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PASTORAL THEOLOGY:  
CREATING NEW SPACES

by

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a thesis submitted in fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Department of Theology and Religious Studies

University of Glasgow

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## Abstract

### PASTORAL THEOLOGY: CREATING NEW SPACES

The social sciences, in particular sociology and psychology, have played an important role in the development of practical theology as a discrete discipline. They have also provided the organisational tools which practical theology has relied upon to maintain credibility within academia. Those who deploy the methods of the social sciences believe that they provide us with a reliable account of reality, justified by their scientific and empirical standards.

The use of such methods does, however, carry with it very specific conceptions of the nature of human action and what it is to be human. In practice, practical theology has (in some areas) been compromised by such methods. Within the discipline, there has been a reduced emphasis on the Divine and the Spirit. Many practical theologians express discomfort at the use of theological and religious terminology. Some practical theologians have sought to justify their presence in secular academia by becoming purveyors of moral science or practical wisdom, which leads to an inevitable narrowing of the remit of the discipline. Excluding the spirit leaves practical theology as just another subsidiary of sociological and cultural studies — offering similar explanations of the human condition.

In this thesis, with reference to contemporary practical theologians, it is shown how the spirit is largely excluded from the discipline. Thereafter, it is argued that a new consideration of the work of theorists such as Schleiermacher and Deleuze can overcome this exclusion. Schleiermacher's conception of the historical and finite spirit and his theology of absolute dependency are used to develop an aesthetic approach to practical theology. This provides an understanding of the human condition that is not just phenomenological but includes the spirit. This approach is illustrated using examples from the works of three artists (Barbara Hepworth, Tacita Dean and Zoë Leonard) plus a reflective Midrash from feminist theologian Heather Walton. Each of these provides a unique aesthetic approach to the human condition that makes it possible to expand the realm of the pastoral and create new spaces in which individual lives can transcend their particular circumstances.

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## Introduction

### METHODOLOGY AND PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

This thesis focuses on the issue of method in practical theology. In this context method will be understood as consisting of techniques and strategies that are implemented within the discipline in order to construct the relationship between theological discourse and current understandings of the human condition. I shall explore how method has been crucial to the development of practical theology as a contemporary discipline and has served important pedagogical functions securing its place within the Academy. I shall show how the methods that are deployed within practical theology serve to justify the application of a theological perspective to contemporary moral issues. Methods are also research tools used by scholars within practical theology to turn experiential data into knowledge. Method thus plays a hugely significant role but serious problems can arise if we do not continually question the validity or appropriateness of the various approaches which are adopted.

Debates about the nature and consequences of methodology involve the critical evaluation of research and investigative techniques in current practice. This scrutiny is necessary because method is not an abstract concept, it is deeply contextual and we must understand changes in method in the light of responses to cultural and epistemological shifts. Debates on methodology often seek to analyse the relationship between method and prevailing cultural assumptions and epistemologies. This thesis is an

exercise in methodology insofar as it explores the impact that contemporary currents of thought, including postmodernism, have upon current practice.

Practical theology has been relatively adept at responding to cultural changes in the past. It has emerged as a progressive, modern and modernising discipline in the contemporary university. It has been forward-thinking, eagerly adopting new investigative strategies—which have become highly influential in the shaping of the discipline.

Practical theology has made a particular alliance with the social sciences. I shall argue that this alliance is understandable, as both practical theology and the social sciences are modernist projects emerging from the epistemological innovations of the enlightenment. These epistemological foundations of the enlightenment project are now being challenged by a postmodernist critique. In light of this development the thesis will examine contemporary responses to postmodernism within practical theology.

It will also be argued here that the dependency on social theory can lead to a concept of humanity that fails to acknowledge theological understandings and perspectives. The application of social theory can occlude other aspects of existence, particularly those which have preoccupied theologians in the past. This thesis is particularly concerned with the notion of ‘spirit’ which is absent or implicitly denied in some of the sociological approaches that have been adopted. This present work will be an attempt to find a way towards revisioning the discipline in a form that acknowledges the theological imperative within it.

To achieve this goal the thesis employs a critical analysis of the work of contemporary theorists, including Gilles Deleuze, to demonstrate the radical epistemologies of postmodern thought. There has been a tendency within practical theology to minimise or even ignore the challenges from postmodernism but I shall show how practical theology can be creative and that we have the resources to meet them. Identifying these resources may entail a return to the roots of modern practical theology, and I find inspiration in Schleiermacher's imaginative responses, deeply influenced by romanticism, to the challenges of his time. I will show how such aesthetic resources may be more appropriate than empirical ones for the creation of new spaces in the application of practical theology and how the creative imagination is required to reconnect us to the divine and the theological core of the discipline. My work thus represents an invitation to discover the ways in which a turn to the aesthetic, inspired by the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher, might generate new potentialities for practical theology.

This thesis is set out in two parts. The first section consisting of chapters 1, 2 and 3 addresses the use of method in practical theology and considers the consequences that this has had for the development of the discipline. In the second section, chapters 4 and 5 focus on how to resolve the problems that various methods have generated. Thereafter Chapter 6 gives practical demonstration of the solution at which this thesis has arrived.

In Chapter 1, I consider the relationship between method and the development of practical theology. What impact does method have on the

identity and status of practical theology as a discipline? Practical theology, it is often observed, is an Enlightenment product. However, there are new epistemological and ontological theories that challenge the analytical tools of modernity and practical theology now faces some difficulty with the issues raised by postmodern theoretical approaches. For example practical theology has in the past worked with concepts of the subject, truth and morality that are incompatible with some aspects of postmodern theory. How should practical theology respond?

Chapter 2 examines the responses to postmodernism from two theorists, Elaine Graham and Friedrich Schweitzer. Who are chosen because they are representative of contemporary theorists within practical theology responding to postmodernism. While there are differences between them, what they essentially have in common is that they both treat postmodernism as problematic. Graham and Schweitzer each wish to retain certain elements of modernity and embrace those aspects of postmodernity that they believe to be positive. They wish to steer practical theology through a period of anxiety and emerge with a working model that contains the best characteristics from both.

I will argue that, because Graham and Schweitzer theorise in terms of crisis, they construct a model that cannot maximize the new conceptual tools of postmodernism. Graham wishes to extended modernity and Schweitzer wants to create a new postmodern paradigm. Elaine Graham starts out by seeking to provide a transition between modernity and postmodernity. Yet, she actually opts for a sociological model of 'high' modernity ('extended' or reflective modernity) such as that offered by

theorists like Anthony Giddens.

Schweitzer's proposal is to seek a new paradigm. However, he ultimately settles for a modified modernity and attempts to supplement it with aspects from postmodern ontology, thereby constructing what he believes to be the concept of a 'postmodern life cycle'. Graham and Schweitzer each tried to construct a 'third way' model. Nevertheless, I will suggest that their models both fail to give postmodernism an adequate hearing on its own terms.

In Chapter 3, I examine some theorists who work with the conceptual tools of a postmodern epistemology. Don Ihde (one of the first postmodern philosophers of technological science) argues for a 'living authors' only approach to his subject. He examines the impact that perception makes on the construction of knowledge and believes that this is more important than the notion of progression through historical development.

Donna Haraway is also critical of our conceptualisation of knowledge and examines how women scientists are too easily co-opted into patriarchal academic disciplines. She also contributes to our understanding of how knowledge is authenticated and her theory of dispersed subjectivity also helps us to understand more about the transference of knowledge.

In the same chapter, I also examine the *Santiago Theory of Autopoiesis*. Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, both biologists, use this to demonstrate how living systems interpret the world according to their finite and limited experience in and of said world. In addition, the work of Jacques Ranciere helps to show how, in the west, the concept of a divided

intellect impacts on what we believe about knowledge. He argued that knowledge is creative and that the spirit/imagination plays a role in this. To illustrate his theory Ranciere used the creative writings of those who lived at the margins of culture. This group of theorists have contributed much to a thoughtful critique of traditional empiricism.

Chapter 4 introduces the work of Gilles Deleuze. If practical theology is to genuinely explore and maximize the use of new conceptual tools, it might benefit from the work of such a theorist— who has emerged as one of the most radical thinkers in areas concerned with epistemology and ontology. Deleuze challenges both the remit of traditional philosophy and the very foundation of what we take to be critical thinking. I will suggest that his work can help to provide new and valuable insight into the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher and help us to recover him as an important figure for contemporary practical theology.

Chapter 5 examines the earlier work of Friedrich Schleiermacher -- and particularly *Speeches* which was first published in 1799. It is argued here that he was co-opted into the new humanities by one of the founders of modern social science, the theorist Wilhelm Dilthey. Schleiermacher is also regarded as the founder of modern theology. It will be argued here that much of what was innovative in *Speeches* has effectively been theorised out of his work. Dilthey's interpretation for example, emphasised the rational aspects of his theory. The church on the other hand tended to see him as an organiser of church offices. This chapter re-examines *Speeches* and argues that its radical introduction of the historicised spirit is valuable to the development of contemporary practical theology. The work of

Deleuze is used in this chapter to redeploy Schleiermacher in the creation of new pastoral spaces.

Finally in Chapter 6 there is a demonstration of how aesthetics can be used in practical theology to reveal the importance of the spirit in the transcending of human circumstances, while simultaneously being committed to a fate in this world. Through the examples of artists Barbara Hepworth, Tacita Dean, Zoë Leonard and the pastoral reflection of theologian Heather Walton, we can demonstrate how new spaces in which to undertake practical theology can be created. The works I have chosen are all concerned with memorializing and grief.

The social sciences are predominantly concerned with a phenomenological understanding of the human condition, not with the presence of spirit in the world. This thesis is an attempt to resolve some of the contradictions which come from using methods which may undermine the ethos and purpose of practical theology. Our discipline can only strengthen its place in academia by demonstrating that it has a unique ability to create new spaces for understanding the human condition, without having to erase either theology from its theory or the notion of the spirit from its practice in the world.

In order to aid navigation through the thesis it might be helpful to give definitions here of key terms and the way they are employed in the current context.

*Pastoral Theology* Within the discipline both the terms ‘practical’ and ‘pastoral’ are frequently deployed to categorise an approach to theology. It is worth noting that the terms are contextualised by the authors who choose to use them. Therefore both have legitimacy but the choice of one or another tends to indicate the methodological inclinations of the author. Practical theology is likely to be favoured when empirical and sociological analyses are used. The term pastoral theology is still in use but less so in contemporary work. The use of the term ‘pastoral’ in the title of the present work indicates a personal preference, but also the desire to rework the theological associations inherent in the term. In this instance ‘pastoral’ is not identical with its historical uses but it serves as a channel through which theology can engage with certain aspects of contemporary culture in order to create new spaces in which to explore the manifestation of spirit in the world. It is also intended as an alternative to the use of practical and the association practical has with those theorists who use it in conjunction with methods from the social sciences. Practical is associated with the *application* of moral theory/practical wisdom and pastoral is historically linked with the movement between spaces (town/conurbation country/arcadia) The concept of *pastoral space* is deployed in the present work as a route for creating new territory and as a move away from prescriptive theory to creative theology. The spirit can be actualised in these creative spaces and be communicated in particular circumstances but only when individuals are immersed in the process and are not merely the recipients of an external moral law/rule. The pastoral is also used in this thesis to denote a space in which individuals can transcend prevailing trends in morality and explore the relationship between spirit and the world

in a space beyond the confines of historical relationships. Schleiermacher's work for example benefited from the opportunity he had to engage with the thinkers beyond the formal boundaries of the Church. Pastoral can be a space of the imagination, a poetic/aesthetic creation. In this sense the last chapter is intended to be a 'pastoral sampler' of different approaches of which the purpose is to provide a space for memorialising and grief.

*Aesthetic:* In the sense that it is being deployed in this thesis aesthetics is the capacity for different art forms to respond creatively to experience, to have the capacity to convey and receive meaning, values and beliefs through art, literature, poetry and technology. The examples used in the thesis demonstrate how aesthetics can radically alter the perception of a given situation. It is an ethical aesthetic which seeks justice rather than an eternal or intransient truth. This is not to suggest that existing conditions can be transformed using only the creative imagination but that this process enables multiple aspects of a situation to be explored, to be made visible. Art can challenge and reshape the formulaic responses that we rely on to understand the world. The aesthetic is a means of exposing our preconceptions to particular aspects that we would not ordinarily consider. This is demonstrated through the work of the different authors I have selected in chapter 6. The aesthetic has the capacity to alter our subjectivity, to take us beyond the 'common sense' or cultural response to certain events and situations. Art can be a connective tissue, as in the case of Zoe Leonard, or it can be a means for altering the moral perspective as we see in the work of Tacita Dean. Art allows other 'spaces' of reality to become perceptible, for pastoral theology this would involve the creation of new sacred spaces as witnessed in the work of Heather Walton. The

aesthetic can have an ethical imperative when it involves moving beyond the realm of familiarity and challenging our image of reality. Art has an aesthetic function of transformation. In this thesis aesthetics is the means for becoming ethical as opposed to an approach which assumes prescribed moral positions. The aesthetic is therefore a way of immersing oneself in an ethical process. Art involves posing questions, making new combinations and going beyond a static perception of 'reality'.

*Spirit:* The concept of spirit in this thesis is taken from the work of Schleiermacher. It is seen as finite and historicising, that aspect of being human that makes it possible for a continuous dialectical movement between inner consciousness and the world. For Schleiermacher this meant the mediation of the absolute in the historical. Spirit denotes the human turn to the absolute, to God, but also the individuals commitment and engagement with the world. This movement is described by Schleiermacher as an overwhelming compulsion to be taken up in the world, to fully participate in existence.

## PART ONE

## Chapter 1

### METHOD AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES IN CONTEMPORARY PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

We are told finally, that all we need to think well, to think truthfully, is a *method*. Method is an artifice but one through which we are brought back to the nature of thought, through which we adhere to this nature and ward off the effect of alien forces which alter it and distract us. Through method we ward off error. Time and place matter little if we apply method: it enables us to enter the domain of "that which is valid for all times and place". (Deleuze 2002, 103)

Practical theologians have spent a great deal of time and effort on the problem of method, yet it remains a contested and under-theorised area of the discipline of practical theology.<sup>1</sup> The objective of this thesis is the analysis of two epistemological traditions, modernism and postmodernism, and the methods through which these are given form within contemporary practical theology. The terms modernism and postmodernism are often contested, and this ambiguity has given rise to some of the methodological anxiety that has beset contemporary theory. I will be seeking to demonstrate that method itself is involved in the constitution of theoretical perspectives and that these theoretical perspectives and the methods through which they are established contain implicit and constraining assumptions about the nature of human life.

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<sup>1</sup> As demonstrated, for example, in the publication *Practical Theology: International Perspectives* Vol.34, 1999. Editors Friedrich Schweitzer and Johannes A. Van der Ven have taken substantial contributions from the international community of practical theologians dedicated to the subject area of methodology and professional identity in contemporary practical theology.

It is my intention to demonstrate that the theoretical approaches taken and the methods integral to them delineate the subject area, in the sense of identifying what is seen as the proper focus of enquiry. More importantly, they embody specific assumptions about what it means to be human and what it is to undertake human action. In other words, I will show how theoretical perspectives and the methods that accompany them serve to conform to certain ontological presuppositions.

It will be argued that for practical theology this creates a tension between the precepts inherent in the conceptual tools and organizing principles of particular theoretical and methodological positions and those aspects of existence which have traditionally been the primary concern of practical theology. For example, when we use sociological tools to analyse human experience these leave out the spiritual dimension of life and the possibility of a divine presence interacting with humanity. Bluntly put, they encourage us to develop a theology that is reticent about the spirit.

There are three major areas within practical theology in which particular tensions related to theory and methods are manifest. Firstly, practical theology has experienced a shift in authority. It is no longer accountable exclusively to ecclesiastical authority as it has a commitment to the standards and expectations of the modern university. Practical theologians are aware of this status and the corresponding research and pedagogical responsibilities that follow from it.

Indeed a key reason for the adoption of methodologies, which are identified as scientific, is their perceived objectivity and empirical standing. It is one reason why leading figures in the discipline such as Johannes A. Van der Ven have argued for an empirical and scientific grounding for practical theology:

The question has to be asked, which methodology is relevant for practical theology. A multitude of methodologies, that are factually used in practical-theological studies, can be distinguished. Historical, hermeneutical and ideology-critical approaches appear to be very enriching. Linguistic methods are also successfully applied, like for instance semiotics, and metaphor-analytical and speech acts-analytical techniques. Next to these methods, the empirical approach can be relevant for practical theology. (Van der Ven, 1999 Vol.34, 323)

Secondly, practical theology borrows and assimilates greatly from the social sciences — making it highly dependent on disciplines that use conceptual formations that may sit uncomfortably outside the remit of practical theology. Methods deployed in the social sciences seek to explain the world in a way that reduces God and spirituality to constructs explicated through social, economic and cultural categories. Although sometimes useful, the methods of the social sciences can have the effect of despiritualising practical theology as a discipline, reducing its capacity to address the sacred and spiritual dimensions of human existence.

Thirdly, the nature of enquiry within practical theology has now become problematic because these methods have themselves come under scrutiny from postmodern critiques. Having collaborated eagerly with the traditions of modernity embraced by the academy, practical theology now finds itself called upon to respond to the epistemological challenges of postmodernism to these same methodological conventions.

There is a pressing need for practical theology to address these challenges. It will be argued here that, in so doing, it has the opportunity to re-integrate into the body of its thought those theological concerns that have been marginalised by its recent methodological preoccupations. It will also be argued that art and contemporary culture can create new spaces that can provide the opening for practical theology to engage in an understanding of the human situation with a new emphasis on the spirit. But first, the significance and the difficulties of method will be considered.

### 1.1 *A Good Enough Method: From Existentialism to Correlation*

Who art thou? From whence dost thou come? What is thy employment?  
What will become of thee?  
(Voltaire 1767)

To understand man, we must develop a 'philosophical anthropology' the existing tools and methods of the natural sciences, of traditional sociology and anthropology, are not adequate. What is needed is a new kind of reason.  
(Sartre 1960b, xi)

In her introduction to Jean Paul Sartre's preface to *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960a) Hazel Barnes sets out the rationale behind what was to emerge from this work as the separate shorter publication entitled *The Problem of Method* (1960b). Later this was published under the title of, *The Search for a Method* (1963). Barnes explains, in the introduction to her translation of this work, that Sartre wrote this as an attempt to reconcile existentialism with Karl Marx's theory of historical materialism. He seeks to understand humanity without reducing experience to biological or economic determinism. (Barnes 1963)

Sartre's quest was to find a way of explaining the 'transitory and fragmented' nature of being without losing sight of contextual influences on the individual. Can freedom and spontaneity be reconciled with a method that 'reads' the world through its economic, sociological and political structures? This title and quest resonates with the present concern about the advantages and limitations of contemporary methods in practical theology.

Sartre wanted to understand how it is that individuals take willing possession of their fate in the world and make life an act of creation. The notion of an autonomous subject with the freedom to make life choices provides the ontological basis of Sartre's existentialism.

What is interesting about this later work is its optimistic and reconciliatory theme, Sartre takes the relative anarchy of existentialism and the restraints of economic determinism and explores some of the most perplexing questions about human existence. But why, in this mature work, should the world's most renowned proponent of twentieth century existentialism turn to historical materialism and declare it to be *the* definitive method of social enquiry?

Sartre is examining the process by which individuals internalize their life circumstances and, by so doing, give a legitimate authenticity to those historical relationships that structure human existence. Put another way, the problem of method lies in trying to reconcile historical preconditions, or a universal fate, with haecceity --- the individual's commitment to these circumstances.

This is not 'the best of all possible worlds' for many individuals so the question for Sartre is why do individuals, regardless of the conditions of their historical circumstances, take possession of a particular life. Personal identity and personal experience are continuing concerns and both fold into each other. Sartre's aim was to find a means of understanding the relationship between the personal and the determined experience.

It is evident that the individual has constraints on choice; a tension exists between desire and history in which commitment becomes the movement that reduces this anxiety. Sartre's use of historical materialism is an attempt to fashion a new reasoning (or radical way of thinking) about this relationship between freedom, determinism and existence. He is searching for the right formula with which to disclose what is knowable about the human condition. In this Sartre is still faithful to the enlightenment mission that there is something objectively knowable about humanity but which, as yet, we have not developed the right methodological tools to reveal.

Sartre's contribution to this challenge is to highlight the ideological problems with *reason* or *thinking* as tools of control with a legitimating function. It is crucial to first understand the nature of reason and its inherent problems. The powers of reason are a double-edged sword that can hinder as well as enhance our understanding. For as Sartre claims philosophy is:

Simultaneously a totalization of knowledge, a method, a regulative idea, an offensive weapon, and a community of language, if this 'vision of the world' is also an instrument which ferments rotten societies, if this particular conception of a man or of a group of men becomes the culture and sometimes the nature of a whole class — then it is very clear that the periods of philosophical creation are rare. (Sartre 1963, 6)

Reason is itself historical, emerging from the particular civilization it serves. The philosopher 'effects the unification of everything that is known', according to the 'guiding schemata' of a particular period of history:

Under certain well-defined circumstances a philosophy is developed for the purpose of giving expression to the general movement of the society. So long as the philosophy is alive, it serves as a cultural milieu for its contemporaries. (Sartre 1963, 3)

The problem is: How do we step outside a particular ideological regime and initiate any genuine new way of thinking? Epistemological traditions have a strong propensity for reinforcing and repeating patterns of knowledge and understanding. We believe method is what we need to think *correctly* about the world.

The paradox is that methods and the conceptual assumptions that they embody can actually put restraints on our thinking. Method should prevent error but it may also prove to be restrictive. Sartre's point is that methods are both the repositories for epistemological traditions and the sentinels of particular intellectual ideologies. In other words, they perform a function beyond that of being mere pedagogical and research tools.

What exactly is the human condition amidst the kaleidoscope of cultural configurations? In the end, for Sartre, it is an act of faith that humans have the power of existential choice. He chose to situate existentialism within the boundaries of historical materialism, in his recognition that freedom is a problematic notion.

Sartre's quest for the right method to explore the human condition essentially parallels the practice of some theologians who utilize the methods of social science — in that they believe in the movement of spirit or God that is somehow beyond or underlying the various social conditions which these approaches are identifying. Distinguishing the presence of such a spirit is difficult to reconcile with some of these methods. Yet it is often deemed to be the task of practical theologians to understand the religious and spiritual aspects of existence as major forces for morality in the social world.

For Paul Tillich (1886-1965), existence itself was a fallen/estranged state in which humanity becomes aware and anxious about its finite condition. Existentialism was to underpin his theory of correlation and provide (for him) a crucial means of addressing the human condition. In *Theology of Culture*, first published in 1959, Tillich addresses the problem of deliberating whether religion is a 'creative element of the human spirit' or divine revelation:

If one replies that religion is an aspect of man's spiritual life, they [theologians] will turn away. Then some secular scientists will ask whether religion is to be considered a lasting quality of the human spirit instead of an effect of changing psychological and sociological conditions. And if one answers that religion is a necessary aspect of man's spiritual life, they turn away like the theologians, but in the opposite direction. (Tillich 1975, 3)

The focus of Tillich's work was the reconciliation of religious faith with an increasingly sceptical contemporary culture. His argument was simply that in all cultural forms religion would actualize itself. He was also very clear about the need for theology to develop a theological method that was compatible with his conception of it as a 'concrete and normative science of religion':

It is not a sound procedure to borrow a method for a special realm of inquiry from another realm in which this method has been successfully used. It seems on that the emphasis on the so called "empirical" method in theology has not grown out of actual theological demands but has been imposed on theology under the pressure of a "methodological imperialism" exercised by the pattern of natural sciences. This subjection of theology to a strange pattern has resulted in an undue extension of the concept "empirical" and the lack of a clear distinction between the different meanings of "experience" in the theological enterprise. (Tillich 1987, 127)

'Religion in the light of science and philosophy' was the focus of the 1952 *Terry Foundation* lectures, delivered by Tillich and later published as *The Courage To Be*.<sup>2</sup> In this work, Tillich assimilates Heidegger's existential philosophy and Spinoza's concept of *conatus* to form his concept of courage established as the parallel to his 'ontology of anxiety':

Courage as a human act, as a matter of valuation is an ethical concept. Courage as the universal and essential self affirmation of one's being is an ontological concept. The courage to be is the ethical act in which man affirms his own being in spite of those elements of his existence which conflict with his essential self-affirmation. (1961, 3)

Tillich further believed that Sartre's work provided a critical psychological dimension to Heidegger's philosophy<sup>3</sup>:

Sartre carried through the consequences of Heidegger's Existentialist analysis without mystical restrictions. This is the reason he has become the symbol of present day Existentialism, a position which is deserved not so much by the originality of his basic concepts as by the radicalism, consistency and psychological adequacy with which he has carried them through. (1961, 142)

This affirmation of Sartre's particular interpretation of Heidegger is also present in his later work, *Theology of Culture* in which he described Sartre as 'the psychological interpreter of Heidegger'. Tillich is in no doubt about the importance of existentialism as a working theory: 'existentialism as a

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<sup>2</sup> Tillich gave the 27<sup>th</sup> series of the Terry Foundation lectures at Yale University in 1952; the first edition of *The Courage To Be* emerged as the seminal work that was to link Tillich with existentialism later that year.

<sup>3</sup> Tillich preferred the psychological immanence of Sartre's interpretation of existentialism to Heidegger's romantic mysticism and origin myths about embryonic epistemology and classical Greek culture. (See Heidegger's 'What is Philosophy?')

philosophy speaks of the universal human situation' (Tillich 1975, 118); but he is also aware that in itself existentialism is not free from ideological influences. He is not entirely in agreement with Sartre's brand of existentialism, but he nonetheless finds Sartre's concept of fear crucial in his interpretation of anxiety as ontology.

Tillich's work is crucial in understanding the development of twentieth century practical theology. In every sense he was constructing a theology and not merely assimilating existing methods. Every science has its basic principles and, for Tillich's systematic theology, these are the central tenets of existentialism. This allowed an interpretation of the Christian narratives of the fall and salvation as a process of psychological healing:

The universal fall — fall meaning the transition from essential goodness into existential estrangement from oneself, which happens in every living being and in every time. (Tillich 1975, 118)

The result is a theology of a timeless fall, in which each generation has to find its way back to wholeness. Christian theology is not a thing apart from culture and Tillich's aim is to take humanity's ultimate questions and address these through the Christian faith. This desire to make theology relevant to humanity's immediate circumstances has become the hallmark of modern practical theology. In turn, this leads to a quest to construct an appropriate and effective method with which this desire can be actualized. Method, for Tillich, is therefore at the heart of the reconciliation of the religious and the secular:

For the religious and the secular realm are in the same predicament. Neither of them should be in separation from the other, and both should realize that their very existence as separated is an emergency, that both of them are rooted in religion in the larger sense of the word, in an experience of ultimate concern. (Tillich 1975, 9)

Tillich retains concepts of 'creative courage' and the 'human spirit' at the core of his search for a suitable method. He believes that knowledge and religion have the same grounding in spirit.<sup>4</sup> The religious aspect is not in any sense a separate criterion. It is not optional but is an integral part of method. In this, Tillich goes some way towards integrating the spirit with the methods of the social sciences. This has eluded much contemporary practical theology.

For some theologians like Seward Hiltner (1910-84), new methods provided the means to restructure practical theology. Hiltner had three significant issues which he believed were important for the future of practical theology:

Firstly, that practical theology needs to be open and enquiring and not spend so much time looking backwards, as Christian revelation is ongoing; secondly, that practical theology should not be limited to the church tradition/hierarchy and clerical affairs; thirdly, that practical theology should become involved in the process of revelation through personal and historical encounters rather than 'Olympian first causes' (Hiltner 1958, 221).

Contemporary epistemologies were to become essential to the total process of what Hiltner conceived to be a new *Systematic* practical theology:

Theologians have of course taken different stands about the relation of theology to culture. Methodologically speaking, however, all great theologians have taken culture or human knowledge in general, quite seriously. In his day Thomas Aquinas was a daring innovator by insisting on relating Aristotelian thought to theology. (Hiltner 1958, 222)

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<sup>4</sup> A theme that also provides the foundations of Karl Rahner's theology of knowledge as 'graced understanding.'

This in some way gets to the heart of the problem for contemporary practical theology. Aquinas and Tillich incorporated secular philosophies into their systematic theology. By contrast, the contemporary emphasis is on the *interdisciplinary* assimilation of modern methods, which can have very different consequences, as indicated here by Friedrich Schweitzer:

In terms of the relationship between Practical theology and the social sciences, the double focus on practical theology as a discipline and on its relationship to contemporary culture appears to produce two contradictory demands. On the one hand, the interest in practical theology as a unified discipline seems to require a limitation or at least clear subordination of interdisciplinary contact. From this perspective, the inclusion of sociological or psychological theories within practical theology must lead to the question of whether practical theology is more than just a different name for sociology or psychology, and how practical theology may be distinguished from the social scientific study of religion. (Schweitzer 1999, 308)

The problems of correlation, assimilation or the interdisciplinary use of methods have been further complicated by the theoretical developments of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is now no longer possible to explore the possibilities of contemporary methods without addressing the theoretical foundations that underpin them. Previously normative methods (and our ways of thinking) have been challenged by postmodernism. The familiar landmarks can no longer be taken for granted.

There is little disagreement about the importance of method. The problem is: How do we find a suitable way forward for practical theology that avoids its being irreversibly subordinated to the methods it borrows? Can practical theology rise to the postmodernist challenge on its own terms?

## 1.2 *The Importance of Methodology for Practical Theology*

As I have begun to demonstrate, method is important in the pursuit of knowledge. It is what we use to shape questions and to arrange data, sources, facts and information in an orderly way. A method is a way of doing something according to a plan. Method is also an important epistemological tool used in the construction and dissemination of knowledge. It can potentially enhance the progression of a discipline eager to position the boundaries of specialization, as argued for here by Friedrich Schweitzer:

My starting point is the question of how practical theology is to be constituted as a discipline. The notion of discipline to which I refer in this question clearly means more than the attempt to just summarize or combine various areas of work under a single heading or umbrella term. Rather, this notion of discipline includes the claim to such a unity which allows us to establish, maintain, and even guide practical theology as a discipline of its own within the field of theology. Therefore, inner coherence and clear boundaries seem to be the necessary implications of this notion. (Schweitzer 1999, 307)

We deploy method to bring order into a discipline, to make it publicly and pedagogically viable. Method is about systems, about being systematic — outlining in schematic form the principles that guide us in the pursuit of knowledge. Method is used for teaching, for exposition, to investigate, to inquire. We use method to contribute to existing knowledge, to make our findings accountable and open to legitimate critique. Method should also enable us to take questions that interest us personally and put them into the public domain. Information is analyzed and interpreted according to the principles of a particular method in order to inform and increase our understanding.

For contemporary practical theology, method is also the foundation of the academic discipline. It is integral to the professional status of practical theology. Our method brings us into line with other disciplines and enables us to achieve an academic identity.

Because of these considerations, contemporary practical theologians are just as likely to be concerned about the professional and intellectual status of the discipline within academia as they are with issues of church and ministry. Increasingly the identity of the contemporary practical theologian is likely to be that of an academic rather than a cleric.

For these reasons, there is an understandable anxiety expressed by some practical theologians that their subject remains current and valid. As an academic discipline, its concerns emerge from an intellectual environment within contemporary higher education. Consequently, practical theologians perceive their success is measured according to how well they perform in such circumstances:

In many respects, practical theology in Britain seems to be thriving. Paul Ballard's recent survey indicated a surprising number of undergraduate programmes in Britain which claim to be offering a substantial focus on practical theology. In meeting various tutors and students involved in such programmes, I am consistently impressed by the degree of enthusiasm and commitment to this discipline. (Lynch 2003, 22)

There is also a desire to escape the confines of clericalism. Paul Ballard (*emeritus* Professor of Practical Theology at Cardiff University) has argued that the professional zenith for the clergy was the nineteenth century and that they have since experienced a decline in status. In the past the clergy were venerated along with law and medicine as part of a learned triad.

The increasing secularization of knowledge has had the consequence of altering the intellectual and cultural standing of the clergy. Ballard suggests that, 'the clergy have experienced in a radical way the current collapse of the professional mystique,' they had once possessed (Ballard 2004, 48). The implication being that the practical theologian can no longer rely on a privileged and uncontested status but has to maintain credibility the same as any other academic discipline. Ballard is concerned with how we define this new professional identity, especially in a postmodern context where investigations relating to 'metaphysical questions about the nature of good' are problematic (Ballard 2004, 51). He seeks to 'compare and contrast' the clerical profession with other professional bodies. This is a model that sets out to demonstrate proficiency and authority and seeks to construct a modern discipline with an ever-increasing tendency toward specialization. Accordingly, practical theologians seek to define these contours with the use of a rational discourse that promotes the concept of the professional 'expert':

One of the marks of a profession is that it practices its skills on the basis of the mastery of a body of knowledge that is held in trust for the laity that receive the service offered. The quality of service is guaranteed in the professional identity. (Ballard 2004, 48)

Paul Ballard and Stephen Pattison have brought together some of these issues of concern in their appraisal of the profile of postgraduate studies in practical theology in higher education. Ballard and Pattison aspire to 'methodological cohesion, consolidation of practice and a clear and recognizable form' for the discipline' (Ballard & Pattison 2002, 15-23).

In his joint publication with Ballard, *Ambiguity and Opportunity* (Ballard & Pattison 2004), Pattison (who is presently Professor of Religion and Ethics at Birmingham University) expresses concern for pedagogical consistency. Ballard's original research was meant to establish the development and consolidation of practical theology as a clearly delineated discipline, but he is aware of the risk practical theology takes of disappearing in between the interdisciplinary gaps.

There is therefore an ongoing challenge to prove that there is a discipline here which is at least as demanding as other theological disciplines. PT is essentially *interdisciplinary*, correlating one or more *social science* with theology. It also works at both the theoretical and practical levels. The danger is that practical theologians suffer the fate of all those crossing boundaries and divides; they are not perceived to have expertise in anything. (Ballard & Pattison 2002, 20)

In pursuing methodological homogeneity, Ballard and Pattison are understandably aiming to provide the systematic regularity demanded within the institutions of higher education. Practical theologians seek to establish and retain a viable discipline through its deployment of methods that are part of public discourse and scrutiny.

As method directs the pursuit of (and legitimises) knowledge within the academic community, it plays a crucial role in making its findings effective, open and accountable. To be credible and respectable has meant investing intellectually in the modern university. This also means aspiring to the standards of excellence set down as the objectives of such an establishment, even if sometimes this means fitting traditional objectives within the matrix of scientific enquiry, as noted by Van der Ven, again in acquiescence to these requirements:

Without a sound and clear methodology, practical theology cannot fulfill its task: reflecting on the people's praxis from the viewpoint of God's revelatory praxis in a way that is as scientific as possible. This especially refers to developing practical theology within the context of the modern secular university. (Van der Ven 1999, 324)

The establishment of a 'sound and clear' methodology is particularly important for those practical theologians who are mindful of the poor status of practical theology in the past. On which point Bernard Reymond, a contemporary French practical theologian, chooses to focus:

The recent evolution of practical theology, and a better understanding of its identity and its importance, have greatly modified the way in which the field defines itself with respect to other theological disciplines... I maintain that practical theology must remain a specific discipline among others-but a discipline in its own right. First of all, it is simply a necessity, according to the way theological studies are organised. In our universities and seminars, practical theology is one professorial chair, possibly several, among others, and I see no justification for imposing its methods or its point of view; such imperialism would be a bad way of trying to compensate for its *subordinate status of previous years* [my italics]. (Reymond 1999, 168)

Implicit in Reymond's article is the notion that practical theology has improved through the process of becoming a discrete and authoritative subject in its own right. The progression of knowledge, through specialized disciplines, is the standard approach in our education system. In higher education, this is even more evident. Practical theologians have worked hard to make their discipline credible and respectable within this culture of expertise. The aim is to provide a consistency and uniformity of composition in its teaching methods. Reymond insists that practical theology is able to present a recognizable topology within its own intellectual landscape:

Any attempt at describing practical theology presupposes therefore that one is conscious of the following: (a) the itinerary which led it to constitute itself as a distinct discipline; (b) the precise field which it considers as its own; (c) the way it distinguishes itself from other branches of theology, and, as is the case for any theological discipline, (d) the confessional (denominational) traditions which affect its declarations. (Reymond 1999, 167)

As I have begun to argue, a crucial part of practical theology's itinerary has been its interdisciplinary assimilation of the methods from the social sciences. Increasingly, practical theology seeks to strengthen its identity as a *moral science* rather than through a classic religious identity. Major theorists (for example: Don Browning at the University of Chicago Divinity School and Elaine Graham at Manchester University) work within a Judaeo-Christian tradition which they seek to open to the insights of contemporary social theory. However, some practical theologians would take the more radical step of ending the restriction of practical theology to specifically religious communities. The consensus being that such a location is neither favorable nor adequate for a contemporary 'post-religious' culture.

When Paul Ballard suggests that the term 'pastoral' has too many ideological implications to be anything other than a hindrance to the progress of *practical theology* he is endorsing a critique that assumes making things current requires the shedding of old images and worn-out religious references. The idea is that the outmoded language of the *pastoral* prevents any genuine contemporary connection. Therefore, the development of practical theology has also been a history of its distancing itself from the concept of the pastoral. The distinctive and phonetically crisp *practical* and its association with praxis and a scientific approach are favored over the softer *pastoral* with its religious and clerical overtones.

Gordon Lynch, Professor of Sociology of Religion at Birbeck, University of London, makes a case for an alternative 'post-religious' practical theology (Lynch 2003, 22-27) and subscribes to this point of view.

Lynch, whose interests have always been in the relationship between religion and contemporary culture, questions the use of a model of practical theology (specifically Seward Hiltner's) which relies on the concept of pastoral. This, he suggests, has the consequence of alienating practical theology from a wide section of society that no longer shares a strong sense of religious identity:

The Hiltner model of an ecclesiastical and pastoral approach to practical theology, whilst useful for the church, becomes clearly less relevant for the large number of people who live without any ecclesiastical point of contact. . . My starting point for this alternative model is the recognition that Britain (like much of Western Europe) is an increasingly post-religious society. (Lynch 2003, 24)

Lynch is critical of Hiltner, arguably because he has underestimated the significance of his methodological reform. Lynch has overlooked the strategic element in Hiltner's revisioning of practical theology, which was to take the biblical metaphor of shepherding and rework it to make it compatible with the increasingly high profile adaptations of psychoanalysis. In the work of Carl Rogers (1902-87), founder of the Jungian influenced *Person Centered Therapy*;<sup>5</sup> Hiltner saw an opportunity to develop a pastoral theology that would easily blend with current psychoanalytic literacy of North America, a culture already well primed in counseling theory.<sup>6</sup> Hiltner, like Lynch, was motivated by the objective of widening ecclesiastical boundaries. That he was successful in so doing is evident in the proliferation

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<sup>5</sup> Carl Rodgers was to make considerable contributions to Hiltner's *Journal for pastoral psychology*. Rogers believed that in actualizing their potential people created culture. He was best known for his founding of 'client centered therapy' in which it was the analyst task to enable positive self actualization of the analysand. The therapist or analyst was to have three essential qualities: congruence - the capacity for complete honesty; empathy - the ability to feel and mirror the emotional reality of the analysand; and, finally, respect - unconditional positive regard for the analysand that was non-judgmental. Rogers and Hiltner both believed that this psychotherapeutic model was in keeping with Christian practice.

<sup>6</sup> In this sense, Hiltner was following in the spirit of Paul Tillich who was an advocated for change in the guiding principles of theology. Hiltner was not an innovative thinker like Tillich, but he was a consummate apprentice of reconfiguration.

of counseling models within practical theology. Hiltner's approach was never simply about what was useful for the church. As he clearly stated:

Pastoral care should be used as we are using the term shepherding, but in that case we should have to be careful not to revert to the thinking by way of church offices. (Hiltner 1958, 20)

Unlike Ballard, Pattison or Lynch, Hiltner is not eager to reject religious language (with its historical associations) as 'obfuscating'. Hiltner maintains enough familiarity through the metaphoric medium of shepherding to secure an authoritative lineage between the classical meanings of pastoral and his own reform. He then establishes a workable distance through an astute mixture of imagery and semantics. In other words, he redefines the shepherding metaphor for a different context.

Lynch's dismissal of Hiltner as a typical proponent of the 'ecclesiastical' model of practical theology ignores the complexity and significance of Hiltner's work. In fact, Hiltner initiated the concern for the educative side of practical theology that is now prevalent in contemporary practice. What is significant about Hiltner's use of the shepherding metaphor is not that he has failed, as Elaine Graham has suggested in *Transforming Practice*, to develop this as a theological concept. It is used by Hiltner primarily as an organising principle of *method*.

Elaine Graham suggested that Hiltner 'neglected to question the aims and ends of shepherding', but this misses the important epistemological implication of mobilizing the concept as an aid in dislodging the *pastoral form* from a clerical mode for *methodological* purposes.

With the use of the 'ancient shepherding metaphor', as he refers to it, as the organizing principle of his theory, Hiltner set out to 'reclaim' pastoral theology for the contemporary purposes of counseling and teaching. The *pastoral* becomes a medium through which the meaning and reconfiguration of practical theology are facilitated. The shepherding metaphor is sustained as a familiar theological concept which also serves as a hermeneutic principle in the transference of new ontological and methodological positions.

In other words, Hiltner's *use* of the shepherding/pastoral, as opposed to its elimination from the topography, would expand the boundaries of practical theology. This is evident in Hiltner's revision of his 'ancient metaphor' to incorporate images of twentieth century husbandry. Amalgamating deep-rooted imagery with a contemporary application, he creates a working analogy to justify his reform:

Today a sheep grower has to help the pasture by fertilizer, by alternative plantings, or by irrigation. He adds vitamins and antibiotics to the sheep diet. He does these things not because sheep are inherently more complicated than they used to be, but because modern knowledge enables him to do more about helping more sheep in more dimensions of their life. The spiritual shepherd of today has as much obligation as the literal shepherd to bring his methods up to date, in order to *meet the peculiar needs and dangers of our time* [my italics]. (Hiltner 1958, 25)

Hiltner then had a specific use for religious terminology. Religious concepts bring with them associations and provide continuity through the construction of a shared memory. This is an important element in the transference of all intellectual histories:

The unique place occupied by shepherding in Christianity comes from the way in which our relationship to God and relationship to our fellow men are regarded as inseparable. (Hiltner 1958, 17)

This is in contrast with Ballard's dismissal of the term 'pastoral' (based on what he took to be the negative connotations with the word) and his desire for the more positive associations of 'practical'. Hiltner was more concerned with harnessing the associations of 'pastoral'. He understood that the familiar can provide a sense of continuity, while executing radical change.

Unlike Ballard or Lynch, Hiltner was not eager to move beyond the historical traditions of practical theology. Nonetheless he was successful in superimposing a powerful biblical image onto the relationship between analyst and analysand. The result was a psychotherapeutic model of pastoral theology validated within a strong religious tradition. Hiltner also wanted to establish pastoral theology as systematic and pedagogical, a suitable vehicle for his clinical model. Overall he made good use of transforming the pastoral/shepherding metaphor into a pivotal organizing tool of his method.

Ballard's critique ignores the plasticity and semantic slippage of language that allows for the adaptation of religious terminology for theoretical as well as theological circulation. To dismiss religious terminology because it has 'outlived' its purpose is a misguided response to the complexity of its history. Choice of language, however, is never arbitrary. As I have suggested, within the discipline the term 'practical' has now become popular because of its proximity to the notion of praxis and the methods of the social sciences. The issue is one of lineage. Hiltner, a dedicated modernist, also wanted historical connections. Those who struggle to define 'new' models of practical theology want this too, but they have a desire to be progressive and the social sciences have provided the means of being such.

There is nothing wrong in this. Equally, there is nothing wrong in Hiltner's synthetic reconstruction of the *pastoral* within a contemporary structure. What counts is transparency of purpose. The changing taxonomy of practical theology is not the real issue. What should be vital is the persistence of whatever it is about the human condition that benefits from its function as a modern discipline.

What remains of lasting value in Hiltner's reinterpretation of the pastoral (contested or not, with or without sheep, resonating and persisting in our culture) is his desire to understand and alleviate what Tillich identified as humanity's 'pathological' anxiety about existence. Hiltner, with all his weaknesses and flaws, was a modernist who did not attempt to reduce practical theology to a 'practical moral wisdom'. He was clear about the need to broaden the working space of practical theology beyond the realm of church offices — without rejecting its religious heritage.

Gordon Lynch believes that the fact that most people have no formal involvement with religious institutions renders Seward Hiltner's approach outmoded. Lynch argues for the construction of a 'practical moral wisdom' that emerges from a 'post-religious' practical theology for a secular culture. The reform of practical theology for Lynch means distancing the discipline from its religious associations. Increasingly, then, it is to secular authority and pedagogic institutions that practical theology turns for authority and legitimation. Practical theologians who move progressively toward the sociological understanding of religion in contemporary culture, like Lynch, are most likely to get their analytical tools from the social sciences.

Nonetheless, Lynch still wishes to retain some distinctiveness for practical theology:

I would suggest that there is still an important difference between these disciplines, however, in that the practical theologian approaches their field of study with the primary goal of asking what forms of belief are adequate, healthy or true, and what forms of practice genuinely promote lasting well-being. Many scholars involved in cultural studies and sociology would share such critical and normative concerns, but in practice they are not always seen as fundamental in social scientific study (which may often remain at the level of describing social processes and structures) as they are within practical theology. (Lynch 2003, 27).

However, here Lynch seems to ignore the struggle within the social sciences to address the problem of overt and covert value judgments. Truth has also been an important aspiration for social scientists like Max Weber who wrote extensively about our projection of meaning into social situations. This is what Weber referred to as 'value considered interest':

It is significant because it reveals relationships which are important to us due to the connection to our values... We cannot discover, however, what is meaningful to us by means of 'presuppositionless' investigation of empirical data. Rather perception of its meaningfulness to us is the presupposition of its becoming an object of investigation. (Weber 1949, 76)

This is at odds with Lynch's notion that social scientists seek a dispassionate interest in describing reality. Any claim to be 'presuppositionless' ignores prevailing value systems that are inherent in the selection of the object of enquiry.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the most enduring social theory has come from those who founded their work on value judgments. Notions of injustice, inequality and exploitation underpin *Das Kapital*, yet Marx could still describe his work as the scientific study of society because he studied the general conditions that gave rise to and perpetuated systems of inequality.

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<sup>7</sup> Although it should be pointed out that Weber always argued that the 'value conditioned interest' of phenomena must be causally explained as a component of a definitive culture to make its significance understandable, this is what makes the study *social science* rather than merely descriptive analysis.

This is also evident in contemporary social theory, the concept of inequality in Pierre Bourdieu's theory of 'cultural capital' being an example.<sup>8</sup>

The absence of an appeal to religious authority makes Lynch's practical morality level with all other ethical and social theory. The social sciences also have a history of being critically aware of value judgments and include this awareness as a necessary prerequisite for any research. In some contemporary strands, ethnomethodology for example, it is the organizing principle.

Although advocating a 'post-religious' practical theology Lynch still acknowledges the debt that his theory owes to Don Browning, one of the foremost contemporary scholars of the discipline:

A practical theology for a 'post-religious' society can draw important methodological principles from the work of Don Browning... (Lynch 2003, 25)

Don, Browning (just like Hiltner before him) understood the importance of religious heritage in providing the underlying authority for practical theology. Contemporary intellectual theory was crucial to the development of a modern discipline but Browning set out to keep these harmonious using an evolved format of Paul Tillich's approach, what he referred to as critical correlation theory. In contrast, Lynch (selecting those strands of Browning's approach that incorporate a social science perspective) effectively empties Browning's methodology of its religious content.

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<sup>8</sup> Cultural capital is a key sociological tool used in Bourdieu's analysis of inequality. Used as a measurement of personal status accumulated through cultural inheritance (habitus/family/intellectual), but this 'measurement' depends upon the boundaries/precepts of subjective value systems and judgments about high and low culture. Political philosophers, Ranciere for example, have been critical about Bourdieu's acceptance of ideologically 'legitimated' or 'policed' epistemologies.

In so doing, he makes it hard to differentiate between practical theology and social science — something of which he is aware, though he insists that practical theology can defend a privileged position in relation to the *ethical* dimension of such studies. However, as we have seen, this fails to stand as a substantial differentiator.

Hiltner successfully expanded and altered practical theology without having to abandon religion. Paradoxically, in arguing for a post-religious practical theology, Lynch makes it difficult to justify the need for practical theology in a contemporary culture. In fact he goes so far as to suggest that some sociologists and journalists already fulfil the remit of pastoral theology:

Indeed, the most stimulating 'practical theology' that I have read over the past couple of years would include Zygmunt Bauman's work on post-modern culture, George Ritzer's work on the McDonaldization of society, and Michael Moore's journalism on the nature of contemporary western politics. (Lynch 2003, 27)

However Lynch is still seeking to find a role for practical theologians in a secular culture and it is to some of the more recognizable formulas that he constantly returns. He would like to develop practical theology as a 'practical moral wisdom'. In this he is following firmly in the footsteps of Don Browning, who has tenaciously sought to make practical theology a working model of moral science – as I shall discuss below.

