

**POSTMODERN MAN IN SEARCH OF A SOUL:
TOWARDS A (RE)FORMULATION OF THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION**

A Dissertation

by

CLASINA BUFFELEN SEGURA

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2003

Major Subject: Sociology

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Approved as to style and content by:

Stjepan Mestrovic
(Chair of Committee)

Edward Murguia
(Member)

Wm. Alex McIntosh
(Member)

Rogelio Saenz
(Head of Department)

Olga Cooke
(Member)

August 2003

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ABSTRACT

Postmodern Man in Search of a Soul:

Towards a (Re)Formulation of the Sociology of Religion. (August 2003)

Clasina Buffelen Segura, B.A., Louisiana State University; M.S., Texas A&M University

Chair of Advisor Committee: Dr. Stjepan G. Mestrovic

This dissertation seeks to evaluate and reformulate the sociology of religion through an integration of the work of Carl G. Jung and others. The purpose of such a reformulation is to develop a “new” theoretical framework within which to describe and explain individual and collective level religious and spiritual experience in our contemporary postmodern social landscape.

Current theoretical frameworks for the sociology of religion have failed to provide an adequate lens through which to view religious experience and have failed to provide an understanding of the differences between religion and spirituality. The modernist framework which reduces religious and spiritual phenomena to mere numbers lacks the depth necessary to view such a multifaceted and varied grouping of social experience. The postmodern alternative, as well, has multiple problems in terms of application particularly if one accepts the postmodern argument that there is no truth. Following a postmodernist trajectory where there is no truth, one must question whether or not the sociological study of religion is relevant at all.

Presented here is an integrative model which challenges Kantian assumptions about the nature of religion. The relationship between the concepts of religion and spirituality has long baffled the social sciences. Here spirituality is characterized, in a truly Jungian manner, as an

archetypal drive shared by all of humanity. Religion, on the other hand, is best thought of as individual and collective representations of an often unconscious search for a soul. This sort of conceptualization proves fuller than those currently offered. A discussion of religious and spiritual options associated with our contemporary American landscape provides evidence of the applicability of the framework presented here.

DEDICATION

For

Louella Maraist Segura (1914-1992)

For my Mon-Mon, who was so much more than a paternal grandmother. She led me on a 22 year journey through the collective (un)conscious of my Cajun People and thus instilled in me a large interest not only in the collective representations associated with my own rich culture but in that of other cultures as well. It is because of her influence that I have made the journey towards becoming a sociologist.

And

Jane A Madsen (1921-2003)

My friend, and guardian angel, and inspiration. Jane allowed me, during the relatively short time we had together, to understand that it was indeed possible to find one's soul in the middle of our stormy sea of contemporary society.

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Outside of the academic world I found help from my family. My parents unyielding support carried me over the many hurtles I have been forced to cross during the last few years. Father Richard Layton, aka Dick the Monk, offered me access to Our Lady of Guadalupe Trappist Abbey and allowed me to search for my own soul through my time with the Trappists. The conversations I had with Jacques and Linda Maraist about all things Jungian helped to keep my mind focused during a time when my academic pursuits were put on hold.

I know with certainty that I could not have done this alone.

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CHAPTER I
SOCIAL AND SPIRITUAL TRENDS AT THE DAWN OF A NEW
MILLENNIUM: AN INTRODUCTION

As humanity careened uncontrollably towards the year 2000 and beyond, we have found ourselves grappling not only with a general fin de siecle crisis (Turner 1992) but also the resulting focus on apocalyptic fears. Everywhere we look, we can easily find evidence of this widespread “crisis of our age“ (Sorokin 1941) in terms of a general air of suspicion, mistrust, discontentment, and disenchantment. And perhaps nowhere has this sense of mistrust and disenchantment been more apparent than in our general loss of confidence and trust in science and the technological advancements it has produced. Hence, while the views of the Unabomber have been to a large extent glossed over by the media and the legal systems as the delusions of a paranoid schizophrenic, there are large numbers of mainstream and mentally healthy individuals in the general public who while not assuming the lifestyle and murderous extremes of Ted Kazinski believe much the same, that technology and the evils it creates are pathological and contrary to the very essence of man.

Similarly, everywhere we look there exists widespread mistrust of the general validity and ability of the hard sciences to provide truth and to produce what it has so long promised our enlightened society. As evidence of this we need only point to the fact that the medical sciences continue to produce very contradictory scientific evidence

This dissertation follows the style and format of *Social Psychology Quarterly*.

on not only the effects and merits of the consumption of alcohol, but also the correct types and amount of fat that should be included in a “healthy diet.” Furthermore, the mainstream medical establishment so closely aligned with positivistic methodology, has reason to be mistrusted recently in that their great medical in the area of weight loss (Phen Fen and Redux) and plastic surgery (silicone breast implants) have been found to have unintended and sometimes deadly consequences.

Furthermore, the increase in the popularity and use of alternative medicine is largely, I would argue, the inevitable result of what has become a rather widespread mistrust of the mainstream medical establishment. In seeking out safer alternative therapies, significant segments of our contemporary postmodern public have turned to homeopathic and herbal remedies, acupuncture and other eastern based medical therapies, and even spiritual mediation and prayer therapy as primary sources of treatment. In fact, the scientific establishment itself has been forced to research and acknowledge the benefits and validity of such “unscientific, ancient, and irrationally” based approaches to treatment because of the extent to which the disenchantment with science in general has taken hold.

But the air of general mistrust of our enlightenment-based institutions is not confined solely to the sciences. In fact, this sense of mistrust is increasingly prevalent in terms of a general suspicion of our modern governmental institution and elected leaders. And while popular culture pokes fun at the paranoid individual who, like the character “Dale” on the FOX cartoon King of The Hill, firmly believes that the government, far from being the protector of democracy and individual liberty it claims, is simply an

elaborate conspiratorial and controlling agent which operates covertly to control every aspect of our social and biological life. And while such portrayals are humorous, the reality remains that much of the American public holds similar, if not so extreme, beliefs about the nature of our government. The popularity of and serious academic discussions about such movies as Conspiracy Theory and JFK further indicate the widespread nature of this sort of mistrust. Similarly, one cannot ignore that opinion surveys reveal that even in the face of our new “War on Terrorism,” a large percentage of the American population continue to believe that the government acted covertly, and with ulterior motives at Waco, Ruby Ridge, and even during the Persian Gulf War. And the fact that the recent documents and testimony support the above indicates that this sort of widespread suspicion and mistrust is not without merit. The fact that there are a number of differing accounts or explanations on these incidents and the general public’s refusal to accept what is presented as the truth fits well into Giddens conceptualization of trust in contemporary societies where so variety of optional explanations leads the individual to believe, or trust, in none (Giddens 1984 and 1991).

The above mentioned trends should provide ample evidence that the postmodern social tone, in line with the definition of postmodernism as a rebellion against all things “modern” (Rosenau 1992) is true not only in academic circles but also throughout society in general where distrust, disillusionment, and disenchantment with modernity, its associated power structure, and the culture and civilization it produces are the norm. So if there is a tendency towards an abandonment of the rational modernist establishment, to what are we turning instead? Even the most cursory survey of our new

born millennium and the recent fin de siècle social landscape reveals an enthusiastic embracing of the irrationally which modernity cast aside as not only archaic but unnecessary. As such, we are seeking tremendous levels of renewed interest in things like the “scientifically unexplainable,” mysticism, and spirituality.

In fact, everywhere we look in popular culture there are indications and examples of our love affair with the irrational. While there has been a long history of science fiction in western society, the unprecedented popularity recently of TV shows like *The X-Files* and *Touched by an Angel* have increased dramatically making such themes the norm rather than the quirky expectation. Even the news media, which once stuck to the hard objective and explainable facts, now finds it necessary to regularly address and report on “miracles of faith” if programs are to attract and keep their audience base.

Further, the trailers or previews of coming attractions at the movie theaters also indicate the selling power of the irrational and unexplainable. The formula for success at the box office now not only includes expensive special effects and live action, but also irrational and unscientific motifs including evil spirits that transport themselves through touch (1997’s movie Fallen), pre-pubescent children learning to cultivate the powers of witchcraft they have been blessed with, and postmodern mythology focusing on a higher power or force which permeates the entirety of the universe (The Star Wars Franchise). In fact, the very popularity and belief in such themes serves as a direct affront to the modernist worldview that places major emphasis on humans as not only the supreme being, or animal, but also as the rational and sole master of the universe.

Having discussed above some of the more general trends in the social mood of the postmodern age, I would now like to turn the attention of this introductory section to a more focused discussion of the changes in the spiritual and religious landscape. This sort of discussion is particularly important as I see the changes in the spiritual mood of our age as going hand and hand with the more general trends mentioned above. Hence, I would argue that to even begin to ponder the above without looking at the changes in religious participation as well as the spiritual outlook or philosophy of the population one cannot paint a complete picture of the crisis associated with our postmodern age.

Hence, in the final part of this section, I will present brief examinations of changes in the religious landscape in terms of church membership and participation and then provide a very short discussion of the spiritual tone in general. Any review of social organization literature is sure to include religion as one of one of the most important factors in the successful functioning of society in general. It should come as no surprise that there is some level of suspicion of religion in general. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that unlike the social institution we know as the state or government, Americans have, and continue to abandon religious institutions without fear of punitive retribution from the larger system. Or rather, it might be argued as an alternative explanation that these individuals are best viewed as religious shoppers, shopping for religions and churches that suit their needs best.

Recent social trends provide evidence of a significant pull away from, or an abandonment of the major established and (rationally) organized Protestant religions in favor of the more loosely organized non-denominational churches and congregations

that are appearing on the social landscape with increasing frequency. This trend has been extended to the hyper reality of cyberspace as internet churches, ministries, and spiritual groups continue to appear the greatest of speed and attract a huge following. And the very differences in the organizations of such churches in comparison to that of the more mainstream religious groups are quite striking. The independent nature and lack of connection to a larger and ruling hierarchy appears to offer its postmodern membership not only a sense of autonomy but a higher level of importance within the group's structure. Furthermore, the fact that the actual religious services do not appear to be bound by strict organizational law or established religious doctrine may attract the postmodern American individual who often appears to be perpetually in search of something new (Baudrillard 1988).

Likewise, and perhaps because of a keen personal interest in architecture, it is also important to point out that there appears to be a new trend associated with the physical buildings which house religious institutions and houses of worship. There are significant changes in that the buildings which house such groups appear no longer to be bound in the least by the centuries old expectation of what a religious place of worship should look like. Long gone are the large and often grand cathedrals once so closely associated with religious life. Increasingly the religious landscape is now dotted with functional buildings that even some members refer to as "barns of workshop." And the appearance of churches in converted hardware stores and strip malls suggest a huge departure from the lofty images associated with churches of the past. And increasingly a number of religious organizations have no house of worship at all but rather work out of

secular locations including school auditoriums and arenas. The recent development of a phenomenon called non-denominational Christian “cowboy church” held in rodeo arenas and livestock barns perhaps represents the extreme of this trend.

Finally, it would appear that religious involvement, might at least for the American majority, be a transient phenomena in that studies suggest that an increasing segment of college students report decreasing involvement in “church“ while still professing strong spiritual beliefs. On the other hand, spirituality in general appears to have rebounded with a vengeance. The media constantly bombards us with factoids indicating that Americans increasingly believe in God and miracles, and view themselves, if not as significantly religious individuals, then as highly spiritual. Furthermore, this rise in spirituality has coincided with a growing interest in a number of Eastern faiths and world views which often focus more on individual spirituality than organized group religiosity. And in fact the increased use of herbal and oriental medical remedies may be partially the result of this interest.

This general separation of religiosity and spirituality, in this writer’s opinion, perhaps better than any of the social trends and tones outlined here best personifies the air of disenchantment associated with our postmodern fin de siecle anti-enlightenment spirit. As such, the work presented here and in my dissertation will look at the inability of the modernist sociological framework’s theories of religion to explain the true nature of religion and spirituality in the postmodern age. Further, I will argue that the mainstream social sciences have in fact never really provided an adequate framework for

the study of religion as Parsonian sociology has failed to adequately and correctly conceptualize the major components at the very heart of religion in general.

In the sections that follow I will begin to outline a re-assessment of the sociological approach to the study of religion used by the mainstream establishment and point out what I see as the inherent flaws in this overall framework. I will then provide what I hope will serve as the building blocks of a new framework which incorporates the misinterpreted and misused work of Durkheim as well as that of Swiss psychologist Carl G. Jung. And in an attempt to illustrate its applicability to the contemporary American landscape, I will briefly discuss several “postmodern religions” within the context of the works discussed here. In the end, I hope to provide the means by which to present a clearer and more correct picture of the religious and spiritual landscape associated with what appears at first glance to be a highly fragmented American reality in which, to paraphrase Jung, postmodern man searches for a soul.

CHAPTER II

**ARRIVING AT OUR CONTEMPORARY REALITY:
FROM TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS TO A POSTMODERN ABUNDANCE OF
RELIGIOUS CHOICES**

General Evolutionary Trends And The Development Of Religion

Before beginning any discussion of religion in contemporary America it is first necessary to look at how we have arrived at our current social milieu where religion is often seen as being at odds with both modern and postmodern worldviews. Social evolution can be traced through three general time periods, the traditional or romantic era, the modern era, and now the postmodern era. By looking at religion within the framework of the movement from community to society, as discussed in Ferdinand Tonnies' now classic work Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft ([1898] 1957), we can get a clearer picture of how we have come to arrive at the point we are now. And as Tonnies wrote this now classic work more than a century ago, long before the beginning of the postmodern age, a third category must be added to his typology, one that Tonnies himself probably did foresee arriving sometime in the future. I will, as many others have, refer to this third additional category or stage, for lack of a better term, and in the postmodern spiritual, as post-Gesellschaft society (Lyons 1987).

