ABSTRACT

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Towards a Genealogy of Sacrificial Rhetoric:
The Discursive Construction of Authority in Luther, Hegel and Weber
(Under the direction of Ruel W. Tyson, Jr.)

This dissertation addresses the historical role played by “sacrifice” in shaping conceptions of the self, society and history. It traces a genealogy of “sacrificial rhetoric” that begins with the Christian reconfiguration of the pagan ritual both doctrinally (through the Crucifixion and Eucharist) and practically (through ascetic substitutions like chastity, poverty, and obedience). In contrast to sacrifice in ancient and indigenous cultures, where the destruction of life or wealth ritually enacts a hierarchy of values (the lower is sacrificed to the higher, the gift to the source, the creature to the creator), Christian “sacrifice” became less a matter of ritual than of discourse. To develop the heuristic resources of “sacrificial rhetoric” as a comparative, critical concept, an introductory chapter situates this rhetorical analysis in relation to the treatment of sacrifice in social scientific discourses. This chapter also relates sacrifice to gift, theft, and exchange, elaborates seven “axes of variation” to compare sacrificial variations across cultures and through history, and isolates two primary discursive effects of sacrificial rhetoric, disaggregation and consecration. Individual chapters examine how the pivotal German writers Luther, Hegel, and Weber continue the Christian process of sacrificial transformation as they strategically deployed the term to demarcate both between sacred and profane and between self and other. At critical junctures “sacrificial rhetoric” allowed each of these writers to break with modes of subjectivity defined by the ancient allegiance to the *polis*, or the medieval bonds of fealty, in favor of a subject of the modern nation-state defined in relation to worship, reflection, and labor.
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ABBREVIATIONS
(For citing these texts, when there is double pagination in the parentheses, the second number refers to the foreign language text).

Luther


FC Freedom of a Christian

LG Lectures on Galatians

Hegel


Weber


1. Sacrificial Rhetoric: Resources for a Comparative Concept

Introduction

This study seeks to construct a novel object of scrutiny, “sacrificial rhetoric,” and explore influential instances of its employment in history. As I understand it, the primary burden of this work is to construct this object in such a way that it both explains phenomena in the world and sets the concept on a sound foundation by building upon existing scholarly resources. Foremost among the innovations I propose is to utilize social scientific theories of religion, ritual and sacrifice in conjunction with literary analysis to explore the rhetorical effect achieved when people speak of phenomena in terms of “sacrifice.” To explore instances of sacrificial rhetoric that will have the greatest illustrative and comparative value, I chose three figures—Luther, Hegel and Weber—who are related by linguistic, religious and national affinities and who each self-consciously drew upon their expertise to contribute to nation-building at the broadest level.

The danger of dealing with three such figures, of course, is the amount of specialist attention they have garnered. Indeed, exploring the conditions and consequences of their sacrificial rhetoric would have been impossible without the immense labors of generations of devoted scholars. I can only hope that the affinities that I find between these three figures, the scrutiny I bring to their rhetorical strategies, and the hypotheses I draw might serve to begin new avenues of inquiry that the specialists will be best equipped to pursue. In the final analysis, this comparative project will have been successful if it contributes in some small way to the spirit of cross-disciplinary conversation and reciprocity upon which the ideal of the university—and, by extension, society—depends.
Disembedded Religion and the Public Sphere

For Karl Polanyi, the emergence of the market as an amoral mediator between humans competing for resources was as important a factor in understanding economics comparatively as the rise and fall of subsistence economies or the emergence of capitalism. Polanyi’s historical hypothesis was that modern societies are defined in relation to a market structure that has become disembedded from other social structures, such as kinship and political authority (1944). In a similar way, a religious sphere disembedded from the rest of society and circumscribed within its proper domain has come to serve as a hallmark of a developed, democratic society.¹ In many contemporary societies, religion has become a phenomenon regarded as mostly private and thus amoral, beyond sanction or judgment. In this new millennium, however, like few times in history, global events have put this détente between co-existing socio-cultural spheres into question. As if to mirror the heightened tensions between nations that followed all too quickly on the heels of the Cold War and the post-Perestroika thaw, within nations as well a new bellicosity has come to mark the relations between the social space claimed by religions and other spaces reserved for cultural, economic, political and juridical phenomena. Even if one argues that these developments are but the latest stages of a process that is cyclical in nature, the socio-economic pressures that have pressed the religious strata of diverse social phenomena to the surface stands as a complicating challenge to the narratives of rationalization and secularization that have defined the liberal-bourgeois world view since the Enlightenment.

Whether it is natural law’s putatively transcendent ground, prophetic calls for socio-economic justice, or authoritative appeals to divine sanctions, disparate cultural and social fields remain haunted by a nearly unavowable religious source. Of course, there are few

¹ Although first encountering this notion of institutional disembedding in Polanyi, it is worth noting that Bremmer too has found it useful in reference to Greek religion: “Whereas most Western countries have gradually separated church and state, the example of other societies, such as Iran and Saudi-Arabia, shows that this is not so everywhere. In ancient Greece, too, religion was totally embedded in society—no sphere of life lacked a religious aspect.[…] Embeddedness went together with the virtual absence of private religion, since in classical Greece the notion of a private sphere was still in an early state of development” (1994, p. 2).
objections to recognizing how historically contemporary social structures emerged from modes of sociality more completely saturated with religious elements—in fact, narratives of rationalization and secularization depend on this. But beyond ideological or antiquarian interests, these religious aspects remain difficult to assess because the putatively “original” religiosity invoked by these narratives only remotely resembles what we have since come to know as religion. Religion’s circumscribed and relegated social sphere itself constitutes a mere remnant of the more vertiginous sacrality that Durkheim described as “collective effervescence,” the transfiguration that the aboriginal Australians produced in their festivals and flashes of which emerge in Holderlin’s lyrics, Nietzsche’s leaps and Artaud’s theater.

Aside from a merely historical interest in an uncircumscribed, embedded notion of religion, there are fundamentalists of various stripes who would reverse this history of disembedding under the guise of a project of cultural and religious recovery. Others, more chastened by the sad history of those who have sought various “lost” origins and objects, reject such returns and teach an accomodationism to the demands of the present. At any rate, despite the recent and much-debated intrusion of robust and unaccomodating religious factions onto the international scene, it is too much to say that we are witnessing either a fundamentalist “re-enchantment” of the world or the rise of an anti-institutional “spirituality”, for the world was

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2 Locke, Jefferson and Madison are certainly key figures in the American tradition of this narrative, and the major social scientific theorists of these trends are Weber (1978) and Berger (1969).

3 According to Durkheim’s last formulation on the topic, “the faithful are not mistaken when they believe in the existence of a moral power to which they are subject and from which they receive what is best in themselves. That power exists, and it is society.” This is so because “religion is first and foremost a system of ideas by means of which individuals imagine the society of which they are members and the obscure yet intimate relations they have with it.[...] And although this representation is symbolic and metaphorical, it is not unfaithful. It fully translates the essence of the relations to be accounted for. It is true with a truth that is eternal that there exists outside us something greater than we and with which we commune.” Against the objection that this ultimate referent of religious symbols and practices is based on “a certain delusion,” Durkheim regarded this “collective effervescence,” during which devotees “believe they have been swept up into a world entirely different from the one they have before their eyes,” as essential to religion’s affective dimension. Accordingly, “[i]f, for this reason, it can be said that religion does not do without a certain delirium, it must be added that a delirium with the causes I have attributed to it is well founded. The images of which it is made are not pure illusions, and unlike those the naturists and the animists put at the basis of religion, they correspond to something real” (1995, p. 227-228).
only disenchanted and secularized for a small—though disproportionately influential—portion of the world’s population in the first place. In fact, insofar as we can speak of these processes at all, I would suggest that enchantment and disenchantment, sacralization and secularization, all are much more dialectically related than any linear historical narrative can describe.⁴ Given the apparent and escalating contradictions besetting the modern world system, these linear narratives of rationalization and secularization must be recognized for what they are: myths that have oriented the actions and affect—or their interface, the *habitus*⁵—of the revolutionizing and culture-bearing European bourgeoisie and their correlates in developing nations. Surely it is too soon to announce the collapse of the democratic, secular state, just as announcements regarding the end of capitalism or of ideology were optimistic, or at best premature, and now appear motivated by a milleniallistic hope more religious than scientific. If the religious aspects of contemporary struggles are not *merely* misrecognitions of actual conditions, and if, even to the degree that they are, these misrecognitions themselves have functional, even fateful consequences, might it be that, for all the contempt that the skeptical elements of the Enlightenment heaped on religions, the redescription of many superficially secular social phenomena as imbued with religious connotations reveals more truth about the phenomena than any putatively objective, ostentatiously rationalistic account? Might it also be

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⁴ Berger’s critical return to his secularization thesis, *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (1999), arguably makes his earlier linear narrative into a Vico-esque *ricurso*. What is needed instead is a more nuanced, dialectical notion of simultaneous secularization and desecularization. Examples of this dialectical relationship could include both of the great signal events of secularization in modern Western history. First, as Marx argued, the Reformation led to the expropriation of church land and property, and this secularization proved a key moment in the primitive accumulation of the European bourgeoisie. These various disenchancing processes were quickly re-enchanted as this class gradually disguised the naked class interests at work in these events with the myths of primitive accumulation that various economists produced and Marx exposed to scornful scrutiny. A more synchronic case, the French Revolution, involved the third estate’s toppling of the first and second estates of aristocracy and clergy, respectively, and, eventually Robespierre’s calendrical and liturgical reform culminating in Christianity’s substitute, the religion of reason.

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⁵ This is the concept Bourdieu developed to account for both the determining effects of society and the sense of agency individuals experience. The *habitus* is precisely the interface between structure and agency as it has become embodied by individuals within society. It attempts to account for the way that individuals, through acculturation, come to *inhabit* their class position and act in ways that oscillate, both consciously and unconsciously, between determination and spontaneity. On this, see Bourdieu (1990, p. 87-94) and Hillier and Rooksby (2005).
the case that, far from constituting primitive survivals doomed to extinction, phenomena grouped under the concept of “religion” remain a provocative surplus that forecloses any possibility of totalizing a set of elements that would bear the name “society”, and that these phenomena thus open that assemblage to an uncertain and undecidable future?

At the very least, I would suggest that the relations between religions and societies are far more complicated than the notion of secularization would allow. To begin to rethink these relations, it is clear that, as with any relation, circumstances and agendas determine whether one stresses the distance or the proximity between the linked elements. Thus, to some theologians, such as John Milbank and Rowan Williams, the relation between religious and extra-religious phenomena has come to seem vital, a link that forms the *omphalos* of all that is meaningful in the contemporary world. Such an apologetic claim is not a premise for this investigation, but a historicizing variant of it is. Since the Protestant and Catholic Reformations, the Wars of Religion and the rise of Enlightenment naturalism, western elites have experienced a period of secularization, rationalization, and increasing objectivity regarding the role of religion in developed and developing societies, largely as a result of comparative studies in the social sciences, classical and religious studies. At this point, under the pressure of historical events, it is time to turn the fruits of these studies back onto the same societies that produced them. In other words, after the provocation of encountering other religions over the past several centuries, the resources developed in the course of these encounters can now return to help analyze the complicated role of religion in Western history and society.

As for the problem raised by the putative “return of religion,” one of the axioms that defines the structuralist paradigm seems especially relevant: in a social system, as in language, the relation between elements is more fundamental, or “real”, than the abstracted, second-order elements that it relates.6 With this sense that even developed, secular societies are not yet

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6 Saussure is the proximate source for this perspective, but I would also trace it to Marx’s definition of human nature as the “ensemble of social relations” in the “Theses on Feuerbach” (1972c, p. 109). In the
finished with religions, the developmental distance between societies with embedded and those
with disembedded religious spheres decreases, making it possible to turn the resources of
anthropology and ethnology back onto the societies that produced these discourses. That is, it
is now more than ever possible—and, indeed, imperative—to cast a cold eye on the sometimes
obscure role that religion has played and continues to play in Western or developed societies. I
stress the obscurity of this role because when religious phenomena migrate beyond their proper
sphere, they often undergo a disfigurement or transformation that makes them hard to
recognize, and, again, this possibility of misrecognition itself has momentous consequences.

To complicate these linear narratives of secularization, this investigation will trace the
consequential function of religious phenomena in the articulation of that which the great social
theorists (Smith, Marx, Durkheim and Weber, especially) each considered the defining element
of modern societies: namely, a dynamic and interdependent division of labor. Though
Durkheim alone developed this topic alone into an extended study (1964), the importance of
the division of labor was central to each of these theorists. For Smith, it was the source of the
efficiencies that best promoted a nation’s wealth; for Marx, it was both the cause and
consequence of alienation from production processes and their products, and also the condition
for a future of plenty and leisure; for Weber, it was the objective counterpart to the subjective
sense of a “calling” that the modern individual was bound to heed if life was to have any
meaning at all. In particular, the dispersion of a peculiarly authoritative type of labor, that of
uttering proclamations regarding the nature of reality itself, required a highly charged type of
religious discourse in order to legitimate the transmission from one position in the social field
to another. As positions of social authority have multiplied to include not only the prophet and
the priest but also the pastor, the philosopher, the scholar and the scientist, in each instance of

twentieth century this insight has migrated from linguistics, that is, from the study of language as a system, to
any system, even society as a whole. An alternative lineage could trace back to Nietzsche’s figure of language
as an army of metaphors (1989, p. 250), not a collection of names. The problematic epistemological status of
Nietzsche’s figure of figurality underscores the nature of metaphor not only as an extention of literal language,
but, more fundamentally, as a relation of displacement.
the series a quasi-religious struggle, a reformation of sorts, took place in order to make way for the emergent position. In the course of these struggles, the figures I address utilized the religiously-inflected language of their predecessors to facilitate the necessary social transaction. It is little wonder, then, that the transaction involved the most charged and troubling of all social and religious phenomena, ritual sacrifice.

**Sacrifice Against “Exchangism”**

On many fronts, ritual sacrifice constitutes the unavowable origin of every social transaction. Classics scholars such as Louis Gernet (1981) and Richard Seaford (1994, 2004) have illustrated the way that, in ancient Greece, the articulation of animal sacrifice towards votive offerings formed the nexus necessary for the emergence of the notion of value and coined money as an instrument of exchange. As a result of this historical differentiation, sacrifice as a costly or risky expenditure has come to serve as the contrary of the notion of exchange, where the latter is understood as a process of mutual and simultaneous appropriation and expropriation marked by equivalence and equilibrium. When the transaction takes place under coercion, or manifests a gratuity and extravagance that attempts to mark the transaction as driven by motives other than self-interest, then one enters the realm of sacrifice.7

Although, as Bataille has argued, sacrifices are not non-economic, but rather function

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7 Both Smith and Marx refer to sacrifice repeatedly but, as one might expect, for entirely opposed purposes. When Smith speaks of sacrifice, it is almost always in reference to political interventions in market mechanisms. For example, mercantilism is fundamentally flawed because it imposes policy on the market: “Consumption is the sole end and purpose of all production; and the interest of the producer ought to be attended to, only so far as it may be necessary for promoting that of the consumer. The maxim is so perfectly self-evident, that it would be absurd to attempt to prove it. But in the mercantile system, the interest of the consumer is almost constantly sacrificed to that of the producer; and it seems to consider production, and not consumption, as the ultimate end and object of all industry and commerce” (1976, p. 660). Thus, to Smith, public figures who protected domestic industries by imposing tariffs would sacrifice lower prices for this protection. If the political would leave the economic alone, by implication society would transcend the need for sacrifice. For key passages in Smith where one can find this nearly compulsive turn of phrase, see p. 188, 267, 539, 584, 594, 617, 660-2, 722, 762. To Marx, by contrast, whether one operated the economy according to laissez-faire principles or not, capitalist relations of production themselves entailed the utter self-sacrifice of the proletariat. For explicit passages in the Economic and Political Manuscripts (1964), see p. 110-111. For his redescription of Smith’s labor theory of value as sacrifice in the Grundrisse (1972), see p. 610-616.
according to different principles within a more general economy that includes exorbitance and waste in many contexts sacrifice remains the exotic and excluded other of market-based, economic phenomena.\footnote{The debt this investigation owes to Bataille is multiform and diffuse. Perhaps no author has so provocatively employed the notions of sacrifice and expenditure to demonstrate the closed and constructed nature of economistic notions of exchange and production (1985, 1990, 1992).}

Despite the prevalence of economic language and models in the social sciences, it is nonetheless often the case that language borrowed from contemporary economic phenomena strains under pressure when applied to other socio-cultural transactions. In these cases the neutrality of “exchange” is too flat to convey the marked or charged nature of the situation in question. For instance, consider the following remarks. In a discussion regarding meaning and the problem of warrant in general, George Steiner observes that “[t]he critic, the interpreter, the committed reader draws, as it were, on the bank-credit of theology, on the ultimately theological re-insurance of the very concept of meaningfulness, without offering in return the collateral of an avowed faith” (1984, p. 21). What is most remarkable in this passage is Steiner’s deployment of economic language to describe a situation that seems particularly unamenable to such terms. If a typical market transaction is marked by reciprocity and facilitated by an implicit framework of equivalence, Steiner’s scenario involving the secular critic and a theologically-grounded meaning entails non-reciprocity and the duplicitous use and disavowal of the credit that theology extends. Embezzlement is one possible label here, yet Steiner avoids a criminal description in favor of an account of failed or faulty commerce. Surely for rhetorical purposes the disenchanted language of market-exchange strikes the appropriate note of scandal in his description, but to understand exactly how this language is apt for his purposes, one must ask what kind of contiguous description his language brushes against, and thus unconsciously connotes.
One pre-supposition of the recent disciplinary move towards the discussion of “lived religion”\(^9\) hinges on the notion that it is more productive for scholars to attend to the movement of deeds, gestures and words between people than to the beliefs or convictions they singly hold fast. With an emphasis, then, on the social work of circulating discourses, of performed gestures and executed actions, religious studies places at its heart questions of how best to investigate and describe these events that take place between individuals in a shared social milieu.

In the context of religious practices, two types of interpersonal events have had a long history: gift and sacrifice. However, a remarkable fact about these two concepts is that, despite the impression that they refer to two clearly distinct phenomena, in practice they tend to mingle together, which has led scholars to search for a third term to account for them both. In reference to a typical expiatory sacrifice, such as the Hebrew ‘olah, one might describe the ritual as an exchange that takes place in two moments: that of the human pence or expiation paid, and the divine forgiveness or restoration bestown. This description, which is very close to that of a commercial transaction between deity and human, has a long heritage: in the *Euthyphro*, Plato’s Socrates spoke of Greek rites as patently economic in nature (1997).\(^{10}\) Thus, to bring clarity to these co-implicated phenomena, structuralism offers the notion of “exchange” as a master-concept explaining social phenomena as disparate as marriage practices and mythological discourses.

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\(^9\) Many prominent scholars of religion, such as Robert Orsi (1997) and David Hall (1997), have promoted this development, which seeks to challenge a perceived Protestant emphasis on the interior states of isolated individuals which has long dominated the field. Insofar as this trend develops counter-elite perspectives and incorporates ethnographic materials and methods, it is a salubrious contribution to the field. Of course, this is not entirely novel, as *Diversities of Gifts* (Tyson, Peacock, and Patterson, 1988) and other texts form important precedents.

\(^{10}\) Gift and sacrifice constitute events within a moral economy which conditions such expiations. Kenneth Burke, for one, argues that notions of sacrifice are integral to any notion of a functioning order (1970). In light of Heidegger’s radical reading of the Anaximander fragment, I for one would suggest that the pre-Socratic ruminations on order attest to Burke’s claim. On the linkage between morality and economy, the *locus classicus* of this insight has to be Nietzsche’s *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1967), where *Schuld* (guilt, debt) is traced back to the importation of economic notions of compensation into the moral sphere, so that, as retribution, the pleasure of inflicting suffering compensates for having suffered.
The structuralist notion of exchange is modeled in part on the noiseless exchange of signifier for signified in Saussurian linguistics, as well as the frictionless flow of the chain of signification and the costless transactions between signifiers in the synchronic structure of *la langue* (Saussure, 1966). When Lévi-Strauss extended structuralist principles beyond linguistics into the other social sciences (1963, 1966, 1969, 1976), exchange became the key term in a new lingua franca of socio-cultural description. Unfortunately, the very neutrality of this concept of a zero-degree transaction presents problems of its own.

First, a great many interpersonal events cannot be deciphered without attending to the costs paid and the benefits reaped, the credit extended and the debts borne. The extension of this frictionless linguistic exchange to all of social life performs a crippling ideological obfuscation, for at a stroke the exchange of equivalents becomes the norm for all social transactions, and costly and risky variants become deviations from this norm. If all exchanges are of equivalents, and all are performed freely, exchange as a master-concept of social behavior ignores circumstantial and structural pressures of coercion, and blanches the fact of power from the field of social life.

Another problem stems from the fact that Lévi-Strauss never interrogates the production of value. According to the structuralist *arche*-binary of nature versus culture, social things, by the very fact that they are not natural but cultural, bear values as constituents of semiotic systems. Structuralism, then, tracks the transformations that various elements undergo as they are exchanged, but does not attempt to account for the generation of values themselves. While this might seem plausible in what Lévi-Strauss calls the “cold” or traditional, non-literate societies, the structuralist framework seems insufficient when confronted with the massive generation and inflation of values in “hot” societies like contemporary America (1976a, p. 29-30).

The critique of the scientism that is endemic to structuralism is typical of the broad movement known as “post-structuralism”, which includes Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze and
Guattari. In Anti-Oedipus, Deleuze and Guattari took explicit aim at the hegemony of “exchangism” that had overtaken the social sciences in the wake of structuralism. Against this language of exchangism, which divests social transactions of affect and conflict, Deleuze and Guattari rejected the economic notion of “need” and restored a fundamental role for the unconscious and desire in social production. Indeed, they insisted categorically that “[d]esire knows nothing of exchange, it knows only theft and gift” (1977, p. 186). One could easily translate Steiner’s scenario into a description using these terms, so that, depending on the motivation of the agents involved, one either faces the secular critic’s theft of the theologian’s meaning, or the former’s reception of the latter’s gift. In either case, the absence of reciprocity and equivalence are better captured by Deleuze and Guattari’s language than by Steiner’s, though, again, rhetorically, the cold language of the markets fits Steiner’s purposes quite well.

Nonetheless, in a sense all three terms utilize a secularized language to describe the transaction. What language might the theologian employ to account for what has taken place? Would she reserve sacrifice for human-divine transactions, or could it apply here as well? Is it a sacrifice when the valued object (in this case, meaning, broadly construed) moves from the religious to the secular sphere? Can one sacrifice to a thoroughly disenchanted recipient? Do the agents involved come to the transaction with their status fixed, or could it change? If the latter, would the recipient then undergo transformation, and in some fundamental way become sacralized? Depending upon the rhetorical purposes of the critic, one could take the argument in several different directions, but this topic raises a typological issue of primary importance. This investigation shares Deleuze and Guattari’s concerns regarding the hegemony of “exchange”, but would take their contribution one step further. How does “sacrifice” relate to their triad of exchange, gift and theft? What relations define their semantic space?

**Gift, Theft, Exchange, Sacrifice**

To analyse the terms gift, theft, exchange, and sacrifice, the first issue to address is their nominative form, which runs the risk of focusing too exclusively on the object and not the
agents of the transaction. Although theft demands that attention be paid to one agent’s relation of ownership to the object that another agent violates, the other three terms can easily slip into the “fetishism” that involves taking what is actually a relation between people as a relation between types of things.\textsuperscript{11} Instead of this object-centered approach, it is important to note that agents use objects to define relationships with other agents as much as they pursue them as objects of need or desire. In addition, one must address the various ways that the agent-object relation changes in different situations. The primary term to denote this is the degree of alienability that marks the agent-object relation. As one might imagine, exchanges are marked by the highest degree of alienability, while sacrifices are marked by the least.\textsuperscript{12}

The point to carry forward here is that the distinctions between these four terms are important but relative and shifting. In Mauss’s investigation into the form and function of the gift, he argued against the view that economic notions such as value and exchange were absent in traditional societies and only emerged in modern western ones. Such notions have long been in effect, but not in the “pure” or disembedded form familiar to economists. Regarding the economic precocity of traditional societies, Mauss argued that

\begin{quote}
the notion of value functions in these societies. Very large surpluses, speaking in absolute terms, are amassed. They are often expended to no avail, with comparatively enormous luxury, which is in no way commercial. These are the signs of wealth, and kinds of money are exchanged. Yet the whole of this very rich economy is still filled with religious elements. Money still possesses its magical power and is still linked to the clan or to the individual. The various economic activities, for example the market,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{11} Marx developed the notion that this kind of projection represents a problem analogous to a religious fetish. According to this analogy, as the relation between the devotee and the deity gets projected and reified into an inanimate object, the fetish, so people living under capitalism tend to mistake their relations with other humans as the relations between the inanimate objects known as commodities. As with all projection theories of religion, this critique of capitalist social relations both acknowledges a limited truth to the folk view (people truly are related to one another by the relations between commodities) and offers a more developed perspective (the folk view is at best a limited perspective, at worst a misrecognition, for the more fundamental relation is that between human beings). For Marx’s development of this critique, see Capital (1954, p. 76-87).

\textsuperscript{12} The theme of “alienability” that has assumed great importance in post-Maussian economic anthropology. According to the contemporary economic notion of complete alienability, which assumes an absolute distinction between the subject and the object, when one sells or buys a good on the market, the previous owner severs all ties to the object. In most societies, however, one is more likely to find degrees of alienation, as is the case with all gifts. With heirlooms and other objects whose history matters, complete alienability is not the norm, but the exception. On this topic, see Godelier (1972, 1977, 1999) and Wiener (1985).
are suffused with rituals and myths. They retain a ceremonial character that is obligatory and effective. They are full of rituals and rights (1990, p. 72).

With the modern, linear narrative of economic emergence complicated and the origin of economic value receding into prehistory, Mauss criticizes the framework that has come to dominate much of developmental economics. Instead of seeking for ways to liberate economic initiative in developing societies, Mauss felt that the problem that economic anthropologists confronted was not in the socio-cultural obstacles of such societies, or in the motivation of its people, but in the typology of transactions developed by economists and anthropologists. Regarding “[t]hese concepts of law and economics that it pleases us to contrast: liberty and obligation; liberality, generosity, and luxury, as against savings, interest, and utility—it would be good to put them into the melting pot once more” (p. 73). This study takes this suggestion seriously, and attempts to develop a place for the topic of sacrifice.

From out of this melting pot I propose to mark out the relationships between these four terms using the semiotic, or Greimas, square. Its strength is that it not only allows one to note the different modes of distinction at work between the four related terms, but it also provides a flexible model for noting their changing relationships over time. The problem here is the question of which term to place in the initial, posited position. Historically one could make the case that sacrifice preceded each of the others. On the other hand, a Hobbesian myth of the transition from the state of nature to the state of culture would have theft mark the initial condition of nature from which humans would progress towards evermore civilized transactions, ending with exchange. Though both sacrifice and theft are plausible enough initial positions in the Greimas square, I will begin with the Maussian hypothesis that the gift is the fundamental social transaction, the one without which society as such could not exist.¹³ As the

¹³ Mauss argues against the economic view of “natural economies” which would posit barter at the origin of society, with the development of money eventually interceding to mediate between barter’s direct exchange of objects. For Mauss, “Apparently there has never existed, either in an era fairly close in time to our own, or in societies that we lump together somewhat awkwardly as primitive or inferior, anything that might resemble what is called a ‘natural’ economy” (p. 5). Instead, one notes the prevalence of gifting and counter-gifting instead.
primary way that moieties bind one another together into the extra-familial grouping that marks the advent of social life itself, as well as source of cohesion that keeps society from dissipating in the face of powerful centrifugal forces, the gift will serve as the initial, posited condition of this square (See Appendix 1).

The relations between gift and theft depend upon the relationship to social sanction in general. In certain agonistic gift-cycles, such as the Kwakiutl potlatch, a gift often works to rob the recipient of prestige, which causes the characteristics of gift and theft to mingle in regard to either of the agents involved in the transaction. Still, participants will typically downplay such intermingling in practice, and even in what Mauss calls “agonistic exchange” (p. 7) the giver will emphasize his own generosity even as he robs—or rather, in order to rob—the recipient of prestige.

In Mauss’s wake the relations between gift and exchange have drawn wide scrutiny. Smith’s analysis of the positive social effects of exchange that far exceed the intentions of the individuals involved also underscores the wide social effects that cycles of exchange generate. Gift would then relate to exchange in a similar way in reference to social effects, with the difference that gifts entail reference to the intentions of the participants, while exchanges specifically exclude any moral connotations from the transaction. The mutuality and reciprocity of gift and exchange are both integral, as opposed to theft, but the former will necessarily involve temporal delays, while exchange will always be immediate, for even if the delivery of goods or services involves delay, a contract is necessary to bridge the gap, as opposed to the gift’s charged time of indebtedness and obligation.

The relation between sacrifice and exchange raises different issues. Clearly, despite Socrates’ critical observation, whatever return a sacrifice garners, it does not involve a simple

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14 While gifting can involve the simultaneous transaction of gift and countergift, far more typical is the necessity of a delay, what Derrida (1992) calls the “time of the gift,” which is the delay between gift and countergift. According to Bourdieu (1990), among the Kabyle too hasty a return would ruin the very spirit of the gift, as part of the process involves enduring the weight of the obligation, and the loss of prestige that receiving the gift incurs. In many ways, this topic touches on the heart of Mauss’s investigation, which was to examine the nature of the “obligation to return” the gift.
substitution or equivalent. That is, if one sacrifices a head of cattle, it is not only to have that
replaced, but to guarantee one’s good standing with the source of such blessings, and
secondarily to secure the continuity of the blessings themselves. Indeed, one can only elicit the
bestowal of divine favor by means of a coin in a different, more terrestrial currency.
Alternatively, on the moral as opposed to the magical side, both employ the coins of
intentionality, where the sacrifice manifests the devotee’s good intentions as a prefiguration of
those of the divinity.

The relation between sacrifice and gift is much more complicated. In the square
(Appendix 1), I note that the most common difference between gift and sacrifice is the status
of reciprocity between the agents. While with a gift one necessarily leaves the reciprocity
unclaimed in order to produce the effect of generosity and not exchange, with sacrifice in many
instances one denies the reciprocity in order to affirm the difference in status between the
devotee and the divinity. How does this difference entail a certain type of relation to the object
that relates the two participants? Here we come upon the issue of alienation. Exchange is the
only term that entails the complete alienability of the object. After putting one’s product or
property on the market, once it is bought all claims to it are relinquished. Because of the
extreme degree of alienability entailed by market transactions, the object of exchange has
virtually no history. Of course, this is only true in an ideal-typical sense, because the history of
an object’s circulation often does contribute to or detract from its value.\textsuperscript{15} Still, in relation to

\textsuperscript{15} Against the marxian focus on production as the source of economic value and consequent rejection
of circulation as a value-adding process, Arjun Appadurai turns to exchange, but in a manner that emphasizes
not individual instances but the general process of exchange as a flow so that exchange and circulation inter-
mingle. Building on the work of Georg Simmel and his \textit{Philosophy of Money} (1978), Appadurai argues that,
contrary to the classical economic view that labor produces value, in fact it is circulation itself that generates
the value humans attach to socio-cultural objects. Certainly, the changing of hands has much to do with the
social sense of value, and the velocity of circulation plays an important element in “bubbles” such as the Tulip
Mania of 17\textsuperscript{th} century Holland and the Dot.com boom of the Nineties. It is an open question, though, whether
Appadurai offers a compelling account not only of the mechanisms of the circulation of pre-given values, but
also the actual generation of these values through circulation. Also, he tends to focus on the special case of
more prestigious items of exchange, on objects like heirlooms that inhabit a liminal space between gift and
exchange economies. His approach forms a welcome complement to production-based, marxian analyses,
though not a replacement, as he suggests. On this see his introduction to \textit{The Social Life of Things} (1986).
the other types of transaction, the object is virtually without history, whereas with gift, theft and sacrifice the contact with the previous owner becomes determinative of the object’s status.

These permeable distinctions often lead to a conflation of gift with sacrifice. With each, the object is ultimately inalienable because the object does not enter into the dehistoricizing matrix of market transaction. Yet we can distinguish gift and sacrifice according to the degree that this inalienability can be acknowledged. When one reads scenes of gift-giving in Homer, what we find is an articulate description of the gift-object itself, which often has a civic status all its own, in addition to its history of ownership. Here, because the object bears traces of its past, it is not completely alienable, though the donor maintains the pretense that it is to produce the effect of generosity and minimize the sense that he self-consciously gives in order to indebt the other. By contrast, with sacrifice the relation of ownership is the critical tie that makes a sacrifice sacrificial. Indeed the sacrificial agent often goes to great lengths to emphasize the inalienability of the animal. As stated below, the animal is already closely identified with the sacrificial agent, but there is apparent anxiety that the object is alienable to any degree at all. Hence, on this issue of alienability, we see polar opposite behavior: although neither gifts nor sacrifices are wholly alienable, with the gift the inalienability is downplayed, while with the sacrifice the inalienability is stressed. As indicated in the square (Appendix 1), the relation of reciprocity is minimized with gifts, but actively denied with sacrifice.

16 Gernet attributed great importance to the prestigious gifts and treasured objects (αγαλμα and αγαλματα) that circulated among aristocrats in ancient Greek society. The fact that value accrues to these objects as they circulate between esteemed peers supports Appadurai’s renewal of interest in the question of circulation. In fact, according to Gernet, this economy played a decisive role in the emergence of the notion of economic value in ancient Greece. Beidelman has written an incisive essay taking a Maussian perspective on agonistic exchange in Homer (1989).

17 Evans-Pritchard has shown that the Nuer identify with their cattle, which is their chief sacrificial object, in a variety of ways, such as scarification and marking with ashes (1956).

