian framework of its rationalistic moral content, replacing it with the primary experiential categories of internal feeling and experience. As Barth put it: "...theology -- now convinced that the Kantian premise should not be accepted just as it is -- can, while it indeed affirms it in what concerns method, subject it to an immanent critique. For it can undertake to broaden and enrich the conception of reason which forms the premise by pointing out that there is yet another capacity a priori which is part of the necessities of human reason, apart from the theoretical and practical ones: the capacity of feeling, as Schleiermacher puts it."⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Gellner (1992).

⁴⁸ Reardon, op.cit. pp.178f.

⁴⁹ Fackenheim, op.cit. p.31.

⁵⁰ Barth, op.cit. p.306.

To understand this romantic transition we must return to the issue of identity. Kant's formal argument faced the task of holding together human identity grounded in noumenal transcendence and human identity grounded in the natural phenomenal world of space and time. "So is the self a bundle [of perceptions], as Hume taught, or is it the invisible inner agency which both assembles the world and dictates our values, as Kant claimed?"⁵¹ Rousseau offers a third alternative. His idealism and holistic epistemology was untroubled by Humean-like empirical misgivings; however, Kantian-like transcendental rationalism posed a genuine threat to human identity. Rousseau's naturalism sought to return human identity to its source in mother earth. We are essentially natural beings, divided and distorted by the unnatural structures of rational society and culture. In effect Hume's psychological fears are here welcomed and embraced. We are who we are precisely as we feel and experience in our natural state. Rousseau's romantic naturalism thus embraces the categories of sensate experience and aesthetics. Unlike Hume this does not imply the disintegration of the self, on the contrary. Rousseau insists upon discovering human identity within a metaphysic of presence: human transcendence is grounded precisely in the natural being of humanity.

The split in Kantian notions of noumenal and phenomenological self-identity is thus resolved by romanticism. Thus Torrance argues that "the experience of man as a subject of the supersensual, or noumenal, world where his only freedom belongs,.....not unnaturally, had the effect of giving rise to a romantic idealism where the human spirit could range at will, uncontrolled by scientific evidence or knowledge".⁵²

On the face of it, romanticism represents a fundamental break with the rationalism of the Enlightenment. True, they have in common the image of the isolated self, but the role of the self in romanticism is to embrace the ambiguity of subjective contemplation, the polar opposite to the search for objective security. Romanticism revokes the Enlightenment's rejection of the authority of tradition and seeks a restoration of the pre-rational mythical age of antiquity. This "reversal of the Enlightenment's presupposition results in the paradoxical tendency to restoration, that is the tendency to reconstruct the old, the conscious return to the unconscious culminating in the superior wisdom of the primeval age of myth".⁵³ The return to myth brings about a restoration of the category of feeling, which now replaces reason as the

51. Gellner, *op.cit.* p.70.

52. Torrance, *op.cit.* p.25.

53. Gadamer (1979) pp.242f.

primary tool for interpreting reality. Objective reason gives way to subjective feeling, and as a result the internal world of value takes precedence over the external world of fact. Truth is to be found in the romantic turn to the subject, in the internal experience of aesthetics, morality and religion. We have here a new enlightenment, one that turns the old on its face: "Belief in the perfectibility of reason suddenly changes into the perfection of the mythical consciousness, and finds itself reflected in a paradisiacal primal state before the 'fall' of thought."⁵⁴ The metaphysics of presence implied throughout modernism is here turned on its head.

However, romanticism fails to achieve a fundamental break with the Enlightenment, and offers only, in Gadamer's formulation, its 'mirror image': "The romantic reversal of this [rationalistic] criterion of the Enlightenment actually perpetuates the abstract contrast between myth and reason."⁵⁵ The image of the isolated self and the resulting subject-object, value-fact dualism remains firmly in place; romanticism and the Enlightenment share the same paradigm of reality. The rebellion of romanticism merely gave a positive value to those subjective categories -- tradition, feeling, value -- that rationalism had found wanting. Because the essential structure remains, the romantic vision is essentially tragic: it must embrace Cartesian anxiety and reject the path of rational security. Yet the brute fact of the physical world of the natural scientist remains firmly in place: ultimately the world of value and myth must give way to the world of fact and reason. Feeling will inevitably, and tragically, be extinguished by the physical death of the body. The true tragedy of romanticism, however, lay in its failure to transcend the dualism of the Enlightenment, to provide the world of value with an ontological foundation. The domain of the romantic is -- ultimately -- positively anti-realistic.

4. The Emergence of Experiential-Expressivism

i) Schleiermacher and modern theology

Kant's new framework for the understanding of religion, seen through the eyes of romanticism's mirror image of critical philosophy, provided the basis for the first and classic description of religious liberalism found in the theology of

⁵⁴. Ibid. p.243.

⁵⁵. Ibid.

Schleiermacher.⁵⁶

The foundations of his theology were worked out within his cultural model of religion set out in *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, in which religion was grounded in the primary religious experience of individuals, described in aesthetic terms.⁵⁷ This was taken a stage further in his hermeneutical philosophy that distinguished a grammatical and psychological approach to understanding. The latter argued that to understand a text of the past it was necessary, through a process of empathy, to re-experience the experience of the text's author, since the heart of the text's meaning was to be found here.⁵⁸

These foundational studies paved the way for his systematic statement of the nature of religion in *The Christian Faith*.⁵⁹ The basis of religion is here described as "neither a knowing or a doing, but a modification of feeling, or of immediate self-consciousness".⁶⁰ The rejection of knowing is directed against knowledge obtained via both revelation and natural theology; the rejection of doing is opposed to the abstract rational ethic proposed by Kant. Feeling is further described as "the consciousness of being absolutely dependent on, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation to God".⁶¹

In Lindbeck's terminology we see here a shift from a traditional cognitive-propositional model of religion to an *experiential-expressive* one.⁶² Doctrines are no longer first order statements: their function is now replaced with a concept of a primary experience. The role of doctrine is now that of second order articulation of this first order experience; "Christian doctrines are accounts of the Christian religious affections set forth in speech".⁶³

56. Schleiermacher (1958), (1976), (1977); cf. also Avis (1986) pp.1-23, Clements (1987), Gerrish (1985), Mackintosh (1964) pp.36-63, Torrance, T.F. (1968), Torrance J.B. (1968).

57. Schleiermacher (1958).

58. Schleiermacher (1977); cf. Torrance, T. F. (1968), Torrance J. B. (1968). The argument adopts Gadamer's reading of the essentially romantic nature of Schleiermacher's position (Gadamer, 1979); for contemporary critiques of this 'canonical' understanding of Schleiermacher cf. Carliss (1993) and Jeanrond (1994).

59. Schleiermacher (1976).

60. Ibid. p.5.

61. Ibid. p.12.

62. Lindbeck, op.cit.

63. Schleiermacher (1976) p.76.

ii) The extension of the experiential-expressive model of religion

From its roots in Schleiermacher the experiential-expressive model of religion developed into a common liberal framework that both conformed to the structures of modernism and allowed for a diversity of religious and a-religious beliefs. A framework, that is to say, within which both believers and unbelievers alike could operate.⁶⁴ Unlike deism, religious liberalism achieved a genuine accommodation between religious and modern perspectives on reality. Given that religion is accepted as being grounded in human experience, the only outstanding question becomes that of the authority and nature of such experience: is it essentially pathological or non-pathological in nature?; immanent or transcendent in reference? It is important to note that the criteria for such judgements tend to turn on the question of the self-verifying authenticity of the experience itself.⁶⁵ This results in the development of a double perspective within the experiential-expressive framework: a *common public* acceptance of the form, linked with an intensification of the modernist drive towards the *individualisation* and *privatisation* of judgements regarding the substantial content and truth of core experience.

In seeking to demonstrate how the experiential-expressive model developed from its source in Schleiermacher's romanticism, there is space here to do no more than outline some of the basic tributaries that grew into the mainstream of contemporary consensus.

a) *Biblical Hermeneutics*.⁶⁶ Initial apologetic responses to the challenges posed to Christian faith by the development of historical and literary criticism of the

⁶⁴. A distinction needs to be made at this point between the undifferentiated 'lifeworld' within which religious faith is lived out by its adherents, and the formulations of the academy. Reference here is being made primarily to the academy, since it is these formulations that have in the main influenced religious educators. The degree to which academic discussion filters down to a public level is dependent upon a variety of contrasting factors. It could be argued that the process is strongest within Protestant culture, since such culture is more open than others – by virtue of its own self-definition – to such influence. The watershed here is undoubtedly the popularization of the model by Robinson (1963). At the same time, however, religious traditions that remain fideistic or fundamentalist in nature are likely to be far more impervious to such influence; thus we might identify with the former mainstream Islam and aspects of Roman Catholicism, and with the latter certain perspectives existing on the boundaries of the Protestant tradition. It seems clear that the intuition that the mainstream lifeworld in contemporary England and Wales has been fundamentally influenced by experiential-expressivism, via both positivism and post-modernism, is not that far from the mark.

⁶⁵. Little attention tends to be paid to the problem of the cognitive value of religious experience, though note Lash (1988), Alston (1991), Schellenberg (1994).

⁶⁶. cf. Neil (1964), Kummell (1973), Clements (1983).

biblical text tended towards harmonization and naturalistic explanation. The common assumption here was that of the basic historical nature of the literature. With the insight that much of the language of scripture was mythological in form came an eclipse of the assumption that the hermeneutical problem was one of realistic reference. This effective opening out of the question of the referent of biblical language was taken further by form criticism's awareness of the genesis -- or at least transmission -- of material within the religious community. This led to the location of the texts in the lifeworld of the worshipping community, and the identification of continuities between biblical and extra-biblical religion. The result was the emergence of the possibility of an apologetic move that need no longer compete with, nor seek reconciliation with, the canons of natural science. Rather, if the primary reference of biblical language is held to be located in individual and communal experience, then the hermeneutical justification of the various expressions of such experience lay in the authority of the experience itself, rather than in the authority of the text as a form of pseudo-science.

b) 19th Century Protestant Theology. Such exegesis was linked closely with developments within systematic and dogmatic theology. Thus, for example, Ritschl was able to offer a justification of Christian faith rooted in a convergence between the ethical teaching of Jesus, shorn of its ontological-mythical roots in transcendence, and the contemporary moral experience.⁶⁷ In this process incarnational Christology is reduced to a Christology grounded in the quantitative authenticity of the religious experience of the historical Jesus, a process linked closely to ethically focused and demythologized historical reconstructions of his life.⁶⁸ The roots of such an apologetic reading of doctrine lay in two sources: i) in an appropriation of a Hegelian philosophy of history whereby Christianity, as the highest ethical-monistic religion, is regarded as the culmination of the evolution of culturally expressed religious experience; ii) in an adoption of the Kantian reduction of doctrinal statements from ontological to ethical categories. Experiential-expressivism here allows for a distinction between the apparent realism of dogmatic and mythical language and the essential ethical content of religion.

c) Existential Theology. The collapse of nineteenth century historical optimism in the rejection of neo-Hegelian idealism saw the transformation of theological liberalism through the thought-forms provided by existential philosophy. The root meaning of religious experience is now to be found not in ethical categories

⁶⁷. Ritschl (1900).

⁶⁸. Schweitzer (1945).

but in the actuality of the religious being and existence of the individual. Humanity is thus redefined as existential being: thrown into the world and discovering meaning only within the existential tension between being and non-being, described classically in the concept of angst.⁶⁹ In this context Bultmann and Tillich developed Schleiermacher's experiential-expressive apologetic. The language of dogma and myth is no longer merely bypassed in favour of moral categories: rather it must now be read in the context of the rediscovery of the eschatological and mythical dimension of the first century world. Bultmann's programme of demythologizing⁷⁰ and Tillich's hermeneutic of convergence⁷¹ sought not to simply reject such mythological language of transcendence, but rather to show how the genuine meaning of traditional doctrinal formulas could be restated in the language of existential philosophy. Such meaning is to be discovered not in their apparent external realism, but in their hidden existential description of the human condition. Through a process of translating exegesis, traditional beliefs could be reclaimed from the assault of rationalism by demonstrating their convergence with the language and event of existential experience. Doctrinal formulations became expressions of primary existential religious being. In the process the value of the horizontal-temporal line of transcendence was passed over: religious language is not to be understood in terms of the development of contrasting historical constructions of reality, but in terms of a vertical relationship with one's hidden existential depth.

d) Catholic Modernism. We can observe a similar, though less central, process within Roman Catholicism. Catholic modernism attempted to break from the bondage of Thomist orthodoxy in part by showing the convergence between the traditional teaching of the church and the actual experience of Christians.⁷² Closer to the mainstream, Rahner's theological programme, while acutely aware of the demands of orthodoxy, nevertheless is rooted in an attempt to reformulate Christianity in the language of a Kantian anthropocentric ontology of presence.⁷³

e) Phenomenology of Religion. A further source for the development of experiential-expressivism was the appropriation by phenomenology of the Kantian framework. Husserl's phenomenology developed in the context of the desire to place

⁶⁹. Kierkegaard (1944), (1983).

⁷⁰. Bultmann (1969), (1985).

⁷¹. Tillich (1987a), (1987b), (1987c).

⁷². cf. eg. Von Hugel (1921).

⁷³. Rahner (1978).

the human sciences on the same epistemological level as natural science.⁷⁴ Phenomenological reduction, leading to eidetic vision, enabled the emergence of the essential nature of phenomena in human consciousness.⁷⁵ Adopted by the emerging non-theological discipline(s) of Religious Studies, Husserl's programme gave birth to the tradition of the Phenomenology of Religion.⁷⁶ Drawing not only on Kant and Husserl, but also directly on Schleiermacher, this tradition was able to advocate an objective study of religion approached as a purely immanent human phenomena, whilst at the same time appropriating a point of meaning in noumenal *sui generis* religious experience, grounded in a metaphysic of presence, that was taken as the source and point of reference of cultural and linguistic religious expression.⁷⁷

f) *Psychology of Religion*. One of the first classic phenomenological studies of religion was that of Otto's phenomenological description of religious experience as experience of the numinous.⁷⁸ This text played a part in stimulating not only the phenomenological investigation of religion, but also the development of a tradition of investigation into religious experience within empirical psychology.⁷⁹ A common feature of the latter was the distinguishing of immediate religious experience from its cultural expression in culture.

g) *The Theology of World Religions*. The appropriation of experiential-expressive categories to religious discourse was not confined to Christianity. Both phenomenological and psychological research had already understood 'religion' in the broadest of senses. From within the phenomenology of religion we can observe a tendency towards a universal perspective. In rejecting Comparative Religion's⁸⁰ horizontal-temporal line of religious development in favour of a vertical-noumenal one, phenomenology was able to relativise the contrasting historical developments of religious phenomena. This opened the door for the development of a universal theology of religion in a tradition that can be traced through Cantwell-Smith to John

74. cf. especially Dilthey (1979).

75. Husserl (1977).

76. 'Religious Studies' is used in the present thesis as an umbrella term embracing a diversity of different disciplines and methodologies including those of Phenomenology and Comparative Religion; cf. Allen (1987), Sharpe (1987).

77. It is important to distinguish here between a distinctively phenomenological method of investigation and the appropriation within phenomenology of a romantic hermeneutic that is not formally phenomenological: religious education, it will be argued below, fails to distinguish romantic empathy from phenomenological reduction leading to eidetic vision.

78. Otto (1931).

79. James (1960), Starbuck (1899), Glock & Stark (1965), Hardy (1966), (1979), Robinson (1977).

80. See above, n.76.

Hick.⁸¹ All religions can claim some grasp of ultimate transcendent truth. The ground of knowledge of such truth is to be found in common universal experience. The various historical traditions of the world religions, together with their doctrinal formulations are but diverse, culture bound expressions of this common experience.

The result of this universalisation of the experiential-expressive model was the achievement, where the programme of deism had failed, of an accommodation between the thrust of modernism towards immanence and the religious impulse towards transcendence. Put in terms of the contours of modernism outlined in the first chapter we see: i) that in the objective sphere of the external world of fact, certainty and reason, it became possible to give a universal description of the phenomena of religion, understood as cultural expression acceptable to all; ii) that in the subjective sphere of the internal world of experience it was possible to allow for a plurality of beliefs regarding the truths of religious claims. In other words, so long as truth claims remained in the private sphere, atheists, agnostics and believers alike could all work within a common framework. Theology is thus accommodated by modernism through a programme that legitimates the privatisation of belief, whilst avoiding the charge of fideism. This is achieved via the liberal concern for human freedom: the believer is free to believe at will, provided such belief does not involve any imposition of truth claims that threaten the freedom of others.

iii) The nature of experiential-expressivism

It is now possible to offer a working definition of the experiential-expressive model of religion, under six key headings.⁸²

a) It attempts to accommodate belief and reason. Its aim is essentially accommodatory and apologetic, seeking to justify belief within the framework of critical philosophy. As such it rejects the extremes of atheistic assimilation and fideistic privatisation.

b) It adopts the axioms of critical philosophy through the mirror image of romanticism. Such accommodation involves accepting the model of the isolated self by placing value above fact, experience above reason, and transcendence above immanence.

c) Religion is rooted in primary, first order, experience. This experience is more fundamental even than reason, and as such constitutes an ontology of presence. The resources of the values inherent in the humanities, as distinct from the facts of the

⁸¹. Smith (1978), (1981), Hick (1977b); cf. also D'Costa (1990), Hick & Knitter (1987), Hughes (1986).

⁸². The structure and terminology here draws on Lindbeck, *op.cit.* pp.31f.

sciences, are tapped here. The language used to describe this core experience is varied: common are the categories of aesthetics, morality, existential experience and revelation.

d) This primary experience is a universal phenomenon. All human beings have access to this experience, though not all will bring it to full consciousness, and even then they may not develop religious language to describe it, and if they do it will not necessarily lead to religious belief. Thus it is possible to have a primary experience that can be described both in atheistic and theistic frameworks.

e) Experience is the source and norm of second order religious expression. Religious doctrines bring this primary experience to expression. Such expression is symbolic, its norm and referent point is not, directly, any objective reality but rather the subjective experience of the one who speaks.

f) The experiential and expressive are linked through a process of convergence. It is thus necessary to produce a model of the convergent relationship between experience and expression. Thus God may converge with the experience of ultimate dependence, the numinous, ultimate concern, etc. At its roots lie a hermeneutic of translating exegesis in which a concept is explained by translating it from one language system to another.

5. A Critique of Theological Liberalism

Outwardly the strength of the experiential-expressive model of religion lies in the fact that it can claim both adherence to the requirements of a rational world view and yet also contain within itself the flexibility to allow for the liberal requirements of freedom of belief. The model allows for the acceptance of pluralism within a common framework. However the limitations of this framework are becoming increasingly clear: in particular the pragmatic demand that belief is kept in the private sphere has become equated with the methodological assumption that there can be no public criteria of choice between beliefs, and the substantial implication that religious believers in fact make no ontological claims.

i) Theological critique

It was the Protestant 'dialectical theology' of the early twentieth century that produced a fundamental criticism of theological liberalism, arguing that liberalism's mistake was to start not from the actuality of Christian revelation but from the abstract category of religious experience. In the light of such revelation it becomes clear that

Schleiermacher's quantitative gap between humanity and God must be replaced with a qualitative distinction between the holiness of God and the sinfulness of fallen humanity, a gap unbridgeable by human effort.⁸³ One root of this 'theology of crisis' lay in Kierkegaard's dialectical model of the relationship between God and humanity, as appropriated by theologians through Heidegger's existential theology. For Bultmann and Gogarten it was the existential experience of faith that had to become the subject of theological discussion.⁸⁴ Barth, after his famous 'false start', came to see this as merely an alternative version of liberalism, hence in the *Church Dogmatics* he moved beyond dialectical theology into a neo-orthodox position in which revealed doctrine replaced the experience of faith.⁸⁵ Liberalism is thus reversed: doctrine, not experience, is the primary source of religious knowledge. The roots of knowledge of God lie in the objective doctrines of Christianity, not in the subjectivity of either religious experience or of faith's appropriation of doctrine.

Barth's fundamental criticism of Schleiermacher was that it was mistaken to think that you could speak of God simply by speaking of man in a loud voice. It is God's action that bridges the gap between himself and humanity. There can, in terms of the logic of theology, be no possibility of an ontological leap from human experience to the divine, indeed such an attempt merely serves as a predicate of humanity. Barth finds himself here at one with Feuerbach's criticism of religion: liberalism in all its forms merely creates God in the image of humanity, rooted in a misplaced individual introspection.

The argument is clear: given the actuality of the Christian knowledge of God, a theology 'from below' that attempts to bridge the qualitative gulf between God and humanity through categories of experience leads inevitably into a reductionist anthropology. Christianity, if it is to be true to its own self-understanding, requires a 'theology from above' in which genuine talk of God proceeds from God's grace, his initiative in revelation.

ii) Humanistic critique

Here, perhaps surprisingly, we encounter a reaction that clearly parallels the main thrust of the theological critique; this despite the conflict between the two groups' fundamental aims and presuppositions. Like the theologian, the atheistic philosopher regards the liberal model of religion as offering no more than a reductionist

⁸³. Barth (1980).

⁸⁴. Bultmann, *op. cit.*

⁸⁵. Barth (1956), (1957), (1975b).

anthropology.

In order to escape the charge of being merely anthropology, liberal theology must show how its vision has the innate power to transcend the experiential and subjective romantic image, and so make statements about the objective world in the way that natural science does. In other words, experience must be shown to have a cognitive ontological foundation. That it is not able to do, indeed the enterprise is not even attempted.⁸⁶ There thus develops a convergence between atheistic and theological critiques: both deny the possibility of talk of God acting in the world ever having ontological reference.

The result of this acceptance of the natural deterministic world is that liberalism exposes itself to the positivistic critique of religion: religious claims are incapable of verification. Thus Bartley argues that liberalism cannot say how the state of affairs of the world would differ if a religious claim were true.⁸⁷ No evidence can be produced to justify or deny religious claims; they have effectively lost all contact with ontological reality. Their point of reference is reduced to the subjective states of minds of believers. Thus the philosophical critique parallels the theological in pointing to Feuerbach's analysis as the logical conclusion to the experientially based claims of theological liberalism.

The parallels with the theological critique are remarkable. For Christian orthodoxy and atheism alike the charge against the liberal experiential-expressive model of religion is the same: the category of experience renounces contact with external, cognitive, ontological reality. As a result that which is claimed as theology descends into anthropology.⁸⁸ The experiential-expressive model points towards a logic of anti-realism, a logic countered only by the defence of subjective experience: theological and rationalistic critiques merely unite in pointing out that such a defence lacks explanatory coherence in the face of the greater coherence of naturalistic or theological logic.

If religious liberalism offers the possibility of the accommodation of faith within modernism, then we should not be surprised to see the adoption of experiential-expressivism in programmes of religious education operating within a modernist framework. Having sketched in a reading of modernism and the appropriation of religion within its framework, our task now is to turn to the question of religious education within this context.

⁸⁶. See above, n.65.

⁸⁷. Bartley, *op.cit.*

⁸⁸. There is thus a consistent modernist logic in Cupitt's attempts to develop an anti-realistic theology, Cupitt (1980).

Chapter Three

Religious Education: The Emergence of a Formative Tradition

Chapter Three outlines the formative educational tradition out of which contemporary religious education operates: i) it identifies two broad strands within educational philosophy and suggests these are both dependent upon modernism and unable to do justice to the integrity of religion; ii) Locke's educational policy is taken as representative of a traditionalist model, operating within mainstream modernism, of education as cultural tradition; iii) Rousseau is offered as an example of progressive education, operating within a romantic framework, concerned with the autonomous development of selfhood; iv) a description and critique of confessional forms of religious education is made; v) Loukes' challenge to confessionalism both points the way towards the emergence of a specifically modern religious education, as well as sowing the seeds for its future demise.

1. Education within Modernism

We turn then from the metaphysical and theological background to the foreground: religious education in the context of post-enlightenment thought. Religious education in England in Wales during the period 1944-1988 underwent a fundamental paradigm shift into a modernist framework. The Enlightenment thematic sub-structures, the politics of pragmatic liberalism, and the experiential-expressive reading of religion set the agenda for its critical analysis and self-reflection. The celebration of this

achievement was ironic: in failing to contextualize its historical, geographical, political and intellectual position within the disintegration of modernism in late twentieth century western culture, religious education laid claim to a legacy that was already in the process of fragmentation.¹

In reality, religious education in this period straddled the borderlands between the open acceptance of liberalism and its unarticulated, hence ideological, appropriation. As Newbiggin points out, the religious educator is "under an obligation to expose for examination the fundamental axioms, the prior decisions about what is allowed to count as evidence, which underlie his way of understanding".² In so far as such axioms may be appropriated implicitly, on a subconscious level, the task of exposure becomes a "critique of ideology that aims at freeing the subject from his dependence on 'hypostasized powers' concealed in the structures of speech and action".³ It is this agenda, the '*Destruktion*' of the modernist presuppositions within religious education, with which we are concerned here.⁴

A key motive for the turn by religious education to liberalism was that of its justification and legitimation within a modern educational programme. This resulted in a policy of accommodation, a consequence of which was the revoking of both the right and ability to contribute positively to the development of educational policy and philosophy on its own intrinsic grounds. At the heart of this period of historical development lay the conflict between conservative and progressive approaches to schooling, and it was within this context that religious education attempted to forge a modern identity. The debate into which the subject sought entry was essentially a battle internal to modernism, between the mainstream rationalist Enlightenment legacy

1. Moran (1989) has shown how the term 'religious education' takes on a fundamentally different meaning in the U.S.A. when contrasted with the U.K.

2. Newbiggin (1982), p.99.

3. McCarthy (1984), p.94; though the critic of ideology in a modern context is rooted in Freud, Marx and Nietzsche, and comes to fruition in post-modernist deconstruction, it is not dependent on these traditions; the reference here is drawn from Habermas' defense and rewriting of occidental reason, specifically his critique of the naive, reductionist, realism of empiricism and positivism, in favour of a high modern critical realism; it is the latter rather than the former that this study follows.

4. '*Destruktion*' rather than 'deconstruction', the use of Heidegger's German here makes an important distinction from Derrida; '*Destruktion*' for Heidegger does not imply the absolute denial of a metaphysics of presence, and draws on a phenomenological tradition that pre-dates post-modernism; thus Hart (1991), pp. 68-69: "If we take the phenomenological and grammatical senses together, deconstruction [*Destruktion*] is therefore an attempt to show how philosophical discourses are constructed. The difference between Heidegger's and Derrida's projects is that whereas Heidegger is often drawn, at least in part, to uncover a text's 'animating centre' Derrida calls all such desires into question, even Heidegger's"; cf. note 3, above.

and its romantic mirror image.⁵ The educational thinking of Locke and Rousseau provided the foundations for, respectively, conservative and progressive educational policy and theory. As such they offer here a working link between liberal religious education and the legacy of the Enlightenment.

Against this formative background we must also consider the immediate foreground. The analysis of the historical progress towards the achievement of the liberal consensus in religious education -- via confessionalism and its critique by Loukes points not only to the inevitability of the formation of the liberal consensus, but also to the embryo of an alternative possibility that will form the foundation of the constructive second part of this thesis.

2. Locke, Traditionalism and Society

i) Pragmatic education and enlightenment

Published in 1693, John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* took the form of a series of letters to Edward Clarke, advising him on the upbringing of his son.⁶ They are occasional pieces, not originally intended for publication, and as such are essentially pragmatic rather than concerned with the construction of any systematic philosophy of education. Despite this they came to represent the first major contribution to educational thought produced by the Enlightenment.

Their roots are in the transition from renaissance to liberal humanism, following the former in rejecting the academic curriculum of theology, grammar, rhetoric and logic characteristic of both high and late scholasticism. They move beyond the idealism and utopianism of renaissance classicism, embracing instead a realistic, pragmatic, utilitarian turn against the background of the growth of a bourgeois mercantile middle class. Bantock's observation of a "tension between his humanistic views of conduct and manners and his new 'scientific' conception of understanding and utility"⁷ thus reflects Locke's concern to transplant the Renaissance's concern with virtue into a new humanistic cultural context informed by a utilitarianism grounded in newly emerging scientific and economic structures.

⁵. As such the self-identity of liberal religious education was torn between image and counter image, see below, Chapter Four, Section One.

⁶. cf. Locke (1968).

⁷. Bantock (1980), p.245f.

Education is thus essentially a pragmatic activity, seeking the good life for the bourgeoisie liberal gentleman⁸: "a sound mind in a sound body, is a short, but full description of a happy state in this world".⁹ This is to be achieved through the development of the capacity for self-discipline, inculcated through the authority of the tutor, whose influence is progressively to be relaxed as self-mastery is obtained.¹⁰ Locke proceeds via a benign behaviourist psychology that takes moderation as its watchword. Reward and punishment is central to the learning process, utilized as a means of instilling motivation based on a happy disposition rather than a slavish obedience. Discipline of the body leads to discipline of the mind. Such self-discipline allows for the growth of virtue: civility, liberality, love of justice, courage and humanitarianism.

The 'completion of education' lies in the ability to apply virtue, through enlightened reason, to the practical task of living. Locke turns here to formal education: the parts of education are virtue, wisdom, breeding and learning. Virtue linked to the capacity to act with wisdom in the affairs of the world produces breeding, and breeding is to be achieved through learning. The skills of reading, writing and grammar, once mastered, can be applied to specific subjects: geography, mathematics, geometry, history, law, religion, philosophy, etc. This allows for both the mastery of a trade or profession and informed recreation, especially dancing, music, fencing and travel.

The good life is the life of the gentleman educated "to have the knowledge of a man of business, a carriage suitable to his rank, and to be eminent and useful in his country according to his station".¹¹ Such education is essentially moral, and takes the form of induction into a particular ethico-cultural social order. The child's freedom is the freedom to conform willingly to the blueprint presented by the tutor. Locke thus offers a form of educational paternalism, deeply conservative in nature, in which educational success is measured by the degree of conformity to a tradition.

Locke distinguishes fact from value: the material content of learning is not an end in itself, rather it is the *discipline* of learning that is essential to the process of good breeding. The value of the material content of education is dependent upon its

⁸. For Locke's educational thinking beyond the middle classes cf. Mason (1962).

⁹. Locke, op.cit., p.114.

¹⁰. Ibid. pp.186ff.

¹¹. Ibid. p.197.

practical utility for the future responsibilities of the young gentleman.¹² The concern is with process, not content: the end of learning is the formation of habit and character. "I do not propose it as a variety and stock of knowledge, but a variety and freedom of thinking, as an increase in the powers and activity of the mind, not as an enlargement of its possessions."¹³

Reason may not trespass beyond Locke's understanding of reality: human freedom consists of living intelligently and autonomously within it. Locke's rejection of original sin underlines the centrality of education to the achievement of such freedom: "of all men we meet with, nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education".¹⁴ As Gay points out, "the most optimistic Christian was not free to assert that education, no matter how thoroughgoing, could ever erase the effects of Adam's Fall.....the philosophes' doctrine of man's original innocence, though it did not necessarily imply, persuasively testified to the efficacy of education in man's renewal".¹⁵ Locke's Pelagianism effectively forecloses the Christian understanding of truth, placing a paternalistic limitation on human freedom.

This opens up the question of the relationship between education and epistemology. If the *Thoughts* represent "not so much a generalized pedagogical credo as a custom built body of theory designed to suit the particular educational requirements of a gentleman's son", may we discover behind them a "more extensive pedagogical thinking" related to his epistemology?¹⁶ The placing of politics and morality in the sphere of practical judgement and belief is a direct result of Locke's acceptance of the limits of theoretical knowledge. His empiricism divides fact from value; the latter, on pragmatic rather than ontological grounds, is freed to develop a

12. cf. Axtell in Locke, op.cit. pp.75ff.

13. Locke, op.cit., p.58.

14. Ibid. p. 114; "great care is to be had of the forming of children's minds, and the giving them that seasoning early, which shall influence their lives always after. For when they do well or ill, the praise or blame will be laid there: and when anything is done outwardly, the common saying will pass upon them, that it is suitable to their breeding" (p.138).

15. Gay (1973b) p.511; Gay continues: "to believe in the importance of education was to believe, at least implicitly, in its power. Of course from the perspective of their philosophy the philosophes were almost compelled to believe in that power: it supported their position on original sin.....The myth of original sin, which the philosophes thought they had exploded, made much of man's incapacity to change fundamentally through his own efforts: education could not do the work of grace...Locke had seen this clearly."; cf. also Gay (1964).

16. Meyer (1975), p.127.

concept of human virtue grounded in belief and guided by the twin liberal principles of freedom and tolerance. There is thus an organic relationship -- structural rather than material -- between Locke's epistemological, ethical and educational thinking. "We find no knowledge in the 'Education' that meets the criterion either of intuitive knowledge or of demonstrable knowledge"¹⁷: epistemology provides the limiting framework rather than the material content of morality. Whilst Locke had not completely abandoned the possibility of the construction of a fully rational morality, his essentially interim ethics are rooted in judgement, and such judgement requires precisely the virtues and discipline education instills and cultivates. Gay is correct in his claim that the *Thoughts* represented "the new philosophy in action.....because it was Locke's philosophy *in education*".¹⁸

ii) Locke on religious education

Religious education serves to uphold this educational programme. Locke's understanding of Christianity is essentially informed by his practical philosophy, and its distinctive tenor is caught well by Drury:

"short on dogma, long on historical criticism and ethics.....Locke praised what he called 'the admirable wariness of his [Jesus'] carriage'.....there was plenty for the Christian to do, conforming his life to his master's law and the social good. You knew where you were with Locke: feet on the historical bedrock, eyes on the neighbour."¹⁹

Explicit knowledge of God is limited to a deism derived rationally from Locke's empirical epistemology.²⁰ Such knowledge is then supplemented by the Christian revelation: here we move into the sphere of practical belief and judgement. Rational empiricism however retains a formative role here: "no alleged revelation could ever be admitted against the clear evidence of reason".²¹

Necessarily, given the limits of reason, such claims to revelation must be

¹⁷. Chambliss (1976), p.376.

¹⁸. Gay, *op.cit.*, p. 501; cf. Axtell in Locke, *op.cit.*, Chambliss, *op.cit.*; contra Meyer, *op.cit.*, Yolton (1971).

¹⁹. Drury (1993), p.205; cf. Aaron (1971), pp.287-301.

²⁰. cf. Locke (1975), pp.618-630.

²¹. O' Connor (1952), p.199.

provisional, hence Locke's advocacy of the central importance of religious toleration.²² Not surprisingly, Locke was drawn to a unitarian form of Christianity, marked by a Latitudinarian divorce from all unnecessary doctrinal formulations, and above all any hint of superstition; its emphasis was on "the rational approach so congenial to humanism [which] could easily exalt the competence of the intellect, stress the human side of Christ, regard Jesus as simply the best of men, emphasize the ethical aspects of the Biblical teachings, and believe that man is able to attain them".²³

Thus through reductionism Locke sought to accommodate Christianity within the rationalism of the Enlightenment. Implicit in this process is the movement from transcendence to immanence and the appropriation of the Christian tradition for pragmatic and utilitarian ends. Religious education was thus little more than ensuring the proper place of the cultural norms of Christendom within the education of the gentleman.

The fruits of enlightenment are to be enjoyed in a state of undifferentiation: there is no scope in Locke's programme for the child to engage in a critical appropriation of the Christian tradition, though Locke himself is reliant upon just such a process. Education inculcates in children a tradition centred on the habits of self-discipline and virtue that make the good life possible. The material content of that good life may appear emancipatory, but it is essentially ideological in so far as it fails to offer the possibility of either self-criticism or alternatives. The development of reason is limited to the practical, itself dependent on an empiricist ontology that rejects a priori the possibility of Christian orthodoxy, on both doctrinal and ethical levels. The question of the truth and adequacy of the nature and end of bourgeois living may not be asked.

Locke thus develops a traditionalist educational paradigm whose influence extends through the public and grammar school systems to the present: education as the inculcation of a tradition of virtue in order to stabilise and enhance a particular vision of the good life. We find here one of the poles of the traditionalist-progressive debate into which liberal religious education sought accommodation. Traditionalism: i) imposes a liberal reading of religion on the curriculum; ii) adopts an educational hermeneutic in which the appropriation of religious understanding is limited by this liberal interpretation; iii) accepts the extrinsic aim for religious education of furthering the moral requirements of society. Beneath the rhetoric of enlightened freedom stands a deeply paternalistic transmission of the liberal tradition.

²² Ibid. pp.211-15; cf. Mabbott, *op.cit.* pp.171ff; Locke (1966).

²³ Latourette (1975) p.795.

Peter Gay has argued that such paternalism is a mark of both traditionalist and progressive forms of post-Enlightenment educational thought. They were both faced with "a dilemma of heroic proportions"²⁴ in balancing their desires for reform and individual freedom: "the realities tore this alliance apart: with the overpowering presence of the illiterate masses and the absence of the habit of autonomy, freedom and reform were often incompatible".²⁵ The resolution of the dilemma led to the advocacy of reform over autonomy:

"the road to the realisation of the philosophe's political programme thus led through the devious and embarrassing detours of repression and manipulation that were a denial and mockery of the world they hoped to bring into being: the very methods used to distribute the fruits of enlightenment seemed to be calculated to frustrate the Enlightenment itself".²⁶

3. Rousseau: Progressivism and the Turn to the Self

i) Education and romanticism

Rousseau's progressivism reflects the romantic turn in Enlightenment thought; within the same paternalistic liberal framework it functions as the polar opposite to traditionalism. It develops Locke's concern with moral education, whilst rejecting his behaviourism. In doing so Rousseau claims the primacy of individual autonomy over culture, society and reason. Locke's virtues, read as cultural norms, are replaced with the romantic notion of 'natural goodness'. "In effect, 'natural goodness' constitutes simply a rallying point for the disengagement from the traditional culture thought necessary by the Enlightenment.....a reason for abstraction from current social pressures."²⁷

Locke's rejection of original sin, and hence the centrality of 'education-for-the-good-life' is accepted: "the first impulses of nature are always right; there is no original sin in the human heart".²⁸ Vice, though is transformed: it is no longer the result of a failure to conform to the virtues espoused by society, since it is civilisation

²⁴. Gay, op.cit., p.497.

²⁵. Ibid.

²⁶. Ibid.

²⁷. Bantock op. cit. p.282.

²⁸. Rousseau (1986) p.56.

itself that corrupts humanity's God given natural goodness. "Everything is good as it comes from the hands of the Maker of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man."²⁹

This natural humanity is not to be equated with the animal desire of the 'noble savage'. Rather natural reason, operating through the conscience, informs an uncorrupted relationship with the natural order. Given this ideal state, education, government and religion will transpire to enhance that human liberty which leads to virtue and happiness. This freedom for the moral life falls into error when society, through pride, departs from the natural order. We see in Rousseau the emergence of a romantic critique of society, in which social refinement conceals the reality of the communal corruption of natural humanity. Education, the establishment of civil liberty and recovery of natural religion must provide salvation from this fall by re-establishing natural goodness: "the overwhelming purpose of such education is to produce the new moral person".³⁰ "All of Rousseau's works concentrate on a single theme, the utopian desire to reconstruct society by means of a new theory of natural order."³¹

Education concerns not the transmission of culture, but the nurturing of inherent natural goodness. The educator will facilitate this through a form of negative education. Darling refers to three fundamentals in operation in the education of Emile: i) unlimited scope for play; ii) freedom to learn in an environment devoid of external constraint and therefore through stimulus appropriate to the child's natural being; iii) the replacement of instruction and direct teaching by encouragement to allow the child to think things through for him or her self, and draw conclusions according to his or her natural reason.³² Natural goodness is nurtured through a negative education that withdraws from the corruption of society; it proceeds society rather than feeds on it, being concerned "not in teaching virtue or truth, but in preserving the heart from vice and from the spirit of error".³³

As Bantock argues, without a viable equation of the natural with the good moral education entails a pedagogic abdication of value by default.³⁴ Rousseau's naturalism stands in sharp contrast to the neutral value assigned to the natural order by

²⁹ Ibid. p.5, following the translation of Bowen (1981) p.187.

³⁰ Bowen, op.cit., p.188.

³¹ Ibid. p.186.

³² Darling (1985).

³³ Rousseau, op.cit. p.57.

³⁴ Bantock, op.cit.

rationalism. The romantic reaction was precisely an attempt to regain a moral ontology in the face of this neutrality. Hence Rousseau's dilemma: "neutralise the universe, demythologize nature's laws so that they function purposelessly (in human terms) driven by their own morally neutral internal momentum, and it is only possible for him to reintroduce the inescapable moral dimension in the education of human beings by literally making a virtue of necessity".³⁵ Thus the Lockean virtues of bourgeois citizenship are replaced with the virtues of romantic subjectivity: autonomy, freedom to be oneself and self-fulfilment. Morality operates within a naturalistic ontology. Negative education, as the provision of the conditions and freedom for self-fulfilment, is in reality a positive transmission of the cultural values of the romantic mirror-image of enlightenment: "what is fostered is an alternative culture stimulated by the indirect intervention of the tutor".³⁶

Behind the rhetoric of freedom stands an alternative paternalism: the naturalistic ontology itself cannot come under question, and self-fulfilment operates in an essential vacuum, reliant on a notion of natural reason whose only material content is the absolute value of freedom itself. It is freedom for the subjective turn, the further dislocation of self from world: freedom through isolation rather than freedom through proper relationship. As Foucault argues, such freedom in actuality represents a form of repressive domination of the self by romanticism.³⁷ Rousseau at times recognises this: "It is true I allow him a show of freedom, but he was never more completely under control, because he obeys his own free will. So long as I could get the mastery over his will, I retained control over his person; I never left him for a moment. Now I sometimes leave him to himself because I control him continually."³⁸

ii) Rousseau on religious education

Rousseau's approach to religious education conforms to this structure. His religious teaching marks a transition stage between deism and romanticism. On the

³⁵. Ibid. p.274.

³⁶. Ibid.

³⁷. cf. eg. Foucault (1989) (1991); Darling, (1985), p.31 argues that "the rhetoric of reform associated with child-centred education disguises the way in which this philosophy reinforces an essentially conservative conception of education", and quotes with approval Schapiro's comment that "what starts out as an assertion of human liberation becomes turned back on itself as a means of further repression or accommodation"; cf. Schapiro (1984) p.377. The freedom of romanticism thus does not entail the freedom for its own self-critique.

³⁸. Rousseau, *op.cit.* p.298; cf. Bantock, *op.cit.* p.278.

one hand, he defends natural theology against the attacks primarily of Voltaire: evil is the direct product of human nature distorted by pride, the natural world is in itself good, and hence the existence of a loving God is not to be rejected by the advocacy of atheistic materialism justified through the claim that the universe is amoral.³⁹ On the other hand, his romanticism leads him to challenge the rationalism of deism: reason guided by conscience interprets the primary epistemological category of feeling, "to exist is to feel; our feeling is undoubtedly earlier than our intelligence".⁴⁰ Thus, having argued for the existence of a supreme creator, it is natural that this gives birth "to a feeling of gratitude and thankfulness to the author of my species, and this feeling calls forth my first homage to the beneficent Godhead".⁴¹ Rousseau's thought embodies, then, a genuine religious impulse; "the philosophical aspects of the physical universe as the ordered system of a divine Creator are far less important than the spontaneous response of human sensibility to its spiritual essence".⁴²

Thus Rousseau experiences, as an essential part of his spiritual quest, "that state of doubt and uncertainty which Descartes considers essential to the search for truth".⁴³ Led by his "inner light", and "bearing thus within my heart the love of truth as my only philosophy"⁴⁴ he arrives, via a fairly standard deistic argument, at the belief that "there is a will that sets the universe in motion and gives life to nature".⁴⁵ Rousseau remains agnostic about what else reason can tell us, and turns instead to experience: "the more I strive to envisage his infinite essence the less do I comprehend it; but it is and that is enough for me; the less I understand, the more I adore, I feel it, experience it."⁴⁶ He thus turns from abstract philosophy to the practical task of living, both through religious worship and through practical morality rooted in a God given conscience that arbitrates between reason and feeling.

Natural theology is revealed by God, whilst religious dogma is a human creation. Such dogma tends towards evil, with a multitude of sects in conflict over claims to possess the ultimate truth. Such truth claims are rooted not in natural reason

39. cf. Voltaire (1947).

40. Rousseau, *op.cit.* p.253.

41. *Ibid.* p.240.

42. Grimsley (1973) p.74.

43. Rousseau, *op.cit.* p.229.

44. *Ibid.* p.231.

45. *Ibid.* p.236.

46. *Ibid.* p.249.

but in geographical and historical accidents of birth, and it is inconceivable that God will judge individuals on this basis: if God saw any of these doctrinal systems as true he would have made it plain. Reason thus culminates in natural theology. "Considering the point I have now reached as the common centre from which all believers set out on the quest for a more enlightened form of religion, I merely found in natural religion the elements of all religion."⁴⁷ If revealed dogma is to be accepted, it must only be after consideration of all alternatives and with insight into the spirit behind the dogma that forms the authentic core of religious systems: for Rousseau this meant a return to his Calvinist roots following his flirtation with Catholicism. Such a decision must rest on personal judgement, and entails an act of faith that goes beyond the limits of universal knowledge of God.

How does this religious construction relate to Emile's religious education? The understanding of religion must be rooted in freedom and reason, there is no place for any process of enculturation. "You smile when I expect to make a thinker, a philosopher, a young theologian, of an ardent, lively, eager and fiery young man, at the most impulsive period of youth."⁴⁸ Thus Emile must think for himself, must appropriate religion through his natural reason, freed from the prejudices and authority of tradition, society and family. "It is in matters of religion more than anything that prejudice is triumphant.....(hence).....we will not attach him to any one sect, but we will give him the means to choose for himself according to the right use of his reason."⁴⁹ From here Rousseau develops three central principles of his system of religious education.

a) *Readiness for religion.* Religious education must appear only at the last stage of the learning process, when Emile's reason and sensitivity is sufficiently developed to allow for undistorted understanding. "At fifteen he will not even know that he has a soul, at eighteen even he may not be ready to learn about it."⁵⁰ Rousseau is guarding against two dangers here, firstly, the imposition of an unjustifiable doctrinal system through parents, tradition and society, secondly, the difficulties of comprehending the mysterious nature of religion itself. He thus seeks to make possible an understanding of authentic, natural religion: "there are mysteries which the heart of man can neither conceive nor believe, and I see no use in teaching them to

47. Ibid. p.260.

48. Ibid. p.279.

49. Ibid. p.223.

50. Ibid. p.220.

children, unless you want to make liars of them".⁵¹

b) Material content. What should actually be taught, once the child is ready, is precisely that natural religion outlined above. Since it conforms to reason, and has passed through the crucible of divinely inspired conscience it can both claim the status of universally accepted knowledge, whilst at the same time being genuine, natural uncorrupted religious teaching. "So long as we yield nothing to human authority, nor to the prejudices of our native land, the light of reason alone, in the state of nature, can lead us no further than to natural religion; and this is as far as I should go with Emile."⁵² Should he choose to move beyond natural religion and embrace revealed doctrine, then that must be his own free and informed choice: "If he must have any other religion, I have no right to be his guide; he must choose for himself."⁵³

c) Humanizing Process. This is as important for Rousseau as the material content of religious education. He takes as a model here his, apparently, biographical experience with the Savoyard priest: taking responsibility for the 'young fugitive' with whom Rousseau identifies himself. The priest approaches his ward's religious quest with kindness, coming down to his level, treating him as an equal, and above all by not intruding or preaching. In addition the priest makes a thorough study of the fugitive's feelings and disposition, enabling the latter to rekindle a sense of self-love. In all this he presents himself as an example, to be imitated by his student, of virtuous humanity.

Enclosed between the rhetoric of Emile's freedom, and the 'open' educational methods of the priest we encounter once again a benign paternalism. The learning process acts as a methodology for inducting Emile into conformity with Rousseau's own religious outlook. Like traditionalism, Rousseau's progressivism: i) imposes a liberal reading of religion on the curriculum; ii) adopts an educational hermeneutic in which the appropriation of religious understanding is limited by this liberal interpretation; iii) accepts the extrinsic aim for religious education of furthering the moral requirements of society. Its influence may be traced forward into progressive models of education that act as the romantic counterfoil, in contemporary debate, to the traditionalism derived from Locke. This polarity within post-Enlightenment thought represents the essential framework of educational philosophy into which liberal religious education sought entry. Having sketched out the broad background, our concern must now be with the immediate foreground, in the critique of programmes of confessionalism that announced the transition to modern religious education.

⁵¹. Ibid. p.220.

⁵². Ibid. p.278.

⁵³. Ibid. p.278.

4. The Deficiency of the Confessional Consensus

i) The nature of religion

The claim, made here, that the traditionalism exemplified by Locke provided confessionalism with its fundamental root structures sets up a number of clear expectations. We thus anticipate a paternalistic form of education characterised by: i) a working understanding of religion within which the question of religious truth is foreclosed; ii) the appropriation of this understanding of religion through a hermeneutic of social inculcation; iii) a justification and aim grounded in the maintenance of a perceived social stability and its continued progression towards a good life.

An analysis of ten key Agreed Syllabuses for the period 1944-1963 reveals a focus on a core subject matter.⁵⁴ This core material has within itself a common hierarchy, revealed if average weightings in terms of the suggested time allocation during the compulsory years of secondary schooling for all ten syllabuses combined is expressed as a percentage. At the heart is Biblical Study, with the New Testament (33%) and Old Testament (30%) approached on a surface level as narrative-history. To this heart is added Church History (17%), taking the Christian story forward from Paul to the present via a mixture of biography and narrative history, and Doctrine and Ethics (14%), reflecting the fundamentals of orthodox Christian belief within a broadly Kantian rather than eschatological moral framework. The Bible (5%) concerns manuscript history, canon, and history of translation, stopping short, in the main, of so called higher criticism. The study of non-Christian religion accounts for less than 1%.

This thematic content demands the equation of 'religion' with a benign form of 19th Century liberal Protestantism; 'benign' in so far as the radical possibilities inherent in 19th Century German scholarship are countered by an underlying current of Protestant orthodoxy; 'Protestant' in so far as the equation of 'religious instruction' with 'scripture' stands as an unproblematic given; 'liberal' in so far as transcendent ontological doctrine is replaced by immanent functional ethics.

In the inner sanctuary of this thematic content stands the figure of Jesus. But to speak of a Christological core would be quite wrong. We are, in reality, in the realm of the 19th Century 'liberal lives': "the aim of this course is to impress upon the minds of children the many traits in the character of Jesus, and the perfect balance between them.....His dynamic goodness, His teaching, His attitude to friends and enemies. His mighty works were not so much a display of His authority and power as evidence that

⁵⁴. cf. Loukes (1965), pp.44ff.

He worked and acted always for the good of others",⁵⁵ A century of biblical scholarship: Schweitzer, Bultmann, Jeremias, of eschatology, historical scepticism and critical realism are all ignored. When a half acknowledged glance in this direction does occur, it is unable to avoid the comic. Schweitzer's "He comes to us as One unknown, without a name",⁵⁶ is transformed thus: "the line 'Gentle Jesus meek and mild' is only part of the truth. Those who knew Him best were impressed as much with His sternness to evil as by His grace."⁵⁷ And this directed not at pupils but at teachers. This is not to suggest that the appropriation of Christianity by religious educators working within the confessional framework was entirely uncritical and undifferentiated. However the political pressure towards conservatism is clearly in evidence, and remains so until the early 1960's.

The result of the conservative dominance of the status quo was a sharp and decisive closure of the problem of religious truth. The external challenges of non-Protestant Christianity, secular Humanism, and other world faiths were accommodated, in the main, by a policy of appeasement: the dual system provided alternatives to the two main (at this stage politically if not numerically) opposition groups, viz Judaism and Roman Catholicism. For the rest there was the opt-out clause of the 1944 Act. Internal dissent was contained: i) by the reaffirmation of the Cowper-Temple clause, against a background of an evolving Protestant ecumenical movement; ii) the assertion of the primacy of the ethical over the doctrinal; and -- as has already been observed -- the effective taming of radical strands within Protestantism.

A mark of the innate conservatism within confessionalism may be recognised in the depth of the influence of Robinson's *Honest to God*.⁵⁸ Effectively legitimating a more radical appropriation of Protestant religion in both the public and professional consciousness, the fact that its popularization of themes common in academic theological debate for more than a century came to be termed the 'New Theology' clearly attests the systematic -- and to a greater or lesser extent unconscious -- avoidance of the challenge of modernism. Previously within confessionalism its influence was sporadically recognised and judged in need of refutation. Thus the Bishop of Bristol, in his preface to the 1947 London Syllabus, states that "we have realised where the critical method went wrong, or at least what its shortcomings were. We see now, from the study of the Bible itself, of what the Bible claims to be, that it

⁵⁵. London Syllabus of Religious Education (1947), p.49.

⁵⁶. Schweitzer (1945), p.401.

⁵⁷. London Syllabus of Religious Education, op.cit. p.49.

⁵⁸. Robinson (1963).

was a mistake ever to regard it as nothing more than a literary collection or a historical record."⁵⁹ We see here, with little attempt at disguise, the foreclosure of the public cultural and intellectual reality of the problem of religious truth by a paternalistic Protestant orthodoxy.

ii) The appropriation of religion

The reading of 'benign liberal Protestantism' for 'religion', linked with the closure of the question of truth, leads us, inevitably to a hermeneutic of inculcation. Beginning with the label 'religious instruction', we encounter at every turn the notion that religion is not to be thought about but assimilated. "The school provides an environment in which the child may acquire the elementary virtues unconsciously. The Christian ideal of conduct should permeate its life."⁶⁰ Christianity "can be learnt only from experience, not from discourse".⁶¹ Thus the hermeneutic of inculcation is essentially one of nurture within community: as Loukes observes, "the church's theory of education was a theory not of instruction or enlightenment, but of community".⁶² At the heart of the Christian community of the school stands the act of collective worship which "can quicken the spirits of the children who take part in it, fixing their roots in the Christian faith, and giving them direction and inspiration for life".⁶³

Religious instruction thus finds its place within the complex of a worshipping community. It functions to inculcate both formally through its authoritarian methods⁶⁴ and care to avoid forms of thinking that might challenge faith,⁶⁵ and materially through its presentation of the heroes of faith whose example is to be followed: Old Testament figures; Christ; biographies of the saints,⁶⁶ and perhaps above all the

⁵⁹. London Syllabus of Religious Education, op. cit. p.18.

⁶⁰. Ibid. p.21.

⁶¹. Loukes, op.cit. p.29, quoting from the Cambridge Agreed Syllabus of 1924.

⁶². Ibid. p.27.

⁶³. London Syllabus of Religious Education, op.cit. p.26.

⁶⁴. cf. eg. Loukes, op.cit. p.166: "the classic authoritarian practices...chalk-and-talk, the dictating of notes, the working of mechanical exercises, learning for tests, rote learning."

⁶⁵. cf. eg. the prescriptions in the London Syllabus of Religious Education, op.cit. p.53 ,note 1, on the correct way to interpret the plagues in the story of the exodus from Egypt in order to avoid challenging pupil's faith.

⁶⁶. Ibid pp.30f.

witness of the Christian teachers themselves.

iii) The function of religious education

As Loukes points out, all this implies a key distinction between the external objective discourse of Christianity and its internal, subjective fideistic core: "the ultimate aim of religious education is not to get over to the child a body of facts -- or 'inert ideas', to use Professor Whitehead's phrase -- but to inculcate and foster a comprehensible Way of Life".⁶⁷ We see here that even within the confessional model the experiential-expressive model -- derived from earlier Protestant liberalism -- already operates, albeit within a conservative traditionalist framework that perhaps owes more to religious piety than academic theology. The confessional consensus assumed, as Cox later pointed out, "that every child is a Christian and comes from a Christian home",⁶⁸ that church and state together formed a modern Christendom. "There was a wide feeling that the Christian tradition had in some way been 'good' for this country; and that if children were not to meet it, they and the country would be in some sense the losers."⁶⁹ Confessionalism held together, in uneasy tension, secular morality and Christian doctrine: "parents generally seemed content that their children should be taught the doctrine and mythology, and then be allowed to forget it, provided that in the process they acquired some of the morality and practise it".⁷⁰

The experience of war in the period immediately preceding the 1944 Act acted as social cement in this context. The Spens Report articulated this clearly,⁷¹ and

⁶⁷. Ibid p.29; cf. Loukes, op.cit. p. 49, quoting V.Murray: "Christianity is here viewed not as a corpus of historical and dogmatic statements which the pupil has to learn to be religious. It is an attitude of life into which he has to grow."

⁶⁸. Cox (1966) p.16.

⁶⁹. Loukes, op.cit. p.19.

⁷⁰. Ibid, p.56.

⁷¹. Spens Report (1938); Loukes comments: "Germany had been revived by an ideal: the Aryan religion had wrought a revolution in conduct; it had had, demonstrably and undeniably, 'a powerful effect on life and character'. Was the counter-ideal to mobilize the energies and command the dedication of the British people? The Germans had, when they began their revival, nothing but belief: where was the belief behind the British way of life, which was now so sorely threatened? And so the Spens Report puts

we see the the state participating in the rejection of any moral reduction of doctrine: "the traditional form which the interpretation of the Bible has taken in this country is Christian...it cannot be treated merely as a part of English literature, nor can it be merged in the general study of history...the moral teaching of the New Testament is subordinate to its religious affirmations".⁷² Three years later, we discover the Anglican establishment reciprocating in kind: "There is an ever-deepening conviction that in the present struggle we are fighting to preserve those elements of human civilisation and in our own national tradition which owe their origin to Christian faith....There is evidently an urgent need to strengthen our foundations by securing that effective Christian education should be given in all schools to children, the future citizens, of our country."⁷³

By the time the Act began its progress through Parliament the tensions were more in evidence; ranks are not so tightly closed, questions of finance enter the equation, a touch of horse trading becomes evident as moral and spiritual idealism discovers the breathing space within which to be pragmatic.⁷⁴ Butler saw this clearly, though he remained happy to play the consensus game: "to some it would be an essential part of such an arrangement that doctrinal teaching should be available in all schools according to the wishes of parents.....Others consider that religious education is the responsibility of the Churches and not of the schools. The irreconcilability of these two standpoints would, in itself, make a modern act of uniformity unlikely to have a long life".⁷⁵

The true burden, though, was carried by Temple, whose task was that of reconciling the demands of the Christian Gospel with the need to lead an established church within a secular society. Of the distinction between Christianity and Christendom he was clear from an early age: "the Church militant here and now on

religious education in the forefront, as the focus of national motive. The genuflection now is to the altar of individual development; the *persuasion* is towards tradition: 'the national tradition in its concrete individuality must...be the basis of an effective education'. Religious education and physical education then become the first subjects of the curriculum" (op. cit. p.22).

⁷². Ibid. p.22.

⁷³. William Temple, quoted in Loukes, op.cit. p.23.

⁷⁴. cf. Temple (1942) p.66: "to fail here on the grounds of the large expenditure would be a national sin"; Loukes, op.cit. p.19:"the necessity of compromise, or the desire to collect within the public sector the 'plant' and 'personnel' controlled by the churches."

⁷⁵. Loukes, op.cit. p.23, quoting Butler during the moving of the Second Reading of the 1944 Education Act, 19th January 1944.

earth is a society only half complete, and consisting of members who are also members of the secular and still half-pagan societies which make up Christendom, half pagan, because the standards of our social, commercial, and political life are not even professedly the standards of Christ".⁷⁶ His solution was not disestablishment, but the osmosis and penetration of Christianity into secular society. Thus Iremonger: "to widen that sense of citizenship and to Christianize it had been the burden of what he had said and taught for thirty years".⁷⁷

From this starting point Temple evolved his educational policy, masterminding the confessional consensus, not through ignorance but with eyes wide open: "our main business is, not surely to be fighting a rearguard action in perpetual retreat till we are driven off the field by the competition of the resources of the State, but to take care that we are interpenetrating with our influence all that the State itself is doing".⁷⁸ This, in spite of the contradictions within society, effectively underpinned the confessional consensus with his Christian vision of education: "education should throughout be inspired by faith in God and find its focus in worship",⁷⁹ "we are not training children according to their own true nature or in relation to their true environment unless we are training them to trust in God",⁸⁰ "education is only adequate and worthy when it is itself religious...there is no possibility of neutrality...therefore our ideal for the children of our country is the ideal for truly religious education."⁸¹

Thus our expectations are fulfilled: an investigation of the basic contours of confessionalism reveal a concept of religion that forecloses the problem of truth, maintained by a hermeneutic of social inculcation and justified, at least in part, by the desire to maintain social stability and develop a good life. Locke's educational framework has been utilized to support a model of religious education that has retained its hold on Christian orthodoxy and yet has still been able to function within a modern world view. As such, confessionalism stands at the dawn of educational liberalism. For all its good intentions, confessionalism's foundations were always of sand, always misjudging the strength of the Enlightenment legacy to grasp its birthright. Only a political consensus, that evolved in full consciousness, stands

76. Baker (1946) p.159.

77. Iremonger (1948) p.578.

78. Quoted in Iremonger, op.cit. p.571.

79. Temple, op.cit. p.73.

80. Ibid. p.69.

81. Quoted in Iremonger, op.cit. p.571.

between religious education and its liberal destination.

It was Loukes the Quaker, brought up in a tradition of non-conformist dissent, untroubled through conviction and belief by any possibility of sanctity in Church-State relationships in the modern world, who tore down the vestiges of the confessional consensus. However, his clear recognition of the fundamental problems inherent in any reconciliation of belief and modernity was swept away by the incoming liberal tidal wave whose forces he had himself unleashed. Loukes thus takes us one step closer to the emergence of modern religious education: his critique of confessionalism ironically embodied also a critique of the modern religious education that replaced it. Loukes thus provides the foundations for modern religious education whilst simultaneously undermining them.

5. Loukes and the Problem of Modernity

i) On re-reading Loukes

Hull's characterisation of Loukes' educational thought follows a fairly standard line: "a Christian nurture model along liberal and progressive lines".⁸² On such a reading his genuine achievement was twofold. Firstly, to draw attention to the hermeneutical distance between pupils' perceptions and the material content of religious education. Secondly, to place on the agenda the central importance of the pupil's own life experience for religious understanding, "drawing the teacher's attention to the psychological and sociological difficulties of pupils in understanding the language and thought forms of religion".⁸³ His failure, so this reading goes, was to allow the latter to operate as a solution to the problem of the former: by starting from the pupil's life questions a viable bridge can be built to enable the child to cross over into the realm of Christian faith. Thus such implicit religious education must, from a liberal perspective, be condemned, for "however liberal in attention, Loukes' suggestions clearly constitute a programme of Christian nurture".⁸⁴

It is the balance rather than the facts of this traditional reading of Loukes that need to be challenged; above all Loukes insists on upholding the integrity of both pupils and religion. Against liberalism he rejected the possibility of the redefinition of religious truth to bring it into line with liberal orthodoxy, whilst at the same time

⁸² Hull, J. (1984), p.29; cf. Bates (1984); Sutcliffe (1984), pp.163f.