The earliest and longest period of human history is what has been termed the traditional period. This stage of evolution can be viewed as analogous to Gemeinschaft or community. Tonnies extolled the virtues of Gemeinschaft which was characterized

by a sort of mother-child bond (or social relationships which were characteristically maternal in nature), spontaneous feelings, and a basic sense of unity among individuals and groups despite existing differences. During this traditional period, individuals had a rural sort of mindset and were generally members of a single all encompassing community based almost exclusively on kinship ties. Again, membership was confined to a single group where all members worked to perform basically the same tasks necessary for the maintenance of the larger community. The sense of self during this stage was therefore well defined and singularly in nature as the individual was a member of a single social group, community or society.

The movement into the modern period, or into *Gesellschaft* or society, has been traced to several factors including population growth, new technologies, and industrialization. According to Tonnies, *Gesellschaft* was characterized by the rational or contractual relationship between individuals. Unlike the maternal relationships Tonnies viewed as characteristic of *Gemeinschaft*, the social relationships found in *Gesellschaft* were more paternal, or legal rational, in nature. During the modern era, more and more aspects of social life moved outside the kinship network as the division of labor increases (Durkheim [1893] 1965). As a result, the individual worked outside of the home and was therefore a member of a professional association in addition to his/her own kinship group. As the level of the division of labor increased further, similar social organizations associated with other aspects of one's life outside the family unit including religion and education began to emerge. It is during this period that the fragmentation of self began to occur as individuals increasingly identify with more than

one social group. Unlike the traditional or romantic period where all social interactions occurred in immediate proximity, the technological and industrial advances of the early modern period make other forms of communication possible the advent of a mail service system and the printing press make possible written or nonverbal communications increasingly devoid of physical, or face to face, contact.

Much of the western world has now entered into what can best be termed the post-gesellschaft period. An important clarification must be made concerning the choice of the term post gesellschaft. In the post-gesellschaft period, elements of community co-exist with heightened societal development. Perhaps the prime example is that even as we claim to have become increasingly metropolitan or global individuals, we are at the same time currently seeing a strong resurgence in ethnic identity (Waters 1990).

Primary among the reasons for the shift into the post-gesellschaft period are the remarkable technological advances that have taken place in the last few decades. These scientific and technological advances have changed society, and social life, dramatically. Whereas gemeinschaft and gesellschaft were identifiable by their rural and urban mindset respectively, the rural-urban distinction is now largely a thing of the past. Even the most geographically isolated and formally rural areas have been saturated by the larger technological culture of fun and violence. In post-gesellschaft America, the rural landscape, once dotted with quaint farms and charming local downtown areas, is now filled with satellite dishes and Wal-Mart Super-Centers that offer the rural dweller everything from dry cleaning to manicures and franchised fast food. Thus in the present

post-gesellschaft period, technology allows for the existence of and maintenance of mass society and the culture of fun that goes along with it.

The extreme technological advances associated with this third post-gesellschaft period have also made it possible for individuals to extend their social networks to a point unimaginable a century ago. Advances in communications and transportation technologies, especially those related to the telephone and information technologies, have allowed for the development of numerous specialized social networks or (sub)communities. And because these postmodern subcommunities or voluntary associations have become so specialized in focus, the postmodern individual, in order to meet his or her social needs, or more appropriately desires, finds him/herself involved in a growing number of such networks or organizations leaving little time to devote fully to any one social organization.

The Place Of Religion: A Historical Summary

Religion, like all other social phenomena and the organizations and institutions based on them have changed dramatically as society has evolved. Religion, in its more traditional or less developed form was all encompassing and functioned not only to give the individual meaning and knowledge of things s/he could not explain or understanding (including birth, death, and the larger universe) but at the same time served to maintain and reinforce community by helping define individual and group identity. As might be expected, many of the beliefs and social experiences of rites and rituals were based on the will or heart and were emotional and irrational rather than rational in nature.

Durkheim's research on traditional religions such as the Arunta Tribe ([1915] 1965) illustrates well several characteristics important to the nature of traditional religion. First, the set of beliefs described in Durkheim's study of the Arunta illustrated not only the highly irrational and emotional face of traditional religions but also that the totality of both one's social and physical existence were experienced within this all encompassing setting. Similarly, studies of early religions indicate the individual and group identity is, in fact, one and the same. The lack of differentiation between and among individuals goes hand and hand with a minimal division of labor characteristic of traditional societies in which the religion exists. And because of the all encompassing nature of primitive religions made necessary by minimally developed social systems, all aspects of society, including the normative guidelines were made clear and stringently (re)enforced through religious practices and through the strict compliance to spiritual and religious beliefs.

Developments in technology set off a vast number of social changes which mark the movement from the traditional period, characterized by *gemeinschaft* or community, to the modern period characterized by *gesellschaft*, or society. The division of labor made possible and in fact necessary, by technological advances resulted in the development of the first distinct social institutions. The technological advancements in tools and agriculture in general and the increase in population size and density it brought signaled the need for a division of labor at the group or societal level. These larger societies then required social institutions which performed special functions necessary for the survival of the members of the larger society. Among the first of these social

institutions to develop were religion and education. This division of labor led to an increasingly more prosperous population where individuals, focusing on more individualized tasks, made greater strides in a number of areas including technology and science. The development of the printing press and a generally more educated population led to changes in the social philosophy of individuals and the stated goals of the larger society.

It is during this second era or modernity that we see the development of a more enlightened population whose beliefs and worldviews began to take the form of that associated with the enlightenment movement. Increasingly, the modern, educated individual believed that human nature, while containing irrational aspects also involved the capacity for rational individual and societal actions. The enlightenment, which emerged first in France, argued, in direct opposition to the view of human nature during the preceding period, that the individual was inherently rational and could be guided by rational decision making processes to make decisions simultaneously beneficial to the individual and society.

Given the above changes, the face of religion was altered as well. The irrational nature of primitive religions had to be altered to fit a new worldview where the individual was master of his/her own rational fate and responsible for the objective betterment of the larger society in which s/he lived. Similarly, technological developments greatly reduced the extent of the unknown changing the centrality of religion and religious/spiritual experience. As it was no longer necessary for religion to

explain the world and was often seen as prohibiting social change, the role of religion appeared to be in jeopardy.

The exact moment at which western society moved into the third stage of social evolution is as hotly debated as how exactly one should define the current social landscape in which we live. There are however two basic arguments about the exact nature of the relationship between the postmodern era and that which it followed. The first argues that the postmodern era, and the social phenomena and culture it creates constitutes an extension of the modernist project while the second argues that postmodernism represents an all out rebellion against everything modernity held and holds dear (Rosenau 1992 and Harvey 1989). Those who argue that contemporary western culture and the larger postmodern landscape constitute an extension of modernity as a somewhat expected outcome of increased rationalization see all problems associated with this state of high modernity as largely acceptable if unforeseen side effects (Giddens 1984 and 1991). The fragmentation of society and the individual as well as a widespread fear of uncertainty are seen as acceptable risks when balanced against the benefits associated with life in an enlightened society. This conceptualization of the postmodern condition is not all that novel. Max Weber's concept of the iron cage certainly mirrors this sentiment (Weber 1976b) in that Weber predicted the problems of increasing levels of rationality. Weber offers no way out and in fact, seemed somewhat unconcerned with these negative consequences of a modern enlightenment based society.

Science and technology have made truth, in the postmodern era, transient at best. And as a result, all social narratives and explanations, including religious ones, are questionable at best. With so many differing expert interpretations of truth now given equal status, religious doctrines and religious institutions at the societal level have lost both status and societal relevance. As a result, organized religions become less structured and fragmented and individuals find little truth and meaning in membership and participation in traditionally defined religions and seek similar experience elsewhere.

Form And Function: Religion In Modern And Postmodern Society

I believe I have made clear the all encompassing form and function of religion in traditional social communities. I will now turn to the task of outlining the nature of the form and function of religion with regards to both modern and postmodern societies calling upon the work of all three of sociology's founding fathers in the process.

The modernists, who have claimed Durkheim as their own, see religion as a social institution charged with, or given the function of, maintaining social order, defining and teaching morality, and maintaining social identity at the individual and group level. As societies move further towards the modern portion of the evolutionary continuum, the irrational components of religious communities and beliefs become less important and the rational nature of a more paternalistic institution (rational and devoid of nurturing) takes center stage.

And while religion still provides explanation, it provides increasingly less emotional attachment and is typified by doctrines which, while geared often at the individual, or grounded and societal concerns. As the portion of human existence seen as mysterious or unexplainable decreases during modern times, irrationally based religions become increasingly less necessary. Unlike Durkheim's positive assessment of the form and function of religion, Max Weber's judgment is decidedly mixed. Weber, in typical modernist form, views those religions which hold individual well-being over that of the larger society, Catholicism and a variety of Eastern and Oriental faiths for example, as decidedly pathological to the larger society. Those religious doctrines and systems of beliefs, even when resulting in individual benefits, results in the benefit to the larger society and social progress, are viewed as decidedly positive. One need only skim the pages of The Protestant Work Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (1976) to glean Weber's beliefs that the Protestant faith provided the necessary condition for the rise of capitalism and by extension the development of an increasingly rational, and thus ore enlightened social system. On the other hand, those religions that equate personal suffering and sacrifice with salvation, were seen by Weber in a completely different light as they served to inhibit much needed social change.

Karl Marx too saw religion in a negative light. But for Marx, religions on any sort prohibited the individual from understanding his/her true plight in life by attributing suffering on earth to rewards in an afterlife. By extension, a belief in the benefit of individual personal suffering had extreme effects on the larger group and society. That is, unlike Weber who saw Protestant religions as necessary for the movement into his

capitalist utopia, Marx saw religion, in any form, as a major obstacle to an equally rational socialist society where all individuals endure an identical and equitable “plight of life.” The problem here is that while a Marxist utopia would be devoid of religion in a more classical traditional sense, the resulting social or civil system which was to replace it itself would take on many of the same characteristics of religion as defined by Durkheim (Rosenau 1992).

If one accepts the major philosophical assumptions which underlie the modernist enlightenment project, then religion in terms of both its form and unction is at least in part contrary to modernity’s stated goals. As western society moves into the latest postmodern period of social evolution, the position of religion in the larger social structure is increasingly tenuous. Religion has and continues to be a presence in advanced postmodern society despite the predictions associated with the modernist project. If modernity had achieved its goals, then traditional religions should have long ago been made obsolete in a world where science and technology function to eliminate human suffering and explain nearly all of the once unexplainable. Our current social reality indicates that these lofty goals have not been met. Religion persists today taking both traditional and modern forms which have adapted to the more advanced social landscape in which it exists.

To be sure, religion in our contemporary postmodern era has evolved a great deal from the all encompassing religions associated with *gemeinschaft* as well as from the more rationally based religions associated with *gesellschaft* where religion served the larger society in maintaining group identity, morality, and social order. In postmodern

times membership in and participation in religious groups and organizations increasingly offers an alternative to rationality and the irrational side effects, associated with advanced societies. Religion and the irrationality associated with it exist simultaneously with other very rational aspects of social life. Our contemporary American social reality suggests that it is possible for the irrational and rational to exist together in harmony. And the fact that participation in religious and spiritual pursuits has increased as confidence and trust in science and technology are increasingly questioned indicates that, in line with the anti-enlightenment view of human nature, the irrational side of humanity can not be completely suppressed or controlled.

So what does the nature of religion in modern and postmodern life tell us about the relevancy of religion? How has religion changed in response to changes in the philosophy and worldview of more developed societies? And what does the nature of religion in modern and postmodern life tell us about the relevancy of religion in general?

If the modernist project had been completely correct in its philosophical assessment of human nature and the future of society, one would expect that religion in a more traditional sense would have long since become extinct or at least transformed into an all but unrecognizable rational justification of the larger societal structure. To be sure, religion has changed dramatically. But the changes do not signify an end in the relevance of religion or its importance on a larger social stage. Indeed, religion as been effected by and transformed during modernity and postmodernity but it has not been rendered irrelevant by them. Indeed the changes in religious institutions and religious and spiritual experience at the individual and group level continue not only to be

necessary for the survival of individual religious organizations but also for the survival of society as well. As such, despite the attempts by other major social institutions to take over the functions of religion, survival of human societies would seem tied to the very existence of religion, whose form may change, but ultimately provides integrative and reinforcing functions. For this reason, religion will likely always remain relevant in society, regardless of its level of development.

CHAPTER III

THE STATE OF THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION TODAY

The Founding Fathers And Classical Theories Of Religion

It will be my argument throughout the remainder of this work that while Durkheim been badly misinterpreted and bastardized by the positivistic Parsonian establishment which I argue has becoming increasingly irrelevant and incapable of providing an adequate framework for the study of our contemporary religious and spiritual landscape, a re-reading of Durkheim's work free of a Parsonian lens offers sociology the foundations of a new sociology of religion. As such, it is necessary to begin by pointing out the limitations of the more mainstream theories of religion currently being employed in the sociological literature.