18 This is in contrast to exchanges, where the equivalent is exchanged immediately or by contract at a future date, and no honor is at stake in a successful transaction, only in the case of deceit.
These distinctions between gift and sacrifice hold for a great many examples, but can become fuzzy as we move to different contexts.\(^{19}\) A sacrifice has gift-like aspects (a valuable good is “offered”; as the object is destroyed the deity is assumed to accept it; there is the strong implication that blessings will come in return—each element congruent with Mauss’s three obligations that constitute the gift-cycle: the obligations to give, to receive, and to return), and a gift has sacrifice-like aspects (the gift must be valuable in order to demonstrate a proper attitude of generosity; as Godelier argues, the gift is not marked by a lack of obligation, but rather a lack of calculation, so mitigations are frequent but disguised \([1999, \text{p. 5}]\)). To distinguish the gift from a single exchange with a delayed return, elements of sacrifice are often included, just as in sacrifice the expectation and even demand for return is never far from the surface. In other words, again, there are gift-like aspects of sacrifice and sacrifice-like aspects of the gift. And this is so not only in practice but in theory as well. That is, though Hubert and Mauss argue that sacrifice cannot be understood strictly under the rubric of gift because it involves not only the exchange of value but also its production,\(^{20}\) Mauss later argued that, though gifts most always elicit a counter-gift, the initial gift will often emphasize the costly, sacrificial nature of the gesture in order to earn an appropriate amount of honor. Hence, to understand the generation of prestige in gift-economies, the theorist must come to terms with the desire to make an expenditure without return, even if a return always befalls the gift.\(^{21}\) In

\(^{19}\) As an extreme example, Strenski, building on Lévi-Strauss’s distinction between restricted and general exchange (the former, more reciprocal, involves only two agents or groups, while the latter, more diffuse, involves more agents and complicated circuits of exchange), claims that alms given to Buddhist monks mark a shift away from restricted exchange toward general exchange and brings one into the sphere of sacrifice (1993).

\(^{20}\) Mauss and Hubert insist that Tylor’s gift-theory of sacrifice, which explained sacrifice as a development from an original process of giving to spirits, “described accurately the phases of the moral development of the phenomenon, [but] it did not account for its mechanism [les phases du développement moral du phénomène, elle n’en expliquait pas le mécanisme]. On the whole, it did no more than reproduce in precise language the old, popular conceptions. Doubtless it had in itself some historical basis of truth…. But it was not sufficient to note the fact; it was necessary to account for it [il fallait en rendre compte]” (1964 p. 2; p. 194). To Mauss and Hubert, this “mechanism” about which it was necessary to render an account involved the specific interaction between ritual, myth and imagination in the history of religions.

\(^{21}\) In her essay on “Sacrifice” in Critical Terms for the Study of Religion (1998), Jill Robbins’ analysis mimics many of Derrida’s maneuvers in Given Time (1992). Derrida illustrates the paradoxes at the heart of
the same way, the subservient gesture typical to sacrifice cannot escape the charge of banking on reciprocity.

This section has attempted to bring sacrifice into current social scientific and literary discourses that seek to analyze the interrelated transactions that coalesce around the concept of exchange. Analyzing sacrifice in relation to other transactional terms such as gift, theft and exchange, the complicated factors that constitute each come more clearly into focus. Returning to speak of sacrifice specifically, the range of folk and scholarly usage I examine will now appear not as the variability of unlicensed improvisation, but as reflecting the complexity and variability of the term itself. In fact, we will begin with the typological complexity at the level of scholarly reflection.

Sacrifice in the History of Religious Studies

Of all the problematic notions that the scholar of religion must negotiate, few have provoked as much anxiety and reflection as sacrifice. Not only does the phenomena raise complicated issues regarding the role of violence in religious history as well as the changing relationship between morality and religion, it also demands reflection regarding the nature of religious transformation in general. Concerning the field of religious studies as a scholarly enterprise, the topic of sacrifice presents a troubling challenge to the promise of its comparative project. As a ritual whose provenance ranges across the religions of the world,

folk notions of the gift by arguing that the gift as such in fact never takes place, because such a disinterested act is impossible, not as a result of a flawed human nature, but as a consequence of the structure of the gift-event itself. This is so because, despite the best intentions of the agent, she always reaps some recompense for the generous act, even if the gift is given to a person who is unable to reciprocate, as happens in Baudelaire’s prose-poem. Such recompense might take symbolic forms such as the social prestige of the benefactor or the self-satisfaction of the pious. At any rate, however extravagant the gift (and those that are too exorbitant risk becoming exorbitant and oppressive), it always crashes upon the rocks of the return which it cannot pre-empt. In an analogous way, Robbins argues that no sacrifice is truly “sacrificial” since every sacrifice takes place within a general economy of recompense and blessing. With some type of currency returning to compensate the sacrificer (be it righteousness, salvation, material blessings, social prestige, etc.), ultimately, self-interest is an irreducible aspect of sacrifice. Although I would distance my stance from Robbins’, I do so not on the grounds that self-interest is not a component of sacrifice, but on the grounds that, though the folk notion of sacrifice is in need of critique, this is a far cry from arguing that the sacrifice as such is impossible.
both small-scale (so-called “native” or “indigenous” religions) and the universalizing or “world” religions, with a suitably flexible definition sacrifice in the history of religions represents a near or quasi-universal. The scholar’s definition of sacrifice might remain socio-culturally specific, or expand to include any number of traditions, depending upon the methods and goals of any particular scholarly project. The cost of too broad a definition of sacrifice, however, is that one then includes every type of religiously framed effort, for this flexibility entails including such related ritual acts as offering, consecrating, and a variety of other sacrifice-like rites, both across and within the religious traditions of the world. The comparative utility of inter-religious versus religiously specific notions of sacrifice remains an open question.

Faced with a quasi-universal like “sacrifice”, which might include a range of phenomena such as ritual feasts, symbolic offerings, charitable giving, tithing, and asceticism, it is tempting to make a move analogous to J. Z. Smith’s turn indicated in his influential essay, “Religions, Religion, Religious” (1995). Here Smith examines the early expansion of “religion” from a self-referential term used by European Christians to one deployed by colonializing Europeans to make sense of the vast amounts of new data coming from the periphery. Very quickly the use-value of this term became apparent, as it allowed colonial powers to circumscribe certain ethical givens prevalent among the societies under rule and subject them to critique. As scholarly inquiry into religions gradually—and many would say, still incompletely—rejected this colonial project and developed new projects for the concept, the

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22 Any number of works, such as Beer’s Women and Sacrifice: Male Narcissism and the Psychology of Religion (1992) and Kristeva’s Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection (1982), draw on a wide, psychoanalytic sense of sacrifice. Ruel, by contrast, insists on a specific sense of sacrifice, to the point that he would distinguish some types of ritual killing from sacrifice (1990).

23 Smith noted how Hume raised “the issue of the adjectival form ‘religious.’ What sort of primary human experience or activity does it modify? What constitutes its distinctive secondary interpretation? How may religious interpretation be assessed in relation to other sorts of interpretation of the same experience or activity? The ‘religious’ (the unknown that the scholar is seeking to classify and explain) becomes an aspect of some other human phenomenon (the known)” (2004, p. 185). As opposed to “religion” or “religions”, investigating the ascription of “religious” aspects to various phenomena avoids the leap to otherworldly perspectives and situates the analysis in the context of other social phenomena.
scope and consequences of the colonizing usage gradually became more apparent. Since so many phenomena which native practitioners consider religious do not fit into the colonial concept of religion, Smith examined how scholars move from the nominal to the adjectival form to enable them to track aspects of disparate phenomena in light of their religious connotations.

The non-overlapping semantic domains of colonizing and native notions of religion present many problems of imposition and distortion for the scholar that the colonial powers could ignore—or, rather, count on as a means of exploitation and socio-cultural expropriation. In the same way, when one moves from the study of particular sacrifices to the theoretical construct of “sacrifice”, one finds that it is also necessary to note the tendency of phenomena typical to “religion” and “sacrifice” to seep out beyond any circumscribed social domain. In other words, because of historical processes of displacement and condensation, to study “sacrifice” in general leads one to the study of the “sacrificial” aspects of a wide variety of phenomena. In moving from the nominal to the adjectival form, one can then track the myriad ways that people have invoked this religious ritual to shape the historical understanding of diverse social phenomena, both sacred and putatively profane.

A further benefit of scrutinizing the ascription of “sacrificial” aspects to multiple phenomena is that one can then treat the various discourses about “sacrifice” as themselves important components of the rite’s social history. In this way, one can go beyond some of the problems that have beset the study of sacrifice in anthropology, religious and classical studies.

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24 I cite here the chief mechanisms of Freud’s “dream work” to indicate a Maussian insight into the role of the imagination in the history of sacrificial transformation (1965).

25 This isolation of a “sacrificial” aspect is not only common when the term strays beyond the confines of religion. In the history of many religions it was precisely this tactic of singling out the sacrificial aspect of a complex ritual process that led to ritual and religio-moral transformation. Examples are legion, but perhaps the most influential, insofar as it proved decisive in the history of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, is the “Aqeda”, or the “Binding of Isaac.” Here, the “sacrificial” aspect shifts from the slaughter of the victim to the attitude of the ritual agent. Typically, the Jewish interpretation of the narrative hinges upon the shift in object, while Protestant readings tend to read the shift from human to animal sacrifice as teaching, in novo, the utter indifference of the sacrificial object. Though the literature on this topic is immense, Spiegel and Kierkegaard (1983) offer important contributions on this topic.
For instance, it is no longer necessary to treat various descriptions or explanations of sacrifice as mere windows onto the rite and its significance, or as wholly different and opposed instances of cultural production. Moreover, one can considerably complicate the relationship posited by the Cambridge Ritualists such as Jane Harrison (1955, 1962) and Gilbert Murray (1951), who tended to treat myths as “scripts” for rituals. Furthermore, no longer is there the need to search for sacrifice as a delimited and discrete object. By shifting the focus from sacrifice as a reification to the multiple processes—somatic, dramatic, discursive and more—that coalesce in the production of the “sacrificial”, one can move from a focus on the singular, objective “sacrifice” and begin to do justice to the multiple and contested notions of “sacrifice” and the “sacrificial” at play in any given socio-historical conjuncture.

However, perhaps the most salient and salubrious aspect of this turn to the adjectival form and the inclusion of discursive aspects of sacrifice is that it complicates the dichotomous treatment of religions that would divide them between indigenous and world, traditional and modern, tribal and universal, magical and ethical. Since such dichotomies dissect religions in a way that is troublingly isomorphic with the self-conception of the “world” or “ethical” or

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26 Levi-Strauss in The Naked Man (1981) argues that ritual pursues a wholly different agenda than myth: whereas myth attempts to totalize phenomena and give a holistic account of the world, ritual attempts to parcel out experience, and, in this pursuit of meaning at the micro-practical level, represents a futile endeavour.

27 Inspired in part by Nietzsche’s reading of Greek culture through the lens of their dramas, members of the Cambridge school of myth and ritual, such as Jane Harrison (1955, 1962) and Gilbert Murray (1951) sought to look at myths with the same dramaturgical lens, as scripts for the rituals and other lived behavior.

28 By the “dramatic” I would indicate not only the spectacle of the ritual itself, but also the historical connection between the Greek festival of Dionysos and the concomitant rituals, and the eventual rise of tragedy.

29 This more complex notion of sacrifice that incorporates the discursive element, including the speech acts during the course of the ritual, the mythical narratives concerning the religious personages the rite involves, as well as the ongoing commentary on the rite’s significance in priestly, prophetic and poetic discourses, owes a great deal to Hubert and Mauss’s study of sacrifice. Also, on the importance of language and ritual speech-acts in sacrifice, see Das (1983).

30 Examples of the typological fervor that scholars bring to the topic of sacrifice is perhaps only outdone by the same will to typify conjured by rhetoric and figural language. In the history of its study, treatments tend to diverge along two, non-exclusive agendas: the desire to define the singular function of sacrifice, and the embrace of diversity that allows one to draw up complex tables of sacrifice.
“universalizing” religions themselves, any scholarly typology that complicates such distinctions would take distance from the ideological colonialism of the world’s more dominant religions.

The Ambiguity of American Sacrifice-Talk

If the scholarly pursuit of typologies and definitions has produced little agreement and much obscurity, when one turns to folk usage the result is even more ambiguous. This can be seen in the present situation in American religion and culture. Many religious Americans define the nation’s identity as the carrier of a universalizing, post-sacrificial religious tradition that draws on the moralization of sacrifice, a process that began among the Hebrew prophets and continued with the Christian interpretation of Jesus’s death as the sacrifice of a being so morally perfect it would serve as the fulfillment of all sacrificial requirements forever. From this perspective, the ritual sacrifice of living creatures has been completely replaced by ethical injunctions to overcome self-interest and “love one’s neighbor.” As if impelled by this narrative of America’s moral and religious origins, American civil religion\(^31\) has taken this post-sacrificial ethos as a key component of the individualism and liberalism that an expansionist American foreign policy ostentatiously (and sometimes even sincerely) seeks to promote in other parts of the world.

Despite this flattering national self-image, and as if in unconscious counterpoint, today in contemporary America there are no rituals of sacrifice in the public square, and yet one finds a prodigious amount of sacrifice talk. Indeed, over the last several years the nation’s airwaves have fairly crackled with talk of sacrifice. During the prosperity of the Nineties the term had a much lower profile, and with the utopian promises of an “information superhighway” leading to a “new economy” which would make crises and crashes things of the

\(^{31}\) This term derives from Robert Bellah’s provocative observations about the religion-like aspects of American patriotism (1967). However guarded scholars have been about extending religion this far beyond the historical religions, I would say that it is undeniable that in American, in particular, because the notion of religious freedom is so interwoven with the American form of patriotic self-regard, for any American citizen who is religious there is a strong tendency to extend this religiosity to include the nation-state since that is the ultimate guarantor of the right to practice that religion.
past, one might have guessed that we had finally entered the “post-sacrificial” era, long
foretold. However, in the period since the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York at the
hands of suicidal terrorists or self-sacrificing religious martyrs, depending upon one’s
interpretation of events, there has been an efflorescence and quickening of “sacrifice-talk”, to
the point that hardly a day goes by that some public figure does not speak of a “sacrifice” that
“we” need to make, or that “others” have already made. President George W. Bush, for
instance, uses the term in its positive, consecrating sense when discussing the costs involved in
his “War on Terror.”

This is hardly a new phenomenon. In his speech after the bombing of Pearl Harbor,
Franklin Roosevelt concluded with the statement that “we must work and sacrifice [...] for
victory.” In contrast to Bush’s univocal use of “sacrifice,” however, in this same speech
Roosevelt employed the term not only in the positive sense of a costly expenditure for a just
cause, as above, but also in the negative sense of an exorbitant, excessive or wasteful loss.
When he explicitly disavowed the notion that the austerities on the homefront will constitute
unjust or unnecessary hardships, Roosevelt insisted, in effect, that the costs of war would be
worth the victory, that austerities for peace were a just exchange, and not a sacrifice.

While political leaders often employ “sacrifice” when discussing the high-stakes
consequences of decisions of state, ranging from rationing, taxation and wage-freezes to
mutilation and death, parents too will often describe familial bonds in starkly sacrificial terms.

32 “America is a strong nation, and honorable in the use of our strength. We exercise power without
conquest, and we sacrifice for the liberty of strangers.” The rhetorical parallelism of the American people’s
sacrifice in one period, and God’s gift in the next, (“‘Americans are a free people, who know that freedom is the
right of every person and the future of every nation. The liberty we prize is not America’s gift to the world, it is
God’s gift to humanity.’”) deploys tropes invoking an American civil religion. Text at

33 “As I told the Congress yesterday, ‘sacrifice’ is not exactly the proper word with which to describe
this program of self-denial. When, at the end of this great struggle, we shall have saved our free way of life, we
shall have made no ‘sacrifice.’” Text at www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1942roosevelt-sacrifice.html.

34 One can find especially rich investigations of such usage in the novels of Henry James, particularly
The Awkward Age. Susan Mizruchi has placed a reading of this text’s sacrificial imagery at the heart of her
book, The Science of Sacrifice (1998), discussing the role played by sacrifice in both social scientific and
Indeed, as soon as one begins to pay attention to this idiom, one finds oneself surrounded by talk of sacrifice. In contemporary American society, people from parents to the President use the term “sacrifice” to evoke charged and irreducibly conflictual relations between self, family, and society. Be it through direct or indirect means, in the context of family relations or state institutions, one can find “sacrifice” at the ready to exalt an expenditure or lament a loss. Serving, therefore, as a term of both praise and blame, of affirmation and rejection, sacrifice becomes a literally pivotal term with connotations that resonate in different keys in relation to different contexts, all the while uniting these contexts in reference to a social practice of nearly universal recognition. As I will suggest, this polyvocality and value-reversibility stems from the many participants involved in the rite (agent, victim and recipient, at least), each one of whom has a distinct perspective on its significance, as well as the differing interests in society at large regarding the contested meanings of this ritual and its history of transformation.

This phenomenon, “sacrifice-talk”, that resonates on multiple levels across a number of possible applications which span the entirety of social positions. Certainly, as follows from its ritual origins, “sacrifice” still echoes with its history of orchestrated acts of violence, and it is this history that makes contemporary usage of the word so strangely problematic. Granted that there are no public rituals of sacrifice in contemporary American society, the question becomes, how has “sacrifice” come to play such a prominent rhetorical role? Instead of a contemporary analysis, this investigation will seek the historical preconditions of these developments. As an initial hypothesis, I would contend that it is precisely because the ritual has largely disappeared that “sacrifice-talk” has become so ubiquitous.

Because my initial examples drew from American presidents speaking of sacrifice, sacrificial rhetoric, one might wonder if this is primarily an American, or Anglophone, literary discourses in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century America.

35 Structuralism as practiced by Lévi-Strauss provides rich resources for tracking reversible symbols and values through many transformations. Another text inspired by these developments, The Reversible World (1978), also contributed to this perspective, as did Bakhtin’s notion of the “carnivalesque” (1984).
phenomenon. At a superficial level, in reference to the specific term, “sacrifice”, the answer is yes, but other authors have explored the use of translatable terms in other languages and nations. Given the international scope of this type of rhetoric, its use has less to do with the peculiarities of any one language or region, and much more to do with broad historical changes in the constitution of the modern nation state, the consolidation of global capitalist hegemony, and an emergent notion of human nature that underpins the regnant set of international institutions, from the United Nations, to the World Trade Organization, to various NGOs. Therefore, this study will take a historical view to examine the discourses that have contributed to the development and use of “sacrifice-talk” in the emergence of the nation-state.

The Turn to Discourse in the Study of Sacrifice

Since this project takes as its object a discursive phenomenon, I want to forestall the objection that I thereby move from the objective and public realm of ritual sacrifice to the ethereal and subjective realm of consciousness or even belief. In the better studies of sacrifice one question often arises: what makes a sacrifice differ from mere butchering? How is it that one can distinguish wanton destruction from the sacrifice of an object? Certainly the degree of ritualization is often a marker, but non-sacrificial acts of destruction can be highly ritualized, just as the ritualism of sacrifice can reduce to a minimum. Rather, over and above the manner in which the action is performed, which can vary by infinite degrees along a vast spectrum (even to the degree that at one end the rituals of preparation themselves come to absorb such a vast expenditure of effort that they constitute the whole of the sacrifice), there is always an act of denomination by means of which the act becomes a sacrifice. Thus, it was a great step forward when Hubert and Mauss broke with the scholarly fallacy of divorcing discourses from rites by noting that every rite invokes mythological elements by way of the invocation of

36 For sacrificial rhetoric in France from the Ancient Regime to the twentieth century, see Strenski (2002); for Italy, see Ferrari (2003); for America, see Mizruchi (1998); for Germany, see Evans (1996).
mythical beings and the utterance of speech acts describing the rite in mythical terms.\textsuperscript{37}

Nonetheless, from this lead we must go further and clarify that the discursive element is not a simple supplement to the rite, as if one could say that the non-discursive aspects of the rite are isolatable in theory but ultimately inextricable from the discourse in which one finds it embedded. Instead, I would venture the much stronger claim that the rite is not a rite without the performative speech acts by which the rite gets recognized as a sacrifice. In this sense, ritual sacrifice has always already been a discursive process. In short, “sacrifices” are not “out there” in the world awaiting discovery. Instead, it is through the very act of naming, of denominating a phenomenon a “sacrifice,” that sacrifices come to be. By way of performative speech acts that announce what they enact, given the necessary authority, to speak of an act or event as a sacrifice is to make it so.

It is possible thus to speak of every sacrificial phenomenon as a hybrid occupying a position along an axis whose endpoints—a purely material and a purely discursive sacrifice—are asymptotic ideals. Any social instance of sacrificial phenomena will thus constitute a complex with discursive and non-discursive elements, provided that one acknowledges the fact that the non-discursive elements must first become discursive objects before they can even be discussed. We can thus denominate this constitutive axis of ritual sacrifice as the \textbf{practical-axis}, in that the weight of practices involved in the ritual range from various speech acts to the physical manipulation of objects in space, often understood as a dramaturgical choreography of the physical counterparts or symbols of the concepts to which the discourse refers.

After opening the topic of sacrifice to its discursive components, many distinctions will be necessary before we can begin to deal concretely with the phenomena. Certainly there is a

\textsuperscript{37} Mauss and Hubert explain that “[o]ur main efforts will be especially directed towards determining the considerable part that mythology has played in this development” (p. 77). Throughout their work they insist that myth and ritual stand together in reciprocal dependence. And not only do they refer to one another, but each dynamically involves the other in processes of mutual elaboration: “though mythology has elaborated the representation of the divine, it has not worked upon arbitrary facts. The myths preserve traces of their origin: a sacrifice in more or less distorted form constitutes the central episode and, so to speak, the heart of the legendary life of the gods that arose from sacrifice” (p. 82).
great deal of difference between the class of priestly scribes who delimited the proper type of sacrifice in the *Rg Veda* or the Hebrew Bible, and the contemporary citizen or political figure who invokes sacrifice to describe charged or troubling social facts. This difference goes much deeper than the differences between the referents of the claim, or the authority behind the respective claims, although the latter remains decisive in that the performative speech act owes less to the felicity conditions of its utterance than the demonstrated and achieved authority of the speaker. Where in the former case there is an observable rite to which the claim refers, in the latter case there is often a putatively secular, quotidian occurrence that one describes using the hyperbolic language of sacrifice. This sense that talk of sacrifice is somehow “hyperbolic” touches upon the proportional or economic problem involved: to speak of sacrifice is perhaps one of the most hyperbolic, exorbitant modes of speech that one can employ, which raises the issue of the general economy of figuration—in other words, a poetics.

Because of this economic connotation, a skeptic might well insist that, where once the discourse of sacrifice was properly sacrificial, in the contemporary world such speech becomes simply a matter of “loose” or figurative discourse. From this perspective, describing a soldier’s death as a sacrifice is a mere metaphor, because such a death, though the most extreme gesture

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38 Against Searle’s treatment of speech acts, Bourdieu argues this convincingly in his *Language and Symbolic Power*: “In the symbolic struggle for the production of common sense or, more precisely, for the monopoly of legitimate *naming* as the official—i.e. explicit and public—imposition of the legitimate vision of the social world, agents bring into play the symbolic capital that they have acquired in previous struggles” (p. 239). If Bourdieu opens the sociological treatment of speech acts to the Aristotelian mode of *ethos*, Derrida confronts Searle as well and insists on the inexcludability of non-normative language games such as fiction, quotation, and figural language in general (1988).

39 The notion of economy functions in two registers on this topic. First, there is Plato’s Socrates in the “Euthyphro” dialogue, who wondered if all religious interactions boiled down to base economic exchanges. Second, economy could describe the practice of rhetoric, insofar as, in the process of exchange, certain modes of equivalence and justification must be maintained without transgression, or, more expansively, the transgression must not be too transgressive. For hyperbolic language like sacrificial rhetoric this last point is especially crucial if the performance is to be persuasive.

40 I draw upon Todorov’s work for this concept (1981). I treat sacrificial figuration as an instance of poetics because, as with Aristotle’s sense of poetry, there is an imitation in play since the ritual remains the absent referent and the figure has to work within the *mise en scene* of the ritual. Of Aristotle’s three modes of persuasion, poetics would thus examine the *logos*, the level of the utterance. Once the analysis incorporates *ethos* and *pathos* we will reach the level of a fully developed rhetoric.
possible, is not prescribed or sanctioned and thus not a literal or “real” sacrifice. With these strictures the transition from literal to figural sacrifice is so decisive that one might think that a categorical shift has taken place, to the point that such sacrifice-talk is a mere residue which is destined to pass, or, to employ E. B. Tylor’s concept, a “survival” which remains despite the passing of its proper social milieu.41

Currently, when one speaks of sacrifice, one possibly refers to phenomena as diverse as 1) an altruistic act, 2) a gift given that one would have liked to keep, 3) a soldier dying for his or her country (or even enlisting, and thereby exposing oneself to the possibility of death), 4) the opportunity cost of choosing to purchase one desired good instead of another, 5) devoting more resources to one activity instead of another (more time given to a job than to a family or vice versa): all these in addition to the specific referent of a religious ritual involving the destruction of a valuable good or the negation of self-interest that would cling to worldly objects. The prescriptive semanticist might oppose the breadth of this term's extension, but common usage cannot be simply dismissed. The diversity and frequency of this term’s uses in everyday discourse indicates a certain necessity: that of describing quotidian actions in terms that deny—or at least complicate—self-interest. It is certainly true that any number of

41 Despite the longevity of Tylor’s notion of religious “survivals” from a past that are doomed to eventual extinction, for the scholar firmly situated in an interim period between the vital religious life of the past and a rational, scientistic future, it is difficult to ignore Tylor’s utopian overtones of a future state where all the “survivals” have finally become extinct. In addition to these problematic hypotheses, there are also socio-political consequences of this theory that are difficult to resolve. For example, here is Tylor on the British colonial bête-noir, widow-burnings, or suttee: “To treat the Hindu widow-burning as a case of survival and revival seems to me most in accordance with a general ethnographic view of the subject. Widow-sacrifice is found in various regions of the world under a low state of civilization, and this fits with the hypothesis of its having belonged to the Aryan race while yet in an early and barbarous condition. Thus the prevalence of a rite of suttee like that of modern India among ancient Aryan nations settled in Europe, Greeks, Scandinavians, Germans, Slavs, may be simply accounted for by direct inheritance from the remote common antiquity of them all. If this theory be sound, it will follow that ancient as the Vedic ordinances may be, they represent in this matter a reform and a reaction against a yet more ancient barbaric rite of widow-sacrifice, which they prohibited in fact, but yet kept up in symbol. The history of religion displays but too plainly the proneness of mankind to relapse, in spite of reformation, into the lower and darker condition of the past. Stronger and more tenacious than even Vedic authority, the hideous custom of the suttee may have outlived an attempt to suppress it in early Brahmanic times, and the English rulers, in abolishing it, may have abolished a relic not merely of degenerate Hinduism, but of the far more remotely ancient savagery out of which the Aryan civilization had grown” (p. 50-1). The intricate tensions here between Vedic and British authority, Aryan and Indian savagery, the arc of civilization and the temptations of relapse all make talk of “survivals” quite dangerous for the scholar of religion.
categorical shifts have taken place since the days when a priestly caste could prescribe and proscribe certain sacrifices in its attempt to monopolize religious authority, and the shift from priestly codes of sacrificial propriety to quotidian sacrifice-talk is but one of them. Nonetheless, to describe this “sacrifice-talk” as metaphorical, and thus merely ornamental to the real work done by strict denotative and referential speech is too strong a claim to stand.

As a first response, at the level of the study of language in linguistics, philosophy and literary studies, there has been a broad but decisive move away from the prescriptive to the descriptive treatment of language. That is, in a departure from received wisdom regarding the universality of reason and the logical structure of grammar, the comparative study of language has clarified the cultural and linguistic specificity of rules of reason and grammatical propriety. In addition to linguistics, where figures such as Sapir (1921, 1956) and Whorf (1973) clearly formulated these views of language and championed the descriptive study of language, there is in philosophy also a turn toward the study of “ordinary language,” with Wittgenstein (1958, 1972) and Austin (1970, 1975) being only the most prominent representatives of this trend. Influenced by the historicity and specificity of reason and the relativity of grammar, the proper semantic domains of words now clearly derives from actual practice, and is thus contested in quotidian speech instead of deduced from extra-linguistic principles. In the same way, sacrifice remains a contested term, with the propriety of its usage determined by the specific language community in question.

A second response to the treatment of the topic as “merely metaphorical” could reference the impact of Freud and the treatment of figurative language as symptoms of tension

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42 In regards to the contemporary academic discourse widely known as “theory”, Jameson links the immanent critique of reason and language to its emergence: “I believe that theory begins to supplant philosophy (and other disciplines as well) at the moment it is realized that thought is linguistic or material and that concepts cannot exist independently of their linguistic expression. Now critique becomes a critique of language and its formulations, that is to say, an exploration of the ideological connotations of various formulations, the long shadow cast by certain words and terms, the questionable worldviews generated by the most impeccable definitions, the ideologies seeping out of seemingly airtight propositions, the moist footprints of error left by the most cautious movements of righteous arguments” (2004, p. 407).
and contradiction. Where correct or literal usage slips into the figural, there one can search for the seeds of the neuroses that afflicts the patient. Thus, under the aegis of psychoanalysis this attention to the details of spoken language can help to reveal the types of social tension that beset the individual who speaks of sacrifice in ways that extend beyond any conscious sense of the problem or its symptomatic traces.

But even beyond this pathological situation, literature has always taken the counterfactual and the figural as important objects of study, primarily because such language stimulates thought and persuasion in ways that literal or strictly logical language cannot. What is more, these metaphors are not mere tools that poets and rhetoricians employ to achieve distinct and isolated purposes. In many senses, figural language in general “speaks us” in that we are more beholden to the thought-pictures they evoke than we can know. It is precisely this hold that figural language has over us that led philosophers as different as Hegel and Wittgenstein to conceive of philosophy as primarily a therapeutic tool to overcome the bewitchment of language. In some small way, perhaps the study of sacrifice as an instance of highly provocative figural language can also serve such a purpose.

A third and final response to the skeptic’s claim is to reject the assumption that, when one speaks of sacrifice without referring to an actual ritual, one uses the connotations of the word to describe a thoroughly and properly non-sacrificial phenomenon as metaphorically sacrificial. Such an objection rests on the assumption both that there is a simple and direct referent for “sacrifice” from which sacrifice-as-metaphor departs, and also that there are aspects of society that have no connection to sacrifice whatsoever. If one builds upon the Durkheimian tradition as Mauss inflected it in his monumental study of the gift, the very realm

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43 Žižek has developed the theme of the Marxo-Freudian symptom (1989).

44 Lakoff, one scholar enjoying a current vogue, aptly named one of his early volumes that argued this position *Metaphors We Live By*.

45 In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein claims that “[p]hilosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language” (1958, #109, p. 47).
of “non-sacrificial” social phenomena begins to shrink. In addition to treating the gift and not exchange as the primary social transaction, it also has sacrifice figuring along with the potlatch as a distinct mode of gifting in many societies, with sacrifice conceived as a species of gift. Although this departs significantly from his and Hubert’s treatment of sacrifice in their earlier essay, there is a new moment here which significantly develops upon the earlier study. Mauss argued that the gift’s social importance derives from its status as a “total social fact.” With this claim Mauss indicated the way that the processes of prestation and counter-prestation do not constitute isolatable social spheres. Instead, they are “total” in the sense that in them every sphere of society—religious, moral, juridical, economic, and familial—intersects. If this is the case with gifts, it is, by extension, also the case with sacrifice. Because so many aspects of society intersect in the notion of sacrifice, this can explain why the scope of sacrificial usage cuts across dichotomies like public and private as well as between sacred and profane, so that the certainty that certain phenomena are completely non-sacrificial begins to waver.

Furthermore, as a total social fact, changes in the significance and function of sacrifice not only reflect but also determine other transformations in the social structure. This is the case not only for relatively proximal aspects of society such as relations between the laity and the clergy or prevalent notions of religious and moral injunctions, but also in the nature of social relationships, especially when considered under the rubric of the exchange. Sacrifice thus haunts every desacralized moment of exchange, for while once the term was moored to a specific and delimited ritual, demarcated to the point that it often served as the primary mode of social demarcation, now the ascription of sacrificial aspects to multiple phenomena makes

46 “In these ‘total’ social phenomena, as we propose calling them, all kinds of institutions are given expression at one and the same time—religious, juridical, and moral, which relate to both politics and the family; likewise economic ones, which suppose special forms of production and consumption, or rather, of performing total services and of distribution” (p. 3).

47 The contemporary struggle over water rights in the global south takes place precisely on the terrain of linguistic typologies: is relinquishing one’s claims on land and water a market exchange or a sacrifice that one might willingly or unwillingly perform?

48 In Greek sacrifice, structurally relate the gods, men and animals. In his The Ancient City, Fustel de
sacrifice a nomadic marker of tension and contradiction in the network of social relations. Far from this fluidity of ascription denoting a decrease in the significance of sacrifice, it indicates the changing ways that societies have problematized sacrifice throughout history.

The payoff for taking seriously the occurrence of sacrifice talk, or the ascription of sacrificial aspects to diverse social phenomena, is the new impetus it provides to the study of sacrifice. To this day there is no consensus in scholarly circles concerning the definition of sacrifice despite years of effort and enterprise. Because there is no single accepted cross-cultural definition of sacrifice, there is no direct relation between the occurrence of a rite and its status as a sacrifice, with the result being that its description as a sacrifice depends upon the observer’s religious or theoretical presuppositions. Since normal or authoritative usage is now rightly seen as always already contested, the notion of sacrifice-as-mere-metaphor can only make sense if we understand metaphor in a way other than as a deviation from normal usage. One such sense follows from expanding metaphor beyond the notion of an ornamental supplement to normal usage, and instead treating the use of figural language as a primary medium of persuasion, that is, as an instrument of rhetoric, as a practice concerned equally with affecting one’s interlocutors, transforming social conceptions, and describing the world.