⁸³ Sealey (1985), pp.45f.

⁸⁴ Bates, *op.cit.* p.80.

insisting on the autonomy of the pupil. The result being that the path from student experience to appropriation of religion is for Loukes highly problematic, since it concerns that very dilemma that modernity had thrown out to religion. At times Loukes' appears agnostic as to whether such a journey is indeed possible, and if for him the final destination *is* orthodox Christianity it is precisely because -- given his non-liberal perspective -- here is to be found not a parochial concern with conversion and nurture but the reality of ultimate truth.

ii) The problem of hermeneutical distance

Teenage Religion marked the effective recognition of the reality of the hermeneutical distance between religion and modernism, together with the failure of the confessional consensus to address the issue, as it "reported on the confusion and ambivalence of mind and heart created among fourteen-year-olds by their religious education. They were confused.....rather than hostile, ambivalent rather than rejecting. The subject matter they agreed, was interesting: the manner and method were 'totally boring'." ⁸⁵ Fundamental to the solution of this dilemma was Loukes' insistence that "religious education should be conducted in an atmosphere of realism and relevance". ⁸⁶

Pupils of secondary school age are at a stage when they are beginning to construct their own perspectives on reality, approaching received tradition with a combination of acceptance and scepticism, starting to crystallize into coherent structures their perceptions and speculations about 'the mystery of life'. As such we would expect them to be moving towards a level of religious literacy "from an individual patch of ground where they feel their feet or are conscious that they are unsure". ⁸⁷ "By fourteen, then, we may expect children -- even less able children -- to be capable of 'autonomy' in religious ideas." ⁸⁸ The failure to bridge the hermeneutical distance is not to fail to nurture successfully, but to fail to achieve such autonomous religious literacy: "we must view with equal alarm a religious education that results in a total inability to think about religion. The orthodox appealing to one authority and

⁸⁵. Loukes, op.cit. pp.11-12; cf. Loukes (1961).

⁸⁶. Loukes (1961) p.11.

⁸⁷. Ibid. p.89; the whole passage reads: "we are dealing with people who have begun to accept or reject teaching, to interpret experience and to speculate about the mystery of life from an individual patch of ground where they feel their feet or are conscious that they are unsure. The particles of their thought are beginning to crystallize into structure, their minds are beginning to 'have a view'."

⁸⁸. Ibid. p.100.

the atheists appealing to another are in no better case than the bewildered, trying hard to think but denied the tools of thought."⁸⁹

Loukes accepts Goldman's "suspicion that when children hear their elders talk about God, they not only fail to understand, but so radically misunderstand that their whole view of reality may be distorted for life".⁹⁰ However, he finds Goldman's solution, that the problem lies in the intellectual immaturity of pupils, their undeveloped minds not yet ready for the complexities of religious language, as only "suggestive though not so conclusive".⁹¹ For Loukes the problem is more fundamental, rooted in modernity itself rather than in the nature of cognitive development. "The problem is not 'Are they ready for an adult presentation of religion?' but 'Has an adult religion any point for a fourteen-year-old?'"⁹² The question is internal to the nature of theological language itself: how can religious language have meaning in a modern context? The issue is one not of understanding but of truth. Loukes' concern is whether a child's experience can be illuminated by religious ideas, whether there can be any connection between the condition of adolescence within the Enlightenment legacy and the condition of humanity expressed theologically. "We are failing to convey through the study of the Bible what we ourselves believe the Bible to say."⁹³ Loukes' language of 'condition' and 'experience' is given an unambiguous realist meaning: his concern is not whether religious language may be accepted as being 'meaningful', but whether it can justly claim to concern what is 'true'. The issue that is central here is that of the reductionism inherent in religious language as appropriated in a modernist context: "We have, in the last thirty years, become frightened of using words that do not refer to some kind of sense experience, or to public, openly demonstrable techniques of thought that relate, in their beginning or in their end, to 'things'."⁹⁴

The key question is "how to convey to the young that our 'pictures' of God are all analogical, how to make statements that intelligent men will, whether they agree or not, take seriously. The gulf between public religious language and the daily language that we use for our ordinary communication is now so great that non-

89. Loukes (1965), p.12.

90. Loukes (1963a), p.4.

91. Ibid. p.4.

92. Loukes (1961), p.100.

93. Loukes (1963a), p.5.

94. Ibid. p.5.

believers may be forgiven if they think that Christians are hypocrites, not, in the old sense, of pretending to virtues they do not practise, but in the sense of using language at second hand about what they do not understand for themselves".⁹⁵

Thus the hermeneutical distance is understood as both the result and reflection of the tension between the transcendence tendencies of religious orthodoxy and the immanent tendencies of the Enlightenment critique of religion. The problem facing religious education was essentially the problem of modernity, not of an inadequate teaching that lacked understanding of the cognitive development of children's minds, their level of maturity and hence their 'readiness for religion'. For Loukes the issue is one of metaphysical truth rather than hermeneutical meaning; he offers "evidence of the disturbance of faith by the secular spirit".⁹⁶

iii) Loukes' critique of confessionalism

In the light of this, it comes as no surprise that Loukes' critic of confessionalism in the first part of *New Ground in Christian Education*⁹⁷ focuses not on the familiar liberal criticism in terms of content (its failure to give attention to non-Christian religions) and process (its indoctrinatory nature), but rather seeks to further polarize the tension between the moral and doctrinal readings of Christianity. He seeks to drive a wedge between Christianity and Christendom, motivated by a concern for the integrity of both. "Religious belief is concerned first with truth and only later with moral consequences....if most of our boys and girls are in fact going to reject the Christian metaphysic when they leave school will they not also reject the Christian ethic?"⁹⁸

It is precisely in its failure to acknowledge the reality of religious truth as problematic that leads to the religious illiteracy Loukes describes. In reflecting upon pupils' responses it is just this issue of theological realism that he turns to. The material content and structure of his questions invite response on this level. See, for example, the sequence of possible responses made available to pupils asked to comment on the doctrine of creation: "I firmly believe that God created the world and everything in it.....I cannot believe the world happened by accident: there must be a God.....People like to think God made the world, but they can't prove it.....nobody

⁹⁵. Ibid. p.5.

⁹⁶. Loukes (1965), p.70.

⁹⁷. Loukes (1965).

⁹⁸. Ibid. pp. 76, 104.

created the world: it just happened by chance."⁹⁹ Loukes notes the disparity between the generally 'orthodox' (in Christian terms) replies to questions about incarnation when compared with a broader variety of responses to questions about creation. "The radical difference between the two issues lies not inside the teaching situation but outside it: on television, the press and weekly journalism, in the whole climate of opinion, where the creation issue is repeatedly discussed, while the doctrine of the incarnation is ignored."¹⁰⁰ Where the tension between modernity and religion has become part of a public debate responses are both more diverse, better informed and thought through in greater depth; where the tension has been ignored in public debate responses tend to offer orthodox linguistic assent, but with little depth of understanding or interest. For Loukes then the problem of religion and modernity is at one and the same time its solution, through the taking up into the educational forum the reality of the problem.

With its concern for clarity and security, linked with a concern for tolerance, and neutrality, it is not surprising that liberalism found in Loukes' battle to establish the integrity of Christian truth claims, and his placing of the divergence between these claims and modernity as the heart of the problem of religious education, a legacy it could not appropriate. Rather, appropriation is extended only to that area in which liberal religious education *did* find something of value in Loukes' work, namely the shift to the subject and the designation of the experience of the child as the vital centre of the religious education process.

In the liberal framework such experience was read as essentially disembodied, a pre-linguistic space, constituted by the characteristics of feeling, subjectivity, autonomy and presence. For liberalism the key concern was relevance: the demonstration that religion, and specifically religion in an experiential-expressive structure, could be appropriated by, and so come to possess a viable meaning for, the pupil. Loukes' use of the language of 'experience' is, however, used explicitly in a non-liberal form; its background is to be found not in romanticism but in Loukes' Quakerism. He is at pains to protect such language from just the misinterpretation it was given, and is aware above all of the danger of an existential reading of 'experience'. For Loukes 'experience' is the result of embodiment in the world, it is experience within culture, tradition, language and truth. Fox's assertion of the primacy of religious experience, the "assertion of the supreme authority of the Inner Light of Christ in the heart of the believer,"¹⁰¹ is to be read realistically and is not subject to an

⁹⁹. Ibid. p.68.

¹⁰⁰. Ibid. p.69.

¹⁰¹. cf. Bates, op.cit. p.76.

anthropological reductionism. Loukes is not a dualist: the 'inner life of Christ' has its source not in authentic self-understanding but in revelation, the latter proceeds the former. "We must be ready to describe *his [God's] impact upon us* in language so human, so full of experiential meaning, so personal that they recognise in our talk something they have known but not understood in their encounter with life."¹⁰²

Religious education for Loukes is concerned with a personal quest, but this is a quest within which meaning cannot be separated from truth. It is concerned with the development of authentic self-understanding, with the deepening integrity of the ego, and such development and deepening can for Loukes take place only in terms of the self's relationship with external reality and ultimate objective truth. There is no autonomous 'inner space' within which an individual enjoys the autonomy to construct her or his own meaning: freedom consists not of freedom from the world, rather it concerns freedom for a correct relationship in and for reality. Hence Loukes can refer to "this cardinal principle, that pupils should be personally and actively concerned with reality".¹⁰³ Loukes' personalism is holistic and realistic in its focus, to read it as dualistic and anti-realistic is inappropriate. We see here the roots of the charge of indoctrination levelled against Loukes. There can be no doubt as to his insistence on the integrity of the pupil as an autonomous rational, ethical and spiritual individual in the best Kantian sense, and to read Loukes as a particularly artful Christian indoctrinator is to misrepresent. Replace the language of 'Christianity' with 'ultimate truth' in his writings and in terms of actual educational methodology and process and Loukes can stand alongside the most enlightened liberal. If his personal integrity means that his hermeneutic of faith held priority over an enlightenment hermeneutic of suspicion, then at least this is openly acknowledged. Education is the appropriation of truth with personal integrity, and this requires open and informed dialogue. In Loukes' case, Christianity and truth are one and the same, but his educational model and the challenge he throws out to contemporary Christianity do not require this identification.

Religious education thus becomes the attempt to reach an informed and literate understanding of the place of the self in the universal and ultimate order of things. Loukes is aware of the problems he faces here: "the crux of the problem of religious education thus becomes the problem with which the contemporary theological debate is concerned: How can we talk about God in natural or secular terms?"¹⁰⁴ He is unwilling to compromise Christian orthodoxy, and so rejects the

¹⁰². Ibid.

¹⁰³. Loukes (1965), p.98.

¹⁰⁴. Ibid. p.101.

liberal solution to his dilemma: "This does not mean that the teacher is compelled to abandon, for himself, his traditional concepts and become a 'new theologian'."¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless there must be a process of translation, explanation or even 'de-mythologizing': the content of this process is not developed beyond Loukes' initial formulation of pupils' personal questions being given biblical answers. Having established the integrity of both parties he offers as a basic model for the overcoming of the hermeneutical divide a form of Socratic dialogue. His growing agnosticism as to its viability becomes increasingly apparent after the brash confidence displayed in *Teenage Religion*. If his Quakerism convinces him that modernism and Christian orthodoxy are not incompatible, he suggests no more -- and no less -- than intelligent, attentive, informed dialogue across the divide.

Thus the challenge to the confessional consensus comes initially from orthodox Christianity, seeking to regain the integrity of Christian truth in the face of Christendom's ethical reductionism. In so far as the traditionalist-progressive polarity is already in operation within confessionalism, in the form of Locke's traditionalism, the orthodox critique represents a critique of the Enlightenment tradition itself. Our task then is twofold: i) in the next chapter, to show how the background of the metaphysical, theological and educational themes of the Enlightenment legacy, as outlined in the first three chapters of this thesis came together to produce the current liberal consensus in religious education, in spite of the nature of the Christian critique of confessionalism; ii) in the second part of this work to consider the viability of a form of religious education that can move forward this critique against the background of the fragmentation of modernism and the ensuing polarization of western thought into post-modern and critical realistic forms.

¹⁰⁵. Ibid. p.101.

Chapter Four

Religious Education and Modernity: the Liberal Consensus

Chapter Four considers modern religious education since 1944, and defends the thesis that it is dependent upon the philosophical, religious and educational contours of modernism outlined in the preceding chapters: i) the controlling drive within modernist religious education is identified as the desire for legitimation within modernism; ii) Goldman, Smart and Hay are identified as key figures in the debate, representing respectively implicit, phenomenological and spiritual forms of modern religious education; iii) each in turn is shown to be dependent upon the experiential-expressive model of religion, a romantic hermeneutic, the dialectic of traditionalist-progressive educational philosophy, and further each introduces a foreclosure of the question of realistic religious truth; iv) it is concluded that modern religious education fails to do justice to the integrity of religion, operating instead to reinforce an uncritical and paternalistic acceptance of the legacy of modernism.

1. Dualism, Legitimation and the Identity of Religious Education

The standard reading of the development of religious education following its emancipation from confessionalism pictures a tension between two contrasting traditions. Their linguistic formulation, as 'implicit' and 'explicit' approaches to religious education was provided by the Schools Council.¹ Such language points to,

¹. Schools Council (1971).

on the one hand an 'explicit' cultural-intellectual concern with the phenomenology of religion, and on the other an 'implicit' turn to the self, labelled variously the existential, experiential or spiritual dimensions.² Thus Cox contrasts 'understanding religion' and 'religious understanding': the former involves "a relatively detached knowledge of the externals of faith...accessible to any rational being...objective, academic...it will probably not significantly alter the student's lifestyle"; the latter "is more penetrating, requiring experience of the quality of a faith's beliefs and practices, an emotional response to its cult objects, and an ability to perceive and respond approvingly to its ultimate function.....those who so involve themselves say that their understanding of their religion is of a different quality from that of those who stand outside and look on".³

i) Dualism and identity

The polarity offers the foundational structures within which discussion of religious education takes place. Thus, for example, Grimmitt's early work constructs a conceptual framework that distinguishes between the experiential and dimensional approach to teaching religion.⁴ The former is concerned with using the child's feelings, actions and experiences to develop the experiential foundations necessary for understanding religion by addressing themes of existential depth, symbol and language, and situation; the latter is concerned with the presentation of explicit religious phenomena, through the dimensions of experience, mythology, ritual, society, ethics and doctrine. In similar vein Holley distinguishes sharply between the 'religious dimension of personal life' and 'religious understanding': "What makes the religious dimension so particular is that it is through and through spiritual."⁵ The physical accompaniments, intellectual constructions and rationalizations of religion are only of instrumental value as aids and guides to the spiritual life.

To develop an adequate typology of this polarity would entail a detailed retelling of the history of contemporary religious education: here we can do little more than give a flavour of the nature of the various debates.

On the explicit side we see the attempt to protect religious phenomena from those who use the word religion "adjectivally to qualify the noun 'education' [as] an umbrella word including within its scope aesthetics, ethics, philosophy, teleology,

² cf. Attfield (1984), Day (1985).

³ Cox (1983a) p.5.

⁴ Grimmitt (1973).

⁵ Holley (1978), p. 48.

humanitarianism, and all aspects of human experience which invoke any type of poetic, artistic or mystical apprehension".⁶ Religious phenomena is grounded in religious experience that is *sui generis*, "a distinct form of experience with its own form and structure".⁷ "Fundamental to this approach is the belief that religious experience is a distinct form of experience with its own essence and structure; from which it follows accordingly, that ordinary experience cannot be the starting point of religious experience."⁸ Implicit here may be seen the notion of a liberal universalist theology.⁹

At the other extreme we find attempts to protect the implicit dimension of religious experience, from what is seen as the empty formalism of external religious culture. Thus Wilson argues for the centrality of the education of the religious emotions: "the metaphysical or doctrinal superstructure is, in one very real sense, unimportant in itself: it is the kind of emotions to which it has been witness that we have to detect and educate".¹⁰ Similarly Holley argues that "religious education is not primarily concerned with the Bible.....nor is it simply concerned with imparting information about the religions of the world.....Religiously educational activities provoke intellectual understanding of the spirituality of personality in all its extensiveness and dynamism".¹¹

Between these extremes we discover a variety of attempts to draw lines of connection between the divergent poles. Thus for some the true nature of the implicit-explicit division is, in the tradition of Loukes,¹² a fundamentally hermeneutical one: implicit experience provides the necessary preparatory grounding for an understanding of the explicit phenomenological dimension of religion; only by starting from the child's experience can a hermeneutical bridge to the reality of religion be constructed.¹³ The failure to construct such a bridge is then put down to the poverty

⁶. Schools Council, *op.cit.* p.36.

⁷. Surin (1980), p.99.

⁸. *Ibid.* p.100.

⁹. cf. Bates (1994). Whilst phenomenological religious education deliberately avoided any specific comparative study of religion for fear of the retention of an imperialistic religious ideology, it now seems clear that the ontological implications of such neutrality are precisely the emergence of a universal ideology grounded in liberal categories of openness and toleration, and feeding on universal theological programmes; cf. Hick (1989), Hick & Knitter (1987), Smith, W.C. (1978) (1981).

¹⁰. Wilson (1971), p.171.

¹¹. Holley, *op.cit.* pp.65f.

¹². See above, pp.92ff.

¹³. Thus Goldman (1965), Grimmitt, *op.cit.*, Hull (1975).

of pupils' experience, and religious education then takes on a two-tier form: firstly sensitization of pupils to the depth of ordinary experience, secondly the hermeneutical transition towards explicit religion.¹⁴

Others seek a material rather than hermeneutical connection. One approach here is to distinguish between general experience and specifically religious experience.¹⁵ The tradition of psychological investigation of such experiences has provided both a justification and a working vocabulary -- focused on the language of 'spirituality' -- for this approach.¹⁶ Others, in different ways, seek a holistic reconciliation between the two traditions, seeking a mutual interpenetration at both formal and hermeneutical levels.¹⁷

ii) Dualism and legitimation

Despite the tensions between these traditions, the remarkable stability within this polarity led Day to reflect whether indeed liberal religious education was faced with "a permanent identity crisis".¹⁸ This crisis has its roots on a structural level: the polarization between the implicit and explicit traditions marks the framework within which critical debate within liberalism takes place, and its cutting edge is to be found precisely at the point of interface between the two traditions.

Cox understands, correctly, that the root cause of the tension inherent in these debates lies precisely in religious education's move into a liberal context.¹⁹

14. cf. eg. Cox (1983b), pp. 39-47; Harris (1988).

15. cf. Surin, op.cit. for discussion of this point.

16. Hay (1985), Hammond and Hay (1990), cf. for critique Thatcher (1991).

17. Contrast the widely divergent approaches of Grimmer (1987) and Hudson (1973a) here; for the former cf. Greer (1988).

18. Day, op. cit.

19. Cox (1983a) p.7: "In the past two decades religious education and theories of religious education have been *greatly modified* because it has *had* to operate in a greatly modified culture. It has been *trying to adapt* itself, *so that it makes sense* in the new, harsher, diverse, humanistic and acquisitive society that has emerged; it has been *trying to make allowance* for a wider, and maybe truer, appreciation of the insights of other faiths and belief systems; it has been *trying to meet the demands of an inductive* and child-centred education and to assuage a phobia of indoctrination. This adaptation, necessary beyond doubt, and tentative to any who try to be alert to all the variable opinions of the diverse society, has produced an element of confusion." The italics are mine, and highlight the essential search for accommodation and legitimation the process involves for Cox: '*modification*' requires the attempt to '*adapt*', '*make allowances*', '*meet the demands*', that it '*had*' to happen is '*inevitable*'.

However, his positive reading of the nature and necessity of the liberalisation of religious education is given a more negative reading by Day, for whom the dilemma of identity within the implicit-explicit polarity is the direct result of the accommodation to modernity:

"the identity crisis of modern religious education lies in the uneasy co-existence of these two traditions.....it is the search for general approval which is.....the real theme of the years since 1944. What appears to be a discussion about the nature of religious education is really about curriculum politics.....in this search for survival and status, the method of legitimation becomes all important."²⁰

The polarity within religious education is a direct inheritance from the critical Enlightenment tradition. In its search for hermeneutical distance that is the hallmark of critical thought this tradition isolated the self from the world and from inherited culture. The resulting Cartesian anxiety produced a hermeneutic of suspicion that sought security by driving a wedge between fact and value. The inability to turn this hermeneutic in on itself, and so produce a 'suspicion of suspicion' in which balanced judgement along the lines suggested by Lonergan's 'transcendental precepts' -- "be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible"²¹ -- would have become a possibility, resulted in the hypostatisation of this hermeneutical structure and the production of an implicit ontological metaphysic.

The triumph of empiricism over idealism, driven by this metaphysic, produced a materialistic naturalism, atomistic and reductionist in both form and content. This empiricism threatened the reductionism of the self into purely behavioural categories. The retrieval of idealism in the form of romanticism's legitimation of the internal freedom and autonomy of the self, in which categories of experiential aesthetics replaced idealism's categories of rationalism itself developed into an implicit ontology of presence. Thus the post-Enlightenment tradition developed a dualistic ontology, holding in tension the polarities of the inner self and the external world. The function of liberal politics was essentially to mediate between these poles: whilst human action must be informed by external facts, the individual must remain free to hold his or her beliefs autonomously; the principle of toleration, that the limits of the freedom of the self are rooted in the demand that the freedom of others may not be curtailed -- given its classic statement in Kant's categorical imperative -- provided the cement that bound together empiricism and its romantic mirror image.

20. Day, *op.cit.* p.59; cf. Wright (1993).

21. Lonergan (1973) p.20.

Religion sought its legitimation within this ontology through the development of the experiential-expressive model of religion: the external phenomenological reality of religious culture offers objective factual truth, the internal religious experience provides the grounds for the freedom and justification of religious belief. In seeking accommodation to, and legitimation within, modernism religious education merely had to retrace for itself, and adopt the results of, religious liberalism. In doing so it inherited the internal/self - external/world polarity created by the Enlightenment. Its identity crisis thus lay precisely in its attempt to discover legitimation within liberalism.

Given its celebration of its turn to modernity as genuine achievement and the priority of its desire for legitimation, it is not surprising that it has demonstrated an inability to carry out any fundamental critic of its structural assumptions, and lacks any belief that its -- or any other -- theological resources themselves could form the basis of any deconstruction of the liberal paradigm. In true Faustian style it sacrifices its theological soul on the altar of modernism and seeks its salvation in its application for liberal citizenship. Its debates, as we saw earlier, take on the nature of Wittgenstein's flies trapped in a fly bottle.

In what follows the attempt will be made to unpack religious education's desire for accommodation and legitimation within liberalism by tracing the path of a number of key themes: the utilization of the experiential-expressive religious model; the adoption of a liberal hermeneutic; the acceptance of the liberal political agenda; and the foreclosure of the problem of theological truth.

2. Goldman and Implicit Religion ²²

Goldman stands side by side with Loukes in his perception of the adequate assimilation of religion as being the central problem faced by religious education.²³ Their perceptions of the root cause of this problem though are fundamentally different.

²² Primary sources: Goldman (1964), (1965). Secondary sources: Greer (1980), Hyde (1984), Langdon (1969), Moran (1983), Peatling (1977), Slee (1986a), (1986b), (1987), (1992).

²³ Thus, eg. Slee (1992), "Goldman's study was motivated by a sense of profound dissatisfaction and disillusionment, shared by many of his contemporaries, with the state of religious education in England.....far from promoting the religious sensibilities of children, the diet of Bible study and church history required by the syllabuses was resulting in boredom, confusion, and even rejection of religion by the majority of pupils. Goldman set out to examine the causes of this 'failure of the 1944 Education Act' in the psychological development of the pupil", pp.133f.

For Loukes the issue is an intrinsic one, focused on the legitimacy crisis faced by religious ontological truth claims within an immanent paradigm of reality, whilst for Goldman it is rooted in the extrinsic hermeneutical question of the possibility of a viable religious understanding and perception. Religion is misunderstood not because religion itself is a problem, but because there is a disparity between the child's cognitive ability and the way in which religion is presented to him or her. Thus the problem of the clash of theology with modernity becomes the problem of the pupil's cognitive ability to understand theological statements; this in turn becomes the problem of inadequate teaching, without due regard to the stage of the child's cognitive development. In so far as the implicit approach accepted the logic of Goldman's definition of religion as being grounded in pre-verbal experience the problem could be translated a stage further, into that of a lack of sensitivity within children to the depth of religious experience.²⁴

i) Linguistic confusion

Goldman assumes throughout that the crisis of legitimacy is overcome so long as we understand that religious language does not make realistic statements about the physical world in itself, but rather points beyond this world by expressing an experience of the physical world as a limited totality, in the process invoking the transcendent or divine.²⁵ The world is a closed causal system within which the divine may be apprehended, but cannot act. Goldman thus adopts religious liberalism's attempts to legitimize religious belief without transgressing the structures of causal science, and takes as his point of reference an assumed solution to the problem of theological legitimacy.

Goldman assumes that the root of language is univocal in character, moving from the perception of sensation to its naming and conceptualizing, and further that it is primarily the responsibility of the individual to achieve this.²⁶ He fails to consider

²⁴. cf. eg. Cox (1983b), pp. 39-47.

²⁵. "Religious thinking is the process of generalising from various experiences, previous perceptions and already held concepts to an interpretative concept of the activity and nature of the divine.....in the literature of religion, especially in the Bible.....the language is almost entirely based upon analogy and metaphor, inferring from other non-religious experience the nature of the divine.....religious thinking is, therefore, dependent upon understanding the original experience upon which the analogy or metaphor is based", Goldman (1964) p.14.

²⁶. "The child has his first sensory experience of the material world in which things are at first undifferentiated. He then forms general percepts and concepts based upon these experiences, symbolising them, first in images and later, when he learns to use

the possibility that language is multivocal, assuming a variety of forms, functions and processes, or that it might be the product of the community that the individual indwells, and so be acquired through social interaction within culture and tradition.²⁷ On the latter view, the learning of language proceeds through trial and error, taking the form of a socialization into communal language. On this model the occurrence of misunderstanding forms an essential part of the learning process. Goldman links the transparency of language with the requirement of clarity and certainty, and hence distrusts the possibility of misunderstanding functioning as a positive hermeneutical tool. Hence his turn to the child-centred tradition of Rousseau and its notion that education proceeds by avoiding confusion, following Piaget in replacing the former's fundamental category of naturalistic morality with the latter's categories of language and cognition.²⁸

Religious education must be essentially negative, protecting the child from any misunderstanding brought on by premature immersion in communal language, and

language, in verbal images or words". Goldman (1964) p.14. A distinction is made between materials, motives, processes and abilities for thinking, however all essentially assume that the role of language is fundamentally to name, with progressively abstract sophistication, objects in the world as they are derived from sense experience. This equation of language use with ostensive definition has been fundamentally refuted by Wittgenstein (1968a).

27. Two basic factors in Goldman's work follow from this. i) The claim that children must be understood as being essentially a-religious within the stage of concrete thinking, cf. Moran (1983) p.188. ii) That biblical stories are approached in isolation from their hermeneutical context, both within the biblical text itself, and within the ongoing tradition of interpretation. "By de-contextualizing the narratives and heightening the miraculous and supernatural elements in the stories Goldman has radically shifted the emphasis of the biblical texts", Slee (1986) p.89. Hull (1992) develops this critique by pointing out how Goldman adopts a structuralist rather than historical hermeneutic by his revision of the text referring to Moses and the burning bush (Exod.2.23), creating "a story that was already prepared for the structuralist interpretation of what the children would say, and which also prepared the children to find in the story a problem of cause-and-effect rationality within a matter-of-fact world," p.217. The consequence is the negation of theological and political meaning: "the result was a story that was no longer about radical historical change leading to a realignment of power on the part of the oppressed...the theological language is neutralized by the reification of such 'invisible institutions' as 'the concrete' and 'the abstract'"(ibid.).

28. ie. While Rousseau saw the problem of education in moral terms, as the avoidance of contamination of the child through fallen society, Piaget saw the problem in cognitive terms, as the avoidance of contamination through the premature misuse of fallen language. The question of Goldman's relationship with Piaget is a matter of ongoing debate, of particular interest here is the suggestion that Piaget's work informed the specific structures of Goldman's understanding of liberal Protestant religion. Thus, Slee (1986) p. 87: "Goldman simply assumed the applicability of a Piagetian model of cognitive development and a liberal Protestant model of biblical interpretation to the analysis of religious thinking, and employed these models with very little attention to their functions and inter-relationships."

thus freeing him or her to develop religious language in a form appropriate to their stage of cognitive development. Goldman's empiricist notion of language as construction via abstraction from sense experience, rather than as the product of communal interaction leads to a reductionist grasp of linguistic function: the role of language is essentially to bridge the gap between mind and world by naming sensation and constructing a linguistic model of reality out of the raw material of names. Linguistic truth is thus understood in terms of the convergence between verbal formulations and sense experience; it follows that theological truth must be of a different order, an expression of the totality of experience rather than its parts.²⁹ The ability to name the whole is at one and the same time the ability to name the divine. Goldman is conscious throughout of the poverty of language within this role.³⁰ The claim that religious misunderstanding is rooted in the confusion between linguistic and theological truth follows on logically.

ii) Conceptual confusion

To Goldman's linguistic inadequacy is added a conceptual confusion. He follows Piaget's model of the progression of thinking from concrete to abstract categories, but conflates material content with cognitive process. A Piagetian reading of the development of religious thinking would run along the following lines. Language is the giving of linguistic form to sense experience. A language able to abstract the essentials of such experience -- and so speak not just of the immediate and concrete experience of the present, but through reversibility of thought to link present experience with past and future experience, and that leading into the ability to utilize abstract categories of thought -- constitutes a far more efficient linguistic tool, and reflects a level of formal operations that is only achievable at a particular stage of development. Interpretation of the biblical texts that refer to divine action in the world would thus, at the formal level, abstract from individual pericopes an abstract interpretative language. A specific healing is thus given the linguistic terminology of miracle, allowing hermeneutical links with other similar events, or an account of transcendent divine intervention is linked with others to produce the language of

29. cf. note 25 above.

30. "In the last resort, religion is a mystery and speaks of matters and experiences which are not easily communicable. Some religious experiences are so profound and personal and mysterious that it is doubtful if they are communicable at all, except through the emotional language of the arts", Goldman (1965) pp.2f.

providence. If we follow this route we arrive at a theological vocabulary clustered around the concept of mythology, understood in the technical sense of statements of transcendent action within an immanent world.

Interpretation of miracles as 'magic', the ability of an agent in the world to manipulate the physical environment through non-causal means thus becomes illegitimate, since the texts are clearly concerned with mythology, the actions of a transcendent agent on the material world. We thus discover ourselves faced with Loukes' ontological problem of religious truth, of the reality or otherwise of a transcendent agent and of the legitimacy of the positive affirmation of the same within an immanent modernist context. Cognitive abstraction and reversibility of thought thus do no more than provide a clarity of language through which the hermeneutical problems of theology may be more adequately approached.

Goldman replaces this concern for cognitive process with a concern for material content and religious meaning. He equates Piaget's notion of the abstraction of a general linguistic terminology from particular sense experience with his own notion of theological abstraction of an apprehension of totality and divinity by such generalised language. The abstraction from miraculous stories to the concept of the mythical, which as we have seen brings us face to face with the problem of the legitimacy of religious statements, is thus subject to a further hermeneutical analysis that is dependent on his liberal Protestant discovery of a totality of experiential meaning behind the particularism of the text. Its primary function is to bypass the problem of legitimacy. He thus confuses cognitive process with the material content of thought. The chief cause of this confusion lies in his acceptance of an experiential-expressive model of religion, linked with an apologetic desire to locate the problem of religious legitimation within the constellation of child-language-learning rather than the constellation of immanence-transcendence-truth.

iii) Theological confusion

Goldman understands religion as being grounded in sense experience, but stresses the centrality of a pre-linguistic emotional and aesthetic understanding of such experience.³¹ Such non-linguistic experience is not to be equated with a direct mystical apprehension of divinity, there is no innate religious capacity. It follows that "religious thinking is no different in mode and method from non-religious thinking".³²

³¹. cf. above, note 30.

³². Goldman (1964) p.3.

All experience, when brought to expression whether through art or language, is subjected to a second order construction. What makes the expression of religious experience different from other experience is precisely the ability to perceive experience as related to the totality of all experience, and hence to the divine: he quotes with approval William James to the effect that "religion is the feelings, the acts and experiences of individual men.....so far as they *apprehend themselves* to stand in relation to *whatever they may consider* the divine".³³

Thus religion is for Goldman the apprehension of totality within normal experience. Religious language, it follows, concerns the attempt to give such apprehension verbal formulation. Goldman makes clear his belief that language is only a limited tool in the process of religious expression: the more expression can move from the particular to the general and abstract, the more it is able to fulfil its function. Thus poetry will be more effective than religious doctrine, and abstract art and music more appropriate still. "Religious percepts and concepts are not based upon direct sensory data, but are formed from other perceptions and conceptions of experience....religious thinking is the process of generalising from various experiences, previous perceptions and already held concepts to an interpretative concept of the activity and nature of the divine."³⁴ He thus superimposes Piaget's concern for cognitive development from the concrete to the abstract upon his own concept of the progression of religious expression from the general to the holistic. The abstraction of theological language from religious texts is thus expanded to embrace the abstraction from theological language of the perception of the divine.

iv) Hermeneutical confusion

Goldman's linguistic, conceptual and theological confusions are thus held together within an experiential-expressive framework: religious expression whether in linguistic or non-linguistic form has its roots in a particular interpretation of sense experience that relates all aspects of such experience to a divine totality which is at one and the same time the apprehension of the world as a limited whole. To understand religion is to be able to pass through this process for oneself. At a prelinguistic stage the exploration of aesthetic experience, nature and the like has the desired aim of allowing the child to apprehend or abstract a divine totality within

³³. Ibid. p.4.

³⁴. Ibid. p.14.

the plurality of experience.³⁵ At the linguistic stage the child must be able, firstly, to abstract language from direct experience and go on from there to abstract out a totality from this very abstracted language.

In thus arriving at the paradigm of 'implicit religious education' Goldman imposes an experiential-expressive model of religion as the working framework for religious education, whilst at one and the same time bypassing the ontological problem of theological truth. This merely reflects the fact that the hermeneutical function of the experiential-expressive model is precisely to legitimate religious belief in the face of the challenge of immanentism. The heart of religion thus lies not in the expression of external reality, but in the possibility of the self achieving an internal subjective apprehension and understanding of the totality of things.

35. There is a confusion within Goldman's thought at this point, though one capable of resolution. He clearly sees the turn to language as necessary on an educational level: "The central focus of this book is upon the child's intellectual struggles to comprehend the central ideas expressed and implied in religious teaching. This focus upon the intellect is chosen because teaching involves the communication of ideas in such a way as they can be grasped intellectually by the learner. Religious teaching is not exempt from this necessity to communicate at a meaningful level, even though we must clearly recognise that understanding may be emotional as well as intellectual." (ibid. p.2) The prelinguistic stage thus may be read either *educationally* -- as a stage of preparation for religious language -- or, alternatively, *religiously* -- as a stage of exploration of that experience that will open up a pre-linguistic apprehension of divinity. Goldman (1964) offers an *educational* reading, while Goldman (1965) may be read as a broadening of the concept of education to embrace the *religious* reading. In the latter case, the confusion is overcome: the pre-linguistic stage operates both as educational preparation and religious event.

Contra Slee (1986), who reads the educational focus and religious definition as embodying dual definitions of religion. i) *Of religion as pre-conceptual experience*. Thus, "religion is continuous with 'ordinary' life, but provides a frame of reference or perspective through which ordinary life is turned into something else. The exploration of ordinary life, understood as a spiritual search or quest, is the locus of encounter with the divine who, for Goldman, appears to be best characterised by Tillich's 'infinite and inexhaustible depth and ground of all being'.....This 'frame of reference' is much more than an intellectual framework of ideas; it is rooted in personal experience and encounter" (p.87). I take this to be an accurate description of Goldman's understanding of religion. ii) *Of religion as conceptual expression*. Here "we find a very different model of religion....characterised by formal adherence to traditional patterns of religious belief and practice, measurable by the central tenets of Christian faith and the practices of church-going, Bible-reading and private prayer" (pp.87f). I take this to be not a second definition of religion, but rather the occurrence of the coming to expression of religious experience within Christian culture, and as such, of key importance for an educationalist concerned with the development of religious reason. It follows that Slee's conclusions here must be rejected, viz. "This extraordinary dualism within Goldman's model of religion receives no explanation and obscures the relationship which obtains between Goldman's research claims and his educational arguments. For whilst one model of religion underpins and validates the research enquiry, an entirely different model of religion provides the justification for the proposals of a developmental religious education." (ibid.) Goldman may be confused, but he is at least consistent in his confusion.

By adopting an experiential-expressive model of religion, together with a liberal hermeneutical model, Goldman offers a paternalistic closure of the problem of theological truth. In doing so he sets the framework of the agenda within which contemporary religious education continues to work. The single gap in this framework not set up by Goldman concerns the issue of the function of religious education within liberalism. He is aware of the problem of pluralism, but remains ambivalent about it: the interpretation of the totality of experience as experience of the divine "in our own culture is interpreted in terms of deity, and more specifically in terms of the Christian concept of God as love, revealed most fully in the historical fact of the Incarnation."³⁶ His ambivalence allows implicit religious education to be utilized as a form of neo-confessionalism.

The priority of experience over expression undercuts the material content of religious expression in the form of doctrinal formulation. What matters is not the realistic claims made by theological language, but the nature of the experience standing behind it. Doctrinal statements are thus second order constructions from first order experience. On this basis the conflicts between religious statements become marginalised -- the result of cultural relativity -- in the face of a common experience. Goldman's focus on Christianity could, thus, never claim a justification beyond that of the perceived Christian nature of society. Once religious education was forced to face the reality of religious pluralism then the shift from a monistic to a pluralistic account of religious expression was inevitable.

v) J.W.D. Smith: from neo-confessionalism to pluralism

This shift was achieved by J.W.D. Smith. It is significant that in doing so he was able to keep in place the implicit structures of religious education set in place by Goldman. All that was needed was the acknowledgement of the plurality of expressions.³⁷ Smith's fundamental concern is with the establishment of the 'good life'

³⁶. Goldman (1964) p.4.

³⁷. Smith (1969). Hull's evaluation of the contribution and central importance of Smith in the development of religious education is illuminative: "It is breaking almost entirely new ground in an attempt to establish British religious education on a neutral philosophical basis. We may even say that what Rudolph Bultmann did on the basis of Heidegger for New Testament theology, J.W.D. Smith has begun to do for religious education", quoted in Schools Council, *op.cit.* pp.39f. Bultmann's achievement was of course the translation of liberal Protestantism's experiential-expressive model into existential categories drawn from Heidegger in the apologetic attempt to legitimate his Lutheranism within modernism. Both Smith and Bultmann are committed to a form of anthropological reductionism of theological language.

through moral and religious education, and he sees this as compromised by the apparent contradictions between conflicting religious systems within society. "We must ask whether Christians and non-Christians could co-operate in a common policy for religious and moral education in state schools."³⁸ Despite the privatisation of religion in modern society, the imperatives of moral judgement bring us face to face with issues of the totality of meaning and ultimate question of the good, "to the threshold of profound questions about the nature of man and the conditions of human existence".³⁹ He seeks to provide an answer to these questions through an existentialist reading of Heidegger's picture of man's finitude and possibility, understood as constituting "the dimension of mystery in human experience".⁴⁰ "Awareness of such questions gives depth and poignancy to human living. They have their source in the very nature of human experience. Christian and non-Christian could surely agree on a common intention to recognize this dimension of mystery in educational planning."⁴¹ This experience is taken as primary to all forms of cultural expression, and thus as the cement that heals the wounds of religious diversity. True, Smith goes on to suggest that the ethical form of the dimension of mystery is that of self-forgetful love,⁴² and that "the life and death of Jesus have been the supreme example and inspiration.....in our western tradition,"⁴³ and further, that a non-partisan study of Christian origins be accepted as an element of common policy for religious education; but by then the deed has been done, and the primacy of experience over expression established.

The adoption of an experiential-expressive model of religion; of a hermeneutic that seeks to bring the pupil to fulfilment by passing beyond religious expression to an experience the totality or depth of their existence; of the denial of cognitive content to religious language as a means of avoiding the problem of religious legitimacy and so patronizing the question of religious truth; the utilization of common experience as a means of cementing together the conflicts within liberal society; all these serve to set the fundamental modernist framework for the subject. Whilst it was legitimate to play games within this framework, the framework itself was not to be trespassed upon.

³⁸. Smith. *op. cit.*, p.17.

³⁹. *Ibid.* p.41.

⁴⁰. *Ibid.* pp.43-54.

⁴¹. *Ibid.* p.54.

⁴². *Ibid.* pp.43-54.

⁴³. *Ibid.* p.54.

3. Smart and Phenomenology

In the late 1960's religious education was a discipline in search of a rationale and theoretical framework. The possibility, latent in the implicit approach, of this being provided by the formulations of liberal Protestantism was negated when Smith placed the issue of religious pluralism at the centre of the agenda. The turn to the constellation of disciplines informed by a secular approach to religion -- under the broad heading of 'comparative study of religion' -- was inevitable.⁴⁴ The acknowledged founder of the *Religionswissenschaften*, the 'science of religion', Muller, had approached the subject within the rationalism of the post-Enlightenment tradition, seeking to establish "a descriptive, objective science that was free from the normative nature of theological and philosophical studies of religion".⁴⁵ The early anthropological and philological schools linked this 'objective' study with a Darwinian evolutionary framework, both -- despite their considerable differences -- seeking to discover the highest form of religion in the emergence of ethical monotheism.⁴⁶ The collapse of this evolutionary sub-structure after World War I led a fragmentation into a plurality of sub-disciplines and methodologies. "The name comparative religion was retained for many years, but the subject separated into a number of interrelated disciplines, the history, psychology and phenomenology of religion among them."⁴⁷

44. The failure of implicit religious education to provide a viable rationale for the subject due to its implicit Christian confessionalism was highlighted further by the lack of explicit religious and theological reference within this model, resulting in a reductionism in the direction of forms of moral, social and personal education; this field in turn was claimed by programmes of PSE grounded in humanistic frameworks. The adoption of religious phenomenology occurred in the face of competing, though complementary, claims by Hirst that religion was best approached in educational terms through a neo-Wittgensteinian notion of 'forms of knowledge'. The emergence of the concern with comparative study of religion within school based religious education was paralleled by contemporary developments within higher education, through the consolidation of departments of religious studies alongside departments of theology; Smart himself played a leading role in this process; cf. Hinnells (1970), Slee (1989) p.129, Schools Council (1971) pp. 21ff, 36ff.

45. Allen (1987) p.276; cf. Sharpe (1975a), (1975b) p.4f, (1987), Smart (1972).

46. Sharpe (1987): Comparative religion in the 19th Century "involved the assignment to each of a place within a scheme of progressive development, or evolution, and the assessment of their value....a desire to discover the laws by which the world of religion operated.....[it] claimed to be a science and made use of the scientific theories of the time to build up a comprehensive picture of the 'natural' history of religion on evolutionary lines", p.578.

47. Ibid. p. 579.

i) The adoption of the 'phenomenology of religion'

The distinctiveness of the phenomenology of religion within these various disciplines lay in its concern -- under the influence of both liberal Protestantism and philosophical phenomenology -- to identify the *sui generis* essence of religion that is manifested as a result of the description of religious phenomena.⁴⁸ This non-reducible essence of religious experience was understood in transcendental terms.⁴⁹ Smart's 1966 sixfold typology of religious phenomena placed them in the context of "a chain of logic from the empirical study of religion to the parahistorical".⁵⁰ By the 'parahistorical' he understood the questions raised by the disciplines of theology and philosophy of religion: of revelation, ideology and metaphysics. At the same time theology itself possesses an "inner logic that drives theology outwards"⁵¹ towards the secular religious disciplines. In other words, Smart understands phenomenology as an integral part of a logically necessary interdisciplinary approach to religious understanding, embracing both secular and theological methodologies.⁵² The fact that by 1971 this interdisciplinary chain has been reduced to phenomenology alone, and that this discipline now appears as *the* religious meta-narrative, is an event that demands explanation.

48. Smart (1970a) distinguishes typological from speculative phenomenology. This parallels Bleeker's contrast between systematic (ie. descriptive/typological) and phenomenological (ie. the investigation of the essential meanings behind religious structures). Saussure -- the 'founder' of religious phenomenology -- had seen his task as purely that of typological description. Kristensen's attack on the explicit positivistic and evolutionary evaluations within such descriptions gave rise to the question of essential meanings, understood now not in horizontal-historical terms but rather vertical-idealistic (atemporal) terms. This shift was given theoretical underpinning and focus by Husserl and philosophical phenomenology. From there the tradition from Otto, through Van der Leeuw to Eliade saw the heart of the phenomenological approach in the identification of the essential underlying essence that legitimated the description of a particular phenomena as 'religious'; on the phenomenology of religion cf. Sharpe (1975a) pp.220-250, (1975b), Allen (1987).

49. Thus: Otto refers to the numinous/numenal as the category of 'the holy' devoid of rational and ethical content, experienced as the feeling of absolute dependence (cf. Schleiermacher and the debt to liberal Protestantism) upon the 'wholly other'; Van der Leeuw speaks of humanity's relationship with ultimate power, manifested as the 'holy' or 'taboo'; Eliade roots the essential transcendental experience behind religious phenomena in the dialectic of the sacred and profane.

50. Smart (1968) p.106.

51. Ibid. p.90.

52. That Smart's interdisciplinary position (1968) is fundamental, and the Schools Council (1971) formulation that isolates the discipline of phenomenology is secondary is confirmed by the rest of Smart's authorship, cf. eg. Smart (1986), (1991). This reading of the problem assumes Smart's authorship, or at least controlling editorship, of the Schools Council Working Paper.

It is apparent that from its inception the phenomenological approach had a clear agenda regarding its nature and purpose, and that this was linked directly with the apologetic motive to legitimate the subject in a modernist context.⁵³ This agenda may be characterised as the search for legitimacy and integrity in the following spheres:⁵⁴ i) the educational justification of the subject in the face of charges of nurture and indoctrination;⁵⁵ ii) the moral development of society in a global-universal context; iii) the development of the individual pupil via openness and respect for autonomy, prior religious commitments and the right of initiation into a depth of religious understanding;⁵⁶ iv) the scientific basis of religion, through the neutral objective description of its nature; v) the religious believer's own perspective, via the recognition that at its heart religion transcends the objective, informative and factual and addresses the issue of religious value and truth.

This agenda demanded a model of religion that could offer as given a set of objective religious facts, whilst at the same time establish the possibility of the free autonomous adoption of questions of religious value. Thus Smart: "religious education must transcend the informative.....in the direction of initiation into understanding the meaning of, and into questions about the truth and worth of, religion,"⁵⁷ and, "religious studies should emphasise the descriptive historical side of religion, but need thereby to enter into dialogue with the parahistorical claims of religious and anti-religious outlooks".⁵⁸ There can be little doubt that phenomenology provided the secular discipline within religious studies most able to meet these twin demands. If Protestant liberalism imposed a pro-Christian value judgement at the expense of scientific objectivity, then the secular disciplines almost invariably combined their scientific methodologies with reductionist assumptions regarding the nature of their material. In contrast, phenomenology offered both scientific objectivity and a commitment of openness towards the possibility of a non-reductionist positive valuation of religious essence, without compromising the freedom and autonomy of the individual regarding their appropriation of the latter.⁵⁹

53. cf. Smart (1968) pp.105f, quoted verbatim in Schools Council, *op.cit.* pp.38f (cf. also pp.43ff).

54. cf. Lealman (1978) p.159, Leech (1989), Slee (1989) pp. 127f, Smart (1972), (1975).

55. Smart (1970b).

56. Leech (1989).

57. Smart (1968) p.105.

58. *Ibid.* p.106.

59. Allen (*op.cit.*) points out the apologetic nature of phenomenology: i) in terms of its relationship with 19th Century liberal Protestantism; ii) in terms of its utilization by 20th Century liberal Protestants (especially Tillich); and, iii) in terms of the

Whilst this explains the attraction of phenomenology, the argument does not fully account for the adoption of phenomenology as *universal meta-narrative* within religious education; here the pragmatic requirements of simplicity, clarity and security against a background of the need to advocate, justify and legitimate presumably supply fundamental motives.⁶⁰ The answer to this question is, at this stage of the argument, one of fine tuning and hence not central to its development. It is enough to point out that the modernist dualism of fact and value, reflected respectively in conservative and progressive models of education, and again in the objective science of religion and its subjective core value, found in phenomenology a framework broad enough to play the central role in the legitimization of religious education within a modern post-confessional setting.

ii) The legitimization of phenomenology

The phenomenology of religion, as a discipline within the *Religionswissenschaften*, espouses what is essentially an experiential-expressive reading of religion. As such its material content derives from liberal Protestantism, whilst its formal structure is that of philosophical phenomenology.

theological motivation of many of the key phenomenologists. The principle that "the phenomenologist must exercise respect, tolerance, and sympathetic understanding for all religious experience and the religious truth expressed in the data" (p.278), could for many easily involve the further step of claiming that "the phenomenologist's personal religious experience is a precondition for an empathetic understanding of the totality of religious phenomena" (p.278), and arguing for "the necessity of religious commitment, a personal religious faith, or at least personal religious experience in order for a scholar to be capable of empathy, participation and sympathetic understanding" (p.281); recently Bates, *op.cit.*, has suggested the possibility of an implicit third stage, in which tolerance grounded in religious sentiment is linked to a universalist theological position -- this would confirm the suggestion made here that phenomenology embodies a specific -- if implied -- ideology.

Amongst those phenomenologists who considered themselves theologians and "submitted that phenomenology of religion led to both anthropology and theology" (p.278) Allen lists Otto, van der Leeuw, Heiler. Clearly Smart must be added to this list, cf. Smart and Konstantine (1991). The crucial issue here is that phenomenology is understood as a complementary discipline working alongside theological and secular methodologies; religious education adopted an exclusive attitude towards phenomenology at the expense of other disciplines.

⁶⁰. The question of the adequacy of teacher training, particularly with regard to subject knowledge is a crucial issue here. The uncritical, and almost universal, adoption of variations of Smarts sixfold typology of religious phenomena in both textbooks and agreed syllabuses -- in the face of many other alternative typological descriptions -- is best seen as a reflection of this fact.

Schleiermacher put forward two key perspectives of relevance to the development of religious phenomenology. Firstly, on the essential level, the argument that religion is rooted in the *sui generis* experience of divinity, giving a vertical focus to the source of this experience as that which transcends the space-time continuum.⁶¹ Secondly, on the existential level, the argument that cultural expression of this experience could be analysed and evaluated through a horizontal, historico-evolutionary typology that pointed to the emergence of ethical monotheism - especially in its Christian form -- as the highest point in the development of religious culture.⁶² He thus offered both vertical and horizontal lines of analysis; this of course with the apologetic aim of legitimation of religious belief in the court of its modernist 'cultured despisers'.

In terms of material content phenomenology may be understood in this context as the process of: i) refining the process of legitimation by shifting from a theological to a secular framework; ii) articulating a working neutrality as regards the question of the relative value of alternative religious cultural expressions, in the process rejecting Schleiermacher's (and early philological and anthropological analysis within the emerging *Religionswissenschaften*) horizontal analysis; iii) affirming Schleiermacher's vertical line of analysis, thus finding the essential value of religion in the underlying experience that is the essence of its expression.⁶³

⁶¹. Schleiermacher (1976) pp.5ff.

⁶². Ibid. pp.31ff.

⁶³. The shift from Christian liberal Protestantism to secular philosophical phenomenology marked a desire to legitimate religion as a universal phenomenon. In this context specific Christian truth claims are problematic unless relativised. Phenomenology sought to affirm the value of religion without affirming the superiority of any particular religion. Hence the necessity of a shift away from comparison to cultural expressions -- beyond that of neutral description -- towards the affirmation of a common essence. The consequence is that religious expression is relativised and a reductionist reading is given of the truth claims contained within that expression. The concern to avoid reductionism thus could be applied only to the vertical, never the horizontal reading of phenomena. At the experiential/essential/vertical level the phenomenological reduction as *epoche* "was intended to achieve the very opposite of reductionism: by suspending our unexamined assumptions and normal preconceptions it allowed for a critical consciousness of the phenomena previously experienced on a pre-reflective level, thus allowing new insight into the specific intentionality and concrete richness of experience" (Allen op.cit. p.281). The result of this is that at the expressive/existential/horizontal level *epoche* already negates the hermeneutical value of language, history and culture; "not only is the phenomenology of religion not historical, it is even anti-historical, both in terms of a phenomenological method that neglects the specific historical and cultural context and with regard to the primacy -- methodologically and even ontologically -- it grants to nonhistorical and non-temporal universal structures" (ibid. p.280, presenting the views of critics of phenomenology).

Phenomenology thus takes from philosophical phenomenology the desire to legitimate the human sciences,⁶⁴ including religion, on a level of rationality akin to that of the natural sciences. The neutral perception and classification of religious phenomena manifests to the observer an essential structure: what makes any human cultural phenomena essentially religious is precisely their manifestation -- via the intentionality of the culture -- of an underlying transcendent and *sui generis* referent point, in the form of experience of divinity, noumena, the 'wholly other'.⁶⁵ This process, of neutral phenomenological analysis revealing an essential transcendental sub-structure, of the clarification of fact leading to the perception of value, allowed religious phenomenologists to transfer liberal Protestant apologetic onto a universal, modernist, scientific basis.⁶⁶

It is of significance that religious phenomenology has, in the main, been immune to the challenges to philosophical phenomenology from both critical-realist and post-modern perspectives. The discipline relies on a 19th Century methodology and epistemology that has been refuted in contemporary thought. It is also noteworthy that phenomenological religious education has relied on an extremely basic -- in reality, crude -- typology of religious phenomena, drawn uncritically from Smart.⁶⁷

64. The crisis of legitimation within the humanities during the 19th Century is directly linked to the emergence of romanticism, which followed Rousseau in denying the validity of the application of rationalism to the human spirit. The concern of Husserl, Dilthey and others attempted to legitimate the humanities within scientific rationalism. Its ultimate success, especially in the emergence of the disciplines of psychiatry and psychology, failed however to bury the contrast between Dilthey and Rousseau. The post-modern critique of these dual traditions, especially in the work of Foucault and Derrida, fails to distinguish between these alternative reactions to the crisis of legitimation (though at a general level it could be argued that Foucault focuses on the critic of the emergence of the disciplines of the humanities, whilst Derrida, especially in his critique of Rousseau, focuses on the romantic retreat from reason).

65. See above, note 49.

66. Though 'scientific' here can at best refer to science in a primitive form. Phenomenological description remains on the level of classification and typological construction, and as such resembles closely the initial stages of zoology and the biological sciences. Science necessarily moves beyond description into interpretation, analysis and explanation: this was precisely the role of evolutionary theory within zoology. By seeking essential rather than existential understanding of religious phenomena the focus shifts from empirical science to idealism (of which romanticism represents an anti-rational variation). This problem only emerges if phenomenology is utilized as a meta-narrative; if it functions as a discipline complementary to other theological and religious disciplines, then its descriptive function offers the raw materials for the possibility of the development of both theological and religious science.

67. Smart (1968), (1970a); Schools Council (1971); cf. above, note 60.

There seems to be little awareness of the complexity of attempts to arrive at more detailed and refined typological descriptions. However, on the assumption that the analysis of phenomena is an objective, neutral and hence uncontroversial process, it is perhaps natural that such description is taken by religious educators to be in essence unproblematic.

Behind the basic analysis of religious expression/phenomena lies the apprehension of religious experience/noumena: this latter essence marks the heart both of religion itself and of the apologetic focus of phenomenological religious education. Thus Smart, in his analysis of one of the key pillars of his descriptive typology, that of the dimension of mythology, reaches the following conclusions with specific reference to Christian myth:⁶⁸ i) to mediate the meaning of mythology in modernist categories inevitably involves analysis, and hence reduction; it follows that an apologetic rooted in the question of credibility within rationalism misses the point. ii) Through a neutral, uncritical, encounter with the phenomena "we need to work at myth in its original luxuriance: we must wander the bush, not seek to alter it to our wishes".⁶⁹ iii) This attentiveness to the phenomena will result in the manifestation of "the principles which lie within the mythic mode.....the connection between certain mythic polarities.....and the experience of the noumenous".⁷⁰

The appropriation of the phenomenological form of the experiential expressive model allows religious education to claim legitimacy in the best of all modernist educational worlds. The phenomenological expression is neutral, objective, factual, in line with the 'best' of modernist science. The embarrassment of liberal Protestantism's advocacy of the superiority of the Christian mode of expression is thus avoided, along with charges of neo-confessionalism and indoctrination. The noumenal manifestation of experience is, as an embracement of subjective meaning, value and worth, in line with the very best of the romantic tradition. The religious heart of the matter is not reduced to anthropology, the essence of the numinous as something revealed to humanity from beyond is not lost; yet it may be appropriated freely, without the imperative to believe.

68. Smart (1974b).

69. Ibid. p.144.

70. Ibid. p.144. We might paraphrase points i) and ii) thus: "the language and hence realistic truth claims of myth must not be allowed to engage with rational empirical modernism....such an engagement will inevitably lead to the reduction of myth's theological truth claims....it may however engage modernism's irrational/experiential mirror image, the inner romantic self".

Phenomenology is thus free to draw upon both traditional-conservative and progressive-romantic philosophies of education. As education into the moral traditions of society, explicit religion seeks to uphold not the Christian vision of neo-confessionalism, but the liberal tradition that seeks unity and stability within a pluralistic culture. The objective, value free, presentation of religious phenomena, linked with the core hermeneutic of empathy, leads to mutual understanding, acceptance and tolerance across cultural divides. As education into the free exploration and development of the self, the experiential dimension of phenomenological religious education allows for a personal search for meaning characterised by more depth and intensity of experience than would otherwise be available. Thus the liberal religious structures combine with liberal education formulations to uphold the legitimacy of religious education.⁷¹

iii) The hermeneutics of phenomenology

That the phenomenology of religion stands alongside liberal Protestantism as an alternative version of the experiential-expressive model of religion, whose function within modernism was the legitimization of religious belief, is a fact that becomes clearer still if the hermeneutical process adopted by the school of phenomenological religious

71. Note the sections in the Swann Report, 'Education for All', concerned with religious education: "We believe that religious education can play a central role in preparing pupils for life in today's multi-racial Britain.....challenging and countering the influence of racism in our society.....the phenomenological approach to religious education reflects most closely the aims underlying 'Education for All', in laying the foundations for the kind of genuinely pluralist society which we envisaged at the opening of this report" (Department of Education and Science, 1985, p.496.); cf. Yates (1988) p.135, Meakin (1988) p.94. The conservative and progressive perspectives tend to combine towards unity. Personal growth through greater levels of sensitivity towards experience -- within religious education, a specifically religious experience -- is linked with the ability to function coherently within a liberal multicultural society. That phenomenology sees religious experience as *sui generis* can create problems here, grounded in the common view that to sensitise for experience is acceptable, whilst to attempt to invoke religious experience is not, i) because religious experience cannot be controlled in this way, ii) because the distinction from emotionally based indoctrination cannot be easily drawn. This in turn suggests a shift towards a more anthropologically focused phenomenology, with a stress on the extrinsic value of experience for community relations over against the intrinsic religious possibilities; two key problems arise here: i) the dangers of a mere phenomenological description -- that by its very nature leaves the key questions of interpretation, analysis and meaning unanswered -- resulting in a reinforcement of intolerance; ii) the question as to whether the raw material of religious phenomena can itself provide the cement to bind society together cf. Yates, p.143, "the history of religion is a story of conflict and dissent, often bloody, as well as of striving for peace and reconciliation"; cf. Wright (1993), p.89-92.

education is considered.⁷²

Epoche, is the process of bracketing out presuppositions, thus achieving a 'scientifically' neutral perspective on religious phenomena. This enables the observer to perceive the pure phenomena, reduced to its basic form through the rejection of questions of value judgement and truth.⁷³ Eidetic vision is concerned with the recognition of essences within, or behind, the phenomena; within the phenomenology of religion this may be equated with the recognition of the experiential dimension behind phenomena; within the phenomenology of religious education this is normally equated with the process of empathetic understanding.⁷⁴ Placing together *epoche* and eidetic vision produce a basic hermeneutic vision: "the task of encouraging young people to 'bracket out' their own conceptions and of entering, sympathetically, into the religious experience of others".⁷⁵

There is a direct parallel here with Schleiermacher's notion of the dialectic of 'grammatical' and 'psychological' understanding: the former is concerned with the reading and translation of the language of a statement or text, seeking clear, objective knowledge; the latter seeks to go beyond the text, and enters empathetically into the

⁷². cf. Wright (1988).

⁷³. "For many phenomenologists, the anti-reductionist insistence on the irreducibility of the intentional immediate experience entails the adoption of a 'phenomenological *epoche*.' This Greek term literally means 'abstention' or 'suspension of judgement' and is often defined as a method of 'bracketing.' It is only by bracketing the uncritically accepted 'natural world,' by suspending our beliefs and judgements based on our unexamined 'natural standpoint,' that the phenomenologist can become aware of the phenomena of immediate experience and can gain insight into their essential structures," Allen (1987) p.275; cf. Sharpe (1975) p.6, Marvell (1976) p.5f. Allen's observation that "sometimes the *epoche* is formulated in terms of the goal of a completely presuppositionless science or philosophy, but most phenomenologists have interpreted such bracketing as the goal of freeing the phenomenologist from unexamined presuppositions, or of rendering explicit and clarifying our presuppositions, rather than completely denying their existence" (ibid.), underlines -- despite the contrast -- the fundamental aim of reaching neutral objectivity in the apprehension of phenomena.