To be sure, all three of the founding fathers of sociology addressed the topic of religion and its place in society. While Weber's work had the most widespread and lasting influence, the work of Durkheim offers a rich theoretical framework that has been, I would argue, in the shadow of Weber's popularity. So rather than begin with a lengthy discussion of what aspects of Durkheim's thought have been (Mis)appropriated into modern theories of religion, a subject that will be discussed in more length in this and the chapters that follow, I will begin this section by briefly describing the basic, and often opposing views of Marx and Weber on the topic of religion and spirituality.

Marx, through much of his work, argued that religion consisted of institutionalized means of, through its associated belief system and worldview, has

severe negative impact on its members and more generally society. According to the Marxist approach, religion functions as a means of repression in that it serves to keep its members from seeing the true oppression of their existence and similarly “prevented” and inhibited action and social change which would alter and improve social existence at both the individual and societal level. Hence, in essence, Marx views religion as an inherently negative social institution which if society is to better itself must be eliminated.

Max Weber on the other hand, saw Western Protestant religions at least in a very positive light. Most simply put, Weber saw religion as an essential social institution which transmitted the worldview, or work ethic, that makes economic and social betterment through the vehicle of capitalism, possible. And while Marx makes no value judgments which assign negative status to any one religion, Weber is ethnocentric in that he sees Protestantism, and in particular Calvinism, as superior and systematically and summarily dismisses not only Catholicism and Judaism but all Eastern religions judging them as socially inferior in that they fail to nurture, or more appropriately inhibit, the development of capitalism.

The extent to which the religious background from which each came is interesting in that it appears to have had a large effect on the manner in which each viewed religion in general and in the place each saw it taking in the larger theoretical perspective of each. And while biographical sketches almost always include mention of their religious background, little is made of the place of it in their theoretical work and is mentioned almost always in passing. Any examination of the three founding fathers’

theory of religion that did not address this issue would be only partially complete as I believe that this particular aspect of their biographical history is central to the understanding of the sociology of religion in general.

The Protestant more specifically a Calvinist background appears to be woven deeply within the work of Marx, the Protestant, or more specifically, the Calvinist background of Max Weber, combined with the pull of a highly bureaucratic father, had tremendously influenced the work of Max Weber. Try has he might the work of the father of value free sociology was effected greatly by the religious environment in which he developed socially. The manner in which he views his own protestant religion in relation to the very negative assessment he has of non-protestants, non western, cultures indicates perhaps an inability to separate himself from this influence and brings into question the potential for anyone to be value free. And given the high level of tension he most certainly felt between the views of his mother's liberal Protestantism and the more godless bureaucratic world in which his father and later he himself worked may have resulted in what, I would argue, might be viewed as an attempt to straddle the fence, or his rejection of all religion with the exception of his own.

The Iron Cage also flows, I would argue, from what might have been viewed by Weber as the irreconcilable conflict between of his mothers focus on liberal Protestantism and his fathers often contradictory focus on the political bureaucracy in which he grew up and developed. As such, the conceptualization of the iron cage can be viewed in terms of a representation of the unfixable internal conflict Weber felt between a bureaucracy which limits the meaning and function of the individual and community

level religious life. That is, one may hold a group of religious beliefs and wish to exercise them, or put them to use, but the bureaucracy, and its insistence on a rational framework (rationally defined and maintained structure and function at all levels of social life) and the cultural of bureaucracy in which they exist, or are imprisoned in limits the extent to which one can integrate these beliefs and practices in everyday life. It is apparent, I would argue from Weber's biographical information that he was torn between the two, or pulled in both directions equally and may have been frustrated with an inability to escape these (Weber 1976a). It might then be argued that Weber, and by extension society in general, were forced to live in an Iron Cage where rationality limited them. The fact that he offered no way out is important. The fact that Weber offers no way out might be interpreted in two ways; first as a theoretical manifestation of the extent to which he was so torn between his parents and by extension religion and bureaucratic society they held so dear but also the constant pull and interplay between society and religion in general.

The religious background of Durkheim and its effect on his work is arguably the most interesting of the three. Durkheim is similar to Marx in that they share in a common Jewish background which both later rejected. They differ in that while Marx's initial rejection occurs sometime in early childhood and resulted, after confirmation into the Lutheran faith as a young adult, in a rejection of religion in its entirety, Durkheim appears to have been brought up in the faith, by a rabbi father and while he rejected Judaism as a young adult retained a belief and interest in religion in general (Mestrovic 1988).

Throughout the whole of Durkheim's large body of work run themes that are suggestive of his Jewish heritage. The importance placed on balance at both the individual and societal level is most certainly suggestive of a Jewish mind. So too is his focus on the importance of social integration associated with religious membership and religious experience at both the individual and group level. While many social scientists of his time dismissed eastern religions as unworthy of study, Durkheim spent a tremendous amount of time in examining what had been ignored and dismissed by Marx and Weber alike.

Mysticism, associated with some forms of Judaism, clearly finds its way into Durkheim's assessment of religion in The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life ([1915] 1965). Durkheim is clearly intrigued by the mystical religious rituals associated with primitive tribes the Arunta and seeks them as essential to reinforcing individual and group identity and argues that such experiences are as essential for the maintenance of even the most modern of societies.

Durkheim's respect for religion finds its way into most aspects of Durkheim's large body of work. And the fact that these themes repeat themselves in nearly all of Durkheim's work, and are applied to all aspects of the social from education to suicide indicate the extent to which this sort of Jewish mindset, regardless of his religious affiliation and practice, indicate that religious background cannot be ignored in the case of Durkheim and thus should be included in any work which seeks to examine his work (Mestrovic 1988). The fact that it is ignored and in fact the very Jewish name David is

removed from his name suggests an attempt by the mainstream to ignore this very important facet of Durkheim's writings.

The background of Talcott Parsons, is important as well as it is through his translations and interpretations that most American sociologists have come to know and understand the works of the three classic social scientists discussed above. Could Parson's own religion background have had some effect on his reading of the classics and in turn directed in a very real sense the larger American sociological mainstream that followed? The answer, I would argue, is a resounding yes. Parsons' biography indicates that he was brought up in the Congregational Church was the son of a strict minister (Ritzer 1988). The consequence of his strict protestant upbringing can be found in his translations of all of the classical social theorists but most clearly in his reading and interpretation of Durkheim which are now accepted without question by mainstream academia. His imposition of a highly rational sense of order and morality, which would typify the sort of upbringing and religious exposure he experienced early on, find their way into his translations of Durkheim's larger body of work and has transformed the French and Jewish influenced original work of Durkheim into what is now viewed as the watershed event for positivistic sociology which stresses social order and strict organization.

My own reading of Durkheim, now labeled the father of functionalism because of the hyper rational Parsonian translations and interpretations, on the contrary indicates that he was concerned more with the function of society rather than with any rational form it might take. The interpretation of the term organic as applied to modern society

was seen by Parsons as an attempt at making seeing modern society as analogous to an organic body with the various social institutions serving as organs working together for the maintenance of the whole. In doing so, the fluidity of the social stressed by Durkheim is lost in the reliance on a positivistic Parsonian interpretation which places weight on the division of labor and an organic analogy that was never of primary importance to Durkheim. Lost also has become the intended meaning of the term *anomie*, which Parson's translated, in a strict protestant fashion, as a state of normlessness and not as the state of sin or unbalance indicated in Durkheim's original work (Mestrovic 1988).

As such, not only has the work of the three social scientists viewed as the founding fathers been effected by the religious context in which they existed but they have potentially been further influenced in a sense by the religious background of the individuals who present their work to us in their translation into English. The above illustrates the role of religion in the initial formulation and writing of these and other classic works as well as the intermediate influence of third parties like Parsons effects greatly the theories in which we work. And despite Weber's insistence that value free sociology was not only possible but necessary if we are to achieve a truly scientific discipline, Weber's own work and that of the others discussed here indicate that even though most others provide evidence not only that it may in fact be nearly impossible to achieve but that despite the influence of subjective factors, such frameworks can in fact stand the test of time.

Contemporary Modernist Functionalist Framework

And most basically put, the functionalist approach views religion almost strictly in terms of an organization in the larger social system that work or function to gather with the other “essential organs” to maintain the larger organism of society. And for the functionalist, the major function of religion is the maintenance of the social order (Caporale and Grumelli 1971). Hence, religion is seen as an institution of integration that serves to reinforce religious morality which in turn reinforces social control in that it serves to enhance and foster civic morality as well.

And as the focus remains at the institutional level, the actual worship, rites, and rituals are relegated simply to discussions of the mechanisms by which membership is maintained and strengthened and thus the social order reinforced. Hence, the mainstream approach sees rituals and rites as products of religion rather than as a system of symbolic manifestations of underlying religious and spiritual belief. Examined through an anti-enlightenment lens, it should, and will later in this paper become apparent that this sort of viewpoint is flawed in that while the modernist approach may acknowledge some degree of irrationality as being associated with many modern religious rites and rituals, it sees the irrationality as simply a necessary means to achieving rational ends (the maintenance of social order) and fails to correctly conceptualize (post)modern religion as an evolved and rationalized system of customs and rituals which are manifestations or representations of an “irrational” set of spiritual beliefs and principles.

Furthermore, the focus of contemporary mainstream sociological theories of religion has been largely restrictive in that the classification scheme is limited largely to Catholicism, Judaism, and Protestantism. The inherent flaw in this typology should be obvious. Religious diversity is nothing new to be sure. A variety of Orthodox Christian faiths have been present for centuries and the rise of Islam dates back even further. As such, one must question if this three category typology ever worked and how it is to work now in the face of a social landscape rich with differentiation and religious and spiritual faiths that defy such “simple” categorization. And a simple survey of Americans today which would certainly elicit a wide variety of very varied religions and spiritual associations as responses and thus revealing the enormous shortcomings of this approach. In response to the rise in the numbers of people falling outside” the three standard categories, the positivistic establishment has responded with the addition of a fourth catch all category labeled “other.” This too leads to problems in that there is a lumping together of a growing number of vastly different “religions” a this single category, an perhaps worse yet a summary dismissal of a large number of religious and spiritual endeavors all together as viewed they often fail to conform to the functionalist ideal type, are often ignored as unworthy of study. Hence there appears not only to be an inability of the mainstream functionalist framework to adequately address the “other” but also a general unwillingness to acknowledge social phenomena that fall outside of the enlightenment based narratives. Another such flaw can be located in the fact that the modernist definition of religion includes or requires the presence of, or a belief, in a *deity* in the more conventional sense. Furthermore, there is a general assumption that

any such deity be masculine in nature. In fact, this is not a new bias and may in fact account for the general view in the relevant literature that religion functions almost exclusively in a paternal manner and ignores those feminine aspects which are crucial to many religions including Catholicism and Judaism. Furthermore, this definitional aspect results in the exclusion of not only deity-less eastern religions including Buddhism and Taoism but also denies the fact that religion can and has spread outside of the “supernatural” realm and into things like worship of nationality or civil religion, and in social causes including environmentalism and feminism.

By far, however, the most glaring flaw I see in the current modernist approach to religion is the inability to understand and make clear the distinction between spirituality and religion. If the modernist social sciences acknowledge spirituality at all, it is in equating spirituality with religion and with the world view or the larger system of beliefs created by the institution itself and which serves the purpose of legitimizing and reinforcing a “need” for involvement in church and an adherence to the related religious and societal principles. Despite this long standing conceptualization of the connection between religion and spirituality, a large body of quantitative data exist which would suggest that this sort of conceptualization is flawed. If one accepts that religion and spirituality are innately tied to one another one would expect to see a positive correlation between church membership or attendance and levels of spirituality. The reality remains that spirituality measured in terms of attitudinal assessments scales do not provide evidence of such. Instead, those who score the highest on the spirituality scales are very frequently those who report no church affiliation and do not attend religious services on

any regular basis (Roof and Perkins 1975). Results such as this indicate a problem both with the way spirituality and religion are conceptualized and the relationship that has long been assumed to exist between the two (Lawson, Swyers and McCougllough 1998).

The following sections will illustrate that there is indeed a significant distinction between the two. And while the two are often largely intertwined, our postmodern reality and the trends discussed in the above section reveal that they must be considered separately as well. And in sum, the current limitations and flaws associated with the sociology of religion represent major thorns in the side of a discipline whose “laboratory” is an increasingly cosmopolitan landscape where such exclusionary definitions are largely inappropriate.

Postmodernism: Does It Constitute A Viable Alternative?

In order to adequately address the extent to which postmodern social theory offers an adequate alternative framework within which to address religion and spiritual phenomena, it is necessary to discuss the development of postmodernism as an academic school of thought and its relation to the modernist movement which has, up until now, provided the majority of sociological literature on the subject of religion and spirituality. It is easy to conceptualize modernity as the rational child of the enlightenment era, an age where individuals were to have shed their barbaric skins, and through reason, entered into a civil society, devoid of the need for religion in a more classic sense. Defining postmodernism has become at best difficult and is usually done so subjectively, in a very postmodernist style by the individual utilizing the term and has

lead to a prominent sense of fragmentation in the larger body of postmodern literature (Roseanu 1992). However, as postmodernism has moved from the humanities and the arts into the social sciences, there have been more unified attempts at establishing a “mainstream” theory of postmodernism (Rosenau 1992, Mestrovic 1992, and Kellner 1989).