Theories of Sacrifice

After justifying the examination of “sacrifice-talk” against the charge that it is merely a metaphor and thus less important than literal, denotative speech, another mode of discourse that has monopolized the approach to this topic appears on the scene. Sacrificial theories also attempt to speak about sacrifice in a way that unveils the truth of the practice. Since this truth depends in part on the authority of scholars in general, the production of sacrificial theories

Coulanges recounts the role played by sacrifices to the Roman god Terminus.

49 As indicated above, both Smith and Marx speak of sacrifice in order to lodge a protest against prevailing practices, yet because each understands the market to function in completely opposite ways, the same negative sense of sacrifice gets ascribed to entirely opposed sets of practices.
contributes to the construction of the scholar’s authority and prestige. Propriety and normativity, then, are produced through discourse even as they serve as the conditions of possibility of any given discourse. Beyond the general difficulties of delimiting sacrifice as a theoretical object, however, it is important to note the differences between sacrificial rhetoric, as I intend to study it, and discourse about, or theories of, sacrifice. Since “sacrificial rhetoric” can closely resemble other types of discourses that take sacrifice as their object, it is imperative at this point to distinguish sacrificial rhetoric from the use of sacrifice as a metaphor, and both of these from theories of sacrifice. After further distinguishing theories of sacrifice from sacrificial rhetoric, it will be necessary to establish their mode of relationship. That is, which is the more inclusive term, or, to make the hierarchy explicit, which is the species, and which a genus?

One can distinguish theories of sacrifice, such as those we encounter in anthropology, classical and religious studies, from sacrificial rhetoric in the following way. Many fields discuss sacrificial practices, and the hallmark of each, especially when they strive to capture the indigenous meanings of the practices, is a translation of the native idiom of sacrifice into a metalanguage. For instance, when Nancy Jay (1991) discusses the patriarchal subsumption of women’s reproductive powers into a cosmos that is produced by male-officiated sacrifice, she is translating the ideological function of sacrifice from this indigenous cosmology into one familiar to western scholarship. With Jay sacrifice remains exterior to the metalanguage she employs. By contrast, when the contested nature of public conceptions of sacrifice get disguised and misrecognized as natural, given or revealed, one can then be sure that this is rhetoric performing its primary work.

As noted above, sacrifice as a “total social fact” cuts across all social phenomena, which means that one must necessarily examine sacrificial practices in light of their religious, juridical, economic, political and social aspects. In fact, even to speak of sacrifice as a singular noun takes great liberties. For the scholar, then, every theory of sacrifice is ultimately unsatisfying, for sacrifice embraces an assemblage of untotalizable phenomena, and there is no way to circumscribe the possible relevant conjunctions of sacrifice with other social phenomena. For this reason, theorizing about the nature or essence of sacrifice confronts the impossibility of constructing a delimited—and thus viable—theoretical object.
Yet this disenchanting work of translation is not solely confined to theories of sacrifice. The very fact that such a work of translation appears to be the proper treatment of sacrifice means that a different regime of persuasion has supplanted a previous one. Where once priestly scribes and prophetic critics engaged one another in an agon over the hegemonic notion of sacrifice, gradually philosophers and scholars emerged to play greater parts in this same struggle. Although there are qualitative distinctions between priestly codes, prophetic critiques, and scholarly theories, each meets the other on the terrain of sacrificial rhetoric, even when one insists that sacrifice as such does not exist, or has no legitimate place in society.

To situate theories of sacrifice in the context of a rhetoric of sacrifice, and, further, to treat science as itself rhetorical, and, finally, to level the epistemological status between theory and rhetoric: all this follows from the final chapter of Durkheim’s *Elemental Forms of Religious Life*. There Durkheim treats the emergence of scientific discourse as dialectically related to the specific doxic regime that is hegemonic in any given social conjuncture. For the public to accept scientific claims as truth, this can only happen when within that society there is a prevailing opinion that scientific discourse itself has become a privileged or at least possible locus of truth. Furthermore, a sociological treatment recognizes thereby the play of interest at work in the social field, with the consequence that even among scientists there is still a social subculture in play, who seek to monopolize the means to epistemic production in the same way

Durkheim claims that “even when constructed in accordance with all the rules of science, concepts are far from taking their authority from their objective value alone. To be believed, it is not enough that they be true. If they are not in harmony with other beliefs and other opinions—in short, with the whole set of collective representations—they will be denied; minds will be closed to them; as a result, they will be and yet not be. If bearing the seal of science is usually enough today to gain a sort of privileged credibility, that is because we have faith in science. But that faith is not essentially different from religious faith. The value we attribute to science depends, in the last analysis, upon the idea we collectively have of its nature and role in life, which is to say that it expresses a state of opinion. The reason is that everything in social life rests on opinion, including science itself. To be sure, we can make opinion an object of study and create a science of it; that is what sociology principally consists in. Still the science of opinion does not create opinion, but can only clarify it and make it more conscious of itself. In this way, it is true, science can lead opinion to change, but science remains the product of opinion even at the moment it seems to rule opinion; for as I have shown, science draws the strength it takes to act upon opinion from opinion itself” (1995, p. 439-440).
that religious specialists have for millenia. What changed first in western cultures was that the conditions of persuasion shifted towards scholarly and scientific discourse, to the point that at the height of the early anthropological studies of sacrifice evolutionism and scientism had become hegemonic, both of which flattered the self-conception of these Euro-American cultures. Scientism as objectification that fails to account for its own mode of objectification, and which thus remains ideological, has been subjected to decisive critique in contemporary critical theory despite its residual currency in political science and developmental economics.

Aside from helping to account for the emergence of sacrificial theories as instances of a particular discourse whose presuppositions and purposes matched a regnant *episteme* in the nations where anthropological thought emerged, there are other benefits that follow from adopting the notion of sacrificial rhetoric. First, what has become a stagnating condition for theories of sacrifice—the lack of a convincing cross-cultural definition of sacrifice that unites disparate instances of the ritual according to sound and specific criteria—is no longer an obstacle to inquiry. Indeed, the multiplicity of social phenomena that incorporate sacrificial aspects no longer serves as an index of the failure of the theoretical project, but becomes, for rhetorical analysis, its ground of proliferation, even its condition of possiblity.

As this reversal from multiplicity-as-blockage to multiplicity-as-condition-of-possibility indicates, a shift from theory to rhetoric reverses the valence of many of the elements under

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52 Latour (1988) and Shapin (1994) both underscore the importance to scientific discovery of a scientific culture, and specifically the networks of social relations and the acculturation into laboratory life necessary to produce scientists.

53 While one could argue that a Wittgensteinian “family resemblance” type of definition (1958, #67, p. 32) might work for sacrifice, I would argue that, while this is in fact the *de facto* type of definition at work in ordinary language, for a topic like sacrifice, whose semantic domain tends to expand and contract much more than ordinary words, the very pursuit of a definition becomes a language game of dubious utility. To use the language of Wilfred Sellars, with such an “accordion term,” the expansion and contraction of which makes the music of scholarly discourse, one would quickly face a project of discussing sacrifices that ranged from the ritual killing of animals, to Kant’s sacrificial opposition between duty and interest, to Freud’s “sublimation” as the *sine qua non* of civilization itself. Since such a narrative arc seems, despite its audacity, to have already been told once or many times before, it remains isomorphic with narratives of the moralization of human-kind and the progress of civilization that are too seductive to compel the skeptical scholar. Instead of relying on family resemblance, then, it seems far better to shift the goals of the project entirely away from a search for such a definition, however construed.
scrutiny. Without ritual sacrifice bleeding into diverse social phenomena and making possible at best a family-resemblance definition of sacrificial aspects, sacrificial rhetoric would not have the polyvocal resources necessary for the diversity of claims that define its field of deployment. The turn to sacrificial rhetoric thus allows one to embrace not only the multiplicity but the mutability of sacrificial phenomena as well, and escape the temptation to utter the final word on the topic, for any instance of sacrificial rhetoric is not syllogistic but enthymemetic, and thus ventures into the open-ended play of multiple plausibilities.

This shift from the theorization of sacrifice to the study of sacrificial rhetoric further entails a shift in the object of scrutiny. No longer will it be necessary to offer a totalizing claim regarding the true nature of sacrifice across time and cultures. Now it will be possible to study not the truth of sacrifice, but its problematization—that is, the way that individuals and institutions have come to recognize the topic of sacrifice as a problem, and have deployed resources to naturalize, critique, or dismiss sacrifice in the context of the socio-cultural issues of the day. Insofar as any position in this ongoing process leads to multiple responses, so that the naturalizing claim summons its critique and refutation inevitably, one cannot simply move to an “outside” of this problematic without participating in the recursive function of this discourse. Thus, in addition to negotiating the treacherous waters of sacrificial ambivalence (because of the perspectival plurality of the rite, the question might always arise, with what person in the sacrifice does one identify?), another key element of sacrificial rhetoric will be this simultaneous rejection of sacrifice in one register, and a redeployment in another.

The last consequence of turning to sacrificial rhetoric involves a salubrious leveling effect among the various discursive modes that take sacrifice as their organizing topic. The goal of defining the proper nature of sacrifice now emerges not as a problem solely for scholars, but becomes a long-standing problem for every discursive agent with a stake in its

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54 I use this term in a way derived from Althusser (1978), i.e., to address the ambiguous state of resolution and openness that scholarly production faces when it assesses the resources and problems of its precedents. The key point is that the field of scholarly production is both open and structured, and the term “problematic” addresses that ambiguous state of affairs.
definition. In the long sweep of archival history that moves from the poetic narrative in the J
document that recounted the travail of Abraham and the change in sacrifice from the first-born
to an animal substitute, to the priestly codes of Leviticus and Deuteronomy that delineated the
factors of conversion for acceptable sacrifices, to the scholarly scrutiny of sacrifices among
various societies with the goal of theorizing the nature and function of the ritual, sacrificial
rhetoric can engage them all as the products of particular positions within the social field of
authority. Precisely by treating sacrifice as a privileged topic for the social construction of
authority, the study of sacrificial rhetoric can account both for its predecessors and the
conditions of possibility of its own emergence.

Theoretical Resources For a Sacrificial Poetics

Given this protean object of study at the interface of extra-discursive practices and
discursive production, the selection of methods is of primary importance. The type of methods
employed stands in a dialectical relationship with the hermeneutical project that one
undertakes. As already indicated, sacrificial rhetoric emerges as a starkly agonistic field, for in
it one observes a sort of boot-strapping process whereby one accrues the authority to define
the proper nature of sacrifice in the very act of issuing statements regarding its nature. This
takes us far beyond the theoretical questions that have preoccupied scholars of religion,
classics, and anthropology, who have sought, first, a congenial definition of sacrifice in order
to, second, understand the social function that it plays. In fact, the very form of the question—
“What is the function of ritual sacrifice?”—calls for a fixed, static answer that holds for a
variety of religions across multiple periods of time. Nonetheless, as already suggested, the
mutability of sacrificial phenomena frustrates every attempt to provide a fixed criteria for
definition, especially since such a fundamental social phenomena as sacrifice shifts in relation to
one’s initial notion of the nature of society itself.

Across the historical diffusion of sacrificial aspects, then, theories of sacrifice have
sought invariant answers to questions concerning the social function of sacrifice. The answers
to these questions have ranged from the emic (for instance, sacrifice as an offering, gift, or
tribute to a divine personage meant to express obedience or deference)\textsuperscript{55} to the etic (such as
sacrifice as a spectacular staging of hierarchical imposition, and thus a primary means towards
social reproduction).\textsuperscript{56} Between these extreme options of transcendent and wholly immanent
answers, positions vary primarily in relation to changing conceptions of the proper nature of
social explanation itself. These debates often center upon the role that subjective motivation
plays in such inquiries, for one’s answers will change drastically if one seeks an objective
analysis of social relations, as opposed to the acculturated sense of obligation and motivation
that the subjects interiorize. Nonetheless, between these options one quickly comes against an
antinomy, for the transcendent account of sacrifice might accord with the subject’s own view
but it is logically unfalsifiable, while the latter, given the presuppositions of the structural-
functionalist framework, is strictly tautological, for whatever occurs within a given society
must function in some minimal way to reproduce that society, or else it would not continue to
occur.\textsuperscript{57} This transcendent-immanent dichotomy, isomorphic as it is with dualisms such as
subjective-objective and emic-etic, all too clearly remains within the dynamics of interreligious
critique which have continued for eons. With the theorist of sacrifice appearing as but one
more outsider to eye skeptically the accepted practices of the society in question, the rhetoric
of insiders and outsiders remains too beholden to a picture of societies as self-consistent and

\textsuperscript{55} Tylor sees three stages of sacrificial development: “The ruder conception that the deity takes and
values the offering for itself, gives place on the one hand to the idea of mere homage expressed by a gift, and on
the other to the negative view that the virtue lies in the worshipper depriving himself of something prized.
These ideas may be broadly distinguished as the gift-theory, the homage-theory, and the abnegation-theory” (p.
461-2). Mauss and Hubert’s critique was that Tylor’s theory was too emic, in that “it did no more than
reproduce in precise language the old, popular conceptions” (p. 2; p. 194).

\textsuperscript{56} Vernant and Detienne offer the most convincing exposition of this type of robust, etic theory of
sacrifice in their structuralist readings of Greek accounts of sacrifice. See especially Vernant’s “At Man’s
Table: Hesiod’s Foundation Myth of Sacrifice” (1989).

\textsuperscript{57} Radcliffe-Brown provides the clearest example of these presuppositions (1945, 1963). As I will
argue in a future chapter, this logical straightjacket in which structural-functionalist anthropology is trapped
suggests one of the reasons that Hegel proved such an immensely suggestive social thinker. As a comparative
analyst of social systems, Hegel, and Marx after him, is open not only to the \textit{possibility} of social dysfunction, he
insists upon it in even the most well-attuned society.
self-identical wholes without heterogeneity or contradiction. Sacrificial rhetoric can better examine the way that every society includes its a produced outside in the form of heterodox positions whose attitudes and conceptions of sacrifice are viable but not regnant.

Of the two explanatory goals that theories of sacrifice have sought—a definition of sacrifice that can allow scholars to track changes in form, and a notion of its function that explains both the former ubiquity of the rite and its subsequent near-disappearance—the goal of speaking scientifically and authoritatively on the subject of sacrifice has blinded theorists to a fundamental function of sacrifice throughout history. Far from the simply tautological claim that the function of sacrifice is to reproduce society (which is as much as to say that the function of sacrifice is to function), it has often served the role of providing the anomalous phenomena that authoritative discourses define for the ultimate reason of both exercising and illustrating their authority to define this phenomena. It is thus in the very moment of explaining the function of sacrifice that the theorist of sacrifice misrecognizes its function, precisely because the theorist’s own behavior so closely mimics that which she studies. If the function of sacrifice has been to serve as the object about which authority must speak, and about whose definition the sovereign authority must decide, the theorist is in no way outside this function, and thus cannot objectify this function while performing it—i.e. pronouncing the true function of sacrifice. For these reasons, the very rules of the scholarly game regarding the treatment of the topic of sacrifice need to be redefined.

It is this project of redefinition that clarifying the topic of sacrificial rhetoric will achieve. The labors that have gone into tracking sacrifice through all its variations in order to gain a sense of its essence somewhere beyond its appearances need not be wasted effort, since the appearances and variations now become the resources that sacrificial rhetoricians employ to ply their trade. While the various theoretical searches for the social function of sacrifice also

58 The echoes of Agamben here are quite deliberate, in that his treatment of the sovereign as the figure who decides those whom the law will include and those it will exclude, an inclusive exclusion, is precisely the dynamic of defining the "sacrificeable" (1998).
contribute to these resources, the totalizing and exclusive claims that define it and explain its function themselves represent a case of sacrificial rhetoric, in that they too invoke specific conceptions of society, human nature, and their inter-relations, which is exactly what the sacrificial rhetorician seeks to transform.

As a transition between sacrificial theories and sacrificial rhetoric, the various theoretical analyses of sacrificial function, change and variation can contribute to an intermediary discourse, a sacrificial poetics. Taking the cue from the term’s etymology (poesis) and Aristotle’s sense that poetry pursued imitation while rhetoric pursued persuasion, a sacrificial poetics would focus on the way that certain statements regarding sacrifice refer to the sacrificial scene as enacted in the history of various religions. Thus, this poetics draws on Todorov’s definition of poetics as a discourse that “aims at a knowledge of the general laws that preside over the birth of each work,” and “it seeks these laws within literature itself” (1981 p. 6). In a similar way, a sacrificial poetics would seek out the function of each figural use of sacrifice in reference to its status as an imitation of the sacrificial rite itself. At times this derivation will be explicit, and in others it will be more abstract. In fact, at times it will take leave of the ritual altogether, and sacrifice as a figure will become the occasion to generate a narrative, a process that Koelb has defined as the “rhetorical moment.”

The relations are as follows: as the rite provides the source for the figure, and the figure a resource for a persuasive account, sacrificial theories and a sacrificial poetics would both play integral parts in a sacrificial rhetoric, which would need to address, within the instance of sacrificial rhetoric, the implicit theory of sacrifice it employs, the figurality of its reference to sacrifice, as well as the social context and consequences of this rhetoric.

59 On the rhetorical moment, “I use the word ‘moment’ both with the usual meaning of ‘instant’ and in the relatively technical sense of ‘cause or motive of action,’ the latter in order to refer to the initiatory aspect of this kind of reading. The moment or instant of understanding is to be viewed not as the end point in a process of reception but rather as the beginning of an act of poetic activity. It is rhetorical because it considers the text before it to be legitimately comprehensible under two interpretive conventions at once. Because the character of the reader/writer is as important to the process as the character of the text being read, we may understand it as a kind of dialogic interaction in which the rhetoricity of an existing text is exploited to produce a new text, a rhetorical construction” (1988, p. 24).
In exploring the variations in sacrificial rhetoric, any theory of sacrifice is inadequate alone, but many offer resources for taking an analysis of sacrificial rituals and sacrificial rhetoric beyond the straight description of the phenomena at hand, especially if one supplements these works with other texts on gift-exchange and production. Provided that one incorporates each as a provisional hypothesis, the various typologies that theorists have developed remain useful resources despite their ultimate failure to define and totalize sacrificial phenomena. The very impossibility of a unified definition has provided a much greater heuristic resource: a multi-sourced conception of the many axes along which sacrificial phenomena might vary. These axes will provide the framework for tracking the transformations in notions of sacrifice that various rhetoricians of sacrifice employ. After working through these types of transformational axes, the variations that theorists of sacrifice have tracked through and between multiple socio-religious complexes will here serve as the background for reading the shifting rhetorical deployment of sacrifice as a figure. That is, we can use theories to map the diversity of the figure of sacrifice, and thereby employ theories as resources for a poetics of the figure. By then moving to examine the socio-cultural conjuncture which the discursive performance engages, which will also involve an examination of the expectations the audience brings to the event, one can the develop a properly rhetorical treatment of the text.

Axes of Sacrificial Variation

In addition to the practical-axis already discussed, along which sacrifices range from the ritual to the discursive, the other axis that is most familiar involves a series of movements of inflation and mitigation that have shifted the risks and costs of sacrifice through the ages. These shifts along the object-axis of sacrificial transformation take place both synchronically

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Weber is only one of the historians who has traced this mitigation, which one could schematically trace in the following way: from multiple public Greco-Roman rites to the singular sacrifice of Jesus; martyrdom as the imitation of Christ; asceticism and monasticism with its corporal rigors as attenuated, graduated sacrifices; corporal hardships replaced by financial offerings. In this way, a sacrificial surplus of signification diffused into the totality of worship, leaving no element untouched. Aside from this quantitative mitigation, a further, categorical transformation was achieved: the collapse of the sacrificial agent into the sacrificial object.
and diachronically, and involve changes in type and quantity. While instances of the latter include such well-known events as the poetic narratives concerning the substitution of a ram for Isaac and a deer for Iphigeneia, the former include the priestly codes of conversion such as those found in the book of Leviticus in the Hebrew Bible, whereby practitioners of every economic class could sacrifice a different type of object to demonstrate a devotion appropriate to their social standing. Such synchronic substitutions also include more ad-hoc instances such as the Nuer sacrifice of a cucumber in place of a head of cattle, which is legitimate so long as it is addressed exactly as if it were a head of cattle. Here, as is typical, this substitution along the object-axis also entails a shift along the behavioral-axis, for the weight of the rite’s efficacy comes to reside more in its speech-acts than in the ritual behavior.

Another axis of variation I derive directly from the work of Hubert and Mauss. In their essay they observe that the ritual process of sacrifice can have different valorizing effects on the ritual agent and object depending upon their initial condition. One undertakes ritual sacrifice in a negative condition which the ritual itself will rectify. According to the Durkheimian insight regarding the ambivalence of the sacred, Mauss and Hubert claim that if at the outset the ritual agent or object is in a profane condition, the ritual will act to sacralize them (p. 52). By contrast, if at the outset one has a negative sacred charge, in the sense that one is polluted with a sacred taint, sacrifice will act to desacralize them (p. 57). In the two

61 Such poetic accounts of object-transformation often constitute pivotal moments in cultural transformation. In Porphyry’s On Abstinence and Against the Christians, the topic of sacrifice serves as a key moment in his schematic treatment of cultural history.

62 In his influential study of Nuer religion (1956), Evans-Pritchard observed that “[w]hen a cucumber is used as a sacrificial victim Nuer speak of it as an ox. In doing so they are asserting something rather more than that it takes the place of an ox. They do not, of course, say that cucumbers are oxen, and in speaking of a particular cucumber as an ox in a sacrificial situation they are only indicating that it may be thought of as an ox in that particular situation; and they act accordingly by performing the sacrificial rites as closely as possible to what happens when the victim is an ox. The resemblance is conceptual, not perceptual. The ‘is’ rests on qualitative analogy. And the expression is asymmetrical, a cucumber is an ox, but an ox is not a cucumber” (p. 128). Of special note here is the requirement that the ritual, including methods of handling the object and terms of address and ritualized speech patterns, all need to remain unchanged, whether the object is an ox or a cucumber. This gives a snapshot of the proliferative nature of sacrifice as a ritual. Even the most important aspects of the ritual may undergo transformation so long as other important elements remain unchanged.
senses invoked here, sacrifice is either a sacralizing or desacralizing ritual. However, in the sense that there might be transmission of pollution, for example, from the agent to the object, as was the case in the ancient Hebrew scapegoat ritual, there are both sacralizing and desacralizing effects at work. Because of this, the dichotomous view that Hubert and Mauss propose I will replace with the valence-axis, along which one finds varying proportions of sacralizing and desacralizing effects.

The next axis builds on the passages in E. B. Tylor’s Primitive Culture cited above, where he offers an evolutionary theory of sacrifice as derived from the gift. In doing so, Tylor takes seriously the worshiper’s claims that the sacrifice is intended for some sort of supernatural being. Since this is almost universally performed in a feeling of gratitude, as well as an expectation of future blessings, the process presents features that are analogous to quotidian gift-exchange, albeit with one participant with the capacity to return much greater gifts. Although Tylor offers only a crude model of gift-exchange, his gift-theory remains convincing for many rituals, even as sacrifice shades into rites of commensality where, as is the case in many Greek sacrifices and as Robertson Smith hypothesized regarding an ur-ritual of ancient Hebrew sacrifice, the participants invite god as a favored guest at a ritual feast.

A commensality-theory thus stands as a variation of the gift-theory that emphasizes the social reproduction of rank and status more than the relationship established with a deity.64

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63 According to Robertson Smith, “Unfortunately the only system of Semitic sacrifice of which we possess a full account is that of the second temple at Jerusalem; […] the system as we have it dates from a time when sacrifice was no longer the sum and substance of worship. In the long years of Babylonian exile the Israelites who remained true to the faith of Jehovah had learned to draw nigh to their God without the aid of sacrifice and offering, and, when they returned to Canaan, they did not return to the old type of religion […]. The worship of the second temple was an antiquarian resuscitation of forms which had lost their intimate connection with the national life, and therefore had lost the greater part of their original significance” (Smith, 1956, p. 215-6). By making commensality such a central focus of a primordial Hebrew ritual, Robertson Smith’s theories bridge the distance between Judeo-Christian apologetic treatments of the unique nature of monotheistic sacrifice, and Vernant and Detienne’s examination of the role of commensality in Greek polytheistic sacrifice.

64 A question therefore arises whether sacrifice-as-commensality represents a mere variation of a gift-theory of sacrifice, one according to which the only difference is that a meal is offered instead of a discrete object? Insofar as Robertson Smith treats the ur-sacrifice of the Hebrews as a joyful congregation, it would seem to differ in intent and effect from a Greek sacrifice more concerned to apportion the world into its discrete
Among the shortcomings of Tylor’s model is that it lacks an explanation for the ubiquity of destruction in sacrificial rites. A great majority of rituals involve processes of elaborate preparation and destruction, and a simple gift-theory of sacrifice offers few resources for explaining this emphasis, except insofar as destruction can stand for a dematerialization that makes the offering appropriate for a spiritual being.\(^{65}\) It was this lack of explanation that led Hubert and Mauss to develop a competing theory of sacrifice. Instead of a gift-theory, which takes little distance from the native conception of a co-present divinity, they construed sacrifice as a species of consecration, or the production of sacred objects or effects of sacralization, instead of a gift. In this way, one can focus more upon the actual operations involved with the material objects, and less upon the psychology of the practitioners and the deity they invoke. A further consequence is that, instead of constructing a model of the circulation and distribution of offerings and blessings, with sacrifice as a species of consecration one enters the sphere of production, which foregrounds the objective or material as opposed to the psychological conditions of the ritual. Building with these developments on Tylor’s contributions, we can posit an **production-axis**, along which the rite might vary from a gift-exchange that produces and sustains relations to a consecration-construction that produces sacred objects and effects of sacralization and desacralization.

Another axis involves the many ways in which the sacrificial agent relates to the material object or victim of the ritual. At one extreme one focuses on the agent, with overtones of asceticism, and at the other the rite telescopes the term from the ritual process to the object, which results in a stark reification. The extreme positions marked out by the ritual process and the object demarcate the **transformational-axis**, which varies from a focus on the transformation of the object to the transformation of the condition of the agent. The transformational-axis thus addresses the multiple avenues of change that a sacrifice includes, levels of mortal, immortal and animal.

\(^{65}\) The ‘olah, or complete consumption sacrifice in the ancient Hebrew ritual, would be one possible example of this type of transformation.
from the material, ritualized processes of object transformation to the psychological and somatic processes of subject transformation, or subjectivation as a whole. Because sacrifice is a that pivots decisively around a transformation be it objective (from life to death, existence to non-existence, etc.) or subjective (from polluted to pure, sinful to holy, etc.), this axis can lead to changes that are locally framed in the ritual (shifts on the micro-level of the ritual process) to those that are more broadly and historically construed (shifts in the cultural or historical significance of the ritual). For example, Christianity tended to interiorize sacrifice to such an extent that this self-sacrifice collapsed the sacrificial agent and the object together, which broad cultural and historical effects regarding the moralization of sacrifice and worship as a whole. The transformational-axis, then, provides the context by means of which socially and historically determined notions of change themselves might undergo transformation.

Perhaps the axis that has garnered the most attention from both religious and scholarly commentators is the process of moralization as sacrifice has moved along the **efficacy-axis**. Weber depicts of sacrifice as an inherently magical ritual which affects nature and is destined to give way to ascetic practices which develop a moral state of being appropriate for devotion to an ethical being. Along this evolutionary arc one can place a wide range of rituals, from Nuer cattle sacrifice to the *Aqedah* in the “J” document to the Crusades as a sacrificial expenditure. If one abstracts away from this evolutionary axis, though, one is left with the two antipodes of magical and ethico-moral sacrifices, and every sacrifice partaking of some portion of each. The efficacy-axis is often keyed to the transformational-axis since the shift from magical efficacy to moral efficacy connects to a shift from an objective to a subjective process as the point of the ritual. These transformations also connect to the struggle over the site of the ritual in social space, as *ad hoc* and household altars give way to centralized sites in temples and urban settings which promote the monopolization of sacrifice by a priestly caste.

At last we turn to the most radical transformational axis, which is in essence a return to the transformed notion of sacrifice developed earlier in this introduction. Because all of the
discourses that accrete around the physical ritual of sacrifice have largely been treated as extraneous to that ritual and thus relegated to secondary status, I have argued, along with Mauss and Hubert, that speech-acts are not only important to the rite, but performatively constitutive of the rite as sacrifice. In light of the heterogeneous nature of the rite as both discursive and extra-discursive, I suggested that any particular instance of ritual sacrifice, depending on the relative weights of the components, will take its place along a continuum defined in relation to asymptotic endpoints of pure discursivity and pure extra-discursivity. Ranging along this practical-axis, the proportion between the discursive and extra-discursive components of the rite here becomes a valorized inflection of sacrifice. That is, with this axis we move from a quantitative to a qualitative distinction, and thereby reach the referential-axis, along which one ranges from the direct indication of an acceptedly sacrificial phenomena to the provocative, experimental or ideological designation of an erstwhile or hitherto non-sacrificial or even non-religious phenomena as a “sacrifice.” The flexibility of ascription at work correlates with the semantic parameters prevalent among a given language community. Because of this flexibility, as the referential speech act moves from the indicative to the performative, the risk courted by the linguistic agent increases proportionately. This is the case because the plausibility of taking the event or phenomena as sacrificial depends upon the conditions of persuasion at work in the culture at the moment. At the interface between the iterative nature of ritual and the open-ended flux of historical events, the closer one approaches

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66 Many examples of this accrue around the developments of the Crusades in the 11th to 13th centuries. There the actual historical linkage between ancient sacrifice and the sacramental structure of the church led to the extrapolation from pilgrimage to sacrifice, a return to the origin. According to Robert the Monk’s version of the speech, Pope Urban II uttered the following peroration in his call for his auditors to undertake the First Crusade: “Whoever, therefore, shall determine upon this holy pilgrimage and shall make his vow to God to that effect and shall offer himself to Him as a, living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, shall wear the sign of the cross of the Lord on his forehead or on his breast. When, truly, having fulfilled his vow be wishes to return, let him place the cross on his back between his shoulders. Such, indeed, by the twofold action will fulfill the precept of the Lord, as He commands in the Gospel, ‘He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me’” (Munro, 1895, p. 5-8). Such a provocative correlation, between the sacrifice of Christ and contemporary historical events, is hardly rare, but this should not prevent one from acknowledging it as an incredibly risky rhetorical gesture. Perhaps less risky was the denomination of the massacre of thousands of Muslims at Acre as a fit sacrifice to God.
the performative side the more one witnesses the “becoming-rhetorical” of sacrifice, one can
trace the increasing role played by ad hoc and ex post facto descriptions of phenomena as
sacrificial in order to justify, normalize or eternalize the irruption of events.

[For a summary of the axes of variation, see Appendix 2.]

To carry forward these insights into sacrificial variation across cultures and through
history, it is important at this point to return to the beginning regarding the problem posed by
acknowledging the discursive element of ritual sacrifice. To embrace change on two levels of
social reality (the material and the discursive) one needs to keep the two levels in relation and
tension, which means treating them as two ends of a spectrum: every ritual has its discursive
element, and every discourse its ritual element. To avoid a scenario of simple inverse
correlation, it is important to note that the “weight” of each element implies that there will be
multiple instances of each involved in the ritual process, so that both the discursive and the
extra-discursive are always co-implicated in sacrificial change. Hence, sacrificial rhetoric has
always constituted a part of the ritual, but also the shifting weight of elements has led to
developments whereby sacrificial rhetoric has come to constitute almost the whole of the
ritual’s continuing relevance.

Adopting the notion of sacrificial rhetoric brings the entire range of sacrificial
discourses all into the same discursive field, including distinct language games such as poetic
narratives of transformation, priestly codes of prescription, prophetic calls for reform, and
scholarly typologies and theories. Such a move breaks down the divides between theory and
practice as well as between emic and etic conceptions of human nature, religion and society.
As a first approximation towards the functional dynamic of a sacrificial rhetoric, one can
already indicate some hypothetical relationships. For example, in regards to sacrificial rhetoric,
speech-acts like description and denomination have become disembedded from the rite. That is,
an aspect of the practice of ritual sacrifice has become dislodged from the cultic matrix, leaving
the term free to describe as sanctified many of the specific costs of general social reproduction.
It is thus precisely to the extent that the term’s referential employment denoting a specific religious ritual has become effaced, that the scope of usage has expanded. In addition to this covariational relationship, one should not let talk of “disembedding” obscure an essential continuity between sacrificial rites and sacrificial rhetoric—namely, the political act of naming something a sacrifice, which rarely happens all at once, and thus entails an entire rhetorical economy. Because sacrifice is a total social fact, it touches upon the whole of social classificatory systems, with the classes of the “sacrificeable” and the “unsacrificeable” affecting the political status of every other class of objects or persons. Because we deal here not only with isolated speech-acts but also social classifications in general, one must analyze the response to particular social conjunctures in order to analyze the ensemble of practices and strategies that constitute a “sacrificial rhetoric.”

The Turn to a Sacrificial Rhetoric

Between theological exegeses of sacrifice, and scholarly analyses of sacrificial rituals, a third form of hybrid discourse exists that deserves scholarly scrutiny. Forming a phenomenon that I will speak of as “sacrificial rhetoric,” this discourse does not treat sacrifice as a given religious or social fact, nor does it take the rite and native statements about the rite as its objective or theoretical objects. Instead, sacrificial rhetoric utilizes “sacrifice” or related terms (crucifixion, martyrdom, asceticism, offering, etc.) to intervene in the reproduction of received notions of self, society, worship and work, and it does so by means of a social prestige that involves claims of expertise, authority and legitimacy.