⁷⁴. "The intuition of essences, often described as 'eidetic vision' or 'eidetic reduction,' is related to the Greek term *eidos*, which Husserl adopted from its Platonic meaning to designate 'universal essences.' Such essences express the 'whatness of things, the necessary and invariant features of phenomena that allows us to recognize phenomena as phenomena of a certain kind', Allen (1987) p.275; cf. Sharpe (1975) p.6, Marvell (1976) pp5f. Religious essence was almost invariably linked with some form of transcendence, cf. note 49 below. Marvell's insistence that such an essence, whilst linked to anthropological experience nevertheless points beyond that towards categories of revelation, and hence that empathy with adherents to religious systems points beyond such experience towards revelation, places him directly within the phenomenological tradition. This does not, though, solve the problem of reductionism.

⁷⁵. Marvell (1976) p.6.

mind of its author, making possible a grasp of the essential meaning of the language.⁷⁶ "Just as every act of speaking is related to both the totality of the language and the totality of the speaker's thoughts, so understanding a speech always involves two moments: to understand what is said in the context of the language with its possibilities, and to understand it as a fact in the thinking of the speaker."⁷⁷ Within the complexity of this debate a simple formula is implicit: i) objective understanding of religious phenomena or expression via grammatical interpretation as *epoche*, leads into, ii) subjective understanding of religious noumena or experience via psychological interpretation as eidetic vision. Liberal Protestantism and phenomenology share common hermeneutical roots in Schleiermacher's hermeneutics.⁷⁸ It follows from this that we should expect any tension between Goldman's and Smart's implied hermeneutics to be rooted in accidental form rather than material content, and this is indeed the case.

The apparent dichotomy between the simplicity of the language of phenomenological description and the complexity of religious language as set out by Goldman is overcome when this is related to the fact that for Goldman the 'problem' of religious language is precisely the imposition on language of an ill-informed, premature interpretation of such language along literalistic lines. Once language is correctly understood as having reference to abstract experience understood against the backdrop of the absolute or divine then the problem of the complexity of language disappears. For both Goldman and Smart appropriate attentiveness towards language, which is at one and the same time the refusal to make premature interpretative judgements, makes religious language opaque, thus making possible the manifestation of its essence in experience.

The apparent dichotomy between Goldman's and Smart's understanding of the experiential essence of language/phenomena is rooted in the dispute over whether

76. cf. Schleiermacher (1977), Mueller-Vollmer (1986) pp.72-97; for critical discussion within the tradition of philosophical hermeneutics cf. Bleicher (1980) pp.13-16, Palmer (1969) pp.84-97; for discussion of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics in the context of liberal Protestantism, cf. Torrance, J.B. (1968), Torrance, T.F. (1968); for discussion of the implications of Schleiermacher's romantic hermeneutic for religious education, cf. Wright (1988).

77. Schleiermacher (1977) p.97; cf. Muller-Vollmer (1986) p.74, Corliss (1993) p.370.

78. See note 76 above. It is important to note that within the philosophical tradition of hermeneutics Schleiermacher's romanticism has been subjected to fundamental criticism, above all by Gadamer, and that mainstream discussion bypasses Schleiermacher, and focuses rather on the ongoing debate between Gadamer's ontological-idealistic hermeneutic and Habermas' critical theory developed from within the Frankfurt School; on this cf., in addition to the references above, McCarthy (1984) pp.187-193, and Wamke (1987) pp.108-138.

such religious experience is a quantitative extension of ordinary experience, or a qualitatively distinct *sui generis* experience. Whilst this tension is in itself unresolvable, the practical process of understanding operates according to identical patterns. We should note here that both for Smart and Goldman the progression from experience to expression represents -- in the best tradition of romanticism -- a move towards the authentic heart and essence of religion, and that consequently a religious education that remains on the level of language and external phenomena is fundamentally deficient.

Goldman's turn to the priority of experience may be read in two ways. On the one hand, the exploration of pre-linguistic experience is a process of creating a readiness for religious language. In which case the development of competency in religious language has as its further aim that of entering once again into the realm of experience, though now from the higher vantage point of an appropriate understanding of the way in which such experience is legitimately expressed. Goldman makes it clear that his concern with language is merely a reflection of his assumption that language is an essential component of an education understood as a primarily intellectual and rational activity.⁷⁹ On the other hand, the logic of his position, and this is developed in his more pragmatic writing, is the notion that the pre-linguistic sensitization towards a depth of experience in the early years is an end in itself, enabling the development of insight into the heart of religion at its experiential level.

Implicit religious education thus came to give priority to the development of depth in ordinary experience, whether or not that process passes through a consideration of linguistic expression. For the phenomenologist eidetic vision involves passing through and beyond expression into its *sui generis* experiential essence. For both religious expression-phenomena acts as a tool to enable access to essential experience: the only issue between Smart and Goldman is whether this process is a primary necessity (phenomenological religious education), or a secondary optional extra (implicit religious education). In each case the basic hermeneutical structure remains the same. Furthermore, the case has been made within discussion of phenomenological hermeneutics for sensitization towards general experience being a necessary prerequisite for any direct *sui generis* religious experience.⁸⁰ Indeed, the

⁷⁹. See above, notes 25 and 31.

⁸⁰. Thus Surin (1980): "We can ask whether the phenomenological approach does not in fact require us to assume, at some stage, that ordinary experience is the starting point of religious experience, or at the very least, that it is the starting point of any *reflection* on religious experience. In other words, is there not a sense in which religious concepts need a grounding in ordinary

notion that religious education may legitimately do more than prepare the general experiential ground for the possibility of specifically religious experience would seem to many to open up the charge of indoctrination.⁸¹ Within all this a common pattern between implicit and phenomenological hermeneutics emerges. The external expression of religion must be treated in a neutral, objective manner, and the temptation to impose theological or secular reductionist interpretations must be resisted. This in turn opens up the possibility of developing the subjective and open sphere of religious experience -- whether this be understood in general or essential terms -- and it is here that the heart and internal justification of religious education is to be found. Both implicit and phenomenological hermeneutical models thus both feed from, and seek in turn to justify, religious education carried out within an experiential-expressive framework.

iv) Phenomenology and the foreclosure of the problem of religious truth

The arguments outlined above -- that the selection of the discipline of phenomenology of religion from amongst other options reflects the apologetic concern to legitimate religious education within modernism -- that the phenomenology of religion is essentially a variant of the experiential-expressive model of religion -- and that phenomenological hermeneutics, like the implicit hermeneutics that preceded it, reflect the necessary and logical process of understanding given the experiential-expressive model -- these all provide evidence which implicitly supports the claim that phenomenological religious education forecloses the question of the problem of religious truth, and hence imposes a paternalistic, because modernist, understanding of religion on pupils.

human experience in order to facilitate a phenomenological analysis of the phenomena designated by these concepts? Or in still other words, is there not a sense in which ordinary experience is logically prior to a phenomenological analysis of religious material?.....What we are saying amounts to a claim that the two approaches are compatible because the phenomenological approach presupposes the experiential approach." p.100; Hammond and Hay (1990), in the context of phenomenological religious education, point out that "this book is not trying to get teachers to generate 'religious experience' in the classroom; even if that were possible we would not encourage it.....[yet].....phenomenologists tell us to take other people's inner intentions seriously; that means we have to enter our own and others' personal worlds.....without an appreciation of the intentions of religious people, the publicly visible phenomena of their faith are likely to seem remote or meaningless to the pupil" (p.6); cf. also. Cox (1983) pp.xx, on 'religious sensitivity'.

⁸¹. cf. eg. Hammond and Hay, op.cit., p.6.

We can additionally highlight a number of supporting considerations. In so far as phenomenological description claims to be neutral, and so to legitimately suspend the issues of truth and value, this must be seen in itself as a commitment to a set of -- in the context of the phenomenological meta-narrative -- unquestionable value judgements and truth claims. Thus Hulmes has pointed out the impossibility of neutrality and the fact that neutrality is itself a judgement of value.⁸² Hardy has developed this point in a series of papers that demonstrate that objective phenomenological typologies of religion necessarily imply a set of value judgements. Specifically that of the equality of contrasting phenomenological expressions of religious experience, and hence of the non-cognitive basis of such expression, since their reference is not to truth claims, but to a common denominator religious experience.⁸³

The counter argument, that phenomenological analysis merely reveals the diversity of truth claims and chooses not to judge between them fails to carry weight, since the impossibility, and indeed illegitimacy of such judgements implies not just a methodological but also an ontological status for the phenomenological meta-narrative. This ontological status is not present when phenomenology operates alongside other disciplines, but functions whenever phenomenology is isolated as the only, and hence absolute, discipline, as happens within contemporary religious education. In a monistic meta-narrative, methodology becomes ontology, since the methodology cannot be transcended. The same point may be made from an alternative perspective: phenomenology, when used as a meta-narrative, forecloses the question of truth by imposing the 'truth' of non-cognitive expressions of religious experience, and hence their equality, precisely because disciplines seeking analysis and judgement of the phenomena -- and in particular the linguistic truth claims -- are made illegitimate. The conversation concerning religious phenomena can, a priori, not be allowed to go

82. Hulmes (1979): "How neutral is this openness? How far is it possible for a believer to pretend to espouse a philosophical neutrality which is alien to his deepest convictions and experience?.....Every teacher brings a personal commitment to bear in teaching.....The only sensible way forward is to accept this limitation as inescapable, and not to insist on a neutrality which is unattainable" (p.48).

83. Hardy (1975), (1976), (1979): "the emphasis on the particularity of the experience of participants in the world religions has been muted by the claim that these experiences are variants of a phenomenon called 'religion' which can be judged by a single method.....These problems arise from reifying a concept, religion, and explaining it in a neo-Kantian (idealist) fashion.....they have the effect of reducing the particularity of the world religions -- not only that of Christianity -- and thus doing them an injustice, even if the material about the different traditions which accompanies the conceptual religion is satisfactory,"

beyond essentially irrelevant questions as to preferences regarding the structure of descriptive typologies.

If we turn to the experiential, noumenal heart of phenomenology, we need to do no more than repeat the charge that by its very nature appeal to experience can never be more than appeal to personal subjective preference.⁸⁴ There is no space for analytic discourse in the realm of non-verbal experience. The result is an inevitable reductionist process that either turns theological statements into anthropological ones, or else retreats into subjective commitment. Feuerbach's critique remains unanswered: to highlight the power of experience, to justify belief on the grounds of the depth or intensity of experience, is merely to highlight the reality of human subjectivity. Thus phenomenology forecloses the question and problem of religious truth by imposing its own account of truth on to religion.

4. Hay and Spirituality

The 1980's saw the development of a concern with the language of 'spirituality' and 'the spiritual' within religious education.⁸⁵ At the time of writing, this movement has not yet crystallised into a new model within the discipline, its main stream advocates being content to operate within the framework of phenomenology.⁸⁶ Nevertheless it represents an important area of development, and one that must be considered here. Two key sources provide oxygen to the debate: the appearance of the language of spirituality within official government documents,⁸⁷ and the tradition of empirical

⁸⁴. See below, Chapter Two.

⁸⁵. cf. Bailey (1982), Berryman (1985), Day (1992), King (1985), Lealman (1982), (1986), Priestly (1985), Slee (1992), Webster (1990).

⁸⁶. cf. Hammond and Hay, *op.cit.* p. 6f.

⁸⁷. The immediate source of this official concern with the spiritual dimension of education appears linked with Prime Minister Callaghan's 'great debate' surrounding education, and specifically the question of the contents of any national curriculum. This debate was given a philosophical underpinning by Hirst's notion of a liberal education into 'forms of knowledge'. The shift from the language of 'religion' to that of 'the spiritual dimension' as such a 'form', or more popularly 'area of experience', reflects the difficulties he himself faced in justifying religion within his neo-Wittgensteinian framework, cf. Hirst (1972a), (1973c). It thus came as no surprise to find the inspectorate hedging its bets in 1977 with two conflicting theological and anthropological definitions of spirituality: i) "The spiritual area is concerned with the awareness a person has of those elements in existence and experience which may be defined in terms of inner feelings and beliefs that affect the way people see themselves and throw light for them on the purpose and meaning of life itself"; ii) "The spiritual area is concerned with everything in human knowledge or experience that is

research into religious experience within the discipline of the psychology of religion.⁸⁸

i) The spirituality of inner space

Hay's programme, as mentioned above, operates within a phenomenological framework, whilst emphasising the central importance of the experiential-essential dimension.⁸⁹ The task of the educator is to present the phenomena of religion "for what it claims to be -- the response of human beings to what they experience as sacred".⁹⁰ This must lead into a commitment to the importance of the essential heart of religion: "religious educators must help pupils to open their personal awareness to those aspects of their experience which are recognised by religious people as the root of religion".⁹¹

connected with or derives from a sense of God or of Gods." The full text is most easily available in Grimmitt (1987) p.393. The discussion culminates in the provisions of the 1988 Education Reform Act: children have an entitlement to a curriculum which "promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils...(and) prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life", DES (1988) Section 1.2. The Act nowhere defines spirituality, though the context of the language suggests that it is seen in broad terms, as an aspect of the whole curriculum, including collective worship, cross curricular themes, as well as specific subject areas, of which one is religious education.

88. Otto (1959) offered a classic phenomenological description of religious experience, and his links with liberal Protestantism are vital for an understanding of work within the psychology of religion. The attempt at empirical analysis of such experience was given its classic formulation by William James (1985). Modern developments of James' programme have centred on America, eg. Maslow (1964), and Britain. Current concerns within religious education take their lead from the British tradition. Alister Hardy's work with the Religious Experience Research Unit, Manchester College, Oxford, was developed by Edward Robinson, cf. Hardy (1966), (1979), Robinson (1977a), (1977b), (1978). Hay gave this tradition a pragmatic and critical framework, and applied it directly to issues within contemporary education, Hay (1982), (1985), Hammond and Hay (1990).

89. Hammond and Hay (1990): "'Phenomenology' has come to mean, in the minds of many, a concentration on external, public 'phenomena' as part of an 'objective' study of religion. But this is not what is meant by the authors of Working Paper 36. Phenomenology attempts to make a direct and simple investigation of people's experiences.....But for the religiously committed, there is another dimension which is more important than these public phenomena.....It is the personal experience, the inner intention, that matters to the religious believer, and without some grasp of that intention, students will have no real understanding of religion," pp.6,10.

90. Hay (1985), p.142. The commitment to an objective apprehension of phenomena and a neutrality in the understanding of experience remains firmly in place: phenomenological description and empathetic experience represent dual tasks which "whilst they point directly at the source of religious motivation for the believer, still bracket out questions of the ultimate truth of religion. They are therefore educational rather than indoctrinatory in intention" (ibid.).

91. Ibid.

The spiritual approach may be seen as developing within phenomenology in three ways: i) As we have seen, by the emphasis placed on experience over against expression. ii) The application of the results of empirical studies into religious experience within the discipline of the psychology of religion.⁹² iii) A far more complex notion of experience, one that is no longer dependent on its *sui generis* nature as proscribed by orthodox phenomenology, and far more open to the suggestion of an interpretative process at work within the recipient of experience.

Hay highlights six areas in which empirical study suggests that "people living within a Christian culture experience the presence of God".⁹³ These are: i) permanent awareness,⁹⁴ ii) spontaneous religious experience,⁹⁵ iii) rekindled hierophany,⁹⁶ iv) reading sacred literature,⁹⁷ v) life as the language of God,⁹⁸ and vi) meditation, prayer and contemplation.⁹⁹ The complexity and frequency of this experience must, however,

⁹². cf. note 88. above, and especially Hay (1982).

⁹³. Hay (1985) p.142, cf. pp.142-144. A revised form of this extended passage is found in Hammond and Hay (1990) pp. 11f. A number of changes made are significant, thus for example the passage quoted above now reads "those kinds of experiences which people in contemporary Britain often interpret religiously".

⁹⁴. "A very few, approximately 2% of the British adult population, claim to be permanently aware of the presence of God", Hay (1985) p.142.

⁹⁵. This is the category that comes closest to the phenomenological notion of religious essence, and Hay refers explicitly to Otto here: "Typically for a westerner, this falls into Rudolph Otto's category of 'numinous experience,'" *ibid.* Hay's description is illuminating, and one to which we must return: "Usually people report themselves to be surprised by an unexpected awareness of God's presence and though the awareness is quasi-perceptual, they commonly do not perceive anything through the normal sense organs. We know that experiences of this type occur from time to time in the lives of at least a third and probably more than half the adult population of Britain. The members of this group are by no means always orthodox believers; nearly half of them seldom or never go to church and quite often they are unwilling or unable to name the 'presence' because they do not wish to have it associated with the religious institution. Nevertheless in their reflections on their experiences, because they live in a linguistic culture with Christian origins, they may employ recognisably orthodox theological language." (*ibid.*).

⁹⁶. ".....there has been an increasing understanding of the universality of ritual and its role in sensitizing and deepening awareness.....The total effect is first of all to remind each believer of the presence of God and in many cases this is followed by a direct awareness of that presence," *op.cit.* pp.142f.

⁹⁷. ".....at times it appears empty and the reader might as well be gazing at a newspaper. On other occasions the words grip the reader who sees them as speaking directly to him or her", Hammond and Hay (1990) p.12.

⁹⁸. "Believers frequently come across the experience of reality, in a sense, 'speaking' to them. Sometimes this is through the noting of odd or extraordinary patternings of experience.....Most frequently, however, it is the totally untidy experience of everyday life that Christians interpret as God's dialogue with them", Hay (1985) p.143.

⁹⁹. "For the believer, this is the heartland of faith, the school in which God becomes known most personally", *ibid.*

be contrasted with Hay's assertion that "religion, as it has been presented to them, bears little or no relation to their personal experience of reality".¹⁰⁰ The problem this contrast raises is seen as both a cultural and an educational one.

On the cultural level, post-Enlightenment intellectual and scientific communities have chosen to ignore or reject the phenomenon of religion.¹⁰¹ As a result, dominant metaphors for reality, especially those that contrast the 'material' and 'spiritual' have led to the marginalisation of the spiritual dimension, since in a scientific culture "we have difficulty hanging on to the spiritual, because 'really' the fundamentals of the world are particles and space".¹⁰² This results in a 'hermeneutic of suspicion', perpetuated by religious education's failure to tackle the issue of spiritual experience adequately, and contrasted with the religious believer's own 'hermeneutics of faith'.¹⁰³

The problem for the religious educator is a familiar one in the context of this study: that of the desensitivity of pupils towards the experiential dimension of religion. So also, the task: "to assist people to enter empathetically the experiential world of the religious believer".¹⁰⁴ What is new is the aggressive stance towards this agenda. Pupils must be liberated from their captivity within an appropriate metaphor, and from the "suppression or repression of the religious aspect of children's experience".¹⁰⁵ The way forward is an educational programme that will redress the balance, opening up their experience through empathy, exploration, and above all an approach to language that stresses its impressionistic, metaphorical and divergent nature.¹⁰⁶

100. Hay, *op.cit.* p.140.

101. The reasons suggested for this are focused on religious institutions' involvement in political reaction, censorship, defence of indefensible philosophical positions, doctrines and textual exegesis, *ibid.*

102. *Ibid.*

103. The language is drawn from Ricoeur; "What is startling to an observer of religious education is the way in which modern syllabuses do to some degree pay attention to the hermeneutics of suspicion but not to those of faith", Hay (1985) p.141.

104. *Ibid.* p.145.

105. *Ibid.* p.144.

106. Thus, Hay and Hammond (19920, p.146, referring to Hammond and Hay (1990): "The purpose of the many exercises in the handbook concerned with playing with metaphor, is to loosen the grip of the 'fact stratum', to demonstrate that there are many possible ways of interpreting reality in which we find ourselves, including the religious way"; The detailed programme of suggestions for classroom activities to achieve this aim is offered in Hammond and Hay (1990).

ii) Debate: Hay v. Thatcher

As was suggested above, there is contained within this programme nothing of fundamental originality. The turn to religious psychology allowed the notion of experience to be unpacked, and the experiential dimension to be highlighted as being of fundamental importance, but the basic structures and perspectives remain consistent with the phenomenological model, and hence also the fundamental criticisms made in this chapter must be seen as applying to both. Thus Thatcher's attack on Hay, which places the programme firmly within the modernist tradition and understands it as deeply flawed as a consequence of the inadequacies of the modernism it seeks legitimation within, is to be seen as fundamentally correct.¹⁰⁷ However the debate has thrown up a number of issues that require clarification if the conclusion outlined in the present paragraph is to be justified.

a) Hay presents his programme as a fundamental, and aggressive, attack on the post-enlightenment tradition, and as such might claim immunity from the criticisms of phenomenology; certainly it lacks the apologetic desire for accommodation that characterises the latter approach. However, it is clear that Hay's critique, and his proposed solution is dependent upon, and seeks to legitimate in its turn, the romantic reaction to post-Enlightenment rationalism, and as such remains firmly within the modernist tradition.¹⁰⁸

b) A key feature of Thatcher's criticism surrounds the issue of dualism. Thus he argues ".....if the claim is being made that experience necessarily requires an inner world where some series of internal events parallels some series of external events, then this is clearly based on a philosophical dualism which lacks credibility. We are worlds away from the Greek sense of 'experience' which clearly involves no such inner reference".¹⁰⁹ Hay's response is to argue that Thatcher has misunderstood his position, since his concern is precisely to 'embody' experience in matter, concurring with Thatcher in his rejection of "that inheritance of the European Enlightenment which

¹⁰⁷. Thatcher (1991); cf Hay's response, Hammond and Hay (1992), and Thatcher's postscript to the debate, Thatcher (1992).

¹⁰⁸. The 'taboo' surrounding religious experience thus parallels logical positivism's 'taboo' placed on non-verifiable language as mere emotion. Significantly, Hay makes nothing of post-modernism's celebration of non-empirically referenced language, despite the utility it might have offered his argument. A clear case can be made out that post-modernism has replaced logical positivism as the implied philosophy within much popular culture. Thatcher charges Hay specifically with being unaware of the work of Rorty, Foucault and Derrida, *op.cit.* p.22.

¹⁰⁹. Thatcher, *op.cit.* p.23.

creates an inner, private world, parallel to -- yet cut off from -- the public world of experience".¹¹⁰ Further, the language of 'inner space', 'going inside', 'inner eye' is to be understood as a metaphor that contrasts superficiality with depth of understanding, rather than physical reality and non-material, spiritual, reality.

It is not clear how Thatcher understands dualism here, whether ontologically or epistemologically. Nevertheless, the metaphor of depth is clearly Hay's intention. What Hay fails to see, however, is that it is precisely in the metaphor of 'depth' that modernism runs into problems. Romanticism understands the self as discovering and attributing meaning to the world, it is the human spirit alone that gives life to phenomena that otherwise must be seen as essentially lifeless. On this level, Hay's response to Thatcher, whatever its validity, fails to extricate him from the modernist dilemma.

c) This in turn raises a third and final issue, that of the relationship between language and experience. Thatcher points out that Wittgenstein has fundamentally destroyed the notion of a private language with which experience can be expressed: "expressing my own mental states or feeling states is impossible without a shared publicly-owned language and considerable induction into its use, with the result that descriptions of sensations and feelings rely on prior social realities, provided by a linguistic community".¹¹¹ Again, Hay's position, that language is an important part of the process of experience seems clear.¹¹² The issue between Hay and Thatcher is not over the importance of language in itself, but in its use. For Hay, language is something that, because of its scientific secularization, serves to subdue the religious instinct. As a result it must be fragmented and broken in order to "loosen the grip of

¹¹⁰. Hay and Hammond. *op.cit.* p.145; Thatcher here sees the language of 'embodiment' as being "smuggled in because the dualistic starting point.....leaves the body out in the first place" (p.26); however, the reality that all but the second ('spontaneous religious experience') of Hay's descriptions of religious experience are directly rooted in the self's contact with the external world strongly suggests that Thatcher has misunderstood Hay at this point; see below, p.30, and note 95.

¹¹¹. Thatcher, *op.cit.* p. 23.

¹¹². Thus of Hay's six dimensions of religious experience, only that of 'spontaneous religious experience' is spoken of without reference to the interaction of the self with some form of external culture-phenomena. The place of language within this exception remains ambiguous. It is not clear whether Hay welcomes or objects to the failure of some recipients of spontaneous religious experience to use religious language to describe it. Their silence, though, does raise the question as to the legitimacy of imposing a theological interpretation on their claims. In the light of Wittgenstein's critique such experience can only become public property if named within a linguistic tradition. The logic of Hay's decision to give priority to experience over language requires the logical priority of the recipient of experience's own linguistic formulations.

the 'fact-stratum',"¹¹³ thus emancipating the child towards a depth of understanding. For Thatcher, critical understanding and the drive towards truth requires language, and the solution to Hay's dilemma is not to move beyond language, but to learn to use it appropriately. We are thus at the heart of the dispute between modernism and critical realism: Hay's modernism leads him to discover the essence of meaning within the self, whilst Thatcher's critical-realism leads him to seek the essence of truth as mediated not by depth of experience but accuracy of language as refined and developed by public tradition. The authenticity of truth claims is a public-linguistic concern, not a private-experiential one. The contemporary concern of religious education with spirituality is thus affirmed by the Thatcher-Hay debate as being firmly within the modernist tradition.

5. Conclusion: the Inadequacy and Illegitimacy of the Liberal Consensus

We thus reach the end of the first part of this thesis, having attempted a descriptive deconstruction of the modernist assumptions within religious education. The 'identity crisis' within contemporary religious education, rooted in a subject-object dualism, has been shown to be a necessity, given its attempt to legitimate itself within a modern liberal framework. Religious education relies on a basic meta-narrative drawn directly from the thematic sub-structures of the Enlightenment, as they were developed within philosophical, theological and educational discourse. The three formulations of religious education we have considered have, despite their differences, a common programme and structure. Implicit, phenomenological and spiritual religious education operate with a common experiential-expressive model of religion, a common romantic hermeneutic, a common function within the progressive-conservative polarity of modern educational philosophy, and a common paternalistic foreclosure of the question of religious truth.

Within modernism the only alternative to the experiential-expressive model was either the rejection of religion in favour of secular atheism, or the privatisation of religious belief through a retreat to the pre-modern isolation of commitment. Neither of these two options were viable for religious education, though they do appear by default: the former in the failure of schools to implement viable programmes of religious education, the latter in state support for faith based schooling. Religion required an experiential-expressive model if it was to legitimate itself within the

¹¹³. cf. note 106 above.

Enlightenment legacy. The liberal Protestantism of implicit religious education, the phenomenological understanding of religion within explicit approaches, and the spirituality of religion rooted in empirical psychology, all represent variations within the experiential-expressive model. All find the cultural expression of religion uncontroversial, unproblematic and objective; and see the source and heart of this expression in subjective religious experience.

The hermeneutical task thus becomes twofold. Firstly to make possible the adequate understanding of the cultural expression of experience. This becomes a problem only if children impose a literalistic understanding upon religious language before their cognitive abilities have developed appropriately; or they fail to appreciate that the meaning of religion lies beyond the cultural form of that language; or they lack an openness to the world view of others. Secondly, to make possible the adequate understanding of the experience that is the source and heart of religious expression. This becomes a problem only if children lack sensitivity towards such experience; or if teaching towards such sensitivity is inadequate.

The achievement of understanding religious expression and its underlying experiential source has a dual pragmatic educational function. On the one hand, conservative education in the tradition of Locke is able to pass on a cultural heritage to pupils, whether that be the tradition of Christian Britain, or of multicultural Britain. On the other hand, progressive education in the tradition of Rousseau is able to allow the growth of individuals to their full potential, freed from the constraints of society, by enabling them to develop a depth of experiential expression.

We thus come full circle, and find ourselves standing before Cox's distinction between 'understanding religion' and 'religious understanding'. Where we differ from Cox is in the rejection of his belief in the necessity and inevitability of this programme of liberal religious education's attempt at legitimation through appeasement. Cox's programme is achieved at great cost, via the positive assumption of the truth of the enlightened sub-structures, and the negative assumption that religious belief might legitimately challenge them on its own terms. The result is a foreclosure of the question of truth, positively in favour of the advocacy of the truth of modernism, and of experiential-expressive religion within modernism, negatively in opposition to the self-understanding and truth claims of non-liberal religious traditions.

The search for legitimacy of liberal religious education is rooted in irony: it seeks an apologetic accommodation with the modernist edifice at precisely that point in cultural history when the edifice has begun to collapse in on its foundations. As religious education turns to modernism, so modernism looks beyond its limitations, towards the debate between post-modernism and critical realism.

Part Two

Deconstruction:

A Post-modern

Interlude

Chapter Five

Deconstructing the Enlightenment Project

Chapter Five outlines the contours of post-modernism's deconstruction of the modernist heritage: i) a consideration of the diversity of readings of Wittgenstein's later philosophy suggests a typology of reactions to modernism against which post-modernism may be orientated; ii) the fundamental moral imperative of post-modernism utilized the Enlightenment's notion of emancipation as a means of achieving freedom from the logocentric limitations of modernism; iii) whilst Foucault sought such emancipation via a transcendence beyond reason, Derrida found freedom within the immanence of language itself; iv) Rorty suggests a pragmatic focus within this flow of language, in which liberal values are kept alive through the human solidarity attained within unlimited conversation; v) a critique of post-modern programmes suggests that their identity is parasitical upon their reaction to modernism, and as such remain reliant on modernist themes, in particular in reinforcing modernism's problematic relationship with realistic accounts of reality.

1. Wittgenstein: Beyond the Enlightenment?

Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* may be read as marking the summation and culmination of the Enlightenment project. Here we find presented the modernist thematic sub-structures with a simplicity that is both transparent and sublime.¹

¹. cf. eg. Bolton (1979) p. xiv.: Wittgenstein's "early work.....marked an ending of the modern philosophical tradition, ie. that which dates roughly from the seventeenth century; and further.....in his later work, particularly in the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein moved away from the fundamental assumptions of that tradition, towards a philosophy more suited to the present time", and further, "The general theme.....is the replacement of various philosophical theories.....Comparison is made

Transparency was precisely that which Wittgenstein sought to achieve. We observe his disengaged self standing God-like above the universe, straddling the world of enlightened reason, a representative and final affirmation of that intellectual lineage whose genealogy can be traced back through Husserl, Kant, Hume and Locke to Descartes himself. All fears of Cartesian anxiety transcended, this self has the freedom to picture, with the clarity and certainty that comes only through simplicity, the true reality of the objective world below.² The *Tractatus* speaks with that one universal language of which its predecessors could only dream, fulfilling the hope that "the world represented by the language, unobscured by the language, would be perfectly *present* to the observing subject, who could then *speak* of what was seen".³ If the objective world stands unshrouded before the self, so too the depths of the self stand open to self-interrogation. Through the beauty and austerity of the language of the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein invokes and affirms the romantic imperative, that turn inwards to the true self that mirrors the turn outwards to the real world. It is here, in the inner universe of value and meaning, within the constellations of aesthetics and morality, that the self finds its spiritual home. It is here that Wittgenstein's religious impulse drives him: that inner space of subjective reflection and meditation where the ladder of language must be replaced by the silence of eternity.⁴

mainly with seventeenth-century thought, but not entirely. The deeper the rejection of modern assumptions becomes, it appears that the break is in fact away from Greek thought, namely Plato's"; Hilmeý (1987) refers to Wittgenstein's "struggle against a dominant 'scientific way of thinking' which is characteristic of the intellectual current of contemporary Western civilisation" (p.193).

2. Thus Hacker (1972). "The *Tractatus* provided a complex and non-trivial logico-metaphysical *explanation* of the pictoriality of thought by way of the doctrines of isomorphism and atomism. Agreement between thought and reality was held to be agreement in form, and an elaborate logic and metaphysics was delineated to *explain* isomorphism....Wittgenstein's late philosophy adamantly rejects the atomistic realist conception of a language-independent *form* of reality....The harmony between thought and reality, Wittgenstein now argues, lies not in isomorphism between picture and reality, but like everything metaphysical, in the grammar of language" (pp.105f.); cf. Hilmeý, op.cit. "the fundamental shift that has taken place in his view of language can be characterised as having involved a change from a 'static' concept of language to a 'dynamic' one" (p.179).

3. Boyne (1990), p. 91.

4. The religious impulse in Wittgenstein's work is often more implicit than explicit, though note the quotations below. That it played a fundamental role in his philosophical development becomes clear when his work is placed in its biographical context". cf. the following biographical reflections: "It seems to me that there are two forms of seriousness of character. One is fixed in 'strong principles'; the other springs from a passionate heart. Wittgenstein was acutely and even painfully sensitive to considerations of duty, but the earnestness and severity of his personality were more of the second kind. Yet I do not know whether he can be said to have been 'religious' in any but a trivial sense of the word. Certainly he did not have a Christian faith," Von Wright

"To view the world *sub specie aeterni* is to view it as a whole -- a limited whole. Feeling the world as a limited whole -- it is this that is mystical.....Anyone who understands me.....must transcend these propositions; and then he will see the world aright..... What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence."⁵

The clue to the sublimity of the *Tractatus* lies in the clarity with which the dualism between fact and value is presented, and in the modernist affirmation that the dislocated self marks the one point of convergence between what are otherwise mutually incompatible realms. The Enlightenment project has been achieved: the external world has been pictured with a language to which it corresponds perfectly, the world not as-it-appears-to-be phenomenologically, but the world as-it-is-in-itself; the internal world has been secured, the philosopher may now know his or her true self. The logic of this is the closure of the grand tradition of western philosophy, the retreat into silent contemplation: Wittgenstein's personal integrity led him precisely there, through the rejection of professional philosophy and the adoption of as near a monastic lifestyle and desert spirituality as one agnostic of organised religion is likely to be able to achieve within modern western civilisation.⁶

Yet this is *only* the clue. The profundity of the work lies in its implied recognition of the bankruptcy of the thematic sub-structures it rests upon. Even within the book itself we encounter the recognition that its words are but a ladder that must

(1967) p.27: "He used to come to my room late at midnight and, for hours, he would walk backwards and forwards like a caged tiger. On arrival he announced that when he left my rooms he would commit suicide.....On one such evening, after an hour or two of dead silence, I said to him 'Wittgenstein, are you thinking about logic or about your sins?' 'Both,' he said, and then reverted to silence." Russell (1967) p.32: "His point of view and his attitude towards people and problems, even theoretical problems, were much more similar to those of a creative artist than to those of a scientist; one might almost say to those of a religious prophet or a seer.....Wittgenstein rejected Schlick's view that religion belonged to the childhood phase of humanity and would slowly disappear in the course of cultural development," Camap (1967) pp.34f. "I think that there was in him, in some sense, the possibility of religion. I believe that he looked on religion as a 'form of life'.....in which he did not participate, but with which he was sympathetic," Malcolm (1958).

⁵. Wittgenstein (1974) 6.45, p.73; 6.54, p.74; 7, p.74.

⁶. Wittgenstein worked for a time as a gardener in a monastery. cf. Von Wright, op. cit. p.20: "Wittgenstein contemplated entering a monastery.....That it never came true was, partly at least, because for him the inner conditions of monastic life were not satisfied"; For Wittgenstein's religious thought, cf. Hudson (1973b), Keightley (1976), Kerr (1986), Barrett (1992).

be discarded.⁷ The closure of philosophy is approached not with any triumphal arrogance, but rather with a quiet resignation. The heart of the problem, and the roots of the restlessness that were to draw Wittgenstein back into philosophy, lay precisely in the dualism that divides fact and value and consigns the realm of value to silence. The attempt to hold together the sub-structures of the Enlightenment project had, in reality, had been achieved only at a price: the cost was the reaffirmation of the dislocated self. The romantic vision, of humanity as "able spontaneously to create and express his own meanings, to be in full possession of himself, and to dominate language as a transparent medium of his inmost being" left the self essentially alone, devoid of relationship, with nothing to love but one's own ego.⁸

Wittgenstein's return to philosophy, culminating in the maturity of the *Philosophical Investigations*, marks -- in a way paralleled at the time only by Nietzsche a century earlier -- a fundamental challenge to the Enlightenment project. Here we encounter an unambiguous break with, and challenge to, the thematic sub-structures that the *Tractatus* had sought to bind together into a coherent unity.⁹

The self no longer stands astride the world, but indwells it.¹⁰ Gone is the transparent univocal language which the self may command at will, now replaced by a complex, multivocal, plurality of words, an intricate weaving of a diversity of languages.¹¹ Gone is the Cartesian certainty, replaced by a measured humility, an awareness of human limitation, a celebration of contingency marked not by anxiety, but by the calm assurance that the self is at last approaching its true home within the order of things.¹² Gone the displacement of value from fact: that which must be

7. Wittgenstein, op.cit., 6.54, p.74: "My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognises them as non-sensical, when he has used them -- as steps -- to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it)."

8. Sarup (1988), p.39.

9. Hacker, op.cit., p.112: "Any attempt to trace out continuity and contrast between the earlier and later work with respect to the conception of philosophy must bear in mind the fact that the axis of reference of the whole investigation has been rotated upon a fixed point."

10. Ibid. p.112: "The need to grasp conceptual structures remains, but they are now conceived *sub species humanitatis*."

11. Ibid. p.115: "Grammar is not embodied in a static instantly surveyable medium, but is the structure of our dynamic linguistic practices. We can, in general, obtain a survey only by patient examination of how sentences and expressions are supposed to be applied, of their rule-governed relations to other sentences and expressions."

12. This theme emerges above all in Wittgenstein's developing conception of the function of philosophy. No longer aiming at absolute, transparent statements concerning the order of things, philosophy now rather is concerned with a therapeutic process, that of dispelling illusions created by the misunderstanding of language. The philosopher merely shows the fly the shape of the fly-

passed over in silence is now proclaimed outloud, not with the arrogance of self-expression, but with a developing awareness of the self's true relationship both to language and within the community of other selves.¹³

Perhaps paradoxically, the very act of submerging the self in the ongoing complexity of tradition, language and life achieves a displacement from the Enlightenment legacy, creates the critical space between Wittgenstein and the *Tractatus*, and makes possible an objective perspective from which appropriation is no longer a given necessity and deconstruction of the modernist sub-structures a reality. Wittgenstein thus frees the fly from the fly bottle, and there in lies his genius: having achieved the culmination of modernism, he now points the way beyond its twilight towards the dawn of a new epoch.

Control of the legacy of Wittgenstein is, of course, the subject of ongoing philosophical dispute. Four main interpretations battle for the spoils: the reactionary, the romantic, the post-modern and the critical-realist. Of these, the former two would dispute the reading outlined above, and seek to draw Wittgenstein's philosophy back into the modernist camp, whilst the latter two would accept the move beyond modernism, but dispute the nature of the new epoch.

i)The reactionary reading

Here Wittgenstein's later work is seen not only as a denial of the Enlightenment, but also at one and the same time a retreat from reason itself. Russell is characteristically uncompromising here; "I have not found in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* anything that seemed to me interesting, and I do not

bottle. Thus Hacker, op.cit., p.116: "Although we wish to arrive at the notions of a sound human understanding, philosophers need to be cured of many diseases.....philosophy aims to dissolve philosophical problems which arise out of language; it is a fight against the fascination exercised by forms of language.....the importance of philosophizing in the new way lies in disillusionment, in curing the philosophical thought of the madness which besets it.....Accordingly, the aim of philosophy is not comprehensiveness; where classifications are given they are merely meant to enable us to disentangle the knots in our own thought. Nor is the aim exactness. Wittgenstein's philosophy does not aim at a systematic survey of those parts that generate illusion."

13. Thus eg. "*Nobody can truthfully say of himself that he is filthy*. Because if I do say it, though it can be true in a sense, this is not a truth by which I can myself be penetrated: otherwise I should either have to go mad or change myself" (Wittgenstein (1980) pp. 32/32e, italics original). The notion of truth and value here clearly transcends that of a private value judgement – public criteria are in operation which clearly assume 'filth' operates at a level beyond pure subjectivity or psychological phenomenology. This is not to claim that the problem of the referent of value judgements has been solved, merely that for Wittgenstein their displacement to the sphere of private language is an impossibility.

understand why a whole school finds important wisdom in its pages.....(he) seems to have grown tired of serious thinking and to have invented a doctrine which would make such an activity unnecessary."¹⁴ Such a reading, consigning Wittgenstein to the level of esoteric philosophical cult leader now seems scarcely credible. Ayer's monography on Wittgenstein, following in the tradition of Russell attempts to recognise this, rating the former second only to the latter in importance in twentieth century philosophy.¹⁵ However, Ayer discovers the majority of what he deems important in the early works, and like Russell's struggles to discover in the later writings more than an occasional flash of illumination on traditional philosophical problems. The heart of the *Philosophical Investigations*, it claims that such problems are pseudo problems created by a model of language rooted in the Enlightenment sub-structures, goes unrecognised. Such a reactionary reading reflects the inability of the Enlightenment project to turn its hermeneutic of suspicion in on itself.

ii) The romantic reading

Here Wittgenstein's references to 'language games' and 'forms of life' are taken and read not in the specific terms of language-as-used, but in terms of a sociologically informed collective generality.¹⁶ This is in turn drawn into the structures of romanticism, producing -- if this is not to put too much strain on the normal usage of the words -- a 'collective solipsism'. Wittgenstein is seen as offering no more than a phenomenological description of language within a romantic framework.¹⁷

On this reading we are able to understand the language of a particular social collective -- the paradigmatic 'tribe' -- only if we ourselves live through and experience at first hand, for ourselves, the collective 'forms of life' of the tribe, and learn to participate in their distinctive 'language games'. The hermeneutical key here is the common collective experience of the social group of which language games and forms of life are culturally and socially generated expressions. We, as external observers, can

¹⁴ Russell, B. (1959), p. 216; cf Ayer (1985), p.134.

¹⁵ Ayer, op.cit.

¹⁶ cf. eg. Winch (1958), (1964).

¹⁷ cf. Gier (1977) "*Lebensformen* are therefore primarily the formal conditions, the pattern and weave of our lives, that make a meaningful world possible.....The philosophy of the later Wittgenstein can therefore be characterised as a descriptive phenomenology of forms of life." cf. also Hunter (1968).

never achieve full membership of the tribe, can never be fully part of their collective experience -- entry via empathy always being inferior to entry by initiation, which in turn is always inferior to entry by birth. Thus Wittgenstein is seen as affirming some form of linguistic and experiential incommensurability. Language games function within the romantic framework as *expressions of experiential forms of life*.¹⁸ In terms, for example, of any given religious group, the expression can only be understood from within the group's collective experience, the religious language game comprehended only from within the religious form of life. It is precisely this reading, drawing the *Philosophical Investigations* into the romantic mirror image of Enlightenment, that gave birth to the once familiar charge of 'Wittgensteinian fideism'.¹⁹

Wittgenstein, it is true, shifts the focus of language from the individual to the collective in his rejection of the possibility of a private language. However, in rejecting in the process the entire romantic experiential-expressive package, he effectively claims a universality for the rejection of linguistic privacy. 'Forms of life' and 'language games' have as a primary reference the call to attentiveness to language: look at how language is used in all its diverse formulations, contexts and processes, the games played with language and their roots in social interaction. To read into this a collective experiential romanticism is indeed the polar opposite to Wittgenstein's true intentions: language has meaning precisely because of the way it functions within the complexity of human interaction, and is subsequently *not* dependent on internal experience as a means to legitimate its meaning. We *can* understand the language of the tribe precisely because, as human beings, we participate in the common linguistic network that gives human interaction focus and meaning.

18. The relevance of this for liberal apologetics is obvious. The experiential-expressive model of religion shifts from an individualised to a collective form, and the religious community claims legitimacy in the modern world, since the burden of religious ambiguity shifts from the charge of the incoherence of belief to the charge that it is the cultured despisers who are at fault: they condemn that which, a priori, they are unable to understand. The retreat to the commitment to the primacy of experience is thus seen not as a retreat to fundamentalism and incoherence, but to a depth of perception and understanding that ordinary, materialistic, rational humanity lacks. Any problem of religious being becomes a problem of secular understanding.

19. Malcolm (1960) offers a classic statement in the context of a discussion of Anselm's ontological argument, concluding "I suspect that the argument can be thoroughly understood only by one who has a view of that human 'form of life' that gives rise to the idea of an infinitely great being, who views it from the inside, not just from the outside and who has, therefore, at least some inclination to partake in that religious form of life. This inclination, in Kierkegaard's words, is 'from the emotions'. This inclination can hardly be an effect of Anselm's argument, but is rather presupposed in the fullest understanding of it" (p.62). cf. Nielsen (1967), Phillips (1970) (1976).

iii) The post-modern reading

Here Wittgenstein is aligned with the post-structural programmes of deconstruction associated with Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard and others, a programme whose final resting place was not that of French student politics, but of the extension of the American pragmatic tradition into a post-modern context, a move associated above all with Rorty. The rejection of the thematic sub-structures brings with it the denial of the entire Enlightenment programme in favour of an ongoing, ironic play of language freed from the constraints imposed by the Enlightenment's metaphysic of presence, together with its demands for self-reference and hence of truth and realism.²⁰ This tradition will be considered in the present chapter.

iv) The critical realist reading

Here Wittgenstein is read as a revisionist, seeking not to destroy the legacy of Enlightenment outright, but to move it onto a more self-critical, less naive plain. The removal of the sub-structures does not bring about the collapse of the Enlightenment project and its concern for the critical appropriation of truth and meaning. But such a desire for truth can no longer proceed with the naivety of a discredited reductionist empirical positivism: epistemology proceeds within the mainstream of the Enlightenment tradition, but without the constraints imposed by the vision of the dislocated self, the fact-value dualism, the requirement of certainty in the face of Cartesian anxiety, and the denial of the centrality of tradition in our ways of knowing. Habermas, Gadamer, MacIntyre, Polanyi, Taylor and, we shall argue, Wittgenstein himself offer a vision of a high modernism that stands in opposition to post-modernism. It will be the subject of Chapter Six; our concern here is to trace the contours of post-modern deconstructive readings of modernism.

²⁰. This is essentially the view of Wittgenstein taken by Scruton in his dismissal of his philosophy, Scruton (1981) p.280: "This kind of reflection led Wittgenstein towards a highly sophisticated form of nominalism: a denial that we can look outside linguistic practice for the thing which governs it. The ultimate facts are language, and the forms of life which grow from language and make language possible.....What is peculiar to Wittgenstein is the transition which he makes at this juncture from the philosophy of language to the philosophy of mind. During the course of this transition, he attempts to overthrow the major premise of almost all western philosophy since Descartes -- the premise of the 'priority of the first-person case'."

2. The Moral Imperative of Deconstruction

The suggestion that a fundamentally moral motivation underlies the central thrust of the post-modern programmes of Foucault and Derrida is a claim that requires justification. Foucault's flirtation with the value of madness and his affection for those, like de Sade, inhabiting the borderlands of conventional morality, together with Derrida's denial of moral absolutes and his placing of the entire discourse of value under constant erasure, seem indeed to point precisely in the opposite direction. This perception is underlined by reflection on deconstruction's sustained attack upon the dislocated self, since it was precisely here that modernism had recognised the source of morality and value. The fundamental attack on romanticism by post-modernism is undertaken in a context in which the notion of a humanistic ethic without self-reference appears fallacious.

The clue to understanding the essential moral thrust of deconstruction is to be found in the appreciation that morality is here understood within the classical Enlightenment framework of freedom and emancipation from the constraints of an imposed authoritarian ethic grounded in religious superstition. In defending this core Enlightenment principle post-modernism betrays its essentially negative content. Just as the Enlightenment saw itself as facilitating the emancipation of the self from pre-modern structures, so now post-modernism understands itself as seeking emancipation from the tyranny of modernism's vision of the self. Its concern is to achieve freedom from the constricting understanding of selfhood imposed by rationalism and romanticism. Indeed, for Lyotard, freedom is *the* essence of post-modernism.²¹

The inherent contradiction involved in this utilization of modernism's concern for emancipation to deconstruct modernism itself should not pass unnoticed. Post-modernism "reflects that the underlying ideal is some variant of that most invisible, because it is the most pervasive, of all modern goods, unconstrained freedom".²² It is such freedom that made possible the emergence of modern selfhood: the emancipation -- which is at the same time the dislocation -- of the isolated self is rooted precisely in this moral imperative. Thus the self is now deconstructed in the name of that very value that enabled its emergence in the first place. Deconstruction fails to achieve critical differentiation from its acceptance of the value of emancipation,

21. cf. Lyotard (1984): the freedom *from* the Enlightenment's 'grand narrative of emancipation', together with the freedom *from* Habermas' concern for the legitimation of knowledge through the distinction between the true and the false, is at the same time post-modernism's freedom *for* the free play within the flux of ever changing social and linguistic relationships.

22. Taylor (1992) p.489.

is unable to carry out the deconstruction of the notion of freedom itself. To do so would open out an issue that becomes central to critical realism: that of the possibility of a morality grounded not in freedom-as-separation-from, but rather in the issue of the correct relationship-between-self-and-others, as it indwells the order of things.²³ The equation of freedom with dislocation rather than proper relationship -- freedom *from* as opposed to freedom *for* -- leads to the acceptance of freedom and dislocation as a moral end in itself. As Taylor points out, "nothing emerges from [this] flux worth affirming, and so what in fact comes to be celebrated is the deconstructing power itself, the prodigious power of subjectivity to undo all the potential allegiances which might bind it; pure untrammelled freedom".²⁴

Post-modernism thus seeks, in the name of freedom and dislocation to deconstruct the self, to separate the self from the tyranny of any notion of essential selfhood, precisely in order to establish the self's freedom. The essence of the self lies in its having no essence: having deconstructed selfhood "what they end up celebrating instead, not entirely by design, is the potential freedom and power of the self".²⁵ If the contours of post-modernism are to be correctly assessed, then the path leading to this apparent contradiction must be mapped out.

From the post-modern perspective the emancipatory promises of the Enlightenment project had failed to materialise. Modernism had itself recognised the rationalistic, behavioural and instrumental constraints it placed on selfhood, and in its romantic turn, with its impulse away from such materialistic limitations, sought freedom in the name of moral, imaginative and aesthetic emancipation. Dislocated selfhood thus became the focus of two complementary emancipatory movements: one away from the external world, in order to gain the critical distance from which it could be objectified and mastered, the other away from the determinist claims of such objectification into the subjective world of inner space, from where it could celebrate its freedom from external constraint.

It was this pivotal role of modern selfhood, as the meeting point of the internal and external realms, of the subjective and objective, that became the target of post-modernism. Modernism instituted a metaphysic of presence, a belief that in the pure self-conscious immediacy of dislocated selfhood was to be found the locus of truth and meaning. Its flight from Cartesian anxiety had led it towards the creation of a logocentric "belief that the first and last thing is the Logos, the Word, the Divine

²³. cf. MacIntyre (1985), (1988). cf. also Murdoch (1992), Weil (1978).

²⁴. Taylor, *op.cit.*, p.489.

²⁵. *Ibid.* p.488.

mind, the self-presence of full self-consciousness".²⁶ Romanticism was recognised as embodying an ontology in which "metaphysical or theological attempts to unite a striving for perfection with a sense of community require us to acknowledge a common human nature".²⁷

Taylor's denial of a moral grounding for deconstruction, his critique of "Derrida's supposed stance outside of any affirmation of good,"²⁸ thus can be taken to apply only to the results, and not to the intentions, of the post-moderns. For them to affirm the good, to name it, to imbue it with a metaphysic of presence, is precisely to limit it, draw it into a discourse of domination and power, to sow the seeds of morality's own self-destruction. For Derrida the refusal to affirm the good is essentially a moral action, one with its own internal logic and coherence, even if such affirmations need always to be read under erasure. It follows that deconstruction stands firmly in the grand tradition of enlightened, emancipatory moralism.

The moral thrust of the Enlightenment's severance from medieval religious superstition, of the romantic self from naturalistic determinism, and of the deconstructed 'self' from its romantic constraints, are all folds in the same material. Deconstruction seeks the emancipation of humanity from the ontological discourse of romanticism, from the confinement of language within the constraints of the romantic mirror image of Enlightenment. The irony remains firmly in place: the moral imperative to deconstruct the modernist-romantic tradition requires that very tradition for its legitimization.

3. The Contours of Post-modernism: Foucault and Derrida

The Enlightenment picture of the individual as "the self-possessed subject of humanist discourse" represents the heart of the system post-modernism sets out to deconstruct. This theme draws us into the heart of the discourse of post-modernism, to the dispute between Foucault and Derrida, and to the ultimate victory of the latter over the former. The dispute focused on the self's relationship to the contingent historical flow of culture and tradition.

Foucault sees within western historical tradition an imperative to transcend

²⁶. Sarup, *op.cit.* p. 39.

²⁷. Rorty (1989) p. xiii.

²⁸. Taylor, *op.cit.* p.488.

itself through the attainment of a logocentric vision, an imperative that acts as a central agent in the construction of the distorted image of the romantic self within the Enlightenment project. This appears in the form of a desire to achieve certainty, to transcend the challenge of Cartesian anxiety. Such certainty was to be discovered in a metaphysic of presence in which that which is true is that which is immediately apprehended by the conscious self. The deconstruction of the self, the celebration of the 'death of the author,'²⁹ entails at the same time the destruction of the logocentric imperative of western tradition. Foucault's early work sought to escapen from such constraints into a form of emancipation defined precisely by its opposition to the entire logocentric constructs of western thought.³⁰ He sought to discover a realm that transcends the western imperative towards reason and rationality.

For Derrida, Foucault's transcendent turn towards a realm of being beyond reason represented simply one more example of the search for an ultimate point of reference and meaning. His response was not to deny tradition but to embrace its inevitability; yet this affirmation of tradition must not be read as the affirmation of the desire to construct a meta-language within its contingencies. Derrida's neo-stoicism affirms the freedom of the self not by denying tradition, but by denying that tradition can ever be more than a stream of non-referential language

29. The phrase 'death of the author' entails a hermeneutical rejection of "the belief that texts must always point back to their source in a moment of pure self-authorised meaning.....an end to that old, repressive regime which identified the true meaning of a text with the animating presence of authorial intent," Norris (1987) pp.112f, 218-221. Thus Schleiermacher's romantic-psychological hermeneutics, Gadamer's ontological search for mutual understanding in the 'fusion of horizons', and Habermas' critical search for unconstrained 'communicative action,' must all be rejected. Derrida's qualification of this programme is significant for what follows in this section: he rejects the notion in so far as it might be interpreted as opening up a project of hermeneutical anarchy. Language itself places constraints on the interpretative procedure, since it demands to be approached on the assumption of an inherent intelligibility and meaning. Language is thus intentional, however, "not in the sense that its meaning either could or should be confined to what the author (supposedly) intended," (Norris, *ibid.*). The author may not be dead, but his or her intentions are constrained by the play and power of language itself.

30. cf. Levin (1988) pp.116-118: he notes the "life-threatening violence implicit in the technological operation of theoretical vision," and continues, "what is at stake, here, is rather the need for public awareness: individual awareness of the historical need for the development of a very different gaze and a very different vision. The gaze of theoretical-instrumental reason needs to be reintegrated with a vision of wholeness, a vision of feeling, a vision of life.....I share with Foucault a conviction that it is necessary, today, to make visible ways in which our present historical mode of visionary being is related to our current political experience."

in a state of constant flux.³¹ Foucault thus attempts to avoid logocentrism by seeking to transcend the western rational tradition, Derrida seeks the same ends by affirming tradition whilst at the same time denying the logocentric imperative that seeks to move beyond its absolute contingency.

i) Foucault: beyond reason

Foucault's understanding of western tradition contrasts modernism's logocentric demand for certain knowledge with a belief -- informed by Nietzschean, Marxist and Freudian critiques of romanticism -- that such knowledge acts as a threat to human freedom, producing a discourse of dominance that forces upon the self a narrative of limitation.³² Limitation here is understood in terms of the assumption that such certainty is in reality unattainable: if the human mind is limited in that which it can grasp, any suggestion to the contrary will of necessity be immersed in the constraints of false consciousness. The modern notion of the self is thus seen as a construct of repression that must be deconstructed, rather than an essential description of humanity.³³ Inevitably these basic flaws in the modernist construction of the self will come to light, bringing about its collapse. Hence Foucault's reflections that "one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea,"³⁴ and that "you may have killed God beneath the weight of all that you have

31. The parallels with Greek stoicism and post-modernism, and in particular with Heraclitus, appear clear, if rarely commented upon. There is no fixed point, everything -- life, language, reality -- is in a constant state of flux, stoic resignation is replaced with post-modernism's ironic play of, and with, language.

32. Whether due to cultural change, political will or suppression, the common denominator here is that power takes precedence, and so controls knowledge within modernism. cf. Sarup (1988) pp.63-95.

33. Foucault's historical studies trace this discourse of repression through the emergence of humanitarian concerns with penal policy (1977), psychiatric medicine (1971), and sexuality (1990). He terms such historical accounts 'genealogies', drawing directly from Nietzsche. cf. Sarup, op.cit. p.63, "Nietzsche's book *On the Genealogy of Morals* was an effort to delegitimize the present by separating it from the past. This is what Foucault tries to do. Unlike the historian who traces a line of inevitability, Foucault breaks off the past from the present and, by demonstrating the foreignness of the past, relativizes and undercuts the legitimacy of the present." cf. Foucault (1989) p.386, "In fact, among all the mutations that have affected the knowledge of things and their order, the knowledge of identities, differences, characters, equivalences, words -- in short, in the midst of all the episodes of that profound history of the *Same* -- only one, that which began a century and a half ago and is now perhaps drawing to a close, has made it possible for the figure of man to appear." The inadequacies of Foucault's historical research have frequently been pointed out, cf. eg. Merquior (1991), p.144.

34. Foucault (1989) p.387.

said; but don't imagine that, with all that you are saying, you will make a man that will live longer than he".³⁵

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault offers a genealogy of the Enlightenment's construction of the modern self, concluding that "we have had to abandon all those discourses that once led us to the sovereignty of consciousness".³⁶ The realisation of this fact involves a consequent loss of faith in the Enlightenment's search for a logocentric grounding for our understanding of humanity. Human subjectivity is thus constituted by and through the Enlightenment's discourse, rather than providing its foundation, source and ultimate goal. Foucault thus establishes the relativism of modernism. The picture of humanity constructed by Enlightenment reason is nothing more than, to quote Norris, "a momentary 'fold' in the fabric of knowledge, an episode brought about by the enlightenment need to think of man as the rational, autonomous dispenser of his own moral laws".³⁷

It is, however, in his treatment of madness that Foucault's fundamental moral thrust comes to the fore. In *Madness and Civilisation* he charts his own idiosyncratic history of western attitudes to mental illness. From the medieval dialogue with madness, and its toleration and even respect for the 'holy fool', we enter successive stages of incarceration, and then of the 'humanitarian' treatment of the insane within emerging medical and therapeutic practice.³⁸ Respect for the insane, the result of an awareness of a reality beyond the limits of human reason, becomes a coercive discourse that speaks *at* -- rather than *with* -- insanity: "The dialogue between reason and unreason was broken. There is now only the monologue of reason *on* madness."³⁹ Foucault thus offers humanity two options: "On the one side.....the pervading silence of the image. It is in this space of pure vision that madness will display its powers.....in that space, madness possesses a primitive force of revelation.....On the other side.....and with the whole humanist tradition, madness is set within the

³⁵. Foucault (1991) p.211.

³⁶. Ibid. p.202.

³⁷. Norris, op. cit. p.221.

³⁸. In the late middle ages and renaissance the positive value of madness, for Foucault, was part of human discourse; he refers both to Shakespeare's fool in *King Lear* and to Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. "For Foucault, the philosophy and literature of the renaissance accorded a certain privilege to madness. Folly held pride of place in the catalogue of human weakness. It held this place because of the ambiguity and precariousness afflicting all forms of human endeavour," Boyne (1990) p.22. Prior to the Cartesian search for certainty the ambiguity of madness had ontological value, shedding light on "the fantastic and terrible territory of the other" (ibid. p.16), and "communicating something approaching a vision of otherness" (ibid. p.26).

³⁹. Sarup, op. cit. p.69.

universe of discourse."⁴⁰

For Foucault the entire humanitarian tradition, rooted in Descartes' *cogito*, represents the imposition on the mind of a cultural and intellectual tradition marked out by constrain and the closure of the true possibilities before humankind in the name of the project of enlightened reason.⁴¹ As Boyne comments, "This project enshrines a denial of otherness, of difference. It is, effectively, the absolutist project, unconsciously designed along lines of complete domination."⁴² Just as Descartes needed to exclude madness if his project was to be secure, so Foucault embraces madness as a symbol of the inherent bankruptcy of the tradition Descartes gave birth to and which he seeks now to deconstruct. Foucault seeks a greater vision, beyond reason and madness, beyond good and evil. "At stake, then, is the possibility of a higher form of reason which would transcend the division between Western reason and its hidden other."⁴³

40. Foucault (1971) pp.38ff.

41. Boynes' treatment of the relationship between Descartes and Foucault is illuminating. He refers to three pages in *Madness and Civilisation* not included in the abridged version which formed the basis of the English translation. I have not had access to the original, and what follows is dependent upon Boyne's summary (op.cit. pp.43-50). Descartes offers three hypothetical reasons for doubting self-certain knowledge: "errors of the senses, the unreality of dreams and the illusions of the mind" (p.45). He effectively treats the former two seriously, but dismisses the latter, the possibility of madness, pre-emptively. "The preservation of truth in the case of dreams and sensible errors is provided for by the nature of the *object* of thought.....The case of madness, however, cannot be argued through because the only thing that allows the pursuit of certainty to continue with some confidence is the characterisation of the *subject* who thinks as sane" (p.46). Descartes thus places madness and rationality in opposition, the result being that from this point "it is the subject who is the wellspring of truth.....the subject as intellect, as thought, as the source of sovereign truth" (ibid.). At this point in cultural history modern man emerges. In parallel fashion Descartes avoids any understanding of the "otherness" of God, of that aspect of divinity beyond human reason; in its place is a deistic God, understood in terms of reason, power and morality, a God constructed within the limits of human reason ("the vision of God subsequently advanced is merely the apotheosis of those ideas.....with God's prime attributes being the truth enshrined in logic, the power bespoken by causality, and the perfection of the moral ideal", p.49). The result is that "the idea of God becomes an adornment which is only contingently present within the system as a whole. So God can easily be subtracted from the Cartesian system, just as it can be, and many would say has been, eliminated from the project of western reason", p.49.