### 1.3 *Don Browning and Practical Wisdom: Practical Theology as Applied Moral Science*

The realization that practical theology can only fulfil its task if it is constituted in relationship to contemporary culture, leads to the need for close contact and co-operation between practical theology and the social sciences. In this vein it is sometimes argued that the social sciences have become the only legitimate access to contemporary culture. Their degree of sophistication has set the standards for all today's understanding of culture...According to this view, the social sciences are the only way in which cultural reality may become accessible for theology. (Schweitzer 1999, 308)

Perhaps one of the most important perceived contributions that the methods of the social sciences have made to practical theology is to provide an armoury of intellectual and scientific integrity. The methods of the social sciences work on the basic principle that, whatever the object of their inquiry, it will be and remain both discernible and measurable in all times and in all places. This capacity for delivering an accurate description of the world is an aspect of the social sciences that practical theologians have long valued.

Don Browning played a crucial role in establishing practical theology as a discrete subject area within an institution that provides uniformity in the production of knowledge and the maintenance of academic standards (Browning 1991). He has been at the forefront of the construction of a practical theology that has a pedagogical rather than ecclesiastical remit, and in this sense carries on with the modernisation of pastoral theology initiated by Seward Hiltner. In contrast to Lynch however, Browning elects to retain traditional Judaeo-Christian sources as an essential underlying authority.

However, I think we have to be cautious about the nature of Browning's correlation method. For Tillich, correlation meant answering particular existential/pathological anxieties within the Christian tradition. A careful critique of Browning reveals not a revised continuation of this but an inverted application of correlation whereby the Judaeo-Christian narrative is ultimately enclosed within a moral science that has been synthetically constructed from prevailing trends in psychology, education and a rediscovery of Aristotelian phronesis via Gadamer's hermeneutics.

Browning's contribution to modern theology consisted in providing continuity between contemporary theory and established traditions by means of a sophisticated hermeneutic exercise. He was working with theorists who were proponents of 'practical philosophy'. The implementation of the critical theory of Jurgen Habermas (Habermas 1968) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (Gadamer 1960) provides the theoretical and hermeneutical tools that, together with the resources of sociology and psychology, underpin Browning's method.

These philosophical perspectives are the foundations of Browning's *Critical Correlation Theory* of which the fullest representation is demonstrated comprehensively in *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (1991). Whereas Tillich's response to the increasing scepticism about religion in a humanistic culture was both intellectual and philosophical, Browning wanted to shift the emphasis from 'the modern fascination' with theoretical and technical modes of thinking.

Browning was also concerned about scepticism but wished to create a theology that had a more practical application. Actively pursuing the 'rebirth' of practical theology as moral science he advocates the introduction of Aristotle's concept of practical wisdom (Browning 1999, 54). This has two components: the capacity to make rational choices on which a person acts (prohairesis); and the reflective process by which a rational choice is ultimately formed. These, coupled with Gadamer's defense of the historical nature of understanding, provide Browning with a reflective model for contemporary practical theology<sup>9</sup>:

The rebirth of practical theology is designed to question the dominance of theoretical and technical reason, to secure in the university a stronger role for practical reason, to demonstrate that critical reflection about the goals of human action is both possible and necessary, and that, as a matter of fact, practical reason does indeed function in much wider areas of human life than we realize — even in fact in the human sciences. (Browning 1999, 54)

Browning's emphasis is on the moral context of understanding revealed in the 'conversational model of hermeneutics' (Browning 1999, 54). He also takes from Gadamer the idea that the events of the past shape our present historical consciousness — Gadamer's famous 'fusion of horizons' (Gadamer 1975). For Browning this translates into a fusion of the classic texts of Judaeo-Christian faith and the critical correlation between these traditions and the 'fore concepts' that contemporary culture brings to them. With this hermeneutic interchange, contemporary issues bring historical text into

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<sup>9</sup> Gadamer was critical of the 'general tendency of the enlightenment not to accept any authority and to decide everything before the judgment seat of reason' (Gadamer 1994, 257). He did not believe in the purity of reason as the 'ultimate source for all authority.' This problem, of the historical nature of reason, is one that also came to preoccupy Jean Paul Sartre. Ultimately Gadamer argues that 'the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being.' Like Sartre, Gadamer concludes self-reflection and self-awareness alone cannot give an accurate picture of history because they render history 'private once more.' In this sense Gadamer was much more aware of the historical distortion that human reason had on the construction of reality than Browning has on his own application of morality with its historically biased ideology.

correlation with our experiences. Present day practical wisdom receives authentication through the classical text, with an appeal to the historical rather than the metaphysical. The result is a combination of religion and morality with a foundational heritage but which nonetheless emerges with a contemporary illustration.

Browning was creating a role for practical theology in a world understood as a rational ordered domain. Utilizing methods from the social sciences he was able to mediate a practical moral wisdom through the contemporary movements in developmental psychology. The intention was to understand humanity through the 'normative visions' of methodology in the social sciences:

Pastoral theology should rediscover itself as a dimension of theological or religious ethics. It is the primary task of pastoral theology to bring together the theological ethics and the social sciences to articulate a normative vision of the human life cycle and psychodynamic, developmental and other social science perspectives that explain how human development comes about. (Browning 1983, 187)

There is a prominent strand within contemporary practical theology which has been deeply influenced by this approach. We can see examples of 'cognitive-structural theories of religious development' (Streib 2003) in the work of James Fowler, Karl Nipkow and Friedrich Schweitzer (1992). Hans Streib has also argued for the deployment of developmental psychology in understanding religion as a 'question of style':

The intriguing possibility of classifying different forms of religiosity in terms of developmental psychology as inspired by Lawrence Kohlberg played a formative role in the theories of Oser and Fowler. Classification in this sense means arranging the different religious orientations along the central thread of a sequence of stages that since Piaget, has been postulated for the development of cognitive structures. (Streib 2003, 2)

Through the social sciences, practical theologians have access to theories that understand humanity through the classification of experience into economic, social and psychological categories. Each theoretical perspective employs methods, which have their own organising principles.

Browning's advocacy of the use of interdisciplinary methods structured his practical theology so that it incorporated developmental psychology and other key developments in the social sciences. But crucially, 20th century developmental psychology sits very well with Browning's redeployment of Aristotle's vision of morality and human nature. Browning brings together contemporary theory, religious tradition and classical theory:

Some of the social sciences — especially personality theory, developmental psychology, and socio-biology — contain empirical information about the central tendencies and central needs of human beings. (Browning 1983, 15)

It might be argued that Browning's work is an example of how successful practical theologians can be in combining the modern social sciences with religious tradition. In this view practical theology need not be bound only to the concerns of the church but can relate much more fully to the wider community and make a genuine contribution to the social order. Browning is confident that religious traditions have a role to play in contemporary culture as part of his moral science. Browning has made concessions to the social sciences in order to shift into the academic realm, but he has retained major theological concepts. He is successful insofar as he takes traditional texts and integrates them with aspects of critical theory and developmental psychology, both which have methodological currency in the social sciences.

Browning has managed to satisfy the criteria for the authenticating body of academia with its standards of methodological scrutiny, but he has remained within religious authority too. From the outset, he followed a pioneering agenda with the objective of raising the profile of practical theology as an independent academic discipline — combining practical theology with social science methods.

As was previously discussed, if practical theology was to be credible as a university discipline, it was required to construct and maintain a methodological order which would make it open to both public scrutiny and professional accountability. To be consistent and pedagogically viable, it would be subject to the same empirical principles as other academic disciplines. Browning's work therefore opened up a new dimension for practical theology. He was himself conscious of this achievement. In the preface to *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, (Browning 1991, xi) he records that '...some early readers of this work have said that I have established in these pages a new genre of theology.'

This is clearly a value-added aspect of interdisciplinary methodology, appreciated by other practical theologians who see a strong link between the revival of practical theology and critical correlation. Reymond for example states that:

Among those factors which have most contributed to the birth of effectively correlative practical theologies, one of the most important has been the input of the methods and results of the human sciences. (Reymond 1999, 171)

There are however some problems with this approach. It is not necessarily the case that an increasingly secular society will recognise the authority of religious text or tradition. The religious sources that are authoritative for Browning are more likely to be explicated in the historical socio-cultural terms deployed by the disciplines from which he borrows. Religious traditions have no more authoritative claim than secular models of morality, they do not have a privileged position in a secular culture no matter how tolerant of different faith perspectives that culture may aspire to be.

This is not to say that Browning is unaware of the sceptical mood of a sophisticated and educated society:

Why given these [religious] communities' failings and ambiguities, their short sightedness and weaknesses, their increasing distance from centres of power, and their intellectual unsteadiness, should late twentieth century individuals with good educations, concern about the future of the human race, and a bit of excess energy use this energy to support religious communities such as churches and synagogues? (Browning 1991, 1)

Browning's answer is to suggest that religious communities can provide a much needed *practical wisdom*. He believes that in a pluralistic age practical theology has a role or function in being able to offer an authentic moral science. This approach forms the basis for Browning's most recent work on marriage and the family. In what he terms a 'critical pro-marriage philosophy' (Browning 2003, 25), Browning argues for an interdisciplinary and international forum on the status of marriage. Practical theological reflection is applied to this cultural and social institution with the benefit of the 'social sciences in a subordinate way to refine its grasp on empirical facts and trends that shape the issues at hand' (Browning 2003, 3).

From the outset, Browning is using existing models of authority and his 'cultural work' is driven from 'empirical facts and trends'. These are given the full treatment of his revised correlation method, with the 'grand themes' of the Christian faith — 'creation, the fall and faith.' Browning's 'cultural work' is always reduced to the contained and controlled practical, 'let me say this now: the exercise of understanding should be conceived of as practical through and through' (Browning: 2003, p 3). The cultural work that he proposes is ambitious and requires a daunting strategic format.

The multiple strategies of this scheme are interdependent and all feed back into the core objectives. Browning puts forward the idea that new education systems, on a national and international level be set up to 'co-ordinate complex patterns of dialogue':

These associations must see the reformation of the ethics of marriage as fundamental to the process of reviving the institution of marriage. They would attempt to devise an interrelated philosophical, religious, economic, legal educational and psychological strategy to influence culture, religious institutions, public life and even the law. They would be based on the best research available in these different disciplines, but the overall task would be practical and hermeneutic: i.e. a matter of understanding, as Hans Georg Gadamer would say, for the purpose of *praxis*. (Browning 2003, 25)

Apart from the logistics of maintaining such a Kafkaesque campaign, there are serious methodological, not to say ethical, questions that are raised by research that sets out with the stated aim of assembling a global consensus on marriage. The question is never put by Browning as to whether it is desirable or even possible. He does not address the underlying patterns of change in contemporary family life, and carries value judgments, intellectually unattended, into his project.

Many of the disciplines from which Browning borrows would explain the changing trends in marriage using their own sociological, economic, political and cultural perspectives. If marriage is primarily a social and legal status, his solutions become more identifiable with state policy and 'good citizenship' public education. Browning could have resolved this difficulty by opting for a religious foundation for marriage as sacramental. However, it is clear that Browning has a major role for the state in his 'cultural work' and this is troubling:

Marriage education should begin in secondary schools. This is another reason why the state must be a partner in the reformation and revival of marriage. There are new curricula now available that help youth navigate the increasingly hazardous years of searching for an appropriate mate. These curricula also begin preparing young people for the institution of marriage. (Browning 2003, 28)

There are wider ideological implications in Browning's model that seeks to harness the existing state apparatus for the application of his practical moral philosophy. But for practical theology there are also serious ethical issues raised by a model that in effect makes morality a prescriptive science, authenticated by its association with religious tradition, and disseminated through external secular authorities.

The most worrying aspect of Browning's theory is that his *practical moral wisdom*, based on the notion of correlative reflection, has evolved into a theory of morality that divides moral being from experience. Morality becomes a systematic science that has to be disseminated through the existing education system.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Browning's theory has a consistent logic to it insofar as his mode of distributing morality is in complete harmony with the western model of the divided intellect (as discussed in Chapter 3 ff).

This is in fact a remix of an old problem. Browning's model of morality is problematic in that it portrays morality as an external system. This is constructed and justified through religion, only then is it expected to be internalised through the educational structures. This is a flawed model from the outset because it has not addressed the foundational ideology from which it emerges. He has constructed a theory that first promotes morality as a socio-religious construct, and then advocates its dispersal and application through institutional routes.

Such a theory diminishes the potential for regarding morality as an immanent and embodied response to lived experience. In other words, it avoids all mention of ethics as existence. In the end, caught between the two stances of either using methods from disciplines (the social sciences and religion) that would explain the development of the social experience of reality and his own default position toward an unconsidered and autocratic morality (when faced with the prospect of either a social science without his moral strictures or a moral theory without social science), in due course he chooses the latter.

Ultimately Browning's revised correlation method has evolved a great distance away from Tillich, who advocated an internalisation of morality as opposed to its external imposition:

Systems of ethical rules, that is moralisms, are imposed on the masses by authorities: religious authorities as the Roman Church, quasi-religious authorities as the totalitarian government, secular authorities as the giver of positive laws, conventional, family, and school authorities. "Imposing" in a radical sense means forming a conscience. External imposition is not sufficient for the creation of a moral system. (Tillich 1975, 138)

As we will see later, in the discussion of Schleiermacher, the development of a theoretical understanding of the relation between ethics and existence does not necessarily preclude the role of the spirit and the engagement of the individual in informing principled being.

#### 1.4 *Method and Interdisciplinary Approaches*

As we have seen for some practical theologians there is a real sense that practical theology is able to revivify its subject area through the application of the techniques and the development of interdisciplinary methodologies from the social sciences. Stephen Pattison specializes in interdisciplinary research. However, he also acknowledges that this interdisciplinary relationship can be problematic.

Pattison has argued that practical theology is in danger of compromising its potential for engagement with the world at large by remaining in a self imposed religious internment, and that innovative method is key to preventing a drift into obscurity. He has accused theologians of being 'backward looking' and 'tradition bound':

Theology is intellectually, as well as academically, confined. In general theology is an uninnovative discipline conservative in its assumptions, structures, methods and findings. (Pattison 2000, 59)

Pattison demonstrates a more complex attitude toward interdisciplinary methodology than Browning does and he is more sensitive about some of the consequences of embracing the social sciences.

This has always been the case in his work. As a leading British practical theologian with a long history in the field, his most recent work has emerged from the experience he has of working with interdisciplinary approaches. He developed a unique and innovative combination of liberation theology and mental health care, and his groundbreaking published work for the last three decades is evidence of this.

Throughout this work, Pattison demonstrates an optimism that practical theology could be of relevance in public issues. In *Pastoral Care and Liberation Theology*, this positive and confident mood is evident:

Only twenty years ago, it was widely assumed that religion had lost its previous place in the western culture and that this pattern would spread throughout the world. *Since then religion has become a renewed force, recognised as an important factor in the modern world and all aspects of life, cultural, economic, and political* [my italics]. (Pattison 1994, ix)<sup>11</sup>

In applying liberation theology to the socio-political issues of mental health treatment, Pattison was doing that for which he is justifiably acclaimed - arguing for a critical and public methodology that made good use of the theoretical insights of the social sciences. At the same time, in his *Critique of Pastoral Care* (1988) Pattison was responding to the inadequate self-perception of the pastoral carer in the real world:

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<sup>11</sup> Pattison was in part at least responding to the work of Eduard Thurneysen. Thurneysen firmly advocated that 'pastoral care exists in the church as the communication of the word of God to individuals' (TCP John Knox Press 1963, 11). Pattison, who has always been a proponent of public theology and keen to be involved in complex social issues this is in direct contrast to the inward and contemplative pastoral theology of Thurneysen, which lacked the dynamic aspect of liberation theology. However, Pattison was involved in the assimilation of liberation theology into his domestic theology at a time when the Vatican, under Pope John Paul II (Karol Wojtyła) had moved considerably to the religious right and began to withdraw institutional support for a theology theorised by Marxism. Pope John Paul had come to his Papal reign from a Poland that had fought against communism and personally he had little sympathy for secular philosophies of salvation. This was to have some considerable influence for the future status of liberation theology.

The broad underlying contention of this work is that acquiring and maintaining a critical perspective about what is or might be done in pastoral practice is valuable, interesting and necessary. It prevents boredom, stimulates innovation, impedes unhelpful naivety, and gives a sense of purpose and direction to pastoral care. (Pattison 2000, 57)

Then, as now, Pattison addressed the 'inadequate' public and professional persona of the practical theologian. Although still committed to social and political awareness Pattison's current stance reflects dissatisfaction within practical theology and its reliance on the social sciences for methodological tactics. Pattison believes that the volumes of discourse on method have more to do with the 'off the shelf' borrowings of existing methods from the social sciences than with genuine innovative thinking within practical theology.

Insofar as theology develops at all intellectually it is usually due to the belated insights and methods of non-theological disciplines such as sociology and literary theory. 'New' ideas and methods often become widespread and accepted in theology just as they are going out of fashion elsewhere in the intellectual world. Seldom does an insight or methodological innovation flow outwards from theology into other disciplines. (Pattison 2000, 59)

Pattison is suggesting that practical theology is a discipline that arrives at the methodological smorgasbord just as everyone else is leaving; the late guest who gratefully feasts on broken victuals. This indictment puts a great distance between Pattison and his earlier confidence in practical theology.<sup>12</sup>

Yet, it is this willingness to address these problems that inspires Pattison to continue exploring new outlets for practical theology when it has to resist being subsumed by borrowed methods. Although Pattison has become

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<sup>12</sup> This 'Johnny-come-lately' image of the practical theologian is a harsh criticism especially if we take note of the fact that some social scientists have expressed exactly the same concerns about methods within the social sciences that Pattison is expressing here. Graham Button, who is a proponent of ethnomethodology, is critical about the methodological fatigue in sociology. He argues that a large part of the profession resists innovations in method and that there is a lack of effort to create new types of inquiry. This is indicative of the universal nature of the problem of methodology in contemporary theory. (Button, 1999)

critical of the religious dimension of practical theology, he is equally sceptical about its newfound scholarly distinctiveness, and suggests that the restraining parameters of the university are as problematic as former ecclesiastical constrictions. Practical theology is in danger of creating intellectual 'ghettoes' within which theologians exchange discourse with each other but have no real communication within the all important public domain:

The methods of theology tend to be scholarly and difficult to acquire. There is an emphasis upon permanent written text rather than upon ephemeral utterance. Furthermore, there is a structural elitism built into the subject that excludes the interests, methods and concerns of non-theologians. Above all, perhaps, theology has aspired to *unified systematic organisation of knowledge* — a place for everything and everything in its place. This militates against taking seriously the fragmentary, transient interests and concerns that characterise most contemporary people's lives and experience. (Pattison 2000, 62)

Pattison is also critical of what he perceives to be the 'limiting' and 'obfuscating' terminology of practical theology. However, rather than emphasising the particular religious and spiritual concerns of theology, he advocates a self-negating dispersal of practical theology into the world.

It must be prepared to disappear into the world to merge with the crowds of discourses and people who may occasionally be helped by the wisdom and insight of some of its contributions. (Pattison 2000, 74)

This 'theology by stealth' is again a stark contrast to Pattison's earlier celebratory call for the public revival of religion. Nonetheless, what he has retained is one of the key organising principles to emerge as a presupposition within contemporary practical theology, the notion that practical theology is still a relevant source for moral wisdom.

For Pattison any direct talk about theology and religion needs to have intellectual and professional clarity. Nevertheless, theology *is* a discipline concerned with the fundamental questions about the nature and purpose of

human existence in relation to God. These are important issues and they encapsulate the taxing problem at the heart of the methodological fatigue that Pattison believes permeates the discipline. It also emerges as a strong theme in his most recent collaborative work.

In *Values in Professional Practice* (2004), co-edited with medical sociologist Roisin Pill, there is little (if any) overt reference to theology or religious values. Pattison has left behind the 'obfuscating' language of theology that he feels alienates a larger audience. In so doing Pattison creates a new link between Christian values and the community. This is intended as a text that informs professional ethics in the area of public health care. It has been Pattison's aim to expand his target audience beyond the exclusivity of Christian communities. This is not a bad objective and it would seem that Pattison has achieved this as health professionals are the anticipated group of people for whom this work is intended. This is consistent with Pattison's long term commitment to public health issues.

The interdisciplinary participation in this publication is diverse, and Paul Ballard is the other theologian included. Ballard's contribution focuses on the professional development of the clergy, a strong theme that has evolved in the collaborative work of Pattison and Ballard:

Like any other profession, the clergy are there to offer a public service. But the point to be underlined here is that in this case this service is referred back to a more fundamental set of questions about human meaning and purpose and how the professional activity serves and reflects the wider good and human values. (Ballard 2004, 51)

That this kind of discussion should occur in the context of professionalism

and *human values* is indicative not only of the importance of professional identity for practical theologians, but in the increasing need to rely on 'human meaning' and 'values'. Paul Ballard does refer to the Christian tradition as an indication that there is an 'immense body of literature' in which expertise can be sourced — the objective being to render this expertise accessible to the wider society.

Pattison is taking a radical step when he advocates distancing himself from 'religiosity'. He is, nonetheless, conscious of the importance of method as a means of obtaining this credibility. Innovative and professional research would stop the 'indeterminate drift' and 'lack of intellectual and practical accountability' and he warns that practical theology is facing the prospect of exile into the academic wilderness if it ignores this problem. Pattison is evidently still sensitive to the history of a discipline that has traditionally been concerned with the spiritual and existential experiences of humanity, the 'transient' and 'fragmentary' aspects for which current methodology seems to provide no concession:

Part of the rationale for academically based theology is that religious practices and beliefs should be subject to rational scrutiny. Here is a set of ironies. In the first place, religious conviction and practice is not ultimately a rational matter. Secondly, it is arguable that it is the symbolic, mythic and *a*-rational aspects of religion that are perhaps of the most interest to non-theologians — and these elements are mostly ignored by theologians themselves in a quest for intellectual respectability. (Pattison 2000, 60)

Pattison is aware of the importance that professional and intellectual credibility carries within the discipline but he has not lost sight of the fact that some aspects that practical theology has traditionally been concerned with can be marginalised within the remit of specialisation. What is really important is that Pattison is rigorous in keeping these issues of method at the forefront of any theorising.

## 1.5 Conclusion

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with the pursuit of organisational, professional and pedagogic skills. It is only problematic when we give up on the capacity to embrace other routes that persist at the borders of this methodological order, when the object of practical theology is delineated by the conceptual and perceptual parameters of one particular method. For example, I have argued that an understanding of humanity from a sociological perspective excludes the spiritual, or at least would attempt to explain religious experiences as the manifestation of particular historical phenomena. The increasing application of rational and empirical theories of knowledge has *de-spiritualised* the subject. These methods have decreased the dimension through which we understand human experience.

The disillusionment with religion, evident in Gordon Lynch's appeal for a 'post-religious' practical theology, creates a possible weakness in the interdisciplinary approach to method:

What I have proposed here as a 'post-religious' practical theology may seem virtually indistinguishable from disciplines such as cultural studies and sociology. I would suggest that there is still an important difference between these disciplines, however, *in that the practical theologian approaches their field of study with the primary goal of asking what forms of belief are adequate, healthy or true, and what forms of practice genuinely promote lasting well being* [my italics]. (Lynch 2003, 27)

Lynch has identified the problem but has not provided a convincing solution. It is not clear how the practical theologian's 'field of study' differs in its objectives from those of the assimilated methodology. Practical theology, in the absence of religious authority, has no obvious claim to be able to discern which beliefs are 'adequate, healthy or true', especially when

using methods, which would assume that the beliefs in question are simply cultural products. For the same reason it is also not clear if the practical theologian can claim privileged insight into 'forms of practice' that 'genuinely promote lasting well being'.

It is also not the case that secular public debate does not share the same guiding principles or seek an outcome that 'promotes well being'. The recent public discussion over school meals, mobilised by celebrity chef Jamie Oliver, had no links to religion or sociology but its goals were no less authentic than those that Lynch claims for a post-religious practical theology. The challenge for practical theology is to demonstrate somehow that it will provide an authoritative way of judging what exactly 'healthy and true beliefs' are.

The real question should be: Why, in spite of the absence of religion (or even a post-religious practical theology), do people still aspire to have 'healthy and true beliefs' about what is right or wrong in their culture? Morality is not the exclusive property of practical theology and this is only a problem for practical theology when it chooses morality as its organising principle. People do not need instructions on how to formulate moral issues by practical theologians, but as Pattison has demonstrated practical theology can be involved in the process.

In the case of the school meals, what people needed was information for an informed debate, which practical theologians can provide perhaps just as well as other professionals but have no exclusive claims on. The authentic desire to do the right thing, in this particular instance, emerged from a

relationship of care and public concern. As Pattison and Ballard have demonstrated practical theologians can utilize this universal human capacity without having to claim exclusivity. However this is potentially problematic for those practical theologians (like Don Browning) who believe that practical theology ought to be organised around the provision of moral wisdom and that it can justify its presence in contemporary culture by providing a moral science.

What Lynch appears to have overlooked is the importance that religious tradition has in relation to making practical theology distinct from the social sciences. Browning, in his insistence that critical theory is compatible with the historical traditions of Judaic and Christian texts, maintained an inherent religious authorisation within his method. Lynch would appear to distance his work from this identifying feature and has therefore opted for a model of practical theology which will be difficult to justify other than as an annex of the social sciences.

Pattison has raised important questions: What is there that is significantly and authentically distinct about practical theology? What gives practical theology its entitlement to a place within the academic community as a discrete and viable subject in its own right? How are we to make space within such a discipline for the 'fragmentary and transient' characteristics of experience that are beyond categorising?

With the stakes raised by postmodernity, the question must now surely be: What role can there be for practical theology in the future postmodern university?

## Chapter 2

### THE POSTMODERN CHALLENGE

All in all, postmodernity can be seen as restoring to the world what modernity, presumptuously, had taken away; as a *re-enchantment* of the world that modernity tried hard to *dis-enchant*. It is the modern artifice that has been dismantled; the modern conceit of meaning legislating reason, the reason of the artifice, that stands accused in the court of postmodernity...

To win the stakes, to win all of them and to win them for good, the world had to be *de-spiritualised*, de-animated: denied the capacity of the *subject*. (Bauman 1992, x)

In Browning's work, practical theology moves its boundaries and, correspondingly, its authoritative legislative body from the clerical to the academic. Through Browning, practical theology would further distance its connection with the metaphysical and become an empirical and historically based discipline. In this sense, Browning's work bears the hallmark of modernity, pursuing the enlightenment project of understanding the capacity for 'good moral choices' as part of a developmental life cycle (Browning 1983, 187).

Critically, modernity enables the reconfiguration of the cultural and historical horizons that provide the basis for Browning's practical wisdom. This arguably results in the limiting of practical theology to a moral science. His approach accommodates only a limited view of ethical existence, resulting in the constraint of new thinking about ethics. Browning's work discloses what some would suggest is the restrictive nature of the empirical and experiential methodology of social science. Practical theology, like other enlightenment disciplines, is experiencing a challenge as new critiques emerge from postmodernism.

The methods of the social sciences are concerned with explanation, direction, meaning and purpose. The goal is to reach some kind of consensus of empirical and objective truth about the world and provide access to a 'cultural reality'. Modernity, with its concern for boundaries is a teleocracy. By contrast postmodernism is teleophobic in that it resists design and final causes. Postmodernism disrupts the order of 'meaningful history' and many theorists have perceived it as a threat to the continuity and reliability of the foundations of knowledge.<sup>13</sup> It is nonetheless the case that practical theologians can no longer work uncritically with the intellectual currents of modernity when such large bodies of contemporary theorists question them. As cultural theorists Patrick Fuery and Nick Mansfield argue:

Put simply, many contemporary intellectuals and theorists no longer see themselves fulfilling the cultural project that arose in the renaissance, which saw the study and fulfilment of human nature as its purpose, and that gave rise to the field of study called the humanities and to the foundation of the modern university. (Fuery and Mansfield 1998, 4)

That this is acknowledged within practical theology is evident in the responses of some theologians to the critical issues raised by postmodernism. It is also true, however, that a number of criticisms have been levelled at the conceptual foundations of the post-modernist project.

Nonetheless, it will be argued here that it is untimely to talk of a 'post-religious' or 'post-modern' practical theology without having addressed some of the issues regarding the theorising of modernity and postmodernity.

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<sup>13</sup> It is interesting to note that the language used to position a response to postmodernism displays much of the intellectual angst of Jurgen Habermas and has become the 'default' position of much contemporary discourse. The semantic fall out is pervasive and rarely challenged. The 'crisis ideology' is reinforced in language that associates postmodernism with 'fragmentation', 'age of anxiety', and 'anatomy of uncertainty'. These particular examples are taken from Elaine Graham's *Transforming Practice* which is subtitled *Pastoral Theology in an age of Uncertainty* (Graham 1996).

## 2.1 *The Postmodern Project*

There are three important elements to the theoretical critique offered by postmodernism which are key to subsequent debates in practical theology. The first is the assertion that the traditional structures of modern industrial society (with its systems of mass production) have been superseded by a postmodern world, with a new focus on consumption and desire. The strong cultural positioning of the modern world has therefore been replaced by a more individualist society in which consumers live in a sea of images from which their own identities are constructed. Put simply, the world in which industrial workers in cloth caps were positioned by overreaching structures of class no longer exists. Instead there are considerably more flexible units of work and leisure from which individual identities can be assembled.

The second dimension to the postmodern approach is a radical phenomenology in which the individual subject is seen to construct meaning in the world. The focus here is on discourse and text as language that does not merely represent 'reality' but, in effect, constitutes it. The assumption is that the 'real' can only be appropriated through language and because this is a system of symbolic meanings, which are negotiated between people and over time, then 'reality', is essentially negotiated and cannot be seen as fixed and essential.<sup>14</sup> The roots of this approach are found in the radical hermeneutics of theorists such as Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida.

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<sup>14</sup> What is considered 'real' is therefore radically different from the 'access to cultural reality' that practical theologians believe some of the empirical methods of the social sciences provide.

As Barthes suggests here, while truth had been seen to lie 'behind' the text, it was increasingly seen as dissolving into the process by which the text was generated:

*Text means Tissue*; but whereas hitherto we have always taken this tissue as a product, a ready made veil, behind which lies, more or less hidden meaning (truth), we are now emphasising, in the tissue, the generative idea that the text is made, is worked out in a perpetual interweaving; lost in the tissue-this texture-the subject unmakes himself, like a spider dissolving in the constructive secretions of its web. (Barthes 1975, 18)

From this it follows that postmodernism questions whether there could be any claim to discern what is 'true' and what is 'false' which could have universal validity. Practical theology is a tradition that has the notion of 'truth value' at the heart of its search for consistency in moral communities. Theologian and philosopher Peter Vardy summarises the consequences of the 'radical relativism' of postmodernism for moral theory:

In the face of a culture in which truth is seen increasingly as a dirty word, there seem to be no firm landmarks, no points that can hold sure and unchanged in a sea of relativity. One person's view seems as good as any other, leaving the door open for people to believe in anything. (Vardy 2003, 4)

As well as rendering objective truth problematic postmodernism questions the status of the subject. Practical theology is a discipline that has relied on traditional notions of agency and identity for the grounding and application of its moral theory. However the third key feature of postmodernism, the concept of the decentred subject, makes this difficult to sustain. This is an element of the postmodern project that has its origins in French structuralism and is also known as poststructuralism. The central proposition of this perspective is that the identity of the human subject is constituted by discourse.

Structuralism has a long history with many variations, but the essence of the argument for our purpose can be seen in the works of philosophers Louis Althusser (1918-90) and Michael Foucault (1926-84)<sup>15</sup>, who argued that what could be thought or understood is effectively organised by the social or discursive structures within which the individual is positioned. As Judith Butler writes, agency is therefore subjected and subordinated by power:

Subjection consists precisely in this fundamental dependency on a discourse we never choose but that, paradoxically, initiates and sustains our agency. "Subjection" signifies the process of becoming subordinated by power as well as the process of becoming a subject. Whether by interpellation, in Althusser's sense, or by discursive productivity, in Foucault's, the subject is initiated through the primary submission to power. (Butler 1997c, 2)

Neither Althusser nor Foucault could strictly be termed postmodernist but their work does illustrate the central features of structuralism and what became poststructuralist. Althusser used the concept of the 'problematic' effectively as a conceptual field within which some questions could be posed while others were excluded. The field is imposed on the subject and organises (structures) both what can be thought about and what can be understood.<sup>16</sup> For Althusser bourgeois ideological apparatuses, in which would be included educational institutions, produced the essential structures.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Althusser reinterpreted traditional Marxism, with its emphasis on economic determinism, and focused more on the overdetermining social structures that gave rise to ideologies that allowed people think they were making free choices. These ideologies were disseminated through Myth, Art, Education and Politics. His most famous text *For Marx* (1965) was a popular introduction to Marxist philosophy. His work was very influential although not always popular as he was criticised for being elitist. He influenced the writings of Michael Foucault who deployed Althusser's anti-humanist perspective to reject common sense assumptions about the nature of humanity but more importantly how we study humanity. Foucault became interested in the relationship between language and power. His major works demonstrated the relationship between language and the construction and control of deviation.

<sup>16</sup> Althusser and Foucault are not themselves postmodernist, but it is significant that key elements of postmodernist thought are found in their strand of theory. For example, Althusser's concept of interpellation has been significant in theories of subjection.

<sup>17</sup> This is a significant consideration in the dispersal of knowledge in society. This is an area to which Browning gives little theoretical consideration when he advocates the use of the school curriculum for the dispersal of

In post-structuralism the overreaching traditional structures are no longer seen to be relevant and the human subject can 'migrate' from one structured position to another.<sup>18</sup> The important point is that wherever the subject exists, thought and action are effectively bounded and discourses are seen as 'speaking through' the subject.

Foucault saw such imposition as the central axis through which power relationships were established in society. He discussed (1976), for example, how homosexuality was defined as mental illness through a panoply of medical and technical speech. Human identities are therefore seen as an effect of discourse.

As cultural theorist, Ien Ang notes, each individual becomes the location of subject positions projected by the discourses with which they are confronted:

Subjectivity is not the essence or the source from which the individual acts, thinks and feels; on the contrary...it is through the meaning systems or discourses circulating in society and culture that discourse is constituted and individual identities are formed. Each individual is the site of a multiplicity of subject positions proposed to her by the discourse with which she is confronted; her identity is the precarious and contradictory result of the specific set of subject positions she inhabits at any moment in history. (Ang 1996, 93)

This element of postmodern theory appears highly deterministic while, at the same time, other strands of post-modern thought tend to stress the elective nature of identity of the subject. Terry Eagleton points to the possible contradiction between these different elements of postmodernism. As he puts it, the human subject is 'set free from constraint, gliding from one position to

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morality and 'cultural work'.

<sup>18</sup> Althusser is not post-structuralist; his work stands in the tradition of Marxist structuralism. While Foucault work on discourse formation is often linked to post-structuralist positions it also contains strong elements that deal with the actual material structures of containment, for example the physical shapes of schools and prisons.

another' and yet simultaneously 'is the mere effect of forces which constitute it through and through'(Eagleton 1996, 28-29).<sup>19</sup>

However, the crucial point, which needs to be stressed here, is that the position of the subject in postmodernism is based on a theoretical perspective that is radically different from that of the Cartesian sovereignty of consciousness. As Raymond Tallis notes:

The frozen, totalising image of structuralist thought was unattractive to those who believed in history both as a force for change and as a way of relativising (and so undermining) absolutes of morality, rationalised hierarchies that were merely self-perpetuating power structures, etc. ... Post-structuralist thought retained the decentred self and a preference for concepts over consciousness. It, too, regarded the Cartesian-phenomenological-existentialist sovereignty of consciousness with contempt. The polycentric post-modern universe does not count the conscious individual as one of its centres – even less as its definitive centre. Even the idea of self-presence is an illusion based upon the accident of hearing oneself speak. (Tallis 1997, 336)

There are, then, three central questions at the core of the postmodern project for practical theology to answer:

- 1) Is there a new post-modern society?
- 2) Does a radical phenomenology render the concept of truth inadequate?
- 3) Does the theory of the decentred subject make moral choice obsolete?

Practical theologians have addressed these issues in different ways. Some, such as Friedrich Schweitzer and Elaine Graham, have used Habermas's notion of modernity as an unfinished project, to argue over when post-modernism 'begins' as a period.

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<sup>19</sup> Theorists like Judith Butler have put forward much more complex arguments about the construction of identity. In *The Psychic Life of Power* Butler examines the intricacy of subjection and the complicity of the individual's role in the process. Sartre also addressed this issue by subordinating existentialism to Marxism in order to come to an understanding of the *commitment* an individual makes to a particular fate. Human freedom is always difficult to reconcile with actual circumstances but what Sartre and Butler sought to understand was the complicity of the subject within given circumstances. Post-structuralist and postmodern variations of this are not merely about an untethered subject. Hence Butler's attempt at understanding how the 'inner' subject is also constructed by power and is not merely the recipient that somehow internalises power. The subject is a product rather than a facilitator. In thinking this, Butler goes beyond Sartre's notion of 'commitment' to explain why the subject is compliant with subjection.

Practical theology has always sought to have a sense of historical progression between periods. This has resulted in Schweitzer and Graham electing to cite theorists who perceive post-modernism as a progression from modernity or use notions of 'high modernity' (Giddens 1994).

The concepts of 'reconstruction' and 'transition' fit in with a discipline which has a sense of historically 'evolving' into its present state. Thus reviewers of practical theology present it as a consistently recognisable discipline with a traceable, albeit changing, topography. The various transformations contribute to the manageability of the discipline because it can be demonstrated as a progression of correctives from its origins or previous states.

For example, Seward Hiltner's work on Pastoral Counselling was seen as extending pastoral theology beyond the boundaries of nineteenth century clericalism (1958). Don Browning sought to raise the profile by progressing into academia (1991). There is a sense that practical theology is continuing to develop and improve through its historical changes.

But though postmodernism renders the 'axioms of modernity problematic', it has been approached as yet another period of transition that practical theology has to be steered through to remain contemporaneous (Graham 1996). The demarcation and identity of postmodernism in opposition to modernity has certainly taken up a great deal of intellectual space. This intellectual angst is mirrored in contemporary practical theology and can also be seen in the work of Schweitzer and Graham.

The crucial question is whether this approach will be effective in dealing with the theoretical issues raised by postmodernism.

Or, in other words, can postmodernism be neatly incorporated into an evolving modernity when its epistemological and ontological assumptions represent such a rupture with prevalent theory? This has long been an ongoing issue in the debate about the formation of both modernity and postmodernity:

I went to Constantine in 1950. Did this mark the end of something or the beginning of something else? The question is a central, classical issue for narratology. In the 'Querelle de Pindare,' which was part of the 'Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes,' it happened that as a zealous a supporter of 'les Anciens' as Boileau defended the beautiful disorder permitted by the 'rule of no rules' that the poetics of the Pindaric ode implied. Against such textual fuzziness, the main advocate for the 'moderns,' Charles Perrault, made the following claim: With such disorder there would be neither beginning, nor middle, nor end in a work, though the author might think that this text was all the more sublime for being less reasonable.' Perrault, in the name of the modern, is obviously for order and definite beginnings, middles, and ends. (Peregrinations Law Form Event 1998)<sup>20</sup>

The point being made here by Lyotard is that the anxiety for order and origins is always relative to some agenda. I will now examine how this need to retain order has influenced the way in which both Schweitzer and Graham have tackled the challenges of postmodernism.

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<sup>20</sup> Original quotation in Pérégrinations from Charles Perrault, *Discourse Sur La Poesie et L'ode en Particulier*. (E.I.G. Gallet 1719) Like Bauman Lyotard chooses to focus on the space created by arguments of transition, in this case between the ancient and the modern. The point being reinforced is that the intellectual arguments arising from such anxiety are irreconcilable because the two positions represent different formats, opposing systems of logic and recognition.

## 2.2 *Friedrich Schweitzer and the Search for a New Paradigm*

Friedrich Schweitzer's claim is that he wishes to explore the possibility of a 'new paradigm' for practical theology. He believes that practical theology is a product of modernity. Consequently, if modernity turns out to be flawed, then practical theology is implicated also:

If it is true, as it is often stated in textbooks, that practical theology as an academic discipline is a child of modernity, then one must wonder if the advent of postmodernity implies that there is no more need for this kind of endeavour. Does the advent of postmodernity, *if it exists*, mark the end of practical theology? Or, if not, does it call for a new paradigm for practical theology? And if so, how can this child of modernity come of age in postmodern times?  
(Schweitzer 2001, 170)

For Schweitzer the methods of modernity have had a twofold influence. They have provided the analytical categories for our understanding of humanity and formed the basis of practical theology as an independent discipline. He makes a direct link between the two.

The most important principle of modernity for Schweitzer's practical theology (strongly influenced by Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development<sup>21</sup>), is the notion of a 'life cycle'. This postulates a series of chronological developmental stages that individuals have to progress through, in the right order, to reach rational maturity. This rational maturity is taken as the fundamental characteristic of a moral community.

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<sup>21</sup> Jean Piaget (1886-1980) was famous for his developmental theory or 'Stages of Cognitive Development' which had four major components that were accumulative and progressive. Sensori-motor (birth-2), Pre-operational (2-7), Concrete-operational (7-11), Formal-operational (11+).

Crucially, Schweitzer uses this template of progressive stages as the basis for advancement and moral maturity. The definitive characteristics of adulthood (*autonomy, independence and rational maturity*) also represent the teleological objectives of enlightenment philosophy.<sup>22</sup>

To make the life cycle a central topic of practical theology along the stages or to develop a practical theology along the stages of the life cycle may be considered a typically modern approach. In this view, the life of the autonomous individual determines the horizon which modern practical theology must presuppose. Consequently, considering the relationships between the changes in the life cycle and practical theology may help us in gaining a better understanding of the current situation of practical theology (Schweitzer 2001, 171).

Schweitzer's proposal is that if we can understand precisely what the changes are that postmodernism makes to the modern life cycle, practical theology will be in a better position to respond to a new postmodern life cycle. He therefore takes each of the key stages of a life cycle (*childhood, adolescence and adulthood*) and tries to ascertain how these have been altered by postmodernism. His argument being, that previously these stages had been considered stable and enduring. Under postmodernism however, the constancy of each is no longer dependable as the consolidated period upon which the next stage depends:

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<sup>22</sup> This was a fundamental principle of the philosophy of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-81), in which he expressed the enlightenment ideal of progression through education. Lessing's teleological theory of improvement through progressive stages was also influential on Karl Marx who went on to hypothesise a teleological theory of economic and social change through progressive changes in the modes of production i.e. from feudalism to capitalism to socialism and ultimately to communism. The inherent assumption being that each progressive stage is relatively more just than the previous.

*Childhood* no longer is the relatively quiet time of stability to be experienced and enjoyed in a stable family. Rather, the changes of the family have made childhood a time with many transitions and with ever-new pressures arising from early on. Literally as well as metaphorically speaking, being a child no longer means living in the safe haven of a home to which one will always look back as the true anchor of one's personal identity. (Schweitzer 2001, 172)

Schweitzer concedes that these stages are modernist constructs. What he fails to demonstrate is that, as highly conceptualised stages, they have also been criticised within modernity's own remit.

The French historian, Philippe Aries, published his demographic study, *Centuries of Childhood* in 1960. He demonstrated how our historical idea of childhood had emerged alongside corresponding notions of family and for that matter the historically changing ideas of morality. Aries' work does not have the theoretical hallmark of Marxism that is evident in Foucault's work. He does, however, trace the development of the historical ideology of childhood through art, education, mortality, clothes, morality and children's games.

By comparison, Schweitzer's sentimental and privileged portrayal of an ideal childhood is flawed and under-theorised and, as such, is representative of the ideology of childhood that Aries' study set out to expose. But he does concede that the 'modern' conceptions of adulthood and rational maturity have been challenged. Moreover, postmodernism may bring 'potentials which are healthy' in so far as 'they provide a new openness' at the different points where 'the modern life cycle become suffocating' (Schweitzer 2001, 175).

Furthermore, he believes it is the role of practical theology to act as a mediator between modernity and postmodernity. His aim is to integrate those aspects of postmodernism that may be beneficial for contemporary theory. This is based on the belief that certain aspects of modernity and postmodernity can be isolated from each approach and then amalgamated into one new paradigm.

Three dimensions to his work are important to us here: Firstly, Schweitzer is not sure if a postmodern world has arrived — he oscillates in his descriptions of postmodernity between questioning whether it exists or simply assuming that it does in his descriptions of contemporary life. Secondly, when he suggests using the conceptual assumptions of postmodernism, he ignores how they undermine the modernist epistemology that he actually favours. Thirdly, whereas he embraces the 'advantages' of the postmodern world, he fails to fully consider the radical structuralism inherent within the postmodern project, more specifically, its implications that fundamentally alter the basis upon which the subject has the capacity for making moral choices.

Let us look first at his approach to the question of whether the concept of postmodernity helps in the diagnosis of culture. From the outset, he theorises ambiguity into its status and argues that this uncertainty is the reason why practical theologians have not adequately addressed postmodernism as a theoretical category:

It seems fair to say that, on the whole, practical theology has not fully dealt with the issue of postmodernity. In part, especially in Germany and possibly most of Western Europe, this is due to the second thoughts which have been raised with the idea of postmodernity. Does postmodernity really exist? Will the concept of postmodernity help us in diagnosing culture or is it actually misleading and at best a shaky category? (Schweitzer 2001, 169)

What Schweitzer then goes on to suggest is that, if there *is* some phenomenon which can be discerned as postmodern, it is for practical theologians to find a way of using the new epistemological and ontological categories to help us understand the changes in our culture which it implies.

However, Schweitzer is firmly committed to the development of an interdisciplinary relationship between practical theology and the social sciences. This has the effect of making him defend modernity, or at least those aspects of it that would provide continuity with a new paradigm.

The problem facing Schweitzer in particular (and practical theology in general) is the obligation to remain contemporaneous. Therefore, ignoring postmodernism is not an option. Schweitzer responds to this predicament, but is reluctant to give up the benefits he believes practical theology has gained from the empirical methods of the social sciences it has deployed in the past<sup>23</sup>:

In general, practical theologians tend to be hesitant to base their understanding and their models of praxis on theoretical and philosophical concepts which have not been established on empirical grounds. And given the fact that some social scientists still consider it unlikely that a postmodern self has actually replaced the modern self, there are good reasons for practical theology to take a more guarded position on the issue of postmodernity. In any case, a more empirical and inductive approach is needed if practical theology is to address the demands of postmodern life. (Schweitzer 2001 p, 170)

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<sup>23</sup> See Friedrich Schweitzer *Practical Theology, Contemporary Culture and the Social Sciences - Interdisciplinary Relationships and the Unity of Practical Theology as a Discipline* in *Practical Theology International Perspectives* (Lang 1999 pp. 307-321) In this paper Schweitzer argues that the social sciences are the only way 'contemporary cultural reality' can be mediated. He outlines a brief history of the development of the correlation between practical theology and the different 'metatheoretical methods' taken from social science and deployed by practical theology. These vary from social science as being ancillary to practical theology to models of 'intentional co-operation' between theology and social science. The main thrust of Schweitzer's argument is that the empirical methods of the social sciences enable practical theology to become efficient and analytical.

It is therefore to the social sciences that he turns to resolve the particular problems of contemporary theory. He focuses on those proponents of theoretical perspectives that attempt to retain some of the epistemological foundations of modernity, notably the *second modernity* hypothesis of sociologists Anthony Giddens, Scott Lash and Ulrich Beck (Beck *et al*, 1994):

According to them, we should speak of a *second modernity* — a modernity which may also be called *reflexive modernity* in that it includes, even in calling itself modernity, the critical awareness of the shortcomings and the dark side of modernity. As opposed to some of the postmodern worldviews, the critical awareness of reflexive modernity is to prevent any kind of nostalgia for the allegedly better times of modernity or even premodernity. Rather, the concept of 'reflexive modernization' is to serve as a basis for the continued attempt of counteracting and overcoming the flaws of modernity while still holding on to what is *worth preserving of modernity* [my italics]. (Schweitzer 2001, 174)

Hence (from a modernist perspective) while Schweitzer is attempting to provide the topography of his 'new' paradigm, he is experimenting with postmodern concepts that utterly reject the modernist epistemology he is using. He selects and privileges those aspects of modernity he wishes to retain and rejects what he perceives to be the more radical and 'destructive' elements of postmodernism. He is approaching postmodernism as problematic and a threat to continuity; believing that if it is not properly theorised it will lead to the fragmentation of society and the destabilizing of the moral theory.