Why turn to “rhetoric” instead of a general term like “discourse”? Strenski, for example, speaks of sacrificial discourse to bridge the gap between apologetic and critical treatments of sacrifice in the francophone university (2002, 2003). This term is useful in that it

67 Although Chaim Perelman, in his multi-work project of a “New Rhetoric,” addresses sacrifice as a figure common to rhetoricians through the ages, the descriptions of the usage are very straightforward. To explore the pragmatic complexities of the term in various contexts, the multitude of sacrificial theories, from those of Burkert and Girard to Hubert and Mauss, can contribute a great deal.
addresses the way that no one invents this language game out of whole cloth, but one always receives the term from a tradition and inherits established modes of exegesis. I speak of rhetoric instead because discourses are very open human institutions, open to reversals and inversions that keep them beholden to an outside that is beyond representation but the very source of their dynamic existence. One could thus think of a “discourse” as a field, but “sacrificial rhetoric” as a strategy or practice one might deploy within that field. With sacrificial rhetoric, then, its outside is not inhabited by “theories of sacrifice,” for calling into question the legitimacy of a speech act which states, “X is a sacrifice,” is merely one move in the ongoing language game. Even if one called into question all such statements and the form of the statement itself, one would still be involved in sacrificial rhetoric, since one would still be speaking of sacrifice in such a way to accrue authority to the speaker’s position (in this case, the scholar or theorist) within the discursive field. If one sought to call into question the validity of sacrificial rhetoric in general, in all cases, it would appear as if one would thereby step outside of sacrificial rhetoric and engage in a discourse that aspires to disenchant itself of this rhetoric. Of course, this leap beyond all talk of sacrifice seems much like an attempt to “sacrifice sacrifice.” This leap would then be the founding event in the creation myth of a discourse that would not escape the figural domain of sacrifice at all. I would only suggest, at this stage of the investigation, that this study of sacrificial rhetoric takes this phenomena as its object of scrutiny, but cannot extricate itself completely from every vestige of the phenomena that it would examine.

With a topic such as sacrifice, to speak of its employment in rhetorical projects conjures all the specters of the Platonic critique of the relativistic, self-interested, mercenary sophists in favor of the disinterested and truth-loving philosopher. While there is a provocative aspect to the notion of sacrificial rhetoric, perhaps no other figure so needs a reading that incorporates the interested social position of the speaker as one that has come to stand for selflessness itself. In other words, to begin the study of sacrificial rhetoric, it is imperative that
we gain some critical distance from colloquial senses of sacrifice. Nothing would betray this investigation more quickly than a commitment to the sense of sacrifice as absolute loss undertaken for a higher purpose. As a first complication, the rhetoric of sacrifice itself, insofar as it invokes a disavowal of self-interest, is highly esteemed, so that there is a recuperation of the loss in another coin, that of honor, prestige, or appreciation.\textsuperscript{68} Hence, as a first principle, we can note that a rhetoric of sacrifice articulates the often incommensurate regimes of gift and exchange, devotion and self-interest, sovereignty and avarice.

On the other hand, as the previous explication of the importance of quotidian “sacrifice-talk” made clear, a rhetorical study such as this cannot simply dismiss prevailing conceptions as irrelevant. Instead, one must situate oneself directly in the charged field where common sense and its critique engage in an ongoing agon, which emerged, according to Heidegger, with the very birth of philosophy:

in the same period in which the beginning of philosophy takes place, the marked domination of common sense (sophistry) \textit{[Herrschaft des gemeinen Verstandes (die Sophistik)]} also begins.

Sophistry appeals to the unquestionable character of the beings that are opened up and interprets all thoughtful questioning as an attack on, and unfortunate irritation of, common sense (1977, p. 138; 1978, p. 196).

A sacrificial rhetoric, then, will have to address the role played repeatedly and markedly by its other, sacrificial sophistry, as the constructed and negated other that the authoritative discourse of the rhetorician.

Because this investigation situates itself in a highly charged and agonistic field, it builds upon a robust conception of rhetoric. In no way connoting a sense of “mere” rhetoric as opposed to statements of fact, or rhetoric as ornamental finery supplementing straightforward truth-claims, rhetoric in this study must be understood in the much more expansive sense as the strategic employment of language for the purpose of effecting social change. With specific

\textsuperscript{68} Kierkegaard’s analysis in \textit{Fear and Trembling} (1983) contends with this possibility, as does Derrida in \textit{Gift of Death} (1995) under the rubric of the secret. Perhaps if one sacrificed to a wholly private ideal, leaving one without any return on the cost, we would have a “true” sacrifice in the sense of wholly without self-interest. But here we come close to the private language argument of Wittgenstein—because one of the desiderata of a value is its publicity, to speak of a private value one courts the paradoxical.
reference to sacrifice there is an essential role played by rhetoric in any conceivable sacrificial rite, especially but not limited to the authorized denomination of the rite as a sacrifice. Because such speech-acts are not descriptive (there is nothing “in the world” that makes a specific ritual act a sacrifice) but performative, a referential model of language use, which posits an objective world of physical objects and events that is more real than the world of discourse, here will not suffice. An initial principle of this investigation is that sacrificial rhetoric is every bit as “real” as any ritual phenomena.

Despite the emphasis thus far on the agonistic nature of the discursive field in which sacrificial rhetoric takes place, with this wide conception of rhetoric as forming the very ether of society in general, a countervailing perspective comes into view. It is good to remember the Ciceronian description of rhetoric as the “moderatrix of force.” With rhetoric thus understood as the pursuit of persuasion and not coercion, it is clear that there has never been nor could there be an entirely coercive society, with the result that the art of persuasion forms at least a minimal element of every society.

Moreover, treating the terrain of rhetoric as the amniotic fluid of social existence is especially appropriate when one considers the origin and development of rhetoric as a specific discipline in the juridical and political settings of the ancient world. As religions transformed and became institutionalized, it became imperative to clarify the proper nature of rituals such as sacrifice in order to exercise the perogative of religious monopoly. This concern with defining a proper sacrifice accords with the very nature of rhetoric, which traces its (perhaps apocryphal) origins as a practice of persuasion to the adjudication of competing property claims after the deposition of two Sicilian tyrants around 485 BCE. Like the speakers in the

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69 This sense that religious specialists are engaged in an ongoing battle to monopolize the scarce religious capital I take from Bourdieu’s programmatic essay, “Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field” (1991). As sacrificial rhetoric extends beyond the Church into disparate sites of authority, I would add that, however many positions of authority emerge in the social field, there is still only so much prestige and authority available for these agents. Hence, though with this multiplication of positions the possibility of achieving a monopoly on religious capital decreases proportionately, the struggle for that monopoly increases in intensity.

70 Because these tyrants deported and expropriated large numbers of people to pay for their mer-
law-courts of Syracuse where rhetoric purportedly first originated or became isolated as a specific discipline or art, this transition from confusion and conflict to a resolution defined by the restoration of the proper and the just forms perhaps the fundamental motif of rhetorical practice. Just as, at its origin, rhetoric concerned itself with determining “proprietorship” and the very notion of the “proper”, religions face the perennial problem of affirming who will become the proprietor of its capital, its doctrines and rituals, sacrifice chief among them.71 Hence, in addition to underscoring the rhetorical nature of sacrificial discourse, this study explores the socio-political work performed by the discursive deployment of the figure of “sacrifice.”

With this widened sense of the field of rhetoric, it is possible to develop a comparative rhetoric. Indeed, rhetoric was already comparative at the outset, in that its categories and classes never claimed the universal content that philosophy or religion did, but were formal-procedural in nature. Thus, with the traffic between mainland Greece and the colonies forming the context that gave rise to this critical reflection on the art of persuasion, a comparative, cross-cultural aspect of rhetoric has been evident from the outset. When we add to this the self-evident notion that what persuades an audience in one socio-historical milieu differs greatly from another, this context-dependent element of the practice makes rhetoric, and the specific mode of rhetoric I propose, a viable comparative notion.

Sacrificial Rhetoric: Modes of Persuasion and Social Functions

In this section I describe some of the formal characteristics of sacrificial rhetoric. This will serve both as a resource and an object of elaboration once I turn to the specific instances of sacrificial rhetoric that form the content of the next three chapters. To approach the specific

cenaries, after their deposition the city had to adjudicate competing claims for seized lots of property. The job of the rhetorician was to persuade a panel of citizens whose novel role was to decide each case (Barthes p. 16).

71 The history of rhetoric is a complicated one, most specifically because at the outset this “art” came into conflict with a similar discourse with scientific aspirations, namely, philosophy. For authoritative accounts of this history and its vicissitudes, see Pfeiffer (1968, 1976) and Vickers (1988).
features of sacrificial rhetoric, it will help to define some of the minimal features of rhetoric in
general. Although certainly not the last word on the topic, Aristotle usefully separated the art
of rhetoric into three distinct modes of persuasion: “The first kind depends on the personal
character of the speaker; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind; the
third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself” (1984,
I.1356a13, p. 2155), historically indicated by the terms ethos, pathos, and logos.

Taking these three modes of persuasion as organizing elements, I will now examine the
way that each contributes to the efficacy of sacrificial rhetoric. To begin with ethos, we have
already spoken about the authority that accrues to those who speak convincingly about the
truth of sacrifice. Simply to speak of sacrifice is not enough, for the audience inevitably comes
to the event with traditional senses of the term in mind. As Aristotle explained,

Persuasion is achieved by the speaker’s personal character when the speech is so
spoken as to make us think him credible. We believe good men more fully and more
readily than others. [...] This kind of persuasion, like the others, should be achieved by
what the speaker says, not by what people think of his character before he begins to
speak. [...] His character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion
he possesses (I.1356a14, p. 2155)

Thus, to speak of such a term as sacrifice in an authoritative way persuades through the mode
of ethos. However, instead of ethos alone, this topic actually haunts the interface between
statement and speaker. Considering the tendency to search out and applaud novelty in the
history of discourse, it is important to note that rhetorically persuasive novelty can only emerge
as an articulation of a tradition and not a break with it. In this sense, the sacrificial rhetorician
emerges as a figure who approximates that of the prophet, as, in fact, they were historically
united in such figures as Amos, Hosea and Isaiah. Yet this articulation of the tradition has to be
constructed or (superficially) rejected anew in each instance of persuasion.

Even when one encounters prophetic overtones regarding a new revelation concerning
the true nature of sacrifice, the difference in conception between the sacrificial rhetorician and
the audience will not be so great that the process of rhetorical persuasion cannot commence.
That is, the intrinsic interest in the process of deploying sacrificial rhetoric does not depend on
the absolute novelty of the deployment. To the contrary, the deployment must be an articulation of received notions of sacrifice that the audience is able to recognize as legitimate. Bourdieu offers a similar description of the prophet’s rhetorical persuasion in practice, and as Bourdieu describes the religious prophet, we can extrapolate to the rhetorician, and the sacrificial rhetorician in particular.

To Bourdieu, prophetic rhetoric is not distinguished by a wholly unprecedented revelation or irruption in the processes of social reproduction. In fact, “The success of the prophet remains incomprehensible as long as one stays within the limits of the religious field, unless one invokes a miraculous power, that is, an ex nihilo creation of religious capital, as Max Weber does in some of his formulations of the theory of charisma” (1991, p. 34). Against the rhetoric of prophetic charisma and revelation that invokes the irruption of the novum, Bourdieu offers a more discursively realistic sense of the prophet’s work, and, by extention, that of the sacrificial rhetorician:

To do away once and for all with the representation of charisma as a property attached to the nature of a single individual, in each particular case one must again determine the sociologically pertinent characteristics that allow an individual to find himself socially predisposed to test and express, with particular force and coherence, ethical or political arrangements already present implicitly among all members of the class or group of its recipients (p. 35)

Whatever charisma and authority accrues to the sacrificial rhetorician, it will be a function of the recognition and legitimacy conjured by the rhetorician’s canny articulation of the tradition.

As we move now to Aristotle’s second mode of persuasion, pathos, it will become apparent why sacrificial rhetoric has become such a viable and important object of scrutiny. As Aristotle explains, “persuasion may come through the hearers, when the speech stirs their emotions” (I.1356a14, p. 2155). For obvious reasons, sacrifice offers immense resources for the rhetorician to channel emotional responses in the audience. I would not go so far as to argue in favor of a model of rhetoric according to which the movement of persuasion leads to a radical de-origination of the utterance, as with Longinus, with the result that the audience believes they have produced the utterance themselves and a state of emotional identification
ensues. Yet with this as an asymptotic conception of the ideal workings of rhetoric, it is worth noting that the Christian conflation of sacrificial object and agent offers an immense opportunity for the rhetorician to dramatize the significance of sacrifice in a way that vivifies the risks and costs of a peculiarly Christian sense of the rite.

Turning finally to Aristotle’s third mode of persuasion, *logos*, we will delineate two distinct functions produced at the level of the utterance. Regarding this mode, Aristotle observed that “persuasion is effected through the speech itself when we have proved a truth or an apparent truth by means of the persuasive arguments suitable to the case in question” (I.1356a36 p. 2155). I would suggest that the suitability in reference to sacrifice involves not only orthodox interpretations of the ritual. In addition, the ritual itself hovers in the background, and esteemed instances of the rite, such as the *Aqedah*, the Crucifixion, and the Christian martyrs must all stand in accord with the utterance in question. Since these actual rites form the basis for the various interpretations, the axes of variation developed out of the various theories of sacrifice will illuminate the specific ways that sacrificial rhetoric both continues and articulates received notions of sacrifice.

As for the specific sense of sacrifice employed in rhetoric, Burke, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca all suggest that any type of moral economy involves some sense of sacrifice, in the sense of an ontological operation that objectifies a system of values and actively instantiates a hierarchy among the values. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca argue convincingly that this term performs discursively what the ritual performs materially—namely, a disaggregation of values and the imposition of a valorized hierarchy. That is, beyond the indication of a “realm of values,” each of which could, by definition, become a possible object of sacrifice (as opposed to mere *res*, materiality, matter, which could not), an employment of a

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72 “Our soul is naturally uplifted by the truly great; we receive it as a joyous offering; we are filled with delight and pride as if we had ourselves created what we heard” (1957, p. 10). Such a description of the rhetorical sublime remains as a limit case, for here rhetorical success most clearly makes any possibility of domination into an issue of legitimacy and recognition.
sacrificial ritual or sacrificial rhetoric would differentiate among the values and single some out as not merely possible but actual objects of sacrifice.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca’s treatment of “argument by sacrifice” comes under the category of “argument by comparison,” which has the general form that, “[i]n every weighing of alternatives, the two terms determine each other.” In this particular case of “argumentation by sacrifice, the sacrifice is a measure of the value attributed to the thing for which the sacrifice is made” (1969, p. 248). The action of the ritual as destruction or offering, and the intention that it attempts to demonstrate, the renunciation, disavowal, or negation of one value in favor of another, gives some sense of the way that this ritual—as well as this interpretive description and rhetorical invocation—actually disaggregates the nebulous sphere of values and orders their relations into hierarchies, strata of related terms, and distinct spheres of exchange.

Barthes defines rhetoric as a “metalanguage,” and, in particular, one “whose language-object is ‘discourse’” (p. 12). Insofar as rhetoric thus seeks to effect the nature of language itself, this is also true of the practice of sacrificial rhetoric: through the practice of rhetoric an authorized speaker intervenes in the circulation of the term and seeks to shift the usage of some in a way more in keeping with the discursive position s/he hopes to authorize. In reference to sacrifice in particular, whether by reversing the valence of the rite, by redefining its operation, or by employing the term to stage the ritual scene and insert different agents and objects into it, sacrificial rhetoric does not mention the term simply to reproduce it as a reified social fact, but seeks to problematize and redistribute its significance. Within the logos as a mode of persuasion, this disaggregation of values forms one of the two primary functions of the statements uttered by the sacrificial rhetorician.

The second primary function of the logos-mode works both in concert with the first and also to counteract some of its untoward effects. This is so because there is a certain sleight-of-hand involved in this argument, in that, even as one disaggregates the values under question, and achieves a hierarchical change where once there was mere contiguity, the
argument depends upon creating the impression that the totality of values are in fact inherently stable. As Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca explain,

To measure something by sacrifice presupposes that there are constant elements placed in a quasi-formal framework, elements which in fact are subject to variation. [...] And does not the very fact of renouncing something work by a kind of recoil to change the value of what is being renounced? Clearly we find ourselves confronted here by a quasi-logical argument, since the term of reference has no fixed value, but interacts constantly with the other elements.

The value of the end which is sought by sacrifice is likewise modified during the action by the very sacrifices themselves (p. 249)

In this light, sacrificial rhetoric fixes the relations between the limited number of values under discussion, but there is a simultaneous destabilization of the general sphere of values of which the specific values are only a part. To confront this problem, sacrificial rhetoric also functions to consecrate the sphere of values, social structures, and social taxonomies with all their hierarchies.

As with any figural usage, “sacrifice” as an element in a greater sacrificial rhetoric involves a carrying-over and a leaving-behind, with the result that certain elements are intensified and others are diminished or euphemized. Thus, in the modern world where few people have ever witnessed a sacrifice (even the killing of criminals, which once provided the occasion for sacrificial festivals, is done in private and without any sense of sanctification [Foucault 1979]), the material event of destruction has been effaced in favor of the process of sacralization, which is the way “sacrifice” is used when political leaders speak of soldiers’ deaths). And yet, just beneath the surface of “sacrifice” as a metaphor stands the rite which constitutes the topic of innumerable narratives and still manages to elicit a shudder. Thus, for the speaker to hear sacrifice as a dead metaphor is to participate in the euphemization of the real suffering of social reproduction, where one group of marginalized people suffer costs while others enjoy the benefits. This rhetoric functions through the simultaneous capacity for recognition and misrecognition, and its capacity to sanctify or consecrate the status quo.

In addition to the general sanctification that a religious description of social phenomena achieves, sacrificial rhetoric’s function of disaggregation itself achieves effects of consecration,
for the very act of instantiating a hierarchy among values creates a sense of order and
systematicity. As an extension of the general power exercised by authoritative interpretations,
Bourdieu suggests,

The effect of consecration (or legitimation) exercised by explanation also causes the
system of dispositions toward the natural world and the social world inculcated by
conditions of existence to undergo a change of nature, in particular transmuting the
ethos as a system of implicit schemes of action and appreciation into ethics as a
systematized and rationalized ensemble of explicit norms. Thus, religion is predisposed
to assume an ideological function, a practical and political function of absolutization
of the relative and legitimation of the arbitrary.[…] (the effect of consecration as

This level of consecration is typical of religious discourse in general, in that its function
depends upon a reserve of prestige and honor that esoteric knowledge accrues at the expense
of the exoteric and the doxic. As for the rite of sacrifice itself, it is hardly arbitrary that Mauss
and Hubert rejected Tylor’s gift-theory of sacrifice in favor of a more material, productive
notion of consecration.

Hubert and Mauss observe that “sacrifice always implies a consecration” because “in
every sacrifice an object passes from the common into the religious domain” (p. 9). Yet
consecration is a practice whose “effects are limited to the consecrated object, be it a human or
a thing” (ibid.). Sacrifice, by contrast, is a special kind of consecration in that its effects are not
restricted solely to the object at hand. Since with this type of consecration the effects extend
to other objects and particularly to “the moral person who bears the expenses [les frais] of the
ceremony” (ibid; p. 201), sacrifice not only produces sacred objects but also communicates or
mediates the effects of sacralization towards other entities, even—indeed, especially—society
as a whole.

Taking into account this specific notion of sacrifice as a species of consecration, as a
rite devoted to the production of the sacred, or, better, effects of sacrality, the following

73 This is a significant departure from Robertson Smith, for whom the sacrificial object comes to the
rite with an inherent sacred quality because of his presumption that the animal had totemic or kinship status.
For the connection drawn between the victim as a totem and the categorical view of kinship in contrast to a
quantitative view, see 1956, p. 273-7.
description of religious effects holds especially true of sacrificial rhetoric:

Religion exercises an effect of consecration in two ways: (1) It consecrates by converting into limits of law, through its sanctifying sanctions, the economic and political limits and barriers of fact and, in particular, by contributing to the symbolic manipulation of aspirations, which tends to ensure the adjustment of actual hopes to objective possibilities. (2) It inculcates a system of consecrated practices and representations whose structure (structured) reproduces, in a transfigured and therefore misrecognizable form, the structure of economic and social relations in force in a determinate social formation (p. 14).

This second logos function of consecration thus helps to mitigate the destabilizing effects of the disaggregation that sacrificial rhetoric also create. With these complementary functions of disaggregation and consecration, sacrificial rhetoric can transform received hierarchies in the sphere of values, while at the same time disguising these articulations of the received traditions as restatements or recoveries. With attention paid to all three of Aristotle’s modes of persuasion, and special roles acknowledged by the functions of disaggregation and consecration, sacrificial rhetoric as a topic of scholarly scrutiny now has enough resources to turn to specific instances of the practice and develop a comparative treatment where diverse instances help to illuminate the scope of the practice.

Selection of the Cases

Moving from the construction of sacrificial rhetoric as a theoretical object, now I will discuss the cases of sacrificial rhetorizing that I will analyze, and the justifications for their selection. This investigation examines the historical role played by notions of sacrifice in the hands of rhetoricians who transformed received conceptions of self and society. To bring these issues into focus, I trace a genealogy of “sacrificial rhetoric,” or the simultaneous emergence and use of “sacrifice” as a rhetorical figure in the elaboration of a mode of subjectivity defined not by the ancient allegiance to the polis, or the medieval bonds of fealty, but by the strategic deployment of demarcations between self and other. With the framework for the analysis of sacrificial rhetoric developed, and several heuristic notions to test on specific cases, the question now becomes, which set of sacrificial rhetoricians will best illustrate the comparative
potentiality of this concept of sacrificial rhetoric, and how do I intend to situate them in relation to one another?

Several studies of sacrificial rhetoric employed in the service of the modern nation-state have appeared in recent years (Evans, 1996; Mizruchi, 1998; Strenski, 2002), making it clear that traditions of this rhetoric are legion. Since any comparative project needs to limit the number of variables in play in order to focus attention on specific and discriminable elements, working within a single vernacular language seems preferable. That is, instead of addressing sacrificial rhetoric as a form of sacrificial mitigation or translation typical to the current epoch (be it “modern,” “capitalist,” etc.), I have drawn my cases from a single language, a single nation, and, arguably, a single discursive tradition. Because the discourse about scholarship, religion, and ritual in deutschophone discourse is so rich, this investigation focuses on sacrificial rhetoric in the German language.74 This will allow me to chart the course of sacrificial rhetoric in a given segment of a single nation’s discourse, and also demonstrate economically some of the diverse effects this rhetoric can produce.

I want to situate this study of sacrificial rhetoric in relation to the emergence of the nation-state for many reasons. First, in terms of correlation, it is remarkable that historically, both the city-state and the empire have deployed public rituals of sacrifice for a variety of purposes, yet the nation-state only describes some events or functions as sacrifices, or, better, ascribes to them sacrificial aspects. This rhetoricalization of sacrifice is not the end of sacrifice, but an uncanny articulation within a long history of spiritualization and moralization. For these reasons, the following passage, which narrates a movement from a territory’s patrimonial body to a spiritual national identity, marks out events of direct relevance to this study:

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74 A study of German sacrificial rhetoric has to address the way that the terms das Opfer and opfern, though false cognates with the English “offering” and “to offer”, do still carry connotations of gift and exchange, as one can discern from der Opferstock (“offertory box”), einem Gotte opfern (“to pay homage to or worship God”), and sich für etwas opfern (“to devote or dedicate one’s life to ...”). As opposed to the Latin sacrificium, which accords better with a sense of consecration, the German Opfer accords better with a sense of gift or tribute. For these reasons, both Tylor’s and Hubert and Mauss’s theories are important resources. Furthermore, the theorist must constantly attend to the proximity between gift and exchange, and, finally, the literature on sacrifice must be complemented with works on gift and gift exchange.
The transformation of the absolutist and patrimonial model consisted in a gradual process that replaced the theological foundation of territorial patrimony with a new foundation that was equally transcendent. The spiritual identity of the nation rather than the divine body of the king now posed the territory and population as an ideal abstraction. Or rather, the physical territory and population were conceived as the extension of the transcendent essence of the nation. The modern concept of nation thus inherited the patrimonial body of the monarchic state and reinvented it in a new form (Hardt & Negri, p. 94-95).

As the territorial body gave way to the spiritual nation, sacrificial rhetoric was on hand to disaggregate fixed values and consecrate emergent structures in the emerging nation-state. The question now becomes, which nation-state’s sacrificial rhetoric would offer the best occasion for scrutiny?

I have drawn each of my case-studies from German-language writers because, of all the nations of Europe, the emergence of Germany offers one of the most complex narratives. Out of the many sub-regions that would eventually form the modern nation of Germany, one finds an exceptionally rich arena where the transformation from feudal-agricultural to capitalist-industrial social relations was always in question and surrounded with an air of anxiety and occasional crisis. Furthermore, while there were many periods of gradual meliorism as was also the case with England and France, Germany lacked the decisive revolutions experienced in these other countries. Such revolutionary periods tend to quicken and radicalize the flows of sacrificial rhetoric, and, my initial studies suggested, produce sacrificial coinages whose wide-ranging circulation tend to overdetermine the employment of sacrificial rhetoric for years to come. As opposed to this, Germany’s lack of a social revolution left sacrificial rhetoric with more play than elsewhere. Furthermore, the gradual nature of German social, economic, and political development meant that heterogeneous social processes often took place simultaneously, and the transformations underway were often decisive but disguised. Since, in contrast to England and France, little of German social transformation took place in the streets in the period in question, critical social effects were as likely to originate from texts as from

75 Strenski’s analysis of French “sacrificial discourse” before, during and after the Revolution depicted a sacrificial notion of citizenship that has become a familiar component of civil religion in America as well (2002).
political factions. This was certainly the case with Germany’s first and only “revolution”, the Reformation that took place over issues that were decidedly sacrificial in nature.

Once restricted to the world of deutschophone discourse, the possible cases are still dizzyingly large. For reasons I will make clear, this investigation will explore the deployment and transformation of sacrificial rhetoric in the texts of three of the most important figures in the modern world: Luther, Hegel and Weber. Although few would contest the historical significance of these figures, it is not the magnitude of their prestige that has guided my selection. I have instead delimited the scope of this study for more strategic reasons. How did I arrive at this choice of figures to exemplify the operations of sacrificial rhetoric?

Despite the lack of a revolution and the kind of upheavals that inaugurated modernity almost at a stroke in England and France, in Germany historical irruptions still figure prominently in the life of these figures. In fact, each lived in times that were provocative and troubling enough that each experienced these contemporary events as challenges and demands to which they had to respond. What Bourdieu says of the prophet one could also say of them: “the prophet is less the ‘extraordinary’ man of whom Weber spoke than the man of extraordinary situations, about whom guardians of ordinary order have nothing to say, and with reason, since the only language which they have at their disposal is that of exorcism” (p. 35). Each faced their times as men conscious of extraordinary situations, as each figure directly responded to felt or perceived historical crises, and in times of dynamic social change one can expect that sacrificial rhetoric will quicken as agents instrumentalize sacrifice as a figure of radical transformation.

As is appropriate for a study of sacrificial rhetoric, this study begins with the Reformation. Although a decisive break in a rather continuous tradition of sacrificial transformation, the Reformation came at the end of a long process of sacrificial mitigation and diffusion. Through the detours of the Christian doctrine of the Eucharist and ascetic substitutions like chastity, poverty, and obedience, “sacrifice” had been attenuated and
individualized to the point that its “rhetoricalization” was simultaneously its “privatization”, and to these developments Luther contributed the final break. With Hegel, the French Revolution provoked a profound re-evaluation of the Enlightenment and its notions of science and truth that deemed it necessary to wage war on religion and custom in the name of a transformed society. Finally, with Weber, the solidification of the nation-state that Hegel lived through and helped champion becomes at last the occasion for a crisis of values. From the midst of this crisis Weber wrote the first text I will analyze, and after the catastrophic events of the first World War Weber wrote the text that will conclude this investigation. In addition to sharing this comparative constant—that each wrote in direct response to world-changing events—these figures also stand together because felt within themselves not only the duty but the capacity to use this rhetoric and to situate themselves and their people in relation to their unique place in world history.

Given the similarity of these contexts, it will become all the clearer that for each sacrificial rhetorizing achieves quite different, and often even contradictory, effects. For this reason, my dissertation will demonstrate that, as Luther contributed to the dissolution of feudal social relations, as Hegel contributed to the formation and legitimation of the Prussian state, and as Weber articulated the ethos of the modern scholar ensconced in the University setting, each figure relied upon sacrificial rhetoric in order to surpass the previous position of discursive specialization and articulate the emergent social relations for which they felt responsible.

Nonetheless, again, despite these differences, what distinguishes the sacrificial rhetoric at work in writers such as Luther, Hegel, and Weber is that, although on one level they seek to critique or even debunk received notions of sacrifice, they are each eager to redeploy the term in line with their own strategies. In fact, this notion is key to my method, in that it best illustrates the ethos mode of persuasion in action through the use of sacrificial rhetoric. In achieving this auto-authorization, each projects a negative image of their own practice and then
negates that projected other. Hence, the rhetorical nature of this project is explicit and integral
to their aims. Each figure is quite self-conscious about addressing a group of like-minded
people and inaugurating a distinct set of roles and rights that will constitute a new position in
the discursive division of labor. In other words, as I suggested earlier, it might be that, far from
a situation where one could seek out an authority who would inform others of the proper
meaning of sacrifice, in fact the invocation of proper and persuasive notions of sacrifice, and
sacrificial rhetoric in general, serves to constitute authority itself. The connection needs to be
examined in historical contexts, but a working hypothesis here is that, inasmuch as authorities
define sacrifice, sacrificial rhetoric in turn helps to install authority.

Aside from the similarities and differences between these three figures, my readings
demonstrate some of the textual effects that writers like Luther, Hegel and Weber can achieve
with sacrificial rhetoric. Equally important, however, are this rhetoric’s extra-textual effects.
Each of these figures makes strong ontological claims regarding the nature of the world and
the society of their day. My working thesis is that sacrificial rhetoric has played a seminal role
in the explication and legitimation of a modern, capitalist conception of the disciplined
individual. More specifically, Luther, Hegel and Weber marshalled sacrificial rhetoric to
legitimate and render inevitable the emergence of their own social positions as authorities in
Christendom, the German nation and the university. In reference to these specific contexts,
sacrificial rhetoric played a crucial role at key junctures in the articulation of social
differentiation, state legitimation, and disciplinary specialization. Hence, a provisional
subsidiary thesis of this investigation is that sacrificial rhetoric has proved an essential means in
the transmission of authority from priest to pastor, philosopher and scholar, as well as the
emergence of religious studies in the modern secular university and public sphere.

Finally, while the sphere of influence in this single discursive tradition narrows with
each successive figure, this is in fact an effect of their own contributions to the specialization of
scholarly disciplines and the division of labor, processes to which their sacrificial rhetoric
contributed. For this reason, the endpoints of my analysis are the two social positions that this sacrificial rhetoric bridged: the priest and the scholar. To track this change I analyze the use of sacrificial rhetoric as this transformation of social authority and its transmission from the Church to the University and the public sphere took place. Hence, in addition to tracking social changes from feudalism to capitalism, and the emergence of the scholar from out of the figure of the priest, this investigation narrates an alternative genesis of the field of religious studies, one that locates its kinship far beyond the nineteenth century, as too many place it, back to the social heterogenization concomitant with the first rumblings of the Reformation.

Preliminary Remarks on the Selected Cases of Sacrificial Rhetoric

As befits his reputation as one of the most robust writers in the German language, Luther’s use of sacrificial rhetoric is the most overt of the cases I analyze. Out of the mass of Luther publications, I focus primarily on his “Lectures on Galatians” (LG). Here Luther employs “sacrifice” and related terms (“crucify”, “martyr”, etc.) as elements in a complex rhetorical effort to delineate his Pauline notion of faith. With these rhetorical figures Luther depicts various social and psychological phenomena as the agents and objects of sacrifice. The subject’s “other” is defined here not only as other subjects and objects, but also as aspects or faculties of the subject that stand opposed to its highest and best interests. The faculty of reason is foremost among these faculties, which Luther alienates and depicts as a belligerent, bestial, and even Satanic opponent.

In the decisive move in his sacrificial rhetoric, Luther stripped reason from the soul and ascribed it to the body. And not only this, he then employed a robustly religious term—“sacrifice”—that allowed him to “enact” the differentiation, disaggregate their values, and recast the distinction as a clash and the struggle between them as the inevitable sacrifice of reason by faith. Furthermore, to facilitate the use of “sacrifice” in his description of the relation between faith and reason, Luther bestialized reason, which in Thomistic thought, for instance,
had hitherto served as the distinguishing feature of the human species. By making reason an aspect of the body and faculty of works, Luther made certain that it would be feared and despised as a proud and contemptuous antagonist of faith. Once reason had been bestialized, it could become the proper object of sacrifice. By preserving the active role in the religious life for a sacrificing faith and the passive role for a sacrificed reason, the two faculties, once complementary and roughly equivalent, get redistributed into a hierarchy of values that instantiates a vision of the new social order.

As one turns to Hegel, any study must come to terms with the incommensurable relations between present conditions of scholarly production and the titanic nature of Hegel’s ambitions. Because Hegel attempted to consolidate the entirety of knowledge existing in his time and systematize it within a rational framework, this analysis engages his oeuvre on the following, limited terrain.