42. Boyne, op.cit. p.33.

43. Ibid. p.48.

ii) Derrida: the play of language

Foucault's 'transcendent turn', his quest for a point of reference beyond the limitations of the binary oppositions of reason and madness, good and evil, are subject to a fundamental critique by Derrida. Despite its apparent challenge to the Enlightenment tradition, and especially to the centrality of reason and humanistic ethics, Foucault's programme must, for Derrida, be read ultimately as an expression of continuity with the tradition of western occidental reason. This is because both have in common the desire for a fixed, final and ultimate point of reference and meaning, transcending the fear of Cartesian anxiety. The flow of western thought, from theocentrism, through naturalism to the romantic transcendent self, is merely in Foucault taken a stage further: towards a transcendent realm of ultimacy, beyond good and evil, reason and madness, which marks the fixed point around which reality revolves, and from which it is correctly to be perceived and appropriated.

In his essay *The Ends of Man* Derrida reviews the critiques of logocentric humanism offered by Nietzsche, Sartre, Heidegger and others.⁴⁴ It is impossible, he argues, for us to transcend our given position within the order of things, we can only begin "from the inside where 'we are'".⁴⁵ We can challenge tradition, but must not be mesmerised into believing that such transgression offers us emancipation and transcendence from this 'inside': there are here only 'false exits'.⁴⁶ We cannot follow Foucault and "decide to change terrain, in a discontinuous and irruptive fashion, by brutally placing oneself outside, and by affirming an absolute break and difference".⁴⁷ Such a path runs up against the brute fact that "the simple practice of language ceaselessly reinstates the new terrain on the old ground".⁴⁸ For Derrida there can be no transcendent point of reference above the ordinary contingent flow of tradition and language. Such a misplaced belief serves only to produce a blindness to the reality of the given situation, the result being that we unconsciously find ourselves "inhabiting more naively and more strictly than ever the inside one declares one has deserted".⁴⁹ "Derrida is saying that it is certainly necessary to question the western understanding of the world, but that to question its categorical framework, with a view to stepping

⁴⁴. Derrida (1982b).

⁴⁵. Op.cit. p.135.

⁴⁶. Ibid.; for the language of 'inner' and 'outer', itself now placed under erasure, cf.Derrida (1976) pp.27ff.

⁴⁷. Ibid.

⁴⁸. Ibid.

⁴⁹. Ibid.

entirely outside it, is only to duplicate the structure of the understanding which is in question, relying as it does on an origin and a presence which are utterly unavailable to us."⁵⁰

While Foucault "sought, at a stroke, to go beyond the structure of thought exemplified by Descartes.....Derrida seeks only the possibility of making mischief within it".⁵¹ Hence Derrida's programme of deconstruction seeks emancipation not beyond tradition and language, but within it, via the affirmation of its ultimate contingency. It is illusion to believe that there is available to humanity any ultimate perspective from which clear certain knowledge of reality may be obtained: this holds both for modernism's rationalism, romanticism's experiential categories and Foucault's vision that transcends reason. We have only language, and language is unable to provide us with any ultimate standpoint beyond its own contingent nature. Derrida's adopted task is to "attempt an exit and a deconstruction without changing terrain..... by using against the edifice [of modernism] the instruments or stones available in the house".⁵² These instruments are constituted by language: the metaphysics of presence is brought face to face with writing, logocentrism with the givenness of the text.

Modernism, having constructed the disengaged self, assumed a 'metaphysic of presence' at the heart of its epistemology: what is ultimately real is that which manifests itself to the self in immediate self-consciousness, in undifferentiated form.⁵³ Such an immediacy of presence transcends Cartesian doubt, offering certainty simply because, in the modernist account, such immediate undifferentiated experience cannot be denied. Thus linked to such a metaphysic of presence stands a commitment to reason, to the equation of presence with logocentrism, the priority of the word of

⁵⁰. Boyne, op.cit. p.108.

⁵¹. Ibid. p.95.

⁵². Derrida, op.cit. p.135.

⁵³. What is ultimately real forms the heart of the 'metaphysics of presence', whether it be Plato's forms, Scholasticism's deity, Descartes' self-reflective self, Husserl's transcendental ego, empiricism's external physical reality; common to all these is the notion that humanity has, in some sense, fallen from, or become separated from, this ultimate reality; the task of humanity, whether scientific, religious or philosophical, is that of restoration to presence of this reality. "The original presence is held to determine its empirical manifestations, its signs, marks, language, writing. The philosophical task has always been to restore that origin, and the philosophical prejudice has been continually to disparage the phenomena subsequent or supplemental to that presence," Boyne op.cit. p.97; cf. Norris (1987) pp.143ff.

reason.⁵⁴ We have already traced how this logos shifted from a theological, through a naturalistic to a romantic humanistic referent.

Derrida draws out a further implication of this picture: alongside logocentric presence modernism places phonocentrism, the priority of speech over writing. In *Of Grammatology* Derrida returns again and again to the Aristotelian definition "spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words".⁵⁵ Logocentric presence gives priority to the primacy of immediate experience over against its secondary expression in language. Consequently, when language is used, the spoken word takes priority over the written word, since it is closer to the originating experience: to speak with the author is always preferable to reading the author's text. Western writing is always phonetic writing. We can speak of the 'voice of reason': "within this logos, the original and essential link to the *phone* has never been broken.....[since].....the voice, producer of the first symbols, has a relationship of essential and immediate proximity with the mind".⁵⁶ Sarup's summary of Derrida here is concise and to the point:

"In the act of speaking I seem to coincide with myself in a way quite different from what happens when I write. My spoken words seem immediately present to my consciousness and my voice becomes their intimate spontaneous medium. In writing, by contrast, my meanings threaten to escape from my control. Writing seems to rob me of my being; it is a second-hand mode of communication, a pallid mechanical transcript of speech and so always at one remove from my consciousness." ⁵⁷

It is this priority of voice over text, experience over expression, which when linked with a logocentric metaphysics of presence, produces that picture of reality that characterises modern western civilisation. Logocentrism, as the metaphysics of phonetic writing, "was fundamentally.....nothing but the most original and powerful

⁵⁴. cf. Sarup, op.cit. p.39, defining logocentrism as "the belief that the first and last thing is the Logos, the Word, the Divine Mind, the self-presence of full self-consciousness". Sarup here follows Derrida in failing to distinguish theological and anthropological terminology: the Feuerbachian reduction is taken as read.

⁵⁵. "Within this logos, the original and essential link with the *phone* has never been broken.....the essence of the phone would be immediately proximate to that which within 'thought' as logos relates to 'meaning', produces it, receives it, speaks it, 'composes' it. If, for Aristotle, for example, 'spoken words (ta en te phone) are the symbols of mental experience (pathemata tes psyches) and written words are the symbol of spoken words' it is because *the voice, producer of the first symbols, has a relationship of essential and immediate proximity with the mind*", Derrida (1976) p.11, italics mine; cf. also p.30.

⁵⁶. Ibid. p.11.

⁵⁷. Sarup op.cit. p.39.

ethnocentrism in the process of imposing itself upon the world".⁵⁸ As such western metaphysics controlled and ordered: i) the concept of writing itself; ii) a history of metaphysics -- from the pre-Socratics to Heidegger -- that assigned the origin of truth to the logos and with it "the debasement of writing, and its repression outside 'full' speech;"⁵⁹ and, iii) the concept of science determined as logic.

Within modernism truth is rooted in the immediate self-consciousness of the ego, and it is the mind that acts as a mirror reflecting external reality. Given the fallen nature of language, in which words are but poor reflections of the immediately present, mere expressions of experience, the task of protecting language in its primary scientific task became paramount: scientific language, must be essentially simple, reductionist and subject to the guardianship of logocentric principles, above all that of verifiability, if its fallen nature is to be in any way redeemed.⁶⁰

Derrida strives to undermine this metaphysic from within by the rehabilitation of writing: the science of phonetic language is replaced by the science of grammatology.⁶¹ Husserl's *Logical Investigations* marked for Derrida a classic example of such misplaced western metaphysics.⁶² Husserl distinguished between expression and indication: the former was linked with the intention of the speaker, to the 'pure' meaning of a sign, the latter acts merely as a pointer, indicating an object yet unconnected with intentionality and hence with a metaphysic of presence. Further, expression is rooted in the transcendental signifier, the logos (as God, idea, mind, nature, etc.) which grounds and justifies expression and separates it out from mere indication.⁶³

Derrida's response to Husserl's position is twofold. In the first place he rejects the notion of a transcendental signifier on the grounds that the notion is a

⁵⁸. Derrida (1976) p.3.

⁵⁹. Ibid.

⁶⁰. Derrida himself highlights Saussure's introduction of a theological nuance into discussion of the 'fall' of language; cf. eg. Derrida, op.cit. pp.34f: "Saussure's vehement argumentation aims at more than a theoretical error, more than a moral fault: at a sort of stain and primarily at a sin. Sin has been defined often -- among others by Malebranche and by Kant -- as the inversion of the natural relationship between the soul and the body through passion. Saussure here points to the inversion of the natural relationship between speech and writing."

⁶¹. Ibid., especially pp. 7494.

⁶². Husserl (1977); cf. Derrida (1976) pp.10ff, Sarup, op.cit. pp.37ff, Boyne, op.cit. pp.92ff.

⁶³. Husserl's influence on the experiential-expressive model of religion, particularly in its phenomenological incarnation has already been remarked upon.

metaphysical creation of logocentric and phonocentric thought. Such thought operates with a series of binary oppositions, elevated to metaphysical status: signified/signifier, speech/writing, reason/madness, etc. The notion of the transcendental signifier depends on the linguistic distinction between expression and indication. Such claims depend on language for their status of metaphysical being: it is the binary language that brings into being logocentric ontology. Secondly, and following on from this, Derrida rejects the notion of pure expression: all expressions involve an indicative element. This is simply a given phenomenological reality: signs cannot refer to entities totally other than themselves. "There is no realm of meaning which can be isolated from the marks which are used to point to it."⁶⁴

It follows that the myth of logocentric presence, of the transcendental signifier, is precisely that, a myth; and over against this myth must be placed the reality of the written text, and the complexity and ambiguity of the ongoing contingent flow of language. Derrida's self indwells the world: spatial-temporal presence is a limiting factor, not an emancipatory one. There can be no vision beyond the limitations of the self in relationship, a relationship mediated by language. Such a limiting position is, though, to be read positively, since the self as an indwelling self, is -- once this reality is acknowledged -- in a position to adopt an appropriate relationship to the ongoing flow of language and tradition.

For Derrida the only true relationship here is that of contingency, to be affirmed in the face of Cartesian anxiety and the old logocentric demands for certainty and clarity. We cannot avoid using language, we cannot escape our tradition. As such we cannot avoid making statements that have the formal appearance of making absolute logocentric claims. Yet such claims act as *supplements*, either adding to, or substituting for, other alternatives.⁶⁵ As such all statements must be read as being *sous rature*: the claims are legible, yet crossed out, essentially provisional, not to be accepted at face value.⁶⁶ Behind each grammatical construction is to be discovered the *trace* of those other possibilities that are forever absent.⁶⁷ Language, as sign, marks

⁶⁴. Sarup, op.cit. p.38.

⁶⁵. Thus Gasche (1986) p.206: "The idea of supplementarity attempts to reunite in one structure a number of contradictory statements and propositions on origin, in such a manner that this contradiction is not obliterated but, on the contrary, explicitly accounted for."

⁶⁶. '*Sous rature*' 'under erasure': "To put a term *sous rature* is to write a word, cross it out, and then print both word and deletion.....since the word is inaccurate, or rather inadequate, it is crossed out. Since it is necessary, it remains legible", Sarup, op.cit. p.35.

⁶⁷. cf. Gasche, op.cit. pp.186-194.

the absent present: the metaphysic of presence is forever one step beyond, essential meaning is continually deferred and postponed. *Differance* is used by Derrida in reference to a quality of nature beyond that stated by language, a quality that must be endlessly delayed and postponed.⁶⁸

Derrida thus effectively deconstructs the modernist sub-structures that characterised the Enlightenment. There is no dislocated self, only the self *sous rature* within the endless flow of language: as such the binary oppositions of fact and value, certainty and contingency, tradition and reason, mind and world, collapse in upon each other. There is a danger of the complexity of the technical language of deconstruction overshadowing the simplicity of its vision. It was suggested in Chapter One that the key to an understanding of modernism was the way in which the sub-structures of the Enlightenment had been transformed into metaphysical categories. Foucault and Derrida are in agreement that this process requires reversing: the essence of selfhood is not dislocation; the limits of humanity mean that there is no absolute God-like vantage point or method whereby reality may be effectively grasped; the worlds of fact and value cannot be distinguished as simply as modernism suggested; and human understanding is grounded in, and works within, received tradition.

As such, deconstruction is to be welcomed as a critique of modernism of fundamental significance. However, at the same time we encounter the danger that the methods and results of deconstruction are themselves attributed with an absolute ontological status. Derrida is correct in suggesting that Foucault is misguided in claiming that reason itself may be transcended, that humanity might obtain a vision beyond the polarity of madness and sanity. Derrida himself, however, runs close to the trap of suggesting that language itself is absolutely relative and contingent, that informed and balanced judgement cannot be made between conflicting statements and truth claims. The rejection of modernist absolutism does not demand an anarchy of absolute relativity. The constructive possibilities of informed judgement -- rooted in human wisdom and as such contingent yet wholly rational -- tend to be overlooked in the deconstructive concern to reject absolutism and certainty. It will be suggested below that, whilst the deconstructive critique of modernism is to be welcomed, the constructive implications are not fully developed within post-modern programmes, and that for these we must turn towards the insights of critical realism.

⁶⁸ The ambiguity of the French verb '*diffère*' -- to be unlike / to postpone -- is here exploited by Derrida.

4. The Pragmatics of Post-modernism: Rorty

Despite the fundamental moral and emancipatory thrust of Derrida's arguments, there remains a sense in which the practical implications of his work remain unexplored. Here Richard Rorty's combination of post-structuralism and pragmatism comes into its own, offering a framework of fundamental importance within the post-modern debate.⁶⁹ *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* offers a deconstructionist account of western philosophy's search for a metaphysic of presence, which he terms as systematic philosophy's "search for universal commensuration in a final vocabulary".⁷⁰ Our concern, however, is with the final section of the book, in which he offers a constructive account of an 'edifying philosophy', a 'philosophy without mirrors', marked by a fundamental shift from epistemology to hermeneutics.⁷¹ These initial constructive comments are further developed in his *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*.⁷²

Rorty begins by denying the possibility of any meta-narrative: we cannot avoid the contingency of language, "the fact that there is no way to step outside the various vocabularies we have employed and find a meta-vocabulary which somehow takes account of all possible vocabularies, all possible ways of judging and feeling".⁷³ Where Rorty differs from Derrida is in the nuance he offers to this situation. The lack of any meta-narrative means that there can be no essential description of individual human nature,⁷⁴ and hence, like Feyerabend before him, he shifts his focus from the absolutism of the dislocated self to the contingent solidarity of community.⁷⁵ This does not, however, require him to follow Feyerabend in freeing humanity from a naturalistic essence imposed by the meta-narrative of natural science: where Feyerabend bid farewell to reason and advocated the absolute relativism to scientific thought, Rorty's down-to-earth pragmatism leads him towards a different solution.

⁶⁹ Rorty (1980), (1989); for critical discussion cf. Malacowski (1990); overviews of Rorty's work are provided by Sorell (1990) and Williams (1990).

⁷⁰ Rorty (1980) p.368.

⁷¹ Ibid. Part Three, pp.313-394.

⁷² Rorty (1989).

⁷³ Ibid. p.xvi.

⁷⁴ Ibid. p.xiii: "Such metaphysical or theological attempts to unite a striving for perfection with a sense of community require us to acknowledge a common human nature."

⁷⁵ Feyerabend (1987).

Behaviourism, naturalism and physicalism are given a wholehearted welcome. Human action and thought can only take place within this -- apparently limiting -- scientific framework. This does not, however, impose a deterministic essence on humanity since: i) within the constraints of naturalistic determinism there is clearly an ongoing contingency within the physical process itself that safeguards human freedom;⁷⁶ ii) the language of science, however factually true in itself, does not constitute a complete meta-narrative;⁷⁷ iii) Such naturalistic language, however correct, is essentially uninteresting: Rorty embraces determinism precisely because it "helps us avoid the self-deception of thinking that we possess a deep, hidden, metaphysically significant nature which makes us 'irreducibly' different from inkwells or atoms".⁷⁸ Rorty thus proceeds by both denying meta-narratives whilst at the same time affirming scientific naturalism: fact and value are thus both preserved by enforcing an incommensurable distinction between them.

Against this unambiguous framework, Rorty attempts to explore the implications of post-modernism at a pragmatic level. He advocates the centrality of liberalism, defining liberals -- after Judith Shklar -- as "people who think that cruelty is the worst thing in the world".⁷⁹ Such liberalism will form the "self-cancelling and self-fulfilling triumph of the Enlightenment."⁸⁰ Self-canceling, since the emancipatory morality of modernism has been compromised by the imposition of rationalism, scientism and the development of the image of the dislocated self. Once the authority of rationalism, and the image of the self it produces, is understood in its correct context, as truth that is limited by its ultimate -- in humanistic liberal terms -- non-importance, then space is made for the triumph of the Enlightenment's liberal legacy.

This triumph is rooted in the notion of irony: "I use 'ironist' to name the sort of person who faces up to the contingency of his or her own most central beliefs and desires -- someone sufficiently historicist and nominalist to have abandoned the idea that these central beliefs and desires refer back to something beyond the reach of time

76. cf. here Dr Johnson's refutation of determinism addressed to Boswell: "Sir we know the will is free, and there's an end on't"; quoted Murdoch (1992) p.55; Rorty's parallel response might be imagined thus: "we may be physically determined in all we do or think, but we remain free within this determination nonetheless."

77. Rorty (1980) p.388: "The complete set of laws which enable these predictions to be made, plus complete descriptions (in atoms-and-the-void terms) of all human beings, would not yet be the whole 'objective truth' about human beings, nor the whole set of truth predictions about them."

78. Ibid. p.373.

79. Rorty (1989) p. xv.

80. Ibid. p.57.

and chance."⁸¹ Rationalism denies liberalism, engenders cruelty and produces intolerance because its search for a metaphysic of presence is given a moral imperative that ultimately requires the negation of that which is not ultimately real. If there is no ultimate truth, then there is no need for conflict over truth, irony replaces the thirst for the real, the transcendent, and as such is essentially irenic.

In this context language is no longer linked with the rationalistic search for essences. Rorty follows Davidson here: language does not function as expression or representation.⁸² Rather, language is essentially metaphorical in nature and hermeneutical in function: its role is not to discover hidden depths within reality, but to make possible the development of human solidarity within society. Theory becomes narrative, and the authority of science -- though affirmed as fundamentally true - is relaxed in order that it might be replaced by the authority of the literature of imagination, creativity, poetics and fiction. These in turn engender progress accomplished not now by argument but through changes in habit. The aesthetics of language can enable the growth of the habit of cruelty free solidarity. This utopian goal "is to be achieved not by inquiry but by imagination, the imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow sufferers".⁸³

For Rorty the systematic philosopher must be replaced by the edifying philosopher, whose function is to reinforce the habit of irony.⁸⁴ i) through their "distrust of the notion that man's essence is to be a knower of essences";⁸⁵ and, ii) by keeping alive "the historicist sense that this century's 'superstition' was the last century's triumph of reason."⁸⁶ As such, the edifying philosopher is the protector of literature, of the artist, of the poet and creative writer. Rorty refers with approval to Gadamer's achievement of turning western thought from epistemology to hermeneutics, in the process "substituting the notion of *Bildung* (education, self-formation) for that of knowledge as the goal of thinking."⁸⁷

Rorty's project draws out the essential continuity between modernist and post-modern strategies. Fundamental to both is the distinction between fact and value:

81. Ibid. p.xv.

82. cf. Rorty, op.cit. Chapter One, especially p.11; for Davidson on Rorty cf. Davidson (1990).

83. Rorty, op.cit. p.xvi.

84. Rorty refers to Goethe, Kierkegaard, Santayana, William James, Dewey, the later Wittgenstein and the later Heidegger, cf. Rorty (1980) p.367.

85. Ibid.

86. Ibid.

87. Ibid. p.359.

emancipation from the tyranny of scientific rationalism is not to be achieved by entering into a realm transcending good and evil, reason and madness (contra Foucault); neither is it to be achieved merely by advocating the ultimate contingency of language, which points, ultimately towards an anarchic erasure of value (contra Derrida). Rorty sets out to reaffirm, via the insights of deconstruction, the central value of enlightened liberalism. He does this by reinforcing the fact-value polarity of modernism. The realm of fact is both affirmed, via the advocacy of naturalism, yet at the same time it is diffused and disempowered. The romantic realm of value is affirmed by turning to the contingency of language, and denying the modernist romantic search for essences. Freed from the tyranny of naturalism and a distorted romanticism the pragmatic option is invoked. "To see keeping a conversation going as a sufficient aim of philosophy, to see wisdom as consisting in the ability to sustain a conversation, is to see human beings as generators of new descriptions."⁸⁸ Rorty's brand of post-modernism in essence seeks the fulfilment of the moral ideals of modernism: it presents a utopian vision of human solidarity. "More important, it would regard the realization of utopias, and the envisaging of still further utopias, as an endless process -- an endless, proliferating realization of freedom, rather than a convergence toward an already existing truth."⁸⁹

5. On Deconstructing Post-modernism

i) The priority of freedom

Post-modernism, as reviewed in this chapter, is the product of a philosophical school whose positive results are to be found in its fundamental critique of the limitations of modernism. The production of a critical distance from the sub-structures of the Enlightenment allows for an external critique that modernism had failed to develop from within its own resources. Its constructive proposals are, it is being suggested, limited: ultimately they collapse in on themselves, this for two reasons. Firstly, the reality that the post-modernist critique's dialectical relationship with Enlightenment rationalism is informed by a hermeneutic of opposition, and as such it is itself dependent for its legitimacy on the very structures it sets itself against. The result is that it bypasses the possibility of a critical revision of the Enlightenment project: in identifying itself as 'opposition to'. Consequently this dialectical relationship

⁸⁸. Ibid. p.378.

⁸⁹. Rorty (1989) p.xvi.

is, and can only be, one of negation: the isolated self may only be removed from the agenda, there is no possibility of its being given a revised description. This assumption, in so far as it is not open to question within post-modernism, becomes both arbitrary and doctrinaire. Secondly, the lack of any informed consideration of the principle that the critique must always be a critique of negation leads to an internal self-contradiction within the post-modern project: the process of deconstruction may not be applied to post-modernism itself.

As we saw, at the heart of post-modernism stands the uncritical acceptance, and extension of, the Enlightenment principle of freedom. From the start it is dependent upon a core feature of the system to which it sets itself in opposition. Its critique of the romantic attempts to retrieve the legacy of Enlightenment was of course not new. Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*⁹⁰ had already demonstrated how the romantic mirror image of humanity had incorporated into itself the very language, processes and instruments of domination it had attempted to escape from. Our thesis that deconstruction moves beyond romanticism precisely in an attempt to re-legitimate the value of freedom reflects the dependency of post-modernism upon modernism itself. Rorty is far less reticent in acknowledging this fact, as was Foucault in his later work, than Derrida: the project must be seen as an attempt "to retain Enlightenment liberalism while dropping Enlightenment rationalism," and as such is both "the self-canceling and self-fulfilling triumph of the Enlightenment".⁹¹

ii) Enlightenment sub-structures revisited

Post-modernism is concerned with the *retrieval of tradition*, the turn to the notion of the self-indwelling the historical process of language and culture. In rejecting Descartes' God's-eye perspective of the isolated self it nevertheless retains the Enlightenment critique of the epistemological value of tradition. It may be inevitable that we indwell the world, but this very fact at one and the same time is seen as reinforcing the Enlightenment's assumption that cultural contingency can never be more than relative, and thus that tradition can offer no clear and certain knowledge concerning reality.

Where modernism and deconstruction part company on this issue is the contrast between the former's fear of *Cartesian anxiety* that the uncertainties of tradition throw out, and the latter's joyful acceptance of this -- apparently inevitable contingency -- in the name of an increase in human freedom: we are no longer bound

⁹⁰. Adorno & Horkheimer (1972).

⁹¹. Rorty (1989) p.57, cf. note 80 above.

by the need to displace anxiety with certainty. This is achieved by bypassing the backdrop of ultimate concern against which Cartesian anxiety operates. Humanity's dramas are no longer epic ones, humanity no longer stands at the intersection of time and eternity: both Greek Tragedy and the Judaeo-Christian drama of redemption are misplaced. Rather we have a more mundane story of a cruelty that can be undermined through playful irony.

Both the re-establishment of tradition and the escape from anxiety are thus informed by the Enlightenment: it both sets the agenda and the results, in so far as post-modernism offers only negation. The process is at its clearest in *the treatment of the self*. If rationalism denied a referent of the self to the divine mind, and romanticism denied a referent of the self to external nature, so post-modernism denies the referent of the self to itself: the result of this is that the self is denied reality, it has no point of reference either externally or internally. This act of deconstruction is at one and the same time a denial of Enlightenment romanticism, and at the same time an extension of the Enlightenment project of freeing the self from constraint.

Both Derrida and Descartes ultimately inhabit the same world: both ask the question of the possibility of the self-reference of the ego. Descartes replies positively, via the *cogito*, and sets out on the path of the denial of anxiety through the achievement of clear, unambiguous knowledge of reality, Derrida replies negatively and sets out on the path of the denial of anxiety through the celebration of contingency. Again, post-modernism is to be seen as reliant on the Enlightenment agenda, and -- at one and the same time -- as defining itself, a priori, in terms of the negation of Enlightenment constructs.

Turning to the *fact-value division* we encounter a similar story. Romanticism had attempted to re-legitimate the Enlightenment project by dividing external scientific fact from internal humanistic value, and celebrating the priority of the latter. In so far as post-modernism focused its attack on romanticism, its relationship with the world of external fact remains problematic. Three solutions offer themselves. Both Derrida and Foucault, in concentrating on romanticism, have little to say about the problem of scientific determinism and its potential denial of freedom. The problem may be put bluntly: either post-modernism limits the process of deconstruction to the world of value, and thus reinforces the Enlightenment dualism, or else it takes part in the deconstruction of science itself.

The latter route can only be seen as nonsensical: the denial of western scientific achievement in the name of western cultural imperialism is an argument that has no explanatory force behind it. The deconstruction, as opposed to the revision, of the natural sciences cannot explain the realities of manned space flight and the technology of micro-surgery. Rorty recognises both the inadequacy of silence, and of

the deconstruction of science, in this matter. His solution is to reaffirm the dualism of fact and value, and as such is one of the most consistent advocates of the Enlightenment vision. His understanding of science, though aware of its current revision, assumes natural science to be the result of a positivist programme. Science reveals the deterministic structures through which external reality evolves. These are not a threat to human freedom, since post-Einsteinian science has revealed the fact of widespread contingency within this evolutionary process. The fact that we are determined by physical processes does not threaten human freedom. This allows Rorty on the one hand to both affirm the truth of science and to categorise it as being essentially uninteresting and irrelevant to the progression of the liberal humanistic ideal - science has no depth, cannot go beyond a positivity of fact and process. The reality of the factual physical world, as embracing contingency within pre-determined and evolving structures, is torn assunder from the poetic-philosophical discourse of the ironic value of human potentiality. One again the Enlightenment is simultaneously affirmed and denied: the fact-value dualism is reinforced at the same time as the Enlightenment search for objective essences is replaced by its polar opposite, the celebration of contingent existence.

iii) A concluding rational postscript

The relationship between post-modernism and the modernist sub-structures is then one of an apparent arbitrary 'selection-from' and 'negation-of'. The logic of the decision to embrace or reject a particular formulation would seem to rest on a fundamental incoherence within post-modernism. The guiding principle in the selection process may be seen as being that of the extension of the principle of freedom to embrace the rejection of the Enlightenment's concern to create, or discover, an essential meta-narrative that transcends the contingencies of human culture. In the name of enlightened freedom, post-modernism sets aside the idea that both the self and reality have in themselves intrinsic natures waiting to be known. Herein lies the self-contradiction of post-modernism, in that the denial of the possibility of a meta-narrative itself entails the construction of the meta-narrative of deconstruction. In affirming the contingency of tradition, the deconstruction of the self, the avoidance of anxiety through irony, and the reaffirmation of the fact-value dualism, post-modernism expresses a meta-narrative, offers a picture of the way things are. A reconstructed Enlightenment project might affirm the epistemological function of tradition, seek the self's correct place within the order of things, advocate the seriousness of contingency and deny the polarity of scientific fact and human value. This is not a viable proposition for post-modernism precisely because it is committed to the meta-narrative that denies meta-narratives.

Rorty does, typically, come close to acknowledging this in reference to his ironic-poetic-philosophical discourse: "I am no more neutral, and philosophy can no more be neutral, on political matters of this magnitude."⁹² Derrida's response, again typically, is to deflect the criticism by offering a deconstruction of this critique itself; what he remains unable to do is to accept the possibility of the deconstruction of deconstruction itself. In essence he evades the question by merely reasserting his position: as such, post-modernism offers a closed discourse whose formal structures bear remarkable resemblance to the processes of legitimation characteristic of religious fundamentalism. Challenges from outside are denied simply through a louder affirmation of the believer's faith on the believer's own terms; the retreat to faith marks the closure of the discourse. The hermeneutic of suspicion may be pointed in any direction apart from that of the meta-narrative of deconstruction itself: deconstruction may not, a priori, be deconstructed.

The result is a dead end. Post-modernism emerges as an inadequate response to the problems of modernism: its dialectical affirmation and rejection of the philosophy of the Enlightenment tradition is guided by the very type of meta-discourse it sets out to reject. It follows that it is unlikely that a more adequate framework for religious education, that is, a framework that transcends the contradictions within liberal religious education, may be developed from post-modernism. To do so would be to take on board an intellectual baggage whose inadequacies now lie clearly on the surface. This provisional conclusion will be confirmed by the treatment of post-modernism's tradition of religious discourse to which we now turn.

⁹². Ibid. p.54.

Chapter Six

The Deconstruction of Religion

Chapter Six considers the understanding of religion that emerges within post-modernism: i) Cupitt's transition from a liberal to a post-modern theological position is offered as a case-study, drawing out the fundamental moral and theological agenda within programmes of deconstruction; ii) the Shoah is discussed as the key instance of the possibility of positive moral affirmation in the face of nihilism, the limitations of post-modern religious affirmations of value are outlined, and against this background two broad programmes within post-modern theological discourse are identified; iii) firstly the emergence of a naturalistic a-theology; iv) secondly, an apophatic negative theology; iv) the implications for religious education are outlined, and the thesis defends the fact that post-modernism fails to offer a framework capable of doing justice to the integrity of religion.

1. The Death of Theology?

i) Theology and post-modernism

The conclusions of the previous chapter suggested that, apart from its negative critique of modernism, post-modernism was unlikely to be able to offer religious education a constructive philosophical foundation. The present chapter, in considering the discourse -- or perhaps better the textuality -- of theology within the deconstructionist framework, will confirm our provisional thesis.

It was suggested above that a fundamental flaw within the liberal experiential-expressive religious framework was its inability to do justice, in the

context of religious education, to the realistic self-understanding of religious traditions with its own implicit anti-realistic reductionism, and this issue will form the sub-text of the ensuing discussion.

The heart of the argument that follows may be summarised thus: i) the central strand of deconstructionist theology explicitly confirms a non-realistic understanding of religious discourse; ii) despite this, post-modernism embodies a fundamentally ethical thrust that implicitly demands that the question of moral, and hence also theological, meta-narratives be addressed; the response to this tension has been twofold, iii) the development of a naturalistic a-theology, and iv) a return to the tradition of negative theology; v) both these responses entail the construction of a metaphysic, and as such are vulnerable to internal criticism from within post-modernism itself, whilst at the same time they fail to defend themselves against external -- especially neo-realistic -- critiques of deconstruction; as a result programmes of theological deconstruction must be deemed to have failed to provide a more coherent philosophical framework for contemporary religious education than that of a flawed modernism.

We begin with an apparent paradox: the post-structural account of the complex, transitory, non-referential language of difference, in which every word, phrase and sentence stands under constant erasure, linked with the a priori denial of any transcendent (whether humanistic or theological) meaningful reference beyond the immanence of language, would seem to suggest that deconstruction's relationship with theology will be found to be a purely negative one. Yet despite appearances, the literature in the field has grown at a rate that has prompted Berry to the suggestion that "the contributions currently being made by many theologians to the changing orientation of post-modern thought appear to herald the end of theology's long intellectual marginalisation".¹

¹. Berry (1992), p.4. She continues: "It now seems plausible that the deconstructive style of thinking which was initiated a century ago, in Nietzsche's twilight, has subtly and unobtrusively dissolved the clear-cut distinction between secular and religious thinking which Kant and the Kantian tradition had carefully secured. Hence the question.....could an apparently nihilistic tradition of thought -- a thought ostensibly *shaped* by that darkness of *angst*, of meaninglessness and abjection, which shrouds the 'end' of the modern era -- paradoxically have acquired a new religious or spiritual dimension."

In contrast to this it is significant that Jungel's standard text dealing with the interface between theology and contemporary philosophy makes no mention either of Derrida or of programmes of deconstruction, Jungel (1983). It is apparent that the progress of deconstruction beyond the French-speaking world has not travelled further than North America and Britain, and that even there it remains associated with a particular school, or style, of philosophy set apart from the mainstream. Pavel's attempt to chart the rise

Certainly the developing popularization of post-modern religious and theological themes -- of which Cupitt's post-liberal position will be taken as providing a benchmark -- would seem to support Berry's statement. However, as was observed above, in reference to liberal religious education's uncritical response to Robinson's *Honest to God*, popular fashion can never be a replacement for intellectual integrity. Indeed, part of the justification for focusing on deconstruction in the central section of the current work is linked with the concern that a misreading of the value of post-modernism for religious education represents a potential danger that attention must be drawn towards, particularly in the light of the subject's past history of uncritical acceptance of theological fashion in the desire for legitimation. To respond to this situation it will be necessary to gain an overview of the central themes of post-modern theology.

ii) Cupitt's post-modern programme

A convenient way into the issues raised by this paradox is to be found in the development of the theological edifice of Don Cupitt. The use of Cupitt as an example is selected here not merely because of the clarity and precision of his prose, but because Cupitt's willingness to allow developments in philosophy to set the boundaries within which theological language may legitimately operate means that the epistemological sub-text is never far from the surface of his writing.² The first phase of Cupitt's work, from the first publications in the early 1960's to its culmination in

and fall of the 'waning paradigm' of structuralism and post-structuralism has informed much of the argument of the present -- and previous -- chapter, Pavel (1992). He suggests that, despite its persisting influence in England and the U.S.A., deconstruction has already been overtaken in the land of its birth by a turn towards critical realism: "all these developments suggest a gradual movement away from the structuralist and post-structuralist debates. They imply that the study of language has ceased to provide the key to philosophy and to the humanities. And while what has been called 'the linguistic turn' has undoubtedly been one of the century's major intellectual events, the time has come to reflect upon the intellectual tasks of the future," p.2.

² cf. especially Cupitt (1980). We should note here the totally uncritical acceptance of the 'romantic' Kantian thematic, especially the internalization of meaning and the autonomy of the human spirit as the structural focal point upon which his anti-realistic theological programme is constructed. On this cf. Cowdell (1988), p.58: "if Cupitt is convinced that he has the critical game sewn up, he must then begin to ask meta-critical questions in order to deconstruct his own biases, not least of which is his quasi-positivistic limiting of the range of admissible evidence for theological reflection". We are face to face once again with the inability of modernism and post-modernism to turn their hermeneutic of suspicion in onto themselves.

Taking Leave of God in 1980, marks a transition from a relatively orthodox Christianity to a liberal perspective that adopts with rigour an experiential-expressive model of religion. The second phase, from 1980 to the present, saw both the rejection of the possibility of a liberal humanistic self-transcendence, and the acceptance of the language and style of post-structuralism, culminating in 1987's *The Long-legged Fly*.³

In *Taking Leave of God* Cupitt's experiential-expressivism operates within a Kantian framework. Religious expression is treated with extreme caution: a realistic theological language affirming an objectively existing God leads us into a religious life dependent on external authority that is essentially vulgar and immature. By letting go of objective religious expression we can appreciate that "God is the religious concern reified; the demands and promises of spirituality in coded form".⁴ Such a demythologized spirituality of experience offers a path to transcendence and ultimate meaning: "The highest and central principle of spirituality (the religious requirement as it is often called below) is the one that commands us to become spirit, that is, precisely to attain the highest degree of autonomous self-knowledge and self-transcendence."⁵

Cupitt's path away from liberal anthropological transcendence begins with *The World To Come*. Drawing implicitly on Rorty and Derrida he develops a social concern to move beyond the modern individualistic nihilism inherent in the post-Nietzschean tradition. We observe the beginning of an attempt to reject the experiential categories that dominated his earlier work, and an attempt to reappropriate religious expressionism. A concern with community and language replaces a focus on autonomy and spirituality: "religion is social: there has to be a community of faith, and the community must have a common language".⁶ Salvation is to be gained through voluntarist action within the world, via relationship with others, rather than through religious introspection. "The only way to salvation is by a decision

3. For Cupitt's transition from Christian orthodoxy to liberalism, cf. Cupitt (1972), (1980), (1985a), (1985b); on the development of a deconstructive perspective, cf. Cupitt (1982), (1985c), (1986), (1988), (1991), and especially (1987); on Cupitt's theological liberalism cf. Ward (1982), Hebblethwaite (1988), Ross (1994); on Cupitt and post-modernism cf. Cowdell, *op.cit.*

4. Cowdell, *op.cit.* p. 18.

5. Cupitt (1980) p.9. This would appear to confirm the Feuerbachian-Barthian critique that the subjective turn within theological liberalism leads inevitably towards an anthropological reduction. However, Cupitt does hesitate to take that final step. He leaves open an – agnostically grounded – possibility of a transcendence beyond humanity: "My account has a hidden transcendent beyond objectivity, but no objective metaphysical world-ruling God," Cupitt (1981), in the context of a discussion of *Taking Leave of God*. cf. Cowdell, *op.cit.* pp.19f.

6. Cupitt (1982) p.64; cf. Cowdell, *op.cit.* pp.33-37.

to *live one's life* by an absolute standard that requires of us singleness of mind, inner integrity and disinterested love."⁷

The decisive break with liberalism however takes place in *Only Human*. With a self-conscious nod in the direction of Foucault, Cupitt utilizes geology, biology, psychology, social anthropology and comparative religion in order to carry out an archaeological deconstruction, via genealogical description, of the tradition of Christian humanism stemming from Augustine.⁸ There is no attempt to fill the vacuum with a revised anthropology; he rejects any humanistic point of reference, either above, beyond or within humanity. "That kind of philosophy is no more than the ghost of theology, and it is as dead now as doctrinal belief".⁹ All we have is language, and such language that we have is appropriated in the ironic, ambiguous and contingent style and tone that Cupitt has learnt from Derrida.¹⁰ Cupitt thus adds to his account of the death of a realistic God the announcement of the passing away of transcendent humanism.¹¹ "Once we have become fully conscious of our language and other forms of symbolic communication as sign-systems through which every thinkable and knowable is mediated, then we see that there can be no sense in the idea of a transcendent language."¹²

The story is taken a stage further in *Lifelines*: "its scepticism, pluralism and historical eclecticism mean that post-modernism can shelter a great variety of spiritualities; a greater variety, indeed, than was permitted by the traditional metaphysics of theism-and-atheism."¹³ Here Cupitt is able to embrace a variety of

7. Cupitt, *op.cit.* p.63.

8. Foucault's approach to history as 'genealogy' "breaks off the past from the present and, by demonstrating the foreignness of the past, relativizes and undercuts the legitimacy of the present," Sarup (1988) p.63, cf. above, Chapter Five, note 33.

9. Cupitt (1985c) p.x.

10. cf. eg. Cupitt, *op.cit.* p.xi.: "It was clumsy of me even to put it into words in the last sentence. How can there be 'words' not themselves part of language, that we can use to state the relation of language to 'reality', or whatever it is we naively imagine to stand beyond language? And when we grasp this we become dizzy, for we see for the first time that the human realm is now absolutely alone. There is no sense in the idea that there could be any guidelines or reference points extending to it that might help us to get it into perspective. That is why it is so hard to say what the human situation is: there is no longer anything else with which to compare and contrast it. As in a late Beckett play, the world is just voices, talk, meanings, symbols."

11. cf. Cupitt (1986) p.220: "Post-moderns have therefore sought to escape from the tyranny of the ideas of linear time and historical period, and to de-centre or demythologize man the finite subject by exposing and criticizing the beliefs that metaphysical theism and atheistic humanism had in common."

12. Cupitt (1985c) p.xi.

13. Cupitt (1986) p.220.

contrasting and conflicting approaches to religion with an ironic lightness of touch that is characteristic of his later work and in keeping with his new found liberation from the shackles of the humanistic demand for a meta-system and a meta-language. As Cowdell points out, though Cupitt retains his criticism of realistic modes of thought, and continues to extol "heresy and dissention as valuable in their own right", nevertheless, "a certain tolerance of conflicting religious positions develops".¹⁴ Theological judgement now rests on aesthetic rather than rational criteria.¹⁵ In the appropriation of this non-referential plurality Cupitt finds himself in the heartlands of post-modernism.

"Post-modernity amounts to a redescription of logic as 'aesthetics', of message as medium, of communication as dramatics, of truth as embodiment....(it) is the transcendence, or 'overcoming', of all archaic or 'legendary' orders of significance that have underwritten cultural discourse....(it) represents a transition from the highly formalized, or 'modern', understanding of things to the 'carnival' of popular culture....(where) the achievement of the 'signifier' no longer depends on language as social interaction, but emerges through the very distension of the grammar of culture."¹⁶

This theme is picked up, later in *What is a Story*: the plurality of narratives and tales, like the plurality of religious systems, draws us into the realm of difference and trace; stories are essentially fiction, and give birth to fictional theology. Here there is "no master-narrative into which religion fits us, just the playfulness of the signs we exchange with one another".¹⁷

The various post-modern themes Cupitt has been developing since *Taking Leave of God* are drawn together in *The Long-legged Fly*. By becoming critically self-conscious, western tradition has developed the tools of its own self-destruction and demythologization. The classical and Judaeo-Christian visions of transcendence, ultimacy and truth have collapsed in on themselves, creating the post-modern situation in which "there is no longer any absolute Beginning, Ground, Presence or End in the traditional sense".¹⁸ In this situation the role of religion is that of the affirmation of a

¹⁴. Cowdell, op.cit. p.66. It should however be noted, and this is of central importance to the argument of the present chapter, that Cupitt's 'tolerance' remains as paternalistic as that of western liberalism. *Lifelines* seeks to draw a plurality of traditions within the limiting structures of a non-referential language system, and as such leads inevitably towards reductionism. This leads Cupitt into self-contradiction: through the denial, both of the centrality of autonomy in his later thought, and of the possibility of a deconstruction of non-referential language systems. cf. note 2 above.

¹⁵. Note that the modernist distinction between fact and value remain firmly in place.

¹⁶. Raschke (1992) p.94.

¹⁷. Race (1992) p.379f.

¹⁸. Cupitt (1987) p.7.

'theology of desire': the desire for acceptance of the absolute contingency of the world we indwell. This is the genuine message of the language of incarnation, in which "the eternal descends into the contingent world and is diffused through it".¹⁹ We are faced with the denial of cosmological dualism and the acceptance of an immanent monism, of a post-modern condition "in which the word became flesh and body and became language".²⁰

At the heart of Cupitt's revised theological programme is to be found a fundamental rejection of theological realism, and of humanistic transcendence. Religious language though, as a non-referential free play of words, is to be affirmed: its function is to make possible the affirmation of a post-humanistic Dionistic ethic of desire, an ethic informed by the fact that theological language has been freed from the constraints of theological realism and humanistic essence, and hence points the way, through its emancipation, towards new possibilities for humanity within the web of language.

iii) The religious agenda of post-modernism

We have used Cupitt's transition from liberalism to post-modernism to set out the agenda and key themes of deconstructional theology. In terms of our search for a framework in which the realistic self-understanding of the world's religious traditions may be heard for what they are, and be held up within their own integrity, our initial conclusions must be wholly negative. The liberal Cupitt still held to the possibility, however tenuous, of experience leading to a transcendence that goes beyond a humanistic anthropological reductionism. The post-modern Cupitt, retreating as he does from experience into the affirmation of a renegotiated, dehumanized language of religious symbolism that no longer expresses the experience of transcendence, stands further still from any possibility of a language of theological realism. "Post-modernism has the effect of dissolving the individual into the endless flow of difference. It strongly suggests that history is closed because no further innovation is possible. We are condemned to an endless recycling of tradition, an aesthetic contemplation of the play of received signs." ²¹

19. Ibid. p.8.

20. Ibid. p.8.

21. Ibid. p.12; the quotation continues, however, "Is the canon closed or rapidly becoming so, or can faith still create? I argue that it can." Cupitt here is referring to a naturalism rooted in a 'theology of desire'. The affirmation of naturalism in no way challenges the anti-realist conclusions of Cupitt, and will be picked up in Section 3 of the present chapter.

Within this broad programme, however, an important sub-text emerges: that of the fundamental moral focus of deconstruction. Behind Cupitt's aestheticism lies a core ethical concern with the nature of our relationships with ourselves, with others and with the world, as mediated by, and confined to, the endless play of language in the post-modern context. It is to this sub-text that we must now turn.

2. Shoah and the Limits of Humanism

i) Judaism and deconstruction: the ontological challenge of nihilism

The project of decentering the self, of denying a metaphysic of presence, undermines the whole edifice of liberal humanism -- that optimistic affirmation of the value of the essential transcendent self, of a humanity devoid of original sin - that can be traced back through Kant, Rousseau and Descartes to Erasmus and the reaffirmation of classical humanism in the Renaissance.²² The path from Hegel to Derrida marks the journey away from humanistic affirmation, and opens up in the process the dilemma of nihilism.²³ However, this fact is obscured by deconstruction's rejection of meta-narrative and its turn to the ironic aesthetic of the play of language.

In both material and symbolic terms the fact of the Holocaust, the Shoah, has raised, and continues to raise, the question of the possibility of the affirmation of value, whether theological, humanistic or linguistic, in the face of apparently meaningless evil.²⁴ Response within the Jewish tradition to this nihilistic challenge has taken the form of painful, almost desperate, attempts to discover value in the ashes of Belsen, in the knowledge that to fail to do so leads inevitably to the affirmation of nihilism as the 'final solution'. Thus Greenberg argues: "the overwhelming testimony of the six million is so strong that it all but irretrievably closes out religious language. Therefore the religious enterprise after this event must see itself as a desperate

²². The tradition of Christian humanism drawn up by Erasmus was overshadowed by the Lutheran and Calvinist reformers, and it was the latter tradition that developed into mainstream Protestantism; their stress on a more negative telling of the human story itself became marginalised from mainstream modernism as Protestantism descended into pietism; cf. here Kung's attempt to retrieve the tradition of Erasmus in Christian terms, Kung (1988); for background to this debate cf. Reventlow (1984) pp.1-91.

²³. On the transition from Hegel to Derrida cf. Gasche (1986).

²⁴. cf. Rubenstein and Roth (1987). The 'symbolic' nature of the Holocaust as a fundamental challenge to both religious and secular humanistic traditions has earlier parallels: the response of Voltaire Pascal, and Leibnitz to the 'symbol' of the Lisbon earthquake, and the response of Barth, Wilfred Owen and Benjamin Britten to the 'symbol' of the Great War of 1914-1918.

attempt to create, save, and heal the image of God where it still exists".²⁵

There is a close parallel between deconstruction's rejection of humanism and Judaism's response to the Holocaust. Both traditions ultimately ask an identical question: "if we reject the humanistic enterprise, then where is value to be grounded?" Jewish reflection on the Holocaust serves to impose on deconstruction a moral seriousness that ought no longer to hide behind the 'playful irony' of Derrida and Rorty.²⁶ When placed alongside one another both traditions question the possibility of a language of moral affirmation in the context of the apparent failure of liberalism and the emergence of the threat of nihilism. Deconstruction sets up this onto-theological conflict between nihilism and value by making possible a critique of the epistemological and metaphysical framework within which the cultural and intellectual conditions that made possible the Holocaust came into being. Judaism draws on this rejection of humanism in the light of its own experience of the Shoah as undermining liberalism. As soon as deconstruction is read in the light of the Holocaust, or the Holocaust in the light of deconstruction two things happen: i) the assumption of the value of the liberal humanistic tradition is placed under question; ii) the problem of an ontology of value becomes central. Both events require further unpacking.

ii) The dehumanisation of liberalism

The dualism of fact and value, of self and world, had been picked up by Nietzsche in the form of a contrast between the sobriety of bourgeois Apolline society, and the life of the Dionysian genius.²⁷ Thomas Mann made the connection between these Dionysiac values -- divorced from the world and tradition and affirming

²⁵. Quoted in Wollaston (1992).

²⁶. I do not want to suggest here that either Derrida or Rorty lack a fundamental moral concern in their work, on the contrary, such concern must be read as forming the foundations of their thought. Thus Rorty's notion of liberalism is grounded in opposition to what he terms 'cruelty': "I borrow my definition of 'liberal' from Judith Shklar, who says that liberals are the people who think that cruelty is the worst thing we do," Rorty (1989) p.xv. However, this is not unpacked in detail, and assumes a humanistic notion of justice and fairness, language which must be seen as inadequate when placed on the altar of the Holocaust. This view is confirmed by his decision to attach his notion of 'liberalism' with that of 'irony'. His 'liberal ironist' points the way towards a utopian future, which is to be achieved "not by inquiry but by imagination, the imaginative ability to see strangers as fellow sufferers," *ibid.* p.xvi. He turns to literature, especially the work of Nabakov and Orwell (*cf. op.cit.* pp.141-168, and 169-188), to develop this imaginative empathy. The question of relevance here is whether this liberal optimism can genuinely be said either to have addressed the nihilistic challenge of the Shoah, or whether -- indeed -- it would be capable of doing so.

²⁷. *cf.* Nietzsche (1966); Kaufmann (1974) pp.128-131.

of the isolated self -- and the emergence of facism and the path to the Holocaust. In his preparatory sketches for *Doctor Faustus*, the novel that related his earlier explorations of the sterility of liberal humanism with his attempts to grapple with the rise of Nazism in Germany, he wrote: "...a world of drunken release, a life of bold, Dionysiac genius, beyond society, indeed superhuman -- above all subjectivity, as experience and drunken intensification of the self, regardless of whether the world outside ran along with it..."²⁸

For Mann the dualism that places value in the realm of the subjective self, and isolates it from the objectivity of external reality, tradition and culture, represents a fundamental flaw in the entire humanistic enterprise: the culture of the isolated self becomes a culture of imperialism, and leads to the Holocaust, and the inevitable tragic collapse back into the realities of the world. Lukacs comments: "Mann's playfulness never dissolved objective reality, but on the contrary underlines its inevitable and natural triumph. The greater the discrepancy between being and consciousness, the more grotesque and degrading must the defeat of subjectivity be."²⁹

This argument, that the Holocaust has its roots in the dualistic flaws in the fabric of liberal humanism, has been taken up by Levin.³⁰ Cartesian subjectivity created and empowered an objective rationality that was to claim sovereignty over the external world through the development of technology. The value of the external world, and its technological manipulation, was subject to the tyranny of the subjectivity of individuals, via the affirmation of "the independence, self-determination, and self-affirmation of the subject".³¹ Freed from external constraints, this subjective freedom "turned brutish and competitive, and a false individualism soon began to inhabit the descendants of the monadic Cartesian ego".³² The result being that, rooted in the liberal dualistic framework, the project of humanism led inevitably towards nihilism:

28. Quoted in Reed (1974) p. 364. cf. pp.360ff; "Mann's Faustus.....is a musician. The composer Adrian Leverkühn rises with Dionysian inspiration. He recapitulates the age of Nietzsche, of the superman and his unprecedented advances in science and in the arts. Leverkühn must penetrate new dimensions to defeat the sterility which threatens when everything has been tried before.....he pays with his soul for gigantic creativity. The new music is demonic". Simon (1972) p.6. cf. also Heller (1981) pp.259ff. For Mann's exploration of the sterility of liberalism, cf. Mann (1960), and its qualification in Mann (1978).

29. Lukacs (1964) p.109.

30. Levin (1988).

31. Ibid. p.3.

32. Ibid. pp.3f.

"But in a world of objectivity, there is no place, no home, for the subject, whose subjectivity -- that is to say, experience -- is denied value, meaning and ultimately any truth or reality. This triumph of subjectivity has been self-destructive: we can now see how the subject falls under the spell of its objects; how it becomes subject to the objectivity it set in power. The subject is in danger of losing touch with itself. When reason turned totally instrumental, a function solely of power, it legitimated the construction of a totalitarian state and engineered the Holocaust. The legacy of humanism is terror." ³³

If we view deconstruction, in terms of the shift from self to language, in the light of the Shoah, we thus encounter a fundamental challenge to humanistic, and theological-humanistic projects; a challenge that asks the ontological question of meaning versus nihilism. The post-structural challenge to the self created a hermeneutical scepticism towards the Enlightenment enterprise, making possible contemporary insight into liberalism's distorted understanding of the relationship between humanity and truth. Yet in making this challenge, deconstruction also raises once again the ontological question of value, despite its rejection of the possibility of ontological language. The Holocaust raises the status of the post-structural programme to an ontological level: is there mercy, truth, grace and value in the world we inhabit, or are we doomed to a descent into nihilism? Deconstruction, while both standing in the shadow of Belsen and denying any fundamental ontology, thus paradoxically raises fundamental theological and ontological questions about the truth of reality.

iii) The silence of the drowned, the lamentation of the saved

Once deconstruction is read in the light of the challenge of nihilism the moral seriousness of its ethic of aesthetic irony is placed under suspicion. The Jewish response, in contrast, may be read as a fundamental attempt at moral seriousness. It understands, unlike post-modernism, that following Auschwitz the very possibility of moral affirmation is in doubt, and with it the possibility of the affirmation of

³³. Ibid. p.4. He continues: "nihilism is a rage against Being: 'nihilism' means the destruction of being; the Being-full beings, including that way of being which we call 'human' and consider to be our own". (ibid. p.5). Levin himself seeks to oppose nihilism through a redrawn, holistic, anthropology: "the essence of humanism is not will; it consists, rather in our capacity for caring" (ibid. p.22). Whether this represents more than a romanticised humanism remains an open question, dependent on how far his anthropological holism relates to an understanding of an anthropology of relationship, understood in terms of a coherent and viable ontology.

humanistic and theological values. Thus Greenberg argues that, in the light of the Shoah, "no statement, theological or otherwise, should be made that would not be credible in the presence of burning children".³⁴ The implications of this statement point in two directions: i) the expiration of language and the descent into silence, in the acknowledgement that language can offer no answers; ii) an attempt to retrieve a language of moral value, to affirm value in the face of nihilism.

Primo Levi's attempt to retrieve language ended in the tragedy of its expiration. His initial reaction to his experience of the death camps was an intense need to testify, to witness, to put into language and so make accessible to the world, the reality of the Holocaust: "the need to tell our story to 'the rest', to make 'the rest' participate within it, had taken on for us, before our liberation and after, the character of an immediate and violent impulse, to the point of competing with our other elementary needs. The book has been written to satisfy this need: first and foremost, therefore, as an interior liberation".³⁵ For all its tentativeness and fragmentary nature, we discover here some kind of value and purpose in the urge to give testimony, some sort of affirmation of value in the way things are. However, Levi remains acutely aware of those who cannot speak: "the *Muselmanner*, the drowned, form the backbone of the camp, an anonymous mass, continually renewed and always identical, of non-men who march and labour in silence, the divine spark dead within them, already too empty to really suffer. One hesitates to call them living: one hesitates to call their death death, in the face of which they have no fear, as they are too tired to understand".³⁶

In his final writings Levi returned to these 'drowned': they, not the survivors, are the true witnesses, only they have possession of the truth, yet they must, of necessity, remain silent.³⁷ For some, Levi's suicide, his decision to unite himself with the drowned, offers an answer to these questions, albeit a silent one. Thus Wollaston draws attention to the expiration, the drying up, of speech: the need to portray 'naked reality' reaches a stage where words become an 'emotional luxury', and the true witness of the *Muselmanner* is forever silent. "The experience of the *Muselmanner* is inaccessible, in that there is 'no story', or there is a story but one that is beyond the

³⁴. Quoted in Wollaston (1992) p.54.

³⁵. Levi (1987) p.15.

³⁶. Ibid. p.96.

³⁷. Levi (1989).

experience of the survivor."³⁸ There is a deep ambiguity in this silence. If, as deconstruction affirms, language is all that we have, does not our silence proclaim the victory of the camps, of the triumph of nihilism? Or is the silence the silence of affirmation, one that draws on the spiritual roots of Judaism:

"Then Job answered the LORD:
'Behold, I am of small account;
what shall I answer thee?
I lay my hand on my mouth.
I have spoken once and I will not answer;
twice, but I will proceed on further'".³⁹

Did Levi take his life in despair or as an act of tragic affirmation of, and identity with, the drowned?

Jewish response to the Shoah that has rejected the expiration of language has focused on the tradition of *lamentation* as a cultural response to collective tragedy.⁴⁰ As a theological form lamentation makes possible commemoration of the dead, access to archetypal responses, and above all "allows the believer to indict God for His silence in the face of the suffering of His Chosen People".⁴¹ Following the Holocaust, this tradition has been invoked not merely as a way of indicting God, but of questioning his reality, and the reality of an ordered universe.⁴² No longer rooted in the sub-structure of faith, lamentation can operate in the context of the loss of faith,

³⁸. Wollaston, op.cit. p.51. Note the language of 'inaccessibility...(of)... experience': here the self is lost because of the Holocaust – 'the death of the self' in the literature of deconstruction is a linguistic event. Both draw on the same cultural tradition, though the levels of moral severity are on entirely different planes.

³⁹. Job 40 vv.3-5.

⁴⁰. cf. Wollaston, op.cit. She traces the lament form back to Jewish folk stories and the liturgical laments contained in the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations. Their function is that of a specific cultural response to collective tragedy, a function radicalised in post-Holocaust Jewish literature.

⁴¹. Wollaston, op.cit. p.51.

⁴². Wollaston traces this radical use of lamentation, in which Job chooses not to keep silence, back to Balík (1873-1934). It is marked by a lack of the traditional culmination in the collective affirmation of faith: "the writer maintains the lamentational form while subverting its traditional context. The lament no longer depends upon a sub-structure of faith. It can emphasise the writer's loss of faith, or his indictment of God's silence or absence." (p.51). cf. Jasper (1992): "Christian reflection and literature has, by and large, continued to engage in futile, traditional theological exercises in attempts to extricate itself from the guilt of genocide. More in the spirit of midrash, however, the condemned Jew remains within his own text, explaining nothing, endlessly suffering yet transcending closure in what Derrida calls a 'negative a-theology' – the textuality of experience itself more important than, yet guaranteeing, the absent divinity. Thus in the Divine himself is found the experience of exile, repetition, otherness, inclusion." pp.5f.

as a response to the silence of God, and of the confrontation with evil and 'unmediated nothingness'.

While for some such lamentation has led to the retention of orthodox faith; for Rubenstein and others it has led to a demythologized retention of religious language in the face of a rejection of God's objective reality.⁴³ Despite their differences both responses represent a turn to a religious language existing on the borderlands between affirmation and negation, meaning and nihilism, faith and its loss. If theological and humanistic affirmations of value can now only be appropriated within a hermeneutic of suspicion, it follows that if God is to be found at all it must be within the borderlands between the collapse of experience and the affirmation of language, revealed to those "who find themselves caught in the middle.....of extremes.....suspended between the loss of old certainties and the discovery of new beliefs, these marginal people constantly live on the border that both joins and separates belief and unbelief".⁴⁴ This opens up the possibility that theological truth is to be found not in a logocentric experience of being, above and beyond language, but actually embodied in text and textuality itself; that the deconstruction of the self leads to a borderland in which theological realism can be affirmed in language -- through a theology of textuality -- but without the need of a primary reference to the self.⁴⁵

43. Rubenstein (1966), cf. Wollaston, op.cit. p.54. Note here Wiesel's response to Rubenstein. quoted in Wollaston ibid. p.55: "I never speak of God now. I rather speak of men who believed in God or *men who denied God*. How strange that *the philosophy denying God* came not from the survivors. Those who came out with the so-called God is dead theology, not one of them had been in Auschwitz." My italics -- Wiesel distinguishes between his existential, and Rubenstein's philosophical denial here. cf. Wollaston, ibid. p.54: "Rubenstein takes the tradition of subverting religious language to extremes: he accepts the form, while dispensing with the content in its totality."

44. Taylor (1984) pp.4f.; cf. Sutherland (1984) pp.xif: "the picture of the great chasm dividing belief from unbelief ill represents the situation.....the boundaries between belief and unbelief are in certain important respects unclear.....Dostoyevsky is perhaps the case which most clearly sustains and defines my thesis, for his genius is the expression of the spiritual pain which comes from simultaneously inhabiting the worlds of belief and unbelief".

45. cf. Handelsmann (1982), drawing out the parallels between the post-modern turn to language and text cut off from self-reference and traditional Judaic methods on biblical interpretation, especially that of rabbinic midrash; the scriptural text, as divine in origin, is used to interpret itself without reference to any human agent; consequently the question of human intentionality -- central to modernist hermeneutics from Schleiermacher, and including the work of Gadamer and Habermas, despite their suspicion of the former's psychological exegesis -- is irrelevant; since the intentionality of God can only be known through the text, it follows that the text must interpret itself; in this context structural considerations become paramount, the physical position of a word in relationship to another can become a key to the hermeneutical process.

Thus Jewish reflection on the Shoah as both the symbolic and material representation of the collapse of the optimism of liberal humanism closely parallels the development of the moral programme of deconstructionism: for both the possibility and limitations of language in the face of the collapse of logocentric selfhood, and consequently the problem of onto-morality, are central themes. How, with the collapse of the humanistic tradition under the burden of Auschwitz, and the eyes of the post-modern philosophers, can the affirmation of value, meaning and order hold sway over the challenge of nihilism that emerges from the camps? From this perspective a different perspective is gained on the fundamental flaws inherent in the dualism of the Enlightenment enterprise. The deconstruction of the self challenges language with the possibility of the affirmation of meaning and truth in reality; in other words it places once again the question of fundamental ontology on the human agenda, asking once again the question of the possibility of realistic theological language. Herein lies the paradox of theological deconstruction: both denying fundamental ontology, yet demanding that the question be asked.