Central to the postmodern debate is the concept of subjectivity. Taken to the extreme one must question the relevance of postmodern thought to this area as religious and spiritual experience increasingly is viewed as an individual experience. If this is the case, one must ask exactly what is the point of such a postmodern debate at all if everything is subjective anyway? Is there really a point to such a discussion if it is rendered mute before it even begins?

Postmodernism makes the assertion that all new meaning, in the de-centered world is not discovered, but rather located within a specific context or community at the subjective level. Avoiding the mainstream mode of knowledge associated with modernity, the postmodernist focuses on life at the margins of contemporary society for his/her understanding of the social making this sort of approach intriguing.

The larger postmodern movement is so fractured that any discussion of it must address the distinction that exists between the two competing strains within the larger movement; skeptical (or pessimistic) and affirmative (or optimistic) postmodernism. This distinction is based on their general outlook on the problems associated with the postmodern age, how they believe these problems are best studied, and finally, the potential solutions to these problems. It is also important to point out that these two

categories are probably best viewed as extremes on a larger continuum (Rosenau 1992). That is, most postmodern theorists fall somewhere between the two and includes aspects of both strains in their larger theoretical perspective.

The skeptical, or pessimistic, camp, (Jean Baudrillard for example), remain highly influenced by the work of Heidegger and Nietzsche, and argue that the world is fragmented, disjointed, caught up in a sea of meaningless without boundaries. These descriptions are based on three major assumptions; the demise of the subject, the death of the author, and the impossibility of truth. For this camp, the postmodern individual finds him/herself in a social world that is grim, cruel, alienating, hopeless, and ambiguous. The future consists of coping with the excesses of modernity which have led to problems of overpopulation, genocide, and images of an upcoming apocalypse.

In line with this outlook, the skeptical postmodernist argues that there is no truth, in any form. All that exists is a play of semeiotics, which is utilized by individuals to play language games in a debate over symbolic meaning. Skeptics question the value of the enlightened individual, or subject, who is unified and coherent, and argues that to believe that the individual subject serves as an adequate references point for social discourse (Baudrillard 1988) is to believe in fairytales. The subject remains a fiction, and can only be constituted by the recognition of the many roles one plays and masks one wears. The skeptics vehemently object to all notions of the subject, or subjectivity, which they argue are rational projects of the Enlightenment. Like the object, the subject is seen as a pragmatic symbol of modernity and has lead to the modern myth of a unified

individual subject. Finally social reality becomes for the skeptic and to some degree the affirmative as well, simply a simulation with little or no universal truth beneath it.

The other end of the continuum is occupied by the affirmative postmodernist who agrees with the skeptic's critique of modernity but offers a more optimistic view of the possibilities involved with the advent of the postmodern age. The beginnings of the affirmative standpoint can be located in the pragmatic tradition including John Dewey (West 1989). This strain of postmodern/ism is geared towards the understanding of meanings produced through an interactive process at the subjective level. Unlike the skeptic, the affirmative continues to hold on to the idea that some meanings, values, and truth are in fact superior to others.

The affirmative camp has proposed a reconstructed notion of the postmodern individual, not as an individual rational actor, but rather as an individual who possesses a somewhat reliable form of knowledge based on life experience. Under this revised form of subjectivity, the focus is not only on the agency of the subject, but on the individual's unique experience. Thus, subjective experience becomes the point for social analysis. For the affirmative postmodernist, the main level of analysis focuses on daily life at the margins of society and on pathologically marginal individuals rather than on mainstream society and well integrated members. This approach continues to reject objective frames of relevance, but offers optimism concerning what can be obtained as a result of a critical pragmatic approach (Denzin 1992).

Like the skeptics, the affirmatives also reconstruct the notion of truth. And while rejecting universal truth, they do accept the possibility of specific, contextual, personal,

and community based forms of (subjective) truth. And the affirmative argues that truth consists in an individual subjective form and that, in essence, this subjective truth is equitable with valid forms of social knowledge, particularly social theory. Thus theory, for the affirmative postmodernist, becomes a narrative of daily life and lived experience. In sum, the affirmative restores the end of object-subject debate ignored and marginalized by modernity.

The myriad of social conditions associated with contemporary social life come together in a world where many of the major assumptions of postmodern theory are held as truth. That is, today's society has increasingly become fragmented and commitment phobic. Given this extreme sense of fragmentation inability to commit and paranoid suspicion it becomes easier to accept and believe not only in the end of truth but the elevation of the individual subject to a place of primacy. Our contemporary social reality has been altered to the point where the individual familiar with the modernist framework must question if religion, along with all truth and history has died or been transformed so radically that its form and function are no longer discernable on the social canvas of contemporary American life.

Is there then a point to applying the postmodernist framework to the sociological study of religion? To be certain, the current religious and spiritual American landscape appears to fit well into postmodernism's larger descriptive definition of the postmodern condition. That is, the religious and spiritual landscape we now find ourselves in is dotted with what might best be termed religions that can certainly be characterized as hyper realities, religions whose churches defy the space time continue and are

characterized by a lack of face to face interaction, by increasing fragmentation, and a lack of significant commitment. In this sense, postmodernism works well in that it provides us with a rich descriptive template making such phenomena easily recognizable.

When examined more completely, one is forced to consider that while Postmodernism does prove to be an excellent descriptive tool in that it outlines basic themes associated with our current, or contemporary reality but what it fails terribly at doing is in providing an adequate, or for that matter a correct means or framework for explaining or analyzing the reality behind, or beneath, contemporary religious and spiritual phenomena. And taken to its extreme one must question whether the sociological study of religion or anything for that matter is a worthwhile pursuit at all. Because in denying not only the relevance of truth, but its existence at all makes mute any such discussions.

Given the importance of the place of religion and spirituality in the individual, group, and societal context societies and time and its apparent refusal to, in postmodern terms die, I cannot accept the extreme alternative offered by postmodernist theory. Because while modernist theory tends to reduce the function of religion almost exclusively to an agent of social control, postmodernism sees it as irrelevant all together and thus does not offer an acceptable alternative.

CHAPTER IV

RELIGION (RE)DEFINED: THE MISUNDERSTOOD WORK OF DURKHEIM AND THE IGNORED WORK OF C. G. JUNG

Introduction

In the above section I attempted to outline some of the crucial problems associated with mainstream approaches to religion. It is the opinion of this writer that these approaches have rendered themselves problematic in terms of their application to the postmodern information age. In this chapter, I will examine more closely the work of David Emile Durkheim and Carl G. Jung in an effort to provide a clearer and more appropriate definitional framework. This “alternative framework” is not only an improved approach to religion and spirituality in light of the multitude of diverse forms associated with the postmodern age but also the more traditional forms addressed, inadequately and incorrectly, by the Parsonian mainstream.

And as the title of this chapter suggests, this portion of the paper focuses largely on correcting the widespread misunderstanding in sociological circles of Durkheim’s work on this subject. Further, and in keeping with my anti-enlightenment call for the breaking of disciplinary boundaries, I will examine the work of Carl Jung whose writings, while considered “psychological” and even mystic in nature, mirrors very closely that of Durkheim not only in terms of the characteristics and functions each sees associated with religion but also in terms of shared basic assumptions about the nature of man and society. And in correcting such misunderstandings, I hope to lay the

foundations for the sections that follow in terms of providing a basis for the integration and extension of the work of these two eminent anti-enlightenment thinkers into a simultaneously new and old theory of postmodern religion and spirituality with particular application to our contemporary postmodern American landscape.

The period of time spanning from the end of the nineteenth through the first part of the twentieth century was ripe with the development of important theories within the social sciences (including sociology, philosophy, psychology, and anthropology). During this time, discussions of religion and spirituality were not uncommon. The large bodies of work produced by David E. Durkheim, a philosopher by education specializing in sociology, and Carl G. Jung, a medical doctor specializing in psychiatry, provide evidence of the shared importance of religion to a number of different disciplines and social theorists a century ago. And the fact that these theorists are rarely addressed together continues to amaze this scholar in particular. Amazing also is the fact that while the shared approach outlined in this work is now, relatively speaking, chronologically ancient, remains exceptionally suitable for examination of the contemporary religious and spiritual landscape. The works of Jung and Durkheim present the contemporary social theorist interested in examining aspects of human culture associated with religion with a comprehensive body of work which covers not only theory at both the micro and macro level, but also, and very importantly, an anthropology laced methodology by which examination and analysis can take place. That is, the hybrid approach presented in the work of Jung and Durkheim covers both individual (psychological) and societal (sociological) level phenomena, in this case

religion and spirituality, using an anthropological methodology which examines such phenomena across different groups, communities, and society and in the same unit across various historical periods.

Despite a number of glaring similarities between the works of these two theorists, there is almost a complete lack of formal connections or links between the two. Such connections are, at best, difficult locate. While Jung, who comes chronologically after Durkheim, does not acknowledge any Durkheimian influence, they did have mutual contacts primarily in the form of Durkheim's student Lucien Levy-Bruhl and indirect connections in the form of a shared integration of the work of Wundt ([1887] 1916). It is apparent however that even without clear direct citations of Durkheim in Jung's work, the connections and parallels are striking. Throughout this chapter, I will point out the nature of the similarities in the context of the contemporary religious and spiritual landscape.

My focus is on Jung and Durkheim, not only because they are of prime importance to me in general but because the ties that bind their work together are so very strong. David Emile Durkheim was chosen for several reasons including the fact that while much of his work has been redefined and framed so as to fit neatly the standard positivistic and Parsonian mold, a different contextual reading of Durkheim's larger body of work, should reveal that the powerful anti-enlightenment influence lies at the basis of his impressively inclusive body of theoretical and applied works almost always tie directly or indirectly to his concern with religion. And while squarely outside of the sociological mainstream, the psychological work of the Swiss analytical psychiatrist

Jung contains endless parallels with Durkheim's sociological work. The use or integration of a non-sociologist into a sociological framework within which to study religion is important because I feel strongly that mainstream sociology has limited itself greatly by placing barriers to the inclusion of works from other disciplines. As such, I find that this sort of approach allows for an increasingly more well rounded description, examination, description and analysis of a variety of complex social phenomena.

Shared Philosophical Foundations: On The Influence Of Schopenhauer And The German Romantics

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the anti-enlightenment approach shared by Jung and Durkheim, or any theoretical framework for that matter, it is first necessary to examine the philosophical assumptions which lie its heart and include assumptions about not only the nature of knowledge and truth but also that of man, and by extension the social systems, or societies, created and maintained, at least in part, through human interaction. It is only through this sort of examination that one can truly grasp, and grapple with, the numerous and often complex theories associated with the social sciences.

And while this work focuses on an argument that the currently accepted enlightenment based narratives and thus the associated philosophical assumptions about the nature of man and knowledge on which they are based are not only flawed but wholly unsuitable for the study of our postmodern religious and spiritual landscape, it is nonetheless necessary to briefly mention, for the sake of contrast, these basic enlightenment assumptions. Most simply put, the positivistic theories currently used by

mainstream sociology are deeply influenced by the French enlightenment philosophical tradition which views the individual (or social actor) and all social phenomena (at both the individual and societal level) as being created entirely through the actions of and interactions between essentially rational beings. And as such, all things social, including social institutions all cultural products, both material and nonmaterial, are viewed most often as equally rational manifestations.

And while vast and essential differences between the enlightenment and anti-enlightenment exist, it is first important to acknowledge that to a large extent, these two opposing traditions tend also to be compartmentalized or separated geographically as well. While the enlightenment is seen as being centered in France and personified by the works of Descartes, the anti-enlightenment tradition is most closely associated with Germany and is best personified by the works of Schopenhauer and the larger German Romantic Movement.

While the relevance and importance of the geographical home of the anti-enlightenment tradition may seem to many to be largely irrelevant, I would argue that the historical and cultural context of its German home is of the utmost importance to the declining significance of this approach to the social sciences in general and to the study of religion in particular. That is while Germany stood for centuries as the cultural and intellectual center of the western universe, the 20th century and Germany's role in the two world wars severely impacted its prominence as a nation as well as the place of the intellectual works of its people. So severe was the impact of these world events that the dark legacy continues to cloud the importance of the classical German works discussed

in this paper. With the fall of the importance of the Germany on the intellectual stage, France stepped in and captured the philosophical place of prestige lost by Germany. As such, the enlightenment tradition, associated closely with the more rational French has now taken a firm hold of the social sciences.

I would presume, based on the above, that this is at least in part to blame for the downplaying of the anti-enlightenment tradition as being at the heart of Durkheim's work and a mainstream interpretation of Durkheim's work as rational and purely enlightenment based. The reality remains however that Durkheim was extremely influenced by the works of the German Romantics including Schopenhauer and Nietzsche which are cited throughout his large body of works (Magee 1983, Ellenberger 1970, and Mann 1939). Nor can the positivistic establishment deny that Durkheim spent several years studying in Germany, which was, at the time, the only place to study the social science and what would later be called sociology.

While the positivist mainstream has been quite successful in covering up the "germaneness" in Durkheimian sociology, Jung's German influence has been much harder to ignore. Not only are there literally endless references to Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Goethe throughout all twenty plus volumes of his collected works, but Jung lived and worked during the height of the period of what might be termed German revulsion. In fact, Anthony Stevens, an imminent Jungian scholar (1993), argues that an unfounded association between Jung and the intellectual basis of Nazism and germaneness in general stands as a major reason for the continued widespread dismissal of his work not only as a mystical but as dangerous.