Hegel’s use of sacrificial rhetoric hinges upon the paradigmatic value of the free conscience, which he understands as his inheritance from Luther. Luther’s devaluation of material works, including the assemblage of ritual practices that fall into the category of sacrificial mitigations, sacrificed the certitude that such works produced in favor of a new but alienating mode of freedom. Because this freedom is based upon the knowledge that works are empty, at the most fundamental level Hegel posits the process of knowing as itself sacrificial, in that the familiarity of immediate conditions must inevitably become alienated in order to constitute them as objects of knowledge. Thus, it is at the price of a direct and immanent relation with the other, society and the world that the sacrifice of knowledge can take place. Taking his cue from Luther’s sacrifice understood as the movement of consciousness itself, Hegel modeled the function of discourse in general on this movement and rearticulated Luther’s insight in philosophical language to assure Germany its central place in world history. This Hegelian interpretation of Luther’s legacy forms the pivot of my analysis. In this light I trace the way that Hegel reconceives reason so that it is no longer the enemy of faith and freedom. Instead, reason well employed is essential to any true emancipation.
For Hegel, given the centrality of freedom, sacrificial rhetoric should prove problematic, for at some level sacrifice involves a degree of compulsion or even coercion. To see how Hegel negotiated this difficulty, I will examine his historical contextualization of the Reformation and the French Revolution in the vicissitudes of European Christianity. In light of this history Hegel avoids the coercive reading of sacrifice by conflating the sacrificial object and the agent in a way that depersonalizes the sacrificial scenario altogether. In the last pages of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (*PhG*), which will constitute the core of my analysis, Hegel describes the final approach towards Absolute Knowing, the dialectical expenditure of Spirit’s forms that takes shape as a continuous and self-reproducing sacrifice. By employing a dialectical method that is starkly sacrificial (the dead weight and dross of outmoded forms of knowledge are cast away as the spirit contained within is liberated), Hegel claims to continue what Luther started by translating what was reasonable about religion into the language of philosophy.

Turning to the last of the three, although Weber has been a mainstay with scholars of religion due to his vast erudition and historical imagination, many of the studies have focused too exclusively on either his typology of religious agents or his historical hypotheses concerning rationalization and secularization. Instead of treating them separately, I examine how they work together. Of the many types Weber isolated, I will treat two who are pivotal in making his historical hypotheses persuasive. The two primary types that Weber describes in reference to sacrificial rhetoric are late products of the historical division of labor, the *entrepreneur* and the *scholar*, for whom Weber serves as a philosophical spokesman. According to the analysis in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (*PESC*), the entrepreneur stands at the end of a long history of ascetic transformation. The entrepreneur breaks with the immediate relation to natural desires. Living in a state of constant and rational self-sacrifice, the entrepreneur does not enjoy the fruits of his labor, but ascetically avoids consumption in order to reinvest the capital in his ventures. But it is only by way of sacrificial
rhetoric that Weber is able to cast the discoverers of a new form of voluptuous pleasure, the accumulation of capital, as the stoic agents of heroic self-denial. In describing the “heroic age” of entrepreneurial capitalism in reference to asceticism and sacrifice, Weber rhetorically negotiates the exigencies of religion and economics.

As I turn from the entrepreneur to the scholar, it is clear that Weber was painfully aware of the contradictory status of the scholar’s position. As both a meritocratic achiever and a cog in a machine, Weber examines the many ways that the guild-like aspects of the discipline stood in conflict with evaluations prevailing in modern societies (especially, he thought, in America, whose universities Germany’s were resembling more and more). Weber’s disenchanted view of the truth as a function of discourses embedded in institutions provides a starkly material basis to his description of “Science as a Vocation” (“SaV”). Because the value of all production in capitalist society is determined by market forces, the scholar’s output is bound to seem ephemeral and unimportant, especially since the march of science will soon make even the most provocative advance obsolete. This commodification of knowledge-production contradicts both a labor theory of value, which apportions value according to the amount of labor that went into the production, as well as an aristocratic or priestly mode of valuation, which acknowledges the ephemeral nature of the production and thereby values it even more, precisely because of these sacrificial qualities. As if in protest against the iron cage of market forces, Weber spoke of the “intellectual sacrifice” that defines the scholar’s relationship to the value commitments that give comfort and orientation to the non-scholar. Because this sacrifice defines the minimal condition for non-prejudiced, objective work, an additional and in some ways contradictory sense of sacrifice comes into play in this essay.

Needless to say, Weber’s attempts to cultivate an ethics of specialization by means of sacrificial rhetoric still speak to the contemporary scholar, and to the scholar of religion perhaps foremost of them all. I examine how Weber employs a sacrificial rhetoric to inculcate in his auditors a mode of self-valorization tailor-made for the paradoxically prestigious but marginal figure of the scholar.
Linking the Cases: A Genealogy of Sacrificial Rhetoric

This investigation consists not only of a series of case studies, for, as noted above, these figures share more than a reliance on sacrificial rhetoric. Each casts a wary eye on their position in society and history, and for each the status of Germany in the world was a key issue. But even more important, each figure transformed the discursive resources at his disposal and transformed the position his group occupied in the social structure. What binds these figures even more tightly together, then, is that each deployed sacrificial rhetoric in a process of what one might call “auto-authorization,” in the sense of taking received discursive resources and effecting a displacement in the discursive field, creating thereby a new place from which to speak. The broad transformation from priest to scholar marks the endpoints of the more local displacements that each performed.

Because each of these adjustments involved, not the incremental development of a continuing trend, but the revision, reversal, contestation and usurpation of positions in a heterogeneous social field, in addition to close readings of acts of sacrificial rhetorizing this work pays close attention to socio-historical context in order to trace the broader implications of the interventions that each writer performs. With this I take my distance from such concepts as enlightenment, rationalization, and secularization, grand abstractions that tend to generate unilinear, monocausal historical schemas. Schemas such as these, which one finds in providential or developmental conceptions of history that posits origins and ends and hence

76 Lest it sound as if I here reject historiography outright, I will here relate my position to Lyotard’s rejection of a Hegelian “philosophy of history.” Lyotard writes, “The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation” (1984, p. 37). I will certainly not disagree with this statement, but when he generalizes and rejects all “grand narratives,” one wonders how “big” the narrative can be without becoming “grand.” The problem with this stance is that grand or metanarratives continue to exert a world-historical force, even if we have become suspicious of unifying movements like “evolution” and “decadence.” As retrospective creations, as so many fabricated paths of necessity to the present, we still need to deal with metanarratives, if for no other reason than to discover their exterior principles, the anxious pressures that shape them are all but unlocatable in terms of the metanarratives themselves. Most importantly, Lyotard cedes too much ground here, in my opinion, as if metanarratives were once acceptable, and even correct, and only now have become obsolete. Lyotard’s position seems bound up with an epochalism (the “post-modern condition”) that is only a variant of another providential metanarrative.
view history as a teleological process, have produced a great deal of historiographical insight. They have allowed historians to think in terms of recursive processes and historical laws instead of the continual irruption of singular and unforeseeable events. However, their hold on historical inquiry has not gone unchallenged. As a way to foreclose the possibility that this investigation will succumb to a unilinear and monocausal narrative arc concerning broad patterns in the deployment of sacrificial rhetoric, for purposes of exposition I will employ aspects of the “genealogical method” as pioneered by Nietzsche and formalized by Foucault.

In an essay that was to become a programmatic statement for his theory of genealogy, Foucault examined in Nietzsche’s work a project other than the excavation of origins (Ursprünge) or the recovery of an identity. In perhaps his most influential book, Nietzsche attempted to trace the descent (Herkunft) or genealogy of morals. Foucault wrote this essay to offer a counter-method to “[a]n entire historical tradition (theological or rationalistic) [that] aims at dissolving the singular event into an ideal continuity—as a teleological movement or a natural process” (1977, p. 154). Instead of an organic kernel in which a whole developmental arc was held in pure potentiality, the tracing of descent necessarily breaks with a monocausal theory of development dependent upon a fixed conception of the nature of humanity, history, society or culture, for “[t]he search for descent is not the erecting of foundations”; instead, “it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself” (p. 147). Since with sacrificial rhetoric what changes in its authoritative deployment is precisely such notions as human nature, the course of history, the structure of society and the meaning of culture, a method like genealogy is especially promising in that it explicitly seeks to trace the history of those phenomena that are supposed to have no history.

As opposed to a view that, though sacrifice as a practice has certainly changed, and the formulations of sacrificial rhetoric have changed in response to changing cultural contexts, the sentiment of generosity and self-abnegation that sacrifice enacts is surely universal and timeless, Foucault argues against the notion “that feelings are immutable,” and insists that
“every sentiment, particularly the noblest and most disinterested, has a history” (p. 153). Even in regard to the body, which would certainly form the “unity of last resort” for a humanism that would narrate history in terms of universals, Foucault insists that the body itself is always “molded by a great many distinct regimes” and, against this, “it constructs resistances.” For these reasons, “Nothing in man—not even his body—is sufficiently stable to serve as the basis for self-recognition or for understanding other men” (ibid.). With this knowledge comes a task: the traditional devices for constructing a comprehensive view of history and for retracing the past as a continuous development must be systematically dismantled. Necessarily, we must dismiss interpretations that encourage the consoling play of recognitions. Knowledge, even under the banner of history, does not depend on “rediscovery,” and it emphatically excludes the “rediscovery of ourselves.” History becomes “effective” to the degree that it “introduces discontinuity into our very being—as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiplies our body and sets it against itself” (p. 153-4).

In many ways, genealogy as a method builds upon fundamental principles of social scientific practices: that culture consists of an assemblage of sign systems, each of which is arbitrary and contingent; that social phenomena are irreducibly historical; that acts of denomination and description are irreducibly rhetorical, and thus political. These are all generally accepted premises of cultural studies. There is an additional element to the genealogical method, however, which derives directly from Nietzsche, and that is a sensitivity to the role of strategies in the non-determined play of interpretation. Hence, genealogy takes as its object the struggles to master an agonistic field of intersecting historical forces and agents, no one of which gains a pure expression or mastery unaffected by others in the play of engagements, reversals and transformations. In short, beginning with the presupposition that each individual element involved at any given zone of play is always already the construct of hegemonic, residual and emergent hybrids, the historical recognition and recovery of identities must give way to the tracing of trajectories of descent. Thus, this study of a genealogy of sacrificial rhetoric attempts
to follow the complex course of descent [...] to identify the accidents, the minute deviations—or conversely, the complete reversals—the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; [...] to discover that truth or being do not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents (p. 146).

It takes explicit guidelines such as these to resist the mesmerizing interpretation that casts the emergence of the scholar as necessary, sacrificial rhetoric as natural, and the emergence of religious studies in its modern form as the salubrious product of this best of all possible worlds.

It is with the steadfast attention to the play of interpretation as an instance of discursive power, the sensitivity to the significance of reversals and contestations, that this genealogy builds on the basis provided by close readings of sacrificial rhetoric.
2. Social Conflict and Sacrificial Rhetoric:
Luther’s Discursive Intervention in the Religious Division of Labor

Introduction

Luther’s influence, not only among Protestants, but throughout Europe, and indeed the world as a whole, is rivaled by only a few figures in history. This is the case not only in terms of religious practices, whether as an influence or an irritant, a modern prophet or a schismatic, but also in terms of linguistic and discursive developments. Luther’s translation of the Christian Bible into the vernacular German established at a stroke the standard German dialect for centuries to come, but even as this consolidated German culture, Luther’s discursive production, spread by waves of text issuing from a thousand print shops throughout the Reformation, led to the unprecedented and lasting fragmentation of Christendom. Luther proved quite adept at exploiting the burgeoning print culture, yet he also recognized what a loose, even dangerous evangelical instrument the printed text could be. The meaning of the Bible might be filled with mysteries, but, as Luther proved, the social risks and costs of teaching it were just as hard to fathom. Luther reacted to these social imponderables, and his reaction took the form of sacrificial rhetoric. Over the pastor would be able to discriminate as

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1 The imprint of Luther’s lexical choices on the German reception of the Christian Bible, and its role in formulating medieval ecclesiastical Latin in the vernacular, comprises a topic of innumerable studies. On this, see Bluhm (1965), Gritsch (2003) and Raeder (1983).

2 According to Febvre and Martin, “Luther made a language which in all domains approaches modern German. The enormous diffusion of his works, their literary quality, the quasi-sacred character which belonged in the eyes of the faithful to the text of the Bible and of the New Testament as established by him, all this soon made his language a model. Accessible immediately to all readers, [...] the term employed by Luther finally conquered, and numerous words used only in medieval German were finally adopted universally. And his vocabulary imposed itself in so imperious a fashion that most printers did not dare to diverge from it in the least” (1950, p. 483), quoted in McLuhan (1965, p. 230).
he mediated between the Word and the congregation. As a living communicant of the word, the pastor could preach the gospel of faith’s sacrifice of reason with a message tailored to the particular needs of his congregation.

To address the discursive influence of a figure with such a long and eventful career, this chapter will address Luther by means of a specific conjuncture. Among the factors involved, one finds, first, that Luther displayed a canny sense of the strategic potentials latent in the relationship between Latin and the vernacular, as well as oral and print culture. Second, Luther developed a principle of *sola scriptura* based on a constructed sense of the Christian Bible as a transcendent object of devotion, which in many ways protected the text against its sudden loss of aura as vernacular printed copies became virtually ubiquitous. Third, the doctrine of *sola fides*, or “by faith alone,” led to a new status of reason in the Protestant model of human nature that was to have profound influence on the scholarly examination of human behavior. Finally, Luther exercised lasting influence in developing an articulation in the religious division of labor whereby the authority of the religious leader derived from fundamentally different sources: as opposed to the priest, the pastor’s authority drew less from historical succession than from a vertical relation of expertise in transmitting the immaterial spirit of Scripture. In light of these factors, this chapter will examine the way that Luther's exegetical work rhetoricalized sacrifice, and, in doing so, constructed a new discursive position, the pastor as anti-sophist, or *parrhesiast*, in the religious division of labor.

**Approaching Luther’s Historical Significance**

In Luther’s text a discursive deployment takes form that will have a long and complex future. Because in Luther’s thought every ritual, as a mitigated sacrifice, comes under critique, so that neither monastic asceticism, sacramental expenditure nor alms-giving remain properly

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3 This reference echoes Benjamin’s thesis regarding the art object’s loss of aura in the age of mechanical reproduction (1969). If this took place with art, I would suggest that it also took place with scripture, and Luther’s exegesis developed in a way that contructed a reserve of the sacred beyond the printed text.
sacrificial, it would appear that only Jesus’s crucifixion and Christian martyrdom (both ancient and contemporary⁴) count as sacrifices.⁵ For this reason, it is all the more remarkable to read Luther speak of faith in the violent idiom of sacrifice. By focusing upon specific passages where this “sacrifice of faith” takes place, I will show how the violence of the imagery serves as an inverse indicator of the degree to which “sacrifice” has become interiorized, a problem of proper conceptualization, and thus a matter of rhetoric. His sacrificial rhetoric encapsulates all the ambivalence of Luther’s personality, and the violence and fury of Luther’s vituperative language goes to great lengths to mask the fact that this sacrifice is purely rhetorical. It is rhetorical because outside of the speech acts that describe the actualization of faith as a sacrifice, there is nothing phenomenal in play at all, but only a hypothetical conflict of the human faculties. Having stripped away the ritualized practices that rooted sacrifice in the medieval world of experience, Luther’s sacrificial rhetoric is set free, to the point that a “sacrifice” becomes nothing more than a discursive effect—yet a discursive effect with wide-ranging, extra-discursive effects. In addition to the role that Luther’s sacrificial rhetoric played in constructing the role of the pastor, I will suggest how its depiction of what is properly human survived into the modern world.

Even the most scholarly studies of Luther tend to focus on the psychological or hermeneutical locus of Luther’s insight or conversion to the doctrine of sola fides. As Luther’s response to the mercenary practices of simony, indulgences, and other clerical abuses (Dykerma and Oberman, 1992), this doctrine, and the intransigence with which Luther preached it, has long obsessed scholars who would trace it causally to its influences and ____________________________

⁴ Gregory suggests that Luther accorded utter reality to the significance of contemporary martyrs, to the point that “Luther himself seems to have struggled with the fact that other evangelicals were being martyred instead of him” (1999, p. 104). Oberman notes that Luther viewed contemporary martyrdoms as signs of the success of the Reformation (1989, p. 265-9).

⁵ Even the eucharist, for Luther, was not a sacrifice, for Luther “decisively violated the incarnational ordering of reality by his rejection of transubstantiation as well as his understanding of the mass as a testament and not a sacrifice” (Headley, 1987, p. 31).
source. Such a focus on a conversion or metanoia, however, tends to give it singular status in an investigation, and makes other transitions, reversals or inversion into determined and necessary responses to this singular historical event. A genealogy, however, needs to address a wider set of such transformations, both psychological and discursive, exegetical and institutional. For this reason, this study sets out to study a much later, and much less noticed, reversal, a change less in the content of the doctrine than in its expression: the turn to sacrificial rhetoric late in Luther’s career.

For a genealogy to locate the emergence of sacrificial rhetoric in Luther’s historical context, the scholar cannot adopt the topos of conversion, inspiration, revelation or hierophany. To do so would situate this investigation on a theological and not a genealogical terrain. Far more important here is to examine the way that Luther achieves this rhetoricalization of sacrifice, and delineate the strategies he utilizes to make it effective.

For these reasons, this chapter will not pursue the matter of the triggering event or singular irruption which marked a break between any set of epochal pairs, either between the truly catholic Church and the diversity of schismatic Christianities, the enlightenment of the Renaissance and the retrenchment of the Reformation, or the Medieval and Early Modern periods. Instead of reading Luther and the Reformation through the lens of this singular irruption coded as the doctrine of “by faith, not works,” this chapter will trace the paradoxical discursive consequences as Luther returns to a pre-eminent form of “work”—namely, sacrifice—in other to legitimate a certain view of human nature and authorize a transformed figure—the pastor—on the terrain of the religious division of labor.

6 As a first complication, a treatment of Luther’s pedagogical and psychological preparations for his “insight” would need situation in reference to the anti-clericalism that was endemic in Luther’s day. On this topic, see Dipple (1996).

7 After a period where Nietzsche viewed him as a nationalist hero, he later viewed Luther as a reactionary, medieval figure opposed to the Renaissance. On this topic, see Bluhm (1956).

8 For the foremost proponent of the view that Luther should be examined as a late medieval, and not proto-modern, figure, see Oberman (1974).
Social historians and other commentators have suggested repeatedly that the Reformation marks a watershed moment in European history, but for reasons drastically different than the religious and theological motivations that one might expect. Although to Luther his production was important because it recovered the original message of Christianity, that it is by faith alone and not by works that the Christian is justified, the radical transformation that ensued had as much to do with formal discursive changes as it had to do with the content. That is, though the message or content of the doctrine was clearly important as an impetus to its circulation, the fact that it was widely circulated in the vernacular, along with most of Luther’s writings as well as those of many others, both supporting and opposing his positions, marks a change that is at least as decisive. As much as the content of Luther’s theological position, the radical change that the Reformation brought meant that discourse in Europe would now take place in multiple media, languages and fora. When faced with fundamental doctrinal and devotional challenges, no longer would the Christian Church maintain a monopoly on theological positions by means of appropriation and incorporation (as was the case with Franciscan movement, which was subsequently brought under the umbrella of the church as a third type of order, the mendicant friars [Rosenwein & Little, 1974]) or rejection and extirpation (as was the case with the Waldensians and the Albigensians, who were excommunicated as heretics and subsequently eradicated in the course of the Fourth Crusade). With Luther’s challenge taken up by pamphleteers and printers across the region, a synergy between doctrinal contestation and discursive production occurred that impelled the Reformation farther and far more intensively than had previous counter-Church and reform movements.

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9 There is still considerable variation in opinion concerning the historical status of the Reformation. Baeumer presses the question whether the Reformation was a Revolution (1985).

10 Habermas has written the most important work assessing the importance of this discursive proliferation, eventually constituting what he calls the “public sphere” (1989). Mattelart’s work deals more specifically deals with media developments (1985). Wohlfeil (2001) puts the origins of this development firmly within the sphere of the Reformation.
To explore Luther’s contribution to the development of the public sphere, and his use of sacrificial rhetoric to construct the pastor as an agent to counteract some of its ill consequences, this investigation draws on the work of Bourdieu (1991), whose work has not yet been widely accepted into the canon of Religious Studies. Because I analyze the way that discourse and rhetoric leads not only to hermeneutical change, but also to shifts in the division of labor, Bourdieu’s work provides many resources. In particular, to analyze the impact that the changing discursive terrain had on Luther’s writing, I must avoid a simplistic dichotomy between a Church monopoly and an emerging free market of discourse known as the public sphere. Here I do not speak of “free markets” as the proponents of rational-choice methods do, primarily because there is no such thing. A market is impossible without a wide gamut of implicit and explicit regulations, with the result that there are degrees of regulation in any given market environment, and never can one adequately deal with the factors at play in these milieus with a binary typology of free and unfree. Aside from the rhetorical dividend that describing the American “religious marketplace” as “free” accrues among the ideologues of economism, it is incredibly detrimental to analysis for it blinds the scholar to the very real regulations that are always in effect, as well as the never-ending struggle to monopolize the scarce social resources of legitimacy and authority. Hence, in speaking of monopolies and markets I follow Bourdieu in seeking only to describe the flow of transactions between agents in a given socio-cultural milieu.

To speak of markets and capital need not entail all the assumptions of rational-choice theory, nor lead to the type of analyses that bear the mark of Nobel-laureate Gary Becker’s influence (1965, 1993). Stark, Finke and Iannaccone have been the most prominent religious studies scholars to promote this method. They each tend to employ a notion of “sacrifice” that is as far as possible from the approach developed in this study. While their analyses have provided some interesting reversals of conventional wisdom, the shortcomings of their approach are legion.
Luther’s Effect on the Structure of the Religious Field

Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone had radical consequences for the devotional life of the committed Christians, for it entailed a complete break with the authority and ritual traditions of the Christian church. In reference to the status of the eucharistic mass, the keystone of the Church’s structure of authority, although still committed to the “real presence” of the Eucharist, for Luther this reality no longer depended upon the priest as a guarantor of ritual efficacity by means of apostolic succession traced back to Jesus’s transmission of authority to Peter. Because they transformed relations between secular and sacred spheres, the division of labor and social reproduction in general, Luther’s doctrines effected a radical transformation in social typologies of many kinds. After this radical break, Luther returned later in life to correct the reception of his doctrines. If the early Luther broke with the sacrificial basis of Church sacraments, the later one employed sacrificial rhetoric to transform received notions of worship and devotion, thereby making Christian sacrifice more a matter of rhetoric than ritual. Whether as the initiator of the Reformation or the conservative voice opposed to its radicalization, Luther effected social change in a way that a merely political revolt could not have accomplished. Luther did not initiate the practice of sacrificial rhetoric, but he did take it in directions that were unprecedented in the history of Church dogma.

Because rituals were the sole provenance of priests who administered them under the auspices of apostolic succession, Luther directly challenged the importance of ritual and doctrine as a monopolized means toward salvation. In moving from a monopolized means of salvation toward a marketplace of doctrines, Luther fit his pastor for this new state of the

\[\text{12 Drawing from Luther’s two early (1520) texts, Treatise on the New Testament, that is, the Holy Mass and The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, Davis argues that “Luther makes the theological move from the mass as a sacrifice and a good work to the position that a proper and Christian mass is the proclamation of Christ's testament (the forgiveness of sins) by means of the Words of Institution” (1999, p. 325). Also, see Osborne (2002) for the nominalist background of Luther's position, and Chilton (1992, 2002) for deep background in early Christianity.}\]
religious field. This is not to say, of course, that this is what Luther sought at the outset of the Reformation. Indeed, he insisted that he was only recovering the Church's true and original doctrine of justification from under the sophistical accretions of power-hungry popes and priests. Thus, like so many tectonic social transformations, this one took place behind the backs of its agents, accomplishing ends far different from those they set out to achieve. Indeed, this defines the very nature of market transactions, the system-wide impact of local actions that leads to the production of unintended consequences.

It is important to reiterate that this breakdown of the Church’s religious monopoly did not take place only in the realm of dogma and sacrament. The proliferation of doctrines and practices beyond any possible synthesis or systematization was facilitated by the rise of vernacular literacy and printing (Davis, 1960; Edwards, 1994). Thus, Pettegree argues that “the Reformation dates not from the publication of the ninety-five theses in October 1517, but from Luther's decision the following year to publish a defence of his views in German” (2005, p. 163). Not only, then, does the Reformation move from a monopolized elite language to a demotic one, but this is also a move from restricted discursive production to a wider, print-mediated regime of vernacular production and distribution.

As this process proceeded, Luther inevitably became aware of its dangers. Already in the early years of the Reformation Luther was wary of antinomian and anarchistic interpretations of his doctrines. Since Luther’s challenge to sacred authorities depended ultimately upon the support of secular rulers, he was often very explicit in defending his doctrines against such conclusions. Furthermore, Luther remained wary of the powerful media he exploited since in his first letter to a publisher of his pamphlets Luther remarked that these are not the best way to “instruct the public” (Pettegree, p. 164). By the time he was at work on his “Lecture on Galatians” (LG)

13 In epistolam S. Pauli ad galata Commentarius, in German translation, Vorlesung über den Galaterbrief. These were Luther’s oral lectures that were copied by his secretary and then countersigned as official. For this reason, although they consist of commentaries on Paul’s letter, I will speak of them as lectures to under-
Rome was obvious: innumerable antinomian prophets led heretical sects into violent uprisings, all under the banner of Luther's Reformation. Hence, there are two reasons to focus on Luther's lectures. First, with them we encounter many of the issues that arise between author and audience. Luther he delivered these orally in Latin, but with occasional German interjections, and subsequently oversaw their translation and, in the case of many, countersigned them as authoritative. For this reason, they serve as emblems of Luther’s discursive production, and touch upon most of the various strategies and means he employed to influence the spread of doctrines and the course of historical events. Thus, Luther’s lectures on scripture can serve as a synecdoche of Luther's reformation experience, and allow this analysis to track, within a single document, the discursive transition from guild-monopoly to market-system.

Because these commentaries are quite late, we will discover some developments that Luther employs to regulate the anarchy of the market. Even as Luther employs sacrificial rhetoric to authorize his doctrine against the contending ones of scholastics and humanists, he employs a polemically defined conception of reason to construct the figure of the pastor whose role it is to protect the congregation against the sophists at the gate. In addition to more traditional descriptions of the pastor as shepherd, here it is not safekeeping and guiding in general that define the work of the pastor, but defending against the more specific and impending dangers personified in the figures of the humanists and the scholastics.

**Luther and the Christian Tradition of Sacrificial Rhetoric**

The overarching question for this inquiry is, how did a particular religious ritual like sacrifice come to serve as such a widespread rhetorical figure? When faced with the immense historical distance between, first, the public destruction of wealth or butchering of an animal, and, last, a speech act describing non-ritual phenomena as a sacrifice, one measures the score the rhetorical setting from which they issued.

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distance not only in years but also in religious and cultural transformation. In this section I briefly account for the way that, historically, sacrifice began as a delimitable public rite and then diffused throughout all Christian worship, with the consequence that, when Luther broke with works, he was at root breaking with sacrifice.

Arguably, the rhetoricalization of sacrifice traces back to the Hellenistic cultural milieu wherein Greek, Roman and Judaic religious and philosophical reflection intermingled, and the topic of sacrifice emerged as a contentious intercultural topic. From out of prophetic and poetic speculations regarding the true meaning and function of sacrifice, enough answers were produced to allow for great flexibility in the ascription of sacrificial significance to a wide variety of behavior. That is, in the dialectic between received cultural practices, which tend to be inherently conservative, and attitudes and conceptions concerning these practices, which can change quickly and abruptly, the transformation of sacrifice and its significance was inevitable.

From the assignation of sacrificial significance to the crucifixion of Jesus, early Christians had to acknowledge this unique sacrifice and, at the same time, negotiate the connotations received and expectations imposed by other religions in the Hellenistic milieu.  

There were always great tension in Christianity between the strong sense in Greco-Roman religion that the sacrifice was a type of gift which could assume the sense of tribute or even a bribe, and the Judaic sense that sacrifice served as an homage to a transcendent deity from whom one could never expect, much less demand, a relation of reciprocity. Between bribe

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14 Many canonical, early Christian letters and sermons translated the death of Jesus into a sacrificial idiom. By means of dichotomies such as human and animal, singular and cyclical, as well as living and dead, in these texts Christ’s sacrifice replaced and surpassed the public ritual cycles of offering dead animals in sacrifice with a single living sacrifice of the most perfect possible being. In Hebrews 10.10, we read: “εν ω θεληματι ηγασθηναι εσμεν δια της προσφορας του σωματος του ιησου Χριστου ερασταξ [And it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all]” (all English translations are from the New Revised Standard Version, NRSV). This Luther translates as “In diesem Willen sind wir gehelligt auf einmal durch das Opfer des Leibes Jesu Christi.”

15 Young explains that the Christians were the sole religious group in the Roman empire to reject all public sacrificial rituals. This is not to say, however, that they decisively rejected and broke with the received importance of sacrifice, for the early Christians embraced many of the sacrificial notions prevalent among both Jews and pagans, even as they rejected the public practices of both (1983, p. 46).
and homage, Christians tried a third way by diminishing the importance of the sacrificial object. In short, along the processual axis early Christianity shifted the focus from the transformation of the object toward the transformation of the agent. There were salubrious echoes of the sacrifice of Jesus to encourage this shift of focus. In Hebrews 9.11-14, the writer stresses the singular and sufficient nature of Christ’s sacrifice by emphasizing not only the superiority of human over animal blood, but also the identity between the sacrificial agent (the “high priest”) and the sacrificial object (the “blood offering”). While in no way unique, I would suggest that this identity between the sacrificial object and agent leads to the spiritualization of sacrifice and provides an element of flexibility to sacrificial rhetoric in the Christian tradition.

To specify a method to achieve this spiritualization or rationalization of sacrifice, in Hebrews the author adopts the prophetic moralization of sacrifice as he enjoins his followers “continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God” and “to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God” (Hebrews 13.15-16). As a result, in the earliest days of Christianity one can find a radical redeployment of ancient sacrificial themes, and a novel conjunction of transcendent and quotidian notions of sacrificial practices.

The Fathers of the early Church, including Barnabas, Tertullian, Hilary, Chrysostom and Cyprian, reiterated this description of the crucifixion as a sacrifice. Even when Tertullian

16 With the identity of sacrificial agent and object in Christ, it was necessary to transmit this priestly authority to the Church. The passage where Jesus calls Peter his “rock upon which the Church will be built” achieved this, as did the Church fathers who spoke of sacrifice in many different ways so as to generate priestly authority. According to Pelikan, “Chrysostom also spoke of ‘the Lord being sacrificed and laid upon the altar and the priest standing and praying over the victim,’” summarizing the sacrificial language about the Eucharist which has also become accepted practice. Therefore the apostles, too, were represented as priests” (1971, p. 25).

17 “15 δι’ αὐτοῦ οὖν ἀναφέρομεν θυσίαν αἰνεσάως διαπαντὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τούτου τεσσαράκοντα καὶ χείλεων ὁμολογούντων τῷ ὄνοματι αὐτοῦ 16 τῆς δὲ εὐποιίας καὶ κοινωνίας μὴ ἐπιλανθάνεσθε τοιαύτας γιὰρ θυσίας ἐναρασττεῖται ο θεὸς [Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of the lips that confess his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God (NRSV)],” which Luther translated as “So lasset uns nun opfern durch ihn das Lobopfer Gott allezeit, das ist die Frucht der Lippen, die seinen Namen bekenne. Wohlzutun und mitzuteilen vergesse nicht; denn solche Opfer gefallen Gott wohl.” The Greek term Paul used for sacrifice, thusiai, is one of many Greek terms for sacrifice. This particular rite most often consisted of a burnt victim directed toward the Olympian gods.
spoke of the crucifixion in terms of a “satisfaction” which echoed Roman private law, the overtones of sacrifice were not lost (Pelikan, p. 146-7). In Ignatius of Antioch’s Letter to the Romans (beginning of the second century CE), martyrdom is not only accepted as a sacrifice, it is actively sought. Once the persecutions ended in the post-Constantine era, the exemplary nature of the martyrs needed to find a new form of expression. Soon there developed a more sublimated disciplinization of the will that pulls back from the extreme of a suicidal passion and attempts to harness the martyr’s prestige to quotidian and rational pursuits. As one scholar of this transition describes, “When the age of the martyrs had passed, it became necessary for the Christian to express his desire to imitate Christ in some other way. [...] The ascetical life came to be looked upon as a martyrrium cotidianum, and the concept of spiritual martyrdom was born” (Malone, p. vii). As these quotidian martyrdoms developed their scope outpace doctrinal sanction, yet the Desert fathers set the ascetics example, and soon whole communities devoted to ascetic practices developed, and the monastic ideal was born. As Malone explained, “There was no conscious effort on the part of the Fathers of the Church to discover or set up a new ideal of perfection as a substitute for martyrdom as the ideal of perfection.” Nonetheless, Spiritual martyrdom became the vocation of the monk, only when the ascetical life became a fixed vocation with the establishment of the monastic institute. Gradually the ascetic, and then the monk came to fill the place that had been left vacant by the martyr. The martyr had been the great champion of the Christian host, the athlete of God, the leader in the militia spiritualis which the Church employs against the forces of evil. These ideas were eventually transferred to the monk as the one who most nearly emulated the heroism of the martyr (p. vii-viii).