Schweitzer has theorised *loss* into his own attempt at reconstructing a 'post-modern life style'. This is parallel to his anxiety about those aspects of postmodernism which threaten the stability of modernity:

It is true that there are far reaching changes in the human life cycle and since these are changes which are clearly different from the modern idea of this life cycle, there are indeed good reasons for speaking of a postmodern life cycle. But in making this statement, the objections against

some understandings of postmodernity may also not be overlooked. One of the main objections concerns the identification of postmodernity by what is *lost in the transition from modernity* [my italics]. (Schweitzer 2001, 173)

Schweitzer is making a fundamental theoretical mistake in that he takes the 'loss' of the 'modern life cycle' to be *caused* by the arrival of a new postmodern life cycle, when in fact postmodernism is a critique of the way we understand the individual and seeks to disclose the discursive processes that construct subjectivity.<sup>24</sup>

The error is compounded by his comparison of the characteristics of a modern life cycle with those of a postmodern one. Resulting in an ambiguous description of what he considers the benefits of this so-called postmodern life cycle.

Schweitzer stresses the 'elective' and 'constructive' elements of the postmodern approach, avoiding the essential determinism of its post-structuralist ontology. The individual, according to this scenario, simply has more choice:

Postmodernity also entails new chances and new potentials for human life which may be liberated from the narrow visions of rational autonomy and of progressive achievement. (Schweitzer 2001, 173)

Schweitzer's 'theology of the postmodern life cycle', which includes the 'experience of a plural self', has its roots in theories of 'high' or 'second modernity' and 'post-traditional' theory that presents the individual as someone with a kaleidoscope of choice and an absence of certainty.

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<sup>24</sup> This in part follows from a contradiction in the postmodern project itself. It is not always clear whether its proponents are suggesting that a new type of society has arrived in which subjective identities may be constructed differently, or whether its radical phenomenology and post-structural determination of the subject is a feature of human life.

However, according to Anthony Giddens:

The plurality of choices which confronts individuals in situations of *high modernity* derive from several influences. First, there is the fact of living in a post-traditional order. To act in, to engage with, a world of plural choices is to opt for alternatives, given that the signposts established by tradition now are blank. (Giddens in Beck 1994, 82)<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, Schweitzer is assuming that it is modernity that retains authority as the conjectural default position, with postmodernism being relegated to those characteristics that work with aspects of modernity 'worth preserving':

Taking the caveats against premature assumptions of a postmodern life cycle seriously it seems appropriate to approach the problem inductively, by contrasting the ideal type description of the *modern life cycle* (which from a postmodern perspective, has to be considered the *traditional* life cycle) with the changes and challenges of the contemporary — possibly *post modern* — situation. This kind of comparison will at least give us an idea of the empirical aspects of postmodern life. (Schweitzer 2001, 172)

Many of the characteristics of modernity become more desirable when what is on offer is the perceived nihilism of post-phenomenology. Schweitzer's original quest, to explore the potential of a 'new postmodern paradigm' is ultimately rejected in favour of a theoretical perspective that seeks to extend modernity. The task that practical theology is required to perform is no longer the smooth transition between modernity and postmodernity but rather to facilitate a revised or 'second' modernity:

But it has also become clear that we cannot accept, let alone uncritically praise, whatever calls itself postmodern. Rather, we need a careful and critical examination of the diverse changes between modernity and postmodernity in order to identify what may really be called a potential and what may rather be seen as detrimental. To put it into one sentence: *Support for helpful postmodern developments* but also *critical resistance* to what cannot be accepted of

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<sup>25</sup> Giddens treats self-identity as 'reflexivity understood by the individual in terms of his or her biography' without any critical analysis of the concept of biography and its history in the humanities from Dilthey to the present. Including such concepts uncritically at a theoretical level result in an accumulative error, for example Giddens develops the notion of 'self-identity' as a 'process whereby self-identity is constituted by the reflexive ordering of self-narratives' (auto-biographies). (Giddens 1991) This is also a good example of the semantic slippage deployed in the theory of 'high modernity'. Much of the language of 'second modernity' mimics the analytical categories of postmodernity.

postmodernity-is the substantial work of practical theology as mediator between first and second modernity. (Schweitzer 2002, 176)

Schweitzer tries to compensate for some of the ambiguity his particular approach creates. He does this by conceding the need for some changes in the concept of a 'life cycle'. The individual of the 'modern life cycle' simply becomes the individual of the 'postmodern life cycle'. So, for example, childhood is no longer a time when the 'anchor of one's personality' is formed. It is now full of constant changes. Adolescence changes from being 'the time for clear cut identity' and 'life long commitment' to a condition of 'inescapable plurality'. Perhaps most importantly, the criteria for adulthood (which are also the basis of the moral community) no longer apply:

Neither autonomy nor rationality or progressive achievements are accepted as the true descriptions of adulthood anymore. (Schweitzer 2001, 173)

Schweitzer's attempt to modify the concept of a life cycle in such a way means that he emerges with a workable model for his 'new' paradigm but fails to address the issue of subjectivity, which is the real problematic identified by postmodernism. Judith Butler has argued that this sort of problem is due to a misunderstanding of analytical principles:

"The subject" is sometimes bandied about as if it were interchangeable with "the person" or "the individual." The genealogy of the subject, rather than be identified strictly with the individual, ought to be designated as a linguistic category, a placeholder, a structure in formation. Individuals come to occupy the site of the subject (the subject simultaneously emerges as a "site"), and they enjoy intelligibility only to the extent that they are, as it were, first established in language. The subject is the linguistic occasion for the individual to achieve and reproduce intelligibility, the linguistic conditions of its existence and agency. (Butler 1997c, 10-11)

Because of this conceptual error at the core of Schweitzer's theorising of postmodernity, he fails to engage with questions at the heart of human

experience. For example, Sartre's question as to why we commit to a particular existence.

Postmodernism (and Butler in particular) explores the process whereby we 'harbour and preserve' the 'beings that we are' (Butler 1997c, 2). Doing so means exploring the acquiescence of the subject to prevailing conditions, which means a radical departure beyond the somewhat artificial problematic of a supposed proliferation of choice. The essence of this difficulty underpinned Sartre's quest to reconcile freedom within constraint. He sought to understand it as the freedom to make the ultimate commitment to the life we have.

Butler puts this question another way, but also struggles with the issues identified by Sartre. The contradiction between the subject being either (on the one hand) set free from constraints and faced with what might seem like a proliferation of choice, or (on the other hand) rendered the 'mere effect of forces which constitute it through and through':

How can it be that the subject, taken to be the condition for and instrument of agency, is at the same time the effect of subordination, understood as the deprivation of agency?  
(Butler 1997c, 10)

Schweitzer is evidently committed to the notion that practical theology is going through a period of uncertainty and change, but the categories that he deploys are confused and under-theorised. His scepticism about postmodernism and his defence of modernity, based on an uneasy concession to some of the more acceptable features of postmodernism ('if it exists at all'), leave many issues about human identity and agency unresolved. Seemingly, without any sense of incongruity, Schweitzer can

simultaneously talk about the 'transitional process from first to second modernity' and a 'theology of the postmodern life cycle.' For those theorists less ambiguous about the status of postmodernism, the case for a *continuous* or *second modernity* is presented with more conviction.

### 2.3 *Elaine Graham and Extended Modernity*

Schweitzer lacks consistency, regarding the status of postmodernity. Such is not the case in the work of practical theologian Elaine Graham. Unlike Schweitzer, Graham is not ambiguous about the actuality of postmodernism. Her work represents a more comprehensive theorising of postmodernism within practical theology. That this is the exception in the discipline is demonstrated by the cautious introduction of her work by Woodward and Pattison in their Reader, *Pastoral and Practical Theology* (Woodward & Pattison 2000). They warn that Graham's *Transforming Practice* (1996) is 'abstract' and not related to 'classic Christian theological tradition'. This begs the question: What is 'classic' practical theology? It is also misleading to describe Graham's work as abstract when it is her stated aim to work within the realm of Christian experience and practice:

By focusing on Christian pastoral practices as the creators and bearers of the fundamental truth claims of the Christian community, therefore, I wish to move toward a model of pastoral theology as the interpretation of purposeful practices through which symbolic and material reality is both mediated and reconstituted. Rather as Bourdieu envisaged practice as the embodied and enacted *habitus* of cultural norms and values, I wonder whether Christian pastoral practices might be imagined as the bearers of living principles of hope and obligation. (Graham 1996, 111)

The point Woodward and Pattison seem to be making is that Graham's work is on the more complex end of their sampler. They are also indicating that *Transforming Practice* is located outside the usual clerical/counselling

neighbourhood of pastoral and practical theology. In this sense, 'classic' denotes a familiar topography that Graham is challenging.

Pastoral and practical theologians may emerge as proponents of different approaches, but they are working within the same epistemological frame. Woodward and Pattison review a selection of these for didactic purposes. What necessitates their cautious introduction to Graham's work is that she is tackling complex issues of methodology within the discipline. Graham is not only a proponent for a particular method, she is addressing the problem of method *per se*. Describing Graham's work as 'abstract' is an indication of how under-theorised methodology is within practical theology. Woodward and Pattison include Graham's work as part of the overall variety of different approaches within the discipline; when, in fact, what Graham has done is to bring methodology into a more central position.

Graham has understood that the crisis in practical theology is about the disclosure of method as the scaffolding supporting the 'classic' domain and that, as such, it is central to the future of practical theology as a discipline. The problem she has identified is the difficulty of continuation for this discipline in its transition from modernism to postmodernism.

*Transforming Practice* is a work that attempts to steer practical theology through the crisis of change to emerge with a working process that is both meaningful and applicable. Like Browning, Graham shifts the emphasis from metaphysical explanations of existence towards an historical and experiential understanding of relationships. She shares the aim to 'construct a relevant but authentic practical wisdom' (Graham 1996, 3).

Unlike Browning, however, Graham is addressing issues of identity for practical theology in a postmodern age. Graham engages with contemporary problems from the perspective of historical materialism and critical phenomenology. Her concept of 'purposeful practices' which are the 'implicit bearers of truth claims' (Graham 1996, 97) is derived, in part, from the interpretative methodology of Max Weber:

Perhaps the most important theorist of social action was Max Weber, whose interpretive methods drew attention to the influence of human interpretation and agency to the maintenance of social order and the creation of social relations. (Graham 1996, 97)

Contemporary social theory is deployed by Graham to avoid falling into the 'metaphysical extra-cultural realm' (Graham 1996, 97). She works within the socio-cultural dimensions of real historical practice that allows 'purposeful practice' to inform her theory of knowledge and understanding. Contemporary theories of *situated knowledge* have also influenced her theoretical position.<sup>26</sup>

However, Graham still seeks to provide a basis for truth and practical moral wisdom within the selection of contemporary theory she elects to use. Within the landscape of what Woodward and Pattison consider 'classic' practical theology the individual autonomous agent is taken as given, she acknowledges that this position is rendered problematic by postmodernism:

The philosophical mood of postmodernism is one of scepticism towards any notion of an eternal, metaphysical human nature. The individual is always a cultural subject, inscribed in linguistic, historical and social contexts. (Graham 1996, 1)

Practical theology has traditionally been concerned with issues of morality.

<sup>26</sup> In particular, the work of Donna Haraway, who has written a feminist philosophy of science. Haraway has written extensively about the nature of the knowing subject. Haraway has argued that our historical experiences, especially gender, play a greater role in our perception than the natural sciences have previously allowed for. (See *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* Free Association Books 1991)

Method is therefore a crucial medium through which we construct our image of the subject as a moral being. With contemporary method, the emphasis is on how we live out a moral existence. Graham argues that we can still provide the basis for a 'reconstructed practical wisdom' (Graham 1996, 9) through the communal experience of Christian morality:

Thus, the moral discourse of the community aims at ordering the community of faith in such a way as to nurture the sensibilities and habits of faith. (Graham 1996, 208)

Graham is still hoping to align practical theology within the prescriptive remit of a Christian value system. This makes her work closer to the 'classic' topography than is suggested by Woodward and Pattison. It also creates a tension between the postmodernism she seeks to accommodate and her reconstructed practical wisdom. When Graham raises the question of the future development of practical theology, she also identifies the elements of a contemporary problematic.

Practical theology is concerned with moral issues, such as: How do we make the right choices and conduct our own living in harmony with what is good for others as well as ourselves? Postmodernism seems to threaten the very notion of a stable moral relationship because it resists privileging any one perspective over another. It exposes the lack of any overriding foundation that authorises any one set of beliefs. Graham's concern is to find a way that Christian communities can respond to this problem.

*Transforming Practice* is introduced with the declaration that, 'we live in an age of uncertainty' (Graham 1996, 2). The notion of uncertainty has become thematic amongst practical theologians who believe that

postmodernism has eradicated any consensus that underpins moral theory. For example, Graham argues that postmodernism has destabilised many enlightenment concepts. Notions of truth, human nature and knowledge are scrutinised as postmodernism is sceptical about identity and 'erases humanist concepts of shared value' (Graham 1996, 2).

Graham, like Browning, is trying to envisage a way for Christian communities to 'respond to changing values and competing world views.' (Graham 1996, 2) The focus of Graham's work is therefore the 'profound fragmentation of values,' that has afflicted Christian theology' (Graham 1996, 3).<sup>27</sup>

In *Transforming Practice* Graham seeks to find a way through the 'crisis' that is brought about by postmodernism. If we can no longer rely on a concept of human nature that has the Kantian/enlightenment individual with the capacity for making good moral decisions at its core will it still be possible to build a shared community of values?

More significant is the fact that Graham wants to *reconstruct* practical theology in such a way that 'we have a model of pastoral theology for a postmodern age' (Graham 1996, 3). This would involve the construction of an 'authentic practical wisdom' that would successfully 'regulate' the relationship between theory and practice.

Graham believes that it is only by taking on the challenges of

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<sup>27</sup> Graham, although addressing the conceptual issues of postmodernism is also inclined to default to negative semantics. For example, the deployment of the terms 'uncertainty', 'fragmentation', 'destabilising', and 'afflicted' is never acknowledged as stemming from an elective perspective. Like Schweitzer, Graham presumes that postmodernism is a disruptive influence.

postmodernism that a feasible practical theology will emerge. She suggests that an 'adequate post-modern' practical knowledge would require a stronger notion of alterity (otherness), and believes that a postmodern perspective provides an opportunity for a 'gender-sensitive practical wisdom'<sup>28</sup> (Graham 1996, 8).

Therefore, although Graham would argue that postmodernism 'renders the axioms of modernity problematic,' she is optimistic about the potential for a postmodern practical wisdom that will resolve some of the issues that critical theory has failed to resolve, such as 'the binary divisions of public and private, of inclusion and exclusion, self and other' (Graham 1996, 8). She is willing to embrace the opportunity to rethink the image of the subject and does not perceive a de-centred subject as being a threat to identity, as Schweitzer does, but as offering a chance to explore it.

However she does feel that although feminist critiques have exposed some of the limitations of modernity there are still issues that remain to make feminism and postmodernism an uncomfortable partnership:

One major tension between the two movements rests upon postmodernisms supposed abandonment of - or at best agnosticism towards - the foundational ethical and political projects of human rights, equality and justice upon which so many of the moral and strategic demands of the second wave women's movement were founded. (Graham 1996, 14)<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Gender sensitive moral studies have received attention ever since the American feminist and ethicist Carol Gilligan formulated her hypothesis that men are more likely to consider morality in terms of justice and individual rights whilst women are concerned with care and relationships. However her work (*In a Different Voice* 1982) has been criticised for being 'gender essentialist.' Gilligan's methods were also challenged by C.H.Sommers (*The War Against Boys*) Gilligan's work is based on acknowledging/privileging difference on the basis of gender which is problematic if read as biologically determining.

<sup>29</sup> Evidently, Graham too feels nervous about the loss of the enlightenment view of the intrinsic worth of the individual which is also the basis of Christian moral theory. Postmodernism's 'death of the subject' is a threat to some of the feminist philosophy that has emerged. However, this makes her position nearer to Schweitzer's, in wishing to retain some of those 'worthy' aspects of modernity. Arguably, this prevents the re-imaging of subjectivity as dispersed and with a new corresponding concept of universal justice.

Graham's vision for practical theology will be achieved through critical reflection on 'cultural experience and social trends' (Graham 1996, 3) this 're-evaluation' and 'reconstruction' of practical theology, for Graham, takes place within a specifically *historical* perspective.

There is a twofold implication to Graham's historical perspective: Firstly, she is referring to the progression of practical theology from clerical and therapeutic paradigms. Secondly, and importantly, Graham draws on a revised historical materialism as a method for understanding the methodological, ideological and epistemological changes in the transition from modernity to postmodernity. This distinction is not always clear, but it is a crucial difference.

Postmodernism is a critique of the notion of history as a linear progression of comprehensive narratives. Distinct and collective themes could only ever be claimed to exist by the exclusion of alternatives. History as the teleological progression of ideas is arguably a modernist construction.

This is an important distinction because Graham treats the critical differences between modernity and postmodernity as two distinct historical epochs, while the clerical and therapeutic paradigms are part of practical theology's historical progression. Graham is working within the authorial and developmental contours of modernity when she places her own work in this historical/patriarchal line. In opting for the historical/ linear model Graham is seeking to 'reconstruct' a practical theology for a postmodern era, which is nonetheless forged and authorised with the tools of modernity.

Graham is working within the theoretical matrix of *historical materialism* to understand postmodernism. Karl Marx gave us the classic approach, providing explanations of society (through its particular relations of production) which also provide the basis for contemporary variations of historical materialism. This influence is evident in Graham's delineation of postmodernity:

I believe that postmodernity, and the crisis of values it delineates and represents, is more than a set of ideas. It concerns visions of ideal communities and human relationships in concrete terms. I shall refer to 'postmodernity' as the contemporary stylisation of society as reflecting certain *economic, cultural, political and intellectual trends* [my italics]. (Graham 1996, 13)

Graham presents modernity and postmodernity as two separate 'social and economic' orders. This enables her to locate the conditions of the transition of one order to another within an economic, political and cultural matrix — a modernist brief that postmodernism critiques.

Graham is therefore using the very tools of modernity to understand a postmodernity that renders them problematic. For Graham, the emergence of postmodernity is the result of the 'transition of one social and economic order to another' (Graham 1996, 15). In treating postmodernism as the manifestation of particular economic, sociological and historical circumstances she is arguing that it too is the result of a transition from one order to another. In so doing, Graham is effectively arguing that postmodernism is part of a totalising historical narrative, part of the ongoing teleology of historical progress. Postmodernism is contained within the fold of a modernist narrative, a linear structure that makes everything comprehensive according to its logic/model.

However, she retains elements of the enlightenment construct of humanity,

as is evident in her retention of the morally competent and reflective individual around whom she builds her theory of *praxis* — by utilizing aspects of contemporary social science and the philosophy of natural science to construct a theory of embodied practice.

One of the key theorists to influence Graham's work is the sociologist Anthony Giddens. It is notable that he considers the legitimate remit for postmodernism has more to do with art and architecture than social theory. Giddens is responsible for a finely-tuned version of historical materialism (Giddens 1995), from the perspective of which Graham hopes to provide an explanation of human experience that is reduced to either 'the laws of history or the forces of nature' (Graham 1996, 97).

According to Giddens, the 'laws of history' are not the highly deterministic prescriptions associated with Marxism. He argued (Giddens 1995) for a theory of historical materialism that rejects the notion that it is the 'progressive augmentation of the forces of production,' or the history of class struggle. Historical materialism 'remains the necessary core of any attempt to come to terms with the massive transformations that have swept through the world since the eighteenth century' (Giddens 1995).

Nevertheless, he rejects as deterministic a Marxist evolutionary explanation of the transition of societies from tribal/primitive to feudal, from feudal to capitalist, from capitalist to socialist and finally to communist. Giddens also seeks to find a theoretical stance that will manoeuvre modernity through the pitfalls of a postmodern critique.

Graham expresses the same need to steer practical theology through such a transition and emerges with a recognisable formula grounded in the revised historical materialism of Giddens' neo-traditional sociological theory. This, coupled with a 'critical phenomenology' in which she believes 'purposeful practices are the bearers of ultimate truth claims' (Graham 1996, 97), provides the organising principles of Graham's theory of praxis. However, it is the status of these phenomena as ultimate truth bearers that postmodernism renders problematic.<sup>30</sup>

Elaine Graham and Friedrich Schweitzer have assimilated some of the theoretical perspectives of contemporary social science that seek to retain and extend the epistemological framework of modernity. This includes (most notably) the 'reflexive modernisation' found in the work of Giddens, Lash and Beck (Beck *et. al.* 1994) and which concurs with Habermas's theory of modernity as an unfinished project.

There are problems with theories that regard postmodernism as arising from a historically linear progression, while ignoring the fact that it exists simultaneously as a contradiction of modernity. In other words, theorising postmodernism from the stance of a continued modernity fails to disclose the process by which postmodernism is mis-recognised within modernity's logic.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> This interpretative phenomenology has its origins in the methodological individualism of sociologist Max Weber. It was Weber's contention that the rational explanation of events could only be understood through the intentions of the individual. Weber was influenced by Wilhelm Dilthey who based his theory on the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher. This link and the rational gloss that Dilthey gave to Schleiermacher's work will be examined in chapter five when Schleiermacher's influence on the social sciences, via Dilthey, will be considered.

<sup>31</sup> This is why Sartre's concept of *raison* as the bespoke tool of a particular ideology is more useful than simply thinking in terms of Kuhn's paradigm shifts. Sartre's approach emphasises the construction of the *thinking* that enables recognition and compels conformity.

It doesn't help to clarify this problem when, like Habermas, we argue about the origins of the term *modern*. Habermas was (of course) quite right when he suggested that the historical nomenclature of modernity has competitive moments regarding the precision of its origins (in Passerin D'Entreves & Benhabib 1996). Nonetheless, this cannot detract from the critical, epistemological and foundational issues raised by postmodernism. It is unlikely that we will get any real insight by trying to locate a chronological starting post for modernity or postmodernity, or the notion of modernity as an 'unfinished project'.

More recently Graham has written about the 'posthuman' in her *Representations of the Post/Human* (2002). In this study Graham is exploring the anxiety created by issues of 'ontological hygiene' in relation to technology. This work is concerned with the identity of the subject and although Graham concedes that the notion of what it means to be human is highly constructed she nonetheless explores this issue from a much more radical position. This indicates that Graham has moved toward a more original engagement with postmodernism and although some anxiety still exists, she is critically engaged with the issues. In *Representations* Graham is thus addressing the fundamental assertions of postmodernism and the status of the subject. As such her work represents one of the most radical engagements with postmodernism within contemporary practical theology.

#### 2.4 *A Shared Dilemma: Zygmunt Bauman and Crisis Theory in Contemporary Sociology*

We have seen that there is considerable consensus that practical theology, as a product of the Enlightenment, is experiencing a challenging period of transition. The empirical and experiential methods it has deployed as the foundation for much of its structure have come largely from the social sciences, which are also enlightenment disciplines. As Zygmunt Bauman, a prominent social theorist stated, 'from its birth, sociology was an adjunct of modernity' (Bauman 1992, 54). Postmodernism is currently perceived as a threat to the continuity and constancy of the foundations of knowledge.

However, Bauman addresses the problems that sociology is beset with from a very different perspective. Bauman takes a very similar stance to Sartre when it comes to the role reason plays within particular epistemological regimes. Bauman starts from examining the way reason is mobilised within modernity as a 'legislative tool'. Reason, once it has been employed to serve the ideological authorization of one regime, in this instance modernity, is a difficult analytical tool to reform. It was in recognition of this problem that Sartre was to observe that reason was a 'double-edged sword.'

For Bauman, reason acts as a 'regulative idea' and it creates an intellectual 'blind spot' influencing how any new emerging philosophy is perceived. The consequence is that the new is assimilated into an existing ideological framework. When contemporary theorists draw categorical markers around postmodernism, they are already in effect distorting what they see.

Theorists may then believe that they are contributing to a 'progressive' transition of one tradition to another, when in fact they are extending and protecting existing conditions. The threat to disturb the self-perpetuating unity of everything known under modernity's schemata is temporarily held off. However, this creates a persistent tension between order and the threat of disorder.

Bauman is aware that postmodernism means many things to many people, this might account for some of the confusion within contemporary theory. There are a list of possible contenders — architecture, genre and cultural styles. His theory moves beyond trying to find a localised identity for postmodernism and introduces a conceptual perspective that might prove more useful in understanding the present dilemma. He acknowledges that postmodernism, 'is all these things and many others,' but more than this it is a '*state of mind*' (Bauman 1992, vii). He tackles the identity of postmodernism from a perceptual perspective. His argument sets out to demonstrate that postmodernism is frequently theorised from within a traditional sociological framework as being problematic.

Bauman has argued that the 'crisis' theory within the contours of modernity is symptomatic of a wary response to change, especially when it is the nature of that change to conceal itself within the old legitimating regime only to be picked up as an intermittent fault in the system. This is then addressed as and when it presents itself as interference or a threat within the prevalent order.

Theorists try to respond to this infringement of the existing order by accommodating it within the existing intellectual apparatus; when, in fact, what is emerging is a new integrative system that cannot be recognised within the 'productive functioning' perspective of the old (Bauman 1992, 48).<sup>32</sup>

Habermas is one such theorist, and he responds to postmodernism within the existing strictures of prevailing theory:

Habermas's *Legitimizing Crisis* was written on the eve of the radical shift in the management philosophy of the capitalist system, a shift which revealed the orthodox method of serving the capitalist economy as an, arguably, belated effort to respond to new economic realities with concerns generated by an earlier stage in capitalist history. It has been because of this unfortunate timing that Habermas failed to consider the possibility that the evident weakening of systemic legitimation could be a symptom of the *falling significance of legitimation* in integrating the systems, rather than the manifestation of crisis. (Bauman 1992, 46)

Bauman is suggesting that Habermas has translated the epistemological collapse of modernity's hegemony as a crisis of legitimation and a threat to foundations, when it may have been more appropriate to question the reasons that former ideological strongholds are no longer authoritative. Bauman argues that Habermas follows the defining contours already legitimate within orthodox method. This becomes a question of 'seeing', a 'state of mind' and it is from an orthodox perspective that:

Inclines one to see the various phenomena collectively named 'postmodernity' as symptoms of disease, rather than the manifestations of new normality (Bauman 1992, 48)

It is possible that a failure to make the conceptual shift has more to

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<sup>32</sup> In Bauman's case, he argues that the old integrative system is based on the capitalist relations of production and the new is a society that has its legitimating ideology shaped by desire and consumption. Like Sartre Bauman wants to transcend the cultural effects on ideology and simultaneously incorporate them into his understanding of the new.

contribute towards Habermas's theorising of postmodernity than bad timing. Bauman's concept of postmodernity being a 'state of mind' (more than anything else) relates to a conceptual and ideological shift that is incomprehensible in a philosophy that opts for the either/or conceptualisation of both. The response of some sociologists has been similar to the 'crisis' thinking found at the core of contemporary theory in practical theology when postmodernism is seen as a threat to truth and theories of social reality.

Whereas Graham sees contemporary theory as a project that will steer practical theology through a transition Bauman examines the ideology of anxiety. In contrast to both Schweitzer and Graham, Bauman takes the *periods* of change between epistemological epochs and makes comparisons between them. That is, instead of comparing the different characteristics of modernity and postmodernity he examines the intellectual discomfort in the conceptual alterations from the classical tradition of *Scholasticism* to *Modernity* and from *Modernity* to *Postmodernity*.

In both instances, the urgency for a new order is at the root of anxiety. Bauman is particularly concerned with the periods of epistemological anxiety *between* regimes rather than in isolating the defining features of each. What is significant in both scenarios is the distress at the apparent moral vacuum. It is this distress that results in the giving of priority to order and moral absolutes in the attempt to ward off chaos and avoid amoral relativism:

The threats related to *postmodernity* are highly familiar: they are, one might say, thoroughly *modern* in nature. Now as before they stem from that *horror vacui* that modernity made into the principle of social organisation and personality formation. Modernity was the continuous and uncompromising effort to fill or to cover up the void; the modern mentality held a stern belief that the job can be done... (Bauman 1992, xviii)

Bauman presents the spectre of an intellectual culture haunted and possessed by old fears in new contexts. The dream of modernity had been for an 'eternal peace brought about by the universality of human reason'(Bauman 1992, viii). This would avoid the collapse into disorder of a world bereft of a preordained fate and its divine author.

However, where modernity offered a replacement, postmodernity seems to offer no such comfort: 'postmodernism has done next to nothing to support its defiance of past pretence with a new practical antidote for old poison'(Bauman 1992, viii).

This is problematic for those contemporary theorists who want to remain with a working concept of modernity. Giddens, for example, argues that:

Modernity is a post-traditional order, but not one in which the sureties of tradition and habit have been replaced by the certitude of rationale knowledge. (Giddens 1991, 2)

Bauman wishes to consider the independent viability of postmodernism. He is not pursuing a definition of postmodernism in quite the same way as Giddens and Graham. He does not try to understand it through the rational methodological order of modernity.

Schweitzer and Graham have both treated postmodernism as a potential dysfunction within the parameters of modernity. This means that they have

deployed mechanisms and methods that start from the position that postmodernism is symptomatic of an ailing modernity. Their main objective is to interrupt the decline by repairing modernity with whatever aspects of postmodernity they find acceptable and compatible with what they consider postmodern practical theology should be.

Bauman however, recognises the flaws of such an approach in a subject that is experiencing the same difficulties. For Bauman postmodernism is not a dysfunctional diagnosis:

The phenomena described collectively as 'postmodernity' are not symptoms of systematic deficiency or disease; neither are they temporary aberrations with a life span limited by the time required to rebuild the structure of cultural authority. I suggest instead that postmodernity (or whatever other name will be eventually chosen to take hold of the phenomena it denotes) is an aspect of fully fledged, viable social system which has come to replace the 'classical' modern, capitalist society and this needs *to be theorised according to its own logic* [my italics]. (Bauman 1992, 52)

Bauman is making it clear that postmodernism is to be understood under its own terms and not merely as a malfunctioning phase of modernity. The difference between Bauman's analysis of postmodernity and Graham's is that he seeks new conceptual tools whereas Graham is happy to use the modified historical materialism of Giddens' 'third way.' It is not that historical materialism itself is a flawed tool, but it is unequal to the task because it is the wrong analytical method for postmodernity.

Theorised from within a modernist perspective we arrive at the concept of a postmodern sociology, or (in the case of Schweitzer) a postmodern practical theology. This, as Bauman has argued, results in a particular understanding of modernity that emerges from trying to make them communicable (Bauman 1992). Modernity impersonates postmodernity in

order to maintain its own legislative processes and its own stability as an analytical tool. Bauman argues that postmodernism requires its own conceptual apparatus to avoid its being absorbed into modernity's remit:

I propose to consider whether postmodernism is a fully fledged, comprehensive and viable type of social system; and whether — in consequence — the treatment of postmodern phenomena as dysfunctional, degenerative or otherwise threatening to the survival of society, is justified by anything but the pressure of historical memory, or an unwillingness to part with a theoretical model which served its purpose so well in the past. (Bauman 1992, 49)

Therefore (for example) Giddens notion of *structuration* is an attempt at a new 'theoretical synthesis' with which he endeavours to accommodate a more critical and reflective agent at the core of his theory of how society operates. This is an example of what Bauman refers to as the 'mimetic representation' of postmodernity. Bauman is alerting us to the possibility that the concepts of critical phenomenology/reflexive modernity provide a semantic gloss for a misshapen discipline called postmodern sociology (practical theology) but that they contain no genuine concept of postmodernism:

One may say that postmodern sociology does not have the concept of postmodernity. One suspects that it would find it difficult to generate and legitimate such a concept without radically transforming itself. (Bauman 1992, 41)

It is precisely this threat of having to radically transform themselves that presents enlightenment disciplines with their conceptual crisis.

The problem for contemporary practical theologians, like Graham and Schweitzer, is that they still want a recognisable model of modernity. This means settling for a *faux* postmodernism. Schweitzer's reconstruction of modernity's life cycle into a postmodern life cycle demonstrates this mimetic inclination. (Schweitzer 2001, 170-173) Here Schweitzer accepts

that the notion of a 'life cycle' is a 'typically modern approach' and furthermore he needs the 'concepts and categories' of modernity in order to construct a 'postmodern life cycle'. Only then does he return this to the equation, as though having discerned what the problem is:

The experience of postmodern life is ambivalent. It holds promises and perils alike. Therefore critical practical discernment is needed. (Schweitzer 2001, 171)

Bauman argues that sociology also seeks a method by which it can pursue a 'continuous modernity' (Bauman 1992, 43). Traditional theorists see postmodernity as 'society in crisis.' One of the implications of Bauman's theory is that the concept of 'crisis' (and the intellectual angst it invokes amongst those who treat postmodernism as the *fragmentation* of the traditional society) are part of an ideological resistance to any actual change in method<sup>33</sup>:

Description of a society as in crisis implies therefore that a society so described retains its identity and struggles to perpetuate it. By the same token, the appearance of phenomena resisting accommodation within known regularity can only be perceived as a case of malfunctioning: of a society diseased and in danger. (Bauman 1992, 43)

As Stephen Pattison has noted (Pattison 2000, 59), the consequences are an endless proliferation of 'mend and make do' reconfigurations of methods that have served the discipline in the past.

Furthermore, even when there is a desire to seek a 'new paradigm', as Schweitzer does, we do not adequately understand postmodernism within the philosophy of methodology in practical theology. However, this is not

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<sup>33</sup> Bauman's approach departs significantly from Giddens, insofar as he is using as a different focus of the 'life world' of the individual as a consumer (as opposed to producer) the intensity around which society functions. This interesting development puts desire into the equation as a driving force of contemporary culture.

only a problem within practical theology, as Bauman's arguments demonstrate; sociology has been wrestling with similar issues of diminishing innovation and creativity in its methods.

Graham Button, a sociologist and proponent of ethnomethodology has made parallel observations in sociology<sup>34</sup>:

Sociologists eagerly latch onto what appear to be new bodies of thought; they toy with them for awhile (organising symposiums to discuss their significance for the discipline, giving over special editions of the discipline's journals to them, and proliferating texts that debate their merits), but then, often as not, sociology moves on. (Button 1991, 1)

Button insists this is not an indictment of alternative theories that challenge orthodox method within sociology, but it represents a greater problem of mis-recognition. His specific argument is that sociology has had difficulty with ethnomethodology in the past because it fails to recognise anything that cannot be categorised within the classical matrix of its own theory of (what he refers to as) the 'staple foundations of sociology':

The critiques and the proliferation of new ideas are organised in accordance with the properties of the 'staple foundations of sociology'. Theories such as 'feminist social theory', or theories about the cultural transformation of society, may challenge existing bodies of thought, but they do not challenge the very *foundational act of theorising*. Findings may be challenged but the methodological foundation through which those findings are generated remains intact [my italics]. (Button 1991, 4)

This parallels the problem of method within contemporary practical

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<sup>34</sup> Button was influenced by American ethnomethodologist Harold Garfinkel who believed that social order is constructed in the minds of social actors. Individuals take part in a process of 'indexicality' in which new facts and experiences are interpreted within the framework of a pre-established order. This 'documentary' method allows the individual to experience coherency of life experiences. Garfinkel famously set up experiments to demonstrate how individuals would make sense of random responses from people they believed had 'authority'. He believed that indexing was necessary for day to day survival but that it also led to an inability to 'see' things clearly/critically because they were so familiar. (A philosophical precursor for Garfinkel's 'indexicality' can be found in Hume's observation that the mind itself makes the causal connection between paratactic displays.) The psychiatrist R.D.Laing was impressed with Garfinkel's experiments and applied his theory to the understanding of patient/doctor relationships.

theology. Graham and Schweitzer have theorised postmodernism as being either a new body of thought or a socio-historical extension of modernity by dismissing it as a dysfunction that requires 'practical critical discernment' (Schweitzer 2001, 171).

Button argues that the 'new' is often absorbed into the 'comforting conceptual, epistemological, and methodological,' foundations of the old by way of resolving any 'bewilderment' and tension (Button 1991, 1) and Graham expresses this same need to steer practical theology through such a transition and emerge with a recognisable formula grounded in the revised historical materialism of Giddens' neo-traditional sociological theory.

However, Bauman illustrates that the most crucial weakness in modernity's theorisation of postmodernity lies in its mimetic translation of postmodernity within its own remit. In this sense, the term 'postmodernism' is a working tool of the ideology of crisis. Bauman, for the time being, is not so much concerned with the nomenclature of classical theory as he is with the disclosure of a 'new normality'. What we have come to theorise as postmodernism has existed (unauthorised and concealed) within the epistemological matrix of modernity. It has its own momentum, it breaks through as interference and once 'seen' cannot regain anonymity.

Bauman and Button are addressing a specific problem of perception within the methodological sphere of sociology. The 'spectator', the theorist, who makes what is observed comprehensive, always prejudges what is capable of being known — that which is considered *epistemological*. What informs

our 'looking' is therefore key to understanding the limitations of our trying to overcome our theoretical 'blind spots.' The 'new' is constantly reconfigured to fit in with the prevailing orthodoxy.

This process of assimilation fails to address the 'foundational act of theorising' and prevents genuine new ways of 'seeing' in practical theology. The practice of collecting, recording and forming a received opinion becomes interchangeable with what is conventional as knowledge.

## 2.5 Conclusion

What we are able to explore in the work of Bauman and Button is postmodernism theorised under the orthodoxy of modernity. This is the very legitimating discourse that fails to do justice to postmodernism because what it constructs is a *faux* postmodernism. This is because modernity can only *mimic* postmodernism in translation.<sup>35</sup>

Postmodernism remains conceptually concealed within the legitimating sphere of modernity. The prevailing ideology will (of course) attempt to absorb postmodernism, or its assimilated image of postmodernism, into an existing frame of reference.

In practical theology neither Graham nor Schweitzer, represent a radical departure from the orthodoxy of modernity. In adopting a troubleshooting stance towards postmodernism (and in treating it as a transition from one

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<sup>35</sup> Elaine Graham's deployment of 'performativity' is an example of mimesis to which Bauman refers. (see Graham 1996,209) Often theorists use the terminology which is taken as shorthand for characteristics of postmodernism; this semantic slippage is often another means of incorporating the new into old configurations.

epistemological paradigm to another), they are committed to incorporating it into the teleological trajectory of modernity. The question therefore needs to be reformulated. Instead of asking:

How should we make the transition from modernity to postmodernity?

Should we not ask:

Is it possible to ascertain what the benefits are from allowing postmodernism its own court?

## Chapter 3

### LOST IN TRANSITION: REASON AS AN ARTEFACT OF LIVING SYSTEMS

We are inheritors of categorized knowledge; therefore, we inherit also a world view that consists of parts strung together, rather than of wholes regarded through different sets of filters. ...It is a world view that in which real systems are annihilated in trying to understand them, in which relations are lost because they are not categorized, in which synthesis is relegated to poetry and mysticism, in which identity is a political inference. We may inspect the result in the structure and organisation of the contemporary university. (Maturana & Varela 1980,63)

Every moment of the human quest for truth is an attempt to contribute to the invention of this huge common subject. As we learn, analyse and discover, each of us is partaking of this massive collective enterprise, with the goal of total knowledge as its imaginary end. The subject of absolute knowing is the ideal thinker, the hypothetical essence of human endeavour, simultaneously gaining greater and greater knowledge of the world and of itself. In the same way that our intellectual and cultural work assumes a knowable world it also assumes a structure larger than each and all of us, that is capable of grasping the knowledge human work is garnering in one massive superhuman act of god-like intuition. (Mansfield 2000, 138)

In chapter two, it was argued that although practical theologians have recognised the need to address the problems raised by postmodernism they have done so in a manner that creates a different set of problems. They accept that practical theology cannot ignore the ontological and epistemological issues that arise but remain unsure about the actual contribution it should make to the discipline. The anxiety and uncertainty created in this response to postmodernism also features in some intellectual angst as to whether or not there is such a thing as the 'postmodern condition'.

Much of the theorising in practical theology has been pre-occupied with the need to discern between the beginning of one epoch and the ending of another, with the provision of a manageable 'transition' between the two; as observed in the work of Elaine Graham and Friedrich Schweitzer.

The problem with the transitional operation both Graham and Schweitzer choose to execute is that it leaves much of authentic postmodernism 'lost' in the adaptation. They take partially theorised aspects of postmodernism and incorporate them into a modernist frame. Graham's idea of *performativity* imbues her theory with the semantic references of postmodernism but is not similar to Judith Butler's radical study of subjection.

This is also true of Schweitzer's concept of a 'post-modern life cycle', which is problematic in that the notion of a 'life cycle' is irreconcilable with the decentred/dispersed subject of postmodernism as shown above. The result is a *faux* postmodernism that mimics some aspects of a new ontology — but does not grasp the radical departure from the enlightenment conceptualisation of knowledge, truth, morality and identity. A misguided problematic has been pursued and the deployment of theories of 'extended' or 'high' modernity do not adequately resolve the problem of subjectivity. Graham and Schweitzer have adopted an intellectual mood, found primarily in the work of Jurgen Habermas, which seeks to retain the more 'stable' characteristics of modernity.

Habermas is renowned for his resistance to the notion that modernity is a 'spent epoch'. His position has its intellectual roots in the Frankfurt School, which focused originally on the attempt to synthesise Marx and Freud. Other attempts to revive modernity have emerged in the sociological theory of 'reflexive modernity' or 'high modernity' of which Anthony Giddens, Scott Lash and Ulrich Beck are co-foundational proponents. (Beck *et. al.* 1994) This theoretical position has had a significant influence on the practical theology of both Graham and Schweitzer.

From this perspective modernity remains associated with certainty, whilst postmodernism is tantamount to opting for ambiguity, especially in the moral realm. This has had the effect of compelling practical theologians into an either/or position on the issue of morality. This division is stressed by Maurizio Passerin D'Entreves in the introduction to *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*:

A fruitful way of addressing the contrast between Habermas and the postmodernists on these issues is by distinguishing two fundamental ethical orientations operating behind their respective positions. These are centred around two different senses of responsibility to act vs. a responsibility to otherness. While Habermas privileges the responsibility to act in the world in a normative justified way, the postmodernists celebrate the responsibility to otherness, namely the openness to difference, dissonance and ambiguity. (Passerin D'entreves & Benhabib 1996, 2)

A central problem with these approaches is that the attempted polarisation of the discrete features of modernity and postmodernity detracts from our capacity to engage properly with postmodernism. A great deal of intellectual energy has been spent trying to rescue an image of humanity compatible with 'normative' systems of morality. This hinders our capacity to question the assumption that practical theology's contemporary role should be inextricably linked with the provision of moral theory for society. The professional and intellectual identity of practical theology is somewhat reduced to the practical application of moral theory.

One of the key assertions of this thesis is that practical theology has a role to play in understanding wider aspects of experience without having to be prescriptive about morality. Practical theologians have traditionally worked with the supposition that moral theory is paramount to its engagement with the world. Its status and presence as an academic discipline is to some extent justified by the claim that it can contribute to society by providing a good

and useful tool installed as practical wisdom.

Stephen Pattison is an example of the professional practical theologian who advocates putting less emphasis on theology in order to pursue a role in contemporary culture as a professional moral consultant. This has some questionable implications for the future of practical theology. In its attempts to be contemporaneous, practical theology is in danger of leaving out the spiritual aspects of experience. Morality rather than religion would seem to be the default position for contemporary practical theology.

Don Browning is an obvious exception to this as he consistently theorises religious tradition as the foundation for his work. Nonetheless, he too believes that practical theology has a role to play in a secular society through the supervision and application of moral theory. If postmodernism is the breakdown of moral theory, as it is often perceived to be, its investiture removes the rational foundation of this strategy.

Yet, the notion that postmodernism leaves us unable to address questions of truth, morality and identity itself stems from a theoretical predisposition of modernity. Occupied in building a reputation as the purveyor of contemporary morality, practical theology has failed to ask whether it *should* be so doing. Michel Foucault has argued that the Christian faith has nurtured a notion of a self-identity that is inextricably bound to its founding truths:

The duty to accept a set of obligations, to hold certain books as permanent truth, to accept authoritarian decisions in matters of truth, not only to believe certain things but to show that one believes, and to accept institutional authority are all characteristic of Christianity. (Foucault 1988, 40)

It is understandable, therefore, that practical theology should wish to retain some features of modernity, but it is not the case that it is essential to its continued existence that it does so. Schweitzer has the identity of practical theology locked into a modernity that results in his having to accommodate postmodernity as an awkward secondary feature. For example in a comparative study on religious education Schweitzer and co-author Richard Osmer provide an explanation of their methodological approach:

We will be using modernization and globalization as our two primary frameworks, and postmodernism as a third framework that is a subspecies of globalization. (Osmer & Schweitzer 2003 29)

Postmodernism requires theorising on its own terms. The reason for this is that postmodernism cannot be located in any specific phenomena. It cannot for example be seen as an architectural movement or an artistic movement. It may be manifest in these areas; just as it may be manifest in sociology, literature and even practical theology. But it is not the defining property of any individual or discrete discipline.

This ontological and epistemological shift resists comprehension from an onto-epistemology that retains the enlightenment concept of the knowing subject. The relationship between ontology and epistemology is at the heart of contemporary struggles for new thinking. The enlightenment individual presides over knowledge and yet is a concealed aspect of this aspiration. From a postmodern perspective the subject, as the containment of intellectual histories, is constructed and indelibly marked for them.

There is therefore, a tension between ontology and epistemology. Hence we need to explain how the discipline becomes immersed in ideological

positions that are not always the best possible options; then reconcile this explanation with the belief that history can be transcended. In other words, there is a need to reconcile the radical structuralism of postmodernism with freedom.<sup>36</sup>

Postmodernism provides the opportunity for practical theology to expand and explore new approaches. The traditional involvement of practical theologians with moral theory is only one route which it might take. A postmodern ontology could help practical theology to investigate alternatives. An understanding of postmodern ontology as something other than a secondary (subspecies) feature of prevailing trends might open new spaces for practical theology to explore.

In addition, postmodernism has profound implications for our understanding of intellectual history. We cannot examine the identity of the subject without also asking crucial questions about the characteristics of knowledge and its transmission. This has pedagogical implications for a discipline that uses encyclopaedist and rationalist enlightenment ideology as the bedrock of its curriculum structure.

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<sup>36</sup> For Heidegger that 'man is' is freedom. The concept of freedom is subject to cultural beliefs; the Enlightenment was synonymous with intellectual emancipation/freedom. Postmodern theorists, like Butler and Deleuze seek to explain an acquiescence that conceals the absence of what would be the traditional notion of freedom, "Why are people so deeply irrational? Why are they proud of their own enslavement? Why do they fight 'for' their bondage as if it were their freedom? Why is it difficult not only to win but to bear freedom?" (Deleuze 1970, 9-10 *Spinoza: A Practical Philosophy*) The difficulty is perhaps not in answering these problems but in asking how it is that we arrive at a concept of freedom, is it something that we aspire to? Does it exist in some form? Can we have a definitive explication of what it would be to be free? For Heidegger freedom was simply to exist, for Hegel social existence meant the immediate expulsion of freedom in his alternating master/slave scenario. For Karl Marx freedom came for individuals through their emancipation from economic modes of production founded on the appropriation of their labour. The notion of freedom is often contained in systems of thought without the concept being adequately theorised. It is the leitmotif of the Old Testament, which is based on the notion of liberation from bondage. At a common sense level we may believe that something called 'freedom' exists and is therefore a justifiable desire. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition freedom to choose is the source for humanity's fall from grace, making it part of the defining rational for culpability.

For practical theology, there are also pastoral, spiritual and methodological concerns. What we believe about how knowledge is transferred will have some bearing on research and teaching methods — and perhaps shed some light on the pedagogical organisation of practical theology. This becomes particularly obvious in the light of some of the recent contributions made by practical theologians like Browning and Schweitzer who are increasingly advocating the deployment of the curriculum to provide an 'identity shaping moral ethos' (2003, xvii).

How should such new epistemologies be constructed and disseminated? This chapter focuses on some of the theorists who have generated new traditions. Specifically, it looks at the work of Don Ihde, Donna Haraway, Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela to show how radical the epistemological break is – and what new world now comes into view.

### 3.1 *Don Ihde's Postphenomenology: Living Authors Only Please*

The tradition of the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something that has never existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from their names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new science of world history in this time honoured disguise and this borrowed language.

(Karl Marx: *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* – in Marx & Engels 1977, 97)

Renowned for being one of the first philosophers of technoscience, Don Ihde (Professor of Science and Technology at Stony Brook, New York) describes himself as a post-phenomenologist.