The following two sections will involve somewhat more detailed discussions of the major tenants of the German Romantics found in the work of Arthur Schopenhauer ([1818]1966) as they manifest themselves in the work of Jung and Durkheim. I would like to briefly end this section on the philosophical influence with a short overview of these important philosophical premises in a purer sense. And as with all such works, the philosophical works of Schopenhauer and those who followed in his path are defined and molded by the very definition of human nature and thus society and the possibility of human knowledge of the truths of not only ourselves (or our selves) but also the physical and social environment which we occupy.

As was alluded to earlier, Schopenhauer's conceptualization of man stands in almost complete opposition to the enlightenment conceptualization of man which puts primacy on the irrational aspects of human nature. That is, while Descartes and the larger modernist project, view the mind, or rationality, as the superior components of the mind body distinction, Schopenhauer and the whole anti-enlightenment tradition view the will/heart, or the irrational components of human nature as innately more powerful than the mind or human capacity for rationality. And having said this, it would be apparent that Schopenhauer's conceptualization of the will is probably the single most important aspect of his work in that it serves as a unifying concept of not only for his own philosophical approach but for the larger German Romantic tradition as well.

Most basically put, for Schopenhauer the will, or what is sometimes referred to as the heart, is the essence of man. So important is the irrational proportion of human nature that Schopenhauer described it in terms of essential roots that provide the basic

nutrients needed for the survival of both the individual and society. The components or contents of the will are vast. Among its irrational contents are the basic instincts associated with all animals as well as the various emotions and innate human capacity for good (love and compassion) and bad (evil and barbarism).

For Schopenhauer and the larger German Romantic Movement, the will is viewed as a unifying characteristic common to all humanity. As such, the will is often referred to in terms of a common or shared force which not only guides individual and group level experiences but also the production of social products or representations. Schopenhauer viewed the irrational contents of the will as providing basic templates or forms which through interaction and human social experience manifested themselves in terms of a system of *representations* which we know as society or the social world. And it is this very tenet that lies at the heart of his landmark work The World as Will and Representations ([1818] 1966). It is also crucial to note that Schopenhauer argues that (advanced) humanity is largely blind not only to the existence of such an archetypal reservoir but also to its irrepressible nature. And in this vein, one might best describe the will in terms of a storehouse of powerful unconscious guiding human forces shared by all humanity.

So what then can be said about truth and knowledge in light of the fact that Schopenhauer viewed the essence of man, or the irrational will, as largely unconscious in nature? One might think that like Kant ([1781] 1958), Schopenhauer would have argued that the reality behind the external social world is unknowable. But this is not the case. For Schopenhauer there is indeed truth or reality behind social representations.

And while complete knowledge of the contents of the will, or the most basic human truths, is likely unattainable, we can grasp partial glimpses of such irrational based truth not through the rational objective methods proposed by the enlightenment, but through subjective experiential examination of ourselves and our larger social world.

Unifying Themes Of Society And The Individual: The Collective (Un)Conscious And The Irrepressible Human Will

Having provided, in the previous section, a brief overview of the major premise of Schopenhauer's German Romantic approach to the nature of man and society, I would now like to turn to a more detailed discussion of how these assumptions manifest themselves and are developed in the work of Durkheim and Jung. As the title of this section indicates, I and others see the major unifying concept in the work of both the social scientists addressed here as being the conceptualization of the will in terms of the collective conscious or collective unconscious. As such, this section arises from what I see as a need to elaborate on the fact that because of the anti-enlightenment approach taken by both Durkheim and Jung, which sees an inescapable connection between the individual and society in that the same templates, forms, or what Jung referred to as archetypes contained within the will manifest themselves similarly at both the individual and societal level, their larger theoretical frameworks allow for a more effective and simultaneously analysis of both individual experience and societal level social phenomena including such things as religion and spirituality.

The adoption of the German Romantic view of human nature as largely irrational is quite apparent in the work of Durkheim. This is especially apparent in his conceptualization of human nature as being made up of two poles, the heart and mind. Like Schopenhauer, Durkheim views the heart, the seat of man's irrationality, as the stronger of the two poles. Jung's work too rests on the assumption that the irrational and primordial aspects of human nature defy rational attempts at repression and that in the end such attempts are fated to result in both individual psychic conflict and large-scale social pathology.

Similarly, Durkheim and Jung are in agreement with Schopenhauer concerning the innate nature of the will and its contents. There are endless references in the work of both to the guiding power of forces instincts, forms, cosmic factors, and archetypes and the power they exercise over the course of our social and psychological lives. And it is this shared or common storehouse of the will's forms that Durkheim refers to as the collective conscious and Jung, because of the fact that we are often unaware of these instincts and their powers, later referred to as the collective unconscious.

And the fact that the two, despite almost identical conceptualizations or definitions of the will and its role in human existence, attach slightly different labels is, to this writer at least, somewhat significant and hence begs attention. To be sure, both see the individual and humanity as largely unaware of the nature of the will or the collective (un)conscious and its functioning in everyday life. But both also acknowledge that we can become at least particularly aware, or conscious, of its contents and functioning through what might best be termed subjective experiential examination of

our own lives and general social trends. Hence I will throughout this paper and others argue for the use of the term collective (un)conscious in an effort to construct a more complete integrative conceptualization.

So then, as the title of this section suggests, the collective (un)conscious and its operation in our individual and collective existence and experience provides in the work of Jung and Durkheim a basic theoretical framework which not only unifies the individual and his/her larger society and world, but also provides an adequate framework which is appropriate not only across societies but also across time as well. And having made a statement which, in light of the power of the modernist establishment, borders on heresy, I must acknowledge and attempt to answer the modernist question of how exactly this is possible. Most simply put, Jung and Durkheim both make the argument, providing empirical evidence as support, that while the collective (un)conscious contains constant components, its manifestations or concrete representations are in fact modified across time and culture to fit the social and even physical environment in which they are produced.

This is what Durkheim set out to illustrate in The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life ([1915] 1965). In this and other works, Durkheim argued that the same “elementary forms” lie at the basis of most religious systems regardless of time and culture. More modern versions can therefore best be viewed simply as modified or evolved representational systems of the same basic beliefs and represent the same components of the collective (un)conscious or shared human will. And Durkheim argues from the very beginning of this work, that while the study of elementary, or less

developed or evolved forms simply allows for easier and less clouded examination of the archetypal forms and that the same methodology applied to more modern or developed forms would reveal that many of the same tenets, templates, or basic forms lie at the basis of all religions. And in fact, even the most cursory examination of Jung's work on Catholicism (1958) which would appear at first glance to be vastly different eastern faiths is sure to reveal this to be true.

In fact, much of Jung's work seeks to provide evidence of the existence of the collective (un)conscious and its individual and cultural manifestation across time and cultures. On the individual level Jung, like his teacher Freud, dealt extensively with dreams. Based on an extensive compilation of individual dreams Jung found similar basic forms not only across individuals from not only different societies and cultures but also across vastly different historical periods (find citation). Similarly, Jung's examination of accounts of flying objects in literature, personal accounts, mythology, and artistic representations shows the same basic forms lying at the basis regardless of time and culture (1959). Hence, while the shape and form of the cultural objects change over time and more specifically in this case as science and technology develop, the crux of the accounts and experience remain the same thus providing support and legitimization for such a theoretical framework.

Hence I will end this section by stating that in sum, the crux of the shared Jungian and Durkheimian approach stands in direct opposition to the modernist approach in that because of its conceptualization of the collective (un)conscious or the will as an irrepressible and building force, it views the enlightenment idea of completely rational

human action as delusional in the sense that it denies the superior irrational will common to all humanity.

Breaking The Micro-Macro Boundary

It is my argument that while the mainstream modernist perspective has been hard pressed to provide explanation for religion and spirituality at a single level of analysis, the anti-enlightenment approach of Jung and Durkheim provides sociology with the potential to explain such social phenomena at not only the macro or societal and global level but also at the micro or individual level as well. The reality that sociology is a fractionalized discipline with well defined and specific areas of interest including social psychology, social organization, community, and political sociology stands much less provide a comprehensive theoretical framework stands as evidence of an inability of much of contemporary sociology to break through the macro-micro boundary. I hope to provide the initial evidence that the infusion of a more anti-enlightenment based approach to the social sciences provides the means by which such boundaries can be broken.

Even a quick review of the work of Durkheim, Jung and their fellow anti-enlightenment theorists including Simmel and Veblen should reveal that those approaching sociology from anti-enlightenment tradition almost literally write the same work over and over again. That is, they apply the same anti-enlightenment framework to what would appear through the modernist lens to be vastly different social phenomena (Mestrovic 1992). And the fact that identical theoretical frameworks are used by both

Durkheim and Jung to explain a variety of social phenomena or facts including suicide, mental illness, religion and spirituality, and even education stands as testimony to the ability of such an anti-enlightenment based approach to break our now well established modernist boundaries.

An interdisciplinary approach of sorts is called for in terms of how we are to achieve what would appear to many to be simply a lofty goal. We need simply look to Durkheim and Jung who broke such boundaries as the previous fin de siecle in terms of the finding the means by which such well established boundaries can be broken today. I would argue that it is essential that we take the lead of Durkheim and Jung and go beyond or outside the boundaries of our own disciplines and embrace, use, and integrate the work of psychology, philosophy, and anthropology. Using the anti or counter enlightenment approach discussed in this work, it should become apparent, and not totally revolting to the modernist establishment, that not only has the macro level been built by micro level representations and interactions but similarly that micro level phenomena are at least partially determined by the macro level social, cultural, and even physical environment in which they occur.

In ending this section I would like to point to what I see as the best example of such boundary breaking, Durkheim's Suicide ([1897] 1966). In this work, Durkheim examines simultaneously the individual and collective level phenomena in illustrating how the individual's experience(s) in the social world (or the macro domain) effect and produce individual or micro level phenomena. In sum, Durkheim provides here one of the best examples and illustrations of how the cultural and societal context and

individual circumstances interact to produce the micro level social fact or phenomena we know as suicide.

Towards A New Scientific Approach

As I pointed out, not only have the theoretical grand narratives associated with the modernist approach to the sociological study of religion proven to be largely irrelevant to our postmodern social reality but also that science in general is now viewed as suspect by the general public. It is in the anti-enlightenment work of Jung and Durkheim that I see the potential grounds on which to reconstruct a new and radically different scientific approach.

And the modernist establishment is sure to ask what is scientific about an approach that denies not only the existence of objective truth but also that truth and knowledge of the social world can be reached solely through the use of the pure rational and objective methodology so closely associated with the modernist mainstream. And again I would answer that the work of the anti-enlightenment thinkers illustrates that the search for truth need not be positivistic and wholly rational in nature. And to get directly to the heart of the matter, while Jung and Durkheim both conceive of their analysis and theoretical work as scientific, it should be apparent based on what has been presented in this paper that the very nature of their definitions of science, knowledge, reality, and social facts are vastly different than those associated with the mainstream modernist establishment.

Like their academic father Schopenhauer, both Durkheim and Jung believed that there is in fact an objective reality beneath social phenomena manifested through representation at both the individual and collective level. And while their approaches see humans as unable to completely understand this reality because of its (un)conscious nature and origin, some degree of knowledge is in fact knowable. And in opposition to the positivistic establishment Durkheim is falsely credited with establishing, his anti-enlightenment methodology incorporates not only a certain degree of rational and systematic examination but also and more importantly a large dose of subjectivity in the form of intuitive experience. Hence for Durkheim and Jung alike, the “scientific” methods by which we are able to examine, experience, and understand not only our larger social world but also ourselves involves contributions from both poles of human nature, or should involve the mind and the will, or rational and irrational methods. And as both Durkheim and Jung see the social landscape in terms of Schopenhauer’s “world as will and representation” or a product of the combination of rational and irrational elements, the only hope they see for true knowledge lies in a methodology which incorporates both.

It is in the above discussion of the conceptualization of knowledge, truth, and our human capacity to understand, the only hope they see for true knowledge lies in a methodology which incorporates both. It is in the above discussion of the conceptualization of knowledge, truth, and our human capacity to understand and experience truth that I see the foundations for a new and simultaneously old methodological approach to understanding religion and our larger social world. And

while I myself grapple, based on the larger modernist baggage, a quick survey of the work of Durkheim and Jung, which includes works entitled The Rules of Sociological Methods (Durkheim [1938] 1964) and Essays on a Science of Mythology (Jung and Kerenyi 1949) suggest that the modernist monopoly on the term and definition are unfounded and thus must be viewed in a more even handed manner allowing for the integration of a more subjective approach which the work of both epitomize.

Durkheim And Jung On The Basis Of Religion

And before I can move into a discussion of the major characteristics of religion which are important to the anti-enlightenment perspective, I feel it necessary to lead off with a brief discussion of Durkheim and Jung's definition and conceptualization of religion. Too be sure, and as I have pointed out in several other works, there are endless similarities between the work of Jung and Durkheim. No where is this more evident than in their common conceptualizations of religion. And the fact that Jung, who wrote decades after Durkheim and in relatively close geographic and philosophical proximity to his work, makes no reference in his text to Durkheim makes the enormity of these connections all the more interesting.