The place of the martyr was left empty as the drama of persecution gave way to the routine of institutionalization. Though the positions, duties and exemplary function changed, the fact that the church needed such an exemplary figure marks the continuity between martyrdom and asceticism. On this continuity between sacrifice and monastic asceticism, we have no less an authority than Gregory making the following prescription: “We ought to immolate to God [...] the daily sacrifice of our tears, the daily offerings of His flesh and blood” (quoted in Pelikan, p. 356) Monastic discipline thereafter would constitute a quotidian, routinized sacrifice.
Certain problems beset any exemplary religious specialist. For asceticism to serve as form of sacrifice, natural desires must be renounced, but in these communities it was impossible to prevent a distinct prestige economy from emerging, with the result that the rigorous discipline of natural desires led to the desire, not only for the discipline itself, but also for the esteem among one’s peers and superiors that such discipline could garner. Asceticism construed as a sacrifice thus faces a fundamental paradox, in that, with the mobility of desire, temptations do not stay rooted in only a natural mode, but soon develop in unforeseen ways to constitute a second-nature that can be as corrupting as the first. Even the desire to be exemplary itself can become corrupting, yet the cost of renouncing, not only the natural pleasures, but the pagan virtues of honor and courage as well, would be to deny the desire for honor and prestige as an engine of ethical development. The desire for esteem and recognition in the eyes of one's peers must be despised, and yet Church writers acknowledged the exemplarity of asceticism both within and without the monastery. To square this circle, the monastery had to cast ascetic exemplarity as purely educational, and in no way enmeshed in the worldliness of a local prestige economy. Hence the monastery quickly became less a refuge from the world than an early form of the schola, and the chief pedagogical institution bridging the ancient and the medieval worlds. Above all, the monasteries provided a pedagogy in paradoxes, which brings us to the case of Martin Luther. Though this institution produced Luther, its paradoxes also led him to turn against it, not because he could not adhere to its strictures, but because he pushed them to their breaking point.

Although the transformation from priestly sacrifice to martyrdom and asceticism might appear to be a strange and unexpected path, one could argue that all these developments were apparent in novo in the New Testament. For Christianity, and Luther, perhaps, in particular, few events in this history of sacrificial transformation have been as decisive as Paul’s interpretation of the relationship between the Hebrew “Law” and Jesus’s crucifixion. In a way that links to the conflation of the sacrificial agent and object in Hebrews, Paul’s directive in
Romans enjoins such a conflation as the supreme worship for all Christians. In what was to become a pivotal moment in the history of Christian dogma, Paul argued that the death and resurrection of Jesus had “fulfilled” the Law of Moses, and beseeched others to “present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Romans 12.1). This formulation, which endorsed the incorporation of the public ritual of sacrifice into the worshiper's body, led to an intensive focus on both physical and doctrinal purity. In conjunction with his rejection of circumcision and other acts of ritual piety, or “works”, Paul shifts the emphasis from the Torah’s complementary conception of faith (pistis) and works, to focus more decisively on the former. Hence, the rhetorical redefinition of “sacrifice” informed the pursuit of individual holiness through the transformed sacrificial practices of martyrdom and monastic asceticism.

This background constitutes the dual-channeled heritage of sacrificial transformation that Luther encountered in the monastery. As an Augustinian monk Luther soon adopted Paul’s emphasis on faith over works and became the most vociferous critic of monastic

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18 Romans 12.1 “παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς ἀδέλφοι διὰ τῶν οἰκτίρμων τοῦ θεοῦ παραστῆσαι τα σώματα ὑμῶν θυσίαν ὑπὸ ὄψεως εὐαρεστεῖτο τῷ θεῷ τὴν λατρείαν ὑμῶν [I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship (New Revised Standard Version)].” Luther translated this as follows: “Ich ermahne euch nun, liebe Brüder, durch die Barmherzigkeit Gottes, daß ihr eure Leiber begebet zum Opfer, das da lebendig, heilig und Gott wohlgfällig sei, welches sei euer vernunftiger Gottesdienst.” Here we do not have the equivocation in the English translation between “spiritual” and “reasonable” or “rational.” In German, Luther opts for a sacrifice that connects to vernunftiger (sensible or reasonable) and thus Vernunft, or reason, which will be decisive for his later deployment of sacrificial rhetoric.

19 At the end of a pivotal passage from Romans 2:25–9, we read that “real circumcision is a matter of the heart—it is spiritual and not literal.” In Romans 4:9–12, Paul asserts that Abraham, who “received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised,” is therefore “the ancestor of all who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them.” In Romans 4.24–5, Paul brings righteousness, faith, and sacrifice into one formulation: “[Righteousness] will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.” Unlike the passage from Hebrews, the passive construction of this last passage indicates that, for Paul, God was the agent and Jesus was the passive but willing object of this sacrifice. In the early days of Christianity, then, there was still a great amount of play in regards to these sacrificial interpretations.
practices, dismissing them as “works” of the “Law.” As befits Luther’s critique of works, in his 1516–7 (pub. 1519) exegesis of Galatians there are few mentions of sacrifice, yet in his 1531 (pub. 1535) version the text is suffused with sacrificial rhetoric. Although Paul’s “Letter to the Galatians,” which deals specifically with the status of Jewish law and ritual in the still forming Christian churches, provided fertile opportunity for Luther’s discussion of sacrifice, because of this difference in the editions we cannot explain the emergence of sacrificial rhetoric as simply the consequence of his exegetical object. One can, however, hypothesize that, as the Reformation took shape and proceeded, and proved an unwieldy movement for one leader to steer, one of Luther’s rhetorical goals was to clarify the proper nature of Christian sacrifice, and thereby construct a new type of religious specialist.

Sacrifice and the Critique of Works

In formulating Luther’s sacrificial rhetoric as an object of scrutiny, I am taking a different trajectory than much Luther scholarship. Indeed, because Luther came to reject what he saw as the abuse of allegory and insisted on the literal truth of scripture, a rhetorical treatment could seem an inappropriate approach to Luther’s text. Since my focus here will be on Luther’s “Lectures on Galatians” this analysis will shift the rhetorical study of Luther from his sermons, which has garnered some attention (Edwards, 1983; Hobson, 2002; Matheson, 87

20 On Luther’s part in the reformation, Harnack claims that, “judged by its religious kernel,” it is “a restoration of Pauline Christianity in the spirit of the new age” (1957, p. 541).

21 Because Luther was an Augustinian monk, and Augustine himself entered public life as a Quintillian-influenced professor of rhetoric, Luther’s rhetorical practices have gained some attention, but most often in regards to his pastoral practice of employing epideictic discourse in his sermons.

22 According to Cranz, “The firm tie between the literal sense of the Bible and its spiritual reality, threatened by humanism and nominalism, is reestablished by Luther as the literal and the anagogic senses coincide in faith” (p. 102). Reinke connects this to the impact of printing: “Luther’s shift from allegory to metaphor involves precisely the kind of psychic transformation occasioned by sustained exposure to the printed text, and that the structure of the Reformation ‘word-faith’ theology may be grounded in this transformation. If so, the freedom about which he writes is not so much that of a Christian man as of a literate man, and his reform program shares a great deal more in common with sixteenth-century iconoclasts and defenders of the printed page than is usually granted” (p. 395).
1998; Oberman, 1988; Vickers, 1988), to his scriptural exegesis, where debate usually centers upon the theological cogency of his arguments. To insist on the rhetorical nature of Luther’s commentary already suggests a skeptical attitude towards any exegesis that attempts to “speak the truth” of a given text. Nonetheless, in speaking of Luther’s commentaries as rhetorical performances, one does not necessarily negate the theological truth-claims, but one does inevitably bring different resources to bear on the theological claims. These are quite amenable to rhetorical study, as they directly bridge the transition from speech-event to public text. Indeed, my reading will highlight the degree to which Luther’s exegesis of Paul uses Scripture as a point of departure for addressing wider social tensions in early sixteenth-century Europe. That is, like any good rhetorician, with one eye on the received tradition and the other on his heterogeneous audience of readers, Luther sought social change through the primary work of reformulating the fundamental categories of existence.

Finally, this rhetorical treatment of the theological plausibility of Luther’s truth-claims will allow us to focus on the categorical infrastructure that forms the condition of possibility of the text’s truth-effects. In other words, through the lens of rhetoric we can examine how Luther attempts to persuade his audience regarding the truth of sacrifice. A rhetorical analysis provides a more promising framework for this topic because, since Luther strove to empty most rituals of religious significance, I contend that “sacrifice” itself thereby became solely a matter of rhetoric. That is, with Luther, sacrifice becomes a solely discursive effect, a consequence of the way that one talks about an act or event. I will further show how this led

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23 In the preface to The Birth of the Clinic, Foucault writes, “Commentary questions discourse as to what it says and intended to say; […] in stating what has been said, one has to re-state what has never been said.” Ultimately, commentary “tries to transmit an old, unyielding discourse seemingly silent to itself, into another, more prolix discourse that is both more archaic and more contemporary.” In this project lies “concealed a strange attitude towards language: to comment is to admit by definition an excess of the signified over the signifier; a necessary, unformulated remainder of thought that language has left in the shade—a remainder that is the very essence of that thought, driven outside its secret—but to comment also presupposes that this unspoken element slumbers within speech (parole), and that, by a superabundance proper to the signifier, one may, in questioning it, give voice to a content that was not explicitly signified” (1973, p. xvi).

24 Davis argues that, despite Luther’s defense of the “real presence” of the Eucharist, he never strayed
to Luther’s disenchantment of reason and the authorization of the pastor as a figure with new
duties in the religious division of labor.

Given the emergence of Luther’s sacrificial rhetoric in the 1535 “Lectures on
Galatians,” one could hypothesize that, as the Reformation took shape and proceeded, it
became imperative to clarify the proper nature of Christian sacrifice. This concern with
defining a proper sacrifice accords with the very nature of rhetoric. As noted in the
introduction, the transition from confusion and conflict to a resolution defined by the
restoration of the proper and the just forms perhaps the fundamental motif of rhetorical
practice. Just as, at its origin, rhetoric concerned itself with determining “proprietorship” and
the “proper”, we can see that Luther was bedeviled by the question: Of the competing factions
in Christendom, which will become the proprietor of sacrifice?

To recapitulate, after Paul it was no longer necessary for a Christian to undergo
circumcision, sacrifice at the Temple, or observe other ritual markers of Hebrew identity. What
remained was an emphasis on holiness which, combined with the early exemplary martyrs,
moved along several variational-axes (the practical, towards rhetoric; the transformational,
towards the subject; the referential, towards the performative) to create a dual idiom of
sacrifice: both an extreme form, to the point of self-annihilation in the case of martyrdom, and
a more “rational” or mitigated form in the case of asceticism. It was in this context that Luther
set forth key dichotomies, such as Law versus Gospel and active versus passive righteousness,
that defined his critique of “works.” This critique he never abandoned or significantly modified,
but in the later commentary on Galatians there is significant novelty in regards to his treatment
of the topic.

Early in his 1535 “Lectures on Galatians,” Luther states that “Christian righteousness
[Iustitiam christianam] […] is heavenly and passive [coelestis et passiva].[…] We do not
perform it; we accept it by faith, through which we ascend beyond all laws and works

from the notion that the Word was more fundamental than the Mass (1999).
[ascendimus supra omnes leges et opera]” (LG, p. 8; p. 46). Later, Luther presents a short conversion narrative wherein he personifies the devotee of active righteousness. After casting himself in the role of the sacrificial agent, Luther laments, “I crucified Christ daily in my monastic life [Ego in monachatu Christum quotidie crucifixi]. […] I observed chastity, poverty, and obedience. […] Nevertheless, under the cover of this sanctity and confidence I was nursing incessant […] blasphemy against God” (LG, p. 70; p. 137). Luther’s routinized ascetic crucifixion of himself sought to repeat and thus replace the one sacrifice, and becomes a usurpation of Jesus’s sacrifice. As is typical of the genre of conversion narratives, Luther stages a dramatic inversion of values. As opposed to an Occamist or humanist reliance on the will, as would befit his education, to Luther the human will is completely corrupt as a result of the Fall, making the ritual observances that depend upon the agent's contrite will worse than useless. Thus, a doctrine that accords a place for human agency in the work of salvation is not only misguided; by diverting hope from its rightful object, namely, God’s grace, it places one on the side of Satan. How, then, can sacrifice escape this critique and serve as the figure for the full actualization of Christian righteousness?

Through the course of events, Luther employed sacrificial rhetoric to accrue the authority that, since antiquity, he who defines or administers sacrifice garners. In a sense, he could not sacrifice sacrifice, but had to appropriate it, especially since, as the Reformation continued and both spread and intensified, Luther came to acknowledge that the truth of Christian dogma and worship would henceforth become an object of contention. Thus, despite his critique of works and rejection of the quotidian and routinized sacrifices that he had

25 Luther makes this abundantly clear in his debate with Erasmus (Erasmus/Luther 1969). For more on Luther’s “grammar of the will,” see O'Rourke Boyle (1985).

26 Soon thereafter one reads: “For Satan loves such saints and treats as his own beloved those who destroy their own bodies and souls, and who deprive themselves of all the blessings of the gifts of God. [...] Such saints are the slaves of Satan. [...] But these men, far from acknowledging that their abominations, idolatries, and wicked acts of worship are sins, actually declare that they are a sacrifice pleasing to God [acceptissimum Deo sacrificium]” (LG, p. 70; p. 138).
practiced in the form of monastic asceticism, Luther was driven back to claim a form of sacrifice for his own position.

This is even more problematic when one considers that, since Christian sacrifice had completely dismissed the use of a sacrificial object, and had collapsed the sacrificial agent and the object into one, the will to sacrifice had long served as the default object of sacrifice. That is, through asceticism, one negated the natural will, the will towards natural desires, and promoted the contrite will, the will towards sacrifice and devotion. Luther, however, in his polemical exchange with Erasmus, had totally rejected the notion of free will. If one could not bring one’s will to the altar, how could one still speak of sacrifice at all? Despite these problems, my hypothesis is that Luther was driven to this by polemical necessity. If this is the case, to understand Luther’s deployment of sacrificial rhetoric it is necessary to understand those who Luther regarded as his antagonists.

In addition to a choleric temperament that served him well in the theological disputes of his day, Luther's deployment of the grammatical quantifier *sola* to isolate *fides* from *leges* in his translations of Paul entailed a remarkable combativeness towards any position that would combine his “solisms”\(^\text{27}\) with any other desiderata of righteousness. Among these, the positions of humanists and scholastic theologians particularly earn his scorn. Both camps looked to Greek and Hellenistic texts as resources for contemporary issues, with the scholastics incorporating Aristotelian developments into established neo-Platonic elements of Christianity, and humanists seeking to recover classical learning in a more holistic sense. Of course, there were many contentious issues separating Luther's opponents. For example, in matters of scripture and practice the humanist rallying cry was “*ad fontes!*” Because this return to the sources had the consequence of circumventing the continuity of Church tradition, the humanists thereby challenged scholastic, and especially Dominican, hegemony. Nonetheless, 

\(^{27}\) Rublack employed the collective term of “solisms” to describe Luther's closed the set of authoritative resources: “*sola gratia, sola Christus, sola fides, sola scriptura*” (1985, p. 31).
although there was much tension between humanists and scholastics, what they shared—and what damned them in Luther's eyes—was an admiration for virtuous pagans and a central role for reason in the Christian life.

To Erasmus, for example, virtuous pagans like Aristotle and Cicero had, through the right use of reason, approximated many of the moral teachings of scripture. In his debate with Luther on the nature of the will, Erasmus asserted that even “in those who lack grace […] reason was obscured but not extinguished.” Believing that the right use of reason can take one very far along the path towards righteousness, Erasmus could argue that, among the pagans, “philosophers, without the light of faith, and without the assistance of Holy Scripture, drew from created things the knowledge of the everlasting power and divinity of God, and left many precepts concerning the good life, agreeing wholeheartedly with the teachings of the Gospels” (1969, p. 49). For Luther, such a statement did little more than insult the divinity’s revelation by mingling it with the tepid moral admonitions and specious metaphysics of benighted pagans. The very idea that reason could help make one moral was preposterous, since, as a result of the Fall, humans were mired in their own iniquity with God’s grace as their only vehicle of righteousness. However, this conflict concerning the status of pagan authors was itself but the effect of a more fundamental rift.

For both humanists and scholastics, humans were created by a benevolent creator, who endowed each person with the faculties necessary to attain some limited knowledge of the divine. As a result, revelation and reason enjoyed a complementary relation. To Aquinas, it is clear that those things which are implanted in reason by nature, are most true, so much so that it is impossible to think them to be false. Nor is it lawful to deem false that which is held by faith, since it is so evidently confirmed by God. Seeing then that the false alone is opposed to the true, as evidently appears if we examine their definitions, it is impossible for the aforesaid truth of faith to be contrary to those principles which reason knows naturally (1924, p. 14).

To Aquinas, there were complementary modes of truth, and neither the truths of reason nor

28 For excellent discussions of the relations of dependence and antagonism between Luther and Erasmus, see Rummel (1995 and 1999).
the truths of faith could be false. Nonetheless, since it was “reason” that authorized Erasmus's admiration for Cicero and Aquinas's admiration for Aristotle, Luther decried this extension of prestige beyond the Christian world.

Yet Luther’s antagonism to these schools was not total. Despite the hostility that Luther displayed both to scholasticism and, more sporadically, humanism, he certainly took what he needed from both movements, and the debt is often deep indeed. The number of texts that underscore Luther’s relationship to humanism, especially in its northern variant as embodied in the work of Erasmus, are increasing rapidly year by year. Whether the devotio moderna emphasis on lay education as a critical component of proper Christian devotion,29 the preference for rhetoric over scholastic dialectic, or the importance of language study as a tool for scriptural exegesis, on many fronts Luther shared the humanist outlook. Certainly Luther’s Bible could not have been translated without the groundwork laid both by Erasmus on the Greek New Testament, and by Reuchlin on the Hebrew language and scripture. What is less often noted is Luther’s tendency to employ scholastic distinctions and motifs in order to persuade his audience. That is, Aristotelian, Thomistic and Scholastic elements provided key rhetorical resources for Luther, which he used despite his express position on their pedigree, and his rejection of scholasticism as an example of a theologia gloria, a theology that glorifies human beings and robs God of his proper praise.30

Luther’s Rhetoricalization of Worship

Before examining the hyperbolic polemic of Luther’s later sacrificial rhetoric, I want to suggest that, though seemingly paradoxical in light of his critique of works, its emergence is

29 On this see Oberman on the distinctiveness of the via moderna movement as it opposed a constructed via antiqua position (1987).

30 From early in his teaching career Luther taught Aristotle. He did so conscientiously, though he quickly resented the place the scholastics claimed for Aristotle in the church. As I argue, though, Aristotelian ethical and metaphysical precepts shaped Luther’s thought more deeply than his public statements would lead one to believe. On this topic, see Spitz (1996).
actually in keeping with principles he espoused early in his career concerning the persuasive capacity of worship. In “The Freedom of a Christian,” as Aristotle often introduces a topic by listing what esteemed predecessors have said about it, and noting the contradictions, Luther begins this work with a paradox: “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all [freier Herr über alle ding] subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all [dienstbar Knecht aller ding], subject to all” (FC, p. 344; p. 21). Though Aristotle would then proceed to seek a resolution, Luther leaves the paradox in place as a provocative test of reason. Further on, Luther makes many references to Aristotelian distinctions regarding the four fundamental types of cause, which help him distinguish the primary modes of devotion from secondary and tertiary ones.31 In addition, the following is very close to an Aristotelian ethical program:

Although, as I have said, a man is abundantly and sufficiently justified by faith inwardly, in his spirit [...], in this life he must control his own body and have dealings with men. Here the works begin; here a man cannot enjoy leisure; here he must indeed take care to discipline his body by fastings, watchings, labors, and other reasonable discipline [messiger zucht32] and to subject it to the Spirit so that it will obey and conform to the inner man and faith and not revolt against faith and hinder the inner man, as it is the nature of the body to do if it is not held in check (FC, p. 358; p. 30).

The notion of “reasonable” discipline seems to accord a primary role to reason one’s ethical development, and will appear incongruous in relation to Luther’s later depiction of reason’s role in Christian life.

Still, one would not want to overstate the proximity between Aristotle and Luther. While the gap here between the pagan and Christian pursuit of virtue is indeed minimal, this is not to say that they are identical. Take the following for instance: “these works reduce the body to subjection and purify it of its evil lusts, and our whole purpose is to be directed only

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31 “Illustrations of the same truth can be seen in all trades. A good or a bad house does not make a good or a bad builder; but a good or a bad builder makes a good or a bad house. And in general, the work never makes the workman like itself, but the workman makes the work like himself. So it is with the works of man. As the man is, whether believer or unbeliever, so also is his work—good if it was done in faith, wicked if it was done in unbelief. But the converse is not true, that the work makes the man either a believer or an unbeliever. As works do not make a man a believer, so also they do not make him righteous” (p. 361; p. 32-33).

32 Luther’s German echoes Aristotle even more closely: the semantic domain of messiger includes measuring and gauging, and Zucht means discipline, but also cultivation and breeding.
toward the driving out of lusts. Since by faith the soul is cleansed and made to love God, it desires that all things, and especially its own body, shall be purified so that all things may join with it in loving and praising God” (FC, p. 359; p. 30-1). For Luther, the Pauline heritage of purity, itself derived from Hebrew rituals, still determined the nature of Christian ethics. With Aristotle, by contrast, there is only the pursuit of virtue as the mean between vicious extremes, and no sense that one could rid oneself completely of natural desires. Luther’s ethics with its goal of perfection thus differs markedly from Aristotelian *phronesis*.

Nonetheless, not much later one finds Luther depicting exactly this kind of “practical wisdom” as the goal of the Christian as well: “In this way everyone will easily be able to learn for himself the limit and discretion, as they say, of his bodily castigations, for he will fast, watch, and labor as much as he finds sufficient to repress the lasciviousness and lust of his body” (FC, p. 359; p. 31). Luther here advises a kind of middle way between an asceticism that weakens the body and one that pursues ecstatic castigations. Just as many humanists rejected any extreme emotionalism in worship, so too Luther rejected the pursuit of both ecstatic and weakened states by means of ascetic rigors:

But those who presume to be justified by works do not regard the mortifying of the lusts, but only the works themselves, and think that if only they have done as many and as great works as are possible, they have done well and have become righteous. At times they even addle their brains and destroy, or at least render useless, their natural strength with their works. This is the height of folly [*große Torheit*] and utter ignorance of Christian life and faith, that a man should seek to be justified and saved by works and without faith (FC, p. 360; p. 31).

He connected this with mistaking the proper ends of worship, and taking bodily discipline not as a means but as an end in itself. All this indicates that the influence on Luther is evident, though their stature in the Church he explicitly rejected. Regarding the principles to employ that would avoid the pitfalls of devotion, Luther borrows markedly from both humanist and scholastic discourse.

In regards to the method of illustrating his points, Luther comes close to a specific reference to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, and the four types of causes (FC, p. 358-362; p. 30-3).
On another point, the role of rhetoric in education, Luther might well have been channeling Quintilian when he depicts worship as more directed towards others than to establishing a relation with God: “For a Christian, as a free man, will say, ‘I will fast, pray, do this and that as men command, not because it is necessary to my righteousness or salvation; but that I may show due respect to the pope, the bishop, the community, a magistrate, or my neighbor, and give them an example. I will do and suffer all things, just as Christ did and suffered far more for me’” (FC, p. 370; p. 37). Here we see a growing concern indicated by a shift: if as a consequence of the critique of works the Christian no longer believes that worship earns salvation, but instead justification is an unmerited gift of divine grace, then devotional practices should be rejected. But we must also be wary of teaching false opinions of faith and works to others. The pressure of sociality itself, and the possibility of misunderstanding the critique of works and the gospel of faith, affects the type of worship that one pursues. It is a direct consequence of the critique of works—our worship earns nothing, but they do have social effects in convincing others of one’s living faith. Indeed, one could say that Luther takes the exemplary function of the monk and, as he did with the calling, secularizes this exemplarity and enjoins all Christians to become an example unto others. What is remarkable, though, as we will see, is that Luther in effect makes worship itself rhetorical, in that we should repeat the example that Christ set. Since this example was conditioned by the society in which he lived, and the people to whom he preached, Christian devotion should have the same kind of targeted effect. For someone who was so intransigent on so many matters, and who insisted on the literal truth of scripture, this promotion of a middle way might seem surprising. My point here is that it should not be, and the late turn to sacrificial rhetoric is another case of Luther’s pragmatic, pedagogical perspective.

This rhetoricalization of worship becomes even clearer later in the text. Luther was very cautious against misinterpretations. “There are very many who, when they hear of this freedom of faith, immediately turn it into an occasion for the flesh and think that now all things
are allowed them. They want to show that they are free men and Christians only by despising and finding fault with ceremonies, traditions, and human laws” (FC, p. 373; p. 38). Against this antinomian interpretation which interprets the critique of works as a doctrine of anti-works, Luther reiterates this position: “Our faith in Christ does not free us from works but from false opinions concerning works, that is, from the foolish presumption that justification is acquired by works” (FC, p. 373; p. 38). But the possibility of false opinions concerning worship means that one cannot simply act in such a way that does not take one’s neighbor into account. Luther therefore argues that he is opposed to the role that works have come to play, but not that he is against any role that the might play, in particular, a rhetorical one. It is this that pushes Luther to make worship itself rhetorical.

If forms of worship are to be rhetorical, a fixed form like monastic asceticism will not suffice. Like any successful attempt at persuasion, here one must know one’s audience. Against the extremes of ecstatic and flagellant asceticism, and the fixed form of monastic regimentation, Luther insisted that “the Christian must take a middle course” (FC, p. 373; p. 37). What is most remarkable here, however, is that Luther describes this as a middle course, but under the cloak of the familiar Aristotelian precept, Luther advises an oscillation depending upon who it is that observes one’s worship. The Christian will meet first the unyielding, stubborn ceremonialists who like deaf adders are not willing to hear the truth of liberty [Ps. 58:4] but, having no faith, boast of, prescribe, and insist upon their ceremonies as means of justification. Such were the Jews of old, who were unwilling to learn how to do good. These he must resist, do the very opposite, and offend them boldly lest by their impious views they drag many with them into error. In the presence of such men it is good to eat meat, break the fasts, and for the sake of the liberty of faith do other things which they regard as the greatest of sins (FC,p. 373; p. 37).

In the face of these observers, Luther recommends, not to pursue a middle way, but to offend boldly, to engage in the same antinomian behavior that he had proscribed earlier, but now it is condoned because it is rhetorically effective. This antinomianism is positively exemplary, just as in antiquity the Cynics taught by means of the demonstrative and shocking gesture. Hence, in this case I think one could not say that the Aristotelian and scholastic framework was for
Luther an unconscious, acculturated inheritance. In this instance, he used scholasticism to pass of his radical position as Aristotelian orthodoxy.

If this is one rhetorical strategy of worship, the other actually endorses a relapse into the practice of works. Works here are acceptable to Luther so long as one does not believe that they earn salvation. With this rhetorical sense of worship, the payoff is not for oneself, but for others. This strategy is adapted to these others,

the simple-minded, ignorant men, weak in the faith, as the Apostle calls them, who cannot yet grasp the liberty of faith, even if they were willing to do so [Rom. 14:1]. These he must take care not to offend. He must yield to their weakness until they are more fully instructed. Since they do and think as they do, not because they are stubbornly wicked, but only because their faith is weak, the fasts and other things which they consider necessary must be observed to avoid giving them offense. This is the command of love which would harm no one but would serve all men (FC, p. 374; p. 38).

It is too much to say that Luther here advocates worshiping in a way at odds with one’s faith, but he does argue that with the gospel of faith worship is no longer an instrument of salvation, and so, in regards to this utmost concern, is a matter of indifference. If worship still matters, it is as an instrument of evangelism, not soteriology. In methods and modes of rhetoric there is much borrowing and intermingling between Luther and the humanists and scholastics, though between them the status of reason emerges as the definitive distinction.

To look ahead, this overriding concern for instruction links Luther’s rhetoricalization of worship, and sacrifice in particular, to his sense of the pastor’s duties in the community’s division of labor. Speaking of the the “weak in faith,” Luther insists, “It is not by their fault that they are weak, but by that of their pastors who have taken them captive with the snares of their traditions and have wickedly used these traditions as rods with which to beat them. They should have been delivered from these pastors by the teachings of faith and freedom” (FC, p. 374; p. 38). These pastors and their work are wicked and misleading. In 1520, it was still possible to think that “teachings”, whether spoken sermons or disembodied texts, could correct the work of pastors. Luther’s strategy will shift: as rhetorical instruments, texts cannot compete with a living being, especially one who exhibits expertise in both spoken rhetoric and
the rhetoricalization of worship. For this reason, later in life, even as Luther intensifies his rhetoric, he still needs to construct the pastor for fully effective evangelism.

To Luther, pagan authors offer only a semblance of reason and morality that threatened to seduce the scholastic theologian and the humanist philologist away from scripture. Against his rivals, then, Luther wants to defend his solisms, and the way to do this is to topple reason from its place at the pinnacle of human faculties. Indeed, with this goal, Luther's discourse becomes the most explicitly rhetorical, for, taking Barthes' definition of rhetoric as a "metalanguage […] whose language-object [is] 'discourse’” (1988, p. 12), Luther’s revalorization of reason challenges both the epistemological status of language itself and the social prestige that it commands.

In arguing that faith alone constitutes Christian righteousness, like Paul before him Luther has to undermine any collaborative or complementary relation between faith and reason. Actually, for a writer whose vision was dominated by such stark dualisms as those of the two kingdoms (the “Kingdom of Earth” [regnum mundi] and the “Kingdom of Christ” [regnum Christi]), as well as the oppositions between the Hebrew “Law” and the Christian Gospel, dissolving this collaborative relationship between faith and reason constitutes but a single example of a more general strategy. Given Luther’s penchant for dichotomizing, then, instances where Luther mediates these dualisms, such as the “Bride of Christ” analogy in “Freedom of a Christian,” have drawn much scrutiny. With this metaphor, however, it is Christ who extends the matrimonial hand, so that Luther depicts the action of grace, an unmerited condescencion. With sacrifice, by contrast, one deals with a human action, one that has become unnecessary since the Crucifixion. To speak of this most costly gesture instead of a

33 Although aware of this danger, Luther did defend the pedagogical, as opposed to the spiritual, role of pagan literature. See Harran (1985) and Lindhardt (1986).

34 For a good example, see Oberman's discussion of perhaps the most celebrated of these instances. In Luther’s Freedom of a Christian he describes the “third incomparable benefit of faith” as “unit[ing] the soul with Christ, as a bride is united with her bridegroom. By this mystery, … Christ and the soul become one flesh.” For a compelling discussion of this topic, see Oberman (1974, p. 23ff).
resolution or reconciliation, Luther’s sacrificial mediation between the sacred and the profane underscores the violence of the operation. It is as if, by an exigency of Luther’s rhetoric, difference almost inevitably entails opposition, and opposition, ineradicable strife. With Luther, “sacrifice” as a figure encapsulates this tendency. Furthermore, this correlates with a general darkening of the Reformation’s “good news” towards the end of Luther’s lifetime.35

The Problem of Praising Faith

In his commentary on Paul’s assertion that Abraham’s faith was “reckoned to him as righteousness,” Luther writes, “With these words Paul makes faith in God the supreme worship, the supreme allegiance, the supreme obedience, and the supreme sacrifice [Et Paulus hic ex fide in Deum summum cultum, summum obsequium, summum obedientiam et sacrificium facit ex fide in Deum]” (LG, p. 226-7; p. 360).36 The question immediately arises, how can faith, however understood, in any way resemble the ritual butchering of an animal or a public expenditure of some mitigated form of wealth? What is the cost, one might ask, of a “sacrifice of faith”? To dispense completely with the expenditure (one almost wants to say, “to negate the negation”37) seems to nullify the notion of “sacrifice” entirely. Furthermore, how can the writer most trenchantly opposed to all works, the entire spectrum of mitigated sacrifices that had filtered into every aspect of medieval life, employ the very figure at the foundation of this edifice? One option is to keep with the Christian conflation of sacrificial agent and object, so that the cost in terms of a valued object is not entailed at all. Yet this

35 It became clear to him that, though he was prepared for the doctrine of sola fides by the rigors of monastic asceticism, for those who did not prepare the way with passionate devotion, the message working quite differently. On this, McCue on “Luther and the Problem of Popular Preaching” (1985), which makes some similar points about the Luther’s rhetoric that I made earlier in regard to the rhetoricalization of worship.

36 Luther follows this formulation with, “Whoever is an orator, let him develop this topic [Qui Rhetor est, exaggeret hunc locum …].” Note the way that with this invitation Luther creates distance between himself and the rhetorician and thereby disavows the rhetorical nature of his commentary.

37 This Hegelian formulation has informed many more recent interpretations of sacrifice, such as those of Bataille (1990) and Nancy (1991).
raises another problem. If, along the transformational axis, it is not the object but the subject that is sacrificed, how does this avoid involving the will? Luther must empty sacrifice of its connotations of voluntarism, of a work that one undertakes, but how is one to divest an act of its agent, an action of its spontaneity?

As Feuerbach argued in his reading of Luther, for the latter the operative distinction was not Creator versus the Created, as with the scholastics; rather, it was God versus Man. Defined in terms that are both complementary and negating, by means of an implicit scholastic attribution of predicates to proper subjects, what God truly possesses, of that humans are wholly bereft. Humans are defined not in relation to their own properties or faculties which are the created gifts of God, for since Creation the Fall has intervened. Instead, humans are defined directly in relation to God—that is, as precisely not-God, and thus without any of God’s characteristics, such as true knowledge and a benevolent will. According to Feuerbach’s reading of Luther,

To every lack in man there is opposed a perfection in God; God is and has exactly what man is not and has not. Whatever is attributed to God is denied to man, and contrariwise whatever one gives to man one takes from God.[...] The less God is, so much more is man; the less man is, so much more is God.[...] The nullity of man is the presupposition of the reality of God. To affirm God is to negate man; to honor God is to scorn man; to praise God is to revile man. The glory of God rests only on the lowliness of man, divine blessedness only on human misery, divine wisdom only on human folly, divine power only on human weakness (1967, p. 33).