As well as scrutinising the nature of the knowing subject, Ihde questions the ideas we have about intellectual histories. He examines the cognitive aspect of perception and the transference of knowledge. In this, although he is influenced by the existentialism of Martin Heidegger he is also critical of the process that facilitates the handing down of intellectual heritage within scientific disciplines. He has developed a post-foundational reading of Heidegger's contribution to the philosophy of science. His most radical challenge is to the notion that we progress 'on the shoulders of intellectual giants.' Ihde's aim is to work with an alternative theory of the production of knowledge through his 'living authors only' principle, which will be explored here.<sup>37</sup> Ihde's philosophy, in particular his Postphenomenology, has implications beyond the philosophy of science and has much to contribute to the exchange of ideas within practical theology.

One of the paradoxes of contemporary practical theology lies in the tension between the need to be seen to be moving beyond the historical limitations of its clericalism and its dependency on long term memory for the justification of its contemporary presence in academia. Browning's work is a good example of this paradox. He keeps within the Judaic-Christian tradition and co-opts contemporary socio-psychological theory.

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<sup>37</sup> Ihde acknowledges the importance of Heidegger's philosophy of technology but is critical of Heidegger's romanticism about the west's debt to Greek heritage. However Heidegger's position is very complex in relation to the nature of the philosophy of science. He was critical of the Sophists because of their concern for 'first principles' and causes, he had no sympathy with Aristotelian 'speculative knowledge', Platonic Idealism or the Cartesian mission for certitude, "The tuning of doubt is the positive acquiescence in certainty." (*What is Philosophy* 1956) Heidegger's theoretical position was close to Ihde's in that he believed it was necessary to have a pre-disposition (Als ge-stimmtes und be-stimmtes ist das Entsprechens wesentlich in einer Stimmung) to a thought in order to understand it, that philosophy could not be understood through a series of historical definitions (intellectual heritage), however Heidegger did believe that we had to 'correspond' with what had been handed down to us and in this Ihde is removed from Heidegger's belief about the status of past knowledge. However, Ihde's latest approach to Heidegger's work is to take what was innovative about his theory of knowledge and empty it of its archaic remnants.

Whether it will eventually reject or retain a particular academic history, practical theology has invested much intellectual energy in reconstructing an intellectual past. The rationale for such reworking has always been about moving forward, progressing and expanding boundaries.

Contemporary practical theologian Duncan Forrester sums up this juxtaposition of contemporaneity and tradition:

Practical theology as a distinct theological tradition is comparatively young, but the idea that theology as such is a practical science has been there from the beginnings of Christian theological reflection. In the gospels, there are repeated reminders that disciples are to be 'doers' as well as 'hearers', that Christianity is far more than theory or speculation — it is a way of life. (Forrester 1999, 16)

This retrospective link with the scriptural origins of practical theology is taken as a given and treated as part of its accepted history. For practical theology, it is also crucial to the notion of authority. The problem for practical theology is precisely this, that its history and its legitimation are conceptually inseparable; any attempts to disconnect them are problematic. Therefore, practical theologians have a tendency to present this discipline as a historical process of progressive evolving and reforming. Such is the conceptualisation of practical theology found in the work of Edward Farley, which James Fowler sums up in *The Emerging New Shape of Practical Theology*:

He (Farley) identified four major phases in the *evolution* of theology as a central activity and concern of the church and later, the university [my italics]. (Fowler 1999, 76)

There is a need for practical theology to present this history and all the various transitions before practical theologians discuss their own contributions. This is one of the core characteristics of an academic community. New research has to locate itself on the historical map of the

discipline to which it wishes to contribute. For Ihde this approach raises certain epistemological problems. He has made a clear division between epistemology and scholarly history within his subject area — the philosophy of technology. He is critical of traditionalists within the philosophy of science who are concerned with 'citing only European giants, interpreting and criticising texts and reconstructing intellectual histories' (Ihde 1993, 1).

Ihde's argument demonstrates the undisclosed restrictions that origin narratives have on the identity of scholarly disciplines. Again, whether it will ultimately retain or reject its intellectual history or not, practical theology continues to invest much scholarly energy in reconstructing its past. The question he puts is do we need this particular approach to authorize contemporary theory?

Ihde is not against history *per se*. He is insistent that, 'you've got to do your Husserl and you've got to do your Heidegger' (Ihde 2000). This suggests that he considers that while the classical history of the philosophy of science is important in the general landscape, it should not be the driving force of current research engines. Contemporary theory breaks off into its own space, what Ihde describes as a 'proliferation of new perspectives.'

What Ihde opposes is the idea of progress having a cumulative/linear relation with historical theory. He genuinely seeks a medium for innovation that respects, but does not depend upon, historically situated epistemologies. He advocates clarity and demarcation between the history of philosophy and present-day research, in large part because his argument includes alteration

in the status of the knowing subject.<sup>38</sup>

For this reason Ihde advocates the use of only 'living authors' in his seminars on the philosophy of science:

I have from time to time thought about doing a book entitled, *Against the History of Philosophy* that would maybe raise a few eyebrows. It has to do with the fact that I don't think that philosophers should rely on the history of philosophy. I think that what philosophers do is read historical texts and pretend in some respects that they are contemporary. I don't think they are contemporary and I don't like the pretence. (Ihde, 2000)

The dominant analytical schools, he argues, are 'largely ahistorical or non-historical. In fact, if you go to English universities, many of them assign all of the historical figures like Plato or Kant to the classics, not philosophy department.' Ihde approves of this demarcation as he opts for the 'living authors only' against the 'heavy weight of history.' (Ihde 2000) The past has to be mediated through contemporary elements, what he refers to as 'reading history through living authors.' (Ihde 2000)

This is about more than just an absence of history in Ihde's work; it is a resistance to heritage within contemporary methodology. Ihde talks about 'epistemological engines', which are interpretative devices:

An epistemological engine is a technology or a set of technologies that through use frequently become explicit models for describing how knowledge is produced. (Ihde 2000)

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<sup>38</sup> Ihde also argues that contemporary knowledge is 'considerably superior to its older forms', but not because of a cumulative effect. Efficiency has more to do with innovations in perception. Nonetheless given his arguments about knowledge transference between cultures this might be seen to present a flaw in his philosophy. Ihde would have no problem, however, with a bias for current epistemology.

New instruments of interpretation are not necessarily representational. Each set of technologies provides a perspective. For Ihde this means that science must change its approach and that a traditional inductive method is superseded in some instances with convergence theory.<sup>39</sup>

The 'interpretation and criticizing text' approach and reconstructing intellectual histories does not add anything to the authenticity of present theory. What Ihde advocates is the expanding of hermeneutics through a 'material hermeneutics' or a 'visual hermeneutics, as outlined here in a quote from a paper entitled "Material Hermeneutics":

A material hermeneutics is a hermeneutics which "gives things voices where there had been silence, and brings to sight that which is invisible." Such a hermeneutics in natural science can best be illustrated by its imaging practices. The objects of this visual hermeneutics were not texts nor linguistic phenomena, but things which came into vision through instrumental magnifications, allowing perception to go where it had not gone before. One could also say that a visual hermeneutics is a perceptual hermeneutics with a perception which while including texts, goes beyond texts. (Ihde, 2003)

Ihde's argument is that science no longer has any claim to a theory of absolutes and that Plato's contemplative telos is no longer adequate in a community that has become conscious of the role of embodied experience. We no longer hold to the ideal notion of knowledge as a disembodied actuality and the disclosure of this fallacy means that we have to think more creatively about the construction of multiple epistemologies.

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<sup>39</sup> Ihde argues that long periods of inductive experimentation may not add anything significant to the knowledge that can be gained from an event and in fact, because of the nature of contemporary science, experiments cannot be repeated (whether for financial, historical or ethical reasons). What is required is the greatest possible access/convergence of interdisciplinary interest.

In the seventeenth century, the philosopher and natural scientist Francis Bacon introduced the concept of a passive natural world ordered and understood by a rational mind. Ihde makes a distinction between science-as-knowledge and science-as-practice and argues that 'theory families' have replaced the one-dimensional pursuit of science-as-knowledge.

Furthermore, the concept of a 'pure' disembodied science becomes itself only one among the proliferating perspectives in the philosophy of science. Ihde's 'theory family' is a combination of 'theory, critical perspective and interpretative context' (Ihde 2000). This particular approach has emerged from feminist evaluations in the philosophy of science.

Feminist scientists, such as Evelyn Fox Keller (*Reflections on Gender and Science* 1985) highlight how science attaches to theoretical metaphors that have a powerful influence:

Again, in a succinct and interesting way, Fox Keller shows the emergence of the dominance of the *mechanical* metaphors which also retain their power in contemporary science. The correlate of a neutral, disembodied, personal language is a mechanical, unalive, passive nature. The victories of this crucial period are of the mechanists over the hermetic traditions, and of the scientific suppression of 'female excess,' presumably embodied in witchcraft. (Ihde 1993, 123)<sup>40</sup>

Fox Keller's work is significant because it highlights what functions are provided by the use of metaphors in scientific theory. Ihde is careful, however to point out that emptying science of historical rhetoric and sifting through cultural residue is not enough in itself to generate new epistemologies (Ihde, 2000).

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<sup>40</sup> Today this excess emerges in contemporary science fiction scenarios of artificial intelligence (A.I., I Robot). The human aspect of 'hard science' is projected onto the actual product of human practice. Disconnecting/alienating human activity from science produces dystopian fantasy. Ihde is always very matter of fact about 'hard' technology, for him this has something to do with fact that if you have children they are more likely to find its use positive rather than threatening. He uses the example of his own teenage sons' comfortable relationship with technology to emphasise this. If you are a 'user' and potential innovator, you may be less susceptible to dystopian nightmares about technology because you are extending, and not reifying, your own experience.

Ihde approached the question of postmodernism from a very different standpoint and uses the terms *postphenomenal* and *non-foundational* interchangeably. (Ihde 1993, 1) Conscious of his reputation as the 'first postmodern philosopher of technology', he concedes this with reservations. This is because he, like many, is reluctant to try to pin down the exact meaning of *postmodern* and does not define his work in terms of such arguments.

In an interview, Ihde expressed some uncertainties about the possibility of a definitive taxonomy of postmodernism, but was very assured about the consequences it had for new epistemologies:

I also have misgivings about certain aspects of postmodernism. But if by modernism you mean the attachment to modernist epistemologies such as those that came out of Galileo, Descartes, and that particular period, which hold that knowledge is the true representation of the external world, then I am clearly not a modernist. I have no sympathy with that. I am clearly postmodernist in the sense that techniques mostly from phenomenology, but also from deconstruction and variants on multiperspectives are where I would stand epistemologically. (Ihde, 2000)

Ihde is here considering the effect that 'new thinking' has on living technocultures. In this sense, he gives us a format for recognising new thinking. In pursuit of working examples of innovative thinking, he avoids the trap of 'crisis ideology.' He acknowledges the difficulty in establishing the genesis of modernity and postmodernity but does not let this impinge on his attempt to understand emerging epistemologies. In contrast to Habermas, Ihde has no anxiety or sense of 'loss' over modernity<sup>41</sup>:

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<sup>41</sup> Although to be fair it should be acknowledged that the posthumanist philosophies that emerge from Ihde and Haraway are ethically complex. New technologies will bring about new definitions of humanity but they also raise new ethical issues. It should be remembered that Habermas defends critical theory against philosophical posthumanists like Peter Sloterdijk (1947-) who has argued that culture and civilisation are 'anthropogenic hothouses' and is a proponent of genetic technology as a means to regulate the 'bio-culture'. Sloterdijk uses such terms as *Zuchung* (cultivation/breeding) and *Selektion* (selection of genetic material for regulation of 'disease') these are historically loaded terms, and no matter how much Sloterdijk defends their use in what he sees as a different context, we should (like Habermas) be suspicious of them.

The proliferations of definitions of the postmodern do not often mesh, yet what is common to the sense of the postmodern that, somehow, we are aware that an era is ending, modernity. (Ihde, 2000)

He is taking steps toward understanding the 'omnipresent technological texture' of a new approach to knowledge without feeling compelled to make it compatible with modernity, or to make provision for the transformation between the two. He rejects arguments that seek to establish a clear historical lineage between postmodernism and modernism.

Understanding postmodernism, for Ihde, is about entering into a far-reaching altered perception:

My approach to this radically fluid postmodern context is to look at our life world, which I contend today has a deep *technological texture*. For unlike the false but widely claimed and believed aspects of *science*, which takes itself still in a kind of modernist guise as universal, atemporal, acultural in its results, there has never been any doubt that technologies are more closely linked to both practicality and cultures. (Ihde 2000)

The focus is the relationship between humanity and technology. Ihde is in agreement with the Foucauldian concept of humanity as a social construction (Foucault 1980), and argues that what it is to *become* human is transformed through our perception and our use of technology. Our aptitude for altering how we think is finely tuned to our relationship with the world.

Furthermore, it is through the interconnectedness of perception and life worlds that radical transformations and 'new thinking' are made possible. Ihde demonstrates this relationship by the historical example of Leonardo Da Vinci, and the effect his work had on renaissance culture. Leonardo's technology was not successful in engineering terms. His flying machines never flew and his artillery/war machines were only ever conceptual.

Nonetheless, Leonardo's transformation of perception was to become the basis for radical new thought processes. This was art (visual thinking) pushing concepts beyond philosophy:

This visualist thinking, the very thinking which would become the style of thinking in both modern science and, even much more particularly, in modern engineering. It is the exploded diagram which makes the workings of such inventions as diesel engines, as hydraulic pumps, as the instrumentation of science itself understandable. (Ihde 1993, 19)

Ihde's argument is that in the 'technological texture' of the life-world, the imagination and creative thinking can revolutionise culture. Styles of thinking emerge that bring about social and cultural shifts', indicating that perception does have a plasticity. Leonardo Da Vinci introduced a radical *gestalt* in his anatomical and technological drawings.

For Ihde this is a significant demonstration of Heidegger's theory that technology is more than a 'collection of artifacts' but a 'way of seeing'.<sup>42</sup> (Ihde 1993, 20) There is an 'intimate synthesis of a way of seeing which was the birthplace of the modern'.<sup>43</sup> Leonardo's *imagined* technologies are more important to the impact of thought than the artifacts of technology.

In this sense Ihde's exploration in perception, his 'visual hermeneutic', and its relationship to the 'technological texture' of a culture has more to do with empiricism of the imagination. He goes on to suggest that it is the anatomical, more exactly than the technological, drawings that have the greatest impact on radical new thought processes — with the emphasis being more on *visual thinking* rather than on technology.

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<sup>42</sup> In an essay titled 'The Origin of the Work of Art' (Harper and Row 1975) Heidegger uses the term *equipmentality* to describe our relationship with the world through our equipment/technologies. He also talks about the 'memorialising' of technological cultures through the visual arts, arguing that art remains a 'soulless disembodied thing' unless we can respond to this capacity it has to memorialise.

<sup>43</sup> In this case, Ihde is referring to the altered perception required for the 'modern' not a historical time line.

Ihde is in no sense making any claims for a renaissance technology in the historical location of modernity. The example is deployed to keep us focused on the ability to transform culture through a radically altered *gestalt*. He is careful to avoid the reduction of Leonardo da Vinci's work to some happenstance of the renaissance and technology. He is not making some adroit statement about early technologies. His concern is with the process of thinking, perception and the importance of the relationship of the two in the 'exploded diagram' in Leonardo's work.<sup>44</sup> The work of the artists, the aesthetic product, is crucial. This becomes the basis for Ihde's material hermeneutics and his theory of *transference*.

In his theory of *technological transfers* Ihde argues that 'techno-artifacts' are like works of art, they are not natural objects but are purposeful and contextual. This, however, does not mean they are functionally or culturally fixed. Ihde's own example of the multifunction of technological artifacts is an instance of how technology may be adapted into different cultures that have not shared the thinking processes that have produced them. The act of adaptation will not necessarily radically alter the *gestalt* of the host culture. He describes how technology that is strange is 'accommodated within a persistent familiarity':

In a transfer, an artefact is transferred. But in its original setting the artefact is paired with a human praxis, a technology is a human technology relation. What is perceived as *useful*, in the typical transfer, must therefore make contact with a recognisable praxis, the familiar. (Ihde, 1993, 40)

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<sup>44</sup> The technology of Leonardo is every so often viewed from our own cultural perspective as 'futuristic' or the insight of a genius. Television programmes have been produced in which attempts have been made to make his designs operational. This kind of curiosity about the work misses the point that Ihde is trying to make. It is the leap of imagination that is crucial not the efficaciousness.

It is therefore wrong to think of technology as having an independent or 'Frankenstein's monster' scenario. Technology does not have the ability to impose a logic outwith its application and use. Ihde's interest is in understanding technology embodied in the 'life praxis' but his approach also reveals the complexity of perception, thinking and comprehension. His examples are demonstrations of different models of recognition, and he makes the point that a host culture will accommodate strangeness within its own logic of *sense* perception. The example Ihde uses is of the clash of cultures between gold prospectors and New Guinean Highlanders early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

The colonists carried tinned goods, for example those old elliptical sardine cans. These they discarded along the way as 'junk.' But the lids were immediately picked up and *incorporated into elaborate headdresses* by the highlanders. Again, there is a pattern of a new artefact being incorporated into a familiar praxis, a fashion praxis if you will. (Ihde 1993, 6)<sup>45</sup>

This theory of technological transfer illustrates the cognitive resistance that arises when two very different models of recognition come into contact. A host culture, on receiving something strange will try to place it with the familiar. It will be assimilated into an existing genus, isolating those attributes of the artifact that are *recognisable* and can be accommodated within the perceptual and conceptual matrix of the host's own praxis.<sup>46</sup>

This does not necessarily change or alter the *thinking* of the host culture just because it has classified the 'strange'. A medium can be provided for the 'new' without making any difference to the mindset of the host culture.

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<sup>45</sup> This is the point at which Ihde's theory takes us beyond the claims that Heidegger made about the possibility of an artefact portraying 'a happening of truth' or the reproduction of a thing's essence, multiple points of recognition prevents such stability in an object.

<sup>46</sup> This is a foundational principle of Garfinkel's ethnomethodology.

It is above all a question of comprehension, suggesting that it is not an objective change in the environment. If real change is to take place, it is within the subjective status of the subject. The cultural differences that are evident in the knowing subject are demonstrated through the mis-recognition and reallocation or assimilation of objects. Therefore, intention of use or interpretation of purpose cannot give rise to 'truth claims' in any conventional sense. Artifacts from one culture become the votive objects of another. They will retain the same meaning only in the epistemological milieu for which they have been constructed. The knowing subject of one culture has a constructed sense-perception for the recognition of culturally specific references.

Practices viewed as purposeful strategies are, therefore, not universal statements of truth. This would obviously raise some difficulties when particular interpretations of 'purposeful practice' are believed to be the foundation for statements of truth.

Elaine Graham, for example, wants to retain a notion of 'creative human agency' (Graham 1996, 97), but the nature of this agency is questionable within an ontology that suggests the construction of a subject for a particular epistemological regime. The experience of an individual might be perceived as private, but nonetheless identity is there as the bestowal of a communal privilege. The individual has sanctuary within a culture; they *belong* as part of a public franchise. The sovereign power that grants such a privilege is often not disclosed, it nonetheless leaves them indelibly marked.

If this is explored, as it has been in Butler's work on gender (Butler 1999), we have to challenge the analytical categories that Graham deploys in *Transforming Practice*:

To regard all theological discourse as grounded in human agency is resonant with perspectives on human identity and agency as constituted through practice, and therefore as enacted, contextual and provisional. Theology now becomes not an abstract series of philosophical propositions, but a performative discipline, where knowledge and truth are only realizable in the pursuit of practical strategies and social relations.

The unity of theology, therefore, is located in the study of the practices of intentional faith communities. The *praxis* of the faith community constitutes the character and wisdom of theology it is the means by which Christians purposefully inhabit the world, and the vehicle through which the community itself is formed and ordered. (Graham 1996, 204)

This begs the question, what is it about a faith community and 'purposeful' or intentional action that endorses this *praxis* as 'truth' and 'knowledge'? This statement also presupposes that the pursuit of 'knowledge and truth' as objective reality is not only 'good' but also *realizable*. Graham's interpretation of performativity does not question the status of *experience* in terms of ownership. It is an affirmation of 'ordinary' life. Graham takes ownership of experience as given. But, more than this, she accepts that each individual has the capacity for 'good will thinking'. This capacity is not in doubt for Graham who opts for a model of rationalised morality.

This position is scrutinised under postmodernism. The status of reason as an objective measure and a working tool is critically assessed and replaced by the notion of reason as a product of living systems. That is to say, those subjects may 'purposefully' inhabit the world, but this 'purpose' is confined to a self-referring order. This tends to go against our instinctive feelings of 'self possession or agency.

### 3.2 *Donna Haraway: Self Possession, Biographical Continuity and Dispersed Subjectivity*

A person with a reasonably stable sense of self-identity has a feeling of biographical continuity which she is able to grasp reflexively and, to a greater or lesser degree, communicate to other people. That person also, through early trust relations, has established a protective cocoon which 'filters out', in the practical conduct of day to day life, many of the dangers which in principle threaten the integrity of the self. Finally, the individual is able to accept that integrity as worthwhile. There is sufficient self-regard to sustain a sense of the self as 'alive' — within the scope of reflexive control, rather than having the inert quality of things in the object-world. (Giddens 1991, 54)

The proper state for a Western person is to have ownership of the self, to have and to hold a core identity as if it were a possession. Not to have property in the self is not to be a subject, and so not to have agency. (Haraway 1991, 135)

Like Ihde, Donna Haraway has no sentimental attachment or sense of loss in regard to pre-technological societies. Her feminist critique emerges from her own working environment within the scientific community. This in turn has resulted in a rethinking of traditional feminism with its emphasis on gender identity. Instead, she focuses on our relationship with technology and the impact this has on our notion of what it is to be human. Like Ihde she believes that to think radically about identity we have to think differently about the sort of boundaries that we believe exist between human and machine, natural and unnatural.<sup>47</sup>

This has made her one the leading philosophers of the new 'posthuman' theory that seeks to understand the influence that technology has on our consciousness. The result is a philosophy of techno-science that breaks away from depth/essence models of human nature and gender dualism. She questions traditional origin myths and seeks to replace them with contemporary affinity stories.

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<sup>47</sup> As we increase the use of technology in our lives, it has become important to rethink our concept of what it means to be human. Haraway's philosophy has extended the boundaries by trying to eliminate the dualism between nature and technology.

Haraway compares the coherent 'regulatory fiction' of gender structure in the west with the concept of transient gender identity found in Marilyn Strathern's study of gender among Melanesians (Strathern 1988). This study was used to demonstrate the fluidity of gender identity in contrast to the permanent biographical trajectory of western culture.

Strathern's work was an important indicator of a dispersed subjectivity that is unintelligible within the framework that Giddens refers to, in which identity is an accumulative biographical progression that results in a permanent stable condition. What Haraway's work reveals is the similar construction of biographical intellectual histories within academic and scientific disciplines.

Haraway has been crucial in our understanding of how the constructions of shared and authoritative stories imbue a discipline with status and authority. For her, it is important to emphasise that the history of a discrete discipline has been the result of a 'collective historical production' (1991, 83).

As such, her work is an insight into the ascendancy of 'winning narratives' in the history of science. It is also a study of the initiation passages of individuals into the discipline:

The language itself is charged with questions of independence and indebtedness, of individual achievement and ascribed identities. Part of women's struggles against patriarchy has been to insist on being independently named. (Haraway 1991, 86)

This reform of primatology took place because of the ability of women scientists to contribute to the narratology from a differing perspective.<sup>48</sup>

Yet, those who contributed still had to become 'experts' through the legitimate routes. Only when safely established could the default position of what would be considered normative perspectives be challenged:

Adrienne Zihlman spoke of range and behaviour; she would do her doctorate on bipedulism within the framework of the hunting hypothesis. Later she would be a central figure in challenging this explanatory framework and in proposing a major synthetic perspective. (Haraway 1991, 91)

Academic disciplines construct and in turn are defined by their intellectual legacies. Haraway's approach is to ask questions about the social mechanisms that act as vehicles that enable the passage of particular narratives:

Like any family name, the academic patronymic is a social fiction. The language of the patriline does not tell the natural history of an academic family; it names the lineage of struggles, mutual concerns, and inheritance of tools and public social identities. (Haraway 1991, 91)

The continuation and propagation of stories, through the medium of academic research, publication and public speaking is all part of the apparatus that retains the authority of the narrative. This is the process of producing public knowledge.

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<sup>48</sup> This reformation is also evident in other disciplines. In Anthropology for example, the work of Adam Kuper (*Anthropology and anthropologists Routledge 1996[1972]*) provides an interesting insight into the response of a professional body when the canonised origin myths are challenged. Kuper introduced the 1996 edition of this work with a reflective parable. A story told with hindsight because he could not have anticipated the reaction to the original. It is a tale of a 'generation' gap. Until then, there had been an unacknowledged tension between the 'elders' of anthropology and its emerging disciples. Kuper would challenge the 'origin myths' of British (colonial) Anthropology. This angered many who read the work (and in the case of Lucy Mair, even those who had not). One positive critic had suggested that Kuper was guilty of 'desacralising the founding fathers of our discipline and presenting them as human beings, warts and all.' Kuper's work had a stormy reception but it went on to become a 'staple' text for undergraduates. It was finally conceded that he had made an important contribution to the discipline by exposing the *documentary fiction*, so closely tied into Malinowski's personal biography, at the heart of its intellectual history. Kuper's work is an enlightening read for anyone interested in understanding the heritage of their own discipline.

Haraway takes into account the particular 'processes and production and reproduction of human life' into her account of her particular discipline. In this sense, she takes a specifically Marxist view of how knowledge is assimilated and disseminated:

Through labour, we make ourselves individually and collectively in constant interaction with all that has not yet been humanized. Neither our bodies nor our social bodies may be seen as natural, in the sense of existing outside the self creating process called human labour. What we experience and theorize as culture are transformed by our work. All we touch and therefore know, including our organic and our social bodies, is made possible for us through labour. (Haraway 1991, 10)

Haraway challenges the usual starting place for the production of scientific knowledge, arguing that the essence of science does not belong in an abstract domain of 'testable propositions' (Haraway 1991, 82) but on the contrary, 'Stories are a core aspect of the *constitution of an object* of scientific knowledge' [my italics] (1991, 82). What becomes a key stage in the development of a scientific discipline is the process whereby some narratives become dominant. In *Daughters of Man-The Hunter* (1991), Haraway starts with Linnaeus being the 'second Adam' with the privilege of bestowing the 'correct names for things'. This is the very essence of the creation of stories that ultimately become the accepted public definition of meaning.

In examining the intellectual history of primatology, Haraway's challenge is for feminism to confront the prevailing narratology and search for new stories. Her analysis is a crucial contribution to our understanding of how disciplines establish their orthodoxy. Haraway has focused on how women scientists have had to go through a classical patriline before having the freedom to do their own authentic research. This force exerts its influence by becoming the established origin myth of a discipline:

And even in our time, when such giants and fathers are dead, scientific debate is a contest for the language to announce what will count as public knowledge. (Haraway 1991, 81)

Haraway's work provides insight and understanding as to how the intellect of the subject is constructed, how identities are formed and how the deification of godlike founding fathers creates powerful origin myths. The apprenticeship served within any academic discipline becomes a rite of passage and reinforces the orthodoxies, supposedly pioneered by individuals, which have in fact emerged from social, cultural and political relationships. Ironically, the much-coveted 'originality' of academic discourse is subordinate to the orthodoxy of prevailing associations. The emergence of pedagogic heritage is reflected in the reproductions of its properties as the intellectual assets of the individual. This illusion is cultivated by the egoism it serves, as illustrated by an observation made by Sir Stafford Beer (1926-2002) in his preface to *Autopoiesis* (also known as the Santiago Thesis)<sup>49</sup>:

A man who can lay claim to knowledge about some categorised bit of the world, however tiny, which is greater than anyone else's knowledge of that bit, is safe for life: reputation grows, paranoia deepens. The number of papers increases exponentially, knowledge grows by infinitesimals, but understanding of the world actually recedes, because the world really is an interacting system... There has been recognition of this, and interdisciplinary studies are by now commonplace in every university. But will this deal with the problem? Unfortunately, it will not. We will say that a graduate must have his 'basic discipline', and this he is solemnly taught — as if such a thing had a precise environmental correlate, and as if we know that God knows the difference between physics and chemistry. He learns the academic *mores*, catches the institutional paranoia, and proceeds to propagate the whole business. Thus it is that an 'interdisciplinary study' often consists of a group of disciplinarians holding hands in a ring for mutual comfort. The ostensible topic has slipped down the hole in the middle. (Beer in Maturana & Varela 1980, 64)

<sup>49</sup> Professor Beer was famous for his research into operational systems or 'the science of effective organisation'. He developed many of his ideas during the Second World War but went on to make their application successful in peacetime. His work on cybernetics and management was carried out in the 70's and he used the term 'data highway' some thirty years before we come across the term 'information highway.' He worked on projects in Chile, which at the time was under the leadership of President Allende. He came to know about the work of Maturana and Varela. The Pinochet regime brought his work in Chile to a halt. As well as his scientific work he wrote poetry and painted. One of his most important contributions to working methods was the concept of 'Team Syntegrity', long before Ihde or Haraway's 'theory families'. Maturana and Varela's concept of *structural coupling* was to have a strong influence on his work. This concept is also found in Deleuze and Guattari.

Haraway's work is of great importance for practical theology as it can help open up the debate about authority and lineage in a subject that is dependent upon both. How can we interpolate our own origin myths with authenticity and question the imposing status of our own 'dead giants'? It also raises issues about the relationship between academic initiation processes and the construction of working methodologies and I now wish to consider alternative theories of knowledge and the potential for different working relationships.

### 3.3 *Autopoiesis: Between our Dreams and Actions Lies the World*

If we are to understand a newer and still evolving world; if we are to educate people to live in that world; if we are to abandon categories and institutions that belong to a vanished world, as it is well nigh desperate that we should; then knowledge must be rewritten. Autopoiesis belongs to the new library. (Beer *in* Maturana & Varela 1980, 65)

The basic claim of science is objectivity: it attempts, through the application of well-defined methodology, to make statements about the universe. At the very root of this claim, however, lies its weakness: the apriori assumption that objective knowledge constitutes a description of that which is known. Such assumption begs the questions 'what is it to know?' and 'how do we know?' (Maturana & Varela, 5)

The empirical methods of science aim to provide us with knowledge statements about objective reality. This rationalist perspective has been the predominant model for the epistemology of the natural sciences and much of the humanities throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Along with his colleague Francisco Varela, Humberto Maturana explores the suppositions implicit in the 'external reality' theory of knowledge.

These assumptions are expressed in the language of science and in the expectation that experiments are repeatable and independently verifiable. This model of 'science as knowledge' relies on the existence of a clearly defined objective and absolute reality that is external to the observer. Moreover there is also the supposition of teleonomy, the belief that there is order in the world being observed:

It is usually maintained that the most remarkable feature of living systems is a purposeful organisation, or what is the same, the possession of an internal project or program represented and realized in and through their structural organisation. (Maturana & Varela 1980, 85)

For Maturana documentary or objectivist models of knowledge are problematic and ultimately are responsible for the marginalisation of knowledge into fragmented 'specialist' disciplines. In this model the observer, who is neutral and independent of the environment being observed, has the rational powers to discern reality. Thereafter, this discerned reality is informationally processed and subsequently modifies pedagogical conduct. It is from this model that the idea of 'independent and objective truths' emerges and, ultimately, it is believed that truth itself is both independent and capable of being sought and discovered.

There is a tautology concealed in these statements. Implicit to this model is the assumption that we are in control of a clearly defined situation; the knowing subject is an independent spectator with the capacity to gather information dispassionately.

Maturana and Varela's position suggests that the opposite is the case, that 'perception should not be viewed as a grasping of external reality, but rather as the specification of one.' (Maturana & Varela 1980, xv) The external world would have a 'triggering' effect on the observing subject, but that effect would always be a fragment of the world, drawn into the immediate priority of what was required for the integrity of the subject.

This is not to suggest that the status of an external world is doubted, but that we can have access to it only through the prisms of our dependency. Beer noted the intellectual irony of this in his preface to *Autopoiesis*:

I note with some glee that this means that Bishop Berkeley got the precisely right argument precisely wrong. He contended that something not being observed goes out of existence. *Autopoiesis* says that something that exists may turn out to be unrecognisable when you next observe it. (Maturana & Varela 1980, 67)

Observations are not steadfast because the world, and our perceptions of it, is not stable. Reality is not an independent and consistent phenomenon and this particular 'reality' has no objective existence beyond its immanent functions. What is real is intimate with the embodied experience of individuals and this identity can expand or retract according to its relationship with the world in which endurance and survival are crucial.

When, on the other hand, we operate as observers we are inclined to divide our environment into self and object. This, of course, ignores the fact that we are *structurally coupled* to the environmental conditions that we objectify and as such are instrumental participants in it.

*Autopoiesis and Cognition* is a thesis that resulted from years of research on *frog vision*. This was a complex biological study that made an important contribution, not only to the philosophy of science, but also to the theory of knowledge. It is also uncompromisingly imaginative in that it resists being relevant to only biological science and has been described as sociology of biology.

This is demonstrated in the innovative use of new terms, Maturana was conscious of the role that language had to play in scientific theory, 'one can only say with a given language what the language permits.' (Maturana & Varela 1980, xiii) *Autopoiesis* is a portmanteau word assembled by Maturana to encapsulate the autonomy and self-referencing/creative potentiality of the individual. But it also widened his explorations beyond the traditional ground already mapped out in his own field. This was effective as a working tool because it broke with traditional semantics and the subtext they bring:

Curiously, but not surprisingly, the invention of this word proved of great value. It simplified enormously the task of talking about the organisation of the living without falling into the always-gaping trap of not saying anything new because the language does not permit. We could not escape being immersed in a tradition, but with an adequate language, we could orient ourselves differently and perhaps from the new perspective generate a new tradition. (1980 xvii)

The term *Autopoiesis* brings into focus the creative activity of existence, balancing this with our concern for the phenomenal. This is a significant alteration of perspective from the empirical and objective model of knowledge and a move toward understanding the world from the perception of an autonomous individual engaged in its cultural environment or milieu. It is a move away from asking the question: 'How does the organism obtain

information about the environment?' — To asking: 'How does it happen that the organism has the structure that permits it to operate adequately in the medium in which it exists?' (Maturana & Varela 1980, xvi)

In other words, this is the biologists' version of the same quest pursued by Sartre and Butler: How do we explain the subjection of an apparently autonomous individual within the confines of experience in the world and why is this made with such acquiescence?

This notion of autonomy is important to understanding what Maturana has to say about the transference of knowledge. He is concerned with the *capacity* for knowledge to be generated rather than the existence of objective knowledge. Why is this significant? It is very different from the discerning enlightenment subject who deploys reason to explain the world. It is contrary to the belief that individuals have been on some voyage of discovery from which they return with spoils to be stored and categorised:

Objective knowledge seems possible and through *objective knowledge* the universe appears systematic and predictable. Yet *knowledge* as an experience is something personal and private that cannot be transferred, and that which one believes to be transferable, *objective knowledge*, must always be created by the listener: the listener understands, and *objective knowledge* appears transferred, only if he is prepared to understand.<sup>50</sup> (Maturana & Varela 1980, 5)

This is in contrast to what we have traditionally believed about the exchange of knowledge. In our western culture, we have a pedagogical tradition that operates on the 'banking' system of knowledge. That knowledge is deposited, via the teacher pupil relationship, with individuals. This model assumes the separation of intellect and body suggesting also that knowledge is something external that needs to be absorbed.

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<sup>50</sup> This is specifically preparation in the sense that the individual has pre-conceptual propensity, not in the sense of consent. Although it is also significant that this preparedness is an explanation for the individual's apparent willingness to participate in the process.

Maturana's concept of the knowing subject is in many ways Spinozean; he links systems of knowledge to nature/biology. Spinoza did not conceive a world divided into two separate spheres, the physical and the mental. Crucially he believed that everything strove to maintain its own particular finite existence, "Each thing, in so far as it is in itself, endeavours to persevere in its being"(Spinoza 1994, 171) This is Spinoza's principle of *conatus*, which is the effort, impulse or striving force that forms the essence of an existence.

In Autopoiesis, it is not so much the essence of a thing as the generation and maintenance of a supporting environment that gives existence an identity. This is also quite close to Haraway's concept of affinity and connectedness to the world. Ultimately it is not human reason that brings order to the world but the need to participate in the world that creates a particular manifestation of the artefact or faculty of reason. The plastic capacity for knowledge enables the individual to extend its identity and endure within a given environment.

Furthermore, the manifestation of a particular epistemology depends on its particular situation and does not have an independent status. Any description of the external world that we have is intrinsic to this very specific relationship. This relationship between subject and environment means neither can be understood independently. Identification with particular environments becomes a series of engaging and disengaging:

To grow as a member of a society consists in becoming structurally coupled to it; to be structurally coupled to a society consists in having the structures that lead to the behavioral confirmation of that society. The spontaneous course of historical transformation of a society as a unity is towards its structural coupling to the medium in which it exists, and, therefore, toward the stabilization of the mechanisms that generate its defining relations through the stabilization of human conduct. *But, the stabilization of human conduct always entails a restriction of creativity through the restrictions of the individual human beings outside those prescribed by the society that they integrate* [my italics]. (Maturana & Varela 1980, xxvii)

This synthesis of biology and epistemology, however, does not mean that Maturana reduces knowledge to a form of biological determinism.

Maturana is a biologist and works in a field of science that is inescapably concerned with ontogenesis. Paradoxically, he rejects the notions of purposefulness and teleonomy. The existence of an organism and its ontogeny are not determinants in the same way as some essential final destination was a necessary final cause for Aristotle. Again he is more in agreement with Spinoza's assertion that existence precedes essence but can never determine what that will be, 'Substance is prior in nature to its affections' (Spinoza 1994, 76).

What this means, for Maturana, is that all kinds of societies are biologically viable without any being either necessary or desirable. The scientific search for the 'element of purpose' is concealed in the process of its descriptive narrative:

The notion of development arises, like the notion of purpose, in context of observation, and thus belongs to a different domain other than the autopoietic organisation of the living system. (Maturana & Varela 1980, 87)

Knowledge emerges from the individual's striving to become and maintain an integrity/integration. A particular epistemology, with a valid currency for that particular system, results from this endeavour.

However, subjection to a social order is not about being trapped. It is a complex relationship between the individual and what is sacrificed in order to gain inclusion and status as a participant.<sup>51</sup>

Therefore, it is an irony (as Judith Butler has argued) that in order to 'persist as oneself' the subject consents to being subordinated. This sacrifice or indeed the process of subjection is not necessarily a condition of which the subject is aware, as Butler has asserted:

No subject can emerge without this attachment, formed in dependency, but no subject, in the course of its formation, can ever fully afford to fully 'see' it. (Butler 1997c, 8)

A self-creating subject acquires a psychological unity through its embodiment in a concrete situation. This makes it possible to retain individuality so long as it is integrated to a system that confers a legitimate identity.

In other words, what we have is the arrangement of natural and acquired features, with the latter made possible because of the non-determining aspects of the former. This plasticity makes change possible, but only from a position outside of the system. Maturana insists on the necessary ontological/biological status of autopoiesis and its inseparability from the intellect. This is very different from Butler's suggestion:

That the body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from *various acts* which constitute its reality. This also suggests that reality is *fabricated as an interior essence*, that very interiority is an *effect and function* of a decidedly public and social discourse. (Butler 1997b, 173)

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<sup>51</sup> This argument can be applied to the nature of exclusion too. Those who are marginalized from specific cultures, or regarded as anti-social are not 'invisible' 'voiceless' or lacking identity. The very existence of these categories/terminologies confers an anti status that confirms the legitimacy of the regime from which they are rendered exiled. This problem was explored in the work of educationalist, Paulo Freire.

Butler has made a distinction between the body surface and interiority, Maturana makes no such distinction and he resists the notion that the body is a malappropriated object for history. Everything is inscribed on the surface, and as the surface changes there is no lingering 'interiority'. There has been no distortion, no loss<sup>52</sup>:

This is why creativity, as the generation of novel social relations, always entails interactions operationally outside society, and necessarily leads to the generation, by the creative individuals, of models of conduct that either change the defining relations of society as a particular social system, or separate from it. Social creativity is necessarily antisocial in the social domain in which it takes place. (Maturana & Varela 1980, xxvii)

The processes by which an individual is able to shape an identity within the system are the same processes that allow a break from it. The interaction with a particular system does not operate on an accumulative basis. The immediacy of ongoing connections sustains what we are. This can just as easily disintegrate if not part of ritual and regular repletion. New rituals and new ceremonies throw open old enclosures and extend the original boundaries.

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<sup>52</sup> Judith Butler argues that gender does not emanate from human biology. This is in contrast to the latest genetic theories that attempt to ascribe all of humanity's traits to the genome. The separation of nature and culture in social science is important; this is not always true for natural science. Whereas Butler tries to explain 'nature' in terms of cultural influences, natural science explains human characteristics in physiological theories. Maturana insists that the biological and the cultural cannot be separated; life worlds that emerge are a product of the physical imagination. Although not determined by a non-teleological ontogeny. However, nature is still problematic for Butler in the sense that she wants to argue that the cultural and symbolic are somehow 'naturalised' through the body. History disappears as the subject internalises the social order. The socialized body has no ontological status beyond a series of performances. The socialized or gendered body might not have a necessary ontological existence, but it does take on an ineffaceable form for the duration of its particular existence. Why is this important? Butler's theory fails to take into account the very real flesh sacrifice in the socialisation process. In her preface to the latest edition of *Gender Trouble*, [1999] she concedes that there is a problem between performativity and subjectivity. She tentatively puts forward the suggestion that this might be an area to be explored through the concept of psychic performativity [Butler 1999] I think this is an interesting issue not least because there is an important feature of Butler's theory that gets in the way of understanding the complexity of sacrifice. The body, in both Foucault and Butler's theories is subjugated to the social order. This is a pessimistic view of the body as a malappropriated object. The internalisation of the cultural realm becomes a psychic extension of performativity, in effect also theorising a malappropriation of the psyche. The body naturalises the historical realm and removes it from the field of vision. The subject so 'naturalised' fails to be perceptive in the environment that provides sustenance for continuity.

*Autopoiesis* is a theory that attempts to close the gap between the physical and the intellectual. Maturana and Varela have explored the subject from a biological perspective in a way that social and cultural theorist have often ignored, perhaps because of the academic separation of boundaries. What I will consider now is the effect this has on our understanding of the intellect.

### 3.4 *Masters of Morality: Jacques Ranciere and Intellectual Emancipation*

Here then is the extent of that vaunted strength; its limits are very confined; and therefore, in games of combination no man after having trained himself with great application and long practice, will get beyond that degree of perfection allotted to him: this is the goal of his intellect. It is absolutely necessary that it should be so otherwise we should gradually go on to infinity. (*Voltaire: The Ignorant Philosopher 1767*)

We can thus dream of a society of the emancipated that would be a society of artists. Such a society would repudiate the division between those who know and those who don't between those who possess or don't possess the property of intelligence. (*Ranciere: The Ignorant Schoolmaster 1991*)

In his essay *The Ignorant Philosopher*, Voltaire was arguing that the intellect, just like the body, grew in maturity. The increment of knowledge was finite and there were no innate ideas, and what's more, it seemed to be self-limiting. He believed knowledge came from experience and was critical of scripture and religion. The work encapsulates the mood of enlightenment thinking. We are all born ignorant of ideas and intellectual progression is comparable with physical growth. There is no dualism between the intellect and the body. The idea of progress through education is a key to the enlightenment notion of emancipation.

However, Voltaire and others like him presumed the intellect to be the natural property of the individual and limited within the private sphere of its own particular experience:

I imagined, that nature had given to every being a portion that is proper for him; and I thought those things which we could not attain, did not belong to us. (Voltaire 1767, 14)

This essay is the one of the earliest developmental philosophies in relation to intelligence. In it, Voltaire treats the intellect as a natural capacity for learning, with which people reach their natural limit. He argues that the 'ordinary' individual, his example was a farm labourer, had not the inclination to ask perplexing questions about whether or not reason was a separate immortal substance. This proved that each person was adequately equipped with a 'proper portion.'

What Voltaire failed to do was to make any comparison between himself (the ignorant philosopher with an abundance of time) and the farm worker (consumed by his labour).<sup>53</sup> The absence of intellectual interest in the philosopher's quest, on behalf of the farmer, seemed evidence of a 'natural' condition in keeping with his requirements.

One of the effects of such thinking is the creation of a pedagogical illusion — the division of the intellect into the knowledgeable and the ignorant. Any discipline that seeks to be genuinely innovative has to address this issue of intellectual identity.

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<sup>53</sup> Voltaire rejects the Platonic/Cartesian dualism of mind/body but retains Plato's notion that the good society is one in which everyone 'knows thyself'. This is often mistaken to mean an inward journey of revelation and wisdom when in fact Plato was referring to the requirement for every individual to know their place in society to maintain order and to make it harmonious.

Karl Marx was one of the earliest political and economic commentators on this conceptual flaw. Unlike Voltaire, Marx did recognise the predicament of the labourer so consumed with his daily commitments that the pursuit of 'abstract' philosophical questions was not possible. But not because of what Voltaire had seen to be a limitation in the distribution of the intellect. Rather it was due to the restriction on circumstances and time available for intellectual activity. However it was not simply that Marx believed that material conditions had to be altered in order to rectify this error:

*The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forget that it is men that change circumstances and that the educator himself needs educating (Marx & Engels 1977, 28)*

In other words Voltaire was just as uninformed and limited due to his circumstances as was his peasant farmer. This presents a more complex problem than merely creating the conditions for the intellectual emancipation for the unenlightened masses, what do we do about the unenlightened masters?

The political theorist Jacques Ranciere maintained that the transference of knowledge in western tradition has always been mobilised within a traditional hierarchy. What Voltaire presumed to be a natural distribution of intelligence, Ranciere argued, was in reality a highly-policed distribution of the intellect/sensibility. In an environment that demands the strict division of 'specialist' areas through the classification of their constituent parts, Ranciere sought to disclose the production of knowledge emerging from a less ordered terrain:

Ranciere wrote books that eluded classification — books that gave voice to the wild journals of artisans, to the daydreams of anonymous thinkers, to the worker poets and philosophers who devised emancipatory systems alone, in the semi real space/time of the scattered late night moments their work schedules allowed them. (Kirsten Ross *in* Ranciere 1991, viii)

By this practice, Ranciere liberated a realm that in turn becomes the basis for his politics of aesthetics. Karl Marx had argued that, 'the exclusive concentration of artistic talent in particular individuals, and its suppression in the broad mass which is bound up with this, is a consequence of the division of labour' (Marx & Engels 1977, 430).

In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Ranciere argues that the appropriation of intelligence results from the division of the intellect into knowledge and ignorance. Knowledge and ignorance are not natural but cultural conditions. However Ranciere goes beyond a strictly materialist understanding and focuses on 'anonymous thinkers'.

For Marx, 'the nature of individuals depends on the material conditions determining their production' (Marx & Engels 1977, 42). Individual consciousness being a consequence of life experience, 'life is not determined by, but consciousness by life' (1977, 47), which consciousness (in turn) is mis-recognised 'solely as *their* consciousness' (1977, 47). This was the core of Marx's critique of Hegelian idealism.

Nevertheless, Ranciere's archive of 'worker poets' is a testimony to life grasped beyond the immediate experience of material circumstances. Even if, ultimately, those circumstance provide the substance for a transcendent aesthetic. A worker might, for example, write poetry about his work experience in time salvaged between work and rest.

Marx focused on the division between mental and manual labour. Hence, his was a critique of the exclusivity of the artistic/intellectual realm, which was to provide the basic formulation of research questions within classical social theory. Ranciere, on the other hand, sought to disclose the division of the intellect into knowing and ignorant as the pedagogical myth at the heart of education.

Ranciere explored the egalitarianism of the intellect in a very practical way. Equality was his starting position not a hypo-theoretical aim. Although not directly challenging the 'new' sociology he nonetheless presented an interesting counter-perspective. His was a voice that offset modern sociology. Ranciere took the contemporary credo of sociology, inequality, and questioned its status as an analytical concept and future aspiration. Ranciere's doctrine was one of intellectual emancipation, rising from the desecrated epitaph on the tomb of his protagonist Joseph Jacotot; "*I believe that God created the human soul capable of leading itself by itself, and without a master.*" Genuine reform can only take place when we examine what it is to know as well as what it means to be ignorant.

Ranciere's basic hypothesis is that, if unrecognised, any given system will continually effect its own reproduction and, furthermore, through this very reproduction the system will itself create and structure mis-recognition. These conditions are the basis for the classical pedagogical myth — that it is the task of the teacher to transmit knowledge. Giving authority to a pedagogical system that rests on the absolute condition of an inequality between the possessors of knowledge and the ignorance of those who do not possess it.

Ranciere constructed a parallel body of knowledge in the form of an archive of the aesthetic creativity of marginalized manual workers.