The fact that Durkheim and Jung share in common a similar definition of religion is not surprising in that both were greatly affected by the works of the German Romantic Movement which emphasizes the *will*, its store house, the *collective (un)conscious* and the manner in which it manifest itself in terms of *collective representations*. The following two passages from Durkheim's Suicide ([1897] 1966) and The Elementary

forms of the Religious Life ([1915] 1965) illustrate extremely well how Durkheim defines religion:

“Religion is, in a word, the system of symbols and means of which society comes conscious of itself. It is the characteristic way of thinking of collective existence.” (Durkheim [1897] 1966, pg. 312)

“Before all it is a system of ideas with which the individuals represent to themselves the society of which they are members and the obscure but intimate relations which they have with it.” ([1915] 1965, pg. 257)

Jung in a very similar fashion to Durkheim, and largely because of their shared philosophical foundation, conceptualizes religion as a system of collective representations which are best viewed as manifestations of the collective unconscious which itself contains the various aspects of the will (or the diverse drives and templates he refers to as archetypes). And for both Durkheim and Jung, religion serves the same basic function. That is religion offers man the means by which to make sense of one's self, his/her relation to and place within the community /society, and also one's relation to the larger world and universe. And while both see the strengthening of society as important in more developed or evolved religious systems, the most crucial function of religion, in its purest sense, is not the maintenance of social order as suggested by Parsons, but the provision of a system or means by which the individual is able to make sense of one's self and his/her place in the physical, social, and psychic environment (see Jung 1933).

And it is important to begin a discussion of the specific characteristic of religion in the work of Durkheim and Jung by first elaborating on just what is meant by the term “symbolic.” For Jung and Durkheim both, the fact that this system of abstract ideas and

relationships which lie at the basis of religion are made concrete and powerfully “experience-able” allows for its members or the faithful to more easily understand “things,” and thus also serves to strengthen faith in general as well as community or societal ties. In an attempt to illustrate the subjective elements and functions of religious and spiritual life, Jung provides elaborate and detailed analysis of the masses, rituals, and customs associated with the Roman Catholic faith (1942 and 1954). And this is essentially what Durkheim himself, some thirty years earlier illustrated in The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life (1915) in terms of the aboriginal peoples of Australia and their primitive forms of totemism.

In addition, both Jung and Durkheim pointed to the group effect of such irrational and symbolic experience associated with religious traditions. Durkheim referred to a *collective effervescence* or heightened excitement which, during religious experiences, appears to have a contagious nature in that it spreads throughout the faithful participating in such rituals. Similarly Jung, borrowing from Levy- Bruhl (1979) used the term *participation mystique* in much the same manner. In fact, for both, it is the very sort of subjective and irrational experience that serves to strengthen the community ties and is in fact a periodical requirement for the maintenance of religious faith and community in general.

And I hope it has become apparent from the above discussion that religion for Durkheim and Jung differs greatly from the modernist framework in that the essence of religion is located not in the conscious rational attempt to produce and ensure continued social order. Rather, for these anti-enlightenment social philosophers/theorists, the basis

of religion is found in the irrational attempt to make more understandable the irrational nature and forces which guide and bind the individual, society, and humanity alike into a community. A further difference of great significance for discussion of the postmodern religious and spiritual landscape lies in the fact that neither Jung nor Durkheim finds the Presence of a “deity or “god” a necessary aspect of the religion. Again, and in keeping with a definite emphasis on the symbolic nature of religion, gods too are largely symbolic in that they represent personifications of religious ideals. Jung in his explorations of western religion explores this very topic and points out that the Christian God and Jesus Christ alike are symbolic on two levels. That is, deities function as both God *images* and God *ideas*. As such, not only do they provide a symbolic “face” or image with its own specific psychological and often physical characteristics as a point of reference for the faithful, but they also epitomize the critical spiritual ideals of the faith with which they are associated.

Unlike the modernist approach discussed in the preceding section that casts religion in a masculine light in that it emphasizes a “patriarchal” function of enforcing social order, the anti-enlightenment approach shared by both Jung and Durkheim views religion in a very feminine light. Durkheim himself, throughout The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life ([1915] 1965) refers to religion as the “womb” which functions to nurture and support the individual and society as well as to give birth to individual ideas (Mestrovic 1992). Jung himself views religion as a collective representation of the great mother archetype. Furthermore, Jung and Durkheim both felt that both masculine and feminine aspects (capacities or templates) are contained within the collective and

personal unconscious of all individuals and that religious experience should involve feminine aspects of the individual members or participants.

And in fact, both discuss at some length the fact that the Christ god Jesus Christ, while being physically or anatomically male, was endowed with largely feminine characteristics and thus acted as a motherly nurturer to the faithful. Similarly both pointed out that not all religions were equally feminine. A major tenet which came out of Durkheim's work on Suicide ([1897] 1966) was that the more feminine nurturing and supportive aspects of Judaism and Catholicism appear in part to lead to lower suicide rates among members than those tied to the more masculine and patriarchal modeled Protestant faiths.

And while contemporary summaries of Durkheim's empirical examinations are confined, to his Western religions, his research and framework are not limited to the three categories associated with modernist framework (i.e. Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism.) In fact, he addressed not only the aboriginal tribes of Australia but various Orthodox faiths, and a multitude of eastern religions and spirituality as well. Furthermore, Jung's fascination with eastern spirituality in general was greatly facilitated by increased contact with a (counter)culture which to some degree accepted and synthesized into their own worldviews aspects of Eastern religions that are to all that foreign to or different from those associated with our more Western forms (Singer 1972). The anti-enlightenment, German Romantic definition and conceptualization used by both Durkheim and Jung can indeed be applied to the traditional and contemporary

Eastern religions thus allowing for the breaking of the western-centric chains which currently (and have for centuries) bind the social sciences.

Having outlined the basic characteristics of religion associated with the work of both Jung and Durkheim, I would like to end this section with a brief discussion of the problems both saw as associated with religion in the modern age. And to be sure, and as I have said before the work of many of the anti-enlightenment thinkers who wrote at the end of the 1800's were quite prophetic not only in that they "foretold" the future social problems which had begun to emerge at the end of the 19th century and continue to pervade and plague, to an ever increasing degree, our own society at the beginning of the third millennium. This is particularly the case with the changes they point out on the religious and spiritual landscape. Durkheim himself, more than a century ago, saw the loss of religious and spiritual integration and support, and by extension societal integration, as a key factor in the trends associated with suicide rates. Similarly, he illustrated trends towards the deification of man and a search for individual centered religions in terms of the cult of the individual and the search for individual based spirituality. Furthermore he correctly pointed out that the modern age was characterized by the hyperextension of the sacred to things once profane and the worship of such things as science and the state. And true to his anti-enlightenment foundations, Durkheim's outlook for the future was pessimistic in that he saw an almost irreversible crisis of modern man and society as giving rise to and being heightened by such individual based trends reaching the societal level.

Jung himself found similar trends associated with what he called modern man. This concept can be extended to postmodern man who would appear incapable of believing in anything and is largely unable to invest any significant part of him/herself in such endeavors as religion which might take away from his/her sense of individual importance. But, for Jung, man is, by nature, incapable of escaping the innate drive or force which compels him and is thus left searching in the postmodern landscape for a soul which not only fits his own lifestyle but satisfies the archetypal needs of his/her will (Jung 1933 and 1954). And it is this that is largely the cause of the separation of religiosity and spirituality. Americans and Westerners in general have firmly taken hold, and with pathological results, of the idea that one need not be involved with organized religion and its now “unnecessary symbolic rituals” in order to be spiritual. The rise in the integration of Eastern spirituality even within organized Western religions too serves as evidence of the pervasiveness of this belief and accounts for the real changing in the religious landscape.

A Simultaneously Old And New Approach To The Sociology Of Religion And Spirituality

I hope to have illustrated adequately in this chapter that the common framework presented in the work of both Jung and Durkheim, and typical of the anti-enlightenment approach differs greatly from the mainstream Parsonian version couched in an inescapably and to at least some degree a flawed modernist framework that assumes all things social to be largely rational in nature. And armed with the above discussion, even the most brief survey of our contemporary social landscape should reveal to anyone

open-minded to the anti-enlightenment perspective that not only is the social world in which we exist largely irrational in nature but that the approach of Jung and Durkheim has not only weathered the test of time but will continue to be more applicable to the postmodern social world. Furthermore, based on the increasingly cosmopolitan nature of our contemporary social reality (or perhaps more appropriately, social realities) where East meets West boundaries are more easily crossed (though not always with the best results and consequences), the current social existence demands the use of a framework which is capable of correctly accessing the nature of the social phenomena associated with both sides of the cultural divide. Furthermore, a framework which contains the work of Durkheim with that of Jung breaks not only the cultural boundaries but also the sociological-psychological disciplinary boundaries in that it offers the power to explain not only religious and spiritual experience in both the east and west but also provides explanations at both the individual and societal level. Hence I would argue that in the adoption of this sort of framework with modifications for postmodern age we have a viable and simultaneously old and new framework which better than nay other current option explains postmodern America's search four a soul and the social landscape in which we search for it.

Religion And Spirituality: Defined And Distinguished

The above outlines the major aspects of the work of Durkheim and Jung that are particularly applicable to our contemporary postmodern social landscape. The final areas that must be addressed concerns how best to address defining and making the

distinction between the concepts of spirituality. Making a distinction between the concepts is key to any discussion of the postmodern religious landscape where increasingly people have increasingly find experience and emotion outside of the confines of church. The answer to his puzzle, I would argue, has existed for more than a century in the misinterpreted work of Durkheim and the ignored work of Jung as well as in that of those who followed in their path (primarily anthropologist Joseph Campbell and sociologist Pitrim Sorokin).

The answer is found not in an outright discussion of the two concepts but in the context of a common discussion of mythology across different cultures and in terms of changes and evolution through different historical periods. Durkheim, Jung, and Campbell all shared an interest in mythology and the term was often almost interchangeably with religion and spirituality as mythology can be seen as the religion of society put into narrative form which makes the guiding principles more easily grasped. The mythological system associated with a given society can be viewed in a very real sense as the religion and spirituality told in narrative form. Just as Durkheim and Jung similarities across religions in all cultures and throughout time which indicated that, housed within the collective (un)conscious was a template for the creation of religion and all cultural systems and that these templates can be discovered through the examination of differing cultures and the same culture across time.

Campbell's extensive study of various systems of mythology indicated that there were two very distinct types of mythology. The first he termed bounded and the second universal (Campbell 1949 and 1988). The major difference between the two has

to do with the nature of the way the mythological systems and the societies which create them and within which they are created view themselves, on both an individual and societal level, in relation to the rest of humanity. Mythological systems that see the individual and the society of its creation as part of a larger connected cosmos or universe fall under what Campbell termed universal while those systems which view the individual and the society of its creation as superior or set apart from those individuals and societies other than that of its creation as bounded.

In his studies of systems of mythologies, Campbell noted that as society evolves from ancient to more modern forms, there is a movement from an emphasis on universal mythologies to those that have an increasingly bounded nature (1949). This is particularly true as science increasingly provides humanity with “answers” concerning the nature of life and human’s place in the larger universe. As a belief in the connectedness shared by all humanity gives way to a focus on understanding and maintaining difference there is a shift from universal to bounded mythology. In addition to this historical movement from universal to bounded mythologies in general, Campbell noted that there was a distinct difference between western and eastern mythology with western mythologies. Western mythologies on the one hand have tended to be more bounded while eastern mythologies have largely taken on a universal in focus.

If one accepts that mythology is analogous to religion told in narrative form, then the distinction between bounded and universal mythologies made by Joseph Campbell, who himself was much influenced by Durkheim and Jung and the larger anti-enlightenment movement, can be used to make sense of the difference between religion

and spirituality in our current postmodern social context. The concept of religion, particularly in the contemporary postmodern age, is best viewed as that system of cultural representations associated with a society or community which is characterized by a bounded world view or one that excludes the portion of humanity which falls outside its boundaries, be them geographical, ideological, ethnic or cultural.

Spirituality, on the other hand is best viewed as a system of cultural representations associated with a society or community which is characterized by a universal world view that includes, or embraces the entirety of humanity without the imposition of boundaries.

A historical survey of western religious and spiritual experience is sure to reveal that the work of Campbell, with its many parallels to the work of Durkheim and Jung, on mythology fits well the sort of framework I am offering here as an alternative approach for the sociology of religion. In chapter two, I discussed the transformation of religion from a system that attempted to provide the individual with personal meaning and an understanding his/her place in the physical world where religious and spiritual experience was seen as integrative into what many contemporary Americans view as a cold organization with teachings and requirements that no longer necessarily provide the individual with a sense of his place in the larger context of humanity. In our contemporary fragmented and bounded social milieu exposure to cultures other than our own has grown exponentially with the advent of the internet and other communication networks made possible by advances in technology. I think Campbell's examination of mythologies and religion provides evidence that because ancient communities were to a large extent homogenous in terms of their culture because of a lack of contact and

conflict with other cultures, the individual and cultural manifestation of the spiritual archetype tended to be universal in nature. Technological advancements resulted in increased contact, conflict which leads to increasingly bounded and fragmented societies and thus increasingly bounded religious manifestations of the spiritual archetype. The average American who has never actually physically traveled to Tibet for example can to one extent or another “know” its culture and religion. This average American can choose to do one of two things with this new knowledge. S/he can borrow from the Tibetan culture and to some extent integrate those aspects of the culture and religion he/she is drawn to into his own religious worldview and practices or can reject it and thus increase the boundedness of his/her sense of his/her own religion. And perhaps there is a third alternative as Americans increasingly pick and choose in terms of including some parts of such eastern based religions while rejecting others. And in societies where the population has come not only to expect but demand variety and personalization this mixing and matching has become increasingly more common.