Theological programmes within deconstructionism have polarized into two main forms: i) that of the development of a 'naturalistic a-theology', via an affirmation of language; ii) the turn to mysticism and the *via negativa*, entailing a theological closure of text and discourse. It is to this key division in the mainstream of theological programmes of deconstruction to which we now turn.

cf. also Jasper (1992) p.5: "Textuality and hermeneutical inquiry become inextricably linked in a connective network of relations of incessant activity. Absorption in the text and textuality is a Rabbinic practice which Handelsmann closely links with the philosophical assumptions of literary critics such as Barthes and Derrida, as opposed to the historical absorption of the German higher biblical criticism.....For the Rabbis, the mesh and interweave of the text itself remain at the heart of their concerns as opposed to the Greek tendency to abstract from the text.....Rabbinic sensibility [is] profoundly, if unselfconsciously, theological through a sense of the divinity of the text."

In so far as rabbinic exegesis is both pre-modern and pre-critical it stands apart from, and challenges the synthesis of, the classical and Judaeo-Christian that gave birth to modernism; cf. here Norris (1987) pp.229f: "To set the Jewish against the Graeco-Christian tradition is implicitly to foreground the matter of writing and its place in the economy of knowledge and truth.....its chief effect is to lessen the hold that Christian (or logocentric) habit of thought which subdues writing to the service of a truth equated with speech, presence and origins."

3. A Naturalistic A-theology

i) Theology deconstructed

We have sketched out a tentative, and apparently paradoxical, preliminary response to some attempts to utilize the programme of deconstruction for theological ends: the replacement of presence with language simultaneously leads us still further from theological realism, yet simultaneously demands a response to the onto-theological question of ultimate truth and value in the face of a resurgent nihilism. Our present task is to approach the mainstream of the deconstructionist theological debate in the form of its attempts to develop a naturalistic a-theology, from the perspective of this paradox. From within the broad range of literature available Mark C. Taylor's *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology*,⁴⁶ and Don Cupitt's *The Long-legged Fly: A Theology of Language and Desire*,⁴⁷ have been selected out as examples of both the best, worst, and certainly amongst the most influential, works in this field.⁴⁸

In both works a number of key themes associated with deconstruction emerge: i) a self-conscious belief that their work stands in the vanguard of a new reformation in theology that challenges the metaphysical roots of the classical Christian heritage;⁴⁹ ii) the adoption of a linguistic style in which theology becomes literature, and reason becomes rhetoric;⁵⁰ iii) the a priori denial of any metaphysic of

⁴⁶. Taylor (1984). His programme of theological deconstruction involves four interlinked moves: i) from the death of God to the writing of God; ii) from the disappearance of the self to 'markings' in the text; iii) from the eschatological hope of the end and culmination of history to grace discovered within the endless play of markings and trace ('mazing grace' [sic!]); iv) from the 'closure of the book' to 'erring scripture', culminating in Dionysian joy/suffering. cf. also Taylor (1982).

⁴⁷. Cupitt (1987).

⁴⁸. For introductory discussion, cf. Berry and Wernick (1992), Hart (1991).

⁴⁹. cf. Cupitt, op.cit. pp. 1, 6 : theology "is dismantling its own objects, changing all the rules and undoing familiar and long-established methods of representation.....western reason has now become critically self-conscious. It has thought through itself, and thereby has even demythologized itself".

⁵⁰. Berry, op.cit. pp.4f, "the problems of terminology which the question presents; words or phrases such as 'spirit', 'the holy', 'the divine', 'God', 'the infinite', and so on, have accumulated association of presence or transcendence which make it extremely difficult to redefine them. What would it mean, then, in the words of Levinas, 'to hear a God not contaminated by Being', or to recover, in the formulation of Mark C. Taylor, 'the non-absent absence of the holy'? While this style of thinking is centrally concerned with issues of alterity, a frequent theme in such discussions presents a new understanding of spirit, not as the opposite term of a binary couple, but rather as facilitating a wholly new mode of awareness, which invites the thinker to abandon their residual attachment to dualistic thinking, but also offers a potent challenge to their desire for subjective mastery and knowledge".

transcendence in either an ontological or theological frame;⁵¹ iv) the denial of any epistemological privilege to the mind, and the assertion of the priority of language over the self-conscious ego;⁵² v) the assertion of a materialistic-determinism, in the shape of a rationalistic scientific naturalism that provides the foundation, structure and limitations within which the human drama may be freely acted out;⁵³ vi) the freedom of humanity to be, and to develop, within this naturalistic frame, a freedom rooted in concepts of playful irony rather than tragedy;⁵⁴ vii) the denial of theological realism, and affirmation of the central value and importance of theological language for the development of a naturalistic anthropology.⁵⁵

Floating shadow-like behind all this is the notion of the 'death of God'. At the heart of Taylor's 'thesis'⁵⁶ stands the argument that this 'death of God' must be deconstructed as an ontological or existential reality, and be seen as a purely linguistic one. He speaks throughout of the 'writing of God' rather than the 'death of God'.⁵⁷ In the same vein Cupitt quotes with approval the slogan: 'deconstruction is the death of

Rose (1992), pp.45ff. "Taylor offers a montage of text and illustration, accruing grammatical, phonetic and graphological juxtapositions and complications, learned, it would seem, from *Finnegans Wake*." For Cupitt, see above, note 10.

^{51.} "Our theology will have to be perfectly horizontal.....the typical post-modern vision of the world is one in which there is no longer any absolute Beginning, Ground, Presence or End in the traditional sense." Cupitt, *op.cit.* p7.

^{52.} cf. above, note 12.

^{53.} " 'Post-modern' thought is the legatee of a version of critique founded on an assumption of immanence.....the immanentist version of critique begins with a refusal to transcend, and an affirmation of the self-sufficiency, not of God, nor of humanity, but of nature or nature-in-progress." Milbank (1992) p.34. Cupitt describes immanentism as 'ultra- naturalism' *ibid.* p.8; "All explanation has to be sideways, and never up or down: such is our new form of naturalism." p.8.

^{54.} Thus Cupitt: "we have to say Yes to what is before us, in all its contingency. Such is, I believe, the final message of an incarnational religion". (*ibid.* p.8); He contrasts the quietist vision of a 'theology of culture' with the 'theology of desire' in which desire seeks expression in "a more anarchistic or radical humanist vision of religious life". (p.10).

^{55.} "The general metaphysical picture that we work towards -- it is only a picture, and we work only towards it.....Given that all experience involves interpretation so that there is nothing wholly external to us, and given also that knowledge is possible only for biological organisms with a felt interest in life, we perform a series of reductions. Being is reduced to meaning, meaning to evaluation, evaluation to calibrated feeling-tones, and feelings to modifications -- enhancing or enervating -- of the will to live." *Ibid.* p.10.

^{56.} The notion of 'thesis' is, of course, anathema to Taylor as a description of the words he gathers together in 'his book' -- the last phrase must be read as standing under erasure!

^{57.} Though cf. here Nietzsche (1968) p. 38: "I fear that we are not getting rid of God because we still believe in grammar"; quoted in Hart (1991) p. 73, who comments "Nietzsche questions the status of the *concept* of the concept of God" (*ibid.*).

God put into writing'.⁵⁸ Since there has never been a God, either in the form of a transcendent reality, or a humanistic existential projection, whose death we must mourn, the issue of the 'death of God' is a purely linguistic one. "The God of the Hebrew Bible is not really supernatural, in the later metaphysical sense, at all: he is just the embodiment of the spirit and the power of the Hebrew language itself."⁵⁹

The appropriation of theological language within deconstruction has no need for legitimation, since language is now approached as a given reality whose legitimacy lies in itself: it no longer requires any realistic referent point, nor its function as the expression of transcendent experience for its justification. Its new role is to offer the post-modernist a textual web through which he or she can enter into the aesthetic play of language emancipated from all meta-narratives. The language of theology contains the traces of modernism, and thus the celebration of the 'death of God' becomes essentially a celebration of post-modernism itself. God is no longer a metaphysical despot, he has become language, become the play thing of post-modernism. What more appropriate words can there be with which to indulge one's immersion into the ceaseless flow of words? Where else can the deconstructionist encounter such heights of irony?

Effectively Feuerbach's humanistic critique of realistic theology is being applied here not to the act of creation, but to the event of the Fall. "Then the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil,'"⁶⁰ is now read as "the god has become one of us, has become part of the reality of language". The account of the Fall contained within the story of the Tower of Babel reinforces this irony: "Come, let us go down and there confuse their language," now demands not despair, but rejoicing.⁶¹

⁵⁸. Cupitt, *op.cit.* p.7.

⁵⁹. *Ibid.* p.27.

⁶⁰. Genesis 2 v. 22.

⁶¹. Genesis 11 v. 7, cf. vv.1-9; note here Hart's discussion of the relationship between the Fall and deconstruction, *op.cit.* pp.3-21; "Adam offers us a model of perfect understanding, one in which language can be mastered and in which intentions can easily be discovered, whether human or divine. How ironic, then, that the ideal Adam represents is withheld from us precisely because of Adam's sin.....although Adam's trespass was chiefly moral in character, it was also a trespass of the linguistic sign -- a desire for unmediated knowledge -- and the sign of this disobedience is none other than the mutability of all signs.....the consequences of the Fall are still felt: man is no longer the master of signs but is frequently mastered by them" (pp.3f); cf. also Derrida (1976) pp.280ff, (1992c) pp.317f.

ii) Nietzsche and the 'Death of God'

Naturalistic a-theology thus stands firmly within the tradition of the 'death of God'.⁶² The term was introduced into modern debate by Hegel: his concern was to consider the nature and implications of the crucifixion in the context of his own Christian ontology.⁶³ Starting from the doctrines of incarnation and trinity, he develops a dialectic of death-resurrection within a framework of Christian orthodoxy, as a means of a deeper appropriation of faith and understanding. This tradition, of the appropriation of language of God's death within the context of orthodox faith seeking understanding, has flourished within the churches this century.⁶⁴

The second -- and for present purposes more fundamental -- source of this tradition is Nietzsche; like Hegel he takes Christian theology with the utmost seriousness, in order not to affirm but to deny.⁶⁵ "Could it be possible! This old saint has not yet heard that God is dead!"⁶⁶ Nietzsche announces the death of God not as an epistemological argument but as a statement of fact,⁶⁷ grounded in taste rather than reason. Nietzsche's own concern was "not simply a rejection of religion but rather the seeking out of the implications of atheism for the whole of human life".⁶⁸

Nietzsche was aware of the existential challenge of a world without God, "of the fact that when God is removed, the universe of meaning, significance and value collapses".⁶⁹ He was also aware of the depth of the psychological and spiritual insights of Christianity: "But he -- *had* to die: he looked with eyes that saw *everything* -- he saw the depths and abysses of man, all man's hidden disgrace and ugliness. His pity knew no shame: he crept into my dirtiest corners. This most curious, most over-impudent, over-compassionate god had to die."⁷⁰ It was the very pity and sympathy

⁶². cf. Jungel (1983) pp.43-104.

⁶³. Thus for Hegel speech of the 'death of God' refers to an ontological event within the life of the Trinity, namely the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth; this must be distinguished from contemporary reference to 'the death of God' as an existential movement in contemporary thought; cf. Jungel, *op.cit.* p.47.

⁶⁴. cf. eg. Moltmann (1974), Fiddes (1992).

⁶⁵. Jungel, *op.cit.* pp. 199ff.

⁶⁶. Nietzsche (1969) p.41.

⁶⁷. "The death of god describes a quasi-historical event, a cultural fact rather than a logical conclusion," Kee (1985) p. 165.

⁶⁸. *Ibid.* p.156.

⁶⁹. *Ibid.* p.164.

⁷⁰. Nietzsche, *op.cit.* p.278.

of Christianity, its picture of a suffering God, that produced a world-weary humanity; this very pity that destroyed the motive power from which the *Übermensch* could emerge,⁷¹ that enticed humanity "into the bondage of false values and false scriptures".⁷²

In proclaiming the *Übermensch* Nietzsche sought to overcome the nihilistic, existential challenge of the death of God, to see his cultural death as the beginnings of human liberation.⁷³ This death brought human freedom and liberation, a new basis for human self-understanding, judgement and morality, the opportunity for the revaluation of all values. The values of Christianity were to be passed. "The good and just call me the destroyer of morals: my story is immoral."⁷⁴ But the 'good and just' are blind to a new morality, beyond pity and nihilism, beyond good and evil. "The Superman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: The Superman *shall* be the meaning of the earth."⁷⁵

Nietzsche's morality, of the will to power, is a creation of human subjectivity, but to achieve this there was the need for the external reality of the objective world to be interpreted in such a way as to create the conditions for the will to power to be realised. Nietzsche's morality is dependent on a materialistic naturalism. He begins with the rejection of transcendence,⁷⁶ and travels towards a denial of any form of eschatological or teleological meaning. Morality is naturalistic and a-historical: the 'goal' of humanity is not in any 'end', but in the realization of the conditions in which the highest specimens of humanity, the *Übermensch*, may emerge. Here we must note the need to invoke the myth of eternal recurrence as a means of denying the emergence of the *Übermensch* as an 'end' of history, yet paradoxically still to retain it as an 'end'.⁷⁷

The significance of this brief survey of the themes of naturalism and the death of God within Nietzsche's thought lie in the direct parallels with naturalistic

⁷¹. cf. Ibid. pp. 43, 58, 275ff; Kee, op.cit. p.161.

⁷². Nietzsche, op.cit. p.115.

⁷³. Kee, op.cit. p.167.

⁷⁴. Nietzsche, op.cit. p.93.

⁷⁵. Ibid. p.42.

⁷⁶. "Do not believe those who speak to you of superterrestrial hopes", ibid. p.42.

⁷⁷. Kung sees Nietzsche's thought here as being rooted in ambivalence: "Anyone who takes seriously Nietzsche's description of life as a pulsating, active coming to be, complex and contradictory in itself, will not necessarily see here a want of consistency; for the idea of the eternal recurrence is not meant to be a coherent principle of becoming or being, but merely an expression of the absurdity of the whole happening", Kung (1980) p.401.

a-theology. Of the seven characteristics of the programme outlined above, all but one can be understood as having their ancestry not in the work of Derrida and post-modernism, but in the thought of Nietzsche himself. It is significant that the single characteristic drawn directly from post-modernism -- the adoption of a rhetorical style -- is fundamentally concerned with style rather than material content.

iii) The poverty of theological naturalism

We dealt at some length with Nietzsche above, since at the heart of objections to theological naturalism lies the thesis that its essence is concerned with a re-reading of Nietzsche's programme within the language of deconstruction. The notion of the death of a realistic deity reflects both Nietzsche's concern to transcend Christian morality, and the post-modern concern to deny the possibility of ontological meaning beyond the endless play of language itself.

Despite the similarities between these two sources, it is apparent that naturalistic theology, whilst adopting the form and style of post-modernism, adopts at the same time the substance of Nietzsche's fundamental ontology. The programme thus assumes the naturalistic results of modern natural science: the physical world offers the limiting structures within which the endless play of language takes place. This endless play of language has as its heart a moral concern, that of affirmation of humanity beyond the constraints of humanism and the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Where theological naturalism parts company with Nietzsche is in its utilization of a redefined theological linguistic heritage in order to articulate its programme. Thus we observe an implicit ontology at work, one grounded in the Enlightenment's distinction between fact and value, and retaining modernism's fundamental concern with human freedom.

It is these issues that are crucial to our understanding of naturalistic a-theology. The programme works on the assumption that the natural world represents a static order, a world of objective fact, but one that does not threaten human freedom in itself. In the sphere of value the freeplay of language represents an emancipation from the constraints of metaphysics, thus making possible a moral freedom characterised by the notions of unrestrained self-assertion grounded in an ethic of desire. This I take to constitute an ontology in itself, further an ontology whose basic structures and source are rooted in an attempt to break with modernism, yet which is still either reliant on the Enlightenment sub-structures, or else defines itself in opposition to them.

A number of conclusions may be drawn from this: i) that theological naturalism stands over against the intentions of deconstruction in its positive affirmation of ontology, and is thus vulnerable to an internal critique within post-

modernism itself; ii) like post-modernism it retains a direct link with the Enlightenment programme; iii) it fails to respond both to the challenge of critical and theological realism. Thus, even by post-modernism's standards -- standards which we have suggested carry little explanatory power and insight -- a naturalistic a-theology is found wanting.

4. Mysticism and the *Via Negativa*

i) Derrida and negative theology

The second strand of theological deconstructionist thinking draws upon the tradition of negative theology, the notion that the path to divinity is via negation and absence. The assimilation within deconstruction is linked to the themes of trace and differance: any positive statement is immediately negated by the network of textuality throwing up alternative possibilities. Here the deconstruction of affirmative theological statements is understood as creating space for religious reflection via negative, through apophatic, attribution.⁷⁸ That this strand of theology carries altogether more weight than that of a-theology is indicated by the fact that Derrida is drawn into combat with it.⁷⁹ He characterises the hypothesis of negative theology thus: "negative theology consists of considering every predicative language as inadequate to the essence, in truth to the hyper-essentiality (the being beyond Being) of God: consequently only a negative ('apophatic') attribution can claim to approach God and to prepare for a silent intuition of God".⁸⁰

Derrida accepts an implicit relationship between deconstruction and negative theology, referring to a "tenable analogy", "traits", and "family resemblance".⁸¹ There is a link between negative theology and "every discourse that seems to return in a regular and insistent manner to this rhetoric of negative determination, endlessly

⁷⁸. Thus, eg. Williams (1992) p.72: "in spite of Derrida's disclaimers, it has proved very hard for religious writers not to read the language of trace and differance as a negative theology. For Derrida himself, it is reasonably clear that 'God' is an 'effect of the trace': to speak of God is to try to put a face upon that which haunts language -- what is over the shoulder, round the corner, what is by stipulation not capable of being confronted, being faced. Thus to speak of God is to try and erase the genuine trace: and negative theology (like the negativity of all dialect) simply affirms the possibility of a state devoid of this haunting, since it identifies trace and differance with a kind of subject, with what is ultimately, despite all theological evasions, presence."

⁷⁹. Derrida (1992a), (1992b), (1992c).

⁸⁰. Derrida (1992b) p.74.

⁸¹. Ibid.

multiplying the defences and the apophatic warnings".⁸² Despite the resemblances, Derrida has from the start been consistent in his refusal to countenance deconstruction playing any role with apophatic theology.⁸³ Despite this there have been equally consistent attempts "to turn the analogy of negative theology and deconstruction into an equation and the family resemblance into affiliation".⁸⁴

ii) God beyond being

The first major occurrence of programmes of negative theology appear within the interface between neo-Platonism and Christian theology.⁸⁵ God, as the absolutely transcendent, stands over above created reality. He is knowable through abstraction: once experience and language is divested of all that is human and all that is of the created world, then divinity may be apprehended. Such a process of abstraction is one and the same thing as mysticism.

The mystical path of the *via negativa* reached fruition in the work of Pseudo-Dionysius, upon whom Derrida draws directly.⁸⁶ God may be approached in

82. Ibid.

83. "As I have always been fascinated by the supposed movements of negative theology.....I objected in vain to the assimilation of the thinking of the trace or of difference to some negative theology", Derrida. op.cit. p.82.

84. Foshay (1992) p.3.

85. Augustine brought into focus suggestions in the work of Plotinus and Gregory of Nyssa, distinguishing approaches to God: i) via affirmation ('God is good'); ii) via negation ('God is not good in the way men use the term good'); iii) via eminence ('God is ultra-good, eminently above human understanding'). It is difficult to underestimate the central role of neo-Platonism in this movement, especially in bringing into the discourse of Christian theology an emphasis on absolute transcendence: God is the 'One' above, beyond and apart from all being. "This does not mean, however, that the One is nothing or non-existent; rather does it mean that the One transcends all being of which we have experience. The concept of being is drawn from the objects of our experience, but the One transcends all these objects and consequently transcends also the concept that is founded on those objects", Copleston (1985a) p.465. It is significant to note here the reaction of Judaism during the period of the second Temple where a parallel affirmation of divine transcendence developed: whilst Judaism responded through the language of apocalyptic and the categories of eschatological hope, medieval Christianity adopted not a chronological/horizontal response, but an a-temporal/vertical one, in which hope was replaced with an already available mysticism.

The tradition of mystical theology can be traced through Pseudo-Dionysius (Dionysius the Areopagite) to his translator, John Scotus Erigenan; from here it gave birth to the medieval Catholic mystical tradition, especially in Julian of Norwich; Aquinas contextualized negative theology as a dialectical, and collerative, movement within positive theology; the strong gnostic and pantheistic impulse within negative theology -- when devoid of such correlation -- passed, via Eckhart, into the western Romantic tradition, and through there into post-modernism.

86. Dionysius (1980); cf. Derrida, op.cit. pp.89ff.

two ways. The positive way entails attributing the best of creation -- goodness, life, love -- to God; it has value only in so far as the best of creation is itself derived from God, and as such is essentially a second hand reflection, understanding God in terms of his work rather than his essential being. The negative way, the better way, involves the "exclusion from God of the imperfections of creatures" until, in the mystical darkness of unknowing, "when the mind has stripped away from its idea of God the modes of thought and inadequate conception of the Deity", the wholly unknowable is known.⁸⁷

Tillich offers a modern formulation, devoid of the traditional mystical content. God does not exist, is not *a being*, cannot be defined within the language of traditional ontology: "He is being itself beyond essence and existence."⁸⁸ Derrida characterises this notion of God as 'the hyper-essentiality' -- 'the being beyond being'.⁸⁹

iii) Correlation and hyper-essentiality

Deconstruction can be understood as embodying precisely this process of negation as the means of revealing that which stands beyond being, beyond the page, beyond language. Its equation with negative theology requires no more than the replacement of the language of metaphysical ontology with that of language and textuality: that which is beyond essence and existence becomes that which is beyond page and text.

Again, Derrida acknowledges the parallels, together with the natural impulse of deconstruction towards the *via negativa*: "the apophatic discourse leads us to consider the becoming theological of all discourse".⁹⁰ However he rejects absolutely this apparent possibility. The attraction of the programme ignores its fundamental superficiality, since negation may be found almost anywhere: "from the moment a proposition takes a negative form, the negativity that manifests itself need only be pushed to the limit, and it at least resembles an apophatic theology".⁹¹

Derrida's fundamental criticism is more substantial: he invokes a basic correlation between positive language and hyper-essentiality. The *via negativa* must be understood as no more than a correlative moment within affirmative theology. The notion of God "as a 'being beyond being', can only be grasped in its relation to classical

87. Copelston, *op.cit.* pp.94f.

88. Tillich (1978a) pp. 188, 227f.

89. cf. note 80, above.

90. Quoted in Foshay, *op.cit.* p4, cf. Derrida, *op.cit.*

91. *Ibid.*

catophtic onto-theology".⁹² As the mirror image of positive onto-theology negative theology participates in the same aim, the same desire for transcendence, it matters not whether or not this is reported in negative or positive terms. There is a clear parallel here between Derrida's rejection of negative theology and his objections to Foucault's attempt to invoke a transcendent reality through the negation of reason. Negative theology participates in the same desire to transcend the limits of language, to invoke, albeit silently, that which stands behind positive theological affirmation. Negative theology is committed to a wager of onto-theological comprehension.⁹³

It follows that even to speak of negative theology becomes a contradiction that must immediately be placed under erasure. Derrida here evokes a notion of a 'double bind': he is bound to speak of negative theology, yet not to speak.⁹⁴ Either speech or silence is misconstrued if they are not immediately placed under erasure, or read ironically. Thus his rejection of negative theology must in itself be placed under

⁹² Ibid. p.3. "I thought I had to forbid myself to write in the register of 'negative theology', because I was aware of this movement toward hyper-essentiality, beyond Being. What *differance*, the *trace*, and so on 'mean' -- which hence *does not mean anything* -- is 'before' the concept, the name, the word, 'something' that would be nothing, that no longer arises from Being, from presence or from the presence of the present, nor even from absence, and even less from some hyper-essentiality. Yet the onto-theological reappropriation always remains possible -- and doubtless *inevitable* in so far as one speaks, precisely, in the element of logic and of onto-theological grammar. One can always say: hyper-essentiality is precisely that, a supreme Being who remains incommensurate to the being of all that is, which is nothing, neither present nor absent, and so on. If the movement of this reappropriation appears irrepressible, its ultimate failure is no less necessary." Derrida, op.cit. p.79.

⁹³ Hart, op.cit. rejects Derrida's argument for the inevitability of the invocation of hyper-essentiality and hence the collapse into onto-theology. Negative theology, as mystical theology, is not to be correlated with positive onto-theology; "theology may survive the deconstruction of theology as onto-theology" (p.252); he rather invokes Heidegger's *Destruktion* of metaphysics as a correlate with Derridian deconstruction -- "what results is a general negative theology, one which places the value of the proper name in question, and thus provides us with an account of the only possible way in which theology can resist the illusions of metaphysics" (p.269). cf. Williams, op.cit. pp.72f.

⁹⁴ Derrida, op.cit. p.86: "It was thus necessary for me to respond, but I assumed responsibility only while deferring it. Before or rather within a double bind: 'how to avoid speaking' since I have already started to speak and have always already started to promise to speak? That I have already started to speak, or rather that at least the trace of a speech will have preceded this very speech, one cannot deny. Translate: *one can only deny it*. There can only be denial of this which is undeniable. What, then, do we make of negations and of denials? What do we make of them before God, that is the question, if there is one. Because the posing of every question is perhaps secondary: it perhaps follows as a first, reactive response, the undeniable *provocation*, the undeniable denial of the provocation." cf. Derrida (1992a): here the double bind is a simultaneous movement of veiling and unveiling, apocalyptic hope and its closure.

erasure. He wishes neither to affirm nor deny, since either option implies an ontological position. Derrida is thus ambivalent about entering the debate: he wishes to reject the ontology -- albeit a negative one -- contained within the *via negativa*, but at the same time wishes also to reject the ontology implied in its rejection. Put another way, Derrida enters the debate only to refuse to take part in it: one is tempted to invoke the notion of a paradigm shift here, though Derrida's response would be to deny the status of paradigm to deconstruction, since the structures of a paradigm of deconstruction stand permanently under erasure, and hence the notion is a contradiction in terms.

Derrida's 'conclusions' are confirmed by theological reflection on negative theology. John Jones distinguishes two movements within Pseudo-Dionysius' formulation of the *via negativa*: i) as a metaphysical function within positive theology as a means of stressing the absolute transcendence of divinity; ii) as a mystical construct apart from ontology. "Here negative (mystical) theology denies all that is, ultimately denies all affirmative theology and hence, all metaphysics."⁹⁵ Balthasar has shown how Pseudo-Dionysius' negative statements in the *Mystical Theology* can only be understood in the context of his other positive works: it is only through the affirmation of creation as an act of grace that the possibility of a return to divinity comes into actuality.⁹⁶ There is a dialectical relationship between the negative and positive movements. Negative theology requires faith as a prerequisite of apophatic understanding, and this is possible only via a positive revelation. Accepting this position, Hart argues that "negative theology performs the deconstruction of positive theology".⁹⁷ The point being, that apophatic theology requires a positive

⁹⁵. In his introduction to Dionysius (1980), p.20; cf. Hart, *op.cit.* p.200, Foshay, *op.cit.* p.11.

⁹⁶. Balthasar (1984) pp.144-210. The whole thrust of his reading of Dionysius, influenced by his reading of Barth, is an implicit rejection of Jones' and Hart's thesis that negative theology is not to be correlated with revealed theology; he thus finds himself in ironic alliance with Derrida here; the mystical theology can only be understood in the context of Dionysius' positive theological writings; negative theology is a possibility only because of the analogy of grace; "Mystical theology is the high-point of the whole theology of the Areopagite. It is present secretly or openly in all his theological utterances and it is systematically necessary to the whole. It is called for as much by the doctrine of God as by his doctrine of the church, and is therefore no 'appendix' for the 'chosen few'. But for just this reason it is not so much the centre of his theology, such that his symbolic and intellectual theology might be relativized and even called in question. There is no gulf between exoteric and esoteric theology; each needs the other and they compenetrates one another: there is not even any tension between dogmatic and mystical theology. Each dogmatic decree, even the sharpest conciliar definition, must be seen in the light of the ever-greater unlikeness of God. *To all eternity we know God only in his self-communication, though it is really God only in his self-communication.*" (italics mine), p.204.

⁹⁷. Hart, *op.cit.* p.202.

understanding of God if it is to place the language of divinity under erasure. There can be no escape, even via negation, of metaphysics, whether explicit or implied: "the denial of metaphysics is itself a metaphysical gesture".⁹⁸

5. Deconstruction, Religion and Education

The discussion of post-modernism in the present and previous chapter has distinguished, within the broad general framework of deconstruction, three fundamental approaches.

i) What might be termed 'orthodox' deconstruction, associated above all with Derrida, that seeks to deny all but the inevitability of our immersion within the ongoing ebb and flow of language. ii) A form of deconstruction linked with the expiration of language, a longing for that fixed point beyond language and text, beyond reason and madness. Associated with Foucault, it appears in theological discussion in the form of negative theology. iii) A naturalistic post-modernism content to affirm a closed natural science in order to free humanity within it, enabling the assertion of emancipated humanity with limitless potential within the aesthetic play of language. Associated with Rorty, and rooted in Nietzsche's moral programme, it appears in theological debate in the form of a naturalistic a-theology.

We have suggested that the second and third of these formulations, in so far as they involve reference -- at least by implication -- to a meta-narrative, are open to attack from an 'orthodox' Derridian perspective. In addition, we have suggested that such Derridian orthodoxy itself -- despite its strenuous attempts to free itself from the hook -- constitutes a fundamental ontology.

This being so, the question to be asked is how far the various varieties of post-modernism offer viable, coherent ontologies with explanatory power. The answer here has to be negative. We saw the limitations of these structures in terms of a double movement involving uncritical acceptance of those Enlightenment sub-structures that focus on an ethic of emancipation, linked with an uncritical rejection of those sub-structures that apparently denied such freedom in the name of logocentrism. Indeed, it is possible to draw even closer parallels between Foucault's search for a point of reference beyond language and idealism, and Rorty's naturalism and

⁹⁸. Ibid. p.201; cf Foshay, op.cit. p.11.

empiricism. The irony is that post-modernism, in defining itself over against modernism is parasitical upon it. Gunton thus must be seen to be essentially correct when he argues that: "there is therefore no single idea of modernity as much as a family of dogmas and practices, among which I would include post-modernity, because.....it belongs with them, and might better be called late modernity".⁹⁹

In the light of these conclusions it should be clear why it would be somewhat prolix to supplement them with a consideration of the possibilities inherent in a post-modern philosophy of education, and a post-modern religious education. Whatever the possible contours of a post-modern education, it is clear that a post-modern religious education would, of necessity, impose upon religious traditions a specific meta-narrative that would polarize the gap between the actuality of religion as understood by its adherents and the reality of religion as presented by educationalists to an even greater extent than that achieved by a discredited liberalism.

If post-modernism is unable to provide an adequate foundational framework for post-liberal programmes of religious education, nevertheless its significance is not to be underrated. Deconstruction introduces a number of issues onto the post-liberal educational agenda that need to be taken over into the following discussion of critical realism.

a) The reality of post-modern forms of religion cannot be ignored, even if they fail to obtain a foundational authority. These may be recognised in two main social contexts. Firstly, in the academy, in the form of intellectual constructions attempting to retrieve or revise traditional theological formulas. It is this aspect that we have been concerned with in the present chapter. Secondly, within broader society, in the form of a diversity of new religious movements.¹⁰⁰ It should be noted here that the majority of these are developments from traditional religious systems, and that the roots of their emergence are to be found within the broadly Protestant ethos of individualism and disengagement from centralised authority, linked in turn with modern liberalism's effective privatisation of religious belief. That is to say, new religious movements, together with the popular culture of post-modernism within which they thrive, are both ultimately grounded in revisions of the romantic mirror image of the Enlightenment. The significance of these revisions of our understanding of religion, at both popular and academic levels, constitutes an agenda that post-liberal religious education clearly cannot ignore.

b) The depth of the critique of modernism achieved by deconstruction is

⁹⁹. Gunton (1993) p.12.

¹⁰⁰. cf. Weller (1993) pp.583ff.

difficult to overestimate. The fundamental flaws within the Enlightenment sub-structures acknowledge in the first part of this thesis came to light largely as a result of post-modern critiques. As a negative undermining of modernism this critique, it has been argued, is authoritative and substantially accurate. A critically realistic framework for religious education must, then, take account of the following insights of deconstructive programmes: modernist absolutism has been fundamentally challenged in terms of a renewed insight into the limitations and contingency of human knowledge; the belief that the achievement of knowledge proceeds via a radical dislocation from received tradition has been replaced by the insight that since there is no transcendent starting point we are bound to work from, and within, the perspectives of a given culture and linguistic tradition; the anthropology that proposed the dislocation of the self from that which is external to it has been questioned by the suggestion that the nature of the self is, at least in part, constituted by its being-in-relation; finally, the distinction between fact and value, and the allocation of religion to the realm of the latter has been fundamentally undermined by post-modernism.

Where deconstruction is not to be followed is in its tendency to allocate, by default, an implicit ontological status to the contingency that emerges. The self understanding of the vast majority of the world's religious traditions is that of the claim to insight into a realistic understanding of the actual nature of religion. That these various claims are essentially contradictory and mutually negating is not a justification for a post-modern resolution of such conflict in terms of the establishment of contingency as absolute non-realistic relativism. Where critical realism departs from post-modernism, and in doing so offers the possibility of a viable foundational framework for a post-liberal religious education is in its ability firstly, to recognize and acknowledge the ambiguity of such mutually negating belief systems, and secondly to affirm the possibility of critical judgement -- however provisional, tentative and contingent -- between them.

The post-modern interlude that forms Part Two of this thesis is thus not to be read as having merely negative results. The path through deconstruction is a necessary one if the flaws inherent in modernism outlined in Part One are to be replaced by a critically realistic framework, the development of which is the intention of Part Three of this thesis.

Part Three

Critical Realism and the Integrity of Religious Education

Chapter Seven

The Promise of Critical Realism

Chapter Seven considers the reactions to modernism of critical realism: i) it is suggested that critical realism seeks to preserve and extend critically the primary legacy of modernism via a non-reductive realism -- grounded in the notion of contingent rationality -- that fundamentally challenges the secondary sub-structures of modernism; ii) critical realism affirms the centrality and necessity of historical tradition in any process of understanding; iii) it moves beyond the image of the dislocated self, and affirms the communal, public nature of selfhood; iv) it accepts the ontological grounding of metaphorical statements of value; v) the distinctive contours of critical realism's search for a critical and realistic wisdom that transcends the reductionism inherent within modernism are outlined.

1. Salvaging the Enlightenment Legacy

In the first chapter we identified a thematic of four key dualistic sub-structures that characterised the emergence of modernism, namely the tensions between fact and value, certainty and contingency, tradition and reason, and mind and world. Much contemporary philosophical discourse understands the emergence of these sub-structures as constituting a fundamental and incommensurable shift from mythological pre-modern world views, understood in terms of an enlightening emancipation. Consequently, the emergence in the late twentieth century of a critical awareness of the moral and epistemological flaws inherent within the sub-structures has created a climate of uncertainty and ambiguity.

In this context post-modernism understands itself in terms of a parallel shift, similarly fundamental, incommensurable and emancipatory: the pattern of the turn from pre-modernism to modernism is now repeated as post-modernism passes beyond the limitations of modernism.¹ This process entailed the rejection of one of the poles of each of the sub-structures. Thus the realms of fact, certainty, reason and mind are radically deconstructed, leaving a free flow of absolutely contingent value, grounded in the worlds of linguistic tradition. The irony, as we have seen, is that in following this course post-modernism reveals itself as being both: i) fundamentally parasitical upon modernism, and as such forming the logical extension and culmination of the Enlightenment's romantic mirror image; and ii) perpetuating uncritically the modernist ideals of emancipation and freedom.

The reaction of critical realism is of a significantly different order.² A twin focus may be observed here: i) a *realistic concern* to be attentive to the way things actually are in reality, open to the demands and claims of the order of things; and ii) a *critical awareness* of both the possibilities and limitations of human understanding. Together they lead to the emergence of contingent rationality. From this perspective at the heart of human wisdom stands the demand that human beings respond to reality in terms similar to the 'transcendental precepts' of Lonergan referred to above: "be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible".³

In the light of this, human understanding can no longer be understood as reliant on the establishment of the sub-structures of the Enlightenment. Over against the claims regarding a radical break within the development of culture at the point at

1. The classic statement of the qualitative distinction between pre-modernism and modernism is that of Comte's identification of mythical-religious and rational-metaphysical thought forms on the one hand, and of positivistic-empirical ones on the other; cf. below Chapter One, note 33; for the advocacy of a qualitative distinction between modernism and post-modernism cf. eg. Rorty (1980) p.6: Wittgenstein, Dewey and Heidegger "glimpse the possibility of a form of intellectual life in which the vocabulary of philosophical reflection inherited from the seventeenth century would seem as pointless as the thirteenth-century philosophical vocabulary had seemed to the Enlightenment".

2. Whilst the phrase 'critical realism' has an increasingly common usage, it has yet to attain the level of a standard designation for a specific school of thought. The work of Bernstein, Gadamer, Habermas, Kuhn, MacIntyre, Polanyi, Wittgenstein et.al. is distinguished by a concern to *critically* appropriate that *realistic* reality that stands beyond the self. The term reflects the aims, if not the naturalistic perspectives of the late 19th century schools of critical realism in Scotland and America: "To be a realist, and yet to be free of any suspicion of naivety..." Passmore (1968) p.279. cf. pp. 279-287. Recently the phrase has been adopted by theologians in reaction to the anti-realism inherent in liberal experiential-expressive constructions of religion, especially in the interdisciplinary field of theology and science, cf. eg. Peacock (1984), (1988), (1993) pp.11-19, and Huysteen (1989).

3. Below, Chapter Four, note 21; Lonergan (1973) p.20.

which the Enlightenment emerges must be placed the understanding of a commensurate development linked with earlier classical and Judaeo-Christian culture: attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness and responsibility is not the preserve of modern western humanity alone.⁴

If this is so, it follows that the dualisms inherent in the sub-structures need no longer be seen as fundamental to the heart of human understanding: modernism and post-modernism are wrong to attribute them the authority they do. Rather they may best be viewed as a hermeneutical tool: of utility to the Enlightenment, but containing no *foundational* significance for human understanding. Thus critical realism has no need to work within such a dualistic framework: the choice is not between fact or value, certainty or contingency, tradition or reason, mind or world. On the contrary, within critical realism we can observe the advocacy of the holistic unity of fact and value, of the contingency of knowledge, of the interdependency of tradition and wisdom, and of the intimate correlation between self and world. Critical realism thus seeks to extend and develop the insights of modernism, over against the scepticism of post-modernism, in a fashion that avoids a repetition of the former's dualistic flaws.

This chapter seeks to offer a perspective on the key themes of critical realism by demonstrating the possibility of transcending the dualisms inherent within modernism and post-modernism. It is, inevitably, necessary to focus discussion on a limited number of writers and themes: the utilization of the work of Wittgenstein, Gadamer and of contemporary philosophy of science should thus be read as exemplary rather than definitive.⁵

2. The Wisdom of Tradition

The modernist picture of the self, dislocated from the contingent flow of tradition and cultural history within the stream of time and space was deconstructed by post-modernism. In place of a metaphysic of presence the self is immersed in the river of life

⁴ For a theological advocacy of such continuity cf. Gunton (1983).

⁵ In addition to those writings given explicit reference above, the following works have played a formative role in the development of the present chapter, though there has not always been the space available to reference them explicitly: Bernstein (1983); Cavell (1979); Gellner (1992); Habermas (1987a), (1987b), (1987c), cf. McCarthy (1984), Bernstein (1985), Ingram (1987), Browning and Fiorenza (1992); MacIntyre (1985), (1988), cf. McMylor (1994); Maxwell (1987); Murdoch (1992); Taylor (1992); Thiselton (1980), (1992); Weil (1978), cf. Petrement (1976).

until it finally dissolves, losing its identity amidst the arbitrary interrelations of word and text. Certainty collapses into chaos, humanity into language. The only constant is an uncritical adoption of the value of freedom itself: freedom *from* the imposition of the authority of tradition is replaced by freedom *within* deconstructed reality, since utter contingency cannot constrain. If there is no possibility of being wrong, then one cannot be placed under any false illusion.

By contrast critical realism's restoration-through-revision of modernism seeks to protect both the identity of the self and the reality of tradition. It does so by turning the notion of freedom on its head: freedom *from* becomes freedom *for*. We are who we were, who we are and who we are becoming not in our isolation, but in an essential communion of relationship. The self is constituted and defined precisely by the nature of its relationships -- within the ongoing interplay of time and space -- with society, nature, the presence or absence of divinity, and the inner conversation of self with self. Metaphors of dislocation are replaced by metaphors of engagement and indwelling. Reason develops within networks of relationships in a dialectical movement that attempts to understand the truth of the way things are, of the order of reality: as such, rationality is neither absolutely present, nor permanently absent, rather reason is contingent, but nevertheless retains its rationality. Critical realism essentially steers a course beyond the excesses of modernism and post-modernism in the name of a balanced, attentive common sense.

i) The philosophy of science

This image of the self indwelling reality emerges clearly within the critical realism of post-Einsteinian science, the later philosophy of Wittgenstein, and in Gadamer's post-romantic hermeneutic.

In natural science, post-Einstein, time and space function not as absolute infinitives, but as relative to one another. As a result the scientific observer occupies a place within, rather than transcends, the space-time reality under observation. Experimental data is thus relative both to the position of the observer and to his or her interpretative frame of reference. Scientific activity is thus neither entirely neutral nor entirely objective. The scientist is part of the reality under investigation, is reliant on community and tradition for a system of reference, and actively interacts with the object under investigation. Any interpretative framework is dependent upon the position of the observer within space, time and tradition; subsequently just as an interpretative framework and research hypothesis interrogates reality, so in turn reality

interrogates the validity of the interpretative framework itself.⁶

Polanyi argues that the *process* transcends the subject-object dualism of modernism, and demands to be understood as 'personal knowledge'.⁷ In the act of understanding, the observer utilizes tacit knowledge; poses questions grounded in imagination, instinct and insight; is led towards truth by the inherent beauty, vision and coherence of a particular framework and the deepened understanding of reality it makes possible; and depends on the shared communal conviviality of working alongside others as part of an ongoing tradition.

Science begins not with abstraction, rooted in the false belief that dislocation from tradition secures the autonomy of rationality. Rather the scientist indwells, and is dependent upon, a scientific tradition. Rationality requires a shared communal tradition of language. Kuhn gives systematic voice to this insight.⁸ Science is not a static discipline, it develops historically through the movement of *normal science* operating within an accepted framework, a movement that may be interrupted by *revolutionary science*, in which the orthodox paradigm undergoes a fundamental revision entailing an inevitable incommensurability between competing models of reality. If tradition is inevitable in the development of science, it follows that scientific authority requires tradition. Since such authority is both necessary, and yet also subject to the possibility of revision, it follows that scientific knowledge is both rational yet contingent.

ii) Wittgenstein: beyond ostensive definition

Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, as an exercise in critical realism, rejects the modernist search for an absolute linguistic perspective on reality.⁹ Its form,

⁶. Experimental data was seen as relative both to the position of the observer and his or her interpretative frame of reference, cf. Bolton (1979): "Einstein inferred that measurements of both temporal and spatial dimensions were relative to the system of spatio-temporal coordinates used for measurement, or, that they were relative to the spatio-temporal position of the observer" (p.103); "If measurement or judgement is a method, then knowledge is an activity, not passive observation, and the nature of reality will depend on what method is employed. So there is, in particular, no pre-given reality called 'sense experience' which all judgements must in some way reflect; rather the concept of sense experience arises through a particular method through which we judge (p.103).

⁷. cf. Polanyi (1946), (1958), (1966), (1969), Polanyi and Prosch (1975); and, for critical discussion, Gelwick (1977), Kane (1984), Mullins (1976), Prosch (1986), Torrance (1984b).

⁸. cf. Kuhn (1970a), (1970b); cf also Lakatos (1970), Popper (1959).

⁹. Wittgenstein (1968a); Hacker (1972) comments, "any attempt to trace out continuity and contrast between the earlier and later work with respect to the conception of philosophy must bear in mind the fact that the axis of reference of the whole

style and ultimate confessional nature root its author firmly within the contingent limitations of space and time. The philosopher functions not as priest or oracle, arbitrating between truth and falsehood from a divine vantage point, but as an Odysseus, isolated from the gods and wandering the earth in search of home. Wittgenstein does not aim to arrive at truth, rather the task is to throw light on the ways in which language mesmerizes the pilgrim, seducing him or her along false paths; it leaves things as they are, setting out merely to dispel philosophical illusions by functioning as a cure for the sickness of understanding.

The *Tractatus* gave a clear answer to the question "what is the relation between a name and the thing named?":¹⁰ the meaning of a name is its correspondence to the object in reality to which it refers. Ostensive definition, this "particular picture of the essence of human language,"¹¹ functioned to bridge the gulf between the dislocated self and the external world. Such ostensive language allows the mind to mirror nature. Wittgenstein seeks emancipation from the captivating power of this limiting image of linguistic essence.

In the *Philosophical Investigations* this idealised ostensive definition is contrasted with the complexity of ordinary language in everyday use. Such linguistic idealism proceeds as if language were a town consisting of a series of "new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses."¹² The reality is different: "our language can be seen as an ancient city, a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods: and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses".¹³ The *Tractatus* mistakes a new housing estate for the whole city.¹⁴ Language is a

investigation has been rotated upon a fixed point. The need to grasp conceptual structures remains, but they are now conceived *sub-species humanitatis*" (p.112); cf. also Wittgenstein (1969), (1979b), (1981); and, Fogelin (1976), Kenny (1975), Klemke (1971), Monk (1990), Pears (1971), Royal Institute of Philosophy (1974).

10. Wittgenstein (1968a) p.18, n.37.

11. cf. Wittgenstein, op.cit., pp2-18, nn.1-37; Fogelin, op. cit. pp.102-105; Wittgenstein's definition of ostensive definition is as follows: "It is this: the individual words in language name objects – sentences are combinations of such names. – In this picture of language we find the roots of the following idea: Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands" (ibid. p.2, n.1).

12. Wittgenstein, op. cit. p.8, n.18.

13. Ibid.

14. Wittgenstein draws this analogy directly from Descartes (1970) pp.15ff. Where Descartes is concerned with the project of building the foundations of knowledge over again from first principles, Wittgenstein introduces a specific linguistic focus. Whilst

complex phenomena, and the philosopher indwells the city, utilizing a complex series of interrelated linguistic forms. To isolate the self in the search for certainty leads inevitably into the need to renew contact with external reality without the fear of mistakes: ostensive definition appeared to offer a solution. Once the image of indwelling is adopted then the question of linguistic convergence between self and world reveals itself as a pseudo-problem, and in the process the essentialism of ostensive definition is dissolved.

As well as being grounded in a pseudo-problem, ostensive definition also seeks to attain an impossible ideal. In offering this viewpoint Wittgenstein constructs a series of basic model languages that take the form of ostensive definition.¹⁵ He proceeds to demonstrate how even such reductionist models fail to operate on a purely ostensive level: even the simplest structures of ostensive communication require a whole variety of interpersonal assumptions, meanings and nuances if they are to function. Ostensive definition works only if artificial limitations are placed on the nature of language: "you can make your definitions correct by expressly restricting it to those games".¹⁶

Language functions and has meaning only within the context within which it is used. The meaning of a word is not found in its ostensive relationship with an object in reality alone, but in the way in which it is used -- within a complex web grammar -- in interpersonal communication.¹⁷ Idealised language can only retard our understanding of the world, since it ignores the phenomena of a rich, highly complex, multivocal series of language games operating in the context of shared forms of life. Appreciation of this fact reveals the limitations of ostensive definition: "this general notion of the meaning of a word surrounds the working of language with a haze which makes clear vision impossible".¹⁸ There is no more a simple definition of the essence of language as there is of the ways in which the words 'tool' or 'handle' are used and hence obtain meaning.¹⁹

the *Tractatus* seeks an ideal language, the *Philosophical Investigations* embrace the complexity of linguistic diversity and rejects the notion of linguistic first principles. Thus the contrast between the modernism of Descartes and the *Tractatus*, and the critical realism of the *Philosophical Investigations* emerges clearly.

¹⁵. Ibid p.3, n.2. and p.5, n.8.

¹⁶. Ibid. p.3, n.3.

¹⁷. Ibid. pp.11f. n.23.

¹⁸. Ibid. p.4, n.5.

¹⁹. Ibid. pp.6f, nn.11f.

Ostensive definition, as the idealised essence of language, feeds upon, and requires, the modernist sub-structure of the dislocated self. A turn to the actuality of language as used entails a rejection both of this particular image of linguistic essence, and of the image of dislocation. We indwell a world in which language functions in a variety of ways, and our knowledge of reality can come only from the acceptance of the complexity, ambiguity and richness of the grammar of everyday usage. The critical dream of an idealised language is but an illusion: we cannot escape from the fact that we indwell a series of linguistic traditions, we can only work with and through them, and hence must accept their authority, their necessity and their possibilities.

iii) Gadamer: the historicity of understanding

Alongside science and linguistics, Gadamer's hermeneutics join the chorus of critical-realists demanding the reassertion of the authority of tradition. *Truth and Method* offers a fundamental critique of the tradition of romantic hermeneutics that sought to lead understanding beyond the objective grammar of fact into the subjective psychology of value.²⁰ The hermeneutical move of romanticism from the second order linguistic expression of texts into the first order experience of the author embraced both scientific objectivity and romantic subjectivity, and as such was rooted in modernist dualism. Within the same tradition, the hermeneutics of phenomenology understood the achievement of objectivity through *epoche*, the suspension or bracketing of prejudice, as a necessary prerequisite to the eidetic vision of subjective apprehension.²¹

For Gadamer "our question is how hermeneutics, once freed from the ontological obstructions of the scientific concept of objectivity, can do justice to the historicity of understanding".²² He denied the possibility and viability of presuppositionless hermeneutics.²³ Understanding requires that attention be paid to the forestructures of understanding. Gadamer uses the German *die Vorurteile*; the

20. Gadamer (1979); cf. Bernstein (1983), Bleicher (1982), Mueller-Vollmer (1986) pp.256-292, Palmer (1969), Rorty (1980) pp.357-364, Thiselton (1980) pp.293-326, (1992) pp.313-330, Warnke (1987), Weinsheimer (1985), Wright (1988), Jeanrond (1994) pp.64-66.

21. The romantic hermeneutical tradition runs from Schleiermacher through Dilthey to Husserl; cf. Schleiermacher (1977), Dilthey (1986), (1979) pp.168-263, Husserl (1977); cf. also Bleicher (1982) pp.11-27, Palmer (1969) pp.84-123, Torrance, T.F. (1968), Corliss (1993).

22. Gadamer, op.cit. p.235.

23. Ibid. pp.235-273.

translation offered in the English version of *Truth and Method* is 'prejudices'. This introduces a negative connotation Gadamer did not intend; 'prejudgement' suggests a self-consciousness that is not always present; 'presupposition' is perhaps the best option for the translator.

Gadamer invokes Heidegger's conception of the hermeneutical circle: all understanding is circular since all knowledge involves a necessary element of pre-understanding on the part of the interpreter.²⁴ He shifts the focus of this circle from the interplay between understanding the parts and the whole of a text towards the interplay between text and interpreter. The achievement of knowledge entails a dialogue of mutual interrogation of text by interpreter and interpreter by text. "A person who is trying to understand a text is always performing an act of projection."²⁵ Projection, the asking questions of a text in the light of previously held expectations, requires the acknowledgement and utilization of presuppositions.

The ideal of objective understanding attempts to break the hermeneutical circle by denying that the interpreter plays any subjective role in the process, since subjectivity threatens objectivity, imposing prejudgements that result not in knowledge but in illusion. The irony here is that such modernist hermeneutics embraces, in this subjective-objective division, an unacknowledged set of prejudices: "the fundamental prejudice of the Enlightenment is the prejudice against prejudice itself, which deprives tradition of its power".²⁶ Given the unacknowledged status of such prejudice, it follows that all understanding and all knowledge must inevitably conform to the modernist understanding of truth. Pre-modern texts must either be rejected as superstition, or demythologized to allow them to fulfill the requirements of the post-Enlightenment canon of truth.

For Gadamer the acceptance of presuppositions opens up the possibility of a text revealing something new, of its challenging our acknowledged interpretative framework, of the possibility of "the experience of being pulled up short by the text".²⁷

24. Ibid. pp.235-240; cf. Heidegger (1987), (1962), and Guignon (1983), Steiner (1978) pp.73ff; for critical discussion cf. Bleicher (1982) pp.98-104, Palmer (1969) pp.124-161, Thiselton (1980) pp.143-204.

25. Gadamer, op. cit. p.237.

26. "This recognition that all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice gives the hermeneutical problem its real thrust. By the light of this insight it appears that historicism, despite its critique of rationalism and of natural law philosophy, is based on the modern Enlightenment and unknowingly shares its prejudices", ibid. p.239, cf. pp.239ff.

27. Ibid. p.237.

"A person trying to understand a text is prepared for it to tell him something. That is why a hermeneutically trained mind must, from the start, be sensitive to the text's quality of newness. But this kind of sensitivity involves neither 'neutrality' in the matter of the object nor the extinction of one's self, but the conscious assimilation of one's own fore-meanings and prejudices. The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text may be present itself in all its newness and thus be able to assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings." ²⁸

The rehabilitation of prejudgement entails both the acceptance that we indwell tradition, and the denial of dislocation. "Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society and state in which we live.....that is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgements, constitute the historical reality of his being." ²⁹

The Enlightenment's rejection of prejudice, understood in the light of this turn from dislocation to indwelling, emerges as essentially the same movement as the discrediting of the authority of tradition. The reality of the forestructures of understanding means that prejudices, and hence tradition, are *necessary conditions* of knowledge. Since knowledge is also essentially rational, it follows that "there is no unconditional antithesis between tradition and reason". ³⁰ Understanding is the result of the interplay between the authority of reason and the authority of tradition. The modernist distinction between the objectivity of reason and the subjectivity of tradition collapses. The acceptance of tradition is not irrational, neither is rationality possible without tradition.

Thiselton points out two key thrusts in Gadamer's work, which serve here also to draw together the insights of Wittgenstein and of post-Einsteinian scientific practice and philosophy. Negatively, "English empiricism and Enlightenment rationalism represent an artificial narrowing of this tradition in which positivistic, theoretical and individual-centred reason becomes abstracted from tradition and community." ³¹ Positively, critical realism claims that "practical reason itself functions

²⁸. Ibid. p.239.

²⁹. Ibid. p.245; Weinsheimer (1985) summarises the implications of Gadamer's position thus: "Modern science, Gadamer suggests, has adopted the Cartesian principle of doubt as its basis and thus begins by attempting to render tradition inert and eliminate the effects of prejudice.....Being thrown means that prejudice is not merely prior to the consciousness but is its condition. We understand our world before we begin to think about it; such pre-understanding gives rise to thought and always in the midst of an ongoing process; if we can know more, that is because we understand something already, pre-reflectively." (pp.10f).

³⁰. Gadamer, *ibid.* p.250, cf. pp.245ff.

³¹. Thiselton (1992) p.186.

in the context of, and as part of, a tradition of effective history, not in opposition to or in abstraction from it".³² It is this later claim that stands at the heart of critical realism's rehabilitation of tradition as fundamental to understanding.

3. The Self in Relation: Decentering the Metaphysics of Presence

i) Relocating the self

Transcendence as divinity, the world as nature, and the self as mind, form the fundamental categories through which the modernist debate developed. Given the quest for certainty, the issue became one of hierarchy: which of these categories forms the still point from which ultimate truth proceeds. The transition from a scholastic to a modern perspective placed a question mark over the Judaeo-Christian priority of divinity, a move confirmed by the collapse of natural theology. Priority shifted from divinity to nature, the scientist replaced the theologian as the high priest of truth. The challenge of naturalistic determinism, with its threat to human freedom, saw the priority shift once again, and the self replaced nature as the source and foundation of truth. Truth was now divided between the objective truth of nature and the subjective truth of value. Romanticism did not dethrone science, but the poet was now able to draw attention to the limitations of scientific consciousness. An alliance was thus formed by scientist and poet, rooted in the centrality of the self, in the metaphysics of presence.

Over all these category shifts, over the competing claims of theologian, scientist and poet, the philosopher stood watch as guardian of truth.

"Philosophy as a discipline thus sees itself as the attempt to underwrite or debunk claims of knowledge made by science, morality, art and religion. It purports to do this on the basis of its special understanding of the nature of knowledge and of mind.....it understands the foundation of knowledge, and it finds these foundations in a study of man-as-knower, of the 'mental processes' or the 'activity of representation' which makes knowledge possible." ³³

Alongside the rehabilitation of tradition, critical realism seeks also to relocate modernism's conception of the priority of the self. Its fundamental aims in this context are revisionist. Contra post-modernism, there is no attempt to deny the reality

³². Ibid. p.325.

³³. Rorty (1980) p.3.

of the self, to dissolve identity in the flow of language. Rather, critical realism set out on a programme of relocation: given the rejection of the image of dislocation and the turn to the metaphor of indwelling, the question arises as to the *appropriate relationship* between self, nature and divinity.

ii) Beyond 'mental states'

Wittgenstein's attempt at relocation proceeds, as we have come to expect, from a consideration of language. Modernism has brought into being a form of thinking and speaking that serves to legitimate the metaphysics of experience, and the limitations of this form entail a sickness of understanding. More specifically, "there is a kind of general disease of thinking which always looks for (and finds) what would be called a mental state from which our acts spring as from a reservoir."³⁴

This 'disease' is the result of our being mesmerised by a particular way of using language. We are captivated by the grammar of the metaphysics of experience: 'mental acts', 'mental processes', 'inner acts of ostentation', 'unique inner experience'. Whenever we feel, think, remember, understand and attribute meaning this grammar causes us to think "of a state of mental apparatus (perhaps in the brain) by means of which we explain the manifestations of meaning".³⁵ Hypnotised by such language "the solipsist flutters and flutters in the fly glass, strikes against the walls, flutters further. How can he be brought to rest?"³⁶

Wittgenstein's answer to this question is essentially simple, and has direct parallels with his rejection of ostensive definition. How might we understand a statement such as "my tooth aches"? We must not be trapped -- because of modernism's attribution of priority to the dislocated self -- into thinking that the meaning of the sentence lies in the mental processes of the speaker. To understand it we must look to the context in which it is used, at the linguistic event incarnate in the public world of space, time and tradition. "Try not to think of understanding as a 'mental process' at all. -- For that is the expression that confuses you,"³⁷ rather look at the way in which the words are used. In doing so you will come to realise that "it would be quite misleading to call the words a 'description of a mental state'".³⁸ Foeglin

³⁴. Wittgenstein (1969) p.143.

³⁵. Wittgenstein (1968a) p.58, n.149.

³⁶. Wittgenstein (1968b) p.300, cf. Hacker (1972) p.185.

³⁷. Wittgenstein (1968a) p.61, n.154.

³⁸. Ibid. p.73, n. 180.

abstracts the core of the argument thus:

"Wittgenstein insists that the meaning of a term has not been fixed until its use in a broader setting has been established.....this cannot be identified with being in a particular mental state (or undergoing a particular mental process) at a particular point in time, for example on the occasion of ostensive definition." ³⁹

Wittgenstein is not, of course, denying the reality of toothache, merely that the statement is likely to be essentially focused on the process of bringing to expression a mental experience. The statement takes its meaning from the context in which it is used: as a justification of irritable behaviour, or an explanation to a dentist, etc. Of all the possible meanings, the reductionist explanation 'I made the statement to identify a mental experience caused by tooth decay' is to impose ostensive idealism on the realistic nature of everyday linguistic usage. Ostensive definition may demand the sequence 'physical cause -- mental experience -- verbal expression'; language-as-use generally does not use that sequence, and thus cannot legitimately be attributed with that meaning.

Wittgenstein proceeds by offering a cumulative case that operates both by highlighting the confusions inherent in the metaphysics of experience, and by demonstrating the inherent coherence, integrity and simplicity of his alternative.

a) The metaphysics of experience confuses the grammar of language with metaphysical necessity primarily because it works with a monolithic understanding of the nature of language. "Language is a labyrinth of paths",⁴⁰ and by misreading the complexity of the ways in which words such as 'meaning' and 'understanding' actually function we take them to be "expressions of a queer process".⁴¹

"The criteria which we accept for 'fitting', 'being able to', 'understanding', are much more complicated than might appear at first sight. That is, the game with these words, their employment in the linguistic intercourse that is carried on by other means, is more involved -- the role of these words in our language order -- than we are tempted to think.....This role is what we need to understand in order to resolve philosophical paradoxes." ⁴²

b) In his studies leading up to the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein argues that the metaphysics of experience presupposes a set of fixed, unproblematic concepts: 'present (mental states)' in contrast to 'past or future (mental states)';

³⁹. Fogelin (1976) p.107.

⁴⁰. Wittgenstein, op. cit. p.82, n.203.

⁴¹. Ibid. p.79, n.196.

⁴². Ibid. p.73, n.182.

'experience' as a referent of personal identity; 'ownership' of mental experiences. All three, he argues, are ambiguous and fail to offer a foundational set of concepts in the way assumed by modernism.⁴³

c) In the *Philosophical Investigations* itself the attack on the metaphysics of experience begins with a consideration of the way in which we acquire, possess and exercise concepts. What do we mean when we say that we understand how to solve a problem, or that we have learnt a language? How do we go about understanding the language of a community that is unfamiliar to us? Wittgenstein's answer is clear: we understand how to solve a problem when we actually carry through its solution, not when we 'think' we know how to do so; we understand a language when we speak it, not when we think we can speak it; we learn a new language by observing how it functions in reality, not by inquiring into the mental processes of the speakers of that language. Understanding a language is to utilize a technique, to obey its rules, to act not think.⁴⁴

Language-as-use replaces language-as-mental-process. Modernism imposes an occult sphere of mental process between self and world, in which both thought, word and deed are not 'spontaneous', but rather filtered through the staging-post of the mind. It is precisely this staging-post, which the grammar of modernism implies is a central requirement, that gives birth to pseudo-philosophical problems, above all, that of solipsism. Pitcher comments: "If we now pursue the matter further and ask how the connection *is* made between a person's image, or the corresponding picture he might draw, and what he means it to represent, we find that the answer lies not in any essential mental activity but rather in the way he uses, or would use, the image or picture, the application he makes, or would make of it."⁴⁵

d) Though we can give examples of 'mental acts', the nexus of language appears on the surface to require further explanation. What exactly is a 'mental act'? What account can we give to the process of inner meaning? What does it mean to have an image in my mind? How are we justified in making such claims to inner knowledge? "But then doesn't our understanding reach beyond all the examples?.....Isn't there a deeper explanation; or mustn't at least the understanding of all explanation be deeper?"⁴⁶ Such questions give rise to an entire sub-discipline of philosophy: philosophy of mind. The image of dislocation spurs the thinker on towards deeper

⁴³. cf Hacker, op. cit. pp.185ff.