Although he never formalised a critique of contemporary sociology his observations and attention to these margins were a critical departure from the more formalised theories within social science that were, Ranciere believed, committed to the endless rediscovery of inequality:

Ranciere's critique of the educational theories of Bourdieu, Althusser and Milner shows them to have at least one thing in common: a lesson in inequality. Each, that is, by beginning with inequality, proves it, and by proving it, in the end, is obliged to rediscover it again and again. Whether school is seen as the reproduction of inequality (Bourdieu) or as the potential instrument for the reduction of inequality (Savary) the effect is the same: that of erecting and maintaining the distance separating a future reconciliation from a present inequality, a knowledge in the offing from today's intellectual impoverishment — a distance discursively invented and renewed so that it may never be abolished. The poor stay in their place. (Ranciere 1991, xix)

If equality is always theorised as an objective it has a tendency to become conceptualised within a utopian frame, in which it then historically and psychologically becomes an aspiration. Those social theorists who demonstrate the existence of inequality and try to demonstrate the means for its elimination are caught in a cycle of objectifying inequality. There exists a methodological blind spot and they cannot perceive that their efforts are part of the process that erodes what is being sought.

Ranciere works from the assumption that equality is the reality and that inequality is created within particular cultural circumstances in which the intellect is policed.

This would seem to suggest that Ranciere is more practical or 'hands-on' but, in fact, he takes the need for theorising the problems of perception as a priority and he does so by deploying a political matrix of aesthetics. His assimilation of intellectual history has meant that he has included what traditional and legitimate schools of philosophy and sociology has left out — the almost imperceptible, inaudible and invisible aesthetic, 'policed'<sup>54</sup> at the political margins.

Ranciere refers to this process as the 'Distribution of the Sensible' an important concept of how divisions and boundaries that define the *visible* and *audible* of a particular politico-aesthetic regime. This is the basis for Ranciere's claim for the universal status of political equality. Crucial to the 'distribution of the sensible' is the aesthetic realm of work and/or art. Here is Ranciere responding to a question about the 'factory of the sensible' and whether universal human activity is inclusive of artistic practices:

The first possible meaning of the notion of a 'factory of the sensible' is the formation of a shared sensible world, a common habitat, by the weaving together of a plurality of human activities. However, the idea of a 'distribution of the sensible' implies something more. A 'common' world is never simply an *ethos*, a shared abode that results from the sedimentation of a certain number of intertwined acts. It is always a polemical distribution of modes of being and 'occupations' in a space of possibilities. It is from this perspective that it is possible to raise the question of the relationship between the 'ordinariness' of work and artistic 'exceptionality'. (Ranciere 2004, 42)

Therefore, crucially, the distribution of the sensible is not merely an aggregate of separate skills. It is the division and limitation of available space. The limitation comes from the absence of time to do otherwise and not some predestined order. This was similar to the Platonic principle of a

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<sup>54</sup> *Police or Police Order*: a specific concept of Ranciere's in relation to a system of co-ordinates that defines the 'borders between the visible and the invisible' as the 'law that determines the distribution of parts and roles in a community as well as its forms of exclusion.' (Ranciere *The Politics of Aesthetics* Continuum 2004, 89)

well-organised community; in that each person only does the one thing that they were destined to do by their nature (Ranciere 2004, 42).

What happens to the potential for creativity when appropriated in such a manner? Ranciere implies, and his archive demonstrates, that individuals have the capacity to create space beyond the formal boundaries of knowledge, deploying imagination/creativity not formally allocated to them through the normal channels of 'intellectual distribution'.

Critical of philosophy that has attempted to 'speak for others', Ranciere developed a methodology of inclusion, as opposed to the patronage of being 'spoken up for'. This is very different in nature and concept from Browning's vision of global morality disseminated through educational institutions. Ranciere opts for the truly democratic vision of the intellect, one that does not presume the need to 'instruct' and is more inclined toward availability of information and the power of example. This concept of the intellect is very much like Schleiermacher's concept of religion, in that it is the capacity to 'become' who we are in the world. However, although Ranciere is making a case for the existence of intellectual activity beyond the controlled channels of existing regimes of knowledge, he nonetheless still incorporates a notion of human striving that is compatible with enlightenment optimism.

In some ways Ranciere's position is close to that of Voltaire who recognised the tension between policed regiments of truth (religious and ecclesiastical bodies) and those who explored the dangerous/alternative realms beyond the jurisdiction of the church:

Whoever seeks after truth will run the risk of being persecuted. Must we remain idle in darkness? Or must we light a flambeau, at which envy and calumny will rekindle their torches? For my part, I think the truth should abstain from taking nourishment, lest we should be poisoned. (Voltaire 1767, 122)

### 3.5 Conclusion: *The Paradox of Cultural Work*

Browning worked with a concept of 'cultural work' as a means for restructuring the ethics of modern-day family life. Like many educationalists, he has a belief that the schooling system can provide the basis for the dissemination of the kind of citizenship that would make our societies a better place. The question is: Can we bring about change in the quality of life in our societies by using educational institutions as a means for creating morally responsible citizens, if it really is the case that these institutions are contributing to the alienation of individuals from any real sense of being valued?

We live in a society which believes that through education everyone has the opportunity to improve his or her circumstances through a meritorious education system. While sociologists like Bourdieu have produced volumes on the notion of 'cultural capital', there remains some disagreement as to whether education really functions as a route to an egalitarian culture and a means of integration, or functions as a barrier that isolates and excludes a large section of the population:

There is no such thing as a *neutral* educational process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes 'the practice of the freedom.' The means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. The development of an educational methodology that facilitates this process will inevitably lead to tension and conflict within our society. (Friere 1993, 16)

In his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire starts with the premise that the teacher/pupil relationship erodes the integrity of those designated ignorant: 'people educate each other through the mediation of the world.' The teacher/student relationship is a narrative one and the teacher is always the narrator. Education, as a result is suffering from 'narration sickness'.

The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable. Or else he expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of his students. His task is to 'fill' the students with the contents of his narration — contents that are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance. (Freire 1993, 52)

This reduces education to a system whereby knowledge is deposited into receptacles or containers, the pupils who come to the teacher empty and waiting to be filled through (what Freire criticised as) the 'banking' system of education in which pupils are passive receivers of knowledge instead of co-creators.

In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as a process of enquiry. The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence. (Freire 1993, 53)

Freire argued that the liberation of education from the banking system must begin with the confrontation of this pedagogical relationship.

The more a person works at storing a deposit of facts and information that has no direct relationship to the existential experiences of their own lives the less they become capable of using their own inherent thinking skills.

What is clear from the arguments put forward by all of the theorists in this chapter is that knowledge is not something external, abstract and capable of being acquired and disseminated by the few. The significance of this is that morality, the knowledge of good and bad, is not external to lived experience. Ihde and Haraway wrote about technologies of subjectivity and how epistemologies and ethics emerge from work and experience. The production of this subjectivity involves complex techniques and strategies. The development of character is tied to response to environment, rather than to obedience to external rules. On the other hand, Ranciere demonstrated through his work that the practice and production of art can create alternative subjectivities and sensibilities within the division of the intellect.

What is common to these theorists is the sense that knowledge does not necessarily follow from a logical process of reason gathering and accumulating external facts, as in a modernist perspective. In their works they raise very clearly the relationship between ontology and epistemology. In the next chapter, I develop the argument that the methodological assumptions of modernity are incompatible with those of postmodernity – and that the best way forward for practical theology is to develop a methodological approach which examines the image of the knowing subject. It will then be possible to examine more fully the relationship between technology, perception, immediate needs and experience.

## PART TWO

## Part Two

### NEW SKIN FOR NEW CEREMONIES

Once one steps out what's been thought before, once one ventures outside what is familiar and reassuring, once one has to invent new concepts for unknown lands, then methods and moral systems break down and thinking becomes, as Foucault puts it, a 'perilous act', a violence whose first victim is oneself. (Deleuze 1995, 103)

This thesis began by questioning the intellectual discomfort at the core of practical theology's response to postmodernism's new epistemologies and corresponding ontology. Contemporary practical theology is a discipline that has emerged in its present form from the enlightenment tradition. As part of its growth it has assimilated the methods of contemporary social science.

This has resulted in the incorporation of a particular concept of humanity and corresponding theories of knowledge. Having relied substantially on the social sciences, practical theology has been keen to defend the principles that have lent it credibility as a discrete academic discipline. The empirical methods of the social sciences have been valued because of the professional status that accompanies them.

In contrast, I have argued that this has resulted in the increasing secularisation of practical theology as some of its practitioners become increasingly self-conscious and apologetic about the use of religious and theological terminology.

Having developed and maintained its academic standing on a diet of such methods, practical theology has relinquished some of its more traditional criteria, *ie*: theological terminology, scripture and religion. This makes it difficult for practical theology to distinguish its own rationale from those of the disciplines it depends upon.

As a result, practical theology may be in danger of marginalizing a concept of the Divine and replacing this with an increasingly secular remit that narrows its activity to the construction and subsequent application of moral theory. Examples of this are found in the work of Don Browning (2003) One of the consequences of pursuing moral science as the legitimating principle for practical theology as a discipline is that it relies on social science as the *means* for distinguishing between truth and moral certainty.

That practical theology continues to distance its organising principles from religious concepts such as spirit is evident in the work of Gordon Lynch. He has specialized in the sociology of religion and popular culture. Studies such as *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture* (Lynch 2005) increasingly lean toward the legitimating framework of the modern academy. This can result in a reluctance to leave the safe scaffolding of modernity and authentically explore postmodernism.

In other words by assimilating the methods of the social sciences, practical theology inherits the same problems concerning value judgments and truth statements — without the default position of religious authority. Having distanced itself from the more traditional realms, practical theology struggles to indemnify its losses.

I have explored some of practical theology's response to postmodernism, primarily through the work of Elaine Graham and Friedrich Schweitzer. Practical theology has tried to maintain continuity in what has been theorised as a 'transition' between modernity and postmodernity. Graham and Schweitzer represent a particular theoretical approach that seeks to sustain elements of a modern ontology and theory of knowledge, while attempting to make this compatible with selective aspects of postmodernism.

The working principle of these approaches seems to be to treat the present stage as an intermediary crisis in which the solution is to seek, retain and assimilate the most desired features of modernity and postmodernity. Theories of 'high modernity' or 'extended modernity' it was argued, have led to a 'mend and make do' reconfiguration of modernity and a misrecognition of postmodernity which is then deemed to be the cause of dysfunction within modernity. This diverts intellectual resources away from what should be practical theology's fundamental act of theorising.

In its response to postmodernism practical theology has limited its potential for developing new approaches and pedagogical strategies.

Practical theologians, like Don Browning, seek to find the correct moral temperament and application for contemporary culture. They do so as means of making practical theology itself contemporaneous, but this can have the undesired effect of reducing practical theology to a 'moral science'.

I have also explored the nature of reason and our belief about intellectual systems. The search for a 'practical wisdom' is based on a particular mode of intellectualism, the master/pupil dichotomy of teacher/learner, characteristic of the modern university.

This problem is disclosed by the work of theorists who resist the intellectual angst of trying to reconcile modernity with postmodernity. Instead, they explore alternative ontological theories and epistemological methods. Don Ihde, for example, rejects the origin myths of the enlightenment that privilege the notion of foundational and progressive intellectual histories (as typified in the work of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing 1729-81).

The Santiago Thesis, *Autopoiesis*, explored an alternative relationship between ontology and epistemology. Maturana and Varella's theory renders problematic the concept of knowledge as a linear and progressive, or unfolding, historical movement. In such theories, intellectual heritage emanates from established and documented sources with an authentic origin or foundation.

In such a model of knowledge, in which the established 'roots' provide a core principle, the source of truth is external. Knowledge is objective, enabling intellectual histories to be established as the authoritative route for co-opted membership into academic disciplines. Haraway, Ihde, Maturana, and Varela all demonstrated alternatives in their theories of embodied knowledge. Ihde, who rejects the concept of intellectual heritage, provided insight into the effect of technology on perception. Haraway's studies went some way to explaining how some intellectual strands are constructed and how individuals become initiated into intellectual cultures. Maturana and Varela provided a biological basis for the construction of knowledge without reducing it to a biologically determined teleology. *Autopoiesis* makes a substantial contribution to the case for embodied knowledge that avoids reducing culturally generated inequalities to biological determinants.

Accepting the limits of a foundational model of knowledge leaves us with the difficulty of explaining how it is that we have the perception of knowledge as a universal and objective realm that we somehow 'acquire' as individuals. Knowledge as a publicly available entity absorbed by the private individual is the rationale that underpins a meritorious education system. French philosopher Jacques Ranciere argued that the division of the intellect into the knower and the ignorant is a flawed model of knowledge, which is nonetheless prevalent in western culture.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> This is a crucial issue for Ranciere who believes that contemporary sociology is obsessive about exposing inequality but fails to recognise that equality is not a thing to be achieved through the widening of *access to knowledge*. We first have to understand that there are conceptual problems in the ideological distribution of the intellect. Policies of inclusion are not in themselves going to resolve this problem. Ranciere demonstrated this in his eclectic selection of diaries from workers who otherwise had no connection to the formal production of knowledge.

If knowledge is not the result of reason gathering and accumulating external facts, how do we explain the persistence of the belief that it is? How do we account for the perception that knowledge is a private achievement?<sup>56</sup>

This relationship between ontology and epistemology is critical to an understanding of the problems of methodology in practical theology. The incompatibility of two conceptual systems, modernity and postmodernity, can produce inconsistency and inherent weaknesses in method if the approach we take is either to try and correlate the two, or to try and work with a model of postmodernism as the 'extended' stage of modernity. If modernity is the persistent 'default position' then postmodernism remains concealed within an unsympathetic conceptual regime.

I will suggest here that the best way of resolving these issues in relation to practical theology is to examine the image of the knowing subject, constructed from a postmodernist perspective which demonstrates the relationship between technology, perceptions, immediate needs and experience. This approach provides an alternative theory of being and knowing. However, it is crucial to understand that this is not the same as saying that knowledge is merely the internal fiction of subjective experience.

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<sup>56</sup> This is certainly evident in our pedagogical methods. In schools and universities, we teach modules, in spite of attempts to introduce 'creative learning' and we teach according to a banking system of knowledge.

A key criticism of post-modern philosophy is that it fails to replace the certainty of truth — *i.e.*: the prevailing modern concept of truth being an objective reality.<sup>57</sup> Truth as an objective reality is arguably a philosophical creation. Reason as the tool, which we deploy to discern these truths, is a cultural artefact built upon the craft and skill of recognition.<sup>58</sup>

In the second part of this thesis, I will explore different approaches to morality and 'truth'. It will be argued that people and their direct life experiences are responsible for a constitutive ethics that is part of the process of individuation. In exploring the case for a creative postmodern practical theology, I will suggest an understanding of ethics as a living system. One that is inclusive and not prescriptive.

Friedrich Schweitzer expressed one of the doubts within contemporary theory, which is that practical theology will somehow disband if it cannot justify its existence within an increasingly secular and postmodern society.<sup>59</sup> I hope to demonstrate that practical theology is a discipline that can engage positively in the understanding of living, relational and ethical systems without sacrificing concepts of grace or spirituality.

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<sup>57</sup> Martin Heidegger argued that modern philosophy, beginning with Aristotle and Plato, is synonymous with the quest for 'truth' and 'first principles.' Not all philosophy retains this concept of truth as an organising principle, and Heidegger was one of the first philosophers to suggest that we try to imagine what philosophy was like beyond the modern. One of the persistent problems for Christian theology, in relation to postmodernism is that it has for centuries been indelibly marked by modern philosophy. (From Aquinas/Aristotle to contemporary remixes *i.e.* Browning/Aristotle.)

<sup>58</sup> What Heidegger referred to as the predisposition or *tuning* of the individual to particular systems of thought. Its maintenance requires an intellectualism that mirrors it.

<sup>59</sup> This sentiment is expressed in other disciplines too. It is found in the 'death of' or 'end of' arguments put forward by critics, *ie*: the death of the novel, the end of narrative, the end of representation etc.

Just as knowledge is the artefact of actual living systems, it is also possible to understand ethical existences as part of authentic engagement with the world. Knowledge and ethics are in constant flux. Rather than see this as a constant threat of relativism, we could view it as the ability to be responsive, rigorous and creative in our relationships with others.

I shall also argue that, in challenging the intellectualism within contemporary practical theology, new pedagogical strategies can be suggested for the future of practical theology within the post-modern university.

I will argue, in the second part of this thesis that practical theology does not have to give up an empirical methodology in order to engage in a contemporary culture. I will suggest that it is possible to develop an approach in which active engagement can be undertaken in conjunction with the challenging of an existing image of the world that has been created through the pre-conceptions embedded in our thinking.

## Chapter 4

### GILLES DELEUZE: METAPHYSICS AND THE GENERATIVE SPIRIT

Then I discovered how much the human world of my time had become the enemy of spirit and therefore of its own light and peace. (Santayana, 1986, 540)

The works of the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and his later collaboration with psychiatrist Felix Guattari provide us with a philosophy that can offer insights into how practical theology may expand into genuinely new space and avoid the narrowing of its application to the social science of moral theory. So, instead of being predominantly in pursuit of 'practical wisdom', it takes responsibility for its part in creating an intellectual culture that recognises the potential for generative grace.

The concept of spirit has become less popular in recent times. It is not being advocated here that we return to the notion of spirit as a separate or disembodied substance. It will be viewed as part of the vital principle of life, that part responsible for the creative imagination enabling us to engage intuitively with our environment.

The concept of spirit explored here is that it is a finite and embodied aspect of being which nonetheless transcends its particular historical existence. It is an essential part of our capacity both to engage in history yet also to be beyond history.

Metaphysics has for some time been keenly avoided by practical theologians. A key conclusion of this thesis will be that the work of theorists such as Deleuze, by questioning traditional empiricism, can help us review the purpose of metaphysics for practical theology. Deleuze was sceptical of the traditional view of the philosopher as an individual who devotes a life to the pursuit of truth as a 'pure' objective. He also challenged the ideological basis of philosophy, arguing that its close relation with the state compromised it:

The rational foundation of order, of course: philosophers have traditionally been employees of the State. The collusion between philosophy and the state was most explicitly enacted in the first decade of the nineteenth century with the foundation of the University of Berlin, which was to become the model for higher learning throughout Europe and the United States. The goal laid out for it by Wilhelm von Humboldt (based on proposals by Fichte and Schleiermacher) was the "spiritual and moral training, of the nation" to be achieved by "deriving everything from a first principle" (truth), by "relating everything to an ideal" (justice), and by "unifying this principle and this ideal in a single Idea" (the State) The end product would be a "fully legitimated subject of knowledge and society" each mind an analogously organised mini-State morally unified in the supermind of the State. (Deleuze & Guattari 1996, xii)<sup>60</sup>

The 'traditional' philosopher aspires to the discovery of 'truth' as a guiding principle, but for Deleuze *thinking*, if it is genuine, is a confrontation with prevailing systems of thought. For the most part he believed that what is taken to be thinking is really only the endless repetition of the same pattern of thought.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> In addition, this change brought about the increased specialisations of subjects - the aim to create discrete disciplines with 'experts' in diverse fields of knowledge. Although I believe Deleuze to be correct about the relationship between the State and moral education I think in the case of Schleiermacher (who in fact had difficulty with some of Fichte's ideas) it could only be argued that his collaboration with the State came at a later period in his working life and coincided with his senior position within education. Schleiermacher's earlier works, which he never reneged on, were critical of both state and church. A more contemporary example of this relationship between the official state apparatus and moral theory would be Browning who advocates the use of cultural apparatus for the dissemination of moral education.

<sup>61</sup> Deleuze believed that this particular phenomenon, which is demonstrated in the *cliché*, is an effect that our senses are dulled to in normal day to day thinking. This same idea can find expression in literary form (Samuel Becket) and film (David Lynch). Sentimentality is an emotional equivalent.

This Deleuzian concept of thinking as an activity with the potential to evolve and escape from the endless cul-de-sac of repetition will be looked at in this chapter.

Knowledge as part of what Deleuze described as *immanence* is more inclusive than the theory of knowledge as an immutable structure. Its immediacy does not make it any less effective, and it does not reduce it to an internal fiction. Knowledge, when understood as the world folded into the consciousness of living systems, is still knowledge borne of an encounter with the world. It is still therefore empirical:

Leibniz's most famous proposition is that every soul or subject (monad) is completely closed, windowless and doorless, and contains the whole world in its darkest depths, while also illuminating some little portion of that world, each monad, a different portion. So the world is enfolded in each soul, but differently, because each illuminates only one little aspect of the overall folding. (Deleuze 1995, 157)

This alludes to the existence of a world that we can only ever hope to share knowledge of in small portions; but that sharing affirms our existence as ethical beings. We each preside over an individuation process that is creative, with each soul contributing to a unique aesthetic that is not static, but that is in a constant state of generation and reformation.

#### 4.1 *Living Systems of Thought*

A philosopher worthy of the name has never said but one thing. (Bergson 1911, 813)

As a philosopher, Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) initiated his career in traditional fashion, the perceived wisdom being that no one can 'do' philosophy until well versed in the classical traditions. However, although Deleuze would sustain a lifelong interest in the 'giants' of philosophy who had so distinctively marked the history of western thought, he did not concede to the notion that these works were closed canons. Influenced by Henri Bergson (1859-1941),<sup>62</sup> Deleuze regarded the ideas of philosophers as still potent 'constellations' of thought rather than dead lines of history. He rejected the notion that progress takes place when new advancements supersede outmoded knowledge.

Discarding this assumption about the status of knowledge Deleuze resisted locating his work on a linear historical map of ideas. He created instead a space that is 'less a dialogue among the dead, but an interstellar conversation, between very irregular stars, whose different becomings form a mobile bloc which it would be a case of capturing' (Deleuze & Parnet 2002, 16). He did not seek to merely understand or interpret the work of other philosophers; he sought to attach their concepts to his own philosophical practice.

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<sup>62</sup> Deleuze was responsible for reviving interest in Bergson when he published *Bergsonism* in 1966. Bergson was famous for his distinction between objective/external perception and intuition.

In other words, his interest in classical philosophy was not merely in the production of monographic interpretations, but in the creation of living systems of thought (constellations). He followed the simple Bergsonian principle, that the greatest of philosophers would generate a single idea. He then made this the working principle that was to underpin his synthesis of ideas. The chronology of philosophical ideas was less important to him than was the transmutability of modes of thought. His unique way of approaching the work of other philosophers enabled him to establish a working relationship with their ideas as 'philosophy that crosscuts its history without being confused with it' (Deleuze & Guattari 1994, 59).

Deleuze handled the ideas of philosophers as conceptual tools that could be bonded with his own work to achieve particular philosophical tasks. John Marks refers to this as the creation of a new authorial space:

Deleuze seeks to work with other thinkers and artists so that his own voice becomes indistinct. In this way, he creates a zone of indiscernability between himself and the authors with whom he works. (Marks 1998, 25)

Deleuze was also prepared to work with intellectual aspects of philosophical systems that traditional philosophy had bypassed in favour of the more conventional elements of particular systems of thought.<sup>63</sup>

This approach created philosophical fusions; his work would become: Deleuze/Hume (radical empiricism), Deleuze/Bergson (empirical imagination), and Deleuze/Spinoza (immanence) – to identify just a few.

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<sup>63</sup> Heidegger also argued that we could not fully understand philosophy through 'historical definitions', the history of thought is *not* the same as philosophy. More important were the remnants of philosophical thought that we could engage with. However, Deleuze explores further than Heidegger in examining the image of thought and not just the ideas of philosophy.

Other authors, alive or dead, became possible theory partners and helped contribute to a rich fabric of concepts. These may be engaged and recomposed, depending on the purpose and emphasis of the theoretical task. This was a radical departure from treating the various philosophies as interesting, possibly relevant, but nonetheless dormant systems of thought.

Deleuze became a vital energy that facilitated the embodiment and reconstitution of philosophical notions from very diverse sources. His innovative reworking of philosophical concepts meant that they would never be the same as the original, but would emerge capable of performing new tasks in different contexts. So, for example, it is not a translation or interpretation of any particular philosopher's work he produced, but a transformation of what was already contained within the work. Deleuze's polytonality or 'zones of continuous variation' were about finding illuminations in the text that were, 'not merely wilfully contrary readings, they rather find something new in already existing texts.' (Marks 1998, 25)

He never sought to be a 'specialist' or an 'expert' in any particular philosopher. His tendency to move outside of the classical philosophical domain resulted in serial combinations with unusual modes of thought that produced writings on cinema, art and literature.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Some examples of these are his writings on Proust (Proust and Sigus 1972), Kafka (Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature. 1986) and Francis Bacon (Francis Bacon: logique de la sensation 1981). Most significant was his work on cinema — which was not a philosophy of cinema but the incorporation of cinematography as a tool for exploring time and movement, what Bergson termed *duration*. (Cinema 1: The Movement Image 1986, Cinema 2: The Time Image 1989)

Deleuze has also taken key concepts from philosophers who have not always been cast centre stage in the history of philosophy and even when he is working with 'giants', he presents new insights into their key notions. For example, philosophers like David Hume (1711 - 76), usually categorised as a traditional empiricist, can be freed from the historical truisms with which they have become associated.

While Hume is generally recognised as being one of the great empirical philosophers, less attention is paid to the psychological understanding of the subject that is inherent in his work (Hume himself having declared that self-identity was an illusion or 'bundle of perceptions'). Deleuze redirected attention from Hume's philosophical scepticism (eg: the flaws of induction) to focus on the positive aspects of the imagination and its function in constructing images of the self and the world. He rejected the notion of empiricism that has long been associated with Hume and concentrated on the relation between the *imagination* and the construction of the subject.

Put simply Hume's 'scepticism' becomes problematic through the weakening of scientific predictability and generalization when the individual is perceived as an independent observer of the world:

Viewed from this perspective, the textbook definition of empiricism, which attributes to experience the origin and the source of validity of all possible knowledge, is, in fact, an answer to the question. Strictly speaking, the definition is not even plausible, because, despite what the definition implies, knowledge does not represent the primary concern for the empiricist, nor does experience play the kind of constitutive role that textbooks assign to it. Knowledge is not primary. (Deleuze 1991, 5)

According to Deleuze, Hume had replaced the primacy of knowledge with *belief*. The association made between the relations of things in the imagination was highly problematic for a traditional empirical philosophy in its pursuit of truth and knowledge.

Deleuze, on the other hand, realized that Hume's philosophy might have exposed the weakness of 'common sense' thinking but that it nonetheless opened new realms in enabling us to understand the relationship between subject and world. Instead of taking Hume's arguments to be a negation or a weakening of empiricism Deleuze portrays traditional empiricism as problematic. Traditional empiricism divides the world into observers and observed. This bifurcation of subject and object is challenged by inverting the traditional view and postulating a subject immersed in the world:

It follows, argues Deleuze, that empiricism is not a philosophy of the senses but a philosophy of the imagination, and the statement that "all ideas are derived from impressions" is not meant to enshrine representationalism but is rather a regulative principle meant to keep us within the straight and narrow of the atomists principle of difference...From a host of different perceptions, a subject is born inside the given, *and the imagination is transformed into a faculty* [my italics]. (Deleuze 1991, 8)

Nonetheless it is difficult to get beyond the epistemological anxiety that Hume's philosophy creates, as Boundas noted:

But ultimately, Deleuze-Hume cannot prevent a paradox from being inscribed in the heart of empiricism: the same critique which disciplines the mind and prompts it to reject the fictions of the imagination is also the critique responsible for leading the mind to the biggest of all fictions — Subject, World and God — and for turning these fictions into "incorrigible," constitutive ideas. (Deleuze 1991, 9)

It has been observed by Boundas that Deleuze never returns to Hume after this early period. However, the absorption of this alternative reading of Hume's work in *Empiricism and Subjectivity* is the hallmark present in every aspect of his work thereafter. What is important about this seminal work is both that it demonstrates the development of the mechanisms used to challenge how philosophy was traditionally understood, but that it also becomes the basis for Deleuzian ontology.

Philosophy takes on new dimensions that are incompatible with a rigid traditionalist way of thinking. Evidence of the enduring influence that Hume's work had on Deleuze is found in the posthumous publication of some of his later work, *Pure Immanence* (2001). In this Deleuze returns to the theme in an essay entitled *The Meaning of Empiricism*:

The history of philosophy has more or less absorbed, more or less digested, empiricism. It has defined empiricism as the reverse of rationalism: Is there or is there not in ideas something that is not in the senses or the sensible? It has made of empiricism a critique of innateness, of the *a priori*. But empiricism has always harboured other secrets. And it is they that David Hume pushes the furthest and fully illuminates in his extremely difficult and subtle work... His empiricism is a sort of science-fiction universe *avant la lettre*. As in science fiction, one has the impression of a fictive, foreign world, seen by other creatures, but also the presentiment that this world is already ours, and those creatures ourselves. (Deleuze 2001, 35)

It is this process of revisiting texts and reinvigorating them with new energy 'to get things moving again' that makes Deleuze such a radical thinker. The central idea, the vital spark, of a philosopher's work remains recognisable but, stripped of its historicity, it becomes a transmutable concept. Rather than approach philosophy as the sequential unfolding of systems of thought he would arrange the key concepts into an assemblage

of contemporary philosophical tools.<sup>65</sup> Dormant ideas are given new life. As in the case of Hume, something already there (but concealed) becomes illuminated.

This is in part because Deleuze argued that all thought belongs to a wider ongoing movement. What is selected and what gets left behind makes all the difference to the meaning and energy that is present in a body of work. For example, while Newton's mechanical universe emerged as an important body of knowledge, his interest in the more 'whimsical' science of alchemy was set aside by later generations.

Deleuze may not necessarily be accepting of all that philosophers have written, but he is nonetheless interested in all the aspects that have contributed to their conceptual 'signatures'. Perfection is not a necessary attribute of valuable thinking. Deleuze does not expend energy on searching for weaknesses and flaws in order to negate the work of other philosophers. Rather he regards imperfection as a valid aspect of an author's working process. This is a bit like accepting that while scaffolding was necessary for the construction of some great edifice, it is no longer essential to the finished product:

When you admire someone you do not pick and choose; you may like this book better than any other one, but you never the less take them as a whole, because you see that some element that seems less convincing than others is an absolutely essential step in his exploration, his alchemy, and that he wouldn't have reached the new revelation you find so astonishing if he hadn't followed the path on which you hadn't initially seen the need for this or that detour.  
(Deleuze 1995, 85)

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<sup>65</sup> This notion of vitalism comes from Bergson who influenced Deleuze with his theory of philosophy as a constellation of thought, as opposed to the linear deposit of intellectual history.

Paradoxically, Deleuze was seldom interested in the historical and biographical details of individual philosophers. Working to synthesize their conceptual 'signatures', separating them from 'personality' and historicity, was a technique that became formalized as an aspect of his ontological theory. He makes specific reference to this process in his joint publication with Felix Guattari: *What is Philosophy* (Deleuze & Guattari 1994).

His work with Guattari was also key to his developing an authorial technique that was itself the ideal medium for his ontological and epistemological theory, clarified and refined in a notion of dispersed enunciation and the belief that philosophers enfolded 'conceptual personae':

The conceptual persona is not the philosopher's representative but, rather, the reverse: the philosopher is only the envelope of his principle conceptual persona and of all the other personae who are the intercessors (*intercesseurs*), the real subjects of his philosophy. Conceptual personae are the philosopher's "heteronyms," and the philosopher's name is the simple pseudonym of his personae. I am no longer myself but thought's aptitude for finding itself and spreading across a plane that passes through me at several places. The philosopher is the idiosyncrasy of his conceptual personae. The destiny of the philosopher is to become his conceptual persona or personae, at the same time that these personae themselves become something other than what they are historically, mythologically, or commonly (the Socrates of Plato, the Dionysus of Nietzsche, the Idiot of Nicholas of Cusa). (Deleuze & Guattari 1994, 64)<sup>66</sup>

Deleuze would describe concepts as 'signed', for example Descartes' *cogito*, or Kant's transcendental. However, that the individual philosopher could be associated with *signature concepts* did not mean that ideas were the exclusive intellectual property of one voice. Though a conceptual persona represents the manifestation of a particular intensity of thought. It does not have a single significance.

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<sup>66</sup> This notion of dispersed enunciation avoids slipping into the Hegelian vortex of idealism; Deleuze combines his theory of enunciation with the Bergsonian concept of Duration and Matter. All ideas therefore have their origin in matter and all require reconstruction through matter. In other words spirit and body were both finite, there is no infinite unfolding of the spirit through history.

The deployment of concepts is underpinned by the Bergsonian principle that knowledge is never a disembodied, disinterested artefact but is the direct and unmediated comprehension of experience in the world:

The concept is incorporeal, even though it is incarnated or effectuated in bodies. But, in fact, it is not mixed up with the state of affairs in which it is effectuated. It does not have spatiotemporal coordinates, only intensive ordinates. (Deleuze & Guattari 1994, 21)

The concept is not fixed to its original applications. It can be revitalized when it is set off in a new direction or given a new intensity. Crucially, these 'intensities' require a medium through which they can be reactivated. It was not only the traditional mode of 'doing' philosophy that Deleuze challenged, but also the relationship between philosophical concepts and the authorial process. His critique of a traditional authoring process became both an important aspect of how Deleuze viewed the 'craft' of philosophy and a decisive factor in his working relationship with others.

#### 4.2 *Polytonality and the Authoring Process*

Deleuze' co-authorship with the work of psychiatrist Felix Guattari (1930-1992)<sup>67</sup> is probably the best demonstration of what he thought philosophy should aspire to be — an immanent collection of events, encounters and intensities. Although it is possible to distinguish the authorial voices of *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Deleuze & Guattari 1980), it

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<sup>67</sup> The political activities that led to the 1968 student uprisings had an impact on both Deleuze and Guattari. Guattari was a pupil and analysand of Jacques Lacan, but had different views about the application of psychotherapy in capitalist culture. Like Deleuze, he was a keen advocate of pedagogical reform, also like Deleuze he resisted the confines of pursuing the small spaces of 'specialist' interest and engaged in a broad spectrum of disciplines.

goes against the intentions and the spirit of the work so to do.<sup>68</sup> While both men have discernable styles, together they create a new voice.

In an academic culture protective about ownership of intellectual property, there is an almost statutory responsibility toward endorsement and clarity of authorship.<sup>69</sup> This desire to police the boundaries of authorship is noticeable in the commentary of John Marks, who writes an informative introduction to Deleuze (*Vitalism and Multiplicity* 1998) but expresses an academic's discomfort over this aspect of the work:

Any study of Gilles Deleuze faces an obvious question about authorship, since a significant proportion of his work was written in close collaboration with Félix Guattari. I have attempted to be consistent in indicating within the text publications which are attributed to Deleuze and Guattari. (Marks 1998, vii)

This fretting is unnecessary and unhelpful because the act of co-authorship is a philosophical *strategy* within the work. It is deployed in order to detach said work from the notion of tenure in different systems of thought. The presumption of infinitude in authoring is carefully indicated at the start of *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze & Guattari). Polytonality, the presence of multiple authoring styles that are no longer distinguishable is intentionally a *deterritorialising* strategy. No individual enclosure exists for the isolation of each voice. This is a deliberate move away from the individual possession of intellectual material, in order to extend and multiply the thought process.

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<sup>68</sup> In fact, I believe that it is almost impossible not to discern the individual styles, especially as any reader of Deleuze's earlier publications will be able to recognise (not so much his style but) the radical alteration that takes place in this style when he worked with Guattari. Using their own unique language they became a very powerful deterritorialising engine. In comparison to the 'highly charged kinetics' of Guattari, Deleuze could look every bit the traditionalist, in a sort of Foucauldian way.

<sup>69</sup> This is already beginning to alter. In a culture that is information/answer rich the combined authorial text will be, by necessity, the norm, and authoring a *relatively* devalued process. As we have seen, Don Ihde has argued that, in the future, the premium value will be on collaborative/generative research engines.

It is also clear that the authors believe that the collective enunciation of the book extends beyond these two individuals bringing these ideas to a particular intensity. This approach to thinking, and the production of ideas, is based upon a radical theory of subjectivity. It is important because of what it implies about the status of the subject.

Nonetheless, Deleuze and Guattari acknowledge the awkwardness of attempting a new mode of nomadic thought, while still being the named authors:

The two of us wrote *Anti-Oedipus* together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd. Here we have made use of everything that came within range, what was closest and what was farthest away. We have assigned clever pseudonyms to prevent recognition. Why have we kept our own names? Out of habit, purely out of habit. To make ourselves unrecognisable in turn. To render imperceptible, not ourselves, but what makes us act, feel, and think. ...To reach, not the point where one no longer says I, but to the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I. We are no longer ourselves. Each will know his own. We have been aided, inspired, multiplied. (Deleuze & Guattari 1996, 3)

This is very different from the multiple authorship found in academic publications where individuals have come together to produce a 'collection' of essays on a particular subject, or even an interdisciplinary work. In such cases the separate pieces are attributable to particular authors.

We have examples in practical theology. These often take the form of pedagogic exemplars such as the *Blackwell Reader in Practical Theology* (Woodward & Pattison 2000) in which different professionals write individual chapters on the definition and development of practical and pastoral theology. There is a necessary and clear differentiation of intellectual property. This is particularly important in contemporary academia where plagiarism is the dark spectre hovering around 'ideas' without clear and traceable husbandry.

However, plagiarism is part of a different system. Plagiarism is a legal term that belongs to a world that has a defined notion about the relationship between the individual and ideas. This issue of authorship is not a new one to philosophical discourse; Roland Barthes (1915-80) and Michael Foucault (1926-84) had made significant contributions to the discussion about what defines the author.

To deploy semantics in order to clarify the meaning of authorship is to misunderstand that the issue for Deleuze and Guattari is both conceptual and ontological. Trying to define the author, or arguing that the concept of authorship is outmoded, is merely a continuation of the usual categories we use to designate authorship.

John Marks (1998) worked with these principles. Hence he misrecognised the nomadic mode of thought in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. In so doing, he confused a new form with an old form. He thereby misses an important aspect of the work by submitting it to an inappropriate critique by a conceptual order/logic incapable of recognising a different system. Neither were Deleuze and Guattari being modest in their resistance to taking individual ownership of intellectual 'set' pieces, they were operating with very different criteria. This contrast to the way in which we normally conceive authoring was recognised by Foucault as a way of disclosing and deflecting power:

It could be said that Deleuze and Guattari care so little for power that they have tried to neutralize the effects of power linked to their own discourse.  
(Michel Foucault *in* Deleuze and Guattari 1983, xiv)

However, whilst there is no doubt that the dispersal of power plays a role in the way that Deleuze and Guattari chose to write together it is more important to understand the onto-epistemological implications. Whereas they sought a means of democratising creativity, the assignment of enunciation to individual subjects is a function of a capitalist system distributing its ideology<sup>70</sup>:

The social character of enunciation is intrinsically founded only if one succeeds in demonstrating how enunciation in itself implies collective assemblages. It then becomes clear that the statement is individuated and enunciation subjectified, only to the extent that an impersonal collective assemblage requires it and determines it to be so. It is for this reason that indirect discourse, especially "*free*" indirect discourse is of exemplary value: there are no clear, distinctive contours; what comes first is not an insertion of variously individuated statements, or an interlocking of different subjects of enunciation, but a collective assemblage resulting in the determination of relative subjectification proceedings, or assignations of individuality and their shifting distributions within discourse. (Deleuze & Guattari 1996, 80)

Experience is a question of social conventions, part of a movement that is constantly regrouping and dispersing. This is combined with Hume's influence on issues of self-identity and individuality:

We start with atomic parts, but these atomic parts have transitions, passages, "tendencies", which circulate from one to another. These tendencies give rise to *habits*. Isn't this the answer to the question "what are we?" We are habits, nothing but habits — the habit of saying "I." Perhaps, there is no more striking answer to the problem of the Self. (Deleuze 1991, x)

Deleuze is working with a concept of the subject that is not stable, but is capable of endless reconfigurations by breaking down and regrouping.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Deleuze was influenced by Spinoza's concept of longitude and latitude, what become the attributes of a delineated individual existence is a question of social conventions, which are constantly regrouping or breaking down, Deleuze and Guattari described this process as *territorialisation* and *detrterritorialisation*.

<sup>71</sup> In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1998, 198-200) Deleuze enlists Scott Fitzgerald's novella *The Crack Up* as an example of how and individual can breakdown and reform — becoming something new under the concealment of the 'crack up.' The character experiencing a breakdown goes through a disconnecting process in which everything previously taken for granted disappears. There are no familiar 'props' for identity. Previous relationships cease and so too does his identity. Gradually a new identity is allowed to emerge. The subject matter of this story is depressing but it is actually a very life affirming story.

This notion of self also becomes the basis for Deleuze's concept of concealment, what people are becoming is not always perceptible, as the characteristic of *habitual* behaviour is not a constant to rely on. There is always the potential for different assemblages that will alter the 'tendencies' to pursue a line without any enduring core.

A very apposite demonstration of this concept was made by the conductor Daniel Barenboim in Radio Four's 2006 Reith Lecture: *In the Beginning Was Sound* (Barenboim 2006).<sup>72</sup> Barenboim, just like Deleuze, had been influenced by a life long study of Spinoza's ethics. He was trying to explain how making music and playing in an orchestra is a very good analogy for understanding the democracy of creativity. His example is also useful as a model for dispersed subjectivity:

The oboe plays the most wonderful tune in a slow movement of Brahms symphony, and the whole orchestra, all ninety or ninety-five of them, and the conductor with the big ego, is following him. (Laughter) Everybody is following him, everybody supporting him, adjusting everything for him to be able to express this thing. He is the king of the world — and that lasts for eight bars. (Laughter and Applause) And then, on the ninth bar, he holds back...back in the society, in the collective, and he has to do what ninety five people have been doing for him for eighty five bars, he has to do maybe for the double basses or for the clarinet or whatever the case may be. (Barenboim 2006)

Deleuze believed that traditional systems of philosophy can fail to innovate; especially if they are impeded with a notion of the subject that has accepted unquestioningly the politics of self-identity that are derived from Descartes and Locke. Contemporary philosophies certainly challenge the relationship between agency, autonomy and self-identity.

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<sup>72</sup> The Reith Lectures were begun in 1948, in honour of the first Director General of the BBC, John Reith. They have been commissioned annually ever since and are usually given by leading figures in Science, Industry, Education, Politics, Theology etc. The first Reith lecture was given by Bertrand Russell (*Authority and the Individual 1948*)

Deleuze and Guattari, however, explore the thinking behind identity. In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1996), they argue that it is possible to have a personal experience without having a personal history of that experience in what is described as a *transversal relation*. What this means is to 'cross the line' to experience what another may have.<sup>73</sup> Hence, individuals do not emerge from within (Lockean) personal memory banks, provided with cohesive narrative identities, but from series of relations which they both affect and are affected by. Advocating that experience is transversal, insofar as it is a distinct component of the milieu (part of an orchestrated experience) and hence external to the subject, has obvious consequences for approaches that value individuals' ethnographic experiences as sources for insight and knowledge of those individuals (Deleuze & Guattari 1996, 11).

The perception of individuality is challenged with the notion of *haecceity*, and a model of individuation that diverges from the Western concern with psychobiography:

Longing for identity comes from the desire for security, itself an ambiguous feeling. However exhilarating it may be in the short run, however full of promises and vague premonitions of an as yet untried experience, floating without support in a poorly defined space, in a stubbornly, vexingly 'betwixt and between' location, becomes in the long run an unnerving and anxiety-prone condition. On the other hand, a fixed position amidst the infinity of possibilities is not an attractive prospect either. In our liquid modern times, when free-floating, unencumbered individual is the popular hero, 'being fixed' — being 'identified' inflexibly and without retreat — gets an increasingly bad press. (Bauman 2004, 29)

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of individuation as movement is the opposite of the static 'root' image of the 'self' that emerges from a layered

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<sup>73</sup> The example used in is Henry Miller's experiment in intoxicating another with water. I think another complex example of this is the way in which individuals perceive their emotional history. Establishing what it means to be Scottish and Jewish or Irish and Catholic for example is often related to assembling a collective memory that cannot be experienced in an individual's lifetime but is assimilated into the present through memorializing rituals. (*Capitalism and Schizophrenia Vol. I A Thousand Plateaus*166) (DC4)

system of growth. There is a model of surface movements; individual identity is a series of events and relations at points (intensities) on a current network.

This can seem an incongruous notion if contrasted with the conception of personhood as an intimate possession. That difference or individuality is more to do with numeral diversity of the body than with deep narratives of the mind is a departure from the enlightenment proposition that we hold our fate in personal custody. Deleuze and Guattari engage in a different approach where the image of the self is disturbed and shifted,

There is a mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing, or substance. We reserve the name *haecceity* for it. A season, a winter, a summer, an hour, a date have a perfect individuality lacking nothing, even though this individuality is different from that of a thing or a subject. They are haecceities in the sense that they consist entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules and particles, capacities to affect and be affected. (1996 *A Thousand Plateaus* page 261)

Deleuze and Guattari build on a theory of *milieus* as a relational 'orchestra' of mutuality. Individuals emerge from environments and through encounters on what they refer to as a *plane of composition* or *plane of consistency*. However the individual is not merely a malappropriated body, because creativity is an ongoing relationship within an immanent environment. This is a theory of becoming that leaves behind the pursuit of the personal in order to understand the process of 'becoming' as a response to existing themes. It means that what we become depends on the immediacy of the environment in which we occupy. However, it also means that within this environment we can create harmony, melodies or discord. This is counter to the position of saying, 'I'm this, I'm that' — and

thus reinforcing an uncritical acceptance of self-possession.<sup>74</sup>

Crucially, for Deleuze and Guattari, individuality is not a personal status but is a series of events that are not exclusive. They question the nature of thought that allows us to think of ourselves as individuals. This challenges our existence as a being with roots and a personal biography. Hence the comment that thinking is a 'perilous' act whose first victim is the 'self'.

Experience, according to Deleuze is a combination of events that take place in a milieu, a habitat that provides the opportunity for events. All events and possibilities are taking place at a surface level and the personal is a synthesis or an assemblage of such events. Ian Buchanan summarizes this in his introduction to *A Deleuzian Century*:

Experience, then, is not something that a person has, or even happens to one; it is, rather, what one is made of. This means, of course, that experience itself cannot be personal but must be non personal, which, in turn, demands that the very notion of experience be rethought. If not the property of the individual, then what is it? (1999,6 *A Deleuzian Century*)

This questions the relationship between knowledge and personal experience. It also raises problems of personal testimony within the history of religion. Like Job, having personalized and privileged our relationship with God through such means, we have been naïve in our *expectations* of what the 'just' ought to receive and who indeed are just. This has been the basis for our confidence in the idea that we can construct moral theory. But, rather than think of this new ontology as problematic, should we not ask:

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<sup>74</sup> It could be argued that this weakens the case for individual responsibility but on the other hand it opens a wider range of potentials for change. It is interesting that Guattari was influenced by the work that Psychiatrist R.D Laing carried out on the condition of Mental illness, and particularly Schizophrenia. He argued that the individual patients condition should not be considered in isolation from family and social circumstances and that to bring about a 'cure' the immediate environment of the individual would have to be taken into account.

How can practical theology explore the potential it provides for an expanding, rather than diminishing, landscape?

The polytonality of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* is an endeavour to put into actuality one of Deleuze and Guattari's most famous concepts the *rhizome*. With this they bring together a wider range of intellectual strands and demonstrate how the traditional function of authoring can *potentially* stop the flow of productive encounters. The traditional mode of authoring is founded on self-identity as the sovereign autonomous individual. Deleuze and Guattari have challenged this by the way in which they write together.

#### 4.3 *Rhizomorphous Thinking*

Deleuze always worked at close quarters with practical problems, and educational reform was one of his main projects. In 1969, in the midst of social and political upheaval, his appointment to the University of Paris at Vincennes St Denis meant that he could participate in an experimental school that would explore educational reform. His pedagogical, ontological and epistemological concepts were always part of this practical working process. These, combined with his particular style of philosophy, led to him consider different models of knowledge and its transference. A central question was whether the educators had a responsibility to disseminate knowledge or be participants in its construction?

This could only be answered through an examination of the prevailing model of what constituted knowledge and learning. So, for example one of the most obvious aids to learning in the west the text book, with its centralized order, is challenged by the *a*-centred rhizome:

You set about opposing the rhizome to trees. And trees are not a metaphor at all, but an image of thought, a functioning, a whole apparatus that is planted in thought in order to make it go in a straight line and produce the famous correct ideas. There are all kinds of characteristics in the tree: there is the point of origin, seed or centre; it is a binary machine or principle of dichotomy, with its perpetually divided and reproduced branchings, its points of arborescence; it is an axis of rotation which organises things in a circle, and the circles round the centre; it is a structure, a system of points and positions which fix all of the possible within a grid, a hierarchical system of transmission of orders, with a central instance and recapitulative memory; it has a future and a past, roots and a peak, a whole history, an evolution, a development; it can be cut up by cuts which are said to be significant in so far as they follow its arborescences, its branchings, its concentricities, its moments of development. (Deleuze & Parnet 2002, 25)

*Capitalism and Schizophrenia* is not a 'book' in the sense that we understand the structure of narrative form and the transference of knowledge. Deleuze and Guattari are seeking to provide a radically new approach to individuality and epistemology, and consequently they explore the thinking behind identity. In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1996), they argue that it is possible to have a personal experience without having a personal history of that experience in what is described as a transversal relation. What this means is to 'cross the line' to experience what another may have.