In sum, spirituality can be best viewed in terms of a grand archetype. It is universal in the sense that this spiritual archetype which includes all of other elementary forms and elements discussed by Durkheim which drives us to experience it through religion. Religion therefore can best be viewed as the cultural manifestation of the great spiritual archetype. Mythology and religion provides the outlet for the fulfillment of a spiritual drive which is universal in the sense that it is shared by all but bounded in that different people and societies experience and express it in different ways. All individuals are driven therefore to express this often unconscious need for spiritual

experience. And while the religious venues discussed in the chapter that follows are unconventional and may not fit conventional definitions of religion, they none the less provide the individual with expressions of the major elementary forms or aspects of the grander spiritual archetype. With increased societal evolution and contact between people of very different cultures, the representations take on increasingly narrow or bounded forms. But they are none the less expressions of the same archetype that is found in the most traditional and ancient of societies.

CHAPTER V

POSTMODERN RELIGIONS: TOWARDS THE APPLICATION OF A NEW FRAMEWORK

Introduction

In the previous chapters I have outlined not only the major problems I see within the theories of religion and spirituality offered up by the academic sociology. In the previous chapter, I provided what I see as a viable alternative framework which has at its heart the anti-enlightenment approach used by both D. E. Durkheim and C. G. Jung as well as in the work of Sorokin and Campbell. It is my argument that the sort of approach outlined in here offers a viable alternative descriptive and explanative theory of religion and spirituality in the postmodern information age.

This chapter is an attempt to provide illustration and thus support for the extent to which the framework offered here provides a viable. I will begin by first examining the more general trend towards what might best be termed virtual religion and then turn to more specific “isms” that represent some of the many avenues or paths taken by Americans who in a very “Jungian” sense appear to be truly in search of a soul (1933). These “isms” include feminism, Afrocentrism, Nationalism, or what Robert Bellah referred to as Civil Religion (1967), and finally the more spiritually based approached which can best be described as Star Warism.

Virtual Religion

Advances in telecommunication technologies, the internet, and more conventional transportation technologies have provided the individual with an endless number of social groups within which one can become involved or simply experience anonymously. Perhaps the best examples of this sort of hyper-religion are internet churches, television ministries, and religious cable networks. Membership in, involvement with or simply the experience of these religious and spiritual program outlets differ dramatically from more traditional forms of religion in that one's physical presence is not required. The fact that the internet, telecommunications, and travel have allowed the postmodern individual to interact with and try on a variety of different religious or spiritual masks truly changes the face of religion in a contemporary society. They are, I believe, best viewed in terms of voluntary religious organizations. And the fact that the individual has access to and can become involved with so many different, and perhaps even contradictory, religious and spiritual groups increases the level to which the individual is fragmented in the postmodern age.

Similarly, because one can participate anonymously and on his/her own terms, commitment to these postmodern religious and spiritual outlets are not necessary and in fact may be difficult if possible at all. One can turn on and off the television or computer at will effectively severing all ties and commitment almost instantly. Similarly, one must question the quality of the religious experience for both the

individual and larger community involved when proximity is not an issue. Whether or not they provide the real sense of individual or group religious/spiritual identity seen as so crucial for both Durkheim and Jung must therefore be questioned.

The nature of the religious services, rites, and rituals have also been transformed within the setting of the internet and cable based networks. Within this context membership status in this sort of setting to what might best be termed viewership. This is an extremely postmodern phenomenon in and of itself as membership in traditional religious groups involved and in fact required active participation. In order to keep the individual involved, religious networks for example, focus not so much on increasing participation but insuring that the audience remains virtually fixated. How exactly this is accomplished is extremely interesting. One need only tune into such programming of an hour or so a day to witness the over the top production spectacle that keeps even the relatively uninterested and skeptical viewer fixated on the spectacle of it all. And because the size of viewership directly determines economic income, doing so takes on increased importance. As such, the meaning of the rites and rituals Durkheim and Jung saw as so crucial for the development and maintenance of individual and group religious/spiritual identity have often become lost in the gilded furniture and wildly exotic looking hosts in order to force continued interest.

An additional type of virtual religion/spirituality can be found in terms of a pursuit perhaps best termed “church shopping” or the trend of perpetually seeking a church or organization that meets one’s own narrowly defined needs and requirements. This category, and by extension the churches and organizations they become involved

with, if only temporarily, are increasingly narrowly focused and tend to be short lived. Carl Jung Dedicates an entire book to this very phenomenon. In Modern Man in Search of a Soul (1934), Jung examines the tendency for contemporary individuals to search for religious or spiritual groups that fit their own very specific personal beliefs and an associated tendency to move on when a group no longer fits exactly one's laundry list of requirements. This is particularly prevalent in American society where membership in small independent non-denominational churches is becoming increasingly more prevalent. Not only can one easily change church affiliation, but if discrepancies between individual and organizational beliefs are discovered, members with similar ideas or interpretations can band together and alter the teaching of the individual church or break away and form new churches that meet exactly individual criteria. The logical extension of this trend towards fragmentation being that eventually all churches may have membership roles of one.

The postmodern landscape is certainly characterized by the fragmentation of self and a decrease in individual ability to commit to anything (Rosenau 1992). Membership and involvement in and experience of religious and spiritual groups and movements has degraded, it can be argued to transient membership in voluntary associations, or to extend the work of Shibutani (1961) to religious social worlds the bounds of which are set almost exclusively by effective (tele)communications. The postmodern individual becomes involved in, if only for a short time, with a number of different religious and spiritual groups. The only way for these groups to attract interest, involvement, and monetary support, and thus insure continued existence in a competitive market is to

bombard the airways, internet, or networks with information and programming, or simply put to market the cause. Like the major television networks whose programming is not religious in nature, it would appear that such media based religious organizations are increasingly appear to make use of the demographic tools to increase their effectiveness in reaching target audiences and producing the desired effect. Just as afternoon programming on most networks is geared towards children and often include cartoons, many of the Christian based networks now offer animated programming in the afternoon with Christian superheroes thus increasing the veiwership during specific time slots. Similarly, daytime programming during the week often appears to be geared towards women and evening and nighttime programming towards family audiences. And in the case of religious television, the worship programming itself must be presented effectively and attractively so as to catch and keep viewers. The high level of competition for viewers and the increasing exposure to the large number of religious worlds on television and the internet makes making a decision to commit difficult and transient as changing one's mind has been made almost effortless.

The sacred aspect of religion, so important to Durkheim has changed dramatically as well. What was once defined as scared is often no longer considered at all. Examples of this are everywhere. A number of aspects of religion and spirituality, including the sacred nature of ideas and physical representations are defined and redefined at the individual level. The circulating sense of truth, so common in postmodern society, leads also to the circulating sense of what is and is not sacred. And things once clearly in the "profane" category now take on sacred religious meaning.

People flocking to see the image of the Virgin Mary on a tortilla in Mexico or the image of Christ in a screen door of a mobile home in Texas and the cults which they give rise to illustrate well the blurring of the lines between the sacred and profane.

Similarly the typical church, once considered sacred by the communities who built and used them, have begun to disappear. The external manifestation of sacredness in the architecture of places of worship has given way to very nondescript, and in many cases, sterile buildings whose purpose is often almost indiscernible to the outsider. The case of telechurches is even more profound. Sanctuaries are nothing more than sound stages, often transient, that can be moved from place to place or disposed of almost effortlessly. Not only is the sacredness of physical place often a transparency in this sort of setting but so too is the ritual form involved. Scripted, often for specific audiences, the ceremonial rites, rituals, and worship take on a sense of theater and spectacle and increasingly lack the sacred nature once associated with religious ritual which both Durkheim and Jung argued were essential for the maintenance of individual religious identity as well as for producing social integration among members.

And while the above discussion may appear wholly critical of virtual religion in general, they must be viewed in terms of the social context within which they developed and now exist. The form that these religions take is indeed much evolved from the more traditional organizations of the past, but the function they serve remains largely the same. That is, the individual, regardless of how fragmented, finds some degree of knowledge and understanding of his/her place in the larger social world and perhaps universe in which s/he exists within the context of these new virtual religions. And

while the degree of involvement in and emotional attachment to these groups has dissipated greatly, they nonetheless have the potential to provide some level of identity to individual members and thus can and should be viewed as viable alternatives to the more traditional or mainstream religions of only a few decades ago.

Nationalism: Civil Religion In America

The first the four *isms* or postmodern religions/spirituality I will address takes the form of what Robert N. Bellah (1967) referred to as civil religion and closely mirrors the discussion of the worship of the state contained within the works of both Durkheim and Jung. The events of September 11 2001, it can be argued were meant by the radicals who perpetrated the bombings was to attack America and its civil religion or sense of nationalism. Instead, for a time at least, American flags flew, the level patriotism and pride in America increased and the war on terrorism launched by the United States Government was, it can be argued, an attempt to reinforce not only the United States' place on the world stage, but also to renew the sense of nationalism among its members. To be certain, the reaction of the United States to 9-11 does not represent a completely new trend. History tells us that in times of war, identification with country, patriotism, and national pride become important. In fact Durkheim argued, and I would agree, that while war and national conflict are painful and often costly these events serve to provide an increased or heightened sense of the collective conscious and duty to one's country and thus serving to make the society stronger. And recent events certainly indicate that

the same is true from many Muslim societies where the Islamic state religion has been given a “sot in the arm” in terms of increased identification with Islam.

And while the American Civil religion and the rituals associated with it have become at the very least, somewhat less important in our contemporary post-emotional society (Mestrovic 1997), the events of September 11, 2001 have offered the opportunity for a nation that has not been in a major war for nearly fifty years and has never been attacked on its own soil to again see the importance of civil religion. And to be sure the strong sense of civil religion we are experiencing, if only a temporary cultural condition, closely mirrors the discussions of worship of the state contained within the works of Durkheim and Jung. One need only take a moment to examine American life since September 11, 2001, and the fact that nationalism in America is religious in nature is easily determined. The beliefs, ideals, rituals, rites and customs associated with our American civil religion are easily identifiable.

The pledge of allegiance, while ruled unconstitutional in California in 2002, serves as a sort of American prayer. Much like an eastern mantra it is simple, easily learned and serves as a profession of faith in one’s country and the beliefs and ideals it holds. Along the same lines, ceremonies like the memorials for the World Trade Center victims serve much the same function as religious gatherings in primitive religions where the collective effervescence is experienced by those present and in our postmodern information age by all those watching on those watching on TV, and thus leads to increased collective consciousness and national unity.

And while American Civil religion does not have any gods in a conventional sense, a look at our society through the sort of Durkheimian-Jungian lens finds gods in the likes of Uncle Sam, George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln. With a little examination, one will find that all these people represent the ideals for which America Stands. And this is squarely in line with Durkheim's assertion that god is society or that god, or totems are simply a representation of the beliefs and values of the religion, and in this case, by extension society (Durkheim [1915] 1965).

The totems or physical representations of American civil religion are quite apparent in American civil religion and often served the same functions outlined by Durkheim and Jung. Totemic emblems like the flag, bald eagle, and Uncle same all evoke feelings of identification with America and bring to mind, in many members, the values and beliefs associated with the nation. Rites and rituals similarly serve the function of increasing and reinforcing individual and group identity.

A tour of Washington DC finds numerous memorials or shrines to these national gods or totems. And interestingly enough, even in times where there is a general air of suspicion of the government or state, most citizens of our postmodern nation are still inclined to participate in national holidays and events and are effected (or affected) by such religious experiences to some degree regardless of their level of trust in the government and elected officials.

But as with most other postmodern, an examination of American civil religion within the anti-enlightenment based framework outlined in the previous chapter several flaws can found associated with this (post)modern religion (Mestrovic 1997). Both

Durkheim and Jung considered, and I believe correctly so, that civil religions, or those centered on nationality are patriarchal have a more repressive inclination and thus tends to operate as repressive agents of social control with almost godlike past and present authoritative leaders (Durkheim [1897] 1966 and Jung 1957). For Durkheim and Jung alike, a more complete, universal religion/spirituality should be at least partially maternal in that it should function to nurture the individual and society as well.

Furthermore, the function of civil religion is to provide integration and support almost solely at the societal level and provides the individual with little understanding of the essence of his/her own nature and relationship to the larger universe. So while more traditional religions provided the individual with an explanation of our place in the universe, civil religions teach us of our place in one's own society. As such, the scope of this sort of religion is relatively narrow. Civil religions, if one accepts that they are religious in nature, have two related functions attached to repetitive rituals and rites, first they serve to reinforce a sense of "we" and second, they make clear the definition of the "They." But the very ritualized holidays, including the Fourth of July, meant in theory to reinforce identification at the societal levels, have the potential to illicit feelings of disenchantment among African Americans and together minorities who have long felt alienated from the larger American society. Furthermore, nationalism or American civil religion may be in direct conflict with the individual's membership in other religious/spiritual groups. For example the fact that one self identifies as both Catholic and American can be complicated by the fact that beliefs in the legitimacy of capital

punishment, accepted by the American civil religion, may be abhorrent to one's Catholic faith and thus create the possibility for internal conflict.