⁴⁴. Wittgenstein, op. cit. pp.56-88, nn.142-240.

⁴⁵. Pitcher (1964) p.265.

⁴⁶. Wittgenstein, op. cit. p.83, n.209.

understanding, more substantial answers. Yet for Wittgenstein these are pseudo-problems: what if, in reality, nothing especially unusual, special or significant goes on in the mind? "If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: 'This is simply what I do'."⁴⁷ The metaphysics of experience generates gnosticism, the search for a hidden knowledge that does not exist. "If god had looked into our minds he would not have been able to see."⁴⁸

iii) Beyond 'private language'

The argument attacking the notion of esoteric mental states culminates in Wittgenstein's rejection of 'private language'.

"But could we also imagine a language in which a person could write down or give vocal expression to his inner experiences -- his feelings, moods, and the rest -- for his private use?.....The individual words of this language are to refer to what can only be known to the person speaking; to his immediate private sensations. So another person cannot understand the language." ⁴⁹

Wittgenstein here is attempting to back the edifice of modernism into a corner: if the metaphysics of experience is to legitimate itself then such a language must be possible. If the dislocated self functions as both source and focus of truth, it follows that we should be able to speak a language that refers to our inner immediate experience and yet cannot be understood by others.

At face value, "the construction of a private language may seem unproblematic",⁵⁰ but this is "only because we illicitly help ourselves to the logical features of expressions that occur in everyday language".⁵¹ Wittgenstein argues that the very act of private ostensive definition presupposes a communal context in which such activity can take place. There is "nothing in the private linguist's theory [that] provides room for the formation and possession of a concept".⁵² It presupposes the existence and use of language external to the mind. We cannot make sense of the

⁴⁷. Ibid. p/85, n. 217.

⁴⁸. Ibid. p.217.

⁴⁹. Ibid. pp.88f, n.243; cf. pp.88-111, nn.243-349.; cf. also Fogelin, op. cit. pp.153-171, Hacker, op. cit. pp.215-250, Klemke, op. cit. pp.172-327.

⁵⁰. Fogelin, op. cit. p.161.

⁵¹. Ibid.

⁵². Hacker, op. cit. pp.233f.

notion of an isolated mind capable of "providing the structures and articulations necessary for the formation of sentences".⁵³ This follows from the argument above that language is acquired through use: from this perspective it is a priori impossible that an isolated mind could construct a private language.

Even assuming such construction were possible, the concept still remains incoherent. Private language is more than merely a code that it is too difficult for others to decipher: "it is the very meanings of the word that are private, not just the method for encoding them."⁵⁴ Wittgenstein sees two possibilities here. On the one hand, the meaning of the language becomes clear in time as its repeated use is observed by others. Thus a symbol 'x' may be ultimately interpreted as occurring in a specific situation that offers a clue to its meaning, in which case the language is not truly private. On the other hand, repeated use of the language does not open up any possibility of comprehension. However, this is absurd: the arbitrary, anarchic way in which symbol 'x' appears to be being used takes its owner out of the sphere of normal human behaviour; he or she can only be seen as acting in a meaningless way; this by definition, since the use of such language cannot be understood a priori.

"But couldn't we imagine God's suddenly giving a parrot understanding, and its now saying things to itself?"⁵⁵ Of course, but what distinguishes the parrot from the owner of the private language? Clearly nothing on the hermeneutical level. Meaning requires a public context; a purely private one is absurd: "If a lion could talk, we could not understand him."⁵⁶ A 'private language' is, then, ultimately a vacuous concept, a language deprived of meaning: we are pushed here to the frontiers of the question of the inherent order and meaning within the universe, the possibility of ultimate chaos and disorder, the ontological question of ultimate meaning. Wittgenstein recognises this: "But here it is an important fact that I imagine a deity in order to imagine this."⁵⁷ Only God can make $2+2=3$! In other words, if a private language is possible then meaning disintegrates into chaos, the order of things collapses, lions speak, the dividing line between meaning and nonsense disintegrates, post-modernism comes of age. The meaning of the private language to its owner can only be self-legitimated: questions of truth and sanity are essentially privatised, in which case all is true and all is sanity.

53. Ibid. p.234.

54. Fogelin, op. cit. p.155

55. Wittgenstein, op. cit. p.110, n. 346.

56. Ibid. p.223.

57. Ibid. p.110, n.346.

The rejection of 'private language' is located within Wittgenstein's attempts to undermine the notion of 'mental acts' as the bedrock of epistemology and truth. Such notions are rooted in a linguistic system that generate pseudo-problems and distort the understanding of the relationship of the self with the rest of reality. The metaphysics of presence along with its picture of the dislocated self is revealed as being fundamentally incoherent.

iv) Beyond the deconstructed self

Deconstruction can follow Wittgenstein along this road only so far. Seeking also to reject modernism's metaphysics of presence it chose not to turn to the question of relationship, but to idealize -- and indeed idolise -- the question of freedom and emancipation as radical abstractions. Hence the self is ultimately dissolved in the ongoing freeplay of language, which emerges as a fourth category of meaning alongside divinity, nature and humanity. This could be achieved only by denying language any fundamental coherence: the result being the advocacy of an entire series of quasi-private languages. Rorty's reading of Wittgenstein points in the direction of such a non-foundational, groundless play of language, constantly under erasure.⁵⁸

Wittgenstein's own philosophy rejects such a move. Firstly, deconstruction ultimately imposes an ontology of language on reality, whilst Wittgenstein is clear that the philosopher can act only to draw attention to the misunderstanding and sickness within misused grammar. Secondly, Wittgenstein speaks not of the deconstruction of the self, but of a misunderstanding regarding the nature of the self: he does not deny in any way the actuality of experience, merely a particular interpretation of this reality. Thirdly, Wittgenstein makes no suggestion that the rejection of logocentrism must, or should, lead to any form of post-modern epistemological anarchy. On the contrary, the argument against private language rests on the assumption of the ultimate coherence and rational coherence within the order of things.

Wittgenstein's real achievement is to relocate the self within the order of things. Divinity, nature and self are not to be isolated via any hierarchical structure, but rather they are to be brought into correct relationship. This Aristotelian turn is developed in the critical realism of Taylor's and MacIntyre's redefinition of self.⁵⁹ We are who we are not in our dislocation and isolation, but in our indwelling in relationship: with ourselves, in community, within nature, and as orientated towards the presence -- or absence -- of divinity.

⁵⁸. Rorty (1980), (1989).

⁵⁹. MacIntyre (1988), Taylor (1992); contrast the neo-Platonism of Murdoch (1985).

4. Value and Ontology: The Rehabilitation of Aesthetics

We have attempted to show how the modernist sub-structures of the authority of reason over against tradition, and of the dislocation of self from relationship, have been redrawn by critical realism. Our concern here is with the dualistic sub-structure that separate fact from value. The question to be asked here is that of the truth of art. Within the romantic metaphysics of experience art laid claim to a subjective truth rooted in inner, private, subjective apprehension, dislocated from external, public, objective reality. Clearly such a justification of artistic truth cannot hold within critical realism. This raises the question of the possibility of the rehabilitation of a realistic ontology of value.

i) Transcending the subjectivity of the beautiful

If we indwell the world, and are reliant on tradition as the primary source of our knowledge of the way things are, what then are the implications for our understanding of the realm of value? Modernism did not lack a sense of value; however its decision to locate value within the subjective sphere of the inner-self, in the process divorcing it from the objective sphere of nature, had far-reaching consequences. The combination of subjectivity with freedom reduced aesthetics to mere opinion and taste. Viewed in this light post-modernism may be seen not as a break from modernism, but rather as its direct descendent.

Aesthetic subjectivism was directly linked with the demand for certainty, the image of the dislocated self and empirical-reductionist epistemology. So long as the self is dislocated from external reality epistemology requires a model of convergence: the equation of knowledge with the building of bridges between the divide, using the raw material of either sense data or language. The need for certainty, coupled with the rejection of tradition, led inevitably towards a simplistic, and hence reductionist, understanding of sense experience and language. The goal was objectivity, and any contingencies that posed a threat to this goal were consigned to the inner world of subjectivity. The basic building blocks of atomistic language and simple sense impressions had been specifically designed to avoid the realm of value, and reality itself is forced to conform to such epistemological fundamentals. It may be true that "scientists frequently experience a sense of awe and wonder at the subtle beauty and elegance of nature,"⁶⁰ but such experience is subjective, generated from within, rather

⁶⁰. Davies (1984) p.145.

than being the result of any external cause grounded in the intrinsic being of nature. In a critical realist context epistemology becomes an issue of the coherence of the stories told within tradition, and their relationship with the ongoing flow of reality. Contingent rationality operates at a level beyond reductionism: verifiable demonstration is replaced by the interpretative power of models, narratives, metaphors and pictures to illuminate the way things are. This entails a new understanding of scientific methodology: scientific hypotheses take on an aesthetic dimension, evaluated in terms of their inherent harmony, simplicity, and symmetry, their ability to open up to the scientist a truer picture of, and hence relationship within, reality. Thus Polanyi: "A scientific theory which calls attention to its own beauty, and partly relies on it for claiming to represent empirical reality, is akin to a work of art which calls attention to its own beauty as a token of artistic reality." ⁶¹

Further, the scientist now works within a new political context: ecological and environmental concerns serve to re-establish the notion of humanity as steward of creation, rather than master of it; awareness of humanity's reliance on nature extends beyond the merely pragmatic; nature demands the language of duty and responsibility. Scientific control and domination is redefined: the scientist seeks not knowledge, but wisdom. ⁶²

Such considerations alone do not of course re-establish an ontology of value that transcends the merely subjective, but they are indicative of a significant cultural shift in that direction. Our reflections will be confined to the sphere of aesthetics, and focus on only one -- though one of key significance -- of a number of critical realist attempts to discover the truth of beauty beyond mere taste. A consideration of Wittgenstein's rejection of reductionism and simples leads us into Gadamer's attempts to rehabilitate the ontological truth of art. We must note in passing that there is a danger here of bypassing the contingent-rationality of such aesthetics: Gadamer's latent idealism has been subject to a sustained attack, and this raises issues that we must deal with in the fourth part of the present chapter. Suffice it to say, Gadamer's language of the "ontological truth of art" needs to be read in the context of Eagleton's reminder that "art contains truth and ideology at once", hence the need for a "scepticism of absolute, monological truth claims". ⁶³

⁶¹. Polanyi (1958) p.133, cf. Davies, op. cit. p.221.

⁶². cf. Maxwell (1987).

⁶³. Eagleton (1990), pp.352, 378.

ii) Holism, simples and reductionism

One of the key prerequisites for any deconstruction of the fact-value dualism is the freeing of language from its critical function of bridging the gulf between mind and nature through ostensive definition. Such a programme entails for Wittgenstein a parallel rejection of the notions of 'simples' and 'reductionism' upon which ostensive definition had come to rely. By reductionism Wittgenstein refers to the doctrine that wholes are most adequately spoken of in terms of their constituent parts; in this context simples form the most basic constituent parts of wholes. Thus a pencil consists of wood, lead and paint, or more accurately of atoms and molecules: the greater the reduction, the smaller the simple, the more accurate the representation in the mind.⁶⁴

The relevance of this becomes clear if we consider the experience of listening to an orchestra. What do we experience? Beethoven's 'ninth'? Strings, woodwind, percussion? A realisation of the notations of a musical score? A series of sound waves on our eardrum? Modernism, needing to bridge the gap between mind and external reality turns to ostensive definition, and in its need for certainty turns to reductionism and simples. Scientific language is privileged as a result: what is *really* happening is the reception of sound waves, since these may be measured and demonstrated with a high degree of mathematical objectivity. The language of aesthetics is, as a result, privatised: the sound waves may make possible an aesthetic experience second to none, but such an event cannot be demonstrated with any degree of accuracy or objectivity. Such experience, whatever its value, remains essentially a question of taste: it is not really what is happening, merely what I *believe* to be happening. The philosopher as arbiter must draw the line between objectivity and subjectivity, fact and value: the emergence of the twin realms of science and humanities in the field of education since the Enlightenment offers a clear testimony as to where exactly the line came to be drawn.

Characteristically, Wittgenstein offers a cumulative case against simples and reductionism: he points negatively towards the absurdities inherent in the object of his attack, and appeals positively to the actual reality of ordinary discourse. The argument needs to be read in the light of his rejection of ostensive definition and of any metaphysics of presence, as outlined previously.

Negatively, Wittgenstein points out that it is not necessary for a word to be reduced to a simple in order for it to have meaning: chair, sword, trees, chessboards all

⁶⁴ cf. Wittgenstein, op. cit. pp.18-38, nn.38-80.

make sense, yet are clearly open to further reduction.⁶⁵ Further, it is not necessary for a word to refer to an object that exists in external reality for it to have meaning: eg. Excaliber, Mr N.N. after his death. Further, simples must logically be indestructible, since to add the description 'X exists' to the name 'X' means that it is no longer a simple. Yet we can imagine a state of affairs in which nothing exists. Hence the absurd conclusion that to be named a simple must exist, yet if it exists it is no longer a simple. Does the standard metre rule in Paris exist? Yes, I can go and look at it, but this negates its status as the simple of 'metre'.⁶⁶ Wittgenstein's aim here is to show how philosophy has become mesmerised by a particular word game which, though stemming from the attempt to make sublime the logic of our language is, in reality, ridiculous.

Positively he points out that it is not necessary for a word to refer to a simple for it to have meaning once we have escaped from the hypnotic qualities of the language game: "Suppose that instead of saying 'Bring me the broom', you said 'Bring me the broomstick and the brush which is fitted to it.' -- Isn't the answer: 'Do you want the broom? Why do you put it so oddly?' -- Is he going to understand the further analysed sentence any better?"⁶⁷ It is the way in which language is used, not the way in which a sentence is subjected to reductive analysis, that gives words meaning. Games are learnt and foreign languages mastered by observation and participation, rather than by analysis of rules and grammar. "To say, however, that a sentence in (b) is an 'analysed' form of one in (a) readily seduces us into thinking that the former is the more fundamental form; that it alone shows what is meant by the other and so on."⁶⁸

Simples and reductionism form a language game that is blind to the complexity and richness of language as used. Holism offers a far more substantial, coherent and illuminatory understanding of the ways human beings communicate and encounter the reality they indwell. To reduce the language of aesthetics to the subjective realm is to be mesmerised by an arbitrary language and grammar that is the direct result of notions of dislocation, certitude and epistemological convergence. To describe the language of science as real, and that of aesthetics as merely personal taste must be seen as a purely arbitrary action.

⁶⁵. Ibid. pp.19f. nn.39, 40.

⁶⁶. Ibid. pp.24f, n.50.

⁶⁷. Ibid. p.29, n.60.

⁶⁸. Ibid. p.30, n.63.

iii) The truth of art

In setting out to give a positive answer to his own question, "Must we not also admit that the work of art possesses truth?"⁶⁹ Gadamer takes as his principal sparring partner the subjectivism of aesthetics in the Kantian critique, together with the subsequent reductionsism that reserves "the concept of truth for conceptual knowledge".⁷⁰

The transcendental function of Kant's critique had distinguished aesthetic judgement from conceptual knowledge. Kant goes beyond classicism: art is more than the beautiful representation of the object, it is "the presentation of aesthetic ideas, ie. of something that lies behind all concepts. The concept of genius seeks to formulate this insight of Kant's."⁷¹

"Art is art created by genius' means that for artistic beauty also there is no other principle of judgement, no criterion of concept and knowledge than that of its finality for the feeling of freedom in the play of our cognitive faculties. Beauty in nature or art has the same a priori principle, which lies entirely within subjectivity."⁷²

While Kant sought to justify transcendently the judgement of taste, Gadamer demonstrates how neo-Kantianism followed Schiller in transforming Kant's methodological concerns into the content of aesthetics: "by trying to derive all objective validity from transcendental subjectivity, neo-Kantianism declared the concept of experience to be the very stuff of consciousness."⁷³ The subjectivism of aesthetics was thus achieved, the beautiful lost all contact with conceptual knowledge and practical reality.

Gadamer's attempt to retrieve the question of artistic truth starts from the insight that the subjectivism of aesthetics works from notions of pure experience, abstracting the work of art from the context in which it exists. "By disregarding everything in which a work is rooted (its original context of life, and the religious or secular function which gave it its significance) it becomes visible as the pure work of art."⁷⁴ By learning to view art in its historical and cultural context we are able to escape from the abstraction of aesthetic consciousness. Gadamer here draws upon

⁶⁹. Gadamer (1979) p.39.

⁷⁰. Ibid.

⁷¹. Ibid. p.48.

⁷². Ibid. p.51.

⁷³. Ibid. p.55.

⁷⁴. Ibid. p.76.

Kierkegaard's demonstration of the 'self-destructive' nature of pure immediacy: aesthetic consciousness must go beyond itself into the world, into the moral stage of existence.⁷⁵ "His theory of the aesthetic stage of existence is developed from the standpoint of the moralist who has seen how desperate and untenable is existence in pure immediacy and discontinuity."⁷⁶

Art then must be contextualised in historical reality, it must be appropriated by the individual indwelling the ebb and flow of time, not experienced as an abstract event in the consciousness of the dislocated mind.

"Inasmuch as we encounter the work of art in the world and a world in the individual work of art, this does not remain a strange universe into which we are magically transported for a time. Rather we learn to understand ourselves in it, and that means that we preserve the discontinuity of the experience in the continuity of our existence. Therefore it is necessary to adopt an attitude to the beautiful and to art that does not lay claim to immediacy, but corresponds to the historical reality of man."⁷⁷

Gadamer's insistence that the true focal point of art is the historical process of the world rather than the abstract consciousness is linked with his understanding of the nature of truth. In common with much post-modern thought he wishes to contextualise truth in historical reality, by passing all abstract idealised transcendent notions. In Weinsheimer's words, "truth is something we neither possess nor make, a product of consciousness, but rather something that happens to us and in which we participate, as when we get caught up in a game".⁷⁸ Just as a player in a game suspends consciousness in order to lose themselves in play, so that "the real subject of the game is not the player, but the game itself,"⁷⁹ so too with the experience of art.

Given the contextualisation of the concepts of 'art' and 'truth' and the priority of art over consciousness, Gadamer makes the claim that "art is knowledge and the experience of the work of art is a sharing of this knowledge".⁸⁰ Art is capable of revelation, of allowing us to recognise the truth of representation, discard our previous understanding of the subject matter and incorporate our new understanding into our lives. Warnke offers a concrete example of this process:

⁷⁵. Ibid. p.85.

⁷⁶. Ibid.

⁷⁷. Ibid. p.86.

⁷⁸. Weinsheimer, op. cit. p.258.

⁷⁹. Gadamer, op. cit. pp.95f.

⁸⁰. Ibid. p.87.

"One learns to see the object represented in terms of the truth that the representation reveals about it. Hence we learn to see the sea as a Turner seascape teaches us to see it just as Rembrandt teaches us the depth of character a human face can reveal. In so far as works of art are mimetic they are therefore not only representational but pedagogical. In picking up certain features of their objects they teach their viewers or readers more of their objects than that audience previously understood." ⁸¹

Both in Wittgenstein and Gadamer we can recognise a common process: once the interpretative framework of critical philosophy is removed and its presuppositions challenged, then the possibility of speaking of the truth or ontology of aesthetic knowledge becomes a reality.

5. Contingent Rationality

i) Realistic wisdom

If we accept the relocation of the self within the ongoing flow of reality, accept the fact that we indwell the world and stand in intimate and reciprocal relationship with that reality we seek the wisdom to comprehend, then it follows that both modern and post-modern approaches to the question of truth require radical revision. The understanding of truth can no longer be reduced to those statements that offer a verifiable connection between the dislocated self and external material reality. Neither can truth be reduced to the internal, private and criterion free apprehension of internal subjective value, indeed such a solipsistic legitimization of truth leads logically to the attempted deconstruction of all truth. Rather, within critical realism, truth is linked to the holistic and ongoing question of the appropriation of increasingly more appropriate relationships both with the concrete reality of our own subjective self-perceptions and with the necessary connection between such perceptions of the reality of other selves, of the natural world and of the presence or absence of divinity, a reality of which we are an intimate part, but exists objectively beyond our subjective perspectives. Truth for critical realism is thus concerned with our actual relationship with the reality of which we are a part, but which exists beyond our individual limitations.

The search for such a true relationship is grounded in the fact that we relate to reality in a given position within time and space: whilst we can to a limited extent

⁸¹. Wamke, op. cit. pp.59f.

control our position within such a framework spatially, there is no possibility of control over our temporal location. It follows that there is no transcendent, God's-eye perspective from which the whole of reality might be comprehended. We are limited by time and space and by the fallibility of our wisdom. Yet, at the same, time the fact of the fundamental coherence of the reality of which we are part forces itself upon us: acceptance of programmes of nihilism and radical incoherence are a practical impossibility. Critical realism thus demands a contingent rationality that works within the limitations of the traditions received by us at our particular moment and place in cultural history. We comprehend the world through the cultural and linguistic traditions that our lives and education have inducted us into, there is simply no alternative. We accept such traditions, and work critically within them on the basis of the fact that given our allocated place in the scheme of things these are the only ones we know, the only ones that enable our proper place within the order of things to be illuminated. If during this process of critical investigation we encounter alternative traditions, ones that illuminate to a greater degree the reality we interact with, then these in turn will become our received tradition, the inevitable public discourse through which we order and make sense of our lives. We may be aware of the fallibility of our traditions, the limitations within which they operate, but that does not make possible any short cut to a premature idealism.

Given that we are both determined by, and accountable to, the reality we indwell, it also follows that our developing interactions with the world cannot be value free. There can no more be an objectivity that transcends all value, nor a realm of subjective value that is not bound up with the actual order of things. Thus our relationship with nature and the environment may be appropriated, in the context of a received Christian tradition, in terms of stewardship in the context of an ontology of the inherent holiness demanded by an ontology of divine creation. Alternatively, our relationship with the natural order may be appropriated, in the context of an atheistic naturalism, in terms of a pragmatic duty to our children's children to preserve the conditions necessary for the achievement of the good life. The latter position is not value free ontologically, since the ontology of a depersonalised natural order is here necessarily linked with an ontology of the human good. Thus our ongoing quest for right relationships within the world, informed by received traditions, cannot escape the unity of value and actuality. At the heart of critical realism is the acceptance that such a search for value within reality is ultimately informed, constructed and challenged by the actual nature of reality itself. We create neither value nor reality, rather both are forced upon us.

ii) Critical Wisdom

Such a forcing of reality upon humanity cannot be reduced to a form of stoic passivism. Given the actuality of human wisdom, we have both the ability and duty to respond appropriately to the demands upon us that come from the order of things. Such a response needs to be essentially informed and critical if an ideology of a false relationship with reality is to be avoided. Critical realism thus demands that received traditions are critically analysed in a process of refinement that seeks an even more appropriate relationship between discourse and reality.

In giving the Enlightenment sub-structures not merely hermeneutical but also ontological status, modernism attempted to achieve transcendental criteria for the apprehension of truth. From a critical realist perspective, both external criterion such as verifiability, and internal criterion such as subjective perception, fail to achieve transcendental status, since both are limited by being part and parcel of received tradition. The hermeneutic of critical realism is thus required to work within the limitations of human wisdom. The truth of a tradition is thus equated not to the achievement of transcendental criteria, but rather with the ability of such a tradition to illuminate coherently our understanding of reality and of our place within it. Beyond objectivity and subjectivity stand public discourses that offer contingent insight into truth, dependent upon informed, balanced communal judgements that are both open to critique and contingently assessable in terms of the adequacy of their claims.

Such contingency requires a hermeneutic both of commitment to critically explore one's community's received traditions, and of openness and tolerance of the traditions of others. The demand for openness and tolerance cannot, though, be given the a priori status attributed it by liberalism. Such a move, by implication, legitimates all beliefs as private, optional and protected from criticism, and as such denies the possibility of the achievement of truth. Critical realism, in contrast moves beyond the limitations of such tolerance, limitations which in effect impose a closed, paternalistic liberalism on all non-liberal discourse. Any discourse is public in nature, and as such open to critical review, and hence critical dialogue with competing traditions. Such tolerance is concerned not with silent acceptance, but vocal acknowledgement of the nature and reasons for judgements between traditions. Critical realism is concerned with the appropriation of a true understanding of reality, and as such requires the acceptance of the fundamental contradictions between contrasting world views. The hermeneutic of tolerance is thus fundamentally concerned not with truth, but with manners: only through open, critical and honest acceptance of differences might the true nature of reality be allowed to reveal itself a little more clearly.

Chapter Eight

Towards a Realistic Public Theology

Chapter Eight considers the nature of realistic theology in the context of critical realism: i) it takes the development of realistic theology within recent Protestant thinking as a case-study and asks whether such a theology is able to make truth claims within the public arena; ii) Barth's turn to the objective claims of revelation are defended within a critically realistic, rather than fideistic, framework; iii) Pannenberg's concern with the critical appropriation of revelation is understood as being complementary to Barth's programme; iv) Jungel's reading of the ontologic referent of tropic language suggests the possibility of an internal coherence within realistic theological discourse grounded in critically appropriated revelation; v) Gunton's reflections on the claims of Trinitarian discourse are understood as supporting the possibility of a theology -- internally coherent, critically appropriated and grounded in revelation -- making legitimate claims to realistic truth within the public domain.

1. Theology and Truth in the Public Realm

Modernism offered three broad options for an understanding of religion: fideism, atheism and an experiential-expressive apologetic. The Feuerbachian critique, as affirmed by atheism, served to undermine the experiential defence of transcendent faith: the greater the reliance on an epistemology rooted in inner experience, the greater the subjective, anti-realistic turn and hence of the interpretative power and

coherence of the critique of anthropological reduction. Given this agenda, the affirmation of theological realism could survive only in the context of a closed communal fideism.

This situation had fundamental implications for religious education, since the realistic self-understanding of Christianity was understood as an essentially private affair, and consequently its place in public education was taken to be illegitimate. The present chapter seeks to take forward this debate in the context of critical realism in an attempt to restore the place of realistic theology in the public realm, and hence to justify the legitimacy of its inclusion in programmes of public education.¹

To achieve this task four criteria will need to be met, namely the demonstration of: a) an objective-public source of realistic Christian theology; b) the ability of Christian theology to carry out an appropriate critique of its fundamental foundations and thus avoid the charge of ideological representation; c) an internally coherent account of the nature of realistic Christian language; d) the ability of such language to enter into public debate regarding the question of realistic truth and fundamental ontology.

The following discussion is offered as a single case-study of the possibility of a realistic theology. It is not intended to suggest that other realistic accounts are not possible, neither is it implied that the account offered actually offers a truthful account of the nature of reality in the form of a viable realistic apologetic. Rather, it seeks to show that such accounts are both possible, and contain sufficient coherence, for them to justifiably claim a legitimate place in the public sphere and hence in public education. The focus on Karl Barth, and the work of Pannenberg, Jungel and Gunton that follow up themes introduced by Barth have been adopted for three reasons. Firstly, his fundamental rejection of experiential-expressivism brings to the surface the contrast between liberal and critically realistic theological apologetics. Secondly, mainstream interpretation of Barth has stressed the fideism apparently at the heart of his theology, as a result any justification of his status as a public theologian is bound to add considerable weight to the critical realist's case. Thirdly, Barth's constant concern to uphold the integrity of his received theological tradition makes it unlikely that the realistic theological defence offered here fall into the trap of theological reductionism.

¹. Possible moves towards a post-liberal realistic theology are explored in Lindbeck (1984), Louth (1989), Newbigin (1986), Paul (1987), Peukert (1986), Thompson (1990), Tracey (1981), Yu (1987).

2. Karl Barth: The Objectivity of Revelation

i) The proper object of theology

At the heart of Barth's theological enterprise stands his assertion of the infinite qualitative distance between God and creation,² the key consequence of which is that "all human existence, religion included, stands in subjection to the divine 'no'".³ He suggests that this is ignored by liberal apologetics, which proceed on the assumption that "we are not concerned with God, but with our own requirements, to which God must adjust himself".⁴ Throughout the development of his thought the distinction of nature from grace, the rejection of an *analogia entis* in favour of the *analogia fidei*, remained constant.⁵ Consequently his disputes with Aquinas' Catholicism, Schliermacher's liberalism, Bultmann's existentialism and Brunner's natural theology all drew upon Barth's acceptance of Feuerbach's reductionist critique.⁶ All attempt to place humanity and culture -- religious, scientific, political, artistic, philosophical -- in a positive relationship to the divine; yet such attempts are fundamentally misguided, since "one can *not* speak of God simply by speaking of man in a loud voice."⁷

2. "The harmonies, continuities and coherences of the Thomist and Catholic doctrine of nature and grace become discordant, discontinuous, fragmented. Catastrophic confrontation replaces Aquinas' mutual complementarity of reason and revelation. There is an 'infinite and qualitative distinction' between nature and grace, the world and God, the human and divine." Avis (1986) p.38.

3. Bouillard (1975) p.344.

4. Barth (1980) p.44.

5. "The *analogia entis*, as Barth understands it, posits an analogy between the human being and the divine being by virtue of their sharing a commonality in 'being'.....The *analogia fidei*, on the other hand, posits an analogy between a human action (faith) and a divine action (grace) in just a situation where no ontological commonality is conceived to exist. Grace elicits faith, and faith corresponds analogically to grace, but no ontological commonality of any kind mediates between them. Since no inherent human openness or capability exists, grace is the sole condition for the possibility of faith. Faith is conceived as grounded in grace alone, and the mediating term with respect to the analogy is conceived not as 'being' but as 'miracle'. Balthasar (1972) claims to find an *analogia entis* within Barth's theology, a thesis refuted by Berkouwer (1956).

6. cf. Barth (1982), Barth and Brunner (1946), Barth and Bultmann (1982); and, for discussion, Avis, op.cit., Gunton (1978), Jenson (1989), Torrance (1962).

7. Quoted in Avis, op.cit. p.40, cf. Barth (1982).

In the context of modernism such a rejection of all human culture appeared as a fideistic turn: "the result of such an outlook was the separation of reason and science from the divine.....a victory of the irrational and demonic over man."⁸ For Barth, however rationality can have its true source not in humanity but in divinity: the divine 'no' to humanity is at one and the same time the divine call to "regain the courage to face up to concrete objectivity (*Sachlichkeit*), the courage to bear witness to the *Word* of revelation, of judgement and of God's love".⁹

Barth's assertion of the qualitative distance between God and creation leads him to discover the source of Christian theology in the actuality of the divine. There is an internal logic within theology: if God is indeed God, then the source of the knowledge of God can only be God himself. Theology is "always and in all circumstances about God himself, who is the presupposition, meaning and power of everything that is to be said and heard in the Church, the subject who absolutely, originally and finally moves, produces, establishes and realises in this matter".¹⁰ As such God can never be the object of human investigation, but the subject who comes to humanity in the act of self-revelation. Revelation is thus understood as "a disclosure which in turn presents God as Subject, the living Lord who calls for man's obedience, the active Subject in originating man's knowledge of Himself, both as to its form and its matter, its possibility and its substance".¹¹ Human appropriation of divine objectivity can then only be adequate in the light of such revelation of God as subject; theology must, by the logic forced upon it by the nature of its object, proceed from and through faith.¹² Theology can be true to itself only by rejecting an *analogia entis*, its function is neither apologetic nor foundational. Rather, it proceeds from the *analogia fidei* as "*ministerium verbi divini* -- service of the Word of God".¹³ Knowledge of God is grounded in the gracious actuality of the divine.

8. Rumscheidt (1972) p.24. The remark is that of Hamack in the context of an ongoing correspondence with Barth, cf. *ibid.* pp.29-53 for the full text.

9. *Ibid.* p.35.

10. Barth (1957) p.3.

11. Brown (1955) p.141.

12. The consequences of such a statement will be crucial to the present argument as it develops. Jeanrond's suggestion that: "The final understanding, the ultimate appropriation of God's Word in Jesus Christ by the reader is in fact God's own achievement in the reader" will need careful qualification, cf. Jeanrond (1988) p.85; see below, note 50.

13. Mackintosh (1964) p.261.

The source of Barth's rejection of theological liberalism and his affirmation of the actuality of God is that of the Bible itself. His reading of scripture is an early example of post-romantic hermeneutics, entailing a 'transforming exegesis' through the discovery that "texts can actively shape and transform the perceptions and understanding and actions of readers and of reading communities".¹⁴ Such a hermeneutic appears in the first edition of Barth's *Commentary on Romans*.¹⁵ He finds embodied in the biblical text itself the rejection of immanent-reductionist readings, the claim to the priority of the divine object over human subjectivity, and the assertion of a realistic conception of sin, eschatology and the necessity of dialectical thinking.

In common with other dialectical theologians he finds in the present encounter with the historical Christ both a divine 'yes' and a divine 'no': in the same movement sin is revealed through judgement, and forgiveness through divine mercy. As Thiemann points out, such a theology continues to bear the traces of modernism.¹⁶ It is grounded in the spatial imagery of divine distance, and the epistemological problem is that of how the gulf between God and creation is to be bridged. The incarnation is thus read from an idealist-historical perspective which pictures Christ "within and above tradition, standing in the intersection of time and eternity."¹⁷ The result is that the Holy Spirit functions as the mediator between nature and divinity. Gunton comments that in this context "to know God is to *be enabled*, by means of a timeless theophany and the agency of the Spirit as *deus ex machina* to cross from ignorance to knowledge".¹⁸

ii) The development of a theological method

The attempt to transfer the insights of Barth's biblical exegesis into a systematic theology bore fruit in the *Christliche Dogmatik* of 1927. The process revealed the limitations of dialectical theology, and the results were withdrawn and described by Barth in hindsight as "my well-known false start".¹⁹ There was no retraction of the grounding of theology in the reality of the actuality of divine

¹⁴. Thiselton (1992) p.31.

¹⁵. Barth (1980).

¹⁶. Thiemann (1985) p.47; cf. Gunton (1988a) p.68.

¹⁷. Simon (1966) p.40.

¹⁸. Gunton, *op.cit* p.68.

¹⁹. cf. Torrance (1962) p.143.

revelation, nor of the assertion of the *analogia fidei*. However, the dialectical language of 'encounter' left the problem of the positive content of Christian theology unresolved.²⁰ Barth came to see dialectical theology as informed primarily by the negation of culture rather than its material content. As Jenson points out "the dialectical theology was above all polemic: it was the perfecting of the Enlightenment's critique of religion, and marked exactly the break with previous theology".²¹

The language of the event of encounter at the point of intersection between immanence and transcendence drew on the modernist categories of existentialism. As such there was the inherent danger of the grounds of such an encounter being rooted in the subjective human experience of divinity, and consequently of a return to an *analogia entis*. Such fears were confirmed as dialectical theology fragmented: Bultmann and Gogarten embracing a concern with the subjectivity of faith, and Brunner turning to natural theology.²² Setting himself against these shifts, Barth turned to the the question of theological method and fundamental epistemology.

Torrance has drawn attention to the fundamental importance of the 1929 Dortmund Lectures, *Fate and Idea in Theology*, in the development of Barth's theological method.²³ At their heart they grapple with the relationship between divine revelation and human appropriation. While realistic attempts to lay bare the nature of immanent reality encounter the danger that God is reduced to the level of mere fate, idealism's search for transcendent truth risks the possibility "that God will be apprehended as the ultimate 'beyond' of human thought".²⁴ Both are possibilities within dialectical theology itself. Indeed, we might observe at this point that Bultmann's idealistic vision of God as 'wholly other' leads logically to an immanent realism in which providence is denied and hence fate is victorious.²⁵

20. Thus Jenson (1989): "When the dialectical theologians were compelled to say what they affirmed, they found they had been mostly united in their negations....One need only ask: how would you preach in its light", pp.32f.

21. Ibid. p.33.

22. For primary texts in relation to the split with Barth cf. Barth and Bultmann, op.cit. and Barth and Brunner, op.cit.

23. Torrance, op.cit. pp.148ff; cf. Louth, op.cit. pp.48ff, following the lead of Torrance.

24. Louth, op.cit. p.50. At their heart the Dortmund Lectures grapple with the potential results of the transcendent-immanent polarity of dialectical theology collapsing in onto either of the poles: the triumph of immanence collapses divinity into identity with time and space, producing pantheism and the identification of providence with faith; the triumph of transcendence isolates divinity from the world, asserting at best the possibility of a negative theology. The crucial issue is that of the relationship between divinity and creation, and it is precisely this area of dialectical theology that Barth is subjecting to fundamental criticism.

25. cf. Ogden (1979).

The key issue for Barth is that of the correct relationship between revelation and its appropriation. Theological science, like all science, is concerned with obedience towards its proper object. "The theologian stands before the Word of God, and sees in the Word One who comes, One who cannot be bound by the apprehensions of the one who hears the Word."²⁶ Hunsinger points out four motifs in Barth's mature methodology that begin to emerge at this stage: *actualism*, operating as event in space and time; *particularism*, noetically defined by the event of Jesus Christ; *objectivism*, revelation and salvation occurring independently of human subjectivity; and *personalism*, divine self-manifestation taking the form of personal address.²⁷ There is here a shift towards an appreciation of the nature of the positive material content of revelation, coupled with a developing understanding of a form of appropriation rooted not in subjective-existential encounter but in "theology as service of the concrete actual form of truth."²⁸ Barth consistently claimed that his mature theological method arrived at its definitive statement in the results of his formative reading of Anselm.²⁹ Barth understands Anselm's 'ontological proof' in the *Proslogium* as being fundamentally theological in nature. Theology can never be foundational, but must always proceed from the givenness of faith: such a statement is not intended as an apologetic avoidance of rational justification, but as the only adequate response to the actuality of faith. "For Anselm, 'to believe' does not mean simply a striving of the human will towards God but a striving of the human will into God and so a participation (albeit in a manner limited by creatureliness) into God's mode of Being."³⁰ The fundamental motivation for this striving is not a quest for certainty, but an aesthetic response grounded in desire and joy. Theology is essentially *fides quaerens intellectum*: it proceeds to attempt to reach understanding of the givenness of God's revelation in a form appropriate to this actuality.

The possibility and nature of such theological understanding can only be grounded in the nature and reality of its proper object. Faith comes about through the *Credo* of revelation. "It is just this same objective *Credo* which compels Christian humility before the *ratio veritas* that is the presupposition of all human knowledge of heavenly things and that belongs to the actual revelation of God. And this *Credo* makes

26. Louth, op. cit. p.50.

27. Hunsinger (1991) pp. 4f. 30-42.

28. Torrance, op. cit. p.177.

29. Barth (1975a); cf. Anselm (1979) pp.1-33, and for critical discussion, Torrance, op. cit. pp.180ff, Gunton (1978).

30. Barth, op. cit. p.17.

the science of theology possible."³¹ As Torrance points out

"Barth found his theology thrust back more and more upon its proper object, and so he set himself to think through the whole of theological knowledge in such a way that it might be consistently faithful to the concrete act of God in Jesus Christ from which it actually takes its rise in the Church, and, further, in the course of that inquiry to ask about the presuppositions and conditions on the basis of which it comes about that God is known, in order to develop from within the actual content of theology its own interior logic and its own inner criticism which will help set theology free from every form of ideological corruption."³²

On this basis Barth was able to take up once again the task of developing a dogmatic theology. In the first two volumes of the *Church Dogmatics* Barth paints a picture of the nature of revelation grounded in the concept of the 'Word of God'.³³ No longer does the existential dislocated self 'encounter' the transcendent, via the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, at a point of intersection between time and eternity. The 'Word' as the criterion of dogmatics is encountered in the threefold form: as preached, written in Scripture and revealed in the incarnation. It is revealed as God's speech, act and mystery and appropriated through faith. As such the 'Word' appears within a Trinitarian structure that forms the foundation of the architecture of the *Church Dogmatics* as a whole: God as Trinity is revealed through his Word in the actuality of the creative work of the Father, the act of reconciliation through the Son, and the achievement of redemption through the Spirit.

This scheme represents two crucial developments from dialectical theology via the affirmation of: a) the positive material content of revelation, and, b) the objectivity of revelation. As a result the theologian stands accountable to the Word. He or she is not free from responsibility, may not "cultivate the creative freedom of the philosopher".³⁴ Rather the search for understanding is itself guided by the criterion revealed by the Word, and theological statements are open to assessment and revision in the light of the objective authority of revelation.

iii) Barth, modernism and critical realism

There is a clear parallel here with the perspective of critical realism.³⁵ Knowledge is not, in the first instance, foundational, it is the result of formation of the

³¹. Ibid. p.26.

³². Torrance, op. cit. p.7.

³³. Barth (1956), (1975b); cf. Bromiley (1979) pp.3-53, Weber (1953) pp.19-72.

³⁴. Louth, op. cit. p.50.

³⁵. cf. here Gunton (1988a).

self by virtue of the self's indwelling a linguistic and cultural tradition located in a specific corridor of space and time. As such, tradition -- as the Word -- lays claim to authority. By virtue of his or her participation in tradition, knowledge as contingent rationality has a given starting point. Understanding develops through the attempt to further understand one's given intellectual tradition. Barth simply starts from where he is, from what he already knows. This does not solve the problem of the truth and viability of a given tradition, an issue we will return to below. However, in turning to the authority of the Word as a starting point Barth is doing no more than adherents of alternative cultural traditions within a critical realist framework.

From within a modernist framework such an enterprise can be seen as no more than a retreat from reason and an assertion of collective fideism, leading inevitably to "puzzlement that someone should commit intellectual suicide in so spectacular a fashion".³⁶ Such a reaction fails to observe both the depth of Barth's dialogue with the modernist legacy, and of his criticisms of it. As Gunton points out, "Barth's theology is part of a conscious attempt to replace the Enlightenment project with something different.....The Enlightenment project has failed because it does not register with the way we actually go about the world cognitively."³⁷ We find in the mature Barth an epistemological programme that anticipates that of critical realism: he reintroduces the dislocated self back into tradition; he affirms the limitations of human knowledge and the necessity of contingent rationality; he reunites the realms of fact and value; and reaffirms transcendence over against immanence. This is not to advocate Barthianism; nevertheless it is clear that, in the development of a realist Christian theology, "though the way forward must go beyond Barth, it must nevertheless go through him".³⁸

36. Ibid. p. 61. cf., for example, Wiles (1982) p. 51, who finds himself "totally unable to accept the fundamental premises upon which his whole enterprise rests"; cf. also Wiles (1974) pp. 24f.

37. Ibid. p.64. Note the comments of Torrance, op. cit. pp. 9, 32: Barth's theology "is not to be understood except in its involvement in and differentiation from the scientific and philosophical movements of the twentieth century, in which he has played so notable a role.....Karl Barth belongs to the very centre of the great European tradition which has sought to give reason its fullest place in exact and careful thinking".

38. Bigger (1988) 'Introduction' p.2.

3. Wolfhart Pannenberg: The Critical Appropriation of Revelation

The mere assertion of a starting point in the given authority of tradition is not, of course, sufficient to achieve the status for theology of its making a legitimate claim to objective, realistic knowledge. If all authority is accepted as true we arrive back at the absolute relativism and subjectivity of post-modernism. The task of theology is to demonstrate that *this* tradition has the interpretative and revelatory power -- both in terms of its internal coherence and its ability to combat the truth claims of alternative external traditions -- to make a legitimate public claim that *its* knowledge, however contingent, nevertheless offers a vision superior to others. In other words, it must demonstrate a critical perspective that sets it apart from a fideistic ideology.³⁹ Our concern here is with the question posed by positivism: does the Word act as an unquestioned foundational principle, or is it subjected to an internal critique of its foundations that serve to reveal an inner coherence. Can Christian dogmatics viably speak of the 'critical appropriation of faith?

i) Pannenberg contra Barth

Pannenberg finds a theological positivism at the heart of Barth's epistemology, and thus rejects his "thesis that God's revelation to man cannot be apprehended by his own power, but only by means of God through the Holy Spirit."⁴⁰

39. In this context it is illuminating to draw parallels between Habermas' critique of Gadamer and Pannenberg's response to Barth.

40. Pannenberg (1979) p. 5; his most substantial critique of Barth is to be found in the section '*Karl Barth and the Positivity of Revelation*' in Pannenberg (1976) pp. 265-276: Pannenberg quotes with approval the W.W. Bartley's assessment, grounded in a Popperian demand for a criteria of refutability: "Bartley diagnoses contemporary Protestant theology of all tendencies as suffering from a 'retreat to commitment'.....as a reaction to the collapse of nineteenth century liberal theology's attempts to base the Christian faith on historical knowledge of Jesus.....[which] led theology into a retreat to an irrational commitment based on 'faith'." Ibid. p. 44, cf. Bartley (1964). For discussion of the relationship between Barth and Pannenberg cf. Avis (1986) pp.72-76, Galloway (1973) p.37, 43, Tupper (1974) p.22. Bonhoeffer was one of the first to formulate this charge, and also to see Barth's fundamental flaw as being rooted in his failure to work through the internal logic of his own theological position (an issue we will return to below). Bonhoeffer (1971) p.286: "Barth was the first theologian to begin the criticism of religion, and that remains his really great merit; but he put in its place a positivistic doctrine of revelation.....The positivism of revelation makes it too easy for itself, by setting up, as it does in the last analysis, a law of faith, and so mutilates what is -- by Christ's incarnation! -- a free gift."

The issue here is not of the source of knowledge, but of the nature of its appropriation. Pannenberg agrees with Barth that, logically, knowledge of God can only proceed through God's self-revelation, and that therefore "Barth is right.....the deity of God stands or falls with the primacy of his reality, and his revelation over religion."⁴¹ However, in denying the possibility of a critical appropriation of revelation Barth merely repeats the familiar pattern followed by Protestant theology under the shadow of the Enlightenment: that of "a retreat to an irrational commitment based on 'faith'."⁴² The result is that Barth finds himself enveloped in precisely that situation he sought to avoid: his positivism leads him directly into the subjectivity of faith. "Barth's apparently loft objectivity about God and God's Word turns out to rest on no more than the irrational subjectivity of a venture of faith with no justification outside itself."⁴³

If theology is to transcend ideology and place itself in the public sphere then the appropriation of revelation must transcend the submission of obedience, must accept critical questioning, must give an account of itself in the context of "the canons of rationality operative in the larger human community".⁴⁴ As Avis points out "Pannenberg's objections are directed at the protected status of revelation in Barth's system: its 'givenness', its immunity to normal standards of rational criticism."⁴⁵

ii) Barthian fideism

Such an understanding of Barth requires the following specific reading of the movement of Barth's thought. The development from his *Commentary on Romans* to the definitive statement of the nature of our knowledge of God in Chapter Five of the *Church Dogmatics* is understood as an expansion of the positive content of revelation.⁴⁶ Within this expansion the issue of epistemological appropriation remains constant. Barth was clear in his dialectical phase that the "Holy Spirit should function as a means to cross an otherwise unbridgeable epistemological gulf".⁴⁷ This situation is not questioned in his formative work on Anselm: "For Anselm right knowledge is

⁴¹. Pannenberg (1991) p.127.

⁴². Pannenberg (1976) p.44.

⁴³. Pannenberg (1976) pp. 272f.

⁴⁴. Tupper, op. cit. p. 22.

⁴⁵. Avis, op.cit. p.73.

⁴⁶. Barth (1957) pp. 3-256.

⁴⁷. Gunton (1988a) p.77.

conditioned by the prevenient and co-operating grace of God."⁴⁸ As a result "A science of faith, which denied or even questioned the Faith (the *Credo* of the church), would *ipso facto* cease to be either 'faithful' or 'scientific'."⁴⁹

On such a reading any possibility of a critical appropriation is ruled out a priori as a turn to a form of natural theology, or Christian apologetic, that seeks to justify the ways of God to humanity. For Barth any such programme entails a return to an *analogia entis*. What for Barth is fundamental to the internal logic of theology, in the light of the divine revelation of an infinite qualitative distance between God and creation, is for Pannenberg merely a retreat from reason into subjectivity. Thus Barth holds fast to the objective reality (Barth) / subjective belief (Pannenberg) that "the final understanding, the ultimate appropriation of God's Word in Jesus Christ by the reader is in fact *God's own achievement in the reader*".⁵⁰

In what follows this tension will be developed along two lines: i) it will be suggested that Pannenberg's own theology does indeed provide a coherent account of a critical appropriation; ii) that Pannenberg's reading of Barth actually misses its target, and that Barth himself can be shown to be committed to an understanding of critical appropriation. Though both approaches are divergent, they are nevertheless complementary, both representing movements within a single perspective, and as such having antecedents within the diversity of Christian orthodoxy, the conclusion being that both theologians adopt a critical appropriation of the objectivity of revelation that enables them to avoid the charge of subjective fideism and ideological appropriation.

iii) Pannenberg: the critical appropriation of faith

As was suggested above, Pannenberg grounds his theology, as does Barth, on the objectivity of revelation. His dispute with Barth lies in his assertion of the critical freedom of humanity in the process of the appropriation of revelation, as opposed to what he sees as Barthian fideism. As a result, his conception of the nature of dogmatic theology takes on a significant contrast from that of Barth: moving beyond obedience to revelation, it seeks to *justify and advocate its truth*.⁵¹

It is a hermeneutical reality that revelation will be appropriated on the basis of human presuppositions and prejudices. The word 'God' exists in human culture prior

⁴⁸. Barth (1975a) p. 37.

⁴⁹. Ibid. p.27.

⁵⁰. Jeanrond (1988) p. 85. cf. above, note 12.

⁵¹. cf. Pannenberg (1991) pp. 48ff.

to revelation, functioning as a general designator. "The metaphysical concept of God which is expressed by this use of 'God' functions in his view as a general condition for understanding Christian God-talk."⁵² Natural theology as a demonstration of God's existence and being has been undermined by the Enlightenment, however the Feuerbachian reductionist critique, as used by Barth to deny all natural theology, is to be rejected. Pannenberg rejuvenates natural theology as an anthropological reality in human life: "the fact that human beings live in virtue of the 'excentric openness' of their existence in an unauthentic awareness of their own life as being posited into the whole of reality and dependent on the divine ground of reality".⁵³

Three key areas in Pannenberg's notion of 'revelation as history' need to be noted in this context.⁵⁴ Firstly, the claim that revelation as God's self-revelation does not occur directly, as in a gnostic-like theophany or special manifestation of divinity, but indirectly within the historical process itself. Secondly, that its historical nature means that it is linked with the whole of reality, and as such is rooted in a temporal process whose open future has been anticipated in Christ.⁵⁵ Thirdly, "the historical revelation is open to anyone who has eyes to see", it has a universal and public character.⁵⁶

The link between universality and revelation is fundamental to Pannenberg. The influence of Hegel is crucial, as is his rejection of Hegelian dialectic and assertion that, as beings within time, we cannot yet know the future end of reality as it comes into being. Thus "revelation is conceived in relation to the comprehensive whole of reality, as a temporal process of history that is not yet complete but open to the future -- yet a future already anticipated in the history and destiny of Jesus."⁵⁷

These themes are drawn together in his concept of a social trinity, drawing on Moltmann and Jungel in opposition to what he sees as Barth's neo-modalism. "Pannenberg's view of the Trinity requires him to see relation as the primary ontological category, and hence to conceive the unity of the divine 'essence' as including the God-world distinction."⁵⁸ As a consequence the nature of the

⁵². Schwobel (1989) p. 271.

⁵³. Ibid. p.272.

⁵⁴. Pannenberg (1979) pp. 125-128; cf. Tupper, op.cit. pp.79-107.

⁵⁵. Pannenberg, op.cit. p.125f.

⁵⁶. Ibid. p.126.

⁵⁷. Tupper, op. cit. p.80.

⁵⁸. Viladesau (1993) p. 72.

relationship between God and humanity, revelation and its appropriation, must be seen in terms of a genuine two-way relationship of interaction between divinity and creation.

In this context human reception of revelation requires critical appropriation in the light of Pannenberg's understanding of the universal, public and historical mode of revelation. Dogmatic statements represent the search for coherence, hence truth, in the light of revelation. As such they must proceed in obedience both to the claims of revelation and to the nature of human knowledge within the contingency of its human and temporal limitations. Theological and scientific understanding is thus drawn into intimate relationship.⁵⁹ Dogmatic statements take the form of hypotheses rather than subjective or fideistic assertions of truth. As such, their truth and coherence -- within the limitations of contingent rationality, since final verification is possible only at the end of the historical process through which reality comes into being -- can only be upheld if the process of critical appropriation can be shown to meet certain criteria.⁶⁰ These are, that dogmatic statements: offer a presentation of the implications of biblical traditions; are related to reality in a form validated by present experience and philosophical reflection; are capable of coherent integration into other areas of experience; and are justifiable in terms of the current stage of theological debate. The question of the truth of public revelation is thus "the question of its power to encompass the whole of reality and to claim all knowledge as evidence for the truth of the Christian message, as the question of its ability to disclose the unity of the whole of reality".⁶¹

iv) Barth revisited

In the light of Pannenberg's theological method it is possible to approach Barth from an alternative perspective. Here his work on Anselm is read as both a movement towards the acceptance of the positive content of revelation, and at the same time a movement towards the principle of its *critical* appropriation. Over against the charge of fideism, Gunton argues, "for Barth.....human knowledge of God is not the conditional reflex of the automaton. It is free personal action in relation, deriving from an indwelling in Christ and taking the form of thanksgiving, awe and the ordered

⁵⁹. cf. especially Pannenberg (1976).

⁶⁰. Ibid. pp. 344ff. cf. Schwobel, op. cit. p. 264: "Pannenberg characterizes theological statements as *hypotheses*. While their complete verification can only be expected from the *eschaton*, there are nevertheless specific criteria for their substantiation."

⁶¹. Tupper, op. cit. p.46.

employment of human concepts."⁶²

The nature of the object of knowledge, and of its relationship with the knower, is crucial for Barth. The positive character of theology is made possible by divine revelation through the Holy Spirit, and its form is personal rather than noetic. The assertion of the critical freedom of human response must be seen in the light of the nature of revelation. That "God grants him [the theologian] grace to think correctly about him"⁶³ is a comment on the source of revelation, *not* the process of appropriation. The appropriate response to the inner nature of revelation is of *free* trust and obedience. Hence the correctness of appropriation is dependent on the right relationship with the object of knowledge. Within this context "the theologian asks -- 'to what extent is reality as the Christian believes it to be?'"⁶⁴ To turn critical appropriation into a search for foundations is to run against the grain of the positive content of revelation: rationality is defined in terms of the appropriateness of the relationship between object and knower. Yet this is dependent on the exercise of human freedom, hence Barth introduces the notions of the contingency of theology, and of progress in theology.⁶⁵ The task of the theologian, grounded in freedom, is that of achieving an appropriate, hence critical, assimilation of revelation: faith, freely and rationally, seeks understanding.⁶⁶

Why then the apparent obscurity in Barth's thought in this area? It is evident that, despite this fundamental shift in his epistemology, the shadow of dialectical theology continued to hover over Barth's work. The attempt to preserve the freedom of God from anthropological reductionism led him into a quasi-modalist Trinitarian doctrine: "there is no room for a plurality of persons in the one God but only for different modes of being in the one divine subjectivity."⁶⁷ This lack of communion within the divine leads into a misplacement of the relationship between God and creation. Barth distinguishes between God in himself, as essential Trinity, and God in

⁶². Gunton, *op. cit.* p. 69.

⁶³. Barth (1975a) p. 39.

⁶⁴. *Ibid.* p. 27.

⁶⁵. For the concept of progress, cf. Barth *ibid.* p. 32; for the contingency of theology, cf. p. 29: "every theological statement is an inadequate expression of its object".

⁶⁶. Thus Gunton (1978) p. 119: "Theology as a *legitimate rational* pursuit is made possible by the incarnation.....but it remains a matter for investigation, discussion and hence proof"; further, Gunton (1988a): "Barth intends to set before us a conception of the knowledge of a personal God by free and thinking persons."

⁶⁷. Pannenberg (1991) p. 296; cf. Gunton (1988a) p. 78: "it does sometimes appear as though Barth is suggesting that God is more of a thrice-repeated I than one whose being is constituted by the communion of Father, Son and Spirit."

his revelation, as economic Trinity.⁶⁸ He thus retains his desire to underline the infinite qualitative distance between transcendence and immanence.

The result is that his doctrine of creation fails to follow through the logic of the *analogia entis* between creator and creation. What emerges is a Kantian-like division between knowledge of God and knowledge of creation.⁶⁹ Similarly, his doctrine of incarnation retains "a tendency to conceive Jesus Christ as a timeless metaphysical idea".⁷⁰ Again, the actuality of incarnation is distorted: the desire to affirm God's otherness denies his freedom to reveal himself precisely in the weakness of suffering and love, and of the consequent freedom of response that this demands. The logic of incarnation grounded in a social trinity affirms the reality of community both in relationship and freedom. God's freedom to become man entails humanity's freedom to respond appropriately. Barth's concern to secure the otherness of God ignores the logic of an incarnational doctrine in which God makes himself vulnerable to his creation and hence affirms human freedom: the faith demanded by unconditional sacrificial love can only be freely given on the grounds of human integrity, it can never be demanded or imposed. Thus "the very strength of Barth's theology, its singlemindedly *theological* character, can become its greatest weakness".⁷¹

The conclusion to be drawn from this is that latent in Barth's theological method is a nascent demand for the critical appropriation of revelation. This fact obscured, on the one hand, by the vestiges of the dialectical theology that informs Barth's Trinitarian doctrine, and on the other by the tradition of reading Barth from the perspective of a modernist framework. In his reflections on the 'humanity of God' towards the end of his life, Barth was clearly moving towards an acceptance of the problems inherent in his retention of the dialectic legacy.⁷² The present argument has attempted to supplement this move by introducing a critically realistic reading of Barth.

Within Christian theology there has always been a creative tension between the actuality of revelation and its appropriation within the limitations of human

68. cf. Fiddes (1988) pp. 114-123: "The two Trinitarian spheres of the being of God are re-employed by him to speak of the triune God as impassible and passible at the same time.....there is thus an 'analogy of relations' between the triune God in essence and the triune God as revealed, or between God 'in-himself' and 'God for us'."

69. Gunton (1988a) p. 78: "the wider the gulf between theological and non-theological knowing, the more will theology appear.....to be no more than tilting at epistemological windmills."

70. Gunton, op. cit. p. 71, referring to the views of Jenson; cf. Jenson (1963) p.168.

71. Gunton, op. cit. p. 78.

72. Barth (1961).

resources. Such a tension is not an epistemological flaw, but part and parcel of the internal logic of the Trinitarian and incarnational formulas, that demand an understanding of the relationship between God and creation on the level of personal and communal interaction rather than divine epiphany. In this light, the work of Pannenberg and Barth may be seen to be operating within the same orthodox framework, their differences being quantitative rather than qualitative.

"Pannenberg's alternative, involving an unworkable diffuseness of method, needs the corrective provided by Barth's stress on the actuality, the givenness of revelation. A truly scientific approach will certainly provide for the enquiry to be adapted to suit the nature of the object as it is progressively disclosed to our search. In the Christian understanding, divine reality gives itself to be known to man, comes down to our level, as it were, submits to our clumsy questions and crude constructions. There thus takes place a conversation, a dialogue, in which the aspects of givenness (stressed by Barth) and appropriation (Pannenberg's concern) are both essential." ⁷³

Both theologians accept the actuality of revelation and the necessity of appropriation through human freedom; where Barth focuses on the freedom of God, Pannenberg focuses on the freedom of humanity. For both the charge of ideological fideism is undermined by the internal logic of a revelation that requires critical appropriation.

4. Eberhard Jungel: The Coherence of Theological Discourse

i) The referent of theological discourse

Having demonstrated an objective ground for its knowledge, and its ability to critically appropriate the sources of such knowledge, the perspective of a realist theology must begin to look outwards. Can it give a viable account of itself within the public realm? Two themes will be developed in the form of case-studies of this issue: i) the present section picks up the *formal* question of the nature and referent of theological language; ii) the next section will develop the *material* question of the ability of a Trinitarian ontology to lay claim to a superior interpretative power, in terms of its own understanding of reality, rather than that of immanent alternatives.

Within modernism and post-modernism the question of the referent of theological language was fundamentally problematical: liberal anthropological reductionism within atheistic and experiential-expressive models gave way to linguistic

⁷³. Avis (1986) pp. 75f.

self-reference within the textuality of post-modernism. Yet if justice is to be done to the realistic claims of Christian theology then account must be taken of the fact that "the formal character of the biblical texts as an anthropomorphic language about God has to be seen as an expression of their material content".⁷⁴ Can, then, theology provide a coherent, public justification of its claim to use the language of immanence to speak intelligently of the realm of transcendence? Can it give account of the divine referent of its language? In this context Jungel sets out to offer a justification of the essential coherence of realistic theological language.

ii) Dialectical thought: beyond reductionism and fideism

In the early dialectical phase of his thought Jungel drew on the inherent reductionism within Spinoza's rationalism, which he traced back to Aristotle's notion as truth as *adaequatio intellectus et rei*, the correspondence of mind to reality, reason to actuality.⁷⁵ Where the medium of correspondence is linguistic, it becomes necessary to distinguish between literal-univocal and figurative-multivocal modes of speech, whilst the former can achieve the task of correspondence, the latter is handicapped by its internal contingency and ambiguity. Theology can, in its very nature, not be understood as literal-univocal: its inevitably anthropological nature requires the adoption of figurative-multivocal speech, and this relegates its discourse to the realms of poetics and rhetoric. As such, it functions not as a means of expressing truth, but of the pleading for, and assertion of, truth. Herein lies the dilemma for theology: it is committed to realistic statements about reality in a cultural context that demands that objective reality be approached only through non-figurative language, yet it must use figurative metaphor if it is to speak of God.⁷⁶

Jungel's initial attempts to overcome this dilemma took place in the context of dialectical theology. Theological language 'breaks in' on human speech, it is an eschatological and sacramental language that intrudes into the world in the form of

⁷⁴. Jungel (1989b) p. 89. The reality that "the biblical texts testify to the 'revelation of God's coming into the world'" (p. 88) is rendered problematical in the post-Enlightenment world; we are "living in the age of the linguistic displacement of God", Jungel (1983) p. 3, following Webster's translation, Webster (1986) p. 39; "the speech of faith is rendered acutely difficult by its present linguistic context". Webster *ibid*.