Hence, individuals do not emerge from within (Lockean) personal memory banks, provided with cohesive narrative identities, but from series of relations which they both affect and are affected by. Advocating that experience is transversal, insofar as it is a distinct component of the milieu (part of an orchestrated experience) and hence external to the subject, has obvious consequences for approaches that value individuals' ethnographic

experiences as sources for insight and knowledge of those individuals different image (and vitally different function) of the book that prevails in our culture. *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* has no pedagogic aspirations, no responsibility to transfer knowledge.

This point is taken up by Foucault in his preface to *Anti-Oedipus*. It is not the power of intellectual possession Deleuze and Guattari seek, but an image 'contrary to a deeply rooted belief' that the book is an image of the world. Therefore, the experience of reading *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* is not intended to be like that of any other philosophical text. It does not attempt to 'lead' its readership or construct the perfect reader. In the words of its translator, Brian Massumi:

*A Thousand Plateaus* is conceived as an open system. It does not pretend to have the final word. The authors' hope however, is that elements of it will stay with a certain number of its readers and will weave into the melody of their everyday lives.  
(Massumi in Deleuze & Guattari 1996, xiv)

The desire for authorial concealment is in keeping with the attempt to avoid a hierarchical pursuit of knowledge but it also discloses the habit of identity as the ensemble of experience. This is the point where the personal 'I' is no longer important (Deleuze & Guattari 1996, 3).

*Capitalism and Schizophrenia* does not provide the security of a narrative carefully constructed to ensure a certain path is under surveillance. The normal function of authoring stops the live flow and productivity of encounters. The multimodal nature of the text of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* deploys one of the most famous concepts of Deleuze and Guattari, the *rhizome*.

The book in our academic culture has traditionally been a means of communicating knowledge to the reader. The traditional book constructs

knowledge as it takes the reader through its organised chapters. Recommended reading lists for academic courses provide and create a shared curriculum memory, consistent objectives and anticipated outcomes.

This image of the book belongs to an arborescent system of thought. The rhizome is a radial system of roots, the opposite of the deep root system of the tree. In contrast, the rhizome is a collection of shallow sub-surface connections, capable of breaking off at one point and re-assembling at another. A rhizome is made of plateaus with no distinguishable beginning, middle and end. The tree has only one deep root to sustain its system and everything comes from its centrality. By contrast, the rhizome has a multiplicity of connections, not all dependent on the same core. The rhizome is not teleological. Order is not a goal:

It would be a mistake to read *Anti-Oedipus* as the new theoretical reference (you know, that much heralded theory that finally encompasses everything, that finally totalises and reassures, the one we are told we "need so badly" in our age of dispersion and specialization where "hope" is lacking.) One must look for a "philosophy" amid the extraordinary profusion of new notions and surprise concepts: *Anti Oedipus* is not a flashy Hegel. I think *Anti Oedipus* can be best read as an "art"... (Foucault in Deleuze & Guattari 1983, xii)

Deleuze and Guattari use the imagery of the rhizome to challenge the prevailing 'arborescent' structures of knowledge. *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* is a medium for some of Deleuze and Guattari's most challenging concepts. If it is read in the way that a traditional book is approached, looking for a central coherent theme, then it will leave the reader frustrated. This point is also made by Simon O'Sullivan:

To read it as a purely scholarly text, to read it simply for *meaning*, is to position it always already within that field that it writes against — representation. (O'Sullivan 2006, 9)

There is a degree of discomfort for the readership, in the sense that the authors would appear to be unaware of them. However this sense of

authorial abandonment results because it is intentionally at odds with the trend to impart knowledge to the reader. O'Sullivan again makes the point that it is 'at odds with much academic writing'(2006, 9).

In fact *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (and more specifically Volume 2 : *A Thousand Plateaus*) is a working guide for some of Deleuze's earlier writings. In its determination to be connective rather than instructive it encapsulates Deleuze and Guattari's concept of immanence. The notion of two planes, a *Plane of Order* and a *Plane of Immanence*, originally appeared in *Difference and Repetition* (Deleuze 1994) in which Deleuze first challenged the *Image of Thought* in western academic culture. These two planes provide the means for two different approaches to thinking and different ways of forming concepts which construct an image of the world.

1: *The Plane of Organisation* — Deleuze introduced the concept of the plane of organisation that facilitates the image of thought that is prevalent in our culture. Writing on the image of thought, Deleuze introduces us to his 'four fold root' image of thought. On the plane of organisation thought is categorical, what is visible, audible and sayable is checked against the representation of thinking. Participation on the plane of organisation requires this degree of recognition.

The plane of organisation is concerned with universal truths and stability. It rejects the unrecognisable and everything is controlled by an 'in house' logic that is measurable and quantifiable. The development of method within the social sciences and practical theology would come under the plane of organisation. The plane of organisation is static and controlled by

its process of recognition, and everything beyond recognition is either left out or made subsidiary to the existing categories. Cohesion and conformity are essential aspects of the *Plane of Organisation*.

2: *The Plane of Immanence* — the concept of immanence begins to emerge with the concept of the rhizome. Immanence becomes a crucial theme throughout all of his philosophy. Immanence is simply 'life', but life before it is taken up as a historical life; Deleuze himself describes this in *Pure Immanence* using the author Charles Dickens to illustrate his point:

What is immanence? A life... No one has described what a life is better than Charles Dickens, if we take the indefinite article as an index of the transcendental. A disreputable man, a rogue, held in contempt by everyone, is found as he lies dying. Suddenly, those taking care of him manifest an eagerness, respect, even love, for the slightest sign of life. Everybody bustles about to save him, to the point where, in his deepest coma, this wicked man himself senses something soft and sweet penetrating him. But to the degree that he comes back to life, his saviours become colder, and he becomes once again mean and crude. (Deleuze 2002, 28)

This life, before it becomes *a* particular life, stimulates the care and represents a value for life *per se*, beyond its distinct manifestation. This complex alteration, between two contrasting responses of respect and repulsion, catches something we are not immediately aware of because we can never have a state of pure immanence — life is always in the state of becoming *a life*. The plane of immanence resists facile organisation and arbitrary unity. It is about becoming, lines of flight, intersections and multiplicities. It is not measurable and we must 'gauge' movement, intensity and effect. Pure immanence is always the capacity that precedes historically specific haecceity.

The principles that form the rhizome are summarised (as outlined below) at the start of the second volume, *A Thousand Plateaus*, of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Deleuze & Guattari 1998, 3-38).

(a) *Multiplicity*: The rhizome has neither subject nor object; its multiplicity exposes the pseudo-multiplicities of the arborescent model. The multiples from the tree model still come from a central organising principle. For example, a traditional approach within the scientific method separates subject and object, *man* 'studies' *world*. By contrast, rhizomatic multiples emerge from 'assemblages' that can change as it expands and disconnects.

There is no central organising principle. There are no beginnings or ends on the rhizome, there are only ever middles, with a constant emerging from the middle/milieu. There are no set points of reference, no controlling centres, there is a 'loss of centres' and it is this aspect contributes to the present anxiety about foundations. The rhizome 'increases territory and we are encouraged to form our own rhizomes. (Deleuze & Guattari 1998, 11)

There are multiple alliances on the rhizome, with no exclusion zones. Boundaries are crossed and no permanent affiliation is necessary. It is a state of 'plasticity' and not consolidation. It is possible to make random connections with no determining 'organising' principle.

The rhizome is not teleological. It has no 'end purpose', no essential relationships. It can attach and detach, territorialize and deterritorialise. With no set order, it is possible to have multiple configurations. There is no chronological order. The rhizome does not trace an earlier cartography. It maps a 'new' one, dispensing with 'decalcomania' or transference of one

thing into another. A decal simply transfers an image already mapped down. There is no stability of substance. What we observe today might not be detectable in that form again. The rhizome is fluid, transient and passing. It reveals and conceals in an endless possibility of new configurations, making creativity possible.

(b) *Heterogeneity*: There is no ideal reader or listener, no homogenous linguistic community and no desire to remake in the image of the book. There is no legislative regime of recognition to impose a hierarchical order. A rhizome will never be 'over coded' it has no formal hierarchy. It is not an elitist 'root and branch' structure.

(c) *Rupture and connection*: The rhizome may be broken up, but only to start up again on another line or to connect to new lives. Identity is in flux and constantly altered. Status is not permanent because the process of connections means that there is a constant movement, Deleuze talks about different speeds. A rhizome is an *a-signifying* rupture. It is not about the permanent allocation of meaning.

The arborescent model of thought always seeks to designate, specify and make sure all meaning is viable in its transference. Being allocated, belonging to, being attributable to and originating from a legitimate central command. Rhizomatic thought by contrast bursts through membranes, escapes and is capable of severance Deleuze and Guattari talk about 'lines of flight.' Thought is not tightly organised and limited to what is recognizable. The rhizome, in other words, is not a zone of representation.

#### 4.4 *The Image of Thought*

A system is not something presented to an observer, it is something recognized by him.  
(Maturana & Varela 1980, 67)

Deleuze examines the nature of recognition and the role it plays in the construction of a knowing subject indelibly marked for a particular order. His critique of the image of thought is crucial to this.

In western academia, there is a belief that the search for knowledge receives validation by the discovery of order and purpose, that good reflective thinking has a good objective. There is a problem for method within this assumption. Deleuze designates this 'the dogmatic image of thought'. This comes from one of the first major publications of his work and is not a direct collaboration with other philosophers. It is therefore very much his 'signature.' As such it can be seen a preparation for the nature of his collaborative work.

In his preface to the English edition of *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze stresses the importance of the *Image of Thought* in relation to all his philosophical works. We have a belief that the search for knowledge is legitimated by the discovery of order and purpose, for which good reflective thinking provides a suitable method. The dogmatic image of thought is that it is capable of producing comprehensive order and systematic theories of purposeful praxis. We seek through our methods to make purposeful statements, to contribute to decision making, to erect moral theories. Deleuze stresses the importance of the *Image of Thought* that is uncritically present in relation to all philosophical premises.

Deleuze challenges the *process* of thinking. He discloses how thought has a pre-established image we are uncritical of. This in turn limits our ability to 'see' or interpret things outside of an existing frame of reference/ingrained image of thought. The first setback to new thinking is what Deleuze refers to as the idea of thinking as *common sense*, quite literally 'cogitatio natura universalis' (Deleuze 1994, 131).

Because everybody thinks, thinking is (by default) a natural talent. We may manifest historical ways of thinking, and even culturally specific thinking, but thinking itself is taken as granted:

This element consists only of the supposition that thought is the natural exercise of a faculty, of the presupposition that there is a natural capacity for thought endowed with a talent for truth or an affinity with the true, under the double aspect of a *good will on the part of the thinker* and an *upright nature on the part of the thought*. It is because everybody naturally thinks that everybody is supposed to know implicitly what it means to think. (Deleuze 1994, 131)

There is an undisclosed connection made between the *capacity* to think and the possibility to think *well*. Deleuze begins with the most well recognized link between knowledge, truth and thinking. The Cartesian subject of the *cogito* 'I think therefore I am'.

Descartes expounded the universality of this premise, confident that everyone could understand what it is to think. This became the premise upon which he would build his certainties. In making this claim, the philosopher has allowed thinking, as a natural capacity, to be presuppositionless. Thinking is divided into the capacity for thought and thought 'perverted by the generalities' of time. In this, there is a hidden suggestion; what Deleuze refers to as an '*implicit presupposition, a pre-philosophical and natural image of thought*' — that everybody has 'good

sense' and a desire to elicit the 'true'. He calls this image the dogmatic/orthodox or moral image.

There are altogether eight different postulates of the dogmatic image of thought:

1. The principle — *Cogitatio natura universalis* or the goodwill of the thinker, the good nature of thought.
2. The ideal — common sense as *Concordia facultatum* and good sense as the distribution, which guarantees this concord.
3. The model of recognition, the ability to judge thought the logic of identity (this is found in Plato, Descartes and Kant)
4. The element — representation. Difference is subordinated to similar/same.
5. The negative — error, everything that can go wrong in thought as the result of external mechanism.
6. Logical function — the proposition.
7. The postulate of modality — solutions. Problems are traced from proposition to solution. Defined by the possibility of being solved.
8. The postulate of the end — knowledge. The subordination of learning to knowledge.

We have seen how the fourth postulate, representation, creates problems when theorists try to understand postmodernism from within a modernist frame. The first three postulates outline the prevailing dogma for thinking.

However, the last postulate (the one that justifies thought, the gaining of knowledge) is the very thing that Deleuze and Maturana drop from their concept of exteriority/empiricism. Maturana argues for the dispensability of teleonomy and Deleuze deploys Bergson's theory of luminosity to provide an alternative theory of exteriority.

#### 4.5 *The Bergson Affair: Creative Evolution and the Empirical Imagination*

The transition from phenomenology to nomadic sensation and thought finds its mature moment in Deleuze enlisting Bergson in the cause of radical empiricism. (Boundas 2006, 5)

Once the evolution of mind is granted, it is a short step to the activist theory of knowledge. Before we learned to think in terms of evolution, knowledge seemed to us a faculty superadded to our powers of action; we used to contrast knowledge and action, regard them as independent things, as if an organism might act and not know, might know and not act. Bergson joins issue with that view. Intelligence, he maintains, develops *pari passu* with the organism: for the measure of intelligence is the measure of the organism's power of action. (Luce 1922, 10)

One of the most important ideas that Bergson has contributed to the Deluzean canon is the relation between matter and memory and *creative evolution*. Bergson attempted to demonstrate the evolution of the human mind. Bergson's philosophy, which portrayed reason as a fluid and evolving faculty stood in contrast to the more static Kantian concept of reason as an analytical tool.

Bergson's theory places human reason in the current of evolution. He treats reason the same way evolutionary biology treats material forms. Intelligence, for example, is not a superior faculty above evolutionary forces. The intellect is not a detached spectator already equipped with twelve categories and two forms. It too had humble beginnings and its future cannot be predicted. Bergson's theory of knowledge is an activist theory of knowledge. Knowledge is embodied and cannot be separate from immanent experience. Its growth is in direct relationship with the physical power to act that the organism has.

Bergson differentiated between the intellect and intuition. Before we can have any real development of thought an act must take place. Before thought comes action. What Bergson was arguing for is a perception of knowledge that is deeply involved in the practicality of 'becoming'. Reason is not a disinterested party. Intelligence is fully integrated into experience and its purpose is ultimately practical. The business of reason is to extend into the environment. Far from being a rarefied faculty that transcends the world, it achieves its best work in matter and immerses itself in matter. The intellect grasps all (*all*) relevant aspects of its immediate surrounding. It cannot act otherwise in order to 'be' anything it must make this leap into the world. Reason, like the material world, has a finite and non-transferable existence. What Spinoza was able to achieve in his theory about the relationship between the soul and the fantasy of immortality, Bergson does for the intellect and the fantasy of a transcended truth/knowledge.

Deleuze holds these important notions at the core of his ontology. Reason is not a tool that might be applied to discern practical moral wisdom. It would be better to explore the nature of ethical existences rather than pursue an objective moral wisdom, which is also what Spinoza set out to achieve. With Bergson 'what to think' determines 'how to think' and intuition as the initiation of thinking and the result of thinking are indivisibly connected. Bergson's 'one thing' was to disclose the relationship between matter and memory — as *duration*. The work that the intellect has to do will only serve a purpose if it is immersed in the world. There are no abstract truths beyond this.

Crucially, however, a universe that 'becomes' a new world in the making requires more than a simple readjusting of the faculty of reason. It needs the *growth* of new concepts, powers of perception and apprehension. Our 'common sense thinking' our 'plane of organization' serves an already settled universe. Intelligence is a faculty that not only copies this universe, but can re-map it. This is why Deleuze believes that 'thinking' can be a revolutionary act.

The notion of the 'plane of organization' in Deleuze derives in part from Bergson's 'plane of intelligence'. Bergson's concept of intuition is likewise the corollary of the 'Plane of Immanence', the immediacy of life, the conscious self incorporating its environment and extending itself into the environment. We resist new ways of thinking about the world because the thinking of the past is comfortable. It has a familiarity about it that gives it the status of being 'natural'. Once accepted as natural it can be difficult to contemplate new ways of thinking. Schweitzer, for example, was reluctant to let go of the concept of humanity as individuals graduating into psychological and moral maturity. Giving up this staple of modernity gives rise to intellectual anxiety. Arguments about the loss of 'truth' betray the same sentiment. The role of reason is to discover this truth. Yet Bergson believed that it was the role of every individual to create. The intellect is an instrumental and utilitarian faculty with the capacity to conform to matter and re-create order.

When Bergson declared human creativity a manifestation of the cosmic *élan vital*, he bracketed artistic creativity as both producer and producer of a metacreative process. Far from being a unique evolutionary force, the creative activity of each individual was part of a super creative universe. Each a single tone in an ongoing durational melody. Every individual's role is to be creative in the evolution of the intellect.<sup>75</sup>

Bergson's is an activist theory of knowledge. He is an advocate of intuition as the real vital force in creative evolution. Creative evolution is a process whereby we construct our image of the universe. It is not pure subjectivity because, for Bergson, intuition works within the realm of experience and activity. It is an organism, a power to engage in the world that makes knowledge pro-active. The intellectual method, by contrast, is unproductive and non-progressive.

Bergson impeached reason as an inadequate sovereign power of knowledge. Moreover, as part of creativity, intelligence actually fails the thinker. Deductive logic simply reproduces a static regime of tautological ideas. Evolving thought is the result of almost imperceptible gradations of sensation. While we have (in fact) moments where we can be intensely focused on some aspects of our environment, it is proposed by Bergson that at any given time there is a plurality of routes/incidents/possibilities to be taken, of which at any given point only a small part is brought into focus:

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<sup>75</sup> While his stance has obvious consequences for pedagogic practice, it also has implications for the practice of theology. For example instead of advocating a model of theology that has the theologian as a professional consultant who makes recommendations for the dissemination of moral theory we perhaps ought to be proposing a model that discloses the capacity for ethical existence, intuitive responses and the total immersion of individual experience in the event; rather than leave it to the chance of our being advised by professional bystanders.

Consciousness, being in its turn formed on the intellect, sees clearly of the inner life what is already made, and only feels confusedly the making. Thus we pluck out of duration those moments that interest us, and that we have gathered along its course. These alone we retain. (Bergson 1998, 273)

Some incidents come into focus because of our interest in them. Bergson's contention is that knowledge is not a disinterested and detached accumulation of data that is then analysed. From the start, what becomes knowledge is governed by our intuitive response to our environment. The intellect then has the task of policing the categorical boundaries of what is regarded as legitimised. Bergson argues that, rather than reason playing a role in illuminating the world to what can be known, it is instead intuition that illuminates:

From the first awakening of reflection, it is this that pushes to the fore, right under the eyes of consciousness, the torturing problems, the questions that we cannot gaze at without feeling giddy and bewildered. (Bergson 1998, 275)<sup>76</sup>

Memory for Bergson is not the Lockean cabinet in which things are stored/accumulated or inscribed on a *tabula rasa* for future categorizing and reference. But most important is Bergson's separation of the intellect and intuition in relation to creative thinking. According to Bergson's theory there are things that exist without necessarily being in the direct line of our perception. This radial division between the immediacy of intuition and the mediated intellect gives rise to two different notions of knowledge. There are things that are perceived intuitively, without them necessarily being seen (*e.g.*: the sublime/concealed).

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<sup>76</sup> This whole notion of a zone of sense and perceptibility is demonstrative of the form that Deleuze's own philosophical method takes. What he brings into his own 'territorial zone' of immanence are the reissued concepts of philosophy. Philosophers can no longer be sovereign rulers of their own domain. Deleuze's own concept/image of the philosopher is of someone who works the conceptual tools that available. His co-opting of past concepts and co-authoring of contemporary ideas is a tribute to the Bergsonian principle of memory being an immediacy and entirety. Everything is at once folded in and puffed up into the present experience.

Hence, for example, great painters are those people who possess an image/vision of things that may eventually become the vision of others.<sup>77</sup> Perception, therefore, is to some extent a freedom until it finds its constraint in matter.

The *élan vital* that underpins Bergson's theory of creative evolution is not a teleological movement. This is not an unfolding of spirit in the purposeful Aristotelian or progressive Hegelian sense. It is a constant movement that involves struggling with (and adaptation) to the historical and material realm. The intellect and the body are not two different ways of experiencing the world. The intellect is formed post-experience as a product of experience. It is not only the mind that extends beyond the frontiers of experience to create new thinking. Total immersion of the individual within a situation forms the intellect. Therefore, Bergson's idea of the intuitive process of becoming that influenced Deleuze was not a revival of enlightenment romanticism.

The individual cannot transcend experience with reason because reason is an artefact of living systems. This tension between the individual intellect and the temporality of experience is comparable to a melody, a linear succession of tones that cannot be divided. Life is an ensemble of rhythmic accord. Change comes gradually but is concealed within the perpetual movement of duration, where past and present is *one*.

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<sup>77</sup> There is an obvious flaw in this argument inasmuch as the impressionism of artists can be part of the process that initiates change and maintains a particular view — the propagation of ideas. Nonetheless this does not detract from the argument that creative thinking takes place outside of the present regime of thought. The problem of the new imitating the old inasmuch as it becomes the 'new order' only suggests that revolution, movement, evolution should be permanent.

The position of theorists such as Butler, Haraway and Deleuze revealed the radical structuralism of a new ontology which negates the earlier romanticism of the enlightenment that posited reason as the route to knowledge and human freedom. This implied that humanity has the capacity to decide its own destiny. As well as offering an alternative empirical approach, Bergson's theory puts a check on a purely rationalist theory of knowledge. Individuals have the potential for an unmediated access to the world. Each individual, by merely connecting to a *life*, is a co-producer of the inhabited world.

Furthermore, as Ranciere's strange collections demonstrate, creativity will out. He was anti-elitist to the extent that he believed the intellect was a universal faculty that made creative 'becoming' in the world possible. But, of course, this is only possible within an environment that has no interest in either dividing the intellect or limiting creativity. Practical theology is part of a pedagogical culture that concedes to the parcelling-up and distribution of knowledge.

What remains undisclosed in this relationship is the necessity for knowledge to be fully appropriated and legitimated before dissemination. The state, via its educational institutions, holds the franchise on what are deemed legitimate forms of knowledge.<sup>78</sup> Our pedagogic model of knowledge contains the presumption that knowledge is an external reality.

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<sup>78</sup> There may be at any given time strong alternatives to the prevailing orthodoxy, but by the designation *alternative* they still use legitimate forms as a measure, which is an inverted confirmation of its rule. A strong culture of autodidacts may arise but this too exists within the delineating boundaries of legitimate forms.

What I have argued is that knowledge is not transferred via a variety of teaching methods, but that knowledge is constructed in only two ways. It is either genuinely created, or it is superimposed as the legitimate property of the state. Hence the transference of knowledge in the pedagogical tradition becomes merely an exercise in recognition.

Deleuze provides an alternative way of examining works from the past. He is the medium through which concepts are bought back into circulation/constellation. He takes conceptual personae or signature themes from other philosophers and uses them to construct an alternative ontology. His own unique concept is that of *Immanence*. This is an amalgamation of the Bergsonian notion of *duration*, Hume's *empiricism* and Spinoza's ethics.

In the next chapter I intend to apply this approach to the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher and demonstrate how Schleiermacher's work, usually regarded as the origin of modern theology, can be deployed in a postmodern context to provide the basis for a practical theology in the realm of the postmodern university. Using the same approach as Deleuze, we can look to Schleiermacher as a 'living author' without being anachronistic. Schleiermacher can then be read as a theologian for a postmodern practical theology of the 21st century.

#### 4.6 Conclusion

The history of knowledge in the west has, in the past, been accompanied by an intellectual devaluation of the body. Plato, for example, compared the body to a dungeon. Descartes relegated it, because he believed it to be a medium of deception, to the inferior 'natural' realm. The body could contaminate the less worldly intellect/mind or soul/spirit. By contrast the spirit is superior and above the physical laws of nature. In Augustinian Christianity the body was an unremitting source of temptation and sin.

The body, being finite and bound by the laws of nature, must die. The spirit, being infinite, transcends both body and death. The systematic theology of St. Thomas Aquinas, which incorporated a modified Aristotelian dualism, supplied an intellectual basis for a belief in the resurrection of body and spirit. Nonetheless, it was still the case that body and spirit were separated by death, even if they would eventually come together again. Besides which, those epistemologies that separate the intellect from the body do little to alter its perceived 'secondary' status in the world.

Friedrich Schleiermacher changed this perception by introducing the notion of immanence to theology; he believed the spirit (like the body) to be finite. This aspect of his thinking was to prove invaluable for the emerging methodologies of the *New Humanities* (what we now call the social sciences).

Whether or not we choose to believe that the spirit is linked to God is a metaphysical choice — but the notion of a constitutive spirit, drawn from the work of Deleuze and Schleiermacher, offers the possibility of an understanding of the spirit as a vital (if finite) and co-creative aspect of the historical self and the developing human subject. The work of Deleuze provides important insight that can help re-vitalize and maximize Schleiermacher's contribution to contemporary practical theology by enabling us to read Schleiermacher anew. The Deleuze-Schleiermacher affiliation is already a multiple in as much as they both envelope the work of Spinoza. Similarly, Deleuze's technique can provide insight into how other theorists have enlisted Schleiermacher's historical hermeneutics as the organising principle of method for the new humanities.

In other words, if we can read Schleiermacher by extracting his signature and applying it to contemporary practical theology, we can also see how that signature has been extended and multiplied in other thought systems. More specifically, it is in one of Schleiermacher's early texts *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, originally published in 1799, that we find his unique ontology and philosophical *persona/signature*. There is already a strong kinship between Deleuze and Schleiermacher in that they both had a deep affinity with the writings of Benedict Spinoza. Like Spinoza, they each shared a desire to separate ethics from morality and are both inclined toward an ethology of existence rather than moral science.

SCHEIERMACHER: A THEOLOGIAN FOR POSTMODERNITY

No matter what one's attitude toward Schleiermacher's method and his utterances on religion may be, one is time and again enthralled by his original and daring attempt to lead an age weary with and alien to religion back to its very mainsprings; and to reweave religion, threatened with oblivion, into the incomparably rich fabric of the burgeoning intellectual life of modern times. (Rudolf Otto *in* Schleiermacher 1958, vii)

It is over two hundred years since the first publication of Schleiermacher's *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (hereafter: *Speeches*). Yet its subject matter still has resonance with many contemporary papers on practical theology. In *Speeches*, Schleiermacher expressed the same concern for the credibility and status of religion that some theologians seem to have today. He was responding to contemporary shifts in the foundation of knowledge, a new confidence in the humanities and an ensuing contempt and mistrust of religion. The eighteenth century had seen the publication of Voltaire's *Ignorant Philosopher* (1767) a collection of essays dismissive of religion. This was a small but important work which reflected the contempt for religion then prevalent in philosophy.

Contemporary practical theology is self-conscious about its deployment of theological concepts and therefore finds its academic confidence elsewhere, specifically in the social sciences. Increasingly practical theology as a discipline is sensitive to being associated with a clerical paradigm that is at

odds with contemporary culture. One of the questions that this thesis has been concerned with is whether or not we can create a new space for practical theology that does not fall into the clerical realm but also resists being dependent quite so much on the social sciences.

A theologian of Schleiermacher's status is never ignored, but his contemporary reputation is largely defined as the founding father of modern theology within this clerical paradigm. There is a strong sense that Schleiermacher (as the originator of the modern faculty of theology) was once essential, but is now a depleted force. His work is often reduced to a few well-worn habitually repeated clichés that demonstrates familiarity with his contribution to the lineage of modern theology. What was innovative about his work is often buried in the foundations.

Schleiermacher was responsible for the creation of three categories of theology within an arborescent model. These were famously explicated in his *Brief Outline on the Study of Theology* (hereafter *Brief Outline*), first published in 1811. This now legendary triad is composed of: philosophical *root*, historical *body*, and practical *crown* (Schleiermacher 1970, 27).

It is in *Brief Outline* that we find Schleiermacher's description of theology as a 'positive science', one 'whose parts join into a cohesive whole'. The work concerns itself with definitions of leadership and responsibility within the church:

The purpose of the leadership in the Christian church is to hold the various concerns of the church together and to build on them further, both in a comprehensive as well as in a concentrated way. The knowledge concerning this activity forms a kind of technology which, in combining all its different branches, we designate as practical theology. (Schleiermacher 1970, 24)

In isolation from Schleiermacher's complete canon, *Brief Outline* becomes a legacy model for a practical theology concerned only with church offices. This understanding persists to some degree in contemporary thinking, although this might perhaps be changing. Here Alistair Campbell dismisses Schleiermacher's 'religiosity' which he holds responsible for the confinement of practical theology to an ecclesiastical community:

Most unfortunate of all was the total identification of the discipline with the church directed functions of ministry. Since the church was seen in Schleiermacher's terms as the fellowship of the pious, this meant the imprisoning of practical theology in the world of the religiously minded. (Campbell 2000, 79)

Campbell's view is one that is mirrored by many other practical theologians, some of whom feel especially strongly that Schleiermacher leaned toward the state institutionalisation of the church. For example, Duncan Forrester accused Schleiermacher of creating:

No more than the craft of church management, the channel through which the theories of biblical and systematic theology flow to nourish the life of the church. The present structures of church and ministry were accepted uncritically, as was the assumption that the subject addressed itself exclusively to the practice of the clergy. (Forrester 1999, 18)

Don Browning is also critical of what he sees as Schleiermacher's narrow concern with the realm of ordained ministry. Browning feels that practical theology has made good progress since Schleiermacher's time:

Rather than envision practical theology as primarily theological reflection on the task of the ordained minister or the leadership of the church, *as was the view of Schleiermacher*, these newer trends define practical theology as critical theological reflection on the church's ministry to the world [my italics]. (Browning 1999, 53)

Schleiermacher is held responsible for the division of theology into discrete areas of special interest within the modern university. This may be considered positively, as (for example) James Fowler suggests:

Schleiermacher's famous proposal for the role of practical theology as the place where the theological disciplines meet to inform the work of ecclesiastical science provided one of such influential rationale for the continuing presence of theological faculties in the now secularising universities. (Fowler 1999, 77)

Giving a more neutral evaluation of Schleiermacher's contribution to the development of practical theology is Elaine Graham, who holds Schleiermacher to account for contemporary developments, arguing that he:

...is responsible for what many regard as the definitive categorisation of theological studies in the academy, and is the theologian from whom several significant trends in modern practical theology can be traced. (Graham 1996, 59)

These last points of Fowler and Graham are important. They emphasize how important the perception is that Schleiermacher was the founder of a differentiated discipline in the modern university. Regardless of how flawed or awkward Schleiermacher's work has become for practical theologians, he still provides the markers for the inauguration of the modern discipline. Having influenced practical theology in its initial stages, Schleiermacher continues to have a presence as the 'founding father' of modern theology. There remains within the discipline an understanding of Schleiermacher as the scholar who was responsible for the development of practical theology as a modern 'positive science' in the university.

It is around the Schleiermacher of *Brief Outline* that practical theology has built its own origin myth, a 'roots and shoots' imagery that has become part of the recognised history of what we delineate as the beginning of practical theology as a modern discipline. This also presents practical theology with an irony. Schleiermacher is held to be both responsible for the beginning of the modern discipline and accountable for its undesired clericalisation.

As we have seen, Donna Haraway argued that one of the core characteristics of any academic community is the need to present its own history with a collective memory linking its founding narratives to its present legitimacy. New and innovative reconstructions can then be located on a historical map of the discipline to which they are intended to contribute. Practical theology can then present an unbroken line of progressive stages through its various correctives. Its history and legitimation become conceptually inseparable.

Hence Schleiermacher remains influential — but only as a sleeping giant. As the 'starting post' for modern theology, he is crucial to the intellectual history of practical theology. The narratology of any discipline, its coherent representation of its own inheritance, is also a key element in its authoritative identity. Schleiermacher thus becomes an important marker in the 'collective historical production' of a discrete discipline in the creation of a narrative that is complete with the language of 'indebtedness, of individual achievement and ascribed identities' (Haraway 1991, 86).

Consequently, practical theologians can employ Schleiermacher both as an authoritative founding figure for the discipline and as a measure of how far it has moved on from the clerical paradigm. Therefore, two things occur when Schleiermacher is allocated a definitive place in the history of practical theology. Firstly, his canon of work establishes the recognizable orientation that is handed down by every succession of theorists. The story has a familiar ring: Schleiermacher was the founder of modern theology, but we have since moved on and his model of theology is no longer compelling.

As Schleiermacher is associated with the ecclesiastical bondage that much academic practical theology wishes to be free of, his original insight becomes inaccessible. Meanwhile, Schleiermacher's masterpiece (*Speeches*) is often glossed over as over as the work of a less than mature theologian. As Richard Crouter argued in the introduction of his translation of the first edition of *Speeches*:

Ultimately Schleiermacher's fame derives from his systematic interpretation of Christian theology, *The Christian Faith (Glaubenslehre* [1821-2, 1830-1]), whose relationship to *On Religion* is often disputed (Crouter 1998, xi).

However, it will be argued here that *The Christian Faith* and *Brief Outline* can only really be understood as part of the movement that makes up all of Schleiermacher's work — in which context, the isolation of *Speeches* has a certain hermeneutic irony. Written some twelve years before *Brief Outline*, *Speeches* is a seminal work that underpins all of his later work. Crouter argues that there is no evidence to suggest that Schleiermacher ever rejected *Speeches* in favour of any later work. Schleiermacher himself edited the continued publication of later editions, while extending the work through added explication — but this was primarily an exercise in clarification. It was not a revisionist process.

*Speeches*, if it is to be included in our understanding of his work, present us with a paradox. How can we justify the perception of Schleiermacher as someone who was a proponent of the clerical paradigm when he has also been critical of both church and institutionally sanctioned morality? The answer might lie in the fact that *Speeches* has been largely neglected. When intellectual interest in it is now shown, it is usually treated as the 'earlier' work of the 'younger man' — thereby suggesting it does not reflect

Schleiermacher's mature beliefs. Yet, before taking up the radical conceptual signature of *Speeches*, it is important to follow the alternative trajectory into which Schleiermacher's ideas are deflected into by the emergent nineteenth century humanities.

Schleiermacher is held up by theorists of other disciplines as the original architect of *historicisation* of the discrete faculties within the modern university. Wilhelm Dilthey, who deployed Schleiermacher's hermeneutics in the new humanities, was responsible for an interpretation of Schleiermacher that still characterizes him in contemporary theory. This is significant, not least because of the link from Schleiermacher (by way of Dilthey) right through to Weber; which provides the connection between Schleiermacher and contemporary phenomenology.

However, Schleiermacher's assimilation into the New Humanities involved interpreting his work from a rationalist perspective. This was ironic in itself because Schleiermacher had tried to find the right balance between enlightenment rationalism (Kant), and German Romantic Idealism (Schlegel, Herder, Fichte, and Goethe).

Using the same approach as Deleuze (see Chapter 4 above), I propose to explore Schleiermacher's *signature* or *conceptual persona*, his notion of the historical soul that experiences the anxiety between 'being' *per se* and particular historical existences. We begin to see in Schleiermacher a theologian who can make a considerable contribution to a postmodern practical theology.

Contemporary theory is full of anxiety about truth and moral certainty; religion has been traditionally used to lend authority to morality. In *Speeches*, Schleiermacher is explicitly critical of the artificial synthesis between religion and moral theory.

As I have demonstrated above, some practical theologians argue that the dissemination of moral theory is a good rationale for its existence as a discipline. Schleiermacher's critique of moral theory is challenging, but it is also revitalizing. If practical theology must justify its existence apart from contemporary moral theory, how is it to do so?

To this end, it might help to try to understand why Schleiermacher was to have such a profound influence in the construction of what was eventually to emerge as the social sciences of the twentieth century. Schleiermacher provided the conceptual apparatus which provided support for the historicisation of the other specific disciplines.<sup>79</sup> The argument here will be that Dilthey's interpretation was responsible for a bias toward the rationalization that detracted from Schleiermacher's aesthetic of absolute dependency.

### 5.1 *Dilthey, Schleiermacher and the New Humanities*

There can be little doubt that Schleiermacher was an important figure, not only in theology, but also within the development of the humanities and (ultimately) the social sciences. His contribution to the understanding of the historical nature of reason and his exploration of that finite aspect of the

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<sup>79</sup> It is after all only fifty years after Schleiermacher that Karl Marx was able to write about *historical consciousness*. The thinking behind concepts such as Historical Materialism is made possible by the likes of Schleiermacher. Much is made of the fact that Marx 'turned Hegel on his head', but Schleiermacher had already argued for the notion of a finite historicised soul.

human spirit provided Dilthey with a contrast to the traditional empiricism of Locke and the methods of the natural sciences:

The purposive activity of an individual — characterized by Schleiermacher the 'will to know,' and by others as the 'drive to know'...must count on purposive activity by other individuals, both to incorporate it and to have an effect on it. (Dilthey 1985, 177)

Dilthey introduced the concept of the psychological and historicized subject to the new humanities. He felt strongly that the social sciences should have a philosophical foundation that was discernable from the natural sciences. Dilthey wanted a systematic approach that could explain the purposeful intentions of the individual. He wanted to create a methodological independence for the new humanities.

To give some perspective to Dilthey's aspirations we have to take into account the intellectual climate at the outset of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Beginning with a mechanistic worldview (based in large measure on conceptual advances by the likes of Locke, Leibniz and Newton), a new intellectual confidence began to emerge — as evidenced in such works as Vico's *New Science* (1725), Linnaeus's *Systema Naturae* (1735) and Hume's *Enquiries* (1748) and *Natural History of Religion* (1757).

Optimism in the creativity of humanity was implicit in the romantic idealism of Goethe, Herder and Fichte. Lessing published his treatise on education (1780) manifesting the high expectations of human progress. Not least, this was the century that heralded the age of reason in philosophical works such as Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), *Prolegomena to any Future metaphysics* (1783), *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) and *Critique of Judgment* (1790).

Impartial and independent scientific knowledge was the desired outcome. However, with no real epistemological guide of any greater significance than Sir Francis Bacon's publication of *The New Organon* (1690), the humanities would struggle with the methods available.

Schleiermacher makes his contribution to the enlightenment just at the very end of this remarkable century.<sup>80</sup> At the height of this optimism

Schleiermacher was about to dampen down the celebrations with his reproving counsel in the publication of *Speeches*. For Dilthey, Schleiermacher's reproaches resulted in a fascinating insight into the historical dimension of human psychology:

The dramatic surge in the natural sciences soon effaced developments in the other disciplines, tempting many of the humanities into an often futile effort to emulate the positivistic methods of chemistry, physics, and biology. As a result, thinkers in the "human sciences" sought new justifications for their disciplines. One of the most influential was the philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey, who in the later nineteenth century began to distinguish rigorously between the *Naturwissenschaften* (natural sciences) and what he termed the *Geisteswissenschaften* (sciences of the human mind), which are based, he argued, on "understanding" (*Verstehen*) rather than the "explanation" that characterizes the natural sciences. (Ziolkowski 2004, 14)

The result was a change in how individuals were regarded in relation to their *lifeworlds*. Modernity's concept of *personal* identity is embryonic in Locke's profile of the individual as a psychophysical unity. Locke closed the gap of Cartesian dualism and introduced the idea that memory and language were crucial elements of 'same consciousness' identity. The individual is like an 'empty cabinet', as Locke put it, of empirical rationalism. Each consciousness collects its own history of experience through its own substance, the body. As autonomous beings, we each have a new beginning:

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<sup>80</sup> A particular concept of what it means to be human emerges from the work of Foucault, who suggested that the 20th century is a Deleuzian century, in much the same way as the 17th century was Kantian. By this, I think we can take it that he is talking about a philosopher who encapsulates a new vision of a kind of *post-humanism*.

The senses at first let in particular ideas, and furnish the yet empty cabinet; and the mind by degrees growing familiar with some of them, they are lodged in the memory, and names got to them: afterwards, the mind, proceeding farther, abstracts them and by degrees learns the use of their names. In this manner the mind comes to be furnished with ideas and language, the materials about which to exercise its discursive faculty; and the use of reason becomes daily made visible, as these materials, that give it employment, increase. (Locke 1823, 21)

Each individual is 'topped up' with experience and memory. Although language and memory are key concepts in Locke's understanding of the accumulation of knowledge, they are mechanical rather than creative. Locke simply asked *how* it is that we come to know anything - and used the empirical method of the natural sciences to obtain his answer. The result was *reason*, understood as a faculty that operates when fuelled with facts from the external world.

Kant took this further and questioned the role of reason in understanding. Where Locke used his enquiry to disclose the *apparatus* of reason, for Kant the individual *is* the instrument of knowledge and understanding. Reason is not merely a storehouse that works through use and accumulation of detail. It also plays its role as a faculty of *understanding*. Truth is the objective, but to access it understanding is needed of the nature and function of the instrument of knowledge — of the individual made proficient through reason. This is summarised in Hegel's critique of Kant:

Knowledge is hereby represented as an instrument, as a method and a means whereby we endeavour to possess ourselves of the truth. (Hegel's *Philosophy of History* 1900, 428)

For Kant the mind provides the luminosity through which human reason gathers up the world and imposes order.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> This image of reason as the instrument of illumination is later challenged by Bergson's argument that the mind is in fact what deflects the luminosity that exists in things in the world. Deleuze takes this notion of luminosity and generates a new empiricism. According to which truth is no longer an objective and the relationship between things takes priority. Empiricism of the senses is replaced with empiricism of the imagination.

Although not in any sense making a direct response to Kant's rational view of the universe, Schleiermacher is nonetheless critical of what is recognizably a Kantian view of moral order:

And what does your morality do? It develops a system of duties out of human nature and our relationship to the universe; it commands and forbids actions with unlimited authority. Yet religion must not presume to do that; it must not use the universe in order to derive duties and is not permitted to contain a code of laws. (Schleiermacher 1996, 20)

This is significant because Schleiermacher is very clear about the synthetic quality in the relationship between metaphysics, morality and religion. What is taken to be religion is actually a number of discrete and independent theories put together in such a way that 'the lawgiver might be engraved at the front of so splendid a code':

If you put yourselves on the highest standpoint of metaphysics and morals, you will find that both have the same object as religion, namely, the universe and the relationship of humanity to it. This similarity has long since been a basis of manifold aberrations; metaphysics and morals have therefore invaded religion on many occasions, and much that belongs to religion has concealed itself in metaphysics or morals under an unseemly form. But shall you, for this reason, believe that it is identical to one of these? (Schleiermacher 1996, 19)

Schleiermacher insisted that religion is the unifying principle that makes all theories possible but that religion could not be identified with any single one of them. Religion is the capacity of the individual to intuitively comprehend and extend the self in the environment:

Intuition is and always remains something individual, set apart, the immediate perception, nothing more. To bind it and to incorporate it into a whole is once more the business not of sense but of abstract thought. The same is true of religion; it stops with the immediate experiences of the existence and action of the universe, with the individual intuitions and feelings; each of these is a self-contained work without connections with others or dependence upon them; it knows nothing about derivation and connection, for among all things religion can encounter, that is what its nature most opposes. (Schleiermacher 1996, 26)

Throughout the eighteenth century individual psychology was important but, initially, then current theories lacked the dialectical relationship that was to become prevalent in social philosophy<sup>82</sup> after Hegel. The early works of the enlightenment had an understanding of consciousness that was, according to Dilthey, mechanical and one-dimensional. Locke, Hume and Kant had failed to incorporate the idea of meaningful or purposeful history. Dilthey turns to the works of Hegel, Schleiermacher and Schelling to fill in this gap for the new humanities. Dilthey argues that the positivism of the natural sciences that had influenced the enlightenment concept of the knowing subject was inadequate.

In the introduction of his philosophy of social science, Dilthey argues for the inclusion of psychology in fully understanding the human condition, but this also helps him to distinguish the humanities from the natural sciences:

No real blood flows in the veins of the knowing subject constructed by Locke, Hume or Kant, but rather the diluted extract of reason as a mere activity of thought. A historical as well as psychological approach to whole human beings led me to explain even knowledge and its concepts (such as the external world, time, substance and cause) in terms of the manifold powers of a being that wills, feels, and thinks; and I do this despite the fact that knowledge seems to be woven of concepts derived from the mere contents of perception, representation, and thought. Therefore I will use the following method in this book: I will relate every component of contemporary abstract scientific thought to the whole of human nature as it is revealed in experience, in the study of language, and in the study of history, and thus seek the connection of these components. The result is that the most important components of our picture of knowledge and reality -- our own personality as a life-unit, the external world, other individuals, their temporal life and interactions -- can be explained in terms of this totality of human nature. In the real life process, willing, feeling, and thinking are only different aspects. The questions, which we all must address to philosophy, cannot be answered by the assumptions of a rigid epistemological *a priori*, but rather only by a developmental history proceeding from the totality of our being. (Dilthey 1985, 50)

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<sup>82</sup> The term 'social philosophy' still applies to these early concepts of humanity because there was as yet no discrete discipline of social *science*.

This indicates a shift toward an understanding of consciousness as the result of an interactive relation with history imbued with purpose and meaning, which becomes the core of Dilthey's philosophy.

Using Schleiermacher's example Dilthey argued that social and historical reality is preserved within the individual historical human consciousness. Willing, feeling and thinking are historical expressions of a universal psychological faculty, which become tools for the understanding of particular historical epochs. From the experience of the individual, an 'immutable law' would emerge<sup>83</sup>:

The result is that the most important components of our picture and knowledge of reality — our own personality as a life unit, the external world, other individuals, their temporal life and their interactions — can be explained in terms of this totality of human nature. In the real life-process, willing, feeling and thinking are only different aspects. The questions, which we all must address to philosophy, cannot be answered by the assumption of a rigid epistemological a priori, but rather only by a developmental history proceeding from the totality of our being. (Dilthey 1989, 51)

Crucially, for Dilthey, Schleiermacher's work enabled the historicizing of these new academic faculties which Kant's inflexible categorization and Newton's mechanics could not. This was a point established in Dilthey's incomplete *Life of Schleiermacher*, in which he instigates a hermeneutic of 'biographical presentation'; arguing that Schleiermacher's theology was indivisible from his psycho-historical situation.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> This principle would run throughout much of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century pastoral theology. For example in the work of Hiltner who would seek to find a 'unifying principle' from the testimony of individuals.

<sup>84</sup> This kind of psychobiography became, and remains, a popular way of presenting intellectual and emotional history. For a classic example see *Young Man Luther: a study in psychoanalysis and history*, Erik Erikson (London Faber 1958.) For a contemporary example the American television production of *The Sopranos* in which psychoanalysis is used as a hermeneutic trope for understanding the coexistence of violence and sentimentality in 'Mob' psychology. In one scene Toni, the mob leader, almost beats his mistress to death because she has crossed the line and phoned his wife pretending to be a real estate sales person. His anger comes from the feeling that his 'family values' have been violated an emotion expressed weeping to his psychoanalysis. *The Sopranos*, however, represents the death of psychoanalysis in its exposure of psychological 'set pieces' of sentimentality and cliché.

This was an ironic turn given Schleiermacher's awareness of the tension between the individual and history and his simple faithfulness to Spinoza's first proposition. Existence is the prerequisite for particular existences; we do not enter into history and gradually shape our existence from a blank slate. We enter in the midst of life.

Schleiermacher's address in *Speeches* was essentially about this tension. Schleiermacher attempts to capture the space or the moment between the individual and history:

Each human soul-its transitory actions as well as the inner peculiarities of its nature that leads us to this conclusion-is merely the product of two opposing drives. The one strives to draw into itself everything that surrounds it, ensnaring it in its own life, and wherever possible, wholly absorbing it into its innermost being. The other longs to extend its own inner self ever further, thereby permeating and imparting everything from within, while never being exhausted itself. (Schleiermacher 1996, 5)

This is an aspect that is lost in Dilthey's acceptance of an individual's identity within historical experience. He is interested in a more stable representation of identity, not least because he wants to use it as a guiding principle for his new science. The psychobiography of the individual is still evident in the notions of 'life cycles' found in 20<sup>th</sup> century practical theology. For example, in the work of Don Browning, we can recognize Dilthey's working principles deployed to supplement an image of the moral individual:

It is the primary task of pastoral theology to bring together theological ethics and the social sciences to articulate a normative vision of the human life cycle. Pastoral theology involves stating the appropriate relation between a moral theology of the human life cycle and psychodynamic, developmental, and other social science perspectives that describe or explain how human development comes about. (Browning 1983, 187)

This principle is, for Dilthey, key to understanding 'the reality of our own essence.' We recognize this biographical narrative because we all have our own sense of personal growth and history. On the one hand we have a physical and biological existence. We start life as helpless infants and much of our identity is organised around pre-existing expressions of life. Gender is an example of this.