The emphasis thereby falls not on how a benevolent God equipped humans to develop a faithful knowledge of the divine, but on human limitation, ignorance and weakness. Theology therefore turns not on the available links between the human and the divine (the divine light of reason, the sublimity and order of nature, etc.), but on the abyss that categorically divides them. In this way, Luther can construct an analogy with faith and reason falling on either side of the fault line between salvation and damnation: as God is to man, and faith is to reason, so salvation is to damnation. Human reason now emerges both as the allegorical representative of agency and the author of all the works that lure the Christian away from the true Gospel. One can see already in this depiction of the human condition a key moment in the conception of agency that will allow for a separation between sacrifice and works.
With human reason now singled out and abstracted from the complex of human faculties, Luther can link reason and works and move the primary locus of the agon between faith and reason into the soul of the aspiring believer. This move too is cast as a return to origins, but unlike the humanists or scholastics, who Luther accused of treating Greek and Roman pagans as authorities, the *fontes* for Luther’s move is a Hebrew. As Luther explains, “faith certainly had this struggle with reason [*Istam luctam profecto habuit fides cum ratione*] in Abraham” (*LG*, p. 228; p. 362). With faith on God’s side, though, the struggle could seem unequal. Lest this psychic conflict lack pathos, Luther emphasizes repeatedly how especially onerous it is that a thing as low as reason challenges God, who should rightly be worshiped and esteemed by all. Reason is such a terrible enemy “because it despises God and denies His wisdom, justice, power, truthfulness, mercy, majesty, and divinity”—that is, it would ascribe to humans the power to justify themselves by means of works. By contrast, “by this same sacrifice [those who by faith reject the pretensions of reason] ascribe glory to God.[... ] Therefore no greater, better, or more pleasing religion or worship can be found in the world than faith” (p. 229; p. 363). The opposition, then, based upon the notion of reason as the faculty of work, involves an inverse distribution of the flows of praise. Since human reason only seeks to glorify itself (*LG*, p. 322; p. 462), in performing its works, however apparently pious, it despises God (*LG*, p. 228-9; p. 368). But there is more to this struggle than the challenge of an upstart faculty that does not know its place.

What is the nature of this antagonism between faith and reason? Over what do they contend, and on which field of battle? As one might guess, this enmity pivots upon Luther’s critique of works. Because works are nothing and grace is all, faith attributes all praise to God, but reason, having erroneously deduced the efficacy of works, wants only to praise itself. When Luther notes that “Paul makes such a boast of his calling that he despises all the others,”

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38 In this passage, Luther speaks repeatedly of either the agent or faith slaughtering (*occidit*), slaying (*mactat, mactavit*) killing (*mortificant*), or sacrificing (*sacrificavit*) reason. In instances like this, the most charged religious term among the group lends its sacramental overtones to the other more quotidian terms.
Luther shifts the value of this behavior in order to make a point about the proper attitude of worship and devotion: “this style of boasting is necessary. It has to do, not with the glory of Paul or with our glory but with the glory of God; and by it the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving is offered up to Him [Ibi gloriatur deus, sacrificatur ei sacrificium laudis et gratitudinis]” (LG p. 17; p. 57). Boasting of faith is not ill-mannered or boorish, it is an essential form of worship, praising God. The reversal here is abrupt and complete: despising reason and works directly equals the sacrifice of praise to God. The continuity between true theology and sacrificial offerings relies not upon the material efficacy of the rite in coercing a divine response, but wholly upon the interpretation of sacrifice as a sign (and only a sign) of a deferential and worshipful attitude. Luther presents this sacrifice as a gesture of deference, tribute and praise to God. To insist that this is only a sign, a means of communication, seems to require some interpretive distance from the Mass as a sacrificial ritual. The sacrifice that Luther describes here differs fundamentally from the “real presence” of God in the Eucharist. With utter intransigence Luther held this position against the Swiss Reformed symbolic interpretation of the Mass, despite the eventual break with Zwingli that this entailed. Luther kept the reality of the Mass despite his critique of works by claiming that the Eucharist becomes the body of Christ by precisely as a result of divine participation, and has nothing to do with human agency, priestly or congregational. Thus, this “sacrifice of praise” is an offering that the Christian makes to God, while the Mass is God’s miraculous manifestation among the congregants in a way analogous to the God’s bestowal of grace upon the individual.

Here then is the key to Luther's construction of a sacrifice that circumvents the critique of works: by means of a sacrifice that is simultaneously the destruction of reason and the manifestation of faith, this operation consists entirely in a communicative gensture that indicates a shift in perspective, a reconceptualization. Luther's sense of the impiety of reason, as well as the sacrifice of faith, both hinge upon the disaggregating work of correctly defining one's concept of the “glorious” and the “praiseworthy.”
Though Luther’s sacrifice seems to involve a religious labor of reconceptualization and
the maintenance of proper conceptions, one could still interpret this as ensnared within the
sphere of works that presume to earn justification. How, then, does Luther walk the tightrope
between conceiving of a “true Christian sacrifice” and laying claim to it, and resurrecting
sacrifice as just one more false work? This is an especially acute problem here, for the
revalorization of received values courts the danger of starting a process that one cannot stop.
Even if one learns to praise faith and the gift of grace instead of reason and its works, how can
Luther be sure his auditors will know to avoid praising faith for its sacrifice of reason? Could
sacrifice become a valiant and praiseworthy but scandalously paradoxical “work” of faith?
Because sacrifice involves such a violent presentation of agency, how can this rhetoric avoid a
too-literal reading that takes the action of faith’s sacrifice in the active sense? With an
unprepared or uneducable congregation, it might be that all metaphorical depictions of “faith”
materialize it too much. That is, once moving beyond a quasi-mystical adumbration of divine
knowledge, we always run the same risk of transforming faith defined as non-work and non-
knowledge into a false reification and a new form of work. Does Luther's conception of the
“sacrifice of faith” do this as well, but simply brings this problem more clearly to the surface?

Despite these dangers, I would argue that the flexibility of Luther's sacrificial rhetoric
allows him to tread this fine line, primarily because of a key innovation: instead of depicting
sacrifice as an act that one could actively pursue or passively undergo, Luther builds on the
Christian tendency to conflate the sacrificial agents and object, and makes this sacrifice one
that is more quotidian than asceticism, and one to perform perpetually.

Importing Sacrifice into the Subject

The sacrificial cognates of Eucharist, asceticism, charity, monasticism and scholasticism
at play in Luther’s time all fell prey to his critique. As opposed to these material, worldly
works, Luther argued that one did not sacrifice to achieve salvation; instead, salvation was a
gift of grace from God, and all one had to do was prepare oneself to receive it. Thus, at the
level of empirical behavior, sacrifice and “works” were forbidden; the term itself, however, was
so highly charged that in rhetorical terms Luther found that he could not do without it. Thus,
when he came to describe the necessity of faith and not works as found in Galatians, Luther
described the state of receptivity necessary to receive grace as one that is produced through a
“sacrifice of faith.” Here, the genitive does double duty, for it is both “a faithful sacrifice” and
“the sacrifice that faith makes.” The question then becomes, what does faith sacrifice? It is
reason itself that faith puts on the altar. For this reason, what distinguishes Luther as a
theologian, at least as much as his exclusive emphasis on faith, is the degradation of reason that
he performs as a result of assigning it to the realm of the body instead of the soul. Arguably,
then, what distinguishes Luther as a decisive figure in Christian history is less the increased
status of faith than the diminished status of reason.

As is typical of Christian sacrifice, Luther makes the individual subject simultaneously
the sacrificial agent and object. Yet his split is not between the spirit and the body, but
between reason and faith. In making “reason” the sacrificial object and thus splitting the
subject, Luther combines aspects of the martyr and the monk. That is, the sacrificial idiom is no
longer split between the passive sacrifice of martyrdom (passive because it came to seem
presumptuous and ostentatious to seek martyrdom actively) and the active sacrifice of ascetic
renunciation (active because construed as the religious will turned against a natural will to
enact the willful sacrifice of the will). With the passive and the active aspects of sacrifice both
resonating, Luther synthesizes the dual idioms of sacrifice: both an extreme form, to the point
of self-annihilation in the case of martyrdom, and a more “rational” or mitigated form in the
case of asceticism. Thus, far from leaping out of the continuum of Church doctrine and
practice, Luther rather closes the circle: through the detours of the Eucharist and ascetic
substitutions like chastity, poverty, and obedience, “sacrifice” had become attenuated and

39 Young and Malone both offer good accounts of these developments.
individualized to the point that its two distinct idioms of violent self-annihilation and rational mitigation could meet in Luther’s rhetorical deployment, a culmination that was simultaneously invisible and absolute.

One consequence of Luther’s deployment of sacrificial rhetoric was to renounce any goal of a united or harmonious subject. Pitting one element of the psyche against another, Luther takes Abraham as his model and imports the spiritual battlefield into the subject. While also recognizable as a practice of monastic asceticism and a stage of conversion narratives, the difference here is that this conflict is not chronic or accidental, but essential and absolute. No longer do we see Saint Anthony or Benedict tempted by the demonic passions and the bestial urges of the body; now, reason itself, that which was most human, that which distinguished humans from the animals, becomes the (hitherto praised, henceforth despised) object of sacrifice. This is the consequence of the rhetorical work of redistributing phenomena into the categories of the “praiseworthy” and the “contemptible”, the “sacrificeable” and the “unsacrificeable.” Furthermore, because this rhetorical work is never finished, the sacrifice never ceases to take place, for as soon as faith emerges from its agon with reason and, flush with battle, misappropriates the outcome and praises its own triumph, one can know that this faith is again only reason in disguise, and the battle must continue.

**The Bestialization of Reason & the Monstrosity of Sophism**

With reason cast in the role of a sacrificial object, already this sharp rebuke to its pretensions treats it implicitly as something fleshy or even animalistic. Luther does not leave this insult implicit, however, but exhibits great glee in bestializing reason. Indeed, though Luther depicts reason as a beast unworthy of praise and worthy of sacrifice, reason is not a merely natural beast, for to serve as the enemy of God it must appear unnatural, anti-natural,

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40 Since both reason and faith contend over the status of works and grace, I suspect that Luther depicts this struggle along the lines of the scholastic practice of the *quaestio disputata* (Lawn, 1993).
even monstrous. To achieve this, Luther attacks reason, not as a human faculty of overweening pride, but as a beast: “faith slaughters reason and kills the beast that the whole world and all the creatures cannot kill” (LG, p. 228; p. 362). Going one step further and divesting reason completely of all its esteem, Luther insists that we must “exclude all works [exclusis omnibus operibus]” in order to destroy “the heads of the beast called reason, which is the fountainhead of all evils [capitibus huius bestiae quae vocatur Ratio, quae est fons fontium omnium malorum]” (LG, p. 230; p. 365). By not only bestializing reason, but metaphorically ascribing to it characteristics of Hydra, the many-headed monster from Greek mythology, Luther thereby casts it into the category of “the sacrificeable” and casts himself in the role of the hero Heracles. In this one figure, then, Luther traffics in anti-pagan rhetoric to link, via reason, scholasticism, humanism and paganism along an axis of demonization. What is the nature, though, of this heroism that defeats Hydra and champions faith?

Luther radically transformed received notions of worship and authority in dense rhetorical passages such as the following:

Any Christian is a supreme pontiff, because, first, he offers and slaughters his reason and the mind of the flesh [offert et mactat suam rationem et sensum carnis], and, secondly, he attributes to God the glory of being righteous, truthful, patient, kind, and merciful. This is the continuous evening and morning sacrifice [sacrificium vespertinum et matutinum] in the New Testament. The evening sacrifice is to kill the reason, and the morning sacrifice is to glorify God [Vespertinum: mortificare rationem, Matutinum: glorificare Deum]. Thus a Christian is involved, daily and perpetually, in this double sacrifice [dupli sacrificio] and in its practice. No one can adequately proclaim the value and the dignity of Christian sacrifice [sacrificii Christiani] (LG, p. 233; p. 370).

With the sacrificial mise en scene set, Luther sets reason on the altar. This passage well represents Luther’s intervention: first, define, then redefine the proper channels of a righteous economy of prestige. In one passage Luther brings the Pope to the level of Everyman, attacks the status of reason, and ends with an aporia, a rhetorical statement affirming the inadequacy of language in the face of divine dignity. The attribution of the properly divine predicates becomes a gesture of tribute through the rhetorical work of reconceptualization, which must take place perpetually.
Because the only object sacrifice is a subjective faculty, it appears that Luther has shifted wholly towards subjectivation along the transformational axis. Though this would appear to be a costless sacrifice, and thus a complete mitigation along the object-axis, Luther avoids the charge of mitigation by means of hyperbolic language and rhetorical intensification. What is rhetorically intensified here is the risk involved in the sacrifice. In most traditional sacrifices there is hardly a hint that the sacrificial agent is in danger or that the outcome is at all in question. Here, however, perhaps because the paradigmatic Christian sacrifice is filled with pathos for the sacrificial object, for the rhetoric to work Luther has to defuse this reaction and ensure that his readers side with faith as the sacrificial agent. To do this, he describes reason as a satanic, beastly usurper of God’s rightful place. Through reason, humans would achieve salvation on their own, and deprive God of his capacity to grant grace. Because reason is inherently aggressive and antagonistic, the eventual sacrifice of it can be described as completely right and just.

Between the first edition of Luther’s exegetical lectures on Galatians in 1517 and the second in 1531 there was a radical upsurge of references to “sacrifice” in Luther’s text. Of course, one might expect two versions of scriptural exegesis so separated in time, with so many momentous events intervening, to differ in many ways, but one is justified in surmising that something clearly happened to Luther’s understanding of the status of sacrifice in the Christian life. Perhaps the upsurge of martyrs in the course of the Reformation made it clear to Luther that this term had to be appropriated if his cause was to succeed.41 This and more could help to explain why there is a metastasis of sacrificial rhetoric in Luther’s text. For a rhetorical analysis, however, which must pay heed to the surface features of the text, in place of why the far more important question is how: how does this sacrificial rhetoric make its appearance?

41 According to Gregory, as Luther saw things, he “and his contemporaries were living in remarkable times. Because Christ had told his followers to expect persecution for his sake (Matt. 24:9, Luke 21:12, John 15:18-20), and because this was the experience of Paul, Stephen, and other apostolic Christians, persecution and martyrdom confirmed Luther’s view that he had dared to proclaim the Gospel aright” (1999, p. 149).
To describe this appearance as a metastasis is already the beginning of an explanation, for “metastasis” is both the rhetorical term for “rapid transition from one topic or figure to the next,” and the clinical term for the manifestation and spread of disease.\textsuperscript{42} This is appropriate here, for in this case of Luther’s sacrificial rhetoric, it appears throughout the text, almost as if, to counter the Hydra that grows evermore heads with each decapitation, sacrificial rhetoric spreads to combat the rebellion of reason wherever it appears. This life/death struggle takes place in this text because the process of exegesis closely resembles the rationalization of a text whose very spirit should take one beyond the limits of reason. Within the context of Luther’s theological presuppositions, the metastasis of sacrificial rhetoric emerges as an effect of the genre of scriptural exegesis.

Furthermore, Luther's sacrificial rhetoric had contemporary resonance that helped him carve out a discursive position distinct from those of his enemies: defenders of traditional Church practices, scholastic theologians, and humanists of differing persuasions. Luther casts the struggle not as that between the soul and the body, as it primarily had been since Plato, but between faith and reason. No longer a struggle for mastery between that in the individual which is properly human (reason) and the residually bestial (the body), suddenly what for so long had been the distinguishing feature of the species becomes the despised enemy that denies any role for God.

In sum, as a key element of his rejection of scholasticism and its relation to monastic asceticism which made theological speculation as much a worshipful, sacrificial offering as scourging the body or pursuing poverty, Luther bestialized reason by making it an aspect of the body and works, and thus to be feared and despised as a proud and contemptuous antagonist of faith. With this distinction in place, sacrifice, though on the surface an operation and thus a “work,” was rhetoricalized to describe the struggle between faith and reason, with reason the sacrificial object and faith the sacrificial agent.

\textsuperscript{42} Oxford English Dictionary.
Martyr, Monk, Friar, Priest, Pastor

To address the polemical context of Luther's textual production, if we take Luther’s rhetoric as first and foremost a social practice with social effects, as I propose, we can ask, if reason is one’s interior enemy, how does this relate to the innumerable enemies that Luther discovered and produced in the course of his dramatic career as a public figure? In these lectures Luther identifies reason’s worldly agents whom he saw springing up incessantly, like so many heretical heads of Hydra. In a passage where Luther decries the way that reason “regards [God’s] Word as heresy,” he condemns “the theology of all the sophists and of the sectarians, who measure the Word of God by reason [Theologia omnium Sophistarum et sectoriorum qui metiuuntur verbum Dei ratione]” (LG, p. 228; p. 362). How can one recognize these sophists and sectarians who so bedevil Luther’s project?

Edwards argues that Luther employed his scriptural exegeses in ways that interpreted his contemporaries in terms of biblical archetypes. In a chapter on “The Mature Luther,” Edwards notes that, by the 1530s, “The events and experiences of the last ten years had caused [Luther] to view himself differently, to elaborate his characterization of his evangelical opponents, and to act in accordance with these new views” (1975, p. 112). Continuing by exegetical means the same polemical intensity that marked many of the pamphlets and woodcuts produced by both Luther and his opponents, Luther rejected all bounds of decorum and targeted his opponents with the greatest vehemence possible.

In his lectures on Galatians, Luther took the opportunity to examine Paul’s sharp rebukes to the Christian church in Galatia for submitting to “certain false brethren, interlopers who stole in to spy upon the liberty we have in Christ Jesus.”43 According to Edwards,

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43 Galatians 2.4-5: “4. διὰ δὲ τῶν παρεισακτῶν ψευδάδελφων οἵτινες παρεισηλῆθος κατασκοπήσαι τὴν ελευθερίαν ἡμῶν ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ Ἰην ἡμᾶς καταδουλώσασθαι 5. οἳς οὐδὲ πρὸς ωραν εἰςάμεν τῇ υποταγῇ ἱνα η ἀληθεία του εὐαγγελου διαμείνῃ πρὸς υμᾶς [4. But because of false believers secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us—5. we did not submit to them even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might always remain with you].” This Luther translated as follows: “Denn da etliche falsche Brüder sich mit eingedrängt hatten und neben eingeschlichen waren, auszukundschaften unsre Freiheit, die wir haben in Christo Jesu, daß sie uns gefangennähmen, wichen
Luther repeatedly made comparisons between Paul’s experiences with the false apostles at Galatia and his own experiences with evangelical opponents. In some instances he used Paul’s experiences to explain his own; in other instances he used his own experiences to fill out his interpretation of Paul’s ministry. These lectures show convincingly that Luther believed that his and Paul’s experiences were substantially alike and that he could legitimately model his own behavior on the example set by Paul (1975, p. 112).

On the basis of this perceived connection between his own ministry and Paul’s, Luther expands the identification into a complex analogy that paralleled Luther’s message, ministry, congregation, and enemies with Paul’s own. Edwards describes this complex and reciprocal process of projection and identification:

from his first encounter with evangelical opponents, Luther had equated them with the false prophets and apostles who had plagued the true prophets and apostles. In the course of his struggles with the fanatics during the 1520’s he found many parallels between them and the biblical false brethren. [...] In time, these parallels between his evangelical opponents and the false brethren of the biblical accounts influenced his view of himself. Finding so many parallels in his own experience, gradually he came to see himself as occupying in his time the role occupied by the true prophet or apostle in the biblical accounts. This view of himself was sustained by his belief in the unchanging struggle between the leaders of the true and the false churches (1975, p.112-113).

In rhetorical terms, against the apostle or true prophet these apostates or false prophets fulfill the role played since Plato by the sophist. Just as sectarians sow dissension in the true church, sophists multiply truth-claims beyond the confines of the true. At least since Gorgias delivered his “Encomium of Helen,” which offered a more sympathetic explanation of her role in the Trojan War, the “sophist” has been an orator who has questioned received ideas and communal values. Although Socrates provoked controversy as well, what distinguished the sophist in Plato’s eyes was that, instead of attempting to set conceptions aright, like Socrates, the sophist turns values upside down in order to make right appear wrong and the true appear false.

Luther’s use of the term is no different. Faith and reason are not in contention because they are

wir denselben nicht eine Stunde, ihnen untertan zu sein, auf daß die Wahrheit des Evangeliums bei euch bestünde.”

44 Note that this is in contrast to Heidegger’s sense of the sophist as the champion of common sense against the esoteric insights of the philosophers (cited in the Introduction, p. 53). This is not uncommon, as the sophist serves as a mobile placeholder for whichever enemy a discursive agent requires in a given context.
equally powerful, but because the individual erroneously understands reason to be equal or, worse, superior. Reason itself is culpable for this misrecognition, but the sophist, as reason’s agent, contributes greatly to this false image of reason’s power. By alienating reason and then personifying it in the sophist, Luther makes it clear that, in the agon of faith and reason, it is the sophist who helps reason deceive us that it and its works are supreme and not God.

Against this rhetorical construction of the contemporary sophist, Luther presents a new and distinct function for faith's agent, the pastor. Luther took as his model for this function Pauline *parrhesia* (traditionally translated as “free speech” but cast by Foucault as “fearless speech” [2001]), which we have already encountered. In his letter to the church of Galatia Paul exhibits a candid and sharp mode of discourse that eschews all pleasantries in pursuit of its dogmatic rectifications. In a way that will make epideictic rhetoric key to pastoral work (Vickers, 1988), Luther is full of admiration for Paul’s opposition to the “boasting” and “pharisaical pride and insolence” of the “false apostles.” Luther applauds how

Paul boldly and with great *parrhesia* pits his apostolic authority, commends his calling, and defends his ministry. Although he does not do this anywhere else, he refuses to yield to anyone, even to the apostles themselves, much less to any of their pupils…. In addition, he pays no attention to the possible offense but says plainly in the text that he took it upon himself to reprove Peter himself, the prince of the apostles, who had seen Christ and had known Him intimately (LG, p. 15; p. 55-6).

Modeled, then, on Paul's author-function in his letter to the Galatians, Luther's pastor is entrusted with specific social and rhetorical duties, primarily to preach the Word and disarm the sophists.

This specialist does not simply replace the priest in the religious division of labor, for Luther decisively rejected the very basis of priestly labor. According to Swanson,

The ideal medieval priest was a construct. Fundamental was his sacramental duty of celebrating mass and thereby confecting the Body and Blood of Christ. The definitive advocacy of transubstantiation at Lateran IV gave the consecrated species new significance, reflected in increasing eucharistic devotion and the cult of Corpus Christi. Priests, the sole authorized performers of the eucharistic rite, en-trapped divinity in wafer and wine; they handled—manhandled—God (p. 41).

Instead of a sacrificial agent who administered rituals and represented a distant institutional
authority, the pastor replaces monk, friar and priest to become a *parrhesiast*, a fearless speaker of truth. This is not to say that the pastor became a free-lance agent of truth, like the ancient philosopher who might move from city to city. Instead, Luther helped install an authoritarian structure all over again, but this time under secular protection.

It was essential that Luther’s pastor serve as a representative of an institution more local than the distant Church in Rome. The local and regional “confessional churches” (*Konfessionkirchen*) “were exclusively established, or at least privileged, creeds and ecclesiastical organizations within a particular society” (Schilling, 1986, p. 22). These churches, with the pastor as their agent, contributed to the process known to European historians as “confessionalization.” Among the developments covered by this term, many fell under the responsibility of the pastor, especially the inculcation of Christian education that would make faith explicit to the believer as opposed to the “implicit faith” of most medieval Christians, and, further, the promotion of literacy and education in general. As Schilling describes this process,

> The term “confessionalization” thus designates the fragmentation of the unitary Christendom (*Christianitas latino*) of the Middle Ages into at least three confessional churches—Lutheran, Calvinistic or “Reformed,” and post-Tridentine Roman Catholic. Each formed a highly organized system, which tended to monopolize the world view with respect to the individual, the state, and society, and which laid down strictly formulated norms in politics and morals (p. 22).

In the course of this process the pastor could draw on Luther’s *parrhesiastic* rhetoric as well as “l’homilétique mélanchthonienne” (1999, p. 298-308), Millet’s term for the catechetical method of scriptural exposition that Luther developed and his pedagogical partner, Melanchthon, formalized. Both the didactic and epideictic modes were thus available to the pastor depending on the spiritual needs of the congregation, and this ability to tailor the sermon to the needs of the congregation marks the decisive contribution of the pastor. Instead of a fixed liturgy that would be the same all over Christendom, here Luther continues his rhetoricalization of worship that we examined in “Freedom of a Christian.” Now there is a religious specialist specifically entrusted with making this worship persuasive to the audience.
Empowered to espouse the Gospel freely and fearlessly, the pastor is entrusted with two duties: to shape his flock with epideictic flows of praise and blame, and to protect the feeble-in-spirit from the sophists at the gate. Luther’s sacrificial rhetoric thus constructs a new configuration in the religious division of labor. In fact, I would argue that the pastor served as the primary agent in the long educational and community-building project of transforming the feudal subject in the modern citizen.

A Historical Conclusion

Luther’s deployment of sacrificial rhetoric was a discursive articulation with a long future, and not only among the clergy. The pastor’s conjunction of sacrificial rhetoric and learning was a critical element of the long transformation that took Europe’s shifting focus from the estate to the city, which was already underway, and continued it in the shift from the city to the region united by complex relations between language, confession, and heritage. According to Schilling,

The grand process of state building between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries converged during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with confessionalization to transform the medieval respublica christiana into the early modern European landscape of independent powers and states. For at least one century, the link between state building and confessionalization was predominant in European history, that is, approximately from 1550 until 1650, in both foreign and domestic policy. [...] It was religious, that is, confessional, uniformity that at the beginning of the early modern era supplied the basis for social integration (p. 23).

All told, the ramifications of this work of confessionalization entrusted to the pastor is difficult to overestimate. Since in the pulpit itself many a schismatic and heretical notion was born, and congregations persuaded to adopt interpretations of the Gospel that Luther explicitly foreclosed, as a principle both of disaggregation and consecration, the pastor and his sacrificial rhetoric helped Christendom multiply and divine into diverse Christian communities.

Hence, it would be too simplistic to describe this as a simple process of confessional elaboration and unification. In other words, despite his construction of the pastor as an agent of congregational and doctrinal orthodoxy, Luther contributed greatly to these schismatic
tendencies in championing a break with traditional principles of scriptural interpretation and trusting too completely in the Bible’s power to forestall heterodox modes of exegesis. Events like the Peasant’s Revolt and the apocalyptic events at Leiden made the residual feudal aristocrats greatly concerned about the impact that Luther’s heralded “priesthood of all believers” would have on political structures. The pastor thus emerged over the next decade as if by political necessity to intercede as a religious specialist between the people and the prince, for the break with Rome led to a destabilizing emphasis on the logic of local rule. As a kind of hermeneutical guard-rail, Luther charged the pastor with forming and protecting the congregation’s doctrinal purity, as well as enforcing the community’s self-understanding as a community in Christ.

Towards the end of his life Luther had given up much hope that events would shift so that unity would prevail, and could foresee the kind of religious fragmentation that would ensue. Because from the Peace of Augsburg there developed the compromise principle of *cuius regio eius religio* (“whose rule, his religion”), the prince alone established the sectarian or denominational creed of his people. Though in some respect aligned with the role of the pastor, it would be better to view them as both complementary and opposed. Where the prince deployed juridical and military force to enforce doctrinal uniformity, the pastor pursued this by means of persuasion. Just as the prince gained refinement through the pastor, the prince added force to the pastor’s arsenal.

Though often most often working as complements, it is important to note that the very existence of the pastor mitigated the radical nature of Luther’s proclamation of the “priesthood of all believers,” in that now only the reigning figure of a territory could exercise the freedom of religious conscience, and could accept or outlaw religious diversity as he saw fit. According to Bickle, these conflicting trends developed into what he describes as two distinct stages of Reformation, the “Communal” and “Magisterial” Reformations. This occurred because the pressure for increased communal autonomy was—quite rightly—perceived as a fundamental threat by the secular authorities, who made sure to contain it as fast as they could.[...] The Communal Reformation in town and country, which accelerated the
religious changes in Zurich, Bern, Basle, and St. Gall, gave way to a “Magisterial Reformation.” [...] Peasants and burghers understood the Reformation essentially as the communalization of the Church and the instrumentalization of the gospel. [...] The Communal Reformation thus acquired a highly explosive potential—the Princes’ or Magisterial Reformation was the necessary response (Bickle, 1998, p. 202-3).

As Luther slowly learned and the princes quickly feared, one could not trust that Scripture itself would provide a bulwark against antinomian and anarchistic interpretations of scripture, interpretations that called for the radical reformulation of social existence. Reason bridled by faith would not suffice if this reason could surreptitiously reconfigure the very relationship between reason and faith. For this reason, the role of providing this bulwark had to be specialized, and in his “Lecture on Galatians” Luther authorizes this figure not only by means of an analogical relationship between Luther and Paul and the false brethren and the radical Reformers. In addition, Luther employs sacrificial rhetoric so that his position could make a claim on the rite so essential to Christian self-definition. Furthermore, the bestialization of reason could be used to denounce those whose interpretation of scripture drifted toward conclusions too radical for the territorial princes. Such radical notions were sure signs of the presumption of reason, and Luther left the the pastor well-equipped with a rhetorical arsenal ready to shout down the sophists and remove the threat from the congregation. In a sense, the shift from the Communal Reformation to the Magisterial Reformation simply extended the same regulative function served by the pastor as a limit to the universal priesthood, for if the pastor is the religious limit to the desire to turn the Reformation into a revolution, the Augsburg compromise, which granted the rights to establish the Konfessionkirchen under the principle of eius regio cuius religio, formed the political limit on the same desires.

A Sociological Conclusion

Even beyond the pastor’s role in the processes of confessionalization, in other venues as well Luther’s disenchanted view of reason still exerts great influence, for a reason devoted to earthly pursuits dovetailed well with broad changes in the constitution of the modern nation-
state, and the global consolidation of capitalist markets. In short, this disenchanted rationality, joined with a utilitarian notion of human nature, formed a hegemonic framework that today passes for common sense. Luther’s bestialization of reason ushers in the disenchantment of human rationality by divesting reason of its last divine remnant. To split reason, the faculty of works, from the rest of the psyche, results in a profoundly alienated model of human nature, one that would teach us to despise, and indeed violently attack, that faculty that had hitherto been humankind's ownmost, defining property. With this achieved, *homo oeconomicus*, whose every faculty serves self-interest by definition, is near on the horizon. According to this model of human nature, we can only serve our passions, or, more neutrally, our self-interest, so that even apparent acts of altruism simply serve our desire for the social prestige or genetic success that such altruism brings. No longer a divine spark or the differentiating, criterial mark of humanity, reason becomes just one more instrument of the body. Luther thus articulates a position that would surface again in Hume's critique of rationalism, Marx’s assault on bourgeois ideology, as well as the critiques of other hermeneuts of suspicion, such as Nietzsche and Freud.

Like these skeptics, the sacrificial rhetorician utilizes the figure of “sacrifice” as a means to intervene in the reproduction of received notions of self, society, worship and work. Here, by means of a performative discursive act presented as a descriptive designation, Luther employs this rhetoric to make a strategic move in the development of the religious division of labor. Moving on from martyr, monk, friar and priest, Luther constructs a new position in the field of discursive production, the pastor as *parrhesiast*. Luther’s discourse thereby clears a space that is dedicated less to applying logical methods than to putting in play diverse flows of affect conjured by the irrepressible emergence of faith's enemies. By preserving the active role

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45 Though Weber's authoritative voice casts the longest shadow in Religious Studies, the work of Nobel-prize winner Gary Becker has opened the way to an economic analysis of every non-economic form of behavior through his acolytes, such as Laurence Iannacoone (1992). On this, see Becker’s Nobel-acceptance speech (1993) and the pivotal essay on time allocation (1964).
in the discourse for a “sacrificing faith” and the passive role for a “sacrificed reason,” the two faculties, complementary in humanism and scholasticism, get disaggregated into a hierarchy of values which both reflects and consecrates a new social order. Hence, Luther's rhetoric works on the world, producing effects in a society that will now have a place for a type of religious specialist who is neither monk nor friar but a fully embodied male whose worship does not consist of the physical asceticisms of monastic poverty or celibacy, but solely of faith’s sacrifice of reason.

Luther’s construction of a distinct type of religious specialist marks an important transformation in Christendom and European history as a whole. The emergence of the pastor had wide-ranging effects on religion, politics and economics. Yet in many ways this articulation in the long history of religious specialization repeats patterns and conforms to structures that have persisted for millenia. If, after having argued for the novelty of the Lutheran pastor in the history of modern Christianity, I will now adopt a more sociological perspective, according to which the pastor is simply a religious specialist. In effect, by holding this variable constant, other effects of Luther’s sacrificial rhetoric will emerge.

As Weber articulated them, the priest and the prophet stand as the minimal pair of religious specialists, the former entrusted to preserve and augment tradition, and the latter eager to reform that tradition through revelation. In Christianity specifically, the monk’s separation from society and complete devotion to sanctity made this figure the pre-eminent religious specialist, one that reproduced sanctity and doctrine and who thus stood as a figure of continuity with the past. Francis of Assisi and other mendicants were the first specifically urban religious specialists, figures who would not flee society but seek out the people in the agora and sacralize urban space itself. The prophetic forces aroused by these radical movements were soon tamed by the Church, though with great difficulty. Whether we persist in looking at the longterm effects of the Agricultural and Commercial Revolutions, which began soon after the second millenium of Christianity, as effects of an ongoing rationalization, as urbanization
proceeded apace, and the prophetic mendicants slowly assumed the status of priestly office-holders, a new wave of lay piety swept through Europe, which happened to coincide with the continuing effects of increasing economic development and the ensuing destabalizations and crises of values. Clearly, a new prophetic revelation would come to meet the demands, for, according to Bourdieu, “The greatest merit of Max Weber […] is to have shown that urbanization (with its correlative transformations) contributes to the ‘rationalization’ and ‘moralization’ of religion only insofar as it favors the development of a body of specialists in the administration of religious goods” (1991, p. 6). Urbanization and economic development would of necessity produce a specialist to negotiate the ensuing crisis of values.