The place occupied by such nationalism or civil religions occupy on the religion-spirituality continuum proves interesting. The very survival of any society is dependent upon the development of such a civil religion. In postmodern times, where technology has advanced dramatically and cultural and physical boundaries are easily crossed, nations seem to be increasingly concerned with clearly defining, maintaining and protecting geographical and ideological boundaries and the what results are civil religions that fall more closely to bounded end of the religion spirituality continuum. As such, civil religions in general do not involve the ideal of compassion for all humanity as do more universal religious/spiritual entities as to do would be viewed at least as detrimental to the social order and the security of the nation itself. Those individuals and groups which feel they have been excluded from such bounded civil religion may go outside and attempt to establish an alternative structure so as to provide a venue to address that which is viewed as inequality or a disparity in the larger system. It is in this sort of rebellion against civil religion, I would argue, that the seeds of feminism and Afrocentrism can be found.

Feminism

Feminism has for many individuals taken on a very religious or spiritual character in that it has come for many members of this social movement to identify or define who or what the individual is, the place of women in her own society and the

larger universe and the relationship that exists between the sexes on an individual and universal level. I would like to begin my discussion of feminism by pointing out that the feminine aspect of the collective (un)conscious are at the very heart of both Jung and Durkheim's conceptualization of religion. In fact, it is in Jung's own conceptualization of the "anima" or his label for the feminine archetypal capacity shared by both the sexes that he, like Durkheim, locates the source of humankind's religious and spiritual capacities. And in fact, the word anima itself is the Latin word for soul (Singer, 1972). So it should not be unexpected that feminine centered religions have a long history. And Jung himself addresses at length the Marianism or the high place accorded the Virgin Mary in the Roman Catholic faith as what can certainly be considered an example of the feminist religious/spiritual perspective in some strains of anti-enlightenment thought. Furthermore, many modern day feminists identify very closely and view very positively, the glorification of such "goddess" images and ideas.

And while the contemporary feminist movement seeks for equal footing with men in society, in theory, the postmodern feminist version of a search for a soul" also represents the glorification and worship of the feminine (or female) and has a stronger accentuation of the characteristically or archetypal feminine attributes rather than those associated with "culturally" preferred masculine attributes associated with what Jung termed the animus. Furthermore, the rallies and "meetings" associated with membership in the feminist movement are constitute, in essence, postmodern rituals that serve many of the same functions of the more traditional religions outlined by Durkheim and Jung. And to be certain, media depictions of the collective excitement experienced by

members at rallies certainly appear to be closely in line with is referred to as collective effervescence. And thus feminism, in its purest theoretical form would appear to offer the possible means by which to achieve the balance between the feminine and masculine, or the anima and animus, which Jung and the larger anti-enlightenment movement in general indicates for as essential for the social and spiritual well being at both the individual and community and societal level.

At the same time, I would agree with other anti-enlightenment assessments which argue that the reality of the current reality of the feminist movement in general differs in a very significant and crucial way from the ideal discussed above (Hoff-Sommers 1994 and Mestrovic 1992). The movement which began as an attempt to reach gender equality and promote inclusion of women into the economic and political structure, has itself become very bounded in its exclusion of an entire group of feminists who were now viewed as too traditional in their views.

An entire group of women labeled conservative because of their tendency to deify and glorify the more traditional or archetypal image of women as feminine and maternal now find themselves outside of the bounds of the movement that began to set women free from a patriarchal society. This faction of the larger feminist movement has been labeled as heretics by the more radical or liberal mainstream which appears to be seeking more to “masculinize” women rather than to glorify and worship the feminine aspects sacred by both women and men. The dismissal of the work of Camille Paglia (1990 and 1992) provides an excellent illustration of the dominance of this viewpoint and agenda in the larger feminist movement. That Paglia like others with more

traditional views in line with Jungian and Durkheimian thought have been “expelled” from or excommunicated from the movement by the National Organization for Women (NOW) for being the equivalent of modern day heretics provides evidence of the extent to which feminism itself has become increasingly bounded and exclusionary despite the inclusiveness originally at its center. And within the anti-enlightenment framework outlined here, such an approach is inherently flawed and differs little from the patriarchal models it seeks to replace in that it essentially seeks to endow women with the very social “powers” associated with the masculine or animus which they purport to despise.

Afrocentrism

Just as feminism arguably grew out of a reaction or rebellion against our American civil religion’s exclusion of women from full access to the American dream, the third ism discussed here, Afrocentrism can be seen as developing out of a similar reaction to and rebellion against what has been essentially, the exclusion of the majority of black Americans from access to the American Dream in the face of America’s stated ideology of equality. The civil rights movement began as an attempt to make the stated ideology of equality and equal access a reality in American life. And while the civil rights movement in general terms involves not only insuring equality for African Americans but all minority groups, the larger movement has splintered and what has evolved is a number of groups focused on gaining rights for more specific minority groups each based on a specific race, ethnicity, sexual preference, or disability.

The contemporary afrocentric movement is a characteristic and perhaps expected outcome of the great resurgence in the importance of race and ethnicity that characterizes our postmodern age and came to fruition during the civil rights moment and the 1960's when African Americans legally gained equal status. Afrocentrism, as with the other two isms discussed above fits well into the theoretical framework discussed in the previous chapter.

Afrocentrism, to a certain extent, has in a sense a (post)modern version of ancestor worship associated with it. Durkheim, Jung and Campbell all indicated that this sort of ancestor worship was a crucial aspect common to many of very early religious systems associated in both eastern and western cultures and throughout the span of human history. And to be sure, the recently developed holiday festival Kwanzaa and the national observances of Martin Luther King Day and Black History Month indicate that a clear set of symbolic collective representations have been established thus further cementing Afrocentrism's status as an alternative postmodern religion or spiritual option. And as in the case with feminist rallies associated with the ism in the previous section, the development of and participation in such rituals and customs certainly serves not only to strengthen individual faith in the afrocentric movement but is also a means by which to intensively reinforce and solidify commitment to and membership in the larger movement. And by extension, the vast number of individuals involved in these sorts of Afro centric movements and organizations suggest that for the African American population at least, this is a viable avenue for finding one's soul.

But again, and from very Jungian point of view, I would argue that a soul which is found and thus located within such racial or ethnicity based religions or spiritualities too is incomplete in that it is extremely bounded as it confines identification almost exclusively to one's own race and thus ignores the commonality shared by all humanity. It can not therefore foster a true understanding of and compassion for humanity which Jung, Durkheim and Campbell argue is preferable.

The recent trend of what has been call voluntary segregation serves as illustration. The early civil rights movement hoped and fought for equality and integration both. And to be sure, this has never been achieved completely. The children of individuals who moved north to escape the continued culture of racism in the south and out of a hope for a better life are now moving back to the south. Atlanta, once viewed as a hostile relic of a segregated and prejudiced past, is now becoming a cultural Mecca of sorts for African Americans. Having come back, in a very real way, many educated African Americans have chosen to live in exclusively black neighborhoods and communities thus themselves choosing voluntary segregation by living in such ethnic enclaves. And while these ethnic enclaves for minorities provide positive living experiences, one can question whether or not such lifestyles result in detachment from the larger American society and its culture an in essence represent the same sort of exclusion the generation before fought to eliminate.

Star Warsism And Beyond

Having examined nationalism, feminism, Afrocentrism, as well as the more general trends involved with what are best termed virtual religions, I would like to now turn to an examination the trend towards increased identification with and integration of new age spirituality into everyday life. Based on the recent renewed popularity of the Star Wars movie franchise and the spirituality which is woven into it, I will refer to this lastism as Star Warsism. And to be sure the spiritual approach which is at the very heart of the plot of all of the Star Wars movies illustrate very well the widespread split between involvement in organized religions and belief in the more general “spiritual” principles which characterize our postmodern social and psychological landscape. The proliferation of these sorts of new age approaches signifies an increased merging of eastern and western approaches and worldviews (Campbell 1988).

An examination of the nature of spirituality and religion in the Star Wars movies provides us an opportunity to see that the capacity for a more universal or complete expression of spirituality, at the individual and collective experience is still possible. The now famous words that scrawl the screen at the beginning of the Star Wars “long long ago in a galaxy far far away” indicate the persistence of the spiritual and religion across both time and all persons.

And other more overt universal spiritual approaches, including yoga and mysticism, are often dismissed by the postmodern population, the less overt, technologically veiled Jedi approach appeals, often at an unconscious level, to our contemporary collective characterized by increasingly religious and spiritual experience.

The alternative approach offered by new ageism in general is attractive to the postmodern individual searching for a soul for several reasons. First, these sorts of new age spiritualities do not require membership but rather are focused more on worldviews and life philosophies which makes them very appealing in our current postmodern cultural context with its focus on individual religious and spiritual experience. The very fact that many of such faiths, religions, or spiritualities do not necessarily need to involve worship within the confines of church serves as support for the argument that like the other postmodern religions/spiritualities discussed above, such new age endeavors, which are largely individually experienced and practiced, fit well into the anti-enlightenment framework I am offering as an alternative to those currently being offered to describe and explain religious and spiritual experience in contemporary America.

Another important characteristic of such postmodern new ageism is found in the distinction between good and evil or sacred and profane and the acknowledgement that everyone contains the capacity for both. Furthermore, while many new ageisms do not include a deity in the conventional sense, most include a conceptualization of some force, in essence what Schopenhauer meant by the will, many new age spiritualities involve an acknowledgement that all humanity has at least a capacity for both good and evil. In the case of StarWarsism, humanity has the capacity for not only good but the evil associated with the dark side. And it can be argued that these sorts of conceptualizations, which are largely absent in Western based religions, provide the

individual with a more accurate means for understanding his/her own psychological and social self as well the nature of the larger collective or society.

An examination of the Star Wars movie franchise, within the alternative Durkheimian-Jungian framework I have outlined here, is sure to reveal the spiritual and religious aspects involved in the mythological journey of Luke Skywalker and the cult like following that has developed around this monumental postmodern cultural phenomenon. In a real way, Star Wars has become a collective representation of the grand spiritual archetype discussed by Jung containing postmodern representations of all the elementary forms of religious life discussed by Durkheim presenting the postmodern with a new space age, science fiction mythology. Luke Skywalker represents the superman, savior, and messiah whose metaphorical journey leads him to an understanding of the force and ultimately allows him to conquer the enemy. In many ways, Princess Leia represents the great mother and Madonna-whore archetype and helps balance this contemporary myth in that she infuses a sense of the feminine or anima into this science fiction version of a timeless mythological story. The Jedi Knights, much like the knights of the roundtable in the King Arthur myth represent an embracing of the force in its totality and integration of it in a truly spiritual, universal fashion. The Darth Vader character, who we later learn is the father of the superman-savior hero, represents the potential problems associated with the potential outcome of the bounded utilization of the force. The moral here being that harnessing only part of the force, or using it in a narrowly defined, non-integrative, fashion has destructive effects not only at the collective level but also at the individual level. Removing his

mask, Vader reveals a disfigured face. This disfigurement represents the effects of a bounded approach as he no longer looks human and no longer resembles the individual he was as a Jedi Knight who embraced the entirety of the force. Here, Lucas presents the audience with a warning suggesting that a life lived without a universal sense of spirituality results in psychological as well as physical disfigurement.

What is important about Star Wars is that has been so widely embraced by a characteristically bounded culture with a tendency to dismiss universal approaches as new age rubbish. And despite a very eastern flair it remains an alternative in a social milieu characterized by increasingly institutional and narrowly defined religious and spiritual options. The number of people who not only identify with the force and have integrated it into their worldview, if in a bounded sense, continues to grow. Recent censuses in Australia for example have revealed that people are now formally identifying with this particular variety of new age spirituality by responding Jedi when about religious affiliation indicating the extent to which Starwarism has become a formal option or choice for the expression and experience of the spiritual at the individual and collective level.

Conclusion

This dissertation has been an attempt to provide an alternative theoretical framework within which to describe and analyze religious and spiritual phenomena at all three levels of analysis. It is in a re-examination of the work of Durkheim coupled with an integration of Carl G. Jung analytical approach that I argue one can find the most

suitable framework for the sociological study of religion. This dissertation has been an attempt to outline not only the need for such an integrative approach but also to provide evidence of its applicability. All of the postmodern religious and spiritual endeavors discussed here serve as excellent illustration for the model I have put forward.

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VITA

Clasina Buffelen Segura

Address

302 Belair Drive
 New Iberia, Louisiana 70563
 Telephone: 337-365-3575
 Email: cbsegura70@yahoo.com

Education

B. A. (Sociology) Louisiana State University, December 1992
 M.S. (Sociology) Texas A&M University, December 1995

Academic Positions

Graduate Assistant Lecturer, 1998-2002
 Research Assistant, 1996-1998
 Graduate Teaching Assistant, 1993-1996

Scholarly Works and Publications:

Chester, Timothy M. and Clasina B. Segura. (1997). The Rise of the Postmodern Left." *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*, Vol. 17, pp. 105-127 and presented at the 1996 American Sociological Association Meetings in New York City, New York.

McIntosh, W. A., D. Sykes, and Clasina Segura. (1999). "Rural Hospital Survival. Survival: A Case Study of the Shaping and Effects of Community Perceptions." *Research in Sociology of Health Care*. Vol. 16, pp. 223-241.

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