Beyond the biological we have also have geographical and social determinants of identity. We may be aware of the cultural and socialization processes that contribute to identity but we certainly feel a strong sense of being a personal 'self' different and separate from others. The self is capable of making choices and decisions. This is important when it comes to moral theory and it has certainly been a morally autonomous self that has been the basis for contemporary practical theology. The physical development of a person has been matched by theories of psychological development. This combination provides a very authoritative image of the life of a person as a natural linear succession of the physiological and psychological. There might be a capacity for social and historical variants but at the core is this enduring vision of humanity.

This image of the subject has been the basis for much of contemporary practical theology. We find it in the concept of a 'normative vision of the human life cycle,' in the work Don Browning (1983) and in the 'life cycles', 'life histories' and 'life maps' in James Fowler's *Stages of Faith* (1995).

Its most recent use is to be found in the work of Friedrich Schweitzer in *Practical Theology and Postmodern Life* (2001) who, as we have observed still tries to retain some aspects of the modern 'life cycle' and even goes as far as introducing the notion of a 'postmodern life cycle'.

And yet Dilthey, because of his own remit to build a systematic analysis under the heading the *Inner Perception and the Experiences of Psychic life* (Selected Works 195), ignored those aspects of Schleiermacher's writing which were nearer to German Romantic Idealism. Richard Crouter has argued this may well be because being associated with Romanticism had negative connotations:

Hans Eichner offers the apt reminder that "romanticism is an unpleasantly vague term, whose meaning depends only too often on the preoccupations of the person who happens to use it." But Schleiermacher's involvement in Romanticism can be approached on the basis of something more than a whim. As Friedrich Schlegel's intellectual confidant, Schleiermacher shared his friend's sensibility and intellectual belief. If little scholarly consensus exists regarding Schleiermacher's relationship to Romanticism, this is partly due to efforts to explain away the relationship. Since Paul Kluckhohn, German literary scholars readily acknowledge that Schleiermacher fully shares the Romantic world view. Some writers in theology and literary studies (Dilthey, Haym, Redeker) resist this view and present Romanticism as a passing phase of his thought, while others (Forstam, Dierkes, Nowak) recognize the commonalities but stress Schleiermacher's distinctive contribution to a movement that was always heterogeneous. (Crouter 1998, xxvi)

Crouter is right to point to a debate that exists between scholars about the nature of Romanticism and the guiding principles of Schleiermacher's writing. He suggests that 'Christian apologists minimize Schleiermacher's Romanticism in order to project the theological orthodoxy of his mature teachings,' (Crouter 1998, xxviii) but ultimately the text itself provides the substance behind the claim for Romanticism being within the body of the work.

Schleiermacher does not make any direct references to Kant's rationalist concept of faith and neither does he hold totally with Herder's view that history is a progressive revelation of divine order. He is generally critical of the previous trend for a certain type of metaphysics:

What does your metaphysics do-or if you want to have nothing to do with the outmoded name that is too historical for you, your transcendental philosophy? It classifies the universe and divides it into this being and that, seeks out the reasons for what exists, and deduces the necessity of what is real while spinning the reality of the world and its laws out of itself. (Schleiermacher 1996, 20)

Schleiermacher may have been critical of rationalism and he construed a more complex notion of Romanticism, but it is nonetheless Romanticism that is at the heart of *Speeches*. This is very clear in his expectations that it is the very 'cultured despisers', the leaders of Romantic Idealism, whom he expects to give the most service to religion. Indicating how strongly he felt that the church is merely one historical manifestation of religion. His conviction that the resurgence of religion is just as likely to be orchestrated outside the church is expressed in the third speech:

Look there, the goal of your present highest endeavours is at the same time the resurrection of religion! It is your efforts that must bring about this event, and I celebrate you as the rescuers and guardians of religion, even though unintentionally so. Do not retreat from your posts and your works until you have unlocked the innermost element of knowledge and, in priestly humility opened the sanctuary of true science where, to everyone who enters and even to the sons of religion, everything is replaced that superficial knowledge and arrogant boasting caused them to lose. (Schleiermacher 1996, 70)

Schleiermacher was calling for the 'cultured despisers' to give up the notion of exclusivity and individual genius in recognition of the role that religion plays in science and art. Religious intuition is after all what makes science, art and poetic creativity possible.

For Schleiermacher, religion is an aesthetic sensibility. The human spirit is extended through art and science. However, it would be a mistake to imagine that Schleiermacher believes that they are in competition with religion, as Crouter seems to be suggesting:

If art and religion both serve as the basis for an intuition of the universe—a view that undeniably follows from Schleiermacher's argument—what makes religion distinctive and worthy of pursuit for its own sake? (Crouter 1996, xxxiv)

Crouter has missed the point that Schleiermacher is making. Art and science would merely be the repetitive transference of ideas without any new imaginative insights made possible by the existence of religious intuition.

Without religion, how can praxis rise above the common circle of adventurous and customary forms? (Schleiermacher 1996, 23)

This observation was not linked to a desire to elevate art or science to religious status, but to indicate that neither of them can be historically manifest or innovative without this religious sensibility. Religion is not part of a trilogy i.e. Science, Art *and* Religion. Religious sensibility is the grounding for science and art. What the 'cultured despisers' have judged has not been religion but only what has been distorted and mistaken as religion. Crucially Schleiermacher did not believe that we find in religion a formula for good living, but that success in the attempt to live well may be achievable with the help of the intuitive faculty of religion.

Dilthey certainly had more cause to emphasize the rational rather than the romantic aspects of Schleiermacher. He had a very definite purpose in assimilating Schleiermacher's work into his own philosophy.

Dilthey and others were intellectually engaged with the notion of history found in Schleiermacher's work. Even contemporary writings on Schleiermacher focus on this characteristic.

What I will argue here is that for Schleiermacher the recognition of the various historical manifestations of religion was never as important as the emphasis he put on the imperfect nature of any historical reality. His view of history was never as simple as Lessing's unfolding enlightenment or Herder's notion that history was progressive revelation. Schleiermacher's view of history was not epic or teleological and, although he did historicize religion, he did not treat these manifestations as necessary.

It is evident that Schleiermacher's notion of an historical soul had an appeal to Dilthey and others like him who were searching for a rational method that would counter the positivism of the natural sciences. But there is a trap here, which Dilthey manages to fall into, of classifying Schleiermacher with other thinkers of his time. The concept of history as the progressive unfolding of spirit in the world (Hegel), or the advancement of enlightenment ideals through the education of humanity (Lessing), or indeed history as revelation (Herder), makes it seem reasonable to assume that Schleiermacher's concept of history was part of this historical ensemble.

But Schleiermacher's notion of the historical soul provides us with a different concept of history; one that diverges from teleological versions.

## 5.2 *Romanticism and the New History*

The history of a thing, in general, is the succession of forces which take possession of it and the co-existence of the forces which struggle for possession. The same object, the same phenomenon, changes sense depending on the forces which appropriates it. (Deleuze 2002, 3)

Theologies, moreover, may differ according to every particular mode of faith, in that they correspond to the distinctiveness of each both in content and form. (Schleiermacher 1970, 19)

Dilthey is a key figure in demonstrating the influence that Schleiermacher had on the embryonic social sciences, especially in relation to his notion of a philosophy of a life world (*Lebensphilosophie*). Dilthey created and deployed a Schleiermachean hermeneutic in his work. He also applied this to the understanding of Schleiermacher's ideas. Kant's theory required no immersion in his life world and as a consequence morality was detached from the world. Schleiermacher, on the other hand, made no separation between morality and subject:

Schleiermacher staunchly refuses to accept the 'duality' of the human moral agent upon which Kant's system rests. The phenomenal and the noumenal selves must be conceived together if we are to consider a person as a moral agent. (Crouter 1996, xxi)

However, Dilthey's approach was intended to serve his own methodological purposes and he therefore ignored the Romanticism inherent in Schleiermacher's work. Dilthey was not opposed to rationalism for its own sake, but to the separation of the psychological component of the individual and the world that it inhabits. Kant's transcendent rationalism was based on a division between knowledge and experience.

Insofar as Schleiermacher was struggling against Kant's rational concept of faith, Dilthey was in agreement. He was astute and appreciated the potential of understanding human experience through the interpretation of an historical milieu. He was less keen to pursue the abstract categories, being more concerned with the psychic realities of experience. Nonetheless, he was still interested in pursuing laws.

However, Schleiermacher's concept of history was far more complex. With Schleiermacher, there is a grasp of the difference between the finite historical presentation of a thing and the infinite nature of its source. Perhaps one of the best demonstrations of this is to be found within the entirety of his work. On the one hand, *Speeches* is a ground breaking innovative masterpiece. *Brief Outline*, on the other hand, is an excellently crafted didactic document. The two are perfectly compatible. Schleiermacher demonstrates an awareness of exactly what the function of *Brief Outline* is in his preface to the first (1810) edition. He actually wrote two prefaces to the book. The preface to the second edition in 1830 is not much more than a small piece of publishing etiquette. It is very different in style and function from the preface to the first edition of 1810, in which Schleiermacher is quite explicit that what he has written is a textbook that contains, like other textbooks, his particular *school of thought*.

This is particularly significant because it reveals that he was very aware of its place in academia. This was the inauguration of Schleiermacher's career as University teacher:

I have always found it extremely difficult to conduct academic lectures by following the outline of someone else's textbook. ... Of course, the more the particular views of people on details are subordinated to a common viewpoint, *ie*: the more what is called a school obtains, the easier it becomes to use such a procedure. But everyone knows how little this is the case in theology at present. (Schleiermacher 1970, 17)

So here is a text that has emerged amid very specific circumstances; a teaching aid that makes no claims to be definitive but does claim to represent the broad spectrum of the author's outlook, prepared for the use of his students. Furthermore its very distinctness can be attributed to its being a scholarly document and not an exclusively theological treatise — in short, it is a prototype for the *teaching* of contemporary practical theology. For example, in its acknowledgement that uniformity of curriculum content is desirable but has not been achieved, its author displays the hallmarks of someone who is endeavouring to perform a professional task.

Schleiermacher (along with others of that period, *i.e.*: Kant, Schelling, Lessing and Fichte) was seeking to create a unified view of knowledge that would provide a consistency in the curriculum for teaching purposes.<sup>85</sup>

There was a certain self-consciousness concerning the academic status of theology and philosophy at a time when the modern university was emerging with Law and Medicine as faculties in greater demand.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, it has very different objectives from his earlier work in *Speeches*.

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<sup>85</sup> Fichte divided knowledge into three distinct areas of study *Philosophical, Philosophical/Historical and Historical*. Historical knowledge played a crucial role in understanding the progression of humanity toward perfection. Schleiermacher too was concerned to present theology as a coherent scientific system but he did not agree with Fichte teleology.

<sup>86</sup> For an excellent account of the historicizing of the new faculties see chapter one of *Clio, The Romantic Muse* by Theodore Ziolkowski (Cornell University Press, 2004)

However, the comparison is unhelpful. *Speeches* was a work that addressed the epistemological and ontological changes of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and *Brief Outline* is a working tool serving a particular didactic purpose.

Misunderstanding it as a departure from the earlier (younger)

Schleiermacher has long been one of the reasons that he has been perceived as merely a civil servant fulfilling state and church duties.<sup>87</sup>

It would also be incorrect to suggest that all of Schleiermacher's work is simply an unfolding of *Speeches* into a variety of forms. There is a more nuanced relationship between *Speeches* and the rest of his work. Although Schleiermacher later makes no overt references to the earlier work, it has a presence in his approach to the historical nature of religion. In fact, the view that he sketches of theology in *Brief Outline* would not have been possible without sustaining the idea of the tension between the individual, faith and history elaborated in *Speeches*.

In other words, the first proposition of *Speeches* serves as a guiding principle that exists throughout Schleiermacher's work. He was clearly more impressed with the notion that (not only was religion not containable within the strictures of given traditions but that) religion itself was what made the multiplicity of its historical manifestations possible. There is then no contradiction in working within the remit of a particular cultural expression of religion:

You will find the spirit of religion, not among the rigid systematizers or superficial indifferentists, but among those who live in it as their element and move ever further in it without nurturing the illusion that they are able to embrace it completely. (Schleiermacher 1996, 113)

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<sup>87</sup> In the introduction to *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari make the same mistake. They are critical of Schleiermacher and Fichte for being complicit in the dissemination of state ideology at the level of individual consciousness, creating a moral order that serves the state. This is a good example of how Schleiermacher work is felt to be familiar — there is no reference that indicates Deleuze or Guattari were aware of the ideas found in *Speeches*.

Schleiermacher's view of religion as the aptitude to assimilate history is different from the notion that religion merely develops and changes according to some notion of progression. Schleiermacher's rejection of any dualism between reason and experience brings some alternative ontological characteristics not commonly associated with the enlightenment/romantic equation.

However, if Schleiermacher has been interpreted from a rationalist perspective that is unsympathetic to his closeness to the Romantic school of thought then it would be equally erroneous to see him as a Romantic Idealist. His century was not epistemologically homogenous; it was neither exclusively rationalist nor romantic. Nonetheless, in Rudolf Otto's introduction to *Speeches* the work is treated as being unequivocally *Romantic*:

In a particular sense, however, the work is a monument of the young Romantic school. Stemming directly from this circle and its atmosphere, it is a veritable manifesto of the Romantics in its view of nature and history; its struggle against rationalist culture and Philistinism of rationalism in the state, church, school and society; its leaning toward fantasy, melancholy, presentiment, mysticism; its bias in favour of the historical and positive "becoming" in contrast to the "natural"; its championship of the individual, and its preference for the strange and the curious as over against "universal reason"....In style and literary manner, the *Speeches*...are a model of romantic prose. (Schleiermacher 1958, xi)

Otto's reading of Schleiermacher was influential for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but he too failed to fully grasp the significance of the work.<sup>88</sup> Nonetheless, it would be wrong to ignore the influence of the Romantic Movement on Schleiermacher.

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<sup>88</sup> Interpretation of Schleiermacher as a 'Romantic Liberal' made him a good counterbalance to the Biblical Orthodoxy of Karl Barth. This is worth the mention because it is another demonstration of how Schleiermacher can be used to serve the purposes and arguments of those who translate and interpret his work, whether it be with the rationalism of a Dilthey or the liberalism of an Otto.

After all, his theory of an absolute aesthetic dependency encompassed both the sciences and the arts. Some of his greatest work was on translating Plato, and he had an affinity with pre-rationalist culture.

*Speeches* emerged from and in response to these two quite distinct intellectual cultures. For example, Kant influenced Schleiermacher at a time when he was questioning the nature of faith. In this sense, Kant became a catalyst for some of the thinking that underpins his work. Therefore, even though Schleiermacher would ultimately be critical of Kant he was still an important figure in the formation of some of his ideas. Working in Berlin, as a hospital chaplain, he befriended intellectuals and poets of the Romantic Movement. Both Fichte and Schlegel were amongst this group. This was also the time when the authorities were most concerned about the influence of contemporary philosophy on his theology.

Schleiermacher, like his contemporaries shared in a vision of a humanity increasingly optimistic about its ability to shape destiny. He benefited intellectually from the freedom of the Romantic period. As Theodore Ziolkowski (a scholar of the German Literature from this period) has argued, the new philosophies were experimenting with language and were creating new forms for the mediation of new ideas. At times they produced, as Ziolkowski suggests, difficult language to comprehend.

This was necessary for the avoidance of a reduction of philosophy to mere 'empty formalism' (Ziolkowski 2004, 49). This was especially true of Hegel's philosophy, written in what Ziolkowski describes as a 'language of

estrangement.<sup>89</sup>

It was Hegel's conviction that the reader, by working his way through his complex prose, would be compelled to recapitulate in his own mind the process of thought that brought Hegel to his conclusions, rather than simply accepting them. (Ziolkowski 2004, 49)

This problem of concealment occupied Schleiermacher, who ultimately came to see that (through poetry, literature and other aesthetic forms) 'cultured' individuals could be a source of discovery. For Schleiermacher this aesthetic sensibility was the source of revelation<sup>90</sup>:

It should be realized that what might be called this language of estrangement, exemplifying the consciousness of a new age, is typical of many young thinkers of the period. During their mutual time in Frankfurt, Hegel's friend Holderlin was creating an utterly original poetic language that did not permit the reader to fall back into the easy familiarities of earlier eighteenth-century poetry but that demanded his active participation; and much of Holderlin's finest poetry still challenges even his linguistically and theoretically most adept admirers. (Ziolkowski 2004, 50)

Ziolkowski argues that Schleiermacher was responsible for achieving the same for theology, and it is certainly true that *Speeches* introduces the reader to a radically new concept of religion with a style very different from the familiar theological treatises.

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<sup>89</sup> Hegel's 'complex prose' seems to be overwhelming in a contemporary academic age where simplicity and clarity are sought. However, Ziolkowski is making an important point about the use of language and how difficulty of understanding is not always due to perversity on behalf of the author. It is hard work to overthrow old patterns of thinking. Interestingly Deleuze and Guattari felt that they were often criticized for using complicated terminology in order to be 'trendy'. They felt the criticism to be unjust because a concept would sometimes need a new word to express it.

<sup>90</sup> Although Hegel and Schleiermacher were working in isolation from each other, there is an underlying principle in the writings of both. Hegel very much wanted to be the 'people's philosopher'. Ironically his work is difficult to read, it is hard to imagine how you could have Hegel as a people's pedagogue when even experienced scholars will settle for reading only the preface of *phenomenology of spirit*. However, it was not this that concerned Hegel so much as the notion that ultimately everyone would have the freedom which it is possible to attain through an enlightened consciousness: 'I am free when I am fully aware of myself. The point is that Hegel was, through his writing, trying to reveal how constrained most of humanity is, and that existing thought processes conceal this lack of freedom. Exactly the same argument is made by Schleiermacher about religion; that the 'cultured despisers' have no awareness that the capacity for religion is the exact thing that makes their particular aesthetic possible.

However *Speeches* is an extraordinary work, not only because it takes on board the intellectual 'estrangement' from old ways of thinking, but because Schleiermacher exercises caution at celebrating the notion of individual genius. Where other enlightenment thinkers embraced new thought as a means for discrediting religion, Schleiermacher would argue that new thinking is only possible through the *mediation of a religious sensibility*. His views were neither popular nor mainstream. He was unique, however, insofar as he acknowledged the potential he found within Romantic Liberalism without giving sway to its more hedonistic aspects. Schleiermacher assimilated these liberating ideas, but ultimately came up with a very distinct ontology.

While Richard Crouter argued that the Romantic Movement was responsible for the revival in the interest of Spinoza through the publication of *On the Teaching of Spinoza: Letters to Mr. Moses Mendelssohn* (1998, 24 [F.H.Jacobi 1743-1819]), there is little doubt that Spinoza also has an intellectual presence in the text of *Speeches*. Schleiermacher certainly feels compelled to share with the reader his admiration for Spinoza:

Respectfully offer up with me a lock of hair to the manes of the holy rejected Spinoza! The high world spirit permeated him, the infinite was his beginning and end, the universe his only and eternal love; in holy innocence and deep humility he was reflected in the eternal world and saw how he too was its most lovable mirror; he was full of religion and full of the holy spirit; for this reason, he stands there alone and unequalled, master in his art but elevated above the profane guild, without disciples and without rights of citizenship. (Schleiermacher 1998, 24)

In this homage to Spinoza, Schleiermacher is all too aware that the fate of maligned outsider could be his too. He makes an important observation in this passage about the status of knowledge. Schleiermacher maintains, in his defence of Spinoza, that no one really understood the significance of his predecessor's work.

Schleiermacher knew that the work was not only of its time but also of very *avant-garde* in its mood. The publication of *Speeches* came at a time when the educated classes dismissed religion with hostility. Nonetheless, the church and the state both defended religious orthodoxy. Schleiermacher was at odds with the educated classes, the church and the state simultaneously. He refused to apologize for his inclusion of Spinoza.

Accordingly, he defended the use of Spinoza within the text. He himself stood accused of pantheism and was potentially at risk of censorship and exclusion. Yet he never reneged on the justification of using Spinozean concepts in later editions of *Speeches*. However, unlike the Romantics, Schleiermacher did not believe that Spinoza's theory of determinate existence necessarily led to atheism. Romanticism may have influenced Schleiermacher, but his interpretation of Spinoza led him to very different conclusions.

Schleiermacher sought to mitigate the more hedonistic aspects of Romantic Idealism with an interpretation of Spinoza's *Ethics*, with the narcissistic elements muted by his theory of absolute dependency, as propounded in *Speeches*. The text of *Speeches* makes a slight volume in comparison to Schleiermacher's later works, but it provides the conceptual fabric behind *all* his later publications; being (in this sense) the greatest of them all.

The notion of a historicized spirit may have been a key concept in the development of Dilthey's method of 'meaningful history', but (at the same time) it detracted from Schleiermacher's radical ontology and his parallel concept of history.

### 5.3 Religion and History: Schleiermacher's *Speeches*

*Speeches* is a treatise on the nature of religion which is concerned with its shifting and displaced frontiers, not with its formal organization.

Schleiermacher intends to demonstrate not only that religion is infinite, but that it manifests itself in transient historical detail. That it is not an organizing principle but that it can be manifest in the 'organizing principles' of historically situated knowledge. Religion is immanent, not detached. It is continually in flux. While it may be associated temporally with some historical feature or other, such is but a worldly association. This directly rejects Kant's attempt to reduce religion to a practice of following the correct moral imperatives from some rational perspective or other.

Schleiermacher makes very radical statements about religion in *Speeches*. Religion has had multiple alliances and will never be 'completed' in any one historical experience. It has no exclusion zones. It crosses all boundaries and cannot be contained within formal institutions like the church. It can engage and disengage. It has no permanent affiliation with any particular historical manifestation. Therefore, religion resists permanent transference into specific cultural traditions. That which we may observe today as religious is not stable but is transient. It can go through periods of being visible as well as periods of concealment.

Religion is not teleological. It has no preset order and therefore has the potential to have multi-configurations. It has no necessary formal hierarchy. It is not elitist. It only appears as such in certain formations where stratification is part of the manifest order. Its connections are never

permanent — as Schleiermacher argued in the case of Kant's metaphysics and moral theory:

Religion never appears in a pure state. All these are only the extraneous parts that cling to it, and it should be our business to free it from them. (Schleiermacher 1996, 21)

Understanding the very human and cultural dimensions of religion and (more importantly) that they can never comprise the totality of religion, is the starting point for Schleiermacher in his address to those who only *think* they know what religion is. In his first speech, he identifies his intended audience. It is the educated and *avant-garde* thinkers of the time, those who have benefited from an enlightenment philosophy of self-improvement. Those who are so sophisticated they would not give religion a second thought:

You have succeeded in making your own lives so rich and many sided that you no longer need the eternal, and after having created a universe for yourselves, you are spared from thinking of that which created you. (Schleiermacher 1996, 3)

Therefore we are led to understand from the outset that Schleiermacher is not concerned with the atheist or the sceptic but that he is focused on the emergence of the kind of thinkers that not only do not even concern themselves with the existence or non-existence of a deity but to whom it is not even a matter worthy of intellectual space. However, Schleiermacher argues that very few have been able to discern authentic religion from its historical and cultural 'trappings':

From time immemorial faith has not been everyone's affair, for all times only a few have understood something of religion while millions have played with its trappings with which it has willingly let itself be draped out of condescension. (Schleiermacher 1996, 3)

Schleiermacher's 'cultured despisers' associate religion with historical

facades and have convinced themselves that they have managed to fulfil their lives through the new arts and sciences, and that they no longer need God as an explanation for existence. Furthermore, they are optimistic that humanity is in control of its destiny.

Having identified his target audience, Schleiermacher then takes care to distance himself from others in his profession who merely lament the decline of religion.

What I intend lies almost outside their sphere and would hardly resemble what they want to see and here. I do not chime in with the cry for help of most of them concerning the demise of religion, for I would not know what other age may have accommodated it better than the present... (Schleiermacher 1996, 4)

Distancing himself from what he considers the restrictive legalistic mode of both Jewish and Catholic traditions, as well as from his own peers, Schleiermacher makes it clear that his concerns extend beyond the usual boundaries of anxiety within religious circles. The commonplace arguments and prejudices are not the objects of his quest. Schleiermacher wants a shift of perspective in the discourse on religion. He wishes to cordon off the social and cultural (even the political) influences. Leaving aside all historical persuasions and manifestations, he desires a proposal with no preconceived cultural agenda.

It is, of course, significant that at the time of writing this address Schleiermacher was not attached to the state machinery. He had also gone into voluntary exile from his friends to write the book. Therefore, it was as an outsider he compiled *Speeches*. This was not the case with his later work.

Schleiermacher also wished to make it clear that he was not speaking in defence of any prevalent school of thought. He regarded all existing arguments (whether rational pious or teleological) as mere fashions, secondary to the true nature of religion:

'That I speak does not originate from a rational decision or from hope or fear, nor does it happen in accord with some final purpose or from some arbitrary or accidental reason. It is the inner, irresistible necessity of my nature; it is a divine calling; it is that which determines my place in the universe and makes me the being that I am. Even if it were neither suitable nor prudent to speak of religion, the thing that thus drives me crushes these petty notions with its heavenly power. (Schleiermacher 1996, 5)

Religion, as Schleiermacher perceives it, has no necessary relationship with the trappings of history. History in this sense is not revelation. It may disclose religion in its manifest traditions, but this is where Schleiermacher's view of history departs from the Hegelian notion of history and, indeed, from those of Herder and Lessing. History is not the unfolding of truth and the path to completeness.

On the contrary, history for Schleiermacher is problematic because an individual has no real chance of reaching a perfect state. At best, individuals may reduce the anxiety of what he describes as a 'holy sadness' by becoming parts of the greater accumulation of individual experiences. Individuals seek to reduce the anxiety of remaining outside history. They seek to embrace particular fates in order to engage with life.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Nietzsche would some time later introduce the notion of 'fate amorii' to describe this dilemma. The point is to embrace your fate, but this is not to be a passive acceptance. Nietzsche believed that once this was accepted, we could have power over our own life circumstances.

#### 5.4 *The Malleable Spirit of Co-creation*

To such a tremulous wisp constantly re-forming itself on the stream, to a single sharp impression, with a sense in it, a relic more or less fleeting, of such moments gone by, what is real in our life fines itself down. It is with this movement, with the passage and dissolutions of impressions, images, sensations, that analyses leaves off — that continual vanishing away, that strange, perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves. (Pater 1893, conclusion)

One of the reasons Schleiermacher was able to mitigate the more hedonistic aspects of Romanticism was his admiration for Spinozean ethics. Influenced by Spinoza, Schleiermacher believed that each individual life is part of a continuum of gain and loss. Each individual is taken and absorbed in the greater whole. The individual has a finite historical existence; this includes the spirit or the soul.

Spinoza believed that the soul died with the body and this becomes the basis for Schleiermacher's understanding of the spirit as historically finite and plastic:

You know that the deity by an immutable law has compelled itself to divide its great work endlessly, to fuse together each definite being only out of two opposing forces, and to realize each of its eternal thoughts in twin forms that are hostile to each other. This whole corporeal world, penetration into whose interior is the highest goal of your investigations, appears to the best informed and most thoughtful among you only as an eternally prolonged play of opposing forces. Every life is a continuous appropriation and repulsion; everything has its determinate being only by the way in which it uniquely combines and retains the two primal forces of nature: the thirsty attraction and the expansion of the active and living self. It seems to me even if the spirits, as soon as they are transplanted into this world, would have to follow such a law. (Schleiermacher 1998, 5)

Spinoza's concept of the finite soul or spirit is nearer to the modified dualism of Aristotle. For Plato, the soul was transcendent and the body was merely a vehicle that it passed through. The soul would carry on after the death of the body and inhabit another. But the soul would experience a 'forgetting' of all

the knowledge accumulated in a past life. Hence for Plato learning was akin to remembering and his method of dialogue would bring out knowledge that the soul already possessed. For Aristotle the soul and the body had one finite existence.<sup>92</sup>

Resisting the dualism of the spirit and corporeal existence has important implications for ethics and epistemology. Knowledge has no transcendent and abstract existence. Experience and knowledge become intrinsically woven. For Schleiermacher, we have a concept of spirit drawing on the world in order to release the tension of *being* without *existence*. Given the inseparability of both, *becoming* in the immediate world is an act of creative consent. Spirit, because of its desire to 'be' becomes imbued with and shaped by the circumstances from which it emerges. This is conceptually different from the Hegelian spirit that unfolds through the material world.

For Schleiermacher there is a tension which is only temporally reduced through the act of becoming. The individual spirit, in as much as it has awareness of its finite and historical existence, knows that to live authentically is to live this particular life. This commitment to life does not diminish the 'holy longing' that discloses the opposing forces of nature and spirit. However, this struggle takes place in the unity of the individual. Hence inner reflection becomes a means of reducing the tension between history and the soul. There is a sense of sacrifice and resistance, awareness

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<sup>92</sup> It was Aristotle's concept of one body, one soul that was adapted by Thomas Aquinas and became the basis for the Christian notion of the beatific vision. Of course for the Christian concept of the afterlife (in which the body was resurrected as well as the soul) this unique identity was important, otherwise there could be no conceivable way that a just allocation of reward or punishment could be administered.

that the movement into a particular self is also a movement that allows history to consume the potential to be other than *this*. How might one live?

Moreover, this particular existence will be able to identify within the shared existence (a shared sensibility) of the particular common bond of consciousness:

The perfection of the intellectual world consists in the fact that not only are all possible combinations of these two forces between the two opposed ends really present in humanity, with now one and now the other nearly excluding everything and leaving only an infinitely small part to its opposite, but also a common bond of consciousness embraces them all so that each person, even though he can be nothing other than what he must be, nevertheless recognizes all others as clearly as himself and perfectly comprehends all individual manifestations of humanity. (Schleiermacher, 1996, 6)

On the one hand, the spirit strives to bring into it the experiences of the historical location and, on the other hand, to permeate that same experience by extending an 'inner self' that is part of/dependent on the infinite:

The former desire is oriented toward enjoyment; it strives after individual things that bend toward it; it is quieted so long as it has grasped one of them, and always works mechanically on whatever is at hand. The latter drive despises enjoyment and only goes on to ever-increasing and heightened activity; it overlooks individual things and manifestations just because it penetrates them and finds everywhere only the forces and entities on which its own forces breaks; it wants to penetrate and fill everything with reason and freedom, and thus proceeds directly to the infinite and at all times seeks and produces freedom and coherence, power and law, right and suitability. (Schleiermacher 1996, 5)

With this concept of the historicized spirit, Schleiermacher has introduced a tension between individual desire and historical circumstances. He used Spinoza's Proposition 1, the prior existence of a substance to its modification (*Ethics*, 5), to form his theory that the body and the soul are both subject to historical adaptation:

The soul, as is shown both in its passing actions and inward characteristics has its existence chiefly in two opposing impulses. Following the one impulse, it strives to establish itself as an individual. For increase no less than sustenance, it draws what surrounds it to itself, weaving it

into its life, absorbing it into its own being. The other impulse, again, is the dread fear to stand alone over against the whole, the longing to surrender oneself and to be absorbed in a greater, *to be taken hold of and determined* [my italics]. (Schleiermacher 1958, 4)

Spinoza's concept of the spirit as finite, with the replenishing theme of gain and loss in relation to the individuation process, provided Schleiermacher with a concept of history as the ebb and flow of constant change in spirit as it extended through its historical individual becomings. This also meant that the particular conditions of being were transient and the trappings of a particular historical existence linger as a remnant.

Religious sensibility was not in the remnants of a particular historical manifestation but in this movement of the soul. For Schleiermacher what he refers to interchangeably as the *soul*, *mind* or *spirit* had a plastic quality. It was capable of being formed or created, giving it a sculptural quality that makes it enduring, in that it extends into history as a particular historical consciousness. This aspect of Schleiermacher's work was crucial for Dilthey's understanding of the world:

The purposeful activity of an individual — characterised by Schleiermacher's the 'will to know,' and by others as the 'drive to know'... must count on corresponding purposive activity by other individuals, both to incorporate it and to have an effect on it. (Dilthey 1989, 177)

In this sense, the individual is a closed unit. Through the spirit, the opposing forces of the spiritual and natural realm are one. Each individual must make the movement toward the world in an act of self-formation. However, to become aware of God and experience revelation requires an expulsion of the historical self; a sacrifice that Schleiermacher portrays as dangerous but rewarding. This is at the core of his theory of absolute dependency and the relationship between revelation and self-denial:

Observe yourself with unceasing effort. Detach all that is not yourself, always proceed with ever-sharper sense, and the more you fade from yourself the clearer will the universe stand forth before you, the more splendidly will you be recompensed for the horror of self annihilation through the feeling of the infinite in you. (Schleiermacher 1996, 68)

Schleiermacher is acknowledging that there exists an awareness of the diverse pull between spirit and the world, but (unlike Kant) he does not believe in a clear division between the two. Extending the self into history is irresistible. The desire to become part of history is equal to the will to be. At the same time, withdrawal from the world is necessary for awareness, not only of the divine, but also of an understanding of the finite limitations of the historical 'I'. Schleiermacher's process of intuition is a retreat from the world in order to then merge with one's place in the world. Except through the material conditions of the body, there is no other means by which the soul can thrive.

When Schleiermacher makes a distinction in his third speech between the religion of *art* and *artistic sense*, he is making a significant statement about the nature of art and the nature of religion. Their appearance is as that of separate entities, but they are both part of the same sensibility. Art is perceived as intuitively creative but not necessarily the same as religion. Schleiermacher is saying otherwise, that the same capacity in the human imagination that is authentic to religion makes art possible too.

Religion and art stand beside one another like two friendly souls whose *inner affinity* whether or not they equally surmise it, is nevertheless unknown to them. Friendly words and outpourings of the heart always hover on their lips and return again and again because they are still not able to find the proper manner and final cause of their reflection and longing. They hope for a fuller revelation and, suffering and sighing under the same pressure, they see one another enduring, perhaps with inner sympathy and deep feeling but yet without love. (Schleiermacher 1998, 69)

Schleiermacher is not confusing religious art or art that is promoted to the

status of religion with the artistic sense that makes the actual production of art possible. Both art and religion share an aesthetic dependency. For each, it emerges from precisely the same source, the spirit.

At the same time, this source is the very goal to which both are striving to return. Like religion, art shares in the ability to make manifest perceptions of the infinite and bring vision to fruition:

Look there, the goal of your present highest endeavours is at the same time the resurrection of religion! It is your efforts that must bring about this event, and I celebrate you as the rescuers and guardians of religion, even though unintentionally so. Do not retreat from your posts and your works until you have unlocked the innermost element of knowledge, and, in priestly humility, opened the sanctuary of true science where, to everyone who enters and even to the sons of religion, everything is replaced that superficial knowledge and arrogant boasting caused them to lose. (Schleiermacher 1996, 70)

The claim that Schleiermacher is making here is that even the church and the clergy can benefit from the insight gained from artistic pursuits.

Furthermore, the passage makes it clear that all along Schleiermacher's 'culture despisers' have been in possession of this aesthetic sensibility and that he has addressed them in particular as a way of showing how the new class of thinkers in a modern world owe their creativity to this absolute dependency on the infinite and therefore owe religion their service.

Schleiermacher believed that religious ethics, as the lived *conatus* of individual souls could be demonstrated through an aesthetic sensibility that could comment on the presence of the infinite in our existence. The question arises: Can this remain true for contemporary art?

## *Conclusion*

Schleiermacher's significance, for postmodern theology, lies in his commitment to the notion of the historical and finite soul/spirit. This has a part to play in an onto-theological and epistemological conception of being. For practical theologians it means that an authentic contribution can be made to contemporary theory from an authentically *theological* perspective rather than settling for an assimilation of anthro-sociological understandings of experience. It brings the spiritual back into the arena of practical theology.

What I have argued for in this chapter is that practical theology should have access to a Schleiermacher unburdened of the various interpretations and misrepresentations that have been responsible for detracting from his radical ontology, thereby allowing the discipline to re-engage with some of the innovative concepts he had with regards to history and knowledge. The first misrepresentation was the notion that Schleiermacher's contribution to modern theology consisted merely in the organization of theology into carefully differentiated annexes. He had the reputation of being the theologian most responsible for the clerical paradigm, which most contemporary practical theologians want to distance practical theology from.

Schleiermacher's later work was consistent with (and modified by) his involvement in the creation of a curriculum in the new modern university in which theology, like other disciplines, was a discrete subject. It no longer held the place it had occupied in the older regime. Schleiermacher was influenced both by Schelling's approach to teaching as a vocation and by

Fichte's attempt to make knowledge systematic. The organization of knowledge into different categories was characteristic of the new world order. This curriculum served a particular culture.

There is nothing in Schleiermacher's later systematic work that contradicts his ontology or his belief about the underlying spiritual basis for knowledge of any kind. The state and the church had more reason to emphasize the pedagogical and clerical aspects of Schleiermacher's thinking. I do not believe that this was in any way conspiratorial, even though both were very critical of what they took to be the 'pantheistic' influences of Spinoza. Schleiermacher was nonetheless accorded a position of considerable influence and responsibility.

The second misrepresentation comes from Dilthey, who was keen for the opportunity to translate Schleiermacher's concept of the historical soul into his own concept of an historical psyche. This provided Dilthey with a psychological perspective for the explanation of experience — something which the methods of the natural sciences, with their emphasis on empirical and measurable facts, could not provide.

However, Dilthey was satisfied that these experiences were a legitimate source of knowledge, whereas Schleiermacher had presented a more subtle understanding concerning the individuals and their historical circumstances. He recognized that fate was, in some sense, both limiting and liberating, whereas Dilthey had his own motivation for deploying Schleiermacher's historicalization of the spirit.

Schleiermacher's concept of religion as the 'inner' or intuitive process emerged from his attempts to show what religion was not. It was not a product of the rational mind; in the second speech Schleiermacher makes it very clear that he wishes to disassociate religion from Kant's transcendental moral philosophy. This is an important critique, which has a contemporary resonance with practical theology because some practical theologians are still in pursuit of an all-inclusive method that will deliver moral theory and practical wisdom as the result of a rational process.

Dilthey was responsible for taking Schleiermacher in a direction that led to a hermeneutics of historical understanding. This ultimately distracted from the insight that Schleiermacher had into the *historicalization* of religion (and, for that matter, science and art).

What Dilthey was in fact analysing was the product of this capacity for the human spirit/soul to engage in history. The desire to understand the 'purposeful' nature of praxis is not the same as understanding the ontological/creativity of the commitment/emergence of an individual to 'a life'.

## Chapter 6

### ART AND NEW PASTORAL SPACES

Above all practical theology has to believe in itself. The opportunities, despite all the negatives of shrinking resources, are there. It will survive and flourish if it can produce the goods. Pastoral theology is genuinely useful. It can enlarge the universe of human discourse, instruct, provide practical council, illuminate human nature and provide moral direction. But pastoral theology is at the bottom like all art — pleasurable, amusing, refreshing, fun. Indeed that is its usefulness (Ballard in *International Journal of Practical Theology* 1999 Vol.2 308)

As I have demonstrated above, practical theology has generated a historical narrative in order to establish its academic bearings. Calibrating the discipline to establish a consistent pedagogy involves locating and coordinating all the familiar landmarks so that a well-mapped landscape can emerge. This sense of an inhabited and settled space is evident in the work of Paul Ballard, e.g.: in the report entitled *Where is British Practical Theology?* The map that Ballard uses here is intellectually similar to those of other academic disciplines.

The fact that Ballard can declare that the ‘first and natural’ place to look for practical theology is in academic structures serves to emphasize this heritage. Practical theology extends itself from within an educational organisation, and seeks to build on this foundation:

Practical Theology (PT) emerged afresh on the academic scene in the 1960s. Subsequently, it has been struggling to find distinct form and content and to become established in the theological curriculum. (Ballard & Pattison 2002, 15)

Within this scheme, while art may be perceived as an extra-curricular subject area that can be deployed by practical theologians as a useful activity which is nevertheless conceptually separate from academia, I will argue in this chapter that this view differs from Schleiermacher's concept of art. The portrayal of art as 'pleasurable, amusing and refreshing' places it in a very minor role in comparison with art as it is understood by some contemporary theorists.

By the mid-twentieth century, we begin to see the theorisation of art reflect an aesthetic creativity as a medium not just for portraying or representing the world around us, but through which human experience and the world are reconciled. This is an understanding of art that is close to Schleiermacher's concept of the spirit. I will argue in this chapter that art and human creative activity should have a much more central role in how we understand spiritual life. I will examine the emergence of these new dimensions of art theory through the writings of Joseph Kosuth, who has made a significant impact on the recognition of art as an integral part of human understanding.

Kosuth was not only an artist; he was also a philosopher of art insofar as he wrote about the critical understanding of how art work is created. His writings contributed to the discourse of art criticism. He wished to separate art from traditional aesthetic criticism and challenged conventional notions about art. The theory of aesthetic perfection/beauty is not the measure of good art and the 'object' of art is not a static form. The result was a philosophy of art that subverted traditional classifications.

New thought, new thinking always seeks out some new form of presenting. Repetition of these forms is always possible but the origins have the uniqueness of communicating the innovative concepts through the working process of the artist.

In his influential essay, *Art after Philosophy*, (Kosuth 2002) Kosuth put forward the idea that the real significance of art is to continue where philosophy has left off.<sup>93</sup> The separation of the understanding of art from the self-reflexive activity of the artists was how art criticism usually worked. Kosuth argued for the right for the artist's thought process, the ideas incorporated in a work, to be part of the understanding of the work. The term *conceptual art* emerged from Kosuth's writings. He also argued that art was not a discipline that could be isolated from culture, perception, language and understanding. Moreover, in searching for a way to reduce art's isolation, he opened up the means of understanding that all these separate disciplines have a common principle. Whatever makes language, culture, belief and understanding possible was also the basis for art works:

In seeking to identify the notion of artistic work with the conceptual artist, Kosuth has not only aligned art with language and culture but has helped to reduce its status as an isolated independent discipline. (Guercio 2002, xxii)

Wishing to dispel the myth that art was something that took place beyond the ordinary experience of existence, Kosuth made it possible for the audience the reader or the viewer of art to be able to perceive art as both universal and integral to the creative process and the human condition.

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<sup>93</sup> This was in specific reference to philosophy after Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) and his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921) and postcolonial anthropology.

He worked on understanding artists' conceptual processes, thus providing new critical insight into the creative practices and new forms that reveal different perceptions of reality.

In the past man has considered the picture of the world which was given to him by his vision as being totally true or real and absolute. The mathematical perspective invented by renaissance scientists gave the artists an opportunity to make 'real' works of art. Modern scientists have realized the limitations of our vision. Technological 'aids' to vision, such as the advanced microscope or telescope, show us how much we don't see. If man's natural vision could see molecules or distant planets, surely his consideration of reality would be much different. The level of our perception of the world around us is arbitrarily arrived at by our vision. (Kosuth 2002, 5)

For Kosuth, conceptual art replaces philosophy and anthropology because it expands the intellectual space that philosophy and anthropology can no longer sustain. Conceptual art seeks to make the excess beyond the controlled boundaries of the narrative form (or *plane of organisation*) accessible; or at least to make it palpable, even if it cannot make it visible.

Lyotard sums up this elusiveness as: 'the perceptible is not entirely perceived; the visual is more than the visible' (Kosuth 2002, xvi).

Conceptual art creates the form through which this is disclosed. This understanding of art is very different from the kind of art that Ballard proposes as a 'fun' aspect of practical theology. As Kosuth presents it, art is a powerful mode of 'presenting' or disclosing the invisible through whichever form it selects. It is a valid analysis of reality when it ceases to be merely an 'investment', a pleasing pastime or entertainment:

Here then I propose rests the viability of art. In an age when traditional philosophy is unreal because of its assumptions, art's ability to exist will depend not only on its *not* performing a service — as entertainment, visual (or other) experience, or decoration — which is something easily replaced by kitsch culture and technology, but rather, it will remain viable by *not* assuming a philosophical stance; for art's unique character is the capacity to remain aloof from philosophical judgments. It is in this context that art shares similarities with logic, mathematics and, as well science. But whereas the other endeavours are useful, art is not. Art indeed exists for its own sake. (Kosuth 2002, 24)

Kosuth's definition of art's viability resonates with Schleiermacher's concept of religious sensibility, which exists for its own sake — not for the purpose of any applied morality of liturgical correctness, but as an infinite and non-contingent faculty manifesting itself in historical form. However, those forms are neither the meaning nor the purpose of it. It exists as part of human understanding, not as some abstract entity possessed of independent existence. It exists because we exist. It is that part of our being that reaches out to grasp fate, but is also the part of us that can influence history through the modifying effect we can have upon it. Schleiermacher makes this point about religion and art being misunderstood when considered as separate and distinct:

Religion and art stand beside one another like two friendly souls whose *inner affinity* whether or not they equally surmise it, is nevertheless unknown to them. Friendly words and outpourings of the heart always hover on their lips and return again and again because they are still not able to find the proper manner and final cause of their reflection and longing. They hope for a fuller revelation and, suffering and sighing under the same pressure, they see one another enduring, perhaps with inner sympathy and deep feeling but yet without love. (Schleiermacher 1996, 69)

Schleiermacher is not confusing religious art, or art that is promoted to the status of religion, with the aesthetic capacity that makes creativity possible. Both *are* one and the same and share an absolute dependency on the spirit. For Schleiermacher, it is the 'cultured despisers' who are most likely to be able to demonstrate this in an age wary of religion:

Look there, the goal of your present highest endeavours is at the same time the resurrection of religion! It is your efforts that must bring about this event, and I celebrate you as the rescuers and guardians of religion, even though unintentionally so. Do not retreat from your posts and your works until you have unlocked the innermost element of knowledge, and, in priestly humility, opened the sanctuary of true science where, to everyone who enters and even to the sons of religion, everything is replaced that superficial knowledge and arrogant boasting caused them to lose. (Schleiermacher 1996, 70)

Schleiermacher is claiming here that the church and the clergy can benefit from the insight gained from artistic pursuits.

Furthermore this passage makes it clear that all along Schleiermacher's 'culture despisers' have been in possession of this aesthetic sensibility. He addressed them in particular with the aim of showing this new class of modern-world thinkers how they source their creativity in this absolute dependency on the infinite and, therefore, owe religion their service. Schleiermacher believed that religious ethics, as the lived *conatus* of the individual spirit could be demonstrated through an aesthetic sensibility that would disclose the spirit. Might this remain true for contemporary art?

Schleiermacher's significance, for postmodern theology is to be found in his commitment to the notion of the historical and finite soul/spirit. This insight might yet contribute to a new onto-theological and epistemological conception of being. For practical theologians, it would entail making a valid contribution to contemporary theory from an authentically *theological* perspective, rather than opting exclusively for anthropological and sociological understandings of experience. In other words, it brings the spirit back into the arena of practical theology and uses this to expand the conceptual landscape in order to create new pastoral spaces.

I will now explore how art can help us do this through the work of artists Barbara Hepworth, Tacita Dean and Zoë Leonard, after which I shall consider how the reflective theology of Heather Walton contributes to the creation of such new pastoral spaces wherein new ethical subjectivities can be constructed.

## 6.1 *Barbara Hepworth: The Body as Pastoral Space*

Here is a system of images which I term my perception of the universe, and which may be entirely altered by a very slight change in a certain privileged image — my body. This image occupies the center; by it all others are conditioned; at each of its movement everything changes, as though by the turn of a kaleidoscope. (Bergson 1994, 25)

Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975), an English modernist working in the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, produced sculptures reflecting the environment. Her landscapes are expansive. In common with her friend, the abstract sculptor Henry Moore (1898-1986), Hepworth believed in the 'intrinsic emotional significance' of the sculptures she produced. It was not representation she wanted, but a harmonious relationship between material and form.

For Hepworth there were both potentials and limitations to the materials with which she worked. Ultimately, while stone remains true stone and wood is still wood, the materials have their own poetic value and are never consumed in representation. Sculpture is a medium through which aspects of human consciousness can find expression. Stone is the material through which the emotion of her art is shaped. Her work became progressively more abstract.

Freedom from the constraints of representational art meant that Hepworth could pursue her own sculptural poetics.