As the agent of this next revelation, unlike the mendicants this second urban religious specialist, the pastor, would come with the opposite economic valence. Instead of embodying a continuous reminder of an apostolic ideal (the *vita apostolica*) that the laity could not meet, the pastor represented the same kind of upwardly mobile social position that the rising middle class also held, the only difference being the specifically religious sphere that was central to the pastor’s aspirations. This pastor could thereby serve as the emblem of social mobility in a time when this transformation in the social structure was becoming increasingly common and decisive. The pastor thus served as a figure who could align religious and economic development, and at the same time divert aspirations away from radical political change.

Luther clearly depicts the pastor’s role as a species of caretaker, one who relieves the spiritual burdens of the congregation when possible, and manages their spiritual crises when necessary. Certainly, too, this was the conscious content of the now legendary vocation specific to the pastor. Yet in creating the position it is again difficult to ignore the fact that this is a serious retreat from the egalitarian principle proclaimed as the universal priesthood. Given the tendencies towards deference, fealty and the exercise of authorized prerogatives in Luther’s day, one could reasonably foresee that the pastor’s initial role of service would transform into a localized but all-too similar priesthood. Would it be too much to say that this represents an
expropriation of the laity's barely won religious independence? This would match Bourdieu’s
description:

Inasmuch as it is the result of the monopolization of the administration of the goods of
salvation by a body of religious specialists, socially recognized as the exclusive holders
of the specific competence necessary for the production or reproduction of a
deliberately organized corpus of secret (and therefore rare) knowledge, the
constitution of a religious field goes hand in hand with the objective dispossession of
those who are excluded from it and who thereby find themselves constituted as the
laity (or the profane, in the double meaning of the word) dispossessed of religious
capital (as accumulated symbolic labor) and recognizing the legitimacy of that
dispossession from the mere fact that they misrecognize it as such (1991, p. 9,
emphasis in original).

At first glance this describes the religious structure of medieval Christinity quite accurately.
One important difference between this account and the situation that Luther produced is the
role of secrecy, which Luther’s pedagogical efforts and vernacular discursive production
explicitly undermined. In many ways, then, Luther would seem to correct this situation, and
expropriate the expropriators on behalf of the universal priesthood. However, the figure of the
pastor complicates this. As would befit a man who embraced paradox, if we take into account
the farthest authoritarian extremes that the local pastor could take, by constructing the pastor
as a religious specialist in response to the dangers of the universal priesthood, Luther would
have lived both to initiate a spiritual revolution and turn that revolutionary movement in
reverse: from an initial move of expropriating the expropriators, later in his career Luther
would construct the pastor and commence a reappropriation of religious capital whereby the
laity would lose the authority and independence they had just won.

Lest this too closely resemble Marx’s account of capital’s primitive accumulation, a
complex process which included the “secularization” of the monasteries and eventually resulted
in the enclosure of the commons, the engrossment of the states, and the dispossession of the
peasantry, there are many factors that point to a more nuanced conclusion. If Luther’s
prophetic revelation of the “universal priesthood” was a liberation, it was also, like all
liberations, a tremendous burden as well. Especially when one took into account Luther’s
understanding of the treacherous nature of reason, and its tendency to usurp the rightful place
of grace, how could a person pursue a living in the unforgiving social landscape of sixteenth-century city and still have time to keep a watchful eye on reason, and sift the speech of one's persuasive neighbor for the traces of false doctrine?

Under the weight of this burden, and from the uneasiness that such popular turbulence promoted among the aristocracy, the pastor served functions that could alleviate both. For the aristocracy, the pastor served as an office-holder who served the congregation but was beholden to prince. For the congregation, they could outsource the doctrinal vigilance that the “priesthood of all believers” should have entailed. This is not to say, of course, that the congregation did not take the pursuit of Christian righteousness seriously. It did, however, mean that the role of pursuing and protecting sound exegesis was more the duty of the pastor as a specialist than a duty for all. This freed up a great deal of time and effort for the changing economic and political environment which also made great demands on the people of sixteenth century Europe. The final consequence of Luther’s sacrificial rhetoric, then, was a transformation of the received notion of implicit and explicit faith. With the pastor to serve as the congregational guardian of the Gospel, Luther’s sacrificial rhetoric effects a division of labor between the people and the pastor, one articulated as a distinction, not between believing and understanding, but between believing and preaching.
3. From the Slaughterbench of History to the Golgotha of Absolute Spirit: 

Hegel’s Sacrificial Rhetoric and Philosophy’s Sublation of Religion

Introduction

Hegel claimed his space in the pantheon of modern philosophers by pursuing a project that would synthesize all the developments in the humanities and the sciences up to his time. A student at the University of Tübingen who earned a degree in theology but whose first love was philosophy, Hegel never disclaimed that he was a Lutheran, though he shared few positions with Luther, and, indeed, pushed every position of Lutheran orthodoxy to its breaking point. Hegel both built upon and broke with the Lutheran tradition on a number of fronts, and this was crucial to his discursive strategy. Inspired by the momentous revolutions of the late eighteenth century and the reformist example of Lessing, Hegel sought to continue Kant’s philosophical revolution not only through the critique of reason, but also by developing the means to evaluate and validate customary modes of reciprocity and recognition, or “ethical substance” [Sittlichkeit]. By making philosophical thought intrinsically historical and integrative, Hegel attempted to redraw the borders that had become battlelines both between the disciplines and within them among the various schools of thought in his day. The Enlightenment, Romanticism, religion and science, all find a place within Hegel’s system of philosophy. Through this project, Hegel carved out a new space in public discourse: not the pastor, nor the public intellectual, but the philosopher, one who serves the nascent nation-state in the important work of social integration.

This chapter will examine Hegel’s multi-faceted treatment of religion in history and in thought. In addition, it will analyse his use of sacrificial rhetoric in several places, but most
importantly in the concluding paragraphs of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. These dense instances of sacrificial rhetoric provide a rich hermeneutical resource for understanding Hegel’s attempt to validate a great deal of religion’s influence in modern society, but at the same time carve out a distinct space for philosophy as its translator in the university and in society as a whole.

Although a keen eye will detect sacrificial rhetoric at work in any number of Hegel’s texts, this analysis will focus mostly on the passages where Hegel deals explicitly with matters pertaining to the relations between religion and philosophy. Of course, one could plausibly argue that Hegel’s dialectic is itself sacrificial in form. That is, just as the ritual process and the object mediate between the ontological abyss that separates the devotee from the deity, so, analogously, Hegel’s dialectic mediates between irreconcilable concepts, positions and discourses. The interrelations here are quite intricate, however, and involve such vast speculations concerning the ontological and epistemological status of both religious sacrifice and speculative dialectic, that one could relate these only at the cost of first separating them by means of a sharper dichotomy between philosophy and religion than Hegel’s philosophy would allow. In other words, the conceptual relations of continuity and discontinuity are too tight to treat the sacrificial rhetoric at work in Hegel’s “system” in a broad way.

In addition to the conceptual reasons for a more focused approach to Hegel’s sacrificial rhetoric, there is also the philological problem of locating Hegel’s fully developed “system” within the intertextual network of an oeuvre that includes not only published works in multiple editions, but also a great number of lectures and letters that arguably refined his system right up to his death. Finally, from the side of sacrificial rhetoric as an object of scrutiny, because I am arguing that the ultimate function of sacrificial rhetoric is more to accrue authority than to produce truth-claims (that is, insofar as the latter takes place, this perspective will regard it as a means to the former), it is possible to see this rhetoric more clearly at work in Hegel’s historical writings, especially the *Philosophy of History* and the
Phenomenology of Spirit. In the former Hegel approaches and appropriates Luther’s prestige by means of complex historical arguments, and in the latter Hegel articulates the relationship between religion and philosophy more generally, providing the ladder whereby the reader can survey all the truth of religion and then transcend it to reach the level of speculative philosophy. This chapter will demonstrate that, as Hegel attempted to demonstrate this movement from religion to philosophy (or, from religion’s viewpoint, to effect philosophy’s usurpation of religion’s rightful place in society), he deployed in various ways a sacrificial rhetoric that reformulated key notions such as piety, devotion and authority. To achieve this change, Hegel had to reformulate the very history of Christianity, and, along with this, notions of sacrifice in relation to a rather unorthodox conception of Geist.

Hegel’s Background

Raised in a middle-class family with a history of legal and theological study, Hegel, a diligent student from an early age, soon decided that he would follow in the steps of Lessing and become the kind of public intellectual who could widely transform the opinions of the Deutschophone world, which at the time was in need of every impetus possible if it was to become truly “modern” in the sense that Hegel had in mind. Eventually Hegel attended the University of Tübingen where he attended the Protestant seminary, or Stift. The University itself, however, was mired in corruption and intellectual decadence, primarily because of fundamental incoherencies in its social basis and function. As Pinkard observed, “Universities remained semifeudal ‘corporations,’ institutions governed by the professoriate, who were far more interested in exercising their inherited medieval privileges than in anything else, and who thus tended to resist strenuously all efforts to reform the universities” (2000, p. 19). Hence, of the two formative settings for the young Hegel, his hometown and his university, the residual

1 In this discussion of Hegel’s background and context, my argument owes much to Althaus (2000) and Pinkard (2000).
patchwork of semi-feudal and semi-modern social principles led to complications that neither mode of social organization could adequately address.

The historical distance between Luther and Hegel is in many senses precisely the gap between the late medieval and the modern world. Luther had no premonition of the rapidly increasing scope of human power over the natural world, or of the rise of more egalitarian principles of social order: both were just beyond Luther’s historical horizon. The development of European colonialism and global capitalism, the rise of monarchical power, the Industrial Revolution, all were unthinkable in Luther’s day. Even though one of the decisive differentiating factors between Luther’s and Hegel’s worlds, the development of the public sphere, was an unintended consequence of the rapid confessionalization that Luther’s principle of *sola scriptura* and commitment to public education helped to quicken, the world was a quite different one as Hegel reached maturity as a thinker in the late eighteenth century.

Yet on many fronts there were remarkable continuities between their worlds as well. The religious and political fragmentation that has come to define modernity were already in evidence at the time of Luther’s death. The rise of cultural and linguistic nationalism as well as the humanist revival of a civic ethos had each done its part to erode what tenuous bonds still united European Christendom (Perkins, 2004). Despite the hope for unification evident in Luther’s prophetic announcement of the “priesthood of all believers,” the ensuing religious wars and the *cuius regio eius religio* (“whose rule, his religion”) compromise of the Peace of Augsburg had fragmented Christendom forever. In effect, if Luther had broken the Church’s religious monopoly, Augsburg affirmed a more fragmented and localized religious monopoly. Once this was intensified by the catechetical endeavours typical of a Europe-wide process of confessionalization, an imposed or “positive” uniformity-in-diversity fell across Europe that

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2 Habermas is the primary theoretician of this important notion (1989). A direct path leads from a literacy in the service of educated devotion, the entire confessionalization project in post-Reformation Europe which seeks to make implicit faith explicit, and the role of education as a means of inculcating citizen regardings his rights and duties.
was in many ways as authoritarian as the Church’s broad canopy of doctrinal unity under which local inflections and variations could flourish. The result was that, between Luther and Hegel, though the role and type of economic and technological forces had been transformed, the roles of religion and politics had changed much less.

While religious diversity was a fact across Europe at the time, in Hegel’s duchy of Württemberg, within any typical community, the same religious homogeneity persisted as would have prevailed centuries earlier. The political structure was more complicated, but in essence quite similar as well. A thriving middle class first began to emerge in European cities in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, so Luther would have been quite familiar with this fourth estate that opened the static triangular structure of peasantry, clerics, and aristocracy to an open and alien future. By Hegel’s day, the bourgeoisie had solidified its power, but it had not yet replaced the age-old claims of the aristocracy to status and power. Indeed, to many in this era, despite the rapid flow of historical events that had transformed Europe in the previous few centuries, a conservative reaction had settled in and was strong enough, with enough residual structures in place to support its claims, that many thought a period of stasis had been reached. Württemberg was still within the domain of the Holy Roman Empire, with extensive traditional rights and privileges that few of those in authority were willing to relinquish (Pinkard, p. 1-28).

Thus things stood as a youthful trio of theology students, Hegel, Hölderlin and Schelling, first started to hear the rumblings of the revolution that was to end the ancien regime in France and inaugurate a new period in European political history.

The French Revolution as Provocation to Thought

The story of the impact that the French Revolution had on Hegel and his seminary friends Hölderlin and Schelling involves all the youthful energy and hopefulness that we have come to associate with this age. Suddenly, the entire ontology of social life had been transformed. With the French overthrow of the aristocracy, it was no longer the case that
humans could take only material things as objects of collective labor, but the structures of social life were of a permanence and inviolability that made them impossible to transform. At a stroke, it was proven that a society could take itself as an object of collective labor, and transform social structures along more just and egalitarian lines. The possibility that the sun was setting on the German aristocracy compelled these friends to seek reform of their country by continuing Kant’s revolution in philosophy.

This era of optimism soon palled, however, as the Revolution turned into the Terror, and the reform of society became the razing of custom, sentiment, and any sense of decency or mercy. During the course of this transformation of the Revolution into the Terror, Hegel began a sustained inquiry that would occupy him for the rest of his career.

Unlike Burke and de Maistre, for Hegel not the goal but the means constituted the primary flaw in the Revolutionary ferment. According to Hegel’s diagnosis, these means followed directly from the Enlightenment. Hence, though the diagnosis differed from Burke, the interpretive method was similar. As O’Regan explains,

given Hegel’s acceptance of the classicalBurkean line of connection between the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, it is possible for Hegel to simply reverse the direction of the reading offered in the earliest period: the Enlightenment is now read in terms of the French Revolution, whereas previously the French Revolution was read, at least implicitly, in the light of the Enlightenment. The emplotment is such that it also highlights the antipathy of Revolution ideology to Christianity by pointing to a pathway between Enlightenment critique and revolutionary practice (1995, p. 37-8).

What were the interpretive consequences of this shift in emplotment? For Hegel, it was to blur

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3 Hegel makes clear in an early letter to Schelling that, whatever his earlier opinions of the Revolution, by the winter of 1794 Carrier’s execution convinced him of the “ignominy of Robespierre’s party” (1984, p. 29). For a close discussion of this reference to Robespierre’s Schändlichkeit, see Schmidt’s “Cabbage Heads and Gulps of Water: Hegel on the Terror.” On Hegel and the French Revolution more generally, see Ritter (1982).

4 This tendency to interpret a historical phenomena by retreating in history to its antecedents and causes, thereby turning the singular event into a teleologically determined outcome, remained key for Hegel. See part III in the “Introduction” of the Philosophy of History, where Hegel discusses, as against change in the state of nature, “[t]his peculiarity in the world of mind [which] has indicated in the case of man an altogether different destiny from that of merely natural objects—in which we find always one and the same stable character, to which all change reverts;—namely, a real capacity for change, and that for the better—an impulse of perfectibility” (PH, p. 54).
the boundary between the theory and practice, discourse and action. While not erasing every
difference, one no longer needed to distinguish discourse and critique from revolt and
revolution in an ontological register. What others might have to argue—the real-world
consequences of theory and philosophy—Hegel proposes as a principle for his entire
philosophical approach. The new issues that emerge all involve the question, what did the
French Revolution, as a decisive event in modern history, tell about the meaning of modern
philosophy?

This section will begin with the Phenomenology, as it was written as a response to
issues raised by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. How does Hegel connect the
Enlightenment to the modern predicament of fragmentation and contention that had begun
long before it? If the Reformation ended in fragmentation, it was more the result of historical
contingencies, and the inadequate means of enacting its principles, than any fault with its
fundamental principles. Almost as if in response to Luther’s bestialization of reason, the
Enlightenment reversed the valence and promoted an apotheosis of reason. The problem with
this apotheosis is its tendency to project reason’s other everywhere, even where it should
recognize reason at work in the world. For this reason, the problem of the Enlightenment is its
non-recognition of reason in its multiple forms of life.

It was precisely this battle of unrecognized inversions that Hegel sought to avoid.
Hegel frames the apotheosis of the Enlightenment as Spirit’s recognition of its fundamental
freedom, and its sense that nothing of any actuality stands opposed to it. As Hegel says, “Spirit
thus comes before us as absolute freedom,” for

[i]t is self-consciousness which grasps the fact that its certainty of itself is the essence
of all the spiritual ‘masses’, or spheres, of the real as well as of the supersensible world,
or conversely, that essence and actuality are consciousness’s knowledge of itself. It is
conscious of its pure personality and therein of all spiritual reality, and all reality is
solely spiritual; the world is for it simply its own will, and this is a general will (PhG,
#584, p. 356-7).

Spirit in the Enlightenment appears as autonomous and unfettered, but misrecognizing all else
as mere reflections and objects of itself, so that Spirit becomes the sole measure and realizing
force in the world. Here the reflection is recognizably cast in Rousseau’s terms of the general
versus the individual will. But the deeper background of the Enlightenment enters when one
understands that the very opposition between individual and general will is an artifact of the
kind of separation that Enlightenment reason performs no matter what the object of scrutiny.
When applied to social practices, Enlightenment philosophical methods and principles of
reduction and distinction, as most clearly formulated in Descartes’ work, resulted in sharp
dichotomies that produced irremediable contradictions in the social structure. In isolating
customary element from their interrelated web of received cultural practices, the dynamic
processes of self-correction they instantiate and in which they participate disappear from view.

Hegel not only sought to overcome society’s scission into warring classes and factions;
in addition—or, in many ways, more fundamentally—he sought to mediate the conflictual
discourses of philosophical critique and religious traditionalism that had taken over most of the
heat from the Wars of Religion and continued it during the course of the Enlightenment. With
the post-Reformation turn to creed, dogma and catechism as not only instruments of cohesion,
as in the early Christian church, but also as shibboleths for exclusion and religious antagonism,
Enlightenment reason took an intellectual view of religion, which meant that religion’s business
was primarily to offer competing truth-claims against science. So misrecognized, the
Enlightenment set out to wage all-out war on both religion and custom. If one reads the Terror
not as a perverse outcome derived from the best of intentions, but as the ultimate consequence
of the Enlightenment critique of religion, superstition and custom, this critique resulted in the
total war of the Terror.

Hegel’s interpretation thus underscores both the power of Enlightenment critique to
clear the brush of custom, and the danger of this critique, as it often clears too much and leaves
society prey to a vertiginous tyranny, the reign, as he called in the Phenomenology, of
“Absolute Freedom and Terror”:

This undivided Substance of absolute freedom ascends the throne of the world without
any power being able to resist it. [...] In this absolute freedom, [...] all social groups or
classes which are the spiritual spheres into which the whole is articulated are abolished;
the individual consciousness that belonged to any such sphere, and willed and fulfilled itself in it, has put aside its limitation; its purpose is the general purpose, its language universal law, its work the universal work (ibid.).

There is no recognition here of otherness, and no acknowledgment of the diversity of claims to privilege and right that any society must sustain. Cast in these terms, the reciprocal social processes of externalization and internalization (*Erinnerung*), manifestation and recognition, cannot take place.

As a consequence of an initial misrecognition, whereby, to Enlightenment thought, “the world is for it simply its own will, and this is a general will” (ibid.), when in practice this identity does not hold true, the fragmented elements begin to turn all against one another. From this emerges a roaming and nomadic general will without content, which can only represent individuality as a fall into particularity. The individual finds itself exiled in practice from the general. Once exiled from the general will, the excluded individual begins plotting a next usurpation:

Just as the individual self-consciousness does not find itself in this universal work of absolute freedom qua existent Substance, so little does it find itself in the deeds proper and individual actions of the will of this freedom. Before the universal can perform a deed it must concentrate itself into the One of individuality and put at the head an individual self-consciousness; for the universal will is only an actual will in a self, which is a One. But thereby all other individuals are excluded from the entirety of this deed and have only a limited share in it, so that the deed would not be a deed of the actual universal self-consciousness. Universal freedom, therefore, can produce neither a positive work nor a deed; there is left for it only negative action; it is merely the fury of destruction (*PhG*, #589 p. 359).

Work and deed are essential moments of *Entäußerung*, or externalization and manifestation of subjectivity. These are the preconditions of any possible *Erinnerung*, or comprehension and recognition. Where work and deed are impossible, the movement of spirit is impossible. Hence work and deed have special status related to the seriousness of sacrifice, for intention and devotion are criterial. By contrast, the destruction produced by Enlightenment is wanton, and only the negative image of sacrifice.

From the principle of abstract universality every possible counterpart is rejected and excluded from relation. The result is the tyrant who speaks for the general will which finds no
satisfaction in any existing arrangement. This tyrant thus becomes a placeholder, a soulless agent of this wanton and mobile process of negation:

by virtue of its own abstraction, [that universality which does not let itself advance to the reality of an organic articulation] divides itself into extremes equally abstract, into a simple, inflexible cold universality, and into the discrete, absolute hard rigidity and self-willed atomism of actual self-consciousness. Now that it has completed the destruction of the actual organization of the world, and exists now just for itself, this is its sole object, an object that no longer has any content, possession, existence, or outer extension, but is merely this knowledge of itself as an absolutely pure and free individual self. All that remains of the object by which it can be laid hold of is solely its abstract existence as such (PhG, #590, p. 360).

The will to overcome religion and culture has razed society of its structures for the recognition of competing views. The intransigence of Enlightenment critique recreates a virtual state of nature whereby every element is bereft of the resources to recognizes its other as its own other, and thus negotiate the processes by which they might mutually co-exist. The stage is set for terror:

The relation, then, of these two [abstract universality and atomistic self-consciousness], since each exists indivisibly and absolutely for itself, and thus cannot dispose of a middle term which would link them together, is one of wholly unmediated pure negation, a negation, moreover, of the individual as a being existing in the universal. The sole work and deed of universal freedom is therefore death, a death too which has no inner significance or filling, for what is negated is the empty point of the absolutely free self. It is thus the coldest and meanest of all deaths, with no more significance than cutting off a head of cabbage or swallowing a mouthful of water (ibid.).

This total diremption of death’s meaning is the endpoint of Enlightenment reason. Its truth is manifest in the guillotine. It is important to distinguish this from a negative sacrifice, such as expiatory or propitiatory ones like scapegoating. These address an initially negative condition and perform the rite to make repairs. With these “coldest and meanest of all deaths” we are dealing with a non-sacrifice, the ultimate nullity of destruction without significance because divested of the received notions of value that impart significance to death and all other aspects of life.

This destruction does not stop at individuals, but turns on itself, for it has no basis or justification for existing, and this intransigent mode of critique cannot abide even its own irrationality. This is why the Revolution turned into the self-devouring Terror:
The government is itself nothing else but the self-established focus, or the individuality, of the universal will. The government, which wills and executes its will from a single point, at the same time wills and executes a specific order and action. On the one hand, it excludes all other individuals from its act, and on the other hand, it thereby constitutes itself a government that is a specific will, and so stands opposed to the universal will; consequently, it is absolutely impossible for it to exhibit itself as anything else but a faction. What is called government is merely the victorious faction, and in the very fact of its being a faction lies the direct necessity of its overthrow; and its being government makes it, conversely, into a faction, and [so] guilty (PhG, #591, p. 360).

This cultural catastrophe results in a situation where no rule can last because all the resources for the establishment and recognition of legitimacy are lacking. This becomes a problem with Enlightenment thought because Hegel reads this through the Terror. Although in this context it could appear to be a peculiarly French problem, Hegel goes on to offer a more nuanced account.  

### The Mediation of Faith and Reason

Against this one-sided Enlightenment critique, and the meaningless deaths that it produces, where an hypostasized reason sees its other everywhere and fails to recognize itself in this other, Hegel proposed a philosophical viewpoint that would take seriously, if not uncritically, that which Enlightenment reason despised, namely, religion and custom. To suture together again that which Enlightenment reason tore asunder, Habermas underscores the importance for Hegel of a philosophical principle of totalization, the absolute, which would be reason’s presupposition that allows it to overcome the fragmentation of understanding:

5 “The Phenomenology offered an account of ‘Die Aufklärung’ that was seemingly inhabited solely by French thinkers.[...] When Hegel discussed eighteenth-century philosophy in his Lectures on the History of Philosophy, he provided a more nuanced account, stressing that the Enlightenment had both French and German branches and that they lead to rather different results. Hence, there is no longer an inevitable path that leads from the Enlightenment to the Terror. Likewise, the Lectures on the Philosophy of History emphasized the atypicality of the French experience: they were cursed with a philosophy that could not help but remain ‘formal’ and ‘abstract’ since it sprung from a culture that had never undergone a Reformation. As a result, the French Enlightenment was thrown into a struggle against both Church and State, while in Germany Enlightenment was carried out ‘on the side of theology’ and was thus more favorably disposed toward the political and social order that confronted it” (Schmidt, p. 25). As we will see, Hegel transforms this nationalistic account by making all of Christendom essentially Germanic.
[Hegel] treats the concept of the absolute (which was taken over from Schelling to begin with) as a further presupposition under which alone philosophy can resume its business. With it, philosophy can make sure of its goal from the outset—the goal of exhibiting reason as the power of unification. Reason indeed is supposed to overcome the state of diremption into which the principle of subjectivity has plunged both reason itself and ‘the entire system of living conditions’ (1987, p. 21).

A one-sided pursuit of the “principle of subjectivity,” a view of the subject’s unlimited power of comprehension, led the Enlightenment and the Jacobins astray. The Enlightenment was both an instrument and an expression of a fundamental historical alienation [Entfremdung] and diremption or “sunderedness” [Zerrissenheit] that not only kept society at war with itself, but turned each individual into a battlefield where one faculty warred with another. Did religion still have any role to play in reconciling these opposing principles? The primary obstacle to religion itself playing a constructive role in modern society was an exclusive distinction between faith and reason. This dichotomy emerged from out of the exhaustion and decline of scholasticism, but external factors also contributed. As sacred texts were translated into the vernacular, and the Gutenberg revolution resulted in the loss of aura of religious texts as objects. To preserve some semblance of sanctity, religious specialists had to abstract away from the material object, and Luther’s sola scriptura in the sense of the spirit of the text served as an appropriate medium for the transmission, not of a reasoned faith, but a faith defined as the overcoming of a too-material reason—and as the Word relates to the book, so faith relates to reason.

I would suggest that Luther’s demotion of reason to cast it as a mere instrument of the body, even a bestialized figure of danger, had a role to play in this, since it led to a model of subjectivity whose internal agon was both natural and religiously charged. If Luther’s hypertrophied religiosity guided the hand that dealt this wound, might religion help to heal it?

This exclusive distinction between faith and reason was also derived from opposite principles, not in the service of preserving sanctity in the face of an encroaching materialism, but from the impetus of materialist critique itself. As Hegel argued, the Enlightenment metastasized a radical critique of superstition and custom, to the point that all custom came to
seem as oppressive to the reasoning person as superstition was to the skeptical philosopher. The desire to uproot superstition and custom led both to their virtual conflation and to a strict demarcation between faith and reason, but this time with the other side—reason—serving as the valorized term. This reached its apogee in the work of d’Holbach and Sade.  

The effects of this schematic and undialectical distinction become clearest at two extreme points of social upheaval, the Reformation and the French Revolution, when the distinction becomes polarized, Manichean, and corrosive. Though derived from heterogeneous social positions and opposed principles, the zealots of both the Reformation and the Enlightenment share a faith in a non-dialectical, non-complementary opposition between faith and reason, an assessment that more pragmatic philosophers, from Hegel to Wittgenstein, reject as untenable. Reason always needs presuppositions in order to begin its work, and religion without reason would be a self-negating know-nothingism. The interrelations between the given and the derived, the presupposed and the proven, entail inextricable ties between religion and other modes of social practice.

After Kant had set out to establish the proper limit of truth claims whose referents are not available to sense-perception, the subsequent generation of philosophers understood the setting of limits and ground rules for the proper functioning of distinct spheres and fields as the essential prerogative of philosophy. If not determining outright the specific results in other fields, philosophy would still ratify and sanction the procedures and methods by which truth was to be sought throughout the university. The model then would be isomorphic with the functioning of civil society. While in many ways an idealist solution, this project does turn to a real institution within society as a means of reforming society as a whole. For Hegel, treating

6 For two accounts of Sade’s centrality in the Enlightenment, see Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) and Foucault (1967).

7 This role is essential to the reform of the German university, which set the stage for making this system the premier research machine in the modern world. Of the innumerable scholars and politicians who contributed to this reform, Humboldt and Fichte stand out in relation to Hegel.

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the university as a metonym for society as a whole requires one also to treat philosophy as a metonym of knowledge, and religion as a metonym for ethical substance or *Sittlichkeit*. This project remains focal for Hegel as he promotes unity over scission by having the university set an example for society and function as an organ of that unification.

If it was often the religious individuals and groups themselves who were the most vociferous and violent participants in Reformation and Enlightenment polemics, could it be that philosophy now had taken over religion’s role in showing these various factions how their interests related to the other parts and the whole? The *de facto* separation of spheres in Locke and Montesqueieu tried to render the scission static. But, as the course of the Enlightenment ending with the Terror showed, this was impossible, as that which cannot recognize the legitimacy of the other cannot then ignore it in peaceful coexistence. Could philosophy take on the role of educating religion concerning its proper place and function in society and history, just as religion for millenia had been the chief means of turning the isolated individual into self-consciously attuned members of a community? Could the two together meet, and, each contributing, develop a proper remedy for social fragmentation?

Not all of these questions were clearly formulated in the 1790s, but as Hegel turned to work on his first mature philosophical work, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, this role for philosophy, a complete reversal of the medieval sense of philosophy as an *ancilla fides*, was clearly formulated and the guiding principle of Hegel’s professional agenda. Another development of note was Hegel’s transition from Lessing as a model of the public intellectual toward a stronger view of the philosopher and his role. Another was a critical reassessment of the historical importance of both Enlightenment critiques and their Romantic reaction. Hegel strove to incorporate the positive developments of the Enlightenment, yet meliorate the components that led to a one-sided view of reason, religion and custom in social life.
Enlightenment and Reformation Critiques of Ritual

When Hegel assessed the aftermath of the Enlightenment battles between faith and religion, he encountered two noble powers that had been disfigured in a warfare of misrecognition. In doing battle against faith, philosophy’s tenacity in isolating and attacking this alien phenomena could not stop there, but eventually cannot help but turn these polemical instruments against itself, and note that it too has many faith-claims on which it depends. This is true to so great an extent that, citing the master/slave dialectic in reference to “barbarous nations” who, though conquered outwardly, in fact conquered the conquerors spiritually. To Habermas,

Enlightened Reason won a glorious victory over what it believed, in its limited conception of religion, to be faith as opposed to Reason. Yet seen in this clear light the victory comes to no more than this: the positive element with which Reason busied itself to do battle, is no longer religion, and victorious Reason is no longer Reason (1987, p. 23).

Reason thus has unexamined positivity of its own to sublate, in the form of residual philosophical positions which still convince people of their validity, but which history has found wanting and thus should be discarded. In a sense, this is what the Phenomenology sets out to do.

Nonetheless, when Hegel adopts sacrificial rhetoric at the end of the Phenomenology, Hegel must negotiate a problem, in that his rhetoric there adopts tones reminiscent of Protestant iconoclastic rhetoric that both resembles and historically contributed to Enlightenment critiques of custom. This underscores the central paradox of Hegel’s sacrificial rhetoric: on a fundamental level Hegel took the Reformation and Enlightenment critique of ritual, and sacrifice in particular, as true. Hegel makes its attitude to rituals of sacrifice and asceticism as fundamentally in accord with Luther’s critique. Speaking affirmatively of the Enlightenment’s critique, Hegel explains that

Enlightenment in its view of the action of faith finds the rejection of enjoyment and possessions wrong and purposeless. As to the rejection being wrong, Enlightenment is in agreement with faith on this point; for faith itself acknowledges this reality of possessing, holding on to, and enjoying, property. In holding on to property its behaviour is all the more self-centred and stubborn, and in its enjoyment it is all the
more cruelly self-abandoned, since its religious act of giving up possessions and enjoyment falls on the far side of this reality and purchases freedom for itself on that side. This service of sacrifice of natural impulses and enjoyments has, in fact, owing to this antithesis, no truth. Retention occurs along with sacrifice; the latter is merely a symbol which performs real sacrifice on only a small portion, and is therefore in point of fact only a sacrifice in imagination (PhG, #569 p. 347).

This critique is an early forerunner of Derrida’s critiques of the gift and sacrifice (1992, 1995), which persistently question if such valorized interactions can ever escape the cunning of economic reason. According to Hegel’s interpretation the Enlightenment critique of asceticism is largely in accord with the Lutheran critique of works, but with an additional angle. With Luther we see a complete doctrinal rejection of all works as intrinsically deceptive and luring the believer away from the true doctrine. In addition, the Enlightenment critique attends to further nefarious effects on the devotee. It is not only that mitigated sacrifices lead to a feeling of license once the ritual is finished and the formal prescription performed, but, further, the gap between the self-abandonment of sacrifice and the actual practice of mitigation (one sacrifices “only a small portion”—i.e. shifts along the object-axis toward less costly sacrifices) leads to hypocrisy. Clearly, then, when we read Hegel speak of sacrifice at the end of the Phenomenology, it is a transformed notion of sacrifice that he employs. To understand the kind of transformation that has taken place, we will examine the way that Hegel redeems the Enlightenment by redefining religion and custom in such a way that it can withstand the astringency of Enlightenment critique. Might Hegel then be offering a non-ascetic view of sacrifice? One that is less ascetic than tragic, in the Greek sense of involving and channeling the play of attachment and pleasure instead of denying it outright? A more pagan sacrifice, that requires the emotion and attachment instead of demanding negation?

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8 “Reformation Christianity in general, then, and Lutheran Christianity in particular, has, in a sense, both temporal and spatial powers