⁷⁵. Spinoza's historical-critical method of biblical interpretation "only acknowledges truth already known through the natural light of reason independently of biblical language about God", Jungel (1989b) p. 86.

⁷⁶. cf. Jungel (1989a) p. 17: since "the Christian faith by no means wishes to evade talking of actuality, and can only go beyond actuality by attending to it, the untruth of the language of truth seems very little different from a lie".

grace. "Christianity is quite specific in that it understands such possibilities as a *donum* (something given) to which actuality is not itself entitled."⁷⁷ Jungel follows Fuchs in linking action and language into an ontological unity. God's Word is his *coming-to-speech*, it follows that "the language of the New Testament is not simply an information-bearing sign, but rather the actual occurrence, the "'real presence', of the realities to which it refers".⁷⁸

Jungel's programme was based on the attempt to avoid anthropological reductionism by preserving the qualitative distinction between the divine and human. However, the result is that his account of theological language cuts against the grain of that natural language it seeks to validate.⁷⁹ "For all Jungel's concern to validate human speech from the prevenient divine Word, there is the real danger of absorption of our language into the divine speech-act, or at least of the implication that a purely 'natural language' is a bastard form of speech."⁸⁰ Such a situation results in theological language taking on a gnostic form that denies human freedom and closes theology from the public realm.

Reacting to such criticisms, Jungel set down two criteria for appropriate theological language. It must: i) "express the *freedom* of the God who *comes* to the world"; and ii) "express the *liberation of the human person* through the God who comes to the world in Jesus Christ."⁸¹ The failure of dialectical theology to express God's freedom was rooted in the aseity of its doctrine of God, and its inability to follow the logic of incarnational language and so discover God's freedom precisely in divine pathos.⁸² Conversely, the failure to express human liberation was rooted in the failure to validate natural language, leading inevitably to theological fideism.

iii) Anthropomorphism, metaphor, truth

Jungel's middle period marked a break with dialectical theology, and the attempt "to state the distinction between God and the world without either abstract

⁷⁷. Ibid. pp. 16f.

⁷⁸. Webster (1989b) p. 94.

⁷⁹. Thus Webster demonstrates how the former remains "tangential to worldly language", speaking of a language-event "whose time is asymptotic with respect to the time of the world", Webster (1986) p. 41. The essence of language is thus divine, and it is natural language that is taken up, made captive and legitimated by God.

⁸⁰. Webster, op. cit. p.42.

⁸¹. Jungel (1989b) p. 94.

⁸². cf. Moltmann (1974), Fiddes (1988).

transcendence or total immanence".⁸³ He turned to an analysis of the metaphorical structure of theological language, which was seen as a dogmatic necessity, being the primary form of Christian discourse.⁸⁴ The "language of faith does not simply accord with actuality.....it has to say more than the actuality of the world is able to say".⁸⁵ Hence the question: how could such language both augment, yet go beyond, immanent actuality?

Tropic languages -- metaphor, analogy, anthropomorphism -- by turning from one focus of meaning to another, are able to "embrace two systems of reference: one system of their regular usage, and a new system to which they refer as their habitual usage is *extended without being replaced*".⁸⁶ Jungel finds here the possibility of theological language both affirming yet going beyond natural language, in the process retaining the integrity of both.⁸⁷ To achieve this it is necessary to recover an ontological truth function for metaphor; here a cumulative case is developed on five fronts.

a) Jungel demonstrates the ability of 'normal', 'everyday' multivocal language to express being, and argues -- contra programmes of atomistic reductionism -- for the priority of multivocal language, from which univocal forms are extracted. It follows that we can "no longer view metaphor as a peripheral linguistic phenomenon but rather as a process fundamental to language".⁸⁸

b) Current research into the nature of parables has "cast doubt upon the old theory which understands the parables as non-literal speech".⁸⁹ Rather, parables offer a distinctive kind of literal speech, marked above all by claims to use, quite deliberately, tropic language to expand and go beyond the reality pictured by the truth claims of a univocal language.

c) For Jungel, Nietzsche adopts the position that Cartesian anxiety, read as a sub-conscious desire for the disintegration of univocal language and the validation of

83. Webster (1989a) p. 5.

84. Jungel (1989a) p. 23: "A theological theory of language has to accord to metaphorical speech a dogmatically fundamental and therefore hermeneutically decisive function."

85. Ibid. p. 17.

86. Webster (1989b) p. 102; cf. Soskice (1987).

87. Webster (1989a) p. 4: "The tropic modes of speech offer significant clues in understanding the historical nature of human existence -- in seeing human life as a process of becoming, of receptivity towards augmentation through the gift of new possibilities in speech, thought and action."

88. Jungel (1989a) pp. 22f.

89. Ibid. p.22.

metaphor, represents a drive intrinsic to human nature, yet repressed by the Enlightenment.⁹⁰ Metaphor is drawn into this process of dissimulation, the self constantly redefines and re-represents itself through deception, role-play and the offering of false fronts. Since the essence of humanity lies beyond literal signification and the domination of a univocal metaphysic, it follows that the essence of language is tropic. For Nietzsche then metaphor, rather than being mere debased truth, offers a way beyond truth, beyond good and evil. Jungel offers a significant revision of Nietzsche here: metaphor operates by extending the network of linguistic relationships without the need for separation from the original signification. Rather than moving beyond truth, metaphor enables us to extend truth, understood as the appropriate relationship between language and the order of things.

d) Jungel rejects Aristotle's reduction of metaphorical truth to rhetoric.⁹¹ Following contemporary hermeneutical theory, particularly as exemplified in the work of Gadamer, a positive value must be given to the process of communication and the situation of the hearer of language. The notion of 'mere rhetoric' devalues this fact; it is a fundamental mistake to distinguish content from form, semantics from style, in communication.⁹² Poetry must be read as both concerned with actuality and with rhetoric, and as such its statements are both irreducible and offer an ontological expansion of our insight into reality.

e) All this conforms with the mainstream of current developments within linguistics and philosophy.⁹³ Metaphor is to be seen as ontologically expansive, not reductionist: it adds rather than subtracts from our understanding of reality. Ricoeur has shown how metaphor disrupts the language of literal reference, breaking down its constraining perspective on reality and thus opening up new possibilities. He speaks of 'metaphorical truth' as the openness to new truth made possible by the acceptance of contingency. "In service to the poetic function, metaphor is the strategy of language by which language divests itself of its function of direct description in order to reach the mythical level where its function of discovery is set free."⁹⁴ This does not lead into post-modernism's absolute relativism: precisely because myth as tropic language is able to retain its connection with actuality and yet go beyond it, it is able to retain an

⁹⁰. Ibid. pp. 26ff.

⁹¹. Ibid. pp. 24f, 37f.

⁹². Thus, to say 'Achilles is a lion', from the perspective of the hearer, makes a claim that opens up understanding. To reduce the statement to 'Achilles is a warrior' reduces the truth content of the statement, representing a linguistic loss rather than gain.

⁹³. Jungel, op. cit. pp. 22f; cf. Webster (1986) pp. 43f.

⁹⁴. Ricoeur (1978) p. 247, quoted in Webster (1986) p. 44; cf. Polanyi and Prosch (1975).

ontological function.

Jungel's understanding of the ontological value of metaphor thus has at its heart the claim that tropic language pushes beyond the literal referent of univocal language, and its parallel ontological limitations.⁹⁵ To understand his understanding of metaphorical realism it is necessary to note his debt to Heidegger's understanding of being as both actuality and possibility. The actuality described by univocal language is not the sum of being: the possibility of becoming draws the future into an ontology of actuality and possibility, being and becoming.

For Jungel, language-as-address means that knowledge has a historical nature, and must be seen as temporal process, as the movement of *coming-to-knowledge*. This is not to be confused with Hegelian idealism, rather, if reality or being consists of all that is, then we face the possibility of new knowledge as temporal reality changes and new realities come into being.

It is possible to expand Jungel's temporal ontology of possibility into an epistemological one. Our knowledge of actuality depends on the legitimacy of our language and the epistemological process through which language functions. If we accept the contingency of language, and of our knowledge, it follows that we are faced with the possibility of the coming into being of new understanding, insight and discovery: not only in the future, but as we direct our attention to the present and to the past. Thus the adequacy of human understanding is itself part of ontological reality.

"What is hermeneutically fascinating about metaphor is the fact that it unites linguistic freedom on the one hand and a semantic sense of actuality on the other, in a way quite unknown to statements which operate with the common significations alone. Metaphorical language harmonizes in the most exact way the creative potential of language and strict conceptual necessity, bringing together the surprise of linguistic novelty and the familiarity of that which is already known. In this way a gain is always made through metaphor. The horizon of being is expanded in language."⁹⁶

It is now possible to draw together the threads of Jungel's understanding of metaphor. Metaphor is irreducible to non-tropic language; it is parabolic, adding to the limitations of univocal language, whilst at the same time retaining a realistic link with the same actuality as the latter; it cannot be subtracted from the process of event and address, and its rhetorical function forms an essential part of the epistemological process; it is essential to discovery, moving beyond univocal language and facilitating

⁹⁵. "Metaphor is only properly understood when we call into question the finality of literal reality and the modes of discourse that express it", Webster (1986) p. 44.

⁹⁶. Jungel (1989a) p. 40.

the disclosure of being; in so far as it enables us to move beyond the temporal and epistemological limitations of our knowledge it contributes to the growth of being since correct use of metaphor represents an ontological gain; by breaking down univocal language it enables us to return to the latter, refine it, and put it to more precise use, with a more accurate relationship with actuality, a more coherent disclosure of truth.

It follows that truth is both given in actuality, and at the same time contingent on the adequacy of language. Truth as *adaequatio intellectus et rei* remains: metaphor allows us a deeper grasp of *rei* as both being and becoming, and of the critical contingency and linguistic limitations of *adaequatio intellectus*. The criteria of truth are drawn from the process of knowing -- we have no external criteria here beyond that of the transcendent precepts of attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness and responsibility -- since reality is always one step beyond the limits of critical and imaginative reason and wisdom. It follows that "the successful metaphor, whose univocity can be sharper and more precise than we would like, cannot and need not be proved. Its power and its worth are axiomatic."⁹⁷ Language discloses and reveals being with the same power, realism, ambiguity and contingency of a work of art.

iv) Metaphor and theological truth

What then are the implications of Jungel's notion of metaphor for theology? Essentially, it enables the integrity of God and of humanity to be retained in creative tension: metaphor allows us beyond the contradictions of anthropological reductionism and fideism. God may encounter humanity, and humanity may encounter God, in freedom. "The language of faith is metaphorical through and through"⁹⁸: herein lies, not the problem, but the possibility of a critically realistic theology. It is both a) anthropologically possible within the limitations of human experience and language, thus avoiding fideism, and b) allows God the freedom to address humanity from beyond itself, avoiding reductionism.

a) The possibility of metaphorical language about God is rooted in the fundamental difference between God and the world. Faith confesses God's action in coming to the world, expressed in the incarnational tension between "confessing Jesus as true God and God as true man".⁹⁹ Linguistically the tension demanded by faith can

⁹⁷. Ibid. p.58.

⁹⁸. Ibid. p. 58.

⁹⁹. Ibid. p. 59.

only be expressed through metaphor. Metaphor can take human statements and move beyond them, open them out to new being, moving beyond fideism because it is precisely human language that is in operation. "Metaphor characteristically relates together two horizons of meaning."¹⁰⁰ Metaphorical language is basically the language of narrative, and the language of Christian faith is the narration of the story of the God who comes to the world. "In such language God allows himself to be discovered as the one who comes. Language about God is thus eminently the language of discovery. But if God is discovered as the one who comes to the world, and in this way as the one who is distinguished from the world, then both the world and the worldly act of discovery are themselves newly discovered. God is a discovery that teaches us to see everything with new eyes."¹⁰¹ The proper theological response to this discovery is trust, and genuine trust requires human freedom, and this in turn is made possible by the metaphorical possibilities within natural language.

b) Metaphor allows God the freedom to be himself, the freedom not to be reduced to the limitations of human language. God's freedom is the freedom to come, as himself, to the world, to address humanity. "Thus the event in which we are addressed in God's name is decisive for the proper formation of theological metaphors,"¹⁰² since God here takes human language and instils it with new meaning and being. The language of Christian theology is thus not free to develop along lines chosen by theologians, rather the narratives of scripture set limitations and legitimate only certain stories, certain metaphors. "The cross of Jesus Christ is the ground and measure of the formation of metaphors which are appropriate to God. Every theological metaphor must be compatible with the cross of Jesus Christ."¹⁰³ This does not deny human freedom to develop other human metaphors, or to critically reject the adequacy of the Christian metaphors, but it does set objective limits to the language, and hence truth claims that may be appropriately called 'Christian'.

Christian doctrine as metaphor,

"tells of the possibility of non-being not simply as that which can only be overcome by God, but as that which has been overcome by God. In this, the language of faith proclaims the existence of a new creation.....when this happens, God reveals himself in the context of the world as mystery. For God is the mystery of the world in that he has overcome the non-being of the world as the one who comes to it." ¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰. Ibid. p. 60.

¹⁰¹. Ibid. pp. 62f.

¹⁰². Ibid. p. 64.

¹⁰³. Ibid. p. 65.

¹⁰⁴. Jungel (1989a) p. 67.

To affirm this statement is to affirm that Christianity illuminates and describes reality in its actuality and becoming in a manner more appropriate, and hence more truly, than other linguistic systems.¹⁰⁵ Our concern here, though, is not directly with the question of truth, but with the question of the public, objective nature of Christian language. The claim made is that the question of its truth or falsehood needs to be placed on the public educational agenda if the principles of attentiveness, intelligence, reasonability and responsibility are to be adhered to within our schools.

4. Theology in the Public Arena

i) The theological challenge to modernism

The orthodox self-understanding of Christianity, passed on through tradition and accepted by the vast majority of contemporary Christians and affirmed by the official statements of the various churches, is that of a realistic theology: Christianity makes fundamental and exclusive claims concerning the nature of reality. Reductionist accounts, particularly that of experiential-expressivism, represent reinterpretations of that tradition within the norms and canons of liberalism and modernism.

In highlighting a particular strand within the thread that forms Christianity's own account of its scientific methodology our concern has been descriptive rather than apologetic. Christian theology can give an account of an objective source and tradition for its normative statements that transcends the limitations of purely subjective experience; it can demonstrate that its own internal logic demands that such tradition be appropriated critically; further, it can look outward and account for the specific nature and structure of its discourse in the light of current understandings of the nature of language.

Certainly within modernism the charge of fideism would still be levelled at this account. However, the core of the argument in this chapter is that, within a developing critical realist context Christianity may lay claim to a public hearing regarding its understanding of the true nature of reality. It is important to note here

¹⁰⁵. Jungel was to develop this perspective in terms of the question "how can one speak of God in a human way without falling short of his divinity", approached through the development of 'the analogy of advent'. Webster (1986) p. 48, cf. Jungel (1983) pp. 261ff. It has not been possible to follow Jungel's argument through in the present context.

that the fundamental change has occurred not within theology, but within secular philosophy. The theological methodology outlined above has remarkable parallels with - and forms part of the continuous tradition of -- patristic and scholastic discussions. It is the shift from modernism to critical realism that has enabled secular philosophy to view theology in a new, public light. Modernism's privatisation of realistic religious belief may thus be seen as the result of the imposition on theology of a liberal ideology, itself not subject to critical appropriation. This is not to argue for the truth of Christianity, merely for its right to make its claim to truth in the public arena. This is not to point out anything new, merely to draw attention to a reality ignored by modernism. Systematic, dogmatic and fundamental theology have, since the birth of Christianity, been involved in creative dialogue with secular philosophy. Contemporary resurgence in this area is precisely that: a reaffirmation of previous activity.¹⁰⁶ Modernist privatisation moves significantly beyond refutation: it embodies a claim to incommensurability and irrationality. In the context of higher education, it is not simply a matter that the theology department's agenda is wrong, but the denial that theology has a place within public educational institutes. To do so, in the light of the nature of ongoing conversations, is actually to impose a modernist ideology on the syllabus of public education.

ii) Gunton: the claims of Trinitarian theology

Amongst the whole host of possible illustrations of the reality of realistic public theology, that of Gunton's recent work on the interface between modernism and Trinitarian theology has been selected both because it is an example that picks up themes already worked through in the current thesis, and because it reveals theology in offensive rather than apologetic mode.¹⁰⁷

Gunton's theology is rooted in the legacy of Barth, adopting a 'critical appropriation' understanding of his methodology which he seeks both to clarify and extend.¹⁰⁸ He has a sharp eye both for the continuities between cultures, and for their discontinuities.¹⁰⁹ There is, he suggests, continuity between the debate between

^{106.} Contemporary debate in the fields of science, philosophy of science, hermeneutics, critical theory, literary theory, ethics, etc. are well documented. Of particular note is the development of interreligious dialogue on the level of fundamental dogmatic theology. cf. eg. D'Costa (1990), Lockhead (1988).

^{107.} Gunton (1985), (1991), (1993).

^{108.} cf. Gunton (1978), (1988a).

^{109.} cf. Gunton (1983).

Christianity and classical culture in the Patristic age and the debate between Christianity and modernism. Classicism's polarity between the monism of Parmenides and the pluralism of Heraclitus takes a contemporary form in the Cartesian search for certainty and the post-modern embracement of plurality respectively.¹¹⁰ Distinguished from this is Christian theology: just as Christianity's vision of the order of things ultimately demonstrated its intellectual superiority over a bankrupt classicism, so might Christian theology achieve a similar result in the face of the challenge of modernism and post-modernism.

Gunton turns to Trinitarian theology in an effort to offer an answer to this question. He distinguishes between the eastern Trinitarianism of the Cappadocians, stressing the community of the persons and the indivisibility of economic and immanent Trinitarian formulations, and the western Trinitarianism of Augustine, which tends towards modalism, as exemplified by its psychological analogies for the inner life of the Trinity, and distinguishes the immanent unknowability of God from his revelation in the economy of salvation.¹¹¹

At the heart of Gunton's argument is the affirmation of perichoresis: "in its origins, the concept was a way of showing the ontological interdependence and reciprocity of the three persons of the Trinity: how they were only what they were by virtue of their interrelation and interanimation, so that for God to be did not involve an absolute simplicity, but a unity derived from a dynamic plurality of persons".¹¹² A Cappadocian informed affirmation of perichoresis serves to unite the immanent and economic Trinity and affirm a dynamic relationship within the Godhead. In the doctrine of creation the ontological structures of divinity are transferred to the ontological structures of the created order. From this perspective Gunton is able to achieve two things: a) on the basis of Augustine's deviance from this model, demonstrate how the legacy of the Enlightenment was grounded precisely in a distorted western Trinitarianism; b) argue that an ontology grounded in a Cappadocian model serves to offer an understanding of the nature of reality superior to that of the Augustinian-modern tradition.¹¹³

a) Augustine's synthesis of Trinitarian quasi-modalism and neo-Platonism introduces a fundamental compromise into the implied ontology: relationship is

^{110.} Gunton (1993) pp. 11ff.

^{111.} Gunton (1988) pp. 146ff.

^{112.} Ibid. p. 152.

^{113.} In the following paragraphs the *implications* of Gunton's work are drawn out in terms of the conceptual framework adopted by the present study.

replaced by the polarity of the one and the many.¹¹⁴ Gunton's reading is given confirmation by Charles Taylor: for both the roots of modernism extend beyond Descartes to Augustine, the former merely worked within the ontology bequeathed him by the latter.¹¹⁵ It is possible to isolate five key issues here.

Firstly, neo-Platonic transcendence, the assertion of a metaphysic in which creation is but a pale shadow of that ultimate reality that lies above and beyond it is reaffirmed by the Augustinian distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity. Here the primacy and essentially unknowability of the one divine being is affirmed over against the plurality of the many, of creation. God is essentially himself in his transcendent being as immanent Trinity, rather than in the secondary economy of revelation.

Secondly, immanent reality, the world of the plurality of phenomena, retains only contingent and relative importance. As a result, humanity strives to transcend and escape from the world of time and space; it follows that the economy of salvation is by implication secondary and contingent: we cannot know God in himself, only God as he reveals himself to us.

Thirdly, as a result of the essentially complex material nature of the created order and the essential simple non-material nature of the creator, a distinction is drawn between the material and mental worlds: the physical world is rooted in contingency, the spiritual world of the inner mind -- with its implied closer conformity to the divine -- offers the possibility of transcending the physical.

Fourthly, the dualisms inherent here, between the one and the many, between transcendence and immanence, between certainty and contingency serve to reinforce a dualistic ontology over against an ontology of monistic relationship in a dialogue of freedom and interdependence.

Fifthly, applied to the self we discover the primacy of personhood in radical reflexivity, a critical and differentiated attitude towards that which lies beyond the mind, an image that affirms the dislocation of the mind from external reality.

From this standpoint it is possible to isolate the source, and trace the development of, the four Enlightenment sub-structures outlined in the first chapter. In the face of the unknowability of God and the contingency of the external world, the mind turns inward, affirms its isolation and relies on its self-sufficiency: the *dislocated self* emerges. Similarly the unknowability of God, linked with suspicion of the contingency of the external world, provokes a crisis of anxiety that can only be

¹¹⁴. Gunton (1991) pp. 31ff.

¹¹⁵. cf. Taylor (1992) pp. 127-142.

resolved by the dislocated self: the *quest for certainty* emerges. The division between God and the world, between anxiety and its resolution, produces a tension between the clarity of the one and the contingency of the many: a dualism between fact and value emerges, later to be taken up into the polarity of Enlightenment reason and romanticism, and of modernism and post-modernism. At the root of all of this is the emergence of a qualitative distinction between transcendence and immanence, later resolved either through an atheistic affirmation of immanence or a fideistic affirmation of transcendence, a distinction highlighted by experiential-expressive attempts to mediate between the poles on the grounds of inner apprehension of transcendence from an immanent perspective.

What emerges clearly, if Gunton is right, is the claim that the Enlightenment account of emancipation from the superstition of religion is at root a misguided one. We must speak not so much of an emancipation as of a rigorous and reflexive working through of the logic of a distorted and compromised Christian ontology.

b) In contrast, the turn to the insights of the Cappadocian Trinity of communion leads to the inference of an alternative, and Gunton would claim, superior, ontology of fundamental relationship between the one and the many. The economy of creation and salvation is at one and the same time the revelation of divinity in its essence. The distinction of creation from God is part of an intended and ongoing relationship, and hence we can speak of the essential knowability of truth. As a result, the contingency of the reality of space and time is not separate from ultimate truth, but stands in positive relationship to it. A distinct theologically informed anthropology emerges: we are the persons we are, precisely as we relate reflexively to ourselves, to other persons in the community, to our environment and to divinity.

Our argument does not need to take the path of drawing attention to the obvious similarities between such a Christian ontology and the emerging ontology of critical realism, nor do we need, in the present context, to affirm the priority of the former over the latter. Our concern is far more pragmatic: Gunton's argument serves us merely by confirming the public nature of realistic Christian discourse, and its ability both to enter into positive relationship with contemporary secular discourse and to affirm its distinction through its unique and publically accountable claim to an understanding of the truth of the order of things. This affirmation of the public nature of the Christian claim to grasp a contingent understanding of realistic truth has implications for religious education in the setting of critical realism; it is to these that we now turn.

Chapter Nine

An Educational Framework: Realism, Contingency, Truth

Chapter Nine sets out to propose a philosophy of education grounded in critical realism and able to do justice to the realistic nature of theological and religious discourse: i) such a programme will seek to avoid the fundamentally anti-realistic thrust observed in contemporary modern religious education; ii) the contours of Hirst's programme of a liberal education grounded in the notion of realistic knowledge is outlined; iii) the eclipse of Hirst's programme within modernist educational debate is partly due to his failure to mediate between the needs of a formal, objective theory of knowledge and the relative, teleological actuality of human understanding; iv) the critical theory of Habermas together with the educational pragmatism of Dewey are appropriated within the framework of critical realism, leading to the proposal of a liberal education grounded in contingent rationality that transcends the problems of modernism encountered by Hirst.

1. Education Within Critical Realism

Liberal forms of education, it has been argued above, function essentially as a means to the ideological confirmation, affirmation and reinforcement of modernism. The approaches of both traditionalism and progressivism focus not on knowledge of, and conformity to, the reality of the order of things, but on the free-floating value systems operating within the modernist world view. Such value perspectives are, by their very nature, dislocated from the 'facts' of objective reality. Education is thus viewed as fundamentally moral, concerned with social and personal development at individual

and collective levels. Thus traditionalism utilizes knowledge -- appropriated in the form of a particular cultural heritage -- as a disciplinary tool through which the ideology of a conservative *status quo* of social norms, order and values may be transmitted to the next generation. Progressivism, in recognising the ideological limitations of traditionalism, sought to transcend them through a 'child-centred' philosophy that saw the cultivation of individual autonomy as the means to emancipate pupils from such ideology. In utilizing the structures of the romantic mirror image of Enlightenment, it failed to realise that its programme in effect constituted merely the substitution of one ideological framework with another.

It is illuminating to read the 1988 Education Act from this perspective. Politically, the Act was developed in the context of a conservative counter-reaction to the increasing dominance of progressivism in schools.¹ Whilst the National Curriculum focuses specifically on the acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding of a variety of academic disciplines, it is clear that the fundamental outcome of such study - - in the context of the 'whole curriculum' -- is expected to be the moral, social, personal and spiritual development of individuals and of society.² Consequently, control of the content of the National Curriculum becomes the central factor in asserting the material content of the moral agenda of education. It is no surprise to discover that a battle for control of the curriculum has followed precisely the lines of the traditional-progressive debate within modernism itself. Education remains a political battlefield in the fight for control of the ideology that is to be transmitted to pupils.

The debate surrounding Religious Education provides a classic illustration of this state of affairs. The 1988 legislation clearly attempted, in asserting the priority of Christianity in the curriculum, to impose a specific traditionalist ideology on the subject.³ The failure of the local Standing Agreed Conferences of Religious Education (SACRE) to give up what was seen as the hard won multi-faith agenda of

1. Hargreaves (1994) pp.54f.

2. This is clear from the statement of its fundamental aim of an education that "promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils in the school and of society; and prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life", Department of Education and Science (1988) Section 1.2. The distinction between the intrinsic moral aim and extrinsic subject knowledge is reinforced by the Act's references to cross curricular dimensions, skills and themes which retain a fundamental moral focus. The question of their relationship with subject knowledge is not addressed.

3. Thus all new locally Agreed Syllabuses must "reflect the fact that religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain." Department of Education and Science, op.cit. Section 8.3.

progressivism, resulted in attempts to enforce the traditionalist agenda.⁴ The debate is concerned, fundamentally, not with the educational question of how best to develop a system that will allow for the development of a depth of religious literacy and understanding in the population, but with a battle for control of the transmission of religious ideology. The reality is that all the major world faiths emerged prior to the development of modernism, and with the exception of Christianity, and some aspects of Judaism, remain relatively untouched by the challenge of the Enlightenment to their self-understanding. It follows that the internal integrity of such faiths can only be compromised if, at an educational level, they must be forced into a modernist framework before they are taught in schools.

The concern of this chapter is to develop a working framework for the subject that is able to transcend the limitations of the internal debate of modernism, one that is able to avoid the transmission of the ideology of modernist religious formulations by allowing religions to retain their integrity within the educational process itself, enabling them to speak for themselves, on their own terms.

The basis of this attempt will be that of the insights of critical realism. It must immediately be acknowledged that critical realism is itself a product of the Enlightenment, and has its roots in a revision of modernism. As such the current programme is vulnerable to the charge that it merely replaces the ideology of modernism with the ideology of critical realism. Hence it is necessary at this stage to offer a preliminary justification of the approach adopted here.

a) Critical realism acknowledges the contingency of knowledge, and its spatio-temporal limitations. It has been argued above that the perspectives of critical

⁴. On SACRE cf. Cox and Cairns (1989) pp.82f. The key political moves to enforce a conservative-traditionalist reading to the Religious Education provisions of the 1988 Education Reform Act have been: a) the requirement of the 1993 Education Act that any Local Education Authority that has not adopted a new syllabus since September 1988 to begin to do so by April 1995; that the SACRE provide the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) with copies of annual reports; that composition of Committee A of a SACRE or Agreed Syllabus Conferences (ASC) (Christian denominations and other religions and religious denominations) should reflect the proportionate strength of the denomination or religion in the area; that SACRE and ASC be open to the public (Department for Education (1993)); b) the analysis of Agreed Syllabuses carried out by the National Curriculum Council in 1992 (National Curriculum Council (1992)); c) the production by the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) of Model Syllabuses for Religious Education in 1994 (Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority (1994)); d) Department for Education advice that collective worship be understood in terms of reverence or veneration to a divine being or power; that as a whole, and at every key stage, the relative content devoted to Christianity in the syllabus should predominate (Department For Education (1994)).

realism have emerged, in the late twentieth century western world, as possessing greater powers of explanation and illumination than the programmes of modernism and post-modernism that they have set out to counter. That the flaws of critical realism will, in the future, emerge is inevitable, nevertheless at this particular geographical and historical point they present themselves as the best, and hence optimum and only appropriate, tools available.

b) Unlike modernism, critical realism does not offer a fixed world view. Its function is essentially hermeneutical rather than foundational. We observed above how modernism was capable of embracing pluralism only on its own terms, offering private freedom of belief within the epistemological structures of an empirical and rationalist ontology. In contrast to modernist foundationalism, critical realism is able to embrace a plurality of world views, fundamental epistemologies and ontologies through a hermeneutical process grounded in the acceptance of the contingency of contradictory and competing understandings of reality.

c) This acceptance of contingency is, however, rooted in a realist impulse. The reality of contradictory world views does not descend into the relativism of the modernist privatisation of belief, nor of the anti-realistic structures of post-modernism. Contingency is rooted in the acceptance that pluralism, in the context of the imperative towards a realistic understanding of reality, is essentially contradictory, and that *in principle* knowledge of the truth of the way things are is possible. In this situation such diverse and contradictory ontologies as atheistic naturalism, Islamic revelationism and Christian Trinitarianism can speak from within the integrities of their diverse and contradictory understandings of realistic truth. As a hermeneutical tool critical realism allows both for the recognition of this diversity, and for the possibility of a hermeneutical debate between them through which the emergence of a more adequate understanding of the way things are becomes a greater possibility. Such debate is to be seen as integral to the process of education itself.

The attempt to develop a critical realist approach to education will take the form of dialogue with two educational theorists who stand on the borderlands of the intersection of modernism and critical realism: Paul Hirst and John Dewey. Hirst's central concern for the grounding of education in realistic truth requires, it will be argued, an acceptance of the contingency of knowledge via the replacement of his Platonically informed foundationalism with an Aristotelian informed hermeneutic. In a parallel fashion Dewey's developmental epistemology grounded in a pragmatically informed contingency requires a grounding in realistic truth. This dual movement, it will be argued, allows two apparently diverse educational philosophies to be drawn together into a coherent critical realist vision of the nature of education.

2. Hirst's Programme of '*Liberal Education*'

i) Hirst revisited

If education is to avoid the arbitrary imposition of the authority of a particular tradition, whether that be along traditionalist or progressive lines, then a point of authority beyond that tradition needs to be found. For Hirst this point was to be grounded in his concept of *liberal education*. Hirst's use of the term is at odds with its use in the present thesis up to this point. Where we have used the term to refer to the grounding of educational debate within the structures of modernism, Hirst uses the phrase to refer to a notion of *liberalism* grounded in classical thought, which he understands as being in essence "an education based fairly and squarely on the nature of knowledge itself".⁵ Hirst here draws on a tradition that equates education with knowledge, one rooted in Plato, and emerging sporadically in western thought, particularly during the renaissance, and in the 19th Century in the work of Matthew Arnold and Cardinal Newman.⁶

Hirst was the leading representative of the analytical school of educational philosophy, standing in the tradition of semantic and logical analysis associated with the Cambridge philosophy of G.E. Moore and C.D. Broad. The work of this school marked the attempt to deepen educational debate by drawing on philosophical work in the fields of epistemology, philosophy of mind, ethics and social philosophy. Its method was that of the conceptual analysis of linguistic terminology in the educational field: "a clarification of the meanings of educational beliefs and principles by means of a mapping of the concepts they employed".⁷ This analysis was to lead to judgements concerning the justification of fundamental educational principles. Whilst it was not the philosophers' task to prescribe the nature of the practical application of these principles, nevertheless those who held that responsibility could now fulfil it in a philosophically informed way. Hirst's analysis of education led him to discern the core of the educational process within the nature of knowledge itself.⁸ The internal logic of the linguistic forms of the disciplines through which knowledge was made available

⁵ Hirst (1965) p.11: References to Hirst's distinctive use of *liberalism* are italicised in the present chapter.

⁶ cf. Newman (1919), White (1986), Pring (1993).

⁷ Hirst (1982) p.7.

⁸ cf. for critical commentary on Hirst's work: Barrow and White (1993); De Leon (1987); Elliot (1987); Enslin (1985); Evers (1987); Green (1985); Griffiths (1986); Hindess (1972); Kasprisin (1987); O'Connor (1972); Scarlett (1984); Scrimshaw (1973); Smith (1981).

offered an objective grounding to education that transcended the arbitrary and contingent nature of education as mere cultural transmission.

In drawing on Hirst in the present context we necessarily become involved in a process of rehabilitation. The eclipse of Hirst in the 1980's was in many respects emphatic. White's comments are typical in this respect: "seductive though the argument may be at first sight, it is pretty clearly inadequate on closer inspection.....few, if any, of its original proponents would wish to adhere to it.....there is no need to rake over these dead leaves again".⁹ This is not to deny Hirst's influence on the educational discussions that resulted in a National Curriculum structured in terms of subject disciplines. However, as we have already observed, the function of such disciplines within the structure of the 1988 Act is not that of the placing of the objectivity of knowledge at the centre of the educational process, but rather the utilization of such disciplines as a means to contingent cultural transmission. Whilst the external framework may have a Hirstian feel, the inner core functions in a manner that is the polar opposite to that which Hirst advocated.

Hirst's classical *liberalism* marked a self-conscious attempt to transcend the limitations of modernist educational programmes. The fundamental flaw in this thought, it will be argued, lay not in his aims, but in the inadequate epistemology through which these aims were developed. Seeking to escape modernism, he nevertheless failed to reach a coherent critical realist position. This can be observed above all in his use of Wittgenstein. Hirst was able to appreciate the importance of Wittgenstein's challenge to modernism, but was able to appropriate his later linguistic philosophy only via a fundamental misreading of it: in essence Hirst follows Wittgenstein in his rejection of a modern instrumental-reductionism as regards the nature of language, but continues to ground the holistic notion of language that takes its place in terms of transcendent rather than contingent rationality.¹⁰ Thus Hirst's critics have sought to dismiss him because of the confusions that are the result of this tension in his work, such criticism though fails to refute the core of his programme,

⁹. White (1982) pp.10f.

¹⁰. It is important to clarify this understanding of the nature of Hirst's misreading of Wittgenstein. It is in part correct to suggest that Hirst misreads Wittgenstein by applying a criteria of internal logic rather than communal consensus (language as use) to the problem of the legitimation of language. Hirst thus accepts the main thrust of Wittgenstein's position: language is communal, not private, and meaning bearing rather than instrumental. However, his idealistic focus on logical coherence leads him to demand a public consensus regarding meaning, rather than the possibility of the inherent diversity of an emerging consensus grounded in the ability of language to reveal itself as more, or less, appropriate within its pragmatic development. Hirst fails to grasp Wittgenstein's affirmation of contingency over against certainty.

namely his advocacy of the central importance of the place of knowledge in education. It is not Hirst's programme that is flawed, but the means by which he carried it through.

Hirst himself, in his later work, acknowledges this situation: there was, he accepts, an unjustifiable objectivism in his early work; the assigning of logical priority to reason over against action was unjustifiable; and analytical philosophy lacked any depth of sensitivity towards the socio-political context. He thus accepts the characterisation, by his critics, of linguistic analysis as "a necessarily value-laden activity, reflecting implicitly the contingent values of the individual philosopher, his socially relative political values, or even the inevitably conservative values of all philosophical analyses".¹¹ Hirst's response serves to set out the broad strategy that will be adopted here: criticisms of the programme fail to undermine the core argument of the centrality of knowledge to any liberal education; recent developments in philosophy, above all in the work of Habermas, offer the possibility of a rejuvenation of his programme.

ii) The rejection of progressivism and traditionalism

Hirst's programme then has its roots in his criticism of educational modernism, specifically the traditionalism and progressivism evident in British schools in the 1960's. His argument is that "the debates between progressives and traditionalists in education are largely anachronistic".¹² The turn to his form of *liberal* education throws light on their flaws: "both shared a common weakness -- they paid too little attention to public forms of experience which.....are absolutely central to the development of knowledge and understanding....an emphasis on forms of experience can provide a much needed synthesis between these two approaches to education".¹³ The traditional 'grammar school' curriculum is faced with a number of persistent and insurmountable problems. It is essentially paternalistic, breeding ignorance and narrow-mindedness.

a) It lacks a coherent understanding of the nature of knowledge, working as it does with a concept of mind "bedevilled by myths largely of an empiricist nature."¹⁴ Effectively it distinguishes acquisition of knowledge from the development of mind,

¹¹. Hirst (1982) p.8, correctly seeing Young (1971) as the benchmark of such criticisms.

¹². Hirst and Peters (1970) p.131.

¹³. Ibid. p.32.

¹⁴. Hirst (1969a) p.147.

failing to see that "the acquisition of knowledge is itself a development of mind.....to fail to acquire knowledge of a certain fundamental kind, is to fail to achieve rational mind in that significant respect".¹⁵

b) It leads to narrow specialization. Since knowledge is separated from mind, learning focuses on content, not method. With the increasing specialization of knowledge, and its fragmentation into technical domains, so education itself becomes specialized. There is little in the way of criteria for selection beyond vocational considerations and personal preference. The result is an ignorance that can have no insight into a synthetic map of knowledge, and cannot do justice to the wealth of human intellectual endeavours.

c) Its objectives are limited and barely thought through. Rooted in the authority of tradition, it demands the mastery of knowledge, acceptance of beliefs, development of skills and nurturing of qualities of the mind. But these are all approached in a fragmentary and limited manner, one that can make no claim to educational justification.

d) The result of all this is an authoritarianism that lacks any moral dimension. Education is no more than enculturation, the arbitrary passing on of tradition. In this process both knowledge itself, and the integrity of the pupils, are ignored.

"An authoritarian method of teaching is suggested to which the most desirable form of response on the part of the learner is the unquestioning acceptance of doctrines.....scientific laws and facts were taught rather than the critical attitudes and ways of thinking of a scientist; moral conformity was insisted on, but not moral awareness.....they valued obedience more than they valued independence of mind."¹⁶

Hirst correctly reads the progressive movement in education as a reaction against the moral shortcomings of traditionalism. While on a humanitarian level he expresses great sympathy with this response, he sees it as being fundamentally confused, not least in the failure to distinguish objectives from methodology. This occurs above all in the conflux of the moral argument with biological theories of development. The uncritical acceptance of the Aristotelian notion that "organic change comes through the actualization of innate potentialities,"¹⁷ led to the principle that learning be adapted to children's needs and interests, being applied not only legitimately to the process of learning, but also illegitimately to its content.

Advocates of child-centred education were fundamentally concerned with

¹⁵. Ibid. p.32.

¹⁶. Hirst and Peters, op.cit. pp.29, 32.

¹⁷. Ibid. p. 31, cf. pp.42-59.

the development of the humanistic virtues, however

"they did not sufficiently appreciate that these virtues are vacuous unless people are provided with the forms of knowledge and experience to be critical, creative and autonomous with. People have to be trained to think critically; it is not some dormant seed that flowers naturally.....being critical must be distinguished from being merely contra-suggestible. just as being 'creative' must be distinguished from mere self expression." ¹⁸

This division in romantic education between mind and world resulted in an anti-intellectualism that "argued that linguistic and abstract forms of thought are only for some pupils; assumed that learning took place naturally in unstructured problem-solving situations, ignoring the centrality of conceptual development and language in this process". ¹⁹ Progressive education thus lost any practical and theoretical contact between the development of mind and the acquisition of knowledge: self-understanding is untouched by "matters of sheer fact". ²⁰

iii) Forms of knowledge and the transcendence of contingency

Both traditionalism and progressivism need to ground themselves in knowledge and experience if they are to escape the despotism of an arbitrary enculturation, or arbitrary self-expression (itself a form of enculturation) respectively. Hirst's target here is the modernist dualism that separates fact from value, 'objective' knowledge from the 'subjective' development of mind. As we have observed Hirst thus looks back to the classical *liberal* tradition in his search for an educational philosophy capable of bringing the development of mind and knowledge of reality into realistic alignment. He advocates "the idea of *liberal* education as a process concerned simply and directly with the pursuit of knowledge". ²¹ Such an education transcends the progressive-traditionalist division: a) it is "based on what is true and not on uncertain opinions and beliefs or temporary values;" ²² b) knowledge itself is seen as a human virtue -- to know is at one and the same time to develop the mind, to develop the mind is to acquire knowledge; c) it follows that *liberal* education is fundamentally concerned both with knowledge and the good life, since both are

¹⁸. Ibid. pp.31f.

¹⁹. Hirst (1969b) pp.44f.

²⁰. Ibid. p.35.

²¹. Hirst (1965) p.114.

²². Ibid. p.114.

mutually dependent entities.²³ *Liberal* education thus combines epistemological and moral functions, "freeing the mind to function according to its true nature, freeing reason from error and illusion, and freeing man's conduct from wrong".²⁴

The roots of liberal education in Platonic idealism²⁵ confront Hirst with the major problem he has to solve. He is aware that the classical notion of truth is grounded in "the doctrines of metaphysical and epistemological realism".²⁶ Truth is *adequatio intellectus et rei*. However he accepts that there can be no return to Platonic metaphysics, and that *liberalism* must operate out of the legacy of modernism. However it is modernism, in its dualistic distinction between fact and value, that has produced precisely the split between mind and truth that he is seeking to avoid. Knowledge is reduced to the objectivity of empirical fact, over which subjective values float freely as an optional extra. Hirst's solution is to challenge the adequacy of modernism, moving forward to an alternative that does not require the re-establishment of any classical metaphysic.

Working from a base in linguistic analysis, Hirst draws upon the work of Ryle, Wittgenstein and Oakeshott, and in his later work, Habermas. He finds in these philosophers the possibility of an epistemology that is reducible neither to forms of empirical positivism, nor to the experiential personalism implicit in, for example, Phenix's equation of knowledge with 'realms of meaning', or Reid's advocacy of 'modes of experience'. However, this process fails to take him beyond the perspective of modernism, and his reading fails to break out of a Kantian framework. Though correct in his view that such approaches offered a path beyond modernism, he failed to follow this logic through to a genuine critical realism. Hirst thus inhabits the borderlands between modernism and critical realism.

Hirst finds the transcendent foundation of knowledge not in the Platonic forms, but in the self-justificatory logic of language itself. The 'forms of knowledge' are in essence linguistic constructions that, because of their ability to relate mind to external reality, achieve an objective independence that transcends the subjectivity of mere linguistic relativity. Such forms of discourse include, crucially, moral and aesthetic understanding, hence they draw modernist 'fact' and 'value' together onto an objective plane.

23. Ibid. p. 115.

24. Ibid.

25. Just as Plato distinguished the contingency inherent in time and space from the ultimacy of the transcendent forms, so

Hirst distinguishes the contingency of opinion from the public objectivity of the forms of knowledge.

26. Hirst (1965) p.116.

The articulation of the 'forms of knowledge' passed through progressive stages of development, largely in response to criticism. The most fundamental development involved the abandoning of generalised 'fields of knowledge' which he had argued paralleled the specific forms. His 1970 formulation lists the forms as: formal logic and mathematics; physical sciences; awareness and understanding of our own and other people's minds; moral judgements; objective aesthetic experience; religious claims; philosophical understanding.²⁷

The forms reflect the way human experience has become structured around accepted public symbols which have been progressively tested and developed. Though the products of progressive interaction between communal mind and world, Hirst claims that they transcend relativism and obtain an objective transcendental status. This because: a) they each contain a distinctive conceptual vocabulary; b) this vocabulary is bound together in a logical structure; c) the adequacy of the linguistic and logical formulations are testable, in ways appropriate to their nature, against external reality.²⁸

The function of the forms is developed in clear opposition to the limitations of positivism, a fact that emerges clearly in his debate with O'Connor.²⁹ The latter found Hirst's forms to be vague, unscientific and essentially pragmatic. They entail a set of value judgements that are not open to refutation, and hence fail to demonstrate any logical connection between statements of scientific fact and statements of value. As Evers points out, O'Connor "achieves the desired unity of educational theory by

27. Hirst (1970) pp.62ff. cf.also, for the development of Hirst's description of the forms, Hirst (1965) p.131, Hirst (1969a) p.151 [the paper was written in 1966]. The issue of development and discrepancies is not crucial to the present argument, and thus is not rehearsed in detail here. Their existence is entirely compatible with Hirst's understanding of the forms as organically developing entities. This does, though, raise problems between the forms as both logically transcendent and epistemologically immanent within human experience: while this issue is central to the argument that follows in the following section, it is not dependent on the specifics of the developing descriptions of the forms. Note the comment of Hindess (1972), pp.164f: "scrutiny of Hirst's several writings on the nature of forms of knowledge reveals discrepancies both in the conditions for a form of knowledge and in the names of the forms of knowledge.....such discrepancies are doubtless the product of critical debate and their importance ought not to be exaggerated".

28. Hirst (1965) pp.128f "They each involve certain central concepts that are peculiar in character to the form.....these.....form a network of possible relationships in which experience can be understood.....the form, by virtue of its particular terms and logic, has expressions and statements that.....may be testable against experience." Hirst was later to abandon a fourth identifiable feature of a form, that of distinctive methodology: "the forms have developed particular techniques and skills for exploring experiences and testing their distinctive expressions".

29. For the Hirst-O'Connor debate cf. O'Connor (1972), Hirst (1972b), Evers (1987).

jettisoning all but one kind of knowledge claim from its legitimate corpus".³⁰ Hirst's concern is to expand the notion of knowledge beyond that of empiricism. In so doing he must move beyond the limitations of a positivist criteria of knowledge. The fundamental nature of the Hirst-O'Connor debate is concerned with whether or not such a move is possible. Hirst accepts O'Connor's claim that "reason (that is, tested methods of assessing and evaluating evidence) is our only guide to problem solving....[and that beyond this]....there is only guessing".³¹ The notion of reason, though, is expanded beyond O'Connor's criteria of explanatory force and refutability: explanation and testing is dependent on the linguistically evolving forms of knowledge and may not be simply reduced to an empirical level.

Hirst thus seeks a model of knowledge that retains the modernist demand for certainty through verification, yet moves beyond modernism's inherent reductionism by refusing to reduce verification to the level of atomistic empiricism.

"What is being suggested.....is that the 'harmony' (between knowledge and mind) is a matter of the logical relationship between the concept 'mind' and the concept of 'knowledge', from which it follows that the achievement of knowledge is necessarily the development of mind -- that is, the self-conscious rational mind of man -- in its most fundamental aspect.....men are able to come to understand both the external world and their own private states of mind in common ways, sharing the same conceptual schema by learning to use symbols in the same manner." ³²

Reference was made above to the eclipse of Hirst's programme. In the following section it will be argued that its fundamental flaw did not lie not in his advocacy of the harmony of knowledge and mind as an objective foundation for education that could counter the inadequacies of traditionalism and progressivism, on the contrary, this argument stands at the heart of the critical realistic educational philosophy being developed here. Rather, its failure lies in the inadequacy of its categorisation of knowledge as transcendent linguistic logical form .

³⁰. Evers, op.cit. p.11.

³¹. O'Connor, op.cit. p.109.

³². Hirst (1965) p. 123.

3. The Eclipse of Hirst: Teleology Versus Formalism

i) Flaws in the framework

The analysis of Hirst's programme that follows will follow through a single -- though central -- strand of the critical discussion of his work. Hindess offers a convenient starting point in her distinction between philosophical investigation of contingent matter, and philosophical investigation of what is necessarily the case. She points out that, whilst Hirst's enquiry clearly focuses on the former, nevertheless his language suggests that he is concerned with the latter.³³ This marks, she suggests, "a major confusion in Hirst's theory".³⁴

Hirst clearly seeks to make synthetic statements about the nature of knowledge, to ground them not in idealism but in realism. They must be statements about the nature of the world that are in principle capable of verification and falsification. Yet if these statements are at the same time to claim the status of transcendent, objective, non-contingent knowledge they must also be logically a priori. Hirst is thus faced with the traditional Kantian question of the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge, and the reality that "whether there can be synthetic a priori knowledge or synthetic necessary statements is still a controversy in philosophy".³⁵ Hindess questions whether the problems encountered here do not leave Hirst's programme with an insoluble problem that constitutes a fundamental flaw in his argument.

"The statements which Hirst makes about the nature of mind, the structure of experience and the forms of knowledge are both synthetic and necessary; that is, they are contingent because they give information about the world and because they can be denied without self-contradiction but they are also known to be true with as much certainty as tautologies." ³⁶

The fact that the forms are the result of contingent development within human culture raises the questions as to how far Hirst's advocacy of a verification principle allows him to genuinely transcend relativism and obtain a transcendental status for the forms. This issue becomes particularly acute when Hirst's own revisions to his descriptions of the forms are noted, alongside his acknowledgement of the reality of development in

³³. Hindess (1972) pp.168f.

³⁴. Ibid. p.172.

³⁵. Ibid. p.173.

³⁶. Ibid. pp.172f.

the forms, together with the 'soft' nature of his methods of verification, dependent as they are on public agreement. In this context Hindess suggests that "presumably Hirst would have to include under the stricture the possibility that what are now thought of as *bona fide* knowledge claims may in some future date be dubbed superstition".³⁷

That Hindess chooses to develop her argument within Kantian categories is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it underlines the fact that Hirst's concept of 'forms of knowledge' ultimately fails to transcend the limitations of modernism. Secondly, at the heart of Hirst's position is encountered the modernist assumption that there is no middle ground between absolute, transcendent certainty and contingent immanent relativism.

Hindess' argument is sharpened by a consideration of Scarlett's distinction between teleology and formalism in Hirst's work.³⁸ Formalism seeks to ground education in the logical properties of knowledge, on autonomous, irreducible propositions whose rational justification transcends the contingency of fashion, utility, vocational considerations and ideology. Teleology, in contrast, grounds education in developing social structures and relationships. Here education is concerned fundamentally with human wellbeing and as such is a branch of ethics. For Scarlett this begs the question: "How can one be purely formalist in ethics?"³⁹

Scarlett recognises that Hirst's programme requires the unification of formal and teleological foundations. "Hirst accepts the charge of formalism but also asserts (surely correctly) that educational justification essentially involves reference to human welfare. To put it another way: one must, in educational justification, appeal to what is desirable for human beings. But, if we are discussing the liberal curriculum, a justification can be produced using purely formal considerations."⁴⁰ Scarlett, like Hindess, rejects Hirst's claim that the forms of knowledge achieve such unification. The simple fact is that a transcendent formalist ethic does not exist. Thus Griffiths points out that ethical judgements are relative rather than essential: the nature of the good life is an issue of fundamental dispute in contemporary multicultural society, as is revealed by the emergence of peace and women's studies.⁴¹

At the heart of this argument is the rejection of Hirst's claim to combine the transcendent and the contingent, the affirmation of his failure to achieve synthetic a

37. Ibid. p.158.

38. Scarlett (1984).

39. Ibid. p.158.

40. Ibid. p.159.

41. Griffiths (1986).

priori's. A possible move forward in this situation might be a reading of the forms as embodying not propositional truth, but rather instrumental meaning. The problem with such a strategy is the fact that the critique of Hirst rehearsed above operates within the structures of modernism, with its dualism of fact-value, transcendence-immanence, contingency-certainty. Within this framework any turn to instrumental meaning would imply not instrumental truth, that is, contingent rationality, but rather wholesale relativism.

ii) Return to relativism

The view that Hirst's transcendentalism has failed thus leads into an acceptance of the priority of contingent teleology. From this perspective Hirst's forms of knowledge are read as themselves contingent on the social, geographical, historical and cultural context of late twentieth century rational, liberal modernism. As such, Hirst must be read as being essentially conservative. He fails to transcend the either/or of traditionalism and progressivism, and whilst his teleological sympathies are clearly with progressivism as an essentially humanistic movement, his formal loyalties are with traditionalism. As such, his programme may be viewed as a traditionalist induction into a western, liberal, cultural tradition.

From this perspective the forms of knowledge are now revealed as being dependent on contingent culture, and as such as being essentially relativistic. This critique of Hirst's position may be placed within the mainstream of the critical, as opposed to positivist or functional, sociology of education. Taking its lead directly from Marxist and neo-Marxist perspectives (particularly here Mannheim's notion of limited rather than radically distorted understandings of reality), and indirectly from Nietzsche, critical sociology reacted against the mainstream modernist tradition not through romantic-psychological categories, but through cultural-linguistic ones.⁴² Traditionalism in education, it is held, offers a fundamentally distorted understanding of knowledge and reality, an understanding that requires countering not through a romantic hermeneutic but through a critical hermeneutic capable of drawing out traditionalism's inherent modernist ideology. Read against the background of this tradition, the argument for Hirst's essential conservatism is reinforced.

Within this general critical movement the sociology of knowledge drew attention to the contingent, cultural foundation of knowledge; phenomenological

⁴². cf. Cosin (1971); Dale (1976); Lawton (1975) pp.52ff; Levitas (1974); Young (1971).

sociology sought to unpack the essential reality of knowledge underlying its phenomenal surface appearance; and post-modern perspectives, particularly as informed by Foucault, sought both to further underline the connection between contingent knowledge and social control, whilst at the same time drawing critical sociology beyond romanticism by developing progressivism's desire for the emancipation of the self from such control through a rejection of any metaphysic of presence via the dissolution of the individuality of the pupil into the free flow of arbitrary non-realistic language.⁴³

Of central historical importance to this movement of thought, in relation to the critic of Hirst, stands the collection of papers edited by Michael Young as *Knowledge and Control*.⁴⁴ Lawton has analysed the key elements of the diverse papers in terms of a five stage movement:⁴⁵ a) traditionalist education serves to preserve an unjust *status quo*; b) the content of education, understood as that knowledge selected for transmission in schools, constitutes a problem that requires critical examination; c) that traditional subject barriers through which knowledge is ordered and justified are arbitrary and artificial; d) that all knowledge is socially constructed; e) "that not only knowledge but rationality itself is merely convention."⁴⁶ Applied to Hirst, such an argument clearly reinforces the failure of the forms of knowledge to achieve any transcendent status.

This cumulative argument ends in a thoroughgoing relativism. Here the step from step d) to step e) of Lawton's summary is crucial. It makes the assumption that, if knowledge is indeed the product of social construction, then the contingency of such construction must be absolute, hence rationality itself is a contingent construction. Such an assumption reveals critical sociology as constituting, in formal terms, a mirror image of the Enlightenment, shadowing precisely the same movement as we saw within romanticism, and ultimately having close links with post-modernism. Thus the modernist dualisms remain firmly in place: absolute certainty is contrasted with absolute contingency. In reacting against the false, ideologically constructed, certainty of traditionalism critical sociology fails to transcend the modernist framework, and is thus thrust back into the advocacy of contingency.

The need to move beyond critique into pragmatic educational programmes within this school of thought thus takes on a distinctive form. There is a clear move

⁴³. cf. Ball (1990).

⁴⁴. Young, *op. cit.*

⁴⁵. Lawton, *op. cit.* pp.58ff.

⁴⁶. *Ibid.* p.58.

beyond progressivism, in so far as the necessity of knowledge, especially as linguistic formulation, is recognised as being a necessary component of individual development, emancipation and fulfilment. To this extent at least Hirst's programme retained influence. What was required was a selection from the diversity of contingent knowledge as the material content whereby education could contribute to personal, social, moral and spiritual development of the individual. Given the primacy of progressive aims -- though not its romantic content -- the criteria for such a selection took on the form of pragmatic ethics. Given progressivism's commitment to equality and emancipation, and its historical distrust of the implications of any diversity of educational content, such a selection was understood in terms of the development of a common curriculum capable of bringing about social cohesion.⁴⁷

The irony of this developed position is that formally the process of education merely replicates that of traditionalism, which itself was concerned with the pragmatic utility of the material content of education for the ethical development of pupils as citizens of the culture it sought to transmit. Critical sociology thus, within a parallel framework, seeks to replace the material content and ethical aims of traditionalist education with that of progressive liberalism. Both traditionalism and the reformulation of progressivism by critical sociology thus operate within the same formal structure of cultural transmission, the content of which, and fundamental ethical aim of, are separated by contrasting visions of the ethical ends of society and the individuals within it. It is this perspective that informs the debate surrounding the national and basic curriculum following the 1988 Education Reform Act. Traditionalists seek a conservative content to bring about conservative ends, 'reformed' progressives seek a liberal structure to bring about liberal ends. The history of the British Empire joins battle with the history of minority groups, the Christian tradition of the nation competes with religious pluralism. The battle ground is located in the political arena, with schools, teachers and pupils left to work with, and digest the crumbs from, the victor's table.

This argument, that Hirst's ultimately relativistic position has strong parallels with the relativism of critical sociology, is confirmed by a consideration of Hirst's treatment of religious education.⁴⁸ According to educational principles learning must be concerned with the critical appropriation of that which is genuine knowledge. There

⁴⁷ For contrasting moves within this debate cf. Hargreaves (1982) and Holt (1978).

⁴⁸ For Hirst's contribution to the Religious Education debate cf. Hirst (1963), (1970), (1972a), (1973c), (1976), (1981); for critical discussion cf. Phillips (1970), Shone (1973).

can, therefore, be no educational justification for a specifically Christian education: faith based schooling, catechesis and indoctrination must all be rejected in so far as they claim to be educational activities.⁴⁹ The ground for such a claim is Hirst's position regarding the status of primary Christian doctrinal and theological statements. He states clearly: "I do not consider that we do at present have objective tests for such propositions."⁵⁰ Further, "it is our uncertainties about such claims that necessarily determine our approach to all aspects of religion within education".⁵¹ Hirst does, however, find genuine, testable knowledge in those secondary aspects of religious discourse that speak of the phenomena of religious belief: "We do know what it is for people to hold Christian or other beliefs, even if we do not know whether those beliefs are true, and our knowledge here is part of a thoroughly objective form of knowledge and understanding."⁵² The objectivity of the secondary discipline of the phenomenology of religion in the context of religious studies thus offers an objective grounding for religious education that the divergent primary disciplines of theology do not provide. Crucial here is the fact that the test for objectivity is that of public consensus read in the context of Hirst's fundamental transcendental concerns. The possibility of truth in contingent theological discourse is bypassed in favour of the certainty of the objective truth of religious phenomenology. Hirst's programme thus rejects the legitimacy of theological education, and as such offers a form of cultural transmission into a specific, late modern understanding of religion. As such, Hirst falls into the very paternalistic trap he seeks to avoid.

4. The Rehabilitation of Hirst: Evolution of Contingent Rationality

i) Habermas and critical theory

Hirst's programme, then, must be seen as fundamentally flawed as a result of his failure to offer a viable understanding of the nature of knowledge as contingently rational. His understanding of knowledge can only avoid the charge of contingency by establishing itself as transcendent. The actual failure to achieve transcendence means that, in Hirstian terms, the supposed objectivity of the forms collapses into subjectivity. At the same time, the critique of this fundamental flaw in his thought is

⁴⁹ cf. Hirst (1972a), (1981).

⁵⁰ Hirst (1973c) p. 10.

⁵¹ Ibid. p.10.

⁵² Ibid. p.10.

unable to do more than affirm the inevitability of subjectivity, and hence turn to a pragmatic justification of education rooted in cultural transmission and distinguished from traditionalism only by its material content. It was suggested above that Hirst stands in the borderlands between modernism and critical realism. The discussion so far has underlined the modernist presuppositions of Hirst's thought, especially in regard to his understanding of religion, and to the framework within which his critics operate. In seeking in this section to rehabilitate Hirst's programme, it will be argued that the modernist dilemma facing both Hirst and his critics may be overcome by shifting the debate into the framework of critical realism, in the process revealing the limitations of the traditionalist and reformed-progressive perspective that informs much contemporary educational debate.

It is significant that Hirst himself, in his later writings in response to criticism, moves to adopt such a strategy.⁵³ He acknowledges the argument that the forms of knowledge fail to produce transcendent knowledge, and accepts that his programme "mistakenly saw itself as producing objective universal truths".⁵⁴ However, in accepting the appropriateness of such criticisms, he goes on to suggest that these "do not seem to me to constitute the fundamental challenge to the enterprise that is sometimes claimed."⁵⁵ The way forward is through a revision of the formalist-teleological tension in his work. On the one hand there is the need "for developing more sophisticated arguments in claims about universal categories,"⁵⁶ and on the other the need "for developing greater sensitivity to the social contexts of conceptual use".⁵⁷ The possibility of such a move lies in attention being paid to developments in philosophy, and here the work of Habermas is cited specifically. The advocacy of a shift to a critical realistic framework, though implicit, seems undeniable.

Habermas, in the development of his thought from *Knowledge and Human Interests* through to *The Theory of Communicative Action* established one of the more sophisticated of critical realist perspectives.⁵⁸ Firstly, he accepts critical realism's attack on modernism: a) knowledge is never transcendent, but is always related to a specific spatial and temporal location; b) knowledge is not subject to empirical or

53. Hirst (1982).

54. Ibid. p.8.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

58. Habermas (1987a), (1987b), (1987c); cf. McCarthy (1984). Bernstein (1985), Ingram (1987), Browning & Fiorenza (1992).

positivist reductionism, but entails both fact and value, being bound up as it is with the ethics of human interest; c) knowledge is inter-subjective, the result of communication between persons; d) knowledge cannot be abstracted from action. Secondly, he rejects the modernist presupposition that such a state of affairs leads inevitably into relativism, and chooses instead to affirm the centrality of contingent rationality: a) knowledge requires, and works within, the tradition of occidental reason; b) knowledge transcends the instrumental-propositional divide, so that truth is pragmatic not because of its ability to achieve a predetermined end, but because of its ability to operate in a way which serves to illuminate reality; c) knowledge is a critical process that moves beyond the idealism of Gadamer's notion of 'understanding' precisely because it is capable of its own self-critique.