I discovered a new approach which would allow me to build my own sculptural anatomy dictated only by my poetic demands from the material. (Hepworth 1946, 47)

The human form is also a *medium* in her sculptures. Mother and child is a consistent theme throughout her work. This was in spite of the ambiguous personal feelings she had about actual motherhood. There is a keenness in Hepworth's art to express her own human existence in her sculptures, but not in an obvious sense. Therefore, abstractions of the human form permeate her work. Her materials, and the shape she gives to them, provide a monumental presence for the human form. This becomes a testimony to the capacity for humanity to reconcile existence to some particular concrete subsistence. Her sculptures exhibit new ways of exploring these relationships between nature, humanity and material environments:

I began to imagine the earth rising and becoming human. I speculated as to how I was to find my own identification, as a human being and a sculptor, with the landscapes around me. (Hepworth 1946, 45)

Hepworth describes her relationship with the materials she uses as crucial to the development of the ideas that will emerge from her sculptures. She follows what she (along with Henry Moore) refers to as an *honesty* of the material. For example, the 'whole growth' of wood is vertical and it can be carved up, down or across it. The use of the material involves her senses, which have developed through her use of them in these particular circumstances. When Hepworth describes marble as 'delicate' and 'easily bruised', she is doing so from a very personal and intimate knowledge of the materials she appropriates for her ideas. But this is language that extends her subjectivity into the material. When using stone, she pays close attention to the sound her hammer makes, using her ears to determine whether the cut will be good or bad, 'listening how each hammer blow is going to take away the piece you want' (Hepworth 1946, 8).

There is an intimate relationship here, between the body and the production (whatever the form). The sculpture as an independent object is mirrored as a real somatic and sensual modification on the body. Hepworth's own subjectivity is altered and enhanced through the same aesthetic process that enables her to fold this development back into her work, as Simon O'Sullivan points out:

We are, if you like, representational creatures with representational habits of thought. We inhabit an internal world and an external world. We separate ourselves as subjects from the object world. Indeed this alienated state is the very precondition of self-consciousness. Art, at least as it is figured within representation, is complicit in this dynamic. Art mirrors back the apparently reassuring image of our own subjectivity (an outer and an inner content). As such a transformation in how we think about art will necessary alter the topology of how we think about ourselves and *vice versa*. It is in this sense that the crisis of representation is also a crisis in typical subjectivity. (O'Sullivan 2006, 16)

Hepworth's art *was* her life; her children spent their early years in a nursing home, a sacrifice that made her art possible. Paradoxically a lot of her sculptures are visually nurturing, *Two Heads (Mother and Child)* 1932, *Figure (Mother and Child)* 1933, *Mother and Child* 1934 and *Nesting Stones* 1937 are all evocative of tender images of maternal care. It would be easy to interpret this as compensation. However, these sculptures of maternal care are best considered as part of the larger vision Hepworth had of humanity and nature. Her sculptures are *not representational* and her emotional response to nature was that she herself was, 'cradled in the anatomy of landscape.'

It is this relationship with the landscape that is given form in her sculpture, not the domestic maternal space. 'I rarely draw what I can see — I draw what I feel in my body' (Hepworth 1966, 11). There is a sense with Hepworth that the body and the landscape have no boundaries, so when she

describes what it is she feels in her body it is also what she has distilled from her environment:

Sculpture is a three-dimensional projection of primitive feelings: touch, texture, size and scale hardness and warmth, evocation and compulsion to move, live and love. Landscape is strong — it has bones and flesh and skin and hair. (Hepworth 1966, 11)

Hepworth understands life as this assimilation of materials, which is why her work is motivated by the need to co-ordinate the location of the human figure within this landscape, rather than try to represent the experiences of the individual life. The human spirit is inseparable from the landscape it inhabits, poetically, emotionally and physically.

The rich mineral deposits of Cornwall were apparent on the very surface of things; quartz, amethyst and topaz; tin and copper below in the old mineshaft; geology and prehistory — a thousand facts induced a thousand fantasies of form and purpose, structure and life, which had gone into the making of what I saw and what I was. (Hepworth 1966, 13)

This is in stark contrast to traditional pastorals<sup>94</sup>, which conceal the philosophical and ideological separation of humanity and nature.

Hepworth's pastoral is closely focused on the human condition and the influence of nature in shaping the spirit. Hepworth's pastoral landscape sculptures demonstrate the engagement of humanity with the environment and in doing so help to remove the illusion of independence or separateness from our immediate environment whether it is natural or technological. This is a concept of the body engaged, assimilated and worn though in multiple environments yet humanity still seem to have the capacity for quiescent and delusional self-absence.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> The pastoral as a concept, with its collection of portraits from biblical images of care and Virgil's classical notion of retreat and return, divisions of country (nature) and town (culture) have been in circulation for thousands of years. However *The Garden of Eden* is one of the earliest idyllic pastorals deployed to explain the human condition as the result of knowledge. Describing a utopia from which humanity has been expelled and to which there is a longing to return. This edenic longing represents a desire for humanity to be free from suffering and alienation. Hepworth in her work seeks to close the gap between nature and humanity.

<sup>95</sup> Although the new eco-politics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century suggests a change in this perception, the concern for the

## 6.2 *Tacita Dean: The Sailor Who Fell From Grace With the Sea*

And Jesus was a sailor  
when he walked upon the water  
and he spent a long time watching  
from his lonely wooden tower  
and when he knew for certain  
only drowning men could see him  
he said All men will be sailors then  
until the sea shall free them  
but he himself was broken long before the sky would open  
forsaken, almost human  
he sank beneath your wisdom like a stone

(Leonard Cohen)

Sister I won't ask for forgiveness, my sins are all that I have...

(Bruce Springsteen)

The sea has always been an important metaphor for human experience, Hans Blumenberg, who has made the 'seascape' a paradigm for existence, argues that it serves to disclose the 'transgression of boundaries':

Humans live their lives and build their institutions on dry land. Nevertheless, they seek to grasp the movement of their existence above all through a metaphoric of the perilous sea voyage. The repertory of this nautical metaphoric of existence is very rich. It includes coasts and islands, harbours and the high seas, reefs and storms, shallows and calms, sail and rudder, helmsmen and anchorages, compass and astronomical navigation, lighthouse and pilots. Often the representation of danger on the high sea serves only to underline the comfort and peace, the safety and serenity of the harbour in which a sea voyage reaches its end. (Blumenberg 1997, 7)

The sea (with its vastness and sense of being 'other world', unknowable,

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environment is global and there is a growing amount of literature on dystopian pastorals. Hepworth's art resonates with this contemporary crisis; a finite soul shaped by the environment is ultimately one that is diminished or enhanced accordingly. There is something reminiscent of the theology of Athanasius in this notion of the soul: the more alienated it is in this world, the less defined it becomes — resulting in the image of the divine both dispersing and weakening.

unpredictable and powerful) has long been an inspiration in the work of artist Tacita Dean (1965- ). In her art, the sea is used to emphasise human vulnerability and dependency<sup>96</sup>:

Often when I consider the desolation of the sea, I imagine it as a place unchanged by the passage of time, a rare prehistoric world where a human being can be truly lost. (Dean 1999, 48<sup>97</sup>)

Her work 'Disappearance at Sea' (1996) is influenced by the tragic events that led to the suicide of yachtsman Donald Crowhurst almost some thirty years earlier. The story of Crowhurst and his fall from grace from the sea becomes a contemporary parable demonstrating that obtaining a definitive moral interpretation of an event is a never-completed task.

For many, Donald Crowhurst is just a cheat who abused the sacred unwritten of good sportsmanship. But for some it is more complicated than this, and he is seen as much as a victim of the Golden Globe as the pursuer of it. His story is about human failing; about pitching his sanity against the sea; where there is no human presence or support system on which to hang a tortured psychological state. His was the world of acute solitude, filled with the ramblings of a troubled mind. (Dean 1999, 7)

Donald Crowhurst was an amateur yachtsman who participated in the first solo round the world yacht race in the summer of 1968. The race was for the 'Golden Globe' trophy, and was sponsored by the *Sunday Times* newspaper. Crowhurst was a competent 'weekend' sailor who was experiencing financial difficulties, who hoped the publicity of victory (and the prize money) would rescue him from financial ruin. The other interested party in the story was the town council of Teignmouth, who were delighted that Crowhurst had adopted their town as the 'home port' of his

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<sup>96</sup> Many of Deans works are influenced by seafaring stories, her 1998 Chalk on blackboard drawings were influenced by Shakespeare's play the *Tempest*. At the end of this tale, Prospero has lost his superhuman/magical powers and appeals for mercy from the audience who can set him free through their forgiveness. This is in a way what Dean is asking the viewer to do for Crowhurst — to see his broken state and allow mercy to set him free.

<sup>97</sup> As the pages in Tacita Dean's book *Teignmouth Electron* are not numbered, all page references are counted from the beginning of the Introduction as page 1.

voyage. The media coverage meant that this small town would attract visitors and benefit financially from the public interest in the competitor Crowhurst:

Crowhurst's voyage was inextricably caught up with the affairs of Teignmouth Council. He became a tool for their Publicity Committee, and after he had found financial support for the construction of his trimaran locally, he named it *Teignmouth Electron* after the town. From what I can gather, he probably loved being the darling of Teignmouth in those few hectic months prior to his departure, but gradually this local pride became too much to bear, and in those agonising days when he was desperately trying to get ready to leave, he must have despised the bunting on the quay, and the dignitaries preparing to wave him off. They stood before him and his way of escape. He must have known that there was no getting out of it then, and that he was trapped by his own bravado, and by their zealous civic pride. (Dean 1999, 3)

The narrative foundation of the real time story of Donald Crowhurst is straightforward enough. It is the story about someone who, for whatever personal reasons, had chosen to attempt something which was beyond his capabilities, but was nonetheless carried along by public enthusiasm. The event had taken on a momentum beyond the management of Crowhurst. Someone should have put a stop to Donald Crowhurst's voyage, but too many people had too much invested in the event. The town council played a particular role in orchestrating events. Making history was not merely Crowhurst's personal adventure. A strong communal drive was behind him, summed up in a postcard printed and sold at the time:

The postcard showed Crowhurst standing on the prow of the *Teignmouth Electron*. He was wearing a V-neck jumper with a tie, awkwardly formal for someone who spent time around boats. He was looking down at the deck. On the back, it read, 'Greetings from Teignmouth the Devon resort chosen by Donald Crowhurst as the home port for his triumphant around the World Yacht Race'. (Dean 1999, 5)

Dean, in her explorations, never settles on the flaws of one character. Culpability for this very public folly is shared. Dean puts the Crowhurst tragedy into the context of the 1960s. It was an era of irrepressible

optimism, when longing for new experience led to a drive for adventure and experimentation — against which the Crowhurst story sets its warning of the darker side of voyaging into the strange unknown world of the sea. In this work, the Crowhurst story also becomes a medium through which we can scrutinize the notion of truth as she examines the moral boundaries.

Crowhurst was not far into his venture, although Dean suspected in fact before it had begun, when he realised that he would not survive a solo trip around the world with his ill-prepared trimaran. The limited period he had for the kind of preparation required for such a trip meant that he had compromised on most of the essential safety organization. Dean records that many of his spares and supplies were left behind in the confusion of his departure Teignmouth.

Crowhurst was as skilled in deceit as he was a sailor. In an age of relatively simple communication devices, he was able for a time to fake his positions and (though his reported times were unrealistically fast) on paper at least he looked set to win.<sup>98</sup> Nevertheless, when his logbooks were placed under scrutiny, his deception would become all too apparent. The deceitful competition would then be over for him. However, before this could occur, a strange inner voyage began to replace of the original external one. The false log was never recovered. Perhaps Crowhurst took it (and his faulty chronometer – see following paragraphs) overboard. What he left behind (purposefully?) was an alternative log of his descent into a timeless abyss, with no real hope of rescue from his completely uncharted inward voyage.

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<sup>98</sup> Robin Knox Johnston was the first to complete, this left Crowhurst and another competitor, Nigel Tetley as contenders for second place. Tetley was actually far in the lead, and could possibly have beat Robin Knox-Johnston due to his later starting date. As a result, Tetley, who had genuinely circumnavigated, pushed too hard, destroyed his own trimaran and had to abandon the race. Nigel Tetley committed suicide a year after this event.

Perhaps Donald Crowhurst used his broken chronometer to weigh himself down into the calm and silent Sargasso Sea. The image is haunting, especially so because of his increasing identification with the vast timelessness of the sea:

God's clock is not the same as our clock. He has an infinite amount of 'our' time. (From the logbook of Crowhurst *in* Dean 1999, 46)

It would seem that Crowhurst had been anxious about the reliability of his chronometer throughout the voyage. At sea, sailors cannot afford to make even the smallest of errors in time; if an error becomes apparent then the flaw is immediately calculated in to bring about consistency. Crowhurst did not have at his disposal the added safety of satellite navigation. Losing the bearing of time left him at the mercy of the sea. For him the loss was unbearable. His time became a perpetual present to which he had constantly to adapt. Crowhurst had begun to suffer from 'time madness' a condition suffered by sailors when failing to keep immaculate time using the chronometer.

By the last day of his voyage, his chronometer had run down and stopped. Resetting it, he recorded in his logbook the words. 'MAX POSS ERROR' (Dean 1999, 47) and counted down his last agonising statements using chronometer time, until he wrote the words:

It is finished-It is finished IT IS THE MERCY

(Dean 1999, 47)

## Disappearance at Sea

The day was ending in a serenity of still and exquisite brilliance. The water shone pacifically; the sky without a speck was a benign immensity of unstained light... And at last, in its curved and imperceptible fall, the sun sank low, and from glowing white changed to a dull red without rays and without heat, as if about to go out suddenly, stricken to death by the touch of that gloom brooding over a crowd of men. (Conrad 1899, Part 1)

Thus, the imagination will not allow itself to be fixed by the principle of habit, without at the same time using habit for the purpose of passing off its own fancies, transcending its fixity and going beyond experience. (Deleuze 1991, 69)

Tacita Deans' artwork *Disappearance at Sea* is an atmospheric film about the disappearance of light, a rhythmic decline into pitch darkness, an exhibit that leaves no tangible subject. A camera fixed on the revolving mechanism of a lighthouse beam creates the effect. The film moves toward a dark landscape beyond the lighthouse, to a vanishing point. Sound is an important aspect of all Deans' work, and here it is the mechanical work of the lighthouse and the noise of sea birds at dusk that provides the soundtrack for a scene with no actual human presence. A convergence of familiar enough sounds is made to seem strange through this particular arrangement.

Much of Dean's work is about dislocation, familiar everyday experiences becoming strange and disconcerting environments through which we try to navigate. She manages to replicate an environment in which sound, time and vision become disproportionate in the absence of haptic events. The artwork demonstrates that sensations of sight and sound become estranged and amplified when the sensation of touch is excluded as a means for psychological orientation. The orientation of the soul depends upon the haptic event. In the eventless environment in which he found himself,

Crowhurst began to experience himself as part of a vast universe with no boundaries within which he could retain an image of himself.

Dean compares romantic notions about the healing powers of the sea with the tragic consequences for those who underestimate the danger of being 'all at sea'. She is ambiguous in her work about the notion that the sea has healing powers and that it is for some a vast pastoral space from which there is the possibility that a troubled soul might return calmed. Crowhurst did not possess the mindset needed for this. For him, the sea held no cure. The more he tried to control his environment, whether by deceit or otherwise, the more overwhelmingly lost he became:

He became dislocated, and absorbed himself in his writing and calculations, and particularly in his reading of Einstein's theories of relativity. Space and time became interwoven in a single fabric. (Dean 1999, 47)

For Crowhurst nothing could help him endure the vastitude of the sea. There was no organisation of the living into which he could extend his broken spirit. His diaries suggest that he had mentally vanished into the sea's formlessness long before he went overboard. Part of his suffering, his 'time-madness', was the eventual erosion of *any* former identity. Crowhurst was a 'cosmic being' with no limits to his spirit. Dean believes that he drifted in to a world of abstract ideas to 'deny his predicament in the physical world.' However, it is just as likely that *his* reality had become something other than ours — something which obscured his real situation, disguising his lonely rupture from the world. Crowhurst's predicament raised the issue of the relationship between the individual and the environment, spirit and the world. He had left behind the concrete hardware of one world while trying to fabricate another.

Ultimately, he fell between the two. All the previous connections and interactions, the actual relations that made him an integrated part of a wider unity, that would finely tune his identity on a daily basis, were gone. In the absence of a continuous regenerative framework Crowhurst's sense of self spills over. It is unsurprising that a person who is already trying to fulfill a fantasy fails to keep centred in the absence of external references.

What is telling about this experience is how rapidly what would have appeared to be formative and foundational, the personal history, dissolves. Crowhurst was unable to subordinate the sea for the purpose of his own sense of self. He was unable to retain a personal and independent status. Instead, he was possessed and consumed by the sea until he reached his vanishing-point.

Where sensation plays an important role in our imaging of life, Crowhurst was left with his reality patched together as if it were part of some abstract game with the cosmos:

And so Crowhurst retreated into a world of abstract ideas in order to deny his real predicament in the world, and being a very good chess player, chose to use its rituals to set out the rules for the cosmic game he was about to play. He stated that the game had to be played in the mind and not outside it; otherwise it would make God sad. (Dean 1999, 47)

Dean's art suggests that just before Crowhurst vanished overboard, he had reached that point where his life was just 'pure immanence' beyond the small domestic measure of good and evil. Had he survived he would have been a cheat and a failure, he could not have been saved by Dean's art, his widow's stoicism or Robin Knox-Johnston's noblesse oblige. Instead, his confession was both a death speech and a passage to peace:

He could have continued to deceive the world – thrown all his logbooks overboard or faked an accident at sea – but he chose the truth, 'the great beauty of the truth.' For Donald Crowhurst, it was the deceit that was unbearable. That was the sin: his 'Sin of Concealment'. He gave up his life as atonement for this sin, so that we might have the truth. (Dean 1999, 51)

The biblical overtones are not a new feature in the work of Dean. Such notes play a significant role in much of her work.<sup>99</sup> For example, the commentary to *Structure of Ice* (1997) is spoken in reverential tones, making the molecular structure liturgical, making Dean's work sacramental.

In a 'real-time' narrative, this 'sin of concealment' reference would be unambiguously directed to the race. Dean's book however, is not a mere collection of facts. It is both a construction of facts and an investigative imagination. Her sleuth persona pulls together coincidence and fragments of detail, thereby recreating Crowhurst's story. Through this work, though Crowhurst cannot be mistaken for someone else, he becomes someone new. His 'sin of concealment' started long before the race. Some signs were already there to suggest a life not felt to be authentic, e.g.: the remark about his V-neck jumper, the comparison between Crowhurst and a 'real' contender like Knox-Johnston, his own self-diagnosis as a 'misfit':

Save some pity for the Misfit, fighting on with bursting heart;  
Not a trace of common sense, his is no common flight.  
Save, save him some pity. But save the greater part  
For him that sees no glimmer of the Misfit's guiding light.

(From the logbook of Donald Crowhurst in Dean 1999, 61)

For Dean, the Crowhurst tragedy provided a means of exploring the nature of reconciliation. In the end, through the lens of her own personal vision of the sea as a healing-space, she saw Crowhurst as 'atoning' for his 'sin of

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<sup>99</sup> The reverential notes she so frequently uses give her works something of a liturgical tone.

concealment'. Crowhurst only gained redemption when he 'gave up' or, to use his own words, 'resigned from the game' to honour God who had 'won'. What had started as a yacht race had developed into a universal pilgrimage. Crowhurst gave himself to the sea; he 'saved/redeemed' himself and offered his peace to all:

That has been my problem that is the problem everyman must solve for him self. This is how I have solved the problem. And to let you inside my soul, which is now "at peace", I give you my book.

(From the logbook of Donald Crowhurst *in* Dean 1999, 30)

Dean's work has a sacramental and liturgical rhythm all the way through. She has picked up the remnants of religious ritual, lately emptied and abandoned, re-used them in an appropriate context. In her work they do not sound awkward. They imbue her works with a solemnity that suggests wonder (*The Structure of Ice*, 1997) sacredness (Crowhurst 'my peace I give you') and liturgical rhythm (the lighthouse in *Disappearance at Sea*), the ethereal movement of women bathers and the suggestion of a healing 'baptism' in water (Gellert 1998).

Dean has lifted Crowhurst out of his own narrow cultural frame (the culture of the sporting hero) with its rigid moral edge (the rules of the race), and expanded his experience into a new space. This new space becomes universal, inviting us into the sojourn that Crowhurst made; which is (in the final analysis) offered up for his redemption:

If you ask anybody about Donald Crowhurst, they will talk, more often than not, about fraud and deceit, and about the man who faked his journey around the world. But the story of Donald Crowhurst is more about integrity than forgery. It is a story about truth. (Dean 1999, 31)

The chief vehicle for this redemption of Crowhurst is the effort of Dean in her weaving together of the fragments of this sad tale beyond its original circumstances. We are the privileged spectators of a strange experience, an experience with which (because it reflects our own flaws and vulnerability) we are able to identify ourselves. In this sense, Dean's art (through being prepared to put sacredness at the core of its attempts at resolution) seems offer both respectful reflection on and honest recognition of Crowhurst's own feeling of being part of something that, ultimately, is greater than himself.

### 6.3 *Zoë Leonard: Art as Necessary Memorial in the Process of Creativity*

Trees show up in my work over and over again. I think I use them so much because they are such an essential symbol. Trees represent home, shelter, the seasons, change and stability, life and endurance. They offer wood and food: fire, building material, fruit. They are beauty. They occur as religious symbols -- representing the connection between earth and sky, as signs of both abundance and longevity. They reflect seasonal changes clearly and dramatically. They indicate water sources and survival zones, marking oases in the desert, and limberline in the mountains. Although trees are much larger than we are, they sort of set the scale for us -- we rest beneath them, cultivate them in orchards. Our language reflects our relationship with trees and forests. We speak of having roots, of bearing fruit, of family trees.

(Leonard & Dungan 2002, 76)

Zoë Leonard is a contemporary American artist, whose organic imagery of left-over relics of life (carrying residues of the past) explores how humanity and nature manage to co-exist in the urban environment. Using materials that have become estranged from what might be considered their 'natural habitat' (e.g.: trees in urban built-up areas), her work exhibits an unromantic, realistic vision of nature which aims at exposing the anxieties we all feel about our immediate surroundings. She uses sculpture to

allegorise the human condition. She proffers no solution. There is no utopian message of harmony. Yet, in all her work there is a sense of hope and graced endurance.

For Leonard, her art does not exist to appease the senses. If it informs us about affliction, it does so as that which is left in the wake of human suffering. It is not offered as contemplative reflection to raise the human spirit from despair. Instead it memorializes suffering by creating encounters that can move the spirit into unfamiliar landscapes.

Leonard's use of trees in her art provides her with the opportunity to explore the relationship between nature and creativity. In one notable work, she has presented a series of photographs of trees growing within the disfigured urban landscape. Yet these trees have not only survived and thrived, they have become part of the very environments that have made their growth so difficult. Some of them (originally planted within iron railings placed to promote straight growth) have outgrown their prisons – though they bear bulges and scars sustained in their escape. Some have even absorbed the fencing into their very trunks. In such art works, Leonard captures and develops her themes of displacement, destruction, repair and survival.

In 1997, for the July Vienna Secession, Leonard made *Tree*. For this she took a whole broken-down tree (*let me see your beauty broken down as you would do for one that you loved*) and 'repaired' it with steel splints. She refers to it as her 'Frankenstein Tree'. She said it was as if the tree had been in a terrible accident. In such works, she is concerned with the survival and

persistence of life in a harsh environment – in an environment which so impinges on 'natural' growth that the trees have to integrate themselves into their inhospitable milieu to remain viable within it.

As well using sculpture, Leonard employs photography to 'reframe' the past inviting the onlooker to take a second glimpse at the remains of an event. Using black and white photography has the effect of sharpening the focus on her subject. She invites us to view things differently with both her choice of subject and its artistic medium. For Leonard her role as an artist is to navigate, to act as a link between strange worlds.

For example, in having the capacity to be co-creative (to absorb and enfold the world into their structure) trees modify the environment that modifies them – and stand revealed as monuments of reconciliation. Some of Leonard's trees are depicted with the debris of modern life clinging to them; used and indestructible plastic bags caught in the branches and blowing like streamers in the wind<sup>100</sup>:

The tree + bag pictures were taken over several years in New York. I kept noticing a particular place where the wind catches stray plastic bags and floats them up into the branches of these two small trees. After a windy day there could be four or five, or as many as a dozen, plastic bags hanging off the branches. I loved this: the beauty and ugliness of it. It's an odd image: cheerful and depressing at the same time (Leonard 2002, 76)

Leonard's art is thematically underpinned by her political and ecological awareness, in the light of which she addresses modern complexity about what it is to be human, or the 'good citizen'. What does it mean to be *good*? Is it related to the environment we have to survive in? How does (if it does)

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<sup>100</sup> In Ireland and the West of Scotland, the bags on the trees have long been named 'witches knickers' – similarly in Leonard's New York, with its strong Irish influence.

this environment affect us? On all levels, Zoe Leonard is constantly aware of this complexity – as her oeuvre demonstrates. The images she produced of 'Hunting in Alaska' are perfect exemplars of this contemplative relationship with her immediate environment:

In 1994, I started spending time in Alaska. The first time, I stayed six months. I returned in 1995 and lived up there alone for a year and a half in Eagle, a small village on the Yukon River. I got interested in the idea of subsistence — of living more directly from my own labour. I heated with wood, hauled my own water, and gathered and grew some of my food. Gradually my experience there seeped into my work.

I was afraid at first that I would have a hard time making art in Alaska. What I found was the opposite. I was surrounded by the complexity of nature, and began to think about our 'progress' as a people, about the choices we have made. I thought a lot about hunting, about our predatory nature. No one wants to admit they're a predator, but it's impossible to find someone who doesn't sanction killing on some level — for food, or for political or moral reasons. (Leonard 1999 Gallery 2 Warsaw The Centre for Contemporary Art. Interview Online)

However, she also evokes past environments, along with their attendant ideologies; bringing them out into the immediate present. Her photographic work on museum images of women challenges our current perceptions of what we regard as morally appropriate by comparing the altering status of the subjects, as depicted through the lens of the historically changing values of our culture. In her black and white pictures of museum displays of anatomical models of women, used to delineate 'abnormality' or medical models, she invites us to look anew at what was once acceptable.

These strange objects were supposedly originally meant to serve some educational and scientific purposes. In reality, they disclose the absurdity of their age. The pictures show anatomical models of women with their chests or abdomens opened up to display the position of internal organs. What makes them curiosities, as opposed to mere teaching tools, is that the models have been posed to reflect 'delicate' femininity. One model sits

upright on a chair, in a pose that suggests a coy self-consciousness about her exposed flesh. She has raised a hand to cover her face and her shame. Frozen in this pose are the values and precepts of that particular era. Another model (lying in a glass museum case) has her organs displayed, yet is still adorned with a double strand of pearls. The original justification for these displays is gone. They are now relics, remnants of the past with all pretence of educational or scientific value long gone. Nevertheless, the images provide a haunting evocation of the history of attitudes to female anatomy in the history of the advance of science.

Perhaps most disturbing of all is Leonard's presentation of the 'Bearded Lady'; the actual head of a woman preserved under a scientific bell jar. Such images go through a process of conceptualisation. Beginning as 'teaching' tools, they have now become museum curiosities – a curiosity at which Leonard is asking us to 'look again'. In the context of her photographs they become artifacts that disclose how the altered manner in which they are viewed reveals the changes in the conceptual apparatus that surround them. The objects have not changed, but how we look at them has. Leonard has taken images that have been 'framed' by ideologies of the past and reframed them to expose more not only the object but also its conceptual and contextual history.<sup>101</sup>

These are repellent objects, but nonetheless of value to our understanding of the continuous flux in sensibility they reveal:

I first saw a picture of the anatomical wax model of a woman with pearls in a guidebook on

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<sup>101</sup> This process continues in presenting these as examples of changing ideology, epistemology and ontology in the present work.

Vienna. She struck a chord in me. I couldn't stop thinking about her. She seemed to contain all I wanted to say at that moment, about feeling gutted, displayed. Caught as an object of desire and horror at the same time. She also seemed relevant to me in terms of medical history, a gaping example of sexism in medicine. The perversity of those pearls that long blond hair. I went on with this work even though it was gory and depressing because the images seem to reveal so much. I was shocked when I came across the bearded woman's head. I couldn't believe that here was this woman's head, stuffed and mounted, in a jar. The bell jar was just sitting on a file cabinet in a corner of the room, in an obscure museum in Paris, a place completely closed to the general public (it is part of the school of medicine at the University of Paris). Her head was placed in the Jar to be looked at. But it's not just her head that I see. I see the bell jar, the specimen identification card, the carved wooden pedestal, I see a set of implied circumstances. Who was in charge? Who put this woman's head in a jar and called it science? (Leonard & Cottingham 1993)

Leonard's work challenges the ontological and epistemological frames that legitimated the original context of these exhibits. What she now exhibits in her reworking/reframing of these is the obscenity inherent in the original matrix. Moreover, for Leonard they provide a means for exposing the continuity of perversity in contemporary culture:

I am moved by her, anxious to know more about her life. But, these pictures don't tell us all that much about her. You cannot see her or know her by seeing only her severed head. These pictures are about our culture, about the institutional need for difference. Those anatomical models were made in the seventeenth century, and that woman was put under the bell jar in the late nineteenth century, but I see these images as contemporary, because the system which put her head in a bell jar is still in place. The world just hasn't changed that much. (Leonard & Cottingham 1993)

This work explores the relationship between nature and culture. The objects of scientific interest were clearly identified as much by gender stereotyping as by their actual physiology. The bearded woman was a 'freak show', presented under the auspices of educational/scientific interest to be sure; but it is clear that her adornment with a lace collar (a cultural indicator of femininity) contrasted with the facial hair (a masculine trait) was meant to arouse a perverse game of gender identity. Leonard's last statement emphasizes the persistence of this facet of our culture. A woman with too much facial hair is someone with a 'medical condition'. We, surely, are

enlightened and sensitive and would not treat her like a freak of nature but as someone whose condition could be dealt with, or 'cured'. For Leonard the idea that someone should have such a life because of a cultural fixation about body hair and gender is tragic. Female facial hair is not life threatening, so why should it be regarded as problematic?

Leonard is deeply concerned with the cruelty underlying attitudes toward differences, to the seeming need of making labeling aspects of the human condition 'normal' or 'abnormal'. Or in the case of illnesses, like the HIV virus, the language is imbued with moral ideologies. (When HIV and AIDS were first known about there were teaching materials provided for schools that portrayed 'innocent' sufferers - with the inevitable corollary implication of culpability in some of those suffering from the disease.)<sup>102</sup>

However, it would be a simplistic error to interpret Leonard's work as merely the study of the distortion of the natural realm through the cultural. Her tree images demonstrate that she is exploring the symbiotic relationship between nature and the environment. Her trees are an analogy for the resilience of humanity and the capacity we have for being co-creative within the strictures of our environments. There is no denying the cruelty and injustice of the past. There is no plea for a utopian future. What her work does is provide the aesthetic space both for mourning and for the real challenge of being vigilant about how we view the world, alerting us to be on guard against the prejudices that are inherent in our very 'looking' at the world.

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<sup>102</sup> The tendency to hold up individuals who are different for some reason still exists, not in the circus as part of a display of 'freakishness' but on television under the guise of being 'informative' and possibly educative. Meanwhile our moral temperature is taken through 'confessionals' like the Jerry Springer show or Britain's own version the Jeremy Kyle show.

If we could extract one feature from Leonard's work that could sum up her work, it would be the notion of *adornment*. With the bearded woman, her adornment, her lace collar, is intended to alert the viewer and cause some discomfort. Pearls and blond hair make for disquiet when they adorn mutilated anatomical models.

However, when it comes to the trees, this adornment is not so obvious. They have gathered their garments from the urban landscape in which they dwell. And this is the very point illustrated by Leonard's art work. We gather our historical adornment from our environment of living systems, present and past. To experience life as other than just a malappropriated object, mourning is necessary — but only alongside celebration and hope. Leonard crosses the boundaries of time with her study. She is able to extend retrospective compassion for a woman who had her head removed and placed in a bell jar, merely because she did not fit the 'proper' criteria of femininity.

Adornment and entrapment are key themes in Leonard's work. While she cannot change the experience of the bearded lady, she can take the official documentation of one part of her experience, her head as museum display, and use it to question our own grasp of the significance of what is displayed before us. This work questions many of the pre-conceptions we use to order our experiences of this world.

Leonard examines the build up of the 'carbuncles', which cling to our perceptions of the world, the distortions that arise from them. What is particularly interesting about this work is the transcendence of present

pastoral space, through Leonard's ability to rework the past and allow it to make its own, authentic, contribution to our own experience of the world via her creation (from the leftover remnants of life) of present and tangible but transient images of loss and death, horror and beauty, sexuality and living experience — in such a way as to provide a connective residue and at the same time confer an intimacy with past injustice.

Another perceptive example of this sensibility is *Strange Fruit*, a sculpture made up from a composite of organic materials, and the process of putrefaction evokes the horror of trees with decaying corpses:

Preserving the object is like preserving the experience, the memory, or the set of associations. *Strange Fruit*<sup>103</sup> deals with the conflict between hanging on and letting go. Which in a way is what mourning is? The conflict in that piece is that every scrap is saved, painstakingly mended, but since the peels themselves are not preserved, they continue to decay. Over time, they shrivel, fade. The piece itself is slowly disintegrating. (Leonard 2002, 83)

Leonard's focus on decay is significant, because it stands for both thematic persistence and the loss of themes. Her work takes old hurts and wounds and offers them up as decaying/fading remnants in her sculptures.

*Strange fruit* remains a powerful witness to the atrocities of lynching in American society. (Alongside *Effigy* 1994 figure hanging from tree)

One of the themes I work with over and over again is the idea of reconstructed experience: memory our desire to remember and the changeable quality of our memories. We constantly reconstruct images of our past in order to create our present identity. I'm interested in the fissures of this reconstruction the clumsiness, the seams, the breaks. (Leonard 2002, 79)

This ability to identify with past struggles comes from her personal experience as a woman artist. Leonard's work demonstrates how our own

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<sup>103</sup> *Strange Fruit* — (1992-97) banana, orange, grapefruit, lemon, avocado peel, thread, buttons, sinew, needles, plastic, wire, stickers, fabric and trim wax. (Philadelphia Museum of Art) Discourse JTSMC Page 70 24.2 Spring 2002

embodiment can act as a viable connection to injustice past and present. What troubles us allows us to identify with universal human experience. This process of identification utilizes the empirical imagination. The traditional empiricism of the social sciences fails to include this transcendent aspect of existence.

#### 6.4 *Heather Walton: A Hermeneutic of Grief, Stowaways and Secret Mourning*

Like a baby stillborn.  
Like a beast with his horn.  
I have torn everyone who reached out for me. (Leonard Cohen)

The rhizome names a principle of connectivity. It implies a contact, and movement, between different milieus and registers, between areas that are usually thought of as distinct and discrete. Such a smearing is creative; it can produce surprising compatibilities and novel synthesis. In fact, the making of connections in this sense might be understood as a key modality of creativity in general. (O'Sullivan 2006, 17)

Heather Walton is a contemporary practical theologian and feminist. In her work, she deploys the tradition of *Midrash* to open up the narrative of sacred texts to new possibilities. Traditional Midrash has its origins in ancient Jewish homiletic commentary on scripture, normally using allegory to contribute to an understanding of meaning. However, Walton's approach is to intensify this kind of commentary by creating a relationship between the theological imagination, scripture and personal experience. Grief and mourning become a means of cutting across time to diminish perceptions of division between past and present.

Just as Leonard has used the past experience of women to highlight the injustices and prejudices of the present, so does Walton — taking some

very personal experiences to deliver a radical reading of scripture interwoven with reflections on contemporary issues of fertility/infertility and loss. Walton's work is important because it brings something new to the traditional use of Midrash. In addressing the limitations of narrative alone as a valid source for the theological imagination, she posits the body as a vehicle for wisdom.

The quest for meaning largely through cerebral acts of understanding has rather overshadowed many rich resources of insight in our culture. Ironically, this has meant that one of the oldest heresies of Christianity, gnostological concupiscence (a denial of the body) persists in our modern logocentric interpretations. Walton's work demands that we reach beyond the constrictions built into our relationships. Mourning, as a pastoral space, enables us both to transcend and to commit to our fate simultaneously. For Walton, the experience of mourning, whatever the nature of the loss, enables her to re-imagine relationships from scripture and imbue them with a new intensity. Thus her work challenges the interpretation of wisdom as intellectual mastery and the pursuit of absolute truth. The physical aspect of grief overrides historical boundaries and creates a sacred space that is revelatory.

Through her radical reworking of the narrative, Walton nonetheless retains scripture as part of the raw materials for the construction of a feminist theology.

Feminist practical theology is beginning to emerge as women cease to remain complicit in networks of institutional power that works against our wellbeing. As feminist scholarship has creatively reassessed the significance of gender difference, women practical theologians and practitioners are becoming increasingly confident about articulating insights from alternative

positions. Stressing the significance of a view from elsewhere does mean the adoption of naïve essentialism. Women have something different to say to practical theology neither because of an ethereal feminine nature nor because they speak from some genetically coded script. It is rather that having a woman's body laces us in a particular cultural location from which to make political judgments and intervention. (Walton 2001, 7)

Walton's theological readings are more than passive reflections that challenge patriarchal origin stories. Her reworking demonstrates that, standing alone, traditional interpretations of narrative are often pastorally inadequate today. Yet, when these original stories are interpolated with personal experience, they can be reassembled anew with new meanings that resonate powerfully with contemporary issues.

It is significant that Walton's theological imagination has her own experience of infertility as part of the creative source for her particular Midrash. Rejecting the principle of 'building up knowledge progressively', Deleuze argued (1995, 139) that the best kind of academic course focuses on what is being investigated. It does not merely pass on what is already known — for that is always changing anyway. Philosophy has become so rooted in 'percepts and affects' and what he referred to as 'nonphilosophical understanding' that, while it 'isn't inadequate or provisional', he felt it is merely one side of what true philosophy might become. (Deleuze 1995, 140)

Walton's work leans in this direction. Beginning with her own experiences, she redirects the sacred texts. New spaces are created and charted through her exploration of infertility from her own personal experience. Ultimately, this leads to a call for a pastoral theology that creates, 'new rituals, new pedagogies, new ways of preaching and caring' (Walton 2001, 10). The

body becomes the hermeneutic prism through which environments are altered and expanded. The process culminates in the creation of temporary communities in which judgments of absolute assuredness are exposed as inadequate responses to the complexity of shared fates. Without diminishing the individual experience of each woman, Walton creates a space for mutuality where stark opposites could have been divisive.

In hospital, while waiting for treatment for her own infertility problems, Walton recalls her experience in a ward with a woman who is waiting to have labour induced because her baby has died. Yet another sits with them, waiting to have an elective abortion. Being confronted with this experience causes Walton to reflect upon (and reassess) her own responses. She resists the detached sovereign division of right and wrong.

I try to remember how I once felt about this issue. In the abstract it seemed awful putting women needing abortions with women losing babies, unable to conceive. In reality it feels there can't be any other way. We are together in this place and that doesn't seem like an awful thing, not to any of us, even the minister's wife. We are only sorry that she feels so alone, so strained. (Walton 1999, 8)

What is so striking about this scenario is that it is those who are hurting the most that have the compassion to turn the room into a safe, if temporary, communion of shared fate and absolution. The telling comment 'even the minister's wife' is a reminder of the world beyond this particular pastoral space — a world which awaits their return to a culture in which judgments are prescribed and very different responses are more than likely. Yet, in the communion of their togetherness, the *practical* of pastoral theology seems full of hope and spirit.

For Walton, the experience lends deeper significance to her image of God:

I have brought you to a place in which you may recognise God and know yourself. This hospital is the same place exactly as the whole universe. When you see this you can smile at the small stories of human freedom and divine judgment which are told for children. They are charms recited to protect against the passion and the pain. There are darker, deeper tales to tell. (Walton 1999, 8)

In one particular 'darker, deeper tale', the scriptural narrative she works with is the story found in 1 Kings 3:16-28 — the story of the dead infant who, in the traditional tale, is the source of sorrow while being (at the same time) overshadowed and marginalised by the splendour of the King's wisdom. Working with the core elements of the original narrative, Walton alters the perspective and reveals the stowaways within:

When reflecting upon the story of Solomon's judgment a painful thought came powerfully to my mind. The king stood erect with his sword held high over the vulnerable body of a child is a mirror image of a previous judgment. God 'himself' stood as both judge and executioner over Bathsheba's baby — Solomon's brother. In this earlier story, however, the sword falls and the child is murdered. A divine victim. (Walton 2001, 9)

In this, the story of the two women who come to King Solomon for his judgment, the latter part of the story celebrates of the King's wisdom:

And all Israel heard the judgment which the King had rendered; and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him, to render justice. (1 Kings, 3:28)

However, Walton here deploys a hermeneutic of grief that reduces the King's role to a mere display of power and reopens the passage to trace the threads of a different understanding of wisdom. Where the traditional view of the narrative serves to demonstrate the divine power of Solomon, Walton challenges this reading that the passage becomes an exposition of unjust power, exposing misogyny at the core of Judaic and Christian traditions.

The original story is layered with moral judgment, from the status of the two women, each claiming to be the rightful mother of the living child to the very notion that the King can discern from his high position the qualities that make a 'real mother' (1Kings 3:27).

In Walton's take on the story, the King's 'public' wisdom is put aside. It is easy to behave as all-powerful and all seeing when detachment makes judgment arbitrary. What Walton is leading into is a space to reflect on the women's experience where they are not polarized by their grief, but understood. Where the original author was demonstrating royal power, Walton seeks for compassion and insight:

In the legends concerning Solomon the pain of his birth and the tragedy of Bethsheba's lost baby unsettle the triumphalist narrative. In the story, which is supposed to confirm his wisdom a lifeless child lies neglected and abandoned — a reminder of this unspoken past. It is my hope that through accomplishing the proper rites of naming and mourning, that feminist practical theology might attend to the birth of a new wisdom. (Walton 2001, 10)

Walton not only contributes to a maturing of how practical theology thinks about God but, more significantly for her, sets about claiming the right to image God from outside the traditional cultural, educational and patriarchal boundaries. For her, women should not have to ask permission for this degree of scholastic independence.

From the point of view of this thesis, Walton's work (like that of Hepworth, Dean, and Leonard) embodies the theorisation of practical theology by lifting her protagonists out of any historical frame of cultural reference and shows the spirit at work within. In other words, as Schleiermacher observed at the beginning of the discipline, the aesthetic process and religious sensibility are both manifestations of the spirit.

## CONCLUSION

As a discipline, practical theology has been shaped largely within the modern university. It is therefore one discipline among many others that contribute to the understanding and exploration of the human condition. It has an educational remit to fulfil and its future is set to continue along this path. It therefore shares the responsibility of addressing theoretical issues that impact on its practical application. I have argued here that practical theology has for some time been over-preoccupied with its professional and academic status to the detriment of its more traditional theological concerns with, for example, the presence of the divine in the world. I have specifically examined some of those theorists who advocate the strengthening of the use of the social sciences within the discipline.

I have also argued that an important issue for contemporary practical theologians should be whether or not practical theology can exist as a discipline that offers its own reason for existence as a discrete subject in contemporary academia. That having its academic credibility defined by the social sciences should not be its main concern. My key argument is that practical theology can construct a strong academic position by way of rethinking the contemporary notion of the subject in a manner that incorporates the spirit back into the theoretical foundation of the discipline. Unlike other disciplines, practical theology has the theological task of including the spiritual aspect of existence.

We might be in danger of diminishing this spiritual component if we pursue only a cultural understanding of humanity as in the social sciences. This is not to say that these sciences do not have a positive contribution to make to practical theology. However, we should be cautious as to how much we rely on them as the foundation of our theorising. Part of this involves examining the nature of the authority of the discipline. Where is practical theology to find its authorisation? What distinguishes the practical theologian from the sociologist? Insofar as these questions have sometimes been overlooked, much of contemporary practical theology seems to have moved a long way towards being simply a method of theorising upon contemporary culture. This is not what Tillich envisioned when he proposed a theory of correlation.

Many practical theologians still feel the need for the security of methodological approaches that will sustain the reputation of practical theology within academia. While this need is understandable, it has perhaps limited the exploration of alternative approaches. Very often, when reading contemporary theory, there seems to be an underlying thought that practical theology is a 'new' discipline. Yet practical theology is, in reality, neither a struggling nor a fledgling discipline. It is a mature subject area with a solid record of committed and excellent research. That I could base this present study on the examination of such a collection of reputable work is a tribute to its established presence within the academy.

However, I feel that it is now time for practical theology to become confident about the exploration of new ways of bringing notions of the spirit into its investigations. I have myself explored a way of achieving this, by bringing in such theorists as Deleuze and Guattari, to provide a reading of Schleiermacher that makes him relevant as a 'living' author for a genuinely postmodern practical theology. Through this procedure it has been possible to introduce a theory of aesthetics that permits the creation of new pastoral spaces and expands the identity of practical theology to include the spirit. Considering Schleiermacher's notion of finite embodied spirit in the light of continental philosophy, provides a reading of Schleiermacher that has the potential to enrich practical theology.

Some practical theologians who believe that practical theology is very much a product of the enlightenment are nervous about the challenges of postmodernism. Modernity and postmodernity have distinct and incompatible visions of the human subject at the core of their understanding. This discord has given rise to theories that seek to contain the most favourable elements of modernity whilst trying to incorporate aspects of postmodernity. I have argued that this leads to a misrepresentation of postmodern theoretical positions. Having examined the response to postmodernism through two major theorists, Elaine Graham and Friedrich Schweitzer, I have suggested that postmodernism has been treated as a dysfunctional element within modernity and that because of this perception the potential value of some postmodern thought has been neglected.

This thought brings with it new ontological approaches, which offer practical theology the opportunity to make a significant contribution to the understanding of how knowledge is transferred and how the experience of learning might be enhanced. Because postmodernism has been (incorrectly) theorised as creating a crisis within practical theology, the possibility has been limited of maximizing new conceptions of the subject in which the spirit can be reintroduced. Such responses have compelled practical theology to maintain rigid boundaries, in the belief that chaos and nihilism would result from failure to police its 'edges' and contain traditional notions of morality and truth. However, practical theologians who have tried to solve what they perceive to be the problem of relativism have largely been working with compromised conceptualizations of postmodernism. Postmodernism, if theorised on its own terms, actually possesses such a radical view of the subject that it can accommodate the spirit in relation to the human condition.

Certainly, I do think contemporary theorists are right to be cautious about an overdetermining postmodernism. Nevertheless, as I have argued, this can be countered by deploying theories that challenge teleonomy. In *Autopoiesis* for example we have a materialist theory of becoming that is not dependent on essences, outcome or an overly determining environment.

There are however, some practical problems for practical theology when it seeks to modernise by distancing itself from the metaphysical. Most contemporary theologians are uncomfortable with the notion of metaphysics and, consequently, historical and psychological explanations have been privileged more often than any other.

Yet these purely historical explanations have despiritualized the subject, narrowing the many rich sources for understanding of how human beings explain their experiences. Appreciating this constriction (and seeking ways of overcoming it) informs my conclusion that aesthetics can go some way to enhancing the theological imagination. Art has the capacity to create new spaces in which the relationship between the spirit and existence might be explored.

Barbara Hepworth's sculptures show the human body as a medium for engaging with the environment and creating the soul through the materials with which she worked. Her work demonstrates Schleiermacher's conception of the soul extending itself into the material world in the process of *becoming in the world*. Hepworth's working process, as much as her artwork, demonstrates how the embodied soul is shaped and reconciled to its environment.

Zoë Leonard's work memorializes grief and old injustices. Her art very often takes the form of allegories of the human condition. Her tree work is an example of how allegory can be used in aesthetics to pay tribute to the enduring qualities found in individuals to whom life is a struggle because they find themselves in particular lives they would not have chosen. Leonard uses her art to examine the harsher realities and cruelties of life with sadness and grace. In her work she is also able to take the past and hold it up as a reflection of the present, indicating that memorialising is an ongoing part of existence. Her work itself is a tribute to the embodied spirit that endures in inhospitable environments.

Tacita Dean's work, *Disappearance at Sea* was used to demonstrate that truth and honesty are sometimes present in the most estranged of experiences. We are spectators of the Crowhurst story but we are invited to redeem ourselves by identifying with him and showing mercy for him.

Finally Heather Walton's reflections that emerge from her own embodied sense of loss and hope enable us to see how transient, but nonetheless powerful, pastoral spaces can be created that ultimately change the image of God in the world.

In the final analysis, I would suggest that becoming 'expert' in specialist areas, such as moral science or practical wisdom, is perhaps not the only way to invest in the future for practical theology. Identity is an issue for the contemporary practical theologian and the professional status of the ethical consultant would seem to be the strongest contender for some who feel they work in a post-religious culture.

Practical theology can continue to strengthen its place in academia and the discipline can contribute a valuable image of the subject imbued with the spirit in real and material circumstances, in which the subject remains totally human and is enriched with the capacity to change lives and transcend historical limitations.

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