The formalist-teleological divide in Hirst's work may thus be seen in new light. Hirst's failure to produce an objective-formalist account of knowledge does not destroy his educational programme, since the alternative is not a subjective-teleological relativism but contingent rationality. Knowledge exists not in a Platonic way above and beyond contingent reality. Rather, in Aristotelian terms, it is to be found within contingent reality, as a process of critical development. The objective-subjective, formalist-teleological divide is thus transcended. A 'liberal education' grounded in critical realism's contingent knowledge of reality, of the way things are, thus moves beyond objectivity and subjectivity, beyond transcendentalism and contingency.⁵⁹

Green has pointed out how this requires liberal education to take account of the nature of the development and evolution of knowledge within education: "Man's capacity for linguistic development and his sensory apparatus are both products of evolution, and must be viewed as non-static in their nature. Similarly, man's notions of reason, intelligibility, and objectivity must be viewed as concepts subject to adjustment and change within the larger evolutionary context."⁶⁰ The language here clearly echoes the work of Dewey, and (paradoxically as it may seem) it will be suggested that it is in the combination of Dewey and Hirst's work -- figures normally approached in terms of polarity -- that the possibility of a critical realist foundation for education is to be found.

⁵⁹. For the educational implications of critical theory in general, and Habermas' programme in particular cf. Gibson (1986).

⁶⁰. Green (1985) p.115.

ii) Dewey: development and truth

Dewey's developed philosophy, perhaps best characterized as a 'pragmatic naturalism', evolved out of his rejection of idealism.⁶¹ He retained idealism's Hegelian notion of the importance of change, process and dynamic organic interaction. However, these notions were now heavily qualified in a manner that represented a fundamental shift from transcendentalism to immanentism. a) Dewey grounded his thought on an empirical notion of experience, though rejecting any possibility of reductionism: experience is essentially holistic, embracing not only sense impressions but the broad scope of historical culture. "Experience is all-inclusive in the sense that man is involved in continuous transactions with the whole of nature."⁶² b) The empirical psychology upon which his notion of experience was grounded was linked with an evolutionary naturalism. Humanity indwells an evolving naturalistic reality, one which is experienced as the ongoing development of culture. c) There is no transcendent perspective available, humanity indwells a world within which there is no present knowledge of "a single unified whole in which everything is ultimately interrelated".⁶³ d) Alongside this flow of naturalistic, experiential, non-transcendent reality Dewey places a fundamental pragmatic concern with practical life, especially in moral and political terms.

Like Hirst, Dewey's philosophy of education is grounded in the dual rejection of traditionalism and progressivism. For Dewey, philosophy, politics and education form continuous aspects of a single process. Within the historical development of culture "Education is, or ought to be, a continuous reconstruction of experience in which there is a development of immature experience towards experience funded with the skills and habits of intelligence."⁶⁴ The school is to be seen as the microcosm of democratic society in general, which itself seeks to develop towards a maturity of experience. In this context Dewey develops his notion of the aim of education. "An aim denotes the result of any natural process brought to consciousness and made a factor in determining present observation and choice of ways of acting. It signifies that an activity has become intelligent."⁶⁵ Here the notion

^{61.} cf. Dewey (1963), (1963), (1966a), (1966b); Bernstein (1967), Blewett (1960), Garford (1966), Skilbeck (1970), Tiles (1988), White (1982), Wirth (1966).

^{62.} Bernstein (1967) p.382.

^{63.} Op. cit. p.381.

^{64.} Op. cit. p.384.

^{65.} Dewey (1966a) p.110.

of aim is rooted in the contingency of knowledge: Educational activity cannot accept as an aim a transcendent point, of which it has no knowledge, it must be content with bringing into focus, articulating and developing our interreaction with the evolutionary processes of nature and culture which we indwell. Consequently "A true aim is thus opposed at every point to an aim which is imposed upon a process of action from without."⁶⁶ It follows that the 'aim' of education is intrinsic to the educational process itself, and is nothing more, and nothing less, than the development of conscious and ongoing interreaction with nature.

White finds such a notion unacceptable. His discussion takes as its starting point the acceptance that "in Dewey, education is essentially to do with promoting the growth of the individual mind without limit. Education for him has no aim outside itself: growth is an intrinsic aim."⁶⁷ He suggests that Dewey's break with idealism has left an unfilled vacuum. If growth of the mind in idealism had an external focus in the divine or ultimate, Dewey's rejection of transcendence means that such growth can only turn in on itself, as a form of ever expanding cancer: here White quotes with approval MacIntyre's suggestion that "A society which pursues only means, without paying attention to any ultimate ends which these means might bring about, is irrational."⁶⁸ Herein, for White, lies Dewey's dilemma. Either education as growth is no more than an irrational, directionless and hence cancerous self-development with no ultimate goal, or else education as growth must accept an external goal or ground in a notion of objective knowledge, yet such knowledge does not exist. "The theory that the aim, or the central aim, of education should be that the pupils possess or pursue knowledge or understanding for its own sake remains ungrounded, except by religious or metaphysical doctrines which man today finds less plausible than their predecessors did in the last century."⁶⁹

Implicit in White's reading of Dewey is the acceptance of an objective-subjective dualism: either education as process has an objective external aim, or education as process is condemned to an intrinsic subjectivity. Such a reading is paralleled by Rorty's appropriation of Dewey as an 'edifying', 'peripheral' philosopher who "asserts the possibility of a post-Kantian culture,"⁷⁰ one which for Rorty is to be identified with his own post-modern project. For Rorty, Dewey bypasses traditional

⁶⁶. Ibid.

⁶⁷. White (1982) p.13, cf. Dewey, *op. cit.* pp.50ff.

⁶⁸. Ibid. p.13.

⁶⁹. Ibid. p.16.

⁷⁰. Rorty (1980) p.6.

epistemology which understands knowledge as being essentially a problem of representation,⁷¹ and rather sets out to "proclaim the unreality of traditional epistemological problems and solutions".⁷² In rejecting this "unnatural quest for certainty"⁷³ Rorty argues, Dewey affirms a vision of a "culture no longer dominated by the ideal of objective cognition but by that of aesthetic enhancement".⁷⁴ He thus supports Rorty's own post-modern vision in which "language is not a device for representing reality but a reality in which we live and move".⁷⁵ Bernard Williams comments that "Rorty claims to free Dewey from dated associations, and to find him already waiting at the end of a road on which Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida are now travelling."⁷⁶

White's rejection, and Rorty's affirmation of Dewey's programme thus have in common, whether implicitly or explicitly, a fundamentally post-modern reading of his work. In contrast, Tiles' monograph offers the possibility of a critical realist reading of Dewey.⁷⁷ He points out that Rorty fails to take Dewey's philosophy, in particular his instrumental logic, seriously: "Rorty distances himself from Dewey the philosopher and moves towards Dewey the pundit.....he is in the end no more prepared to take seriously and develop the philosophical position for which Dewey argued than are those who remain firmly within the analytical tradition."⁷⁸ Tiles points out that Dewey nowhere abandons the notion of 'truth', as Rorty's post-modern reading suggests. On the contrary, he develops his fundamental concern for truth in terms of his notion of 'warranted assertibility'.⁷⁹ For Dewey truth is essentially a matter of contingent rationality. Thus to the quotation from Bernstein offered above, viz that "experience is all-inclusive in the sense that man is involved in continuous transactions with the whole of nature"⁸⁰ must be added the additional qualification ".....and through

71. Thus, with reference to Dewey, Rorty suggests that "to think of knowledge [as something] which presents a 'problem', and about which we ought to have a 'theory', is a product of viewing knowledge as an assemblage of representations". Ibid. p. 136.

72. Ibid. p. 166.

73. Ibid. p.228.

74. Ibid. p.13.

75. Quoted from Rorty (1982), with no page reference, by Williams (1990) p.26.

76. Ibid. p.26.

77. Tiles (1988).

78. Ibid. pp.4f.

79. Ibid. p.4.

80. cf. note 62, above.

systematic inquiry he can come to understand the essential characteristics of nature".⁸¹ The quest for truth is an ongoing critical process that takes place within the flow of cultural and historical contingency. That the aim can only, in such a situation, be a developing intrinsic one (since extrinsic truth, transcending the process, is unavailable) does not necessitate the rejection of rationality or of the notion of truth. Contingent rationality constitutes an ongoing critical movement towards truth.

"To mount such criticism effectively, moreover, requires certain distortions in our conceptions of experience and of reality to be corrected, and it cannot be carried out without a sound grasp of the nature of the general goals of intellectual endeavour (such as 'truth') and how these goals are progressively refined as our methods for pursuing them are developed." ⁸²

Such methods for Dewey are set out in his understanding of instrumental, or experimental, logic, and are essentially the same as the methods of science. In the context of contingently indwelling, evolving nature, the inquirer experiential relationship may encounter a displacement of relationship, a 'felt difficulty'. This requires the displacement to be articulated as a problem, an articulation that itself develops through a process of suggestive refinement. Such articulation and refinement proceeds towards the development of a hypothetical solution, itself subject in turn to experimental testing. If such testing proves positive then the displacement is transformed into a relationship with nature that constitutes a unified whole holding together in harmony the ongoing movement of self, experience and nature. And so the process of contingent rational inquiry, whether in the fields of science, aesthetics, religion or politics, continues. Such experiential learning is neither subjective, irrational nor cancerous.

Bernstein's comments on the logic of Dewey's process of inquiry, establishing clearly, as they do, his critical realist credentials, are worth quoting in full.

"Dewey's theory of inquiry as an ongoing self-corrective process.....there are no absolute first truths that are given or known with certainty. Furthermore, knowledge neither has nor requires such a foundation in order to be rational. Inquiry and its objective, knowledge, are rational because inquiry is a self-corrective process by which we gradually become clearer about the epistemological status of both our starting point and conclusions. We must continually submit our knowledge claims to the public test of a community of inquirers in order to clarify, refine and justify them." ⁸³

⁸¹. Bernstein, op. cit. p.382.

⁸². Tiles, op. cit. p.4.

⁸³. Bernstein, op. cit. p.383.

By bringing Hirst and Dewey into positive relationship, it follows, the possibility of a critical realist model of education becomes a reality. Both Hirst and Dewey rejected the limitations of traditionalism and progressivism. Both saw the way forward in terms of a realistic relationship between the self and the order of things. The inadequacies of Hirst's forms, understood in terms of the tensions between formalism and teleology, are bypassed if Dewey's notion of instrumental reason is adopted. Formalism is indeed to be replaced by teleology, yet this leads not towards relativism, subjectivism and post-modernism, but towards an ongoing, critical enterprise of bringing humanity into greater alignment with the actual nature of reality. Education is no more, and no less, than the quest for truth.

Contemporary educational debate may be read as being dominated by the modernist distinction between fact and value. The humanistic thrust of education places the concern for moral and spiritual value above that of value-free knowledge. Traditionalism responds by imposing on education the transmission of a traditional, value-laden culture, whether it be that of the tradition of conservative 'traditional' values, or the liberal values of multiculturalism. Progressivism responds by assigning the right to adopt values to the individual, who is urged to move towards self-fulfilment in the containing context of the liberal values of freedom, autonomy and tolerance.

Hirst is absolutely correct to seek to ground education on the unity of fact and value, to understand education as a move towards a right relationship with the order of things. His fundamental problem is that his understanding of such a unity of knowledge is both static and transcendent, and as such operates in the shadow of Cartesian anxiety. It has been suggested here that to approach such a unity in terms of a progressive, contingent rationality enables education both to be grounded in the order of things whilst at the same time accept sensitively the contingency of human knowledge of this order. Education is no more than the giving of direct attention to the process of bringing individuals and society into line with the nature of reality. Such a process moves beyond modernist distinctions between subjectivity and objectivity, absolutism and relativism. Education is grounded in that which is both contingent and rational and has as its justification its concern to align the learner with the true nature of reality.

Chapter Ten

Critical Realism and the Integrity of Religious Education

Chapter Ten offers a proposal regarding the nature of religious education within the framework of critical realism; i) a summary of the argument of the preceding chapters is offered, together with a methodological reflection on the status of religious education within critical realism; ii) the aims of religious education should be fundamentally concerned with the intrinsic integrity of its subject matter, that is to say, with the question of realistic religious truth and knowledge, appropriated within the discourse of contingent rationality; iii) to achieve this, religion must be presented within its own diverse integrity, utilizing a variety of appropriate methodological approaches, with particular attention being paid to the dual themes of religious ambiguity and religious truth; iv) this will require the development of a critical hermeneutic focused on the notion of the development of a religiously literate society capable of responding to and living with theological and religious dimensions with the maturity of an informed integrity; v) to achieve this, religious education will need to differentiate itself from -- and so become critically aware of -- its political context.

1. The Framework of Religious Education

i) Summary: from modernism to critical realism

a) Modernism. As the argument of the preceding chapters has developed, the problem of realism has emerged as a fundamental question. The sub-structures engendered by the Enlightenment introduced a dualism between external-objective and

internal-subjective truth.¹ The former related knowledge to the order of things in a naturalistically conceived, materialistic universe, whilst the latter understood knowledge in terms of an esoteric depth of private perception of value. This modernist programme was extended by post-modernism, that highlighted the fundamental ethical importance of the autonomy of value over against the constraints of any realistic objectivity. Realism is understood as morally and religiously neutral, whilst the anti-realism of internal perception stands at the heart of our humanity. In effect, the hermeneutical nature of the sub-structures was transformed into an ontology, one that required the liberal pragmatics of freedom of, and tolerance towards, beliefs. The fatal flaw in such a construction was observed to be the dislocation of issues of value from the question of the nature of reality itself.

It was within this dualistic context that religious and theological perspectives were required to operate if they were to avoid the poles of fideism and reductionism. Religious liberalism, faced with the requirement of an accommodation with modernism, turned away from the realistic claims of religious doctrine and language, replacing them with a prior grounding of religious belief in internal experience. The result was the acceptance, by default, of the inherently anti-realistic nature of such experience. Post-modernism was understood as representative of the logical working through of the liberal position: religious language and experience float free of any contact with the actual reality of the universe. Religious claims are understood as being essentially limited to the expression of private preference. The politics of liberalism, in affirming the freedom of individuals to believe what they will, regardless of the constraints of external reality, thus offered religious liberalism precisely that compromise of accommodation that it sought: religious belief was thus legitimated, provided that it remains firmly in the private sphere.

Given the divorce of factual from value, it was inevitable that modernist programmes of education would take as their central concern that of the moral development of society and of individuals. Such programmes developed along two parallel lines: traditionalism offered an induction into the received cultural tradition of society, understanding such an induction as necessary preparation for the living of a responsible life within it; progressivism, on the other hand, was wary of the possible constraints of the imposition of such culture, and focused instead directly on the

¹. It is important to underline here that the description of the Enlightenment sub-structures was, on pragmatic grounds, a deliberately limited one, focusing on questions of epistemology and placing on one side cultural, economic, social, political and bureaucratic factors that also played a central role in the transition from pre-modern, through modern, to post-modern provenances.

autonomous growth and fulfilment of the innate potential of the inner self. Both programmes, it was observed, were essentially paternalistic: they imposed a set of anti-realistic values without addressing the question of the relationship of such values to the actual nature of reality itself. The inherent truth of modernism as an ontological construction was assumed throughout. Hence the irony that programmes of liberal education actually involved the induction of children into a closed system in the face of the rhetoric of freedom.

Faced by the same demands for legitimation within a modernist framework as religious belief itself, religious education between 1944 and 1988 adopted a similar strategy of accommodation. The modernist accounts of subjective and objective knowledge, of the essentially experiential-expressive nature of religion, and of the complementary educational strategies of traditionalism and progressivism, assumed the unquestioned framework within which religious education sought to develop its identity. The result was a model of religious education that: i) limited the understanding of educational aims to the moral development of society; ii) imposed an experiential-expressive model of religion at a foundational level; iii) adopted a romantic hermeneutic informed by the priority of the experiential over the expressive; and, iv) utilized liberalism's politics of autonomy and toleration as part of its self-understanding and justification. The result was a paternalistic distortion of religion in the minds of pupils, the imposition of an ideology grounded not in the intrinsic self understanding of the religious issues it addressed, but rather in the needs of the religious education industry to survive in a modernist framework.

b) Post-modernism. The argument proceeded to address the disintegration of the modernist ontology via the development of post-modern and critical realist perspectives on the world. Post-modernism, it was suggested, merely served to perpetuate the dualisms of modernism by affirming, reinforcing and drawing out the logical implications of the romantic mirror image of non-realistic values. As such it offered nothing substantial for education beyond earlier calls for a de-schooled society, or a radicalisation of educational progressivism. Nevertheless, its critique of the limitations of modernism, in particular its denial of the adequacy of a single publically acceptable meta-narrative, was of fundamental importance to the emergence of critical realism, even if post-modernism's positive content failed to follow through the logic of this critique.

c) Critical Realism. At the heart of the present argument is the claim that critical realism, in contrast, does offer a viable alternative framework to that of modernism. On an epistemological level critical realism transcends the limitations of the dualistic sub-structures of modernism. Knowledge develops from within the perspectives of the world we already know, dependent on tradition and the

progression of public discourse. As such it is able to avoid the reductionism and dualism inherent in modernism. It is at heart realistic, seeking a proper location of the self within reality. It avoids any descent into ideology through the self-conscious demand for an ongoing criticism of the contingent, though never non-rational, constructions of reality it gives voice to.

The religious and theological implications are profound. Religious statements are understood as making realistic claims regarding the nature of reality. As such we must accept the ambiguity of divergent patterns of belief. These, however are no longer protected by a rhetorical ontology of privatisation and immunity, but rather form part of public discourse. This opens up the possibility of dialogue across world views whose aim is that of a more coherent understanding of the order of things.

A critical realist educational programme, it was suggested, would take the question of knowledge, and hence of realistic truth as being of central concern. Education thus becomes a process of inducting pupils into the various discourses of our cultural heritage with a view to equipping them to take on board for themselves the insights, wisdom and skills necessary to further extend and deepen our limited human understanding of reality. The question of the moral development of society is fundamentally addressed within such a process. Morality and value cannot, it was suggested, be divorced from our contingent realistic understanding of reality. The outstanding question, addressed here, is that of the possible shape of any programme of religious education within such a framework of critical realism.

ii) The status of the critical realist framework

In offering critical realism as an alternative framework on which to ground religious education there has been no desire to offer an ontological solution to the problem of religion. Given that the reality of a universally accepted ontology is not yet a possibility, and shows little sign of becoming one even in the distant future, critical realism is offered in pragmatic terms, as a *hermeneutical framework better able to do justice to the conflicting ontological claims of religious and non-religious world views and to the appropriation of a level of religious understanding in pupils able to lead them towards a genuine religious literacy*, than the competing alternatives of a particular theological programme, or of modernism and post-modernism. The contention is merely that, since such a framework is inevitable, at the present moment in western cultural history, critical realism stands most chance of enabling the emergence of a discourse of religious education capable of moving towards the ideal of allowing all the key competing discourses to be heard. If modernism marked the

closure of theological discourse in the public realm, then critical realism sets up the hope of its reinstitution.

Critical realism serves to avoid reductionism in linguistic reference. Language is used in a plurality of multivocal voices, with a wide variety of functions, contexts and meanings. To understand language is to be able to function effectively and intelligently within the families of discourse. Such language is contingent, but not as a result relative. We indwell the world, able to understand reality only from the perspective of our place, both spatial and temporal, in the order of things. Because language is not incommensurable between world views, the possibility emerges of informed judgement between competing linguistic discourses. Language can offer us more and less, appropriate and inappropriate, coherent and incoherent, stories and descriptions of our place within reality. Whether the referent of religious discourse is appropriately located in God, the world, community or self, whether it functions as a discourse of description or of relation, can remain an open question. This does not necessarily lead either to relativism or agnosticism. Practical commitment to a specific world view and linguistic system within this plurality is unavoidable. The consequence is that religious believer and unbeliever alike are free to adopt a specific ontological discourse as being of ultimate truth, on the basis of the accepted truth and coherence of a received linguistic tradition, without being at the same time drawn into the closure of discourse.

Critical realism is thus capable of appropriating plurality not, as in liberalism, by advocating a point of lowest common denominator agreement, but by holding up the diversity of world views within their collective ambiguity and tension. Atheistic humanism, Islamic revelationism and Trinitarian Christianity are thus able to speak for themselves: the resulting contradictions are not papered over by a paternalistic liberal utopianism, but are brought to the surface. The result is the possibility of the introduction of seriousness, integrity and honesty into religious debate.

This opening out of discourse is not negated by religious and fideistic systems that choose to close their discourse from the outside world. In this situation the fact that public discourse disintegrates itself becomes a matter of debate. If such fideism chooses to explain why it considers its conversation to be incommensurable with that of the outside world, then a negative discourse remains a linguistic reality. If fideism moves from negative discourse to silence, then the closure of discourse remains a matter of external debate, and the silence continues to speak for itself.

At this point the limitations of both critical realism and fideism themselves become a focus of language, and substantial discussion becomes structural and fundamental. In this situation: i) either fideistic silence will be read as a failure to provide a coherent and explanatory discourse capable of competing with that of

others, and the world view it embodies will become merely one of historical interest. It seems unlikely that this will become a reality with those major world views that have stood the test of time, though in the longer term the reality of non-living religions -- those whose world views are no longer adhered to -- must be acknowledged. Here religious education may well need to come to the decision that, for example, many of the current representatives of emerging new religious movements lack the illuminatory coherence for their truth claims -- as opposed to their historical reality -- to justify a place in any syllabus of education. Alternatively, ii) the coherence and explanatory power of a world view may emerge that forces a rethinking, redrawing, or even discarding of the critical realist framework. Such are pragmatic issues that a later generation must address. This, of course, is not to say anything new: the emergence of liberal education offers a recent and relevant example of just such a structural-foundational shift, and the present thesis is offered as a pragmatic proposal of yet another.

2. The Structure of Religious Education

Having summarized the core argument of the thesis, and outlined the function of the critical realistic perspective, the remaining task is to map out an outline of the contours of religious education that emerge within it. This will be done in the form of a series of proposals, together with explanatory comments. These will follow up the division introduced in Chapter Four's critique of liberal education, outlining in turn issues concerned with aims, the nature of religion, hermeneutics and the political dimension. For ease of reference these proposals are repeated in bullet form in the final conclusion and summary. It needs to be stressed that what is offered is no more than a working structure for religious education, one capable of retaining the subject's integrity within the provenance of critical realism. Practical issues of curriculum development and classroom teaching are placed on one side.

i) The aims of religious education

a) Religious education should aim to ground its integrity within its own intrinsic subject matter, that is, the question of religion.

Liberal religious education was understood above as being driven by a fundamental desire for its own legitimation and justification within the framework of

modernism. As such it embarked on a systematic redefinition of its intrinsic subject matter in the form of an acceptance of a universal experiential-expressive model of religion acceptable by all who assume the given framework of modernism. The division between subjective experience and the objective reality of the cultural phenomena of religion that this entailed meant an acceptance of the modernist distinction between fact and value. Consequently religious education became alienated from the intrinsic question of religious truth and adopted in its place the role of exploration and clarification of individual value preferences. Such alienation meant the subject could no longer offer anything of intrinsic religious worth to the curriculum, and as a result became the subject of political manipulation in the modernist search for a viable programme of moral education.

The institutional structures of the religious education industry, so long as they seek external legitimation at the expense of internal integrity, involve themselves politically in a process of self-defence in which the protection of such structures becomes an end in itself, regardless of the material content of the curriculum that emerges. Such a process inevitably leads to an ongoing process of redefinition of its subject matter that ultimately leaves religious education morally, intellectually and politically bankrupt, and dependent on the good will of external agencies for its survival.

The framework of critical realism offers religious education the opportunity for the retrieval of its intrinsic subject matter. The 'question of religion' is understood here as the realistic question of the truth, or falsehood, of the various attempts to understand the whole of reality objectively through the constructs of religious and a-religious systems. If the subject is to regain its integrity, and so have a positive content to offer the curriculum, it must do so in terms of the intrinsic value and importance of *this* question for an education leading to individual and social development. The justification and legitimation of religious education thus becomes grounded in the importance of the religious question itself.

b) Religious education should aim to attend to the heart of the religious question, which is that of transcendence, that is, that which is in actuality stands over against reality as its ultimate purpose, nature and explanation.

The definition of 'religion' and hence of the 'religious question' is of paramount importance here. Phenomenological research has identified the search for, or apprehension, of the revelation of a transcendent realm as constituting the essence of religion. As such, non-theistic religious systems such as Buddhism may be incorporated into the broad understanding of religion, whilst political and cultural

movements such as Humanism and Marxism, whilst they may display similar social functions and structures, are excluded because of the lack of any transcendent reference. The adoption of such a phenomenological description here is not taken to imply the addition of a phenomenological meta-narrative describing either the nature of transcendental truth, or the nature of the interrelationship between contrasting descriptions of transcendence.

Given this definition, the enterprise of religious education emerges as a fundamentally theological one. Theology here is understood in a broad sense, to encompass all attempts to pass beyond phenomenological description of human religious culture and engage with the realistic question of the truth and actuality of transcendence. Thus a strict etymology of the word is not being invoked: 'theology' is being referred to transcendence generally, rather than a more limited notion of a theistic or deistic transcendence.

The theological focus on transcendental religious truth is to be distinguished from the broad research area referred to within the academy as 'religious studies'. This conglomeration of interlinked disciplines is, historically, a product of the Enlightenment. Its agenda is set negatively by the suspension of the theological question of religious truth, and positively by a concern for functional, descriptive or reductionist accounts of the cultural phenomena of religion understood within the immanent framework of modernism. A religious education that draws its rationale and curriculum content from religious studies will inevitably be drawn into a number of assumptions regarding the religious question posed by theology and as such will impose a modernist ideology on its subject matter.

The advocacy of the primacy of theology over religious studies is not to deny that the theological question can be asked apart from the investigation and exploration of the human phenomena of religion. Indeed, the insights of religious studies may be said to constitute a necessary requirement for theological investigation. Nevertheless, religious studies should function to inform and contextualise theological debate rather than be allowed to set a limited theological agenda. A narrow focus on religion as cultural history results in the question of theological truth becoming subservient to the functional issue of a pragmatic search for value within culture. Theology replaces the question of the social function of religion with the question of the actuality of religious truth. The giving of priority to functional rather than intrinsic questions involves an implied answer to the problem posed by theology, and as such will result in a form of educational paternalism.

c) Religious education should aim to attend to the reality that the question of transcendence is an objective one, that is to say, its truth remains given in its actuality regardless of the human capacity to appropriate it.

The rejection of functionalist accounts of religious phenomena, and the turn to the intrinsic importance of the religious question itself raises the issue of the modernist move to relegate such issues to the sphere of the private, subjective and non-realistic. The logic of the experiential-expressive model, it was suggested above, is one in which the subjectivity of belief takes priority over the objectivity of truth. This in turn develops into a post-modern reading of religion in which religious language is entirely arbitrary, constituted by the free construction of religious language systems grounded in personal preference.

Contrasted to this, a critical realist perspective focuses on the question of the objective actuality of transcendent religious truth. Though human knowledge is contingent and provisional it nevertheless is capable of remaining rational in this context. Any epistemology or description of religious reality implies a fundamental ontology, implies that is to say, a theological answer to the religious question.

Thus, for example naturalistic post-modern readings of religion accept an unambiguously immanent naturalistic cosmology when describing objective reality, and their upholding to the value and truth of religious language is unequivocally located in the realm of non-realistic language. Its rejection of the possibility of a religious meta-narrative thus, ironically, actually entails a theological ontology: that of non-realism within an immanent naturalistic framework. This is not to argue that the perspectives of naturalistic post-modern theology have no place in programmes of religious education, merely that they cannot be allowed to become foundational -- that is to say provide a meta-narrative upon which the rationale of religious education is grounded - - without imposing an educational paternalism. Rather such a post-modern religious ontology should take its place alongside other fundamental religious meta-narratives as the subject of investigation within the discipline of religious education.

d) Religious education should aim to attend to the reality that there exists a plurality of public beliefs concerning the nature of transcendence, that is to say, religions offer contrasting and contradictory descriptions of transcendence.

Modernist religious education, in its concern for legitimation, sought a working neutrality as a means of broadening its appeal and bypassing the ambiguity of religion within society. Its tendency to fail to distinguish teaching from advocacy led to a confusion between a methodological neutrality and a material neutrality. That is to

say, the neutrality entailed by the educational aims and objectives of the teaching process were often transferred to a working neutrality imposed on the material content and structures of religion itself, as it was presented in the classroom. The experiential-expressive model offered a common framework for religion, and when this was applied -- often implicitly -- to the theological question of transcendence. The result was the imposition on religion of an implied single theology of world religions. Religion is thus reduced to a single meta-narrative, a single ontology, in which the diversity of religious cultural expression is united by a common experience of a single transcendent ontology.

Within a religious education stemming from the perspectives of critical realism the diversity of religious ontologies must be both acknowledged and upheld. Claims that Jesus of Nazareth is a false prophet, *the* incarnation of God, or a prophet of Allah entail three contrasting religious meta-narratives, those of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This cannot be reconciled by a reductionist understanding of Jesus as a holy man favoured with a special, or even unique, experience of the divine without doing fundamental injustice to the self-understandings of the three contrasting ontologies. The issue is not simply one of communal belief: it is an ontological *fact* that Jesus cannot be the figure described alternatively by Judaism, Christianity and Islam at one and the same time.

This acknowledgement of the plurality of religious ontology may be taken a stage further. The limits of this plurality cannot simply be limited to the understanding of the world's religions as a series of independent, static entities. The historical emergence of a single religious faith should not disguise the fact that a number of fundamental meta-narratives may be operating within that particular faith network. Religious traditions are in constant inter-action both with external and internal agencies. It is, as a result, necessary to view them from the perspective of a dynamic evolution. We have seen, for example, how within the context of modernism Christianity has undertaken a series of critical revisions and re-definitions of its basic ontology to the extent that there is an internal dispute as to which of the resulting ontologies that have emerged may justifiably be termed Christian. Thus the orthodox evangelical Christian tradition understands the revisions of Christian self-understandings by Hick, in his concern to build a common universal world theology within which Christianity may be located, and by Cupitt, in his concern for a non-realistic theology, to constitute meta-narratives that must be distinguished from that of mainstream orthodox Christianity.

Again, the integrity of religious education will be dependent on its ability to acknowledge and respond to this diversity of theological approaches to the religious

question: both in terms of the developing interactions between and within the diversity of faith traditions and communities.

e) Religious education should aim to attend to the ambiguity of these transcendent beliefs, that is to say, the very existence of transcendence is itself a disputed question.

Alongside the plurality of developing religious accounts of transcendence must be placed the ambiguity of the fact that the affirmation of immanence and rejection of all transcendent reality represents a publically accepted and intellectually viable position. It is necessary here to speak of an interlinked and dynamic plurality of immanent positions. This situation, itself largely a product of modernism, is of fundamental significance to the developing self-understanding of the religious traditions. The justification of transcendence cannot, in the light of the intellectual strength and coherence of immanent claims, be affirmed without addressing and responding to the position of the latter. Any viable religious education concerned with the theological truth of the religious question must thus inevitably address this issue. Indeed, within our definition of theology as the investigation of the religious question of transcendence, such immanent accounts demand to be understood as fundamentally theological in nature. If theology is concerned with the actuality of transcendence, then the negation of transcendence is itself a theological move, one that makes positive statements about the nature of transcendent reality, albeit with a negative content.

Liberal religious education, having made the decision to utilize religion as a means of individual and social development was faced with the difficulty that to introduce into its curriculum reference to the negation of religious belief threatened the possibility that such a negation might undermine the positive function adopted for religion, of offering cohesion to a pluralistic society. As a result the Humanist and Marxist traditions of theological negation were introduced obliquely: either through a consensus between religion and Humanism regarding a common denominator ethic of freedom and tolerance, or else through a phenomenological description of Marxist society in which its phenomenological structure and social functions were set alongside parallels within religious communities as complementary examples of human belief systems.

In both the Humanist and Marxist cases the contradictions between immanent and transcendent perspectives were effectively avoided, leading to a form of religious education within which the fundamental challenge to religious belief, that effectively ensures that at present the basic religious question remains ambiguous and devoid of public consensus, plays no significant role at all. The question of realistic truth, side-stepped by liberal religious education, thus entails a systematic censorship

of negative as well as affirmative theological positions. It follows that a programme within the contours of critical realism that is able to do justice to the plurality and ambiguity of both religious and secular positions will be appropriate both for those positions that affirm transcendence and those that seek to negate it, precisely because the religious question, and hence problem, of truth is held to be central to the educational process.

f) Religious education should aim to attend to the fact that the question of transcendent religious truth is of fundamental importance for human self, communal, natural and transcendental understanding, that is to say, to the drive towards an avoidance of illusion and falsehood and the achievement of an appropriate orientation towards the actual order of reality.

Within the contours of modernism the differentiation of subjective human value from the objectivity of a neutral, naturalistic universe resulted in the assumption that the fundamental religious question played little or no role in the moral development of individuals and of society. It was the attitudes directed towards free-floating values, legitimated by the depth and intensity of inner experience, that gave legitimation and meaning to the question of morality. The objective facts of external reality, and specifically the neutral description of religion as a cultural phenomena, were of no fundamental moral interest beyond that of a process of providing information with which the liberal imperatives of tolerance and neutrality could be more effectively implemented. Hence modern religious education faced a constant battle to hold together in a coherent framework both the neutral objectivity of religious description and the subjective values of religious experience.

For critical realism such a privatisation of value has only a limited value. The contingency of humanity in the face of external reality means that moral truth and value is inevitably linked up with the question of the actual nature of objective reality. Human fulfilment is not merely concerned with an internal and solipsistic fulfilment of self-understanding and self-knowledge. Such self-understanding is dependent upon the relationship of the self with the human community, which in turn is dependent upon the orientation of the human community to the natural world, in turn this requires attention to the fundamental religious question of the ultimate truth of reality. Hence moral education must be seen as dependent upon the demands made upon the moral order by the actual realistic nature of the universe itself.

Human development and fulfilment thus requires an appropriate orientation towards the actual order of things: an in-appropriate orientation towards one's own being, towards society, towards nature, and towards the reality towards which the

religious question points -- whether that be transcendent or immanent -- produces falsehood and illusion. The drive towards truth, towards emancipation from the limitations of a false orientation, may be seen as fundamental to humanity, and education may be read as a key contributor to this task. The fulfilment sought by the 'discontent philosopher', and rejected by the 'content pig' thus requires a perspective that looks outward beyond the self towards the ultimate nature of reality itself. Hence the moral questions addressed by religious education are directly linked to the discipline's fundamental concern for theological truth.

g) Religious education should aim to attend to the needs of the individual and of society in the context of a transcendence that is, in its present temporal-spatial context, understood as both pluralistic and ambiguous, that is to say, to the need to develop a level of linguistic competency through which the drive towards truth may be led by an appropriate level of religious literacy.

Liberal religious education understood the concern to produce a religiously educated pupil in terms of a romantic hermeneutic that adopted a dual hermeneutic: firstly, an objective process of neutral description of the cultural phenomena of religion; secondly an opening out of the experiential dimension that was understood to constitute the heart of religion. Again, we note that the disengagement between the factual and the evaluative places the religious question in the sphere of non-realistic, privately appropriated, personal preference.

The realistic perspective of critical realism demands a hermeneutic that looks outward towards the problem of the fundamental problem posed by the religious question. Since it is language that is the medium and bearer of the narratives and linguistic structure through which this question is appropriated and understood, and since such language is essentially public and communal rather than private, it follows that a fundamental aim of religious education, in terms of its notion of what constitutes a religiously educated person, must adopt a concern for the development of an appropriate level of religious literacy. Understanding of the controversial reality referred to by the religious question requires a knowledge of, and an ability to use appropriately, the diversity of religious and theological language. To be religiously educated is fundamentally wrapped up in the ability of the pupil to engage in an informed and intelligent conversation about religion, rather than in the ability to invoke, or an openness to have invoked, the sphere of internal experience.

ii) The presentation of religion

a) Religious education should present the religious question in terms of the actuality of transcendent reality, focusing upon the issue of objective truth.

The basic criteria by which the specifically religious content of the curriculum should be presented in the classroom are threefold: i) any such presentation should be grounded in a concern to uphold the integrity of the discipline's subject matter, that is, the religious question; ii) the religious question must be presented in terms of the core issue of the actuality of transcendence, that is to say, the being or non-being of a transcendent reality that is both the source and explanation of the universe; iii) such a presentation should accept the objectivity of the ontological reality addressed by the religious question, the fact that it stands beyond the limits of present human knowledge should reject any suggestion that this reality may be either manipulated, controlled or constructed by a humanity whose grasp of ultimate truth remains both limited and contingent.

b) Religious education should present the religious question in terms of the plurality of divergent transcendental truth claims and the ambiguity that the reality of transcendent truth is itself a matter of dispute.

It follows that in presenting both the religious question itself, and the divergent human solutions to the religious question, religious education must accept its responsibility both to acknowledge, and to give the learner access to, the diversity, plurality and ambiguity of the broad range of secular and religious world-views that offer solutions to the religious question.

c) Religious education should present the religious question in a form that retains the integrity of the plurality of faith communities, together with the integrity of the academy.

In the context of the occidental west, the differentiation of the place of worship from the academy, of the priest from the teacher, poses the question of the relationship between the self-understanding of the faith communities themselves and the understanding of religion encountered within the academy. This issue, though, need not be overburdened with significance. The majority of the major religious traditions retain substantial links with the western academy: it is possible to refer to

substantial apologetic works, written and produced within the context and ground rules of the academy, that seek to provide an academic defence and legitimation of a broad variety of positions adopted by faith communities. Indeed, the nature of the differentiation of religious community and academy is in actuality a diverse and complex one. The academy may alternatively seek to describe, explain, attack or redefine the self-understanding of religious traditions. Religious traditions in turn may respond by rejecting the academy, or by seeking to redefine it, or by entering into a constructive partnership with it.

Having acknowledged the diversity, plurality and ambiguity of the relationship, a religious education that seeks to avoid paternalism should seek to respect, in its presentation of religion and the religious question, the integrity and self-understanding of both the various religious communities and of the academy. To undermine, in the process of seeking to present, the self-understanding of a faith community is to impose some form of ideology. To ignore the insights and agenda of the academy is to reject the existence of a public rationality. The issue is not one of how to solve the problem prior to the teaching process itself, but of how, by respecting the various demands for a retention of integrity, to integrate the issue into the actual learning process itself. Thus, for example, the task of teaching about a specific fundamentalist form of religious belief that consistently rejects the authority of the academy will require: i) a presentation of the self-understanding of that community and of the nature and content of its claim to possess an accurate answer to the religious question; ii) a presentation of the response of the academy to this situation in terms of its critical perspectives on the phenomena of fundamentalism; iii) a presentation that acknowledges and brings to the surface as a necessary part of the learning process the problematic nature of the relationship between community and academy.

d) Religious education should present the religious question in a form that does justice to the tensions of convergence and divergence between competing religious and a-religious understandings of reality.

Liberal religious education, in its concern for legitimation, approached the ambiguity of religion as a problem that threatened its legitimacy and hence as one that had to be overcome. If religion in a modern secular and pluralistic context was understood as being an issue of contention and controversy, then such controversy must be overcome if religious education itself was to avoid its very existence being subject to question. It thus failed to grasp the educational opportunities that such

ambiguity threw out. Given the central importance of the religious question, coupled with the ambiguity of a variety of contradictory theological responses, a critically realistic approach to the subject may discover its legitimation precisely in the fact that the religious question and theological answers are the subject of controversy. The fact that religion is problematical is only a problem if one adopts a paternalistic educational programme. If one rather seeks the development of a society capable of responding intelligently and in an informed way to the religious problem then it follows that religious education becomes a central necessity within the curriculum.

e) Religious education should present the religious question in a form that accepts the temporal-spatial limitations of the educational context, whilst at the same time recognising the universality of religious and a-religious truth claims.

Modern religious education tends to adopt a universal focus in the form of a single meta-narrative related to a limited number of religious traditions that are presented in an idealistic manner. It thus lacks a feeling for the contingency of religious issues and their location in a particular time and space of human development. Critical realism, on the other hand, seeks to hold a creative tension between the universality of the religious question and the contingency and provinciality of human understanding. The complex network of dynamic, developing transcendent and immanent responses to the religious question means that at different locations in space and time different concerns and issues come to the fore, against a background of the givenness of the actual nature of reality. Where liberal education offers an idealised version of religion grounded in a specific and limited religious understanding grounded in the emergence of modernism, critical realism seeks to present religion realistically, and with a sense of its genuine diversity as a dynamic and evolving entity.

f) Religious education should present the religious questions in a selective manner through a curriculum that addresses those issues that are both of most fundamental universal importance and of most relevance to the contemporary local, national and international context.

Religious education needs to move beyond the modernist appropriation of the 'big six' world religions in an idealised form operating within a common experiential-expressive framework. Given the fact of human contingency, and the insight that understanding is, inevitably, grounded within a particular cultural, or group of cultural, contexts, the spatial and temporal location of contingent knowledge takes

on central importance. This brings us face to face to the creative tension within the perspective of critical realism, between the contingency of knowledge, and the claim that within this lies the possibility of a level of understanding that may transcend the absolute contingency of relativism.

It follows that curriculum development within religious education will need to be itself contingent, introducing into its material content a dynamic understanding of process and development. Whilst taking account of the absolute claims of a diversity of religious traditions, and at the same time seeking to transcend the merely parochial, it will need also to respond to the nature of religious and a-religious beliefs as they emerge at a local level. To this should be added an additional criteria: that curriculum selection will need to address the question of the educational value of the content of the curriculum, rather than operating on the level of liberal politics, in which selection sets out not to meet educational concerns directly, but rather aims to achieve a political balance between the claims of the contrasting perspectives of different faith communities.

It follows from this that, to some extent at least, curriculum selection will need to be open to the demands of empirical evidence regarding the nature and extent of religious belief in the United Kingdom.² Such evidence makes it clear that the phenomenological balance between the 'big six' fails to reflect accurately the actual empirical reality. In terms of community membership, Christians form by far the largest religious grouping, outnumbering the second largest group, that of Muslims, by a ratio of about thirty-seven to one. The combined membership of all other religious communities approximates to that of the Islamic community. The fact that the largest group after Christianity is made up of those without any religious allegiance is of fundamental significance for the religious educator. This fact is underlined when one contrasts the numbers for community membership with those for adult *active* membership. With the exception of Islam and Sikhism, such active membership is significantly lower than that of community membership. Within Christianity, in particular, the ratio between active and community allegiance is greater than one in five.

Such empirical evidence allows us to sharpen still further our criteria for selection. We are able to say: i) that the major meta-narrative currently operating within the United Kingdom is that which encompasses a diversity of Christian forms; ii) that the other key meta-narrative is that which embraces a plurality of immanent accounts of reality; iii) that the key tension within British society is constituted by the

². On what follows, cf. Weller (1993) pp.40f. and Davie (1994).

grey area between a communal allegiance to the Christian meta-narrative and its practical rejection; iv) that alongside the tension between these two narratives stands a number of other religious traditions, which find themselves forced to operate in a context: firstly, where they are all, though to a lesser extent than that of Christianity, faced with the influence of immanent meta-narratives; and secondly, they are required to operate as minority traditions in the face of the numerical dominance of the Christian heritage. Across Britain as a whole, then, the empirical evidence would suggest that an appropriate educationally grounded curriculum will need to address these four areas directly. However, since the geographical distribution of these perspectives is likely to vary at local and regional level, a case should be made out for the balance between these four perspectives reflecting specific situations. Again, it must be stressed that the justification of such a decision rests not upon the educational criteria that the development of any appropriate level of religious literacy will require the individual to be able to operate religiously both within his or her immediate community and within the broader context outlined above. Curriculum selection has no implications regarding the ultimate truth of any meta-narrative.

iii) The hermeneutics of religious literacy

a) The learning process within religious education will need to be such that it enables the student to participate in the development of a linguistic competency whereby the religious question can be appropriated at practical and theoretical levels in terms of the development of a religious literacy.

Within the hermeneutics of modernist religious education, language was consistently appropriated in terms of a number of, at least implied, assumptions: that a single, monolithic account of language is possible; that religious language is essentially a second order expression of primary experience; that the religious value of language is a limited one, extending merely to the objective description of religious cultural phenomena operated at a second order level; that the appropriate religious reference of language was that of an inner dimension of experience; that to use religious language with an objective reference to actual reality was to run the risk of an inadequate quasi-superstitious and even magical perspective, one undermined by the superior explanatory authority and power of the language of the natural sciences; and, finally, that the justification of the experiential realm that transcends the limits of language is essentially a private process.

As has already been indicated, the perspective of critical realism challenges each of these implicit assumptions: language is a diverse phenomenon, employing a

broad range of forms, contents, processes and uses; that one of the key functions of language within this diversity is that of the means of a first order critical appropriation of understanding of the actual nature of reality; that individual religious experience is both informed and made possible by the possession of public language learnt within the religious community; that tropic language is able to transcend the merely objective and descriptive and engage in the critical process of achieving appropriate judgements regarding the actual answer to the religious question.

It follows from this that language, within the hermeneutics of critical realism, should play the fundamental role of the means through which religious understanding is developed. To be religiously educated is not to have developed for oneself, or to have been stimulated by a third party into developing, a depth of private experience. Rather it is to have appropriated a variety of vocabularies and linguistic skills to allow one to play a legitimate role in the process of religious communication with others, at both theoretical and practical levels, and in a context that transcends the linguistic constructions of one's primary meta-narrative and thus enables one to communicate adequately with those who own opposing meta-narratives. To be religiously educated is thus, essentially, to be religiously literate.

b) The learning process within religious education will need to be such that it enables the student to appropriate a selection of key accounts of the nature of reality, drawn from faith and secular communities.

The empirical actuality of the pluralistic religious context of the United Kingdom is such that any level of religious literacy must involve an ability to understand, utilize and work with, at appropriate levels, the meta-narratives of the community with which one identifies, together with those of a number of other significant community narratives. It was suggested above that the basic core necessary to operate intelligently in the current cultural context requires an appropriation of the narratives of Christianity, of the secular rejection of transcendence, and of at least one other transcendent tradition. If justice is to be done to the integrity of each of these traditions, it follows that such appropriation needs to be achieved in terms of an openness to the self-understanding of the traditions themselves.

It perhaps needs to be underlined here that, once the legitimization of language is separated from any primary experiential dimension, the ability to use a language in terms of the self-understanding of the community that owns it is not to be identified with, nor is it dependent upon, any acknowledgement of the truth of the particular meta-narrative to which the language gives voice. To understand, and to be able to use and communicate within, for example, the Islamic meta-narrative is

necessary for any literate understanding of that religion, but it need not imply any level of commitment to it.

c) The learning process within religious education will need to be such that it enables the student to appropriate a range of critical apparatus, drawn from the academy.

As well as appropriating the narratives of a variety of diverse communities as they each in turn seek to understand and respond to the religious question in forms appropriate to their own self-understanding and intellectual and religious integrity, the process of religious education also requires the appropriation of a number of skills, methods and traditions, drawn from the academy, through which the claims of each meta-narrative are refined and subject to critical scrutiny, and through which the complex interrelationships between different narratives are explored, compared and contrasted. As a result, an informed understanding of the nature of the religious question, both as one posed by the human community and in terms of the objective reality to which it refers, may become a developing achievement.

The development of such a critical apparatus will take religious education beyond the judgements expected and made possible by modernist religious education, limited as they were to mere statements of personal preference grounded on inner personal experience.

The contingent and developing nature of human knowledge within the academy itself means that the selection of the range of critical apparatus necessary for the emergence of an appropriate level of religious literacy will itself not be a fixed entity, but rather reflective of both developments, integral within the academy and the specific religious issues thrown up by local, national and international contexts. The diversity of disciplines and sub-disciplines within the academy is broad, and certainly not monolithic. We may point to a number of tensions: between the division between the broad disciplines of theology and religious studies; between areas of study distinguished by method (eg. philosophy of religion) and by content (eg. religious ethics); between methods intrinsic to the nature of religion (eg. the study of Christian doctrine from within the perspective of the faith community), and methods held in common with other spheres of the academic community (eg. the application of 'secular' literary and historical methods to the study of the Bible); between the adopted role of the academy of critical analysis, and the roles of either defence of, or construction of, meta-narratives themselves.

The task of religious education, in drawing upon the various disciplines and sub-disciplines in the process of development within the academic community is not to attempt to impose some sort of order on this rich diversity, but rather to identify and utilize those traditions that are currently required for the production of any level of

religious literacy. These may include: the theology set out by various communities as it is sharpened and brought into clearer focus by the academy, including the theology(s) associated with the secular rejection of transcendent reality; the philosophical investigation of the nature of religious language; the epistemology of religious belief; the question of the nature and justification of religious authority; the sociological understanding of the developing nature of society as both pluralistic and in parts secular; the emergence of attempts to redefine Christianity within modernism, in particular the increasingly popular paths of naturalistic a-theology and of an inclusive theology of world religions; the developing dialogue between science and religion. Clearly, there is neither the time nor the space here to take such issues further: the present aim is not to produce an appropriate syllabus within the provenance of critical realism, merely to outline the contours, criteria and agenda that should inform its framework and material content.

d) The learning process within religious education will need to be such that it enables the student to locate his or her own personal religious stance, and that of the community, or various communities, with which he or she identifies.

Driven by the image of the disengaged self, the modernist hermeneutic of religious education tended to abstract the learner from the specific belief traditions he or she indwells and identifies with. This involved two fundamental moves: firstly, the desire for objectivity in the public realm of religious culture led to the requirement that the pupils suspended their given beliefs in an effort to achieve a working neutrality and hence reinforce the possibility of religious tolerance; secondly, the dislocation of fact from value meant that, when religious education turned to the private sphere of subjective belief this was appropriated in terms that were fundamentally abstract, seeking to generate insight into the pupils' general religious experience understood as cut off from its specific cultural expression. The assumption that, generally speaking, children failed both to achieve the required element of neutrality and lacked any depth of experiential insight created a model in which the presuppositions of the learner were understood to be both detrimental to the learning process and also a root cause for the failure to achieve an appropriate level of religious understanding.

From the perspective of critical realism the presuppositions of the learner, in contrast, form a central and fundamental pivot within the learning process. Pupils come to the religious education lesson already possessing a theology, understood (as outlined above) as a meta-narrative concerning the answer to the religious question. This pre-understanding may be implied rather than explicit; it may be internally

coherent or involve a range of incompatible presumptions; it may be held with greater or lesser degrees of conviction and intensity; it may draw on a single narrative grounded in the child's primary socialization, or may involve a compromise between such socialization and other narratives encountered and embraced during the process of secondary socialization; it may be held with varying degrees of reflection and investigation; the pupil may, indeed, be able to operate with contrasting meta-narratives in different social contexts; and, finally, the narratives held by the pupil may well be in process of adaptation, change and even rejection.

Whatever the actual nature of the pupils' presuppositions, it will be these that will be projected on the material content of religious education as the process of understanding and appropriation takes place. It follows that the development of religious literacy will be enhanced if the hermeneutic of religious education embraces the task of enabling the pupil to recognise, articulate and clarify his or her presuppositions. This will involve the process not only of identifying one's own personal stance, but also of locating its source and roots within the plurality and diversity of meta-narratives encountered within contemporary society. The key factor here is the recognition that pupils come to the process of religious education already possessing a level of religious literacy, already playing a role within the broader religious conversation. Religious education thus needs to understand itself in terms of development and extension rather than as a supplementary or remedial process.

e) The learning process within religious education will need to be such that it enables the student to enhance the individual and communal search for an appropriate relationship to the religious question of ultimate meaning and truth.

This suggestion opens out the question of the relevance of religious education and of the learning process that informs it. Given the collapse of confessionalism, modernist religious education, as we have already noted, sought relevance in factors extrinsic to the actual realistic content of the religious question. The implicit model sought relevance in a process of redefinition of the religious content, leading to a concern with the subjective, existential relevance of religion to individual development at the experiential level of morality and aesthetics. This tradition was picked up in the traditions of phenomenology and spirituality. Relevance was here understood in terms of an appropriation of personal meaning and integrity justified in terms of the achievement of private understanding dislocated from the realistic content of theological positions. Relevance on the subjective level was thus understood in terms of attitude, utility and function rather than of material content and truth.

This approach was held in tension with a claim to social relevance grounded in the public manifestations of religious culture. Here it was the political and pragmatic possibility of religious education providing a coherence within the reality of religious fragmentation and disunity, of the subject providing the cement with which to bind together a pluralistic society, which offered the promise of relevance. Again, we note: that this search for public relevance was grounded in factors extrinsic to the religious question; that it consequently distinguished the social utility of religion from religious truth; and that it consistently operated within a working tension with the concern for individual religious and spiritual development.

By insisting on the unity of fact and value, and of the private and public spheres, critical realism points to the possibility of a hermeneutical relevance for religious education grounded squarely in its own intrinsic subject matter. Here the ultimate good of society, and of individuals within society, is understood in realistic terms as the process of moving towards an adequate and appropriate relationship with the actuality of the order of things. It is the achievement of harmony with objective reality that lies at the heart of the religious quest. Given the contingent nature of human understanding, it follows that it is the method and quality of the process of understanding, and appropriation of answers to, the religious question, that is to say, the level of religious literacy, that becomes central. The question of the relevance of religious education thus receives an answer grounded in its intrinsic material content: religious education is of relevance simply because the religious question itself is of relevance.

iv) The politics of religious education

a) Religious education should accept both its inevitably political nature, and its political responsibilities by responding to its moral, legal and intellectual duty to contribute to the development of society and of individuals within the national and international community.

The modernist quest for certainty and its desire to avoid the possibility of Cartesian anxiety led to the urge to impose premature solutions on issues that were fundamentally ambiguous. At a political level modernism is characterised by attempts to offer such premature solutions to political questions in terms of blueprints for a model society. These tended to be characterized by a thrust towards uniformity and coherence as a means of transcending diversity and ambiguity. The liberal blueprint, in so far as it was able to hold within its single vision a broad element of cultural diversity cemented together through the liberal ideals of freedom and tolerance, could

claim a moral superiority over the closed blueprints advocated by various forms of facism and communism.

With the demise of confessionalism, religious education sought a political accomodation with the politics of liberalism. In the 1960's this was pursued in the face of a humanistic critique that followed an implicit sociology of religion drawn from Marx that understood religion to have a fundamentally pathological role within society.³ Through the process of drawing the plurality of world faiths into its embrace, phenomenological religious education was able to achieve the accomodation it sought by employing implicitly a sociology of religion grounded in Durkheim's belief that religion played a necessary and positive role as offering the social symbolism through which the sacred nature of human social relationships was expressed. The form of religious education concerned with the autonomous development of individual spirituality stood firmly within this tradition: Durkheim and his followers had anticipated the possible collapse of organised forms of religious expression of the sacred and the emergence of a post-modern situation in which the expression of the sacred was transferred to humanity itself within its diverse individuality. Given such diversity, a religious education shorn of its material content became pray to manipulation within the ongoing debate between conservative and progressive visions of society.

In a post-critical context two fundamental challenges emerge to this political programme. Firstly, the rejection of the utilization of transcendent religious belief in a merely functional manner, disengaged from the material question of the actual nature of reality. Secondly, the rejection of the belief that humanity is in a position, given the limitations of human understanding, to offer a blueprint for society that transcends the contingent. This critique lays open a clear political role for religious education in the context of critical realism: firstly, the political role of the subject should not be that of supporting a particular political blueprint, but rather of understanding itself as contributing to the ongoing process of searching for more adequate political models and structures, that is to say, of informing the political process itself; secondly, that its distinctive role in contributing to the political process is grounded in the insights and questions that its specific content asks of society and politicians. Its political task is thus fundamentally pro-active rather than reactive.

³ See Beckford (1992) for Marx's sociology of religion, and for the following discussion of Durkheim.

b) Religious education should accept both its inevitably political nature, and its political responsibilities by understanding its duty in terms of the production within society of a level of religious literacy that will enable citizens to take on board for themselves the responsibility to integrate the religious question into the ongoing democratic process.

The political role of religious education will, currently at least, need to operate in the general context of the democratic nature of contemporary society, in which each individual is allocated an equal right and responsibility for the current and future development of society, and also the specific context of the legal expectation that education inform that process. It follows that religious education, grounded in the pro-active concern to relate the realistic religious question to the political sphere, will achieve its task in so far as it is able to produce religiously literate future generations of adults able to act and communicate intelligently in the sphere of religion, and as a result ensure that the religious question plays a full and appropriate role in future political debate and action. The political task of religious education should be not to identify with any specific political programme, but rather to equip society with the skills, insight and literacy that will enable the political process, however that might develop, to operate in a more informed and intelligent manner as regards the material question of religion.

c) Religious education should accept both its inevitably political nature, and its political responsibilities by recognising that the future democratic development of society can not be segregated from fundamental questions of ontology.

This suggestion has already been implied in the argument above. Given the perspective within critical realism that fact cannot be disengaged from value, it follows that political questions cannot be divorced from the material question of religious truth. An example will clarify this point: Islam makes no distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the spheres of religion and of politics, hence the possibility, and indeed reality, of the Islamic state. This position runs counter to the tradition in the liberal west of the differentiation of religion and politics, and attempts to consign the influence of the church to the sphere of private and individual spirituality, leaving the political field free for the professional politician. Any imposition of this latter liberal perspective upon Islam will inevitably involve an act of paternalism so far as liberalism fails to address the question of the material truth of Islamic theology.

It is not then the task of religious education to discover and disseminate a solution to this issue, however, ultimately the division between Islamic and liberal

political stances can only ever ultimately be understood and worked with if religious education enables society to possess an appropriate level of religious literacy through which such fundamental issues, ultimately grounded in conflicting ontologies, may be honestly and intelligently addressed.

d) Religious education should accept both its inevitably political nature, and its political responsibilities by enabling society to move forward through the process of a drive towards an increasing conformity of the network of individual, communal, national and international relationships to the actuality of reality in its transcendent, naturalistic and humanitarian dimensions.

The integrity of religious education, it has been argued, should, within the provenance of critical realism, be grounded in the contingent question and given actuality of the ultimate truth of reality. Given a context in which the answers to this ultimate question are both plural and ambiguous, the task of religious education -- understood as a fundamentally political activity -- should be that of producing a level of religious literacy whereby individuals and society may be enriched through the ability to communicate and explore the issue that ultimately is of fundamental importance to humanity: that of the possibility of an appropriate and developing relationship to reality as it is in itself, rather than as it might be perceived to be.

3. Summary and Conclusion

By way of conclusion to both the present chapter and the argument as a whole, and in a concern for clarity of expression, the theses defended above are offered below as a series of bullet points. A critical realistic form of religious education, transcending the limitations of pre-modern, modern and post-modern approaches to the discipline, will need to address the following issues.

The Aims of Religious Education

Religious education should aim to:

- a) ground its integrity within its own intrinsic subject matter, that is, the question of religion;

- b) attend to the heart of the religious question, which is that of transcendence, that is, that which is in actuality stands over against reality as its ultimate purpose, nature and explanation;
- c) attend to the reality that the question of transcendence is an objective one, that is to say, its truth remains given in its actuality regardless of the human capacity to appropriate it;
- d) attend to the reality that there exists a plurality of public beliefs concerning the nature of transcendence, that is to say, religions offer contrasting and contradictory descriptions of transcendence;
- e) attend to the ambiguity of these transcendent beliefs, that is to say, the very existence of transcendence is itself a disputed question;
- f) attend to the fact that the question of transcendent religious truth is of fundamental importance for human self, communal, natural and transcendental understanding, that is to say, to the drive towards an avoidance of illusion and falsehood and the achievement of an appropriate orientation towards the actual order of reality;
- g) attend to the needs of the individual and of society in the context of transcendence that is, in its present temporal-spatial context, understood as both pluralistic and ambiguous, that is to say, to the need to develop a level of linguistic competency through which the drive towards truth may be led by an appropriate level of religious literacy.

The Nature of Religion

Religious education should present the religious question:

- a) in terms of the actuality of transcendent reality, focusing upon the issue of objective truth;
- b) in terms of the plurality of divergent transcendental truth claims and the ambiguity that the reality of transcendent truth is itself a matter of dispute;
- c) in a form that retains the integrity of the plurality of faith communities, together with the integrity of the academy;
- d) in a form that does justice to the tensions of convergence and divergence between competing religious and a-religious understandings of reality;

- e) in a form that accepts the temporal-spatial limitations of the educational context, whilst at the same time recognising the universality of religious and a-religious truth claims;
- f) in a selective manner through a curriculum that addresses those issues that are both of most fundamental universal importance and of most relevance to the contemporary local, national and international context.

The Hermeneutics of Religious Literacy

The learning process within religious education will need to be such that it enables the student:

- a) to participate in the development of a linguistic competency whereby the religious question can be appropriated at practical and theoretical levels in terms of the development of religious literacy;
- b) to appropriate a selection of key accounts of the nature of reality, drawn from faith and secular communities;
- c) to appropriate a range of critical apparatus, drawn from the academy;
- d) to locate his or her own personal religious stance, and that of the community, or various communities, with which he or she identifies;
- e) to enhance the individual and communal search for an appropriate relationship to the religious question of ultimate meaning and truth.

The Politics of Religious Education

Religious education should accept both its inevitably political nature, and its political responsibilities:

- a) by responding to its moral, legal and intellectual duty to contribute to the development of society and of individuals within the national and international community;
- b) by understanding its duty in terms of the production within society of a level of religious literacy that will enable citizens to take on board for themselves the responsibility to integrate the religious question into the ongoing democratic process;

- c) by recognising that the future democratic development of society cannot be segregated from fundamental questions of ontology;
- d) by enabling society to move forward through the process of a drive towards an increasing conformity of the network of individual, communal, national and international relationships to the actuality of reality in its transcendent, naturalistic and humanitarian dimensions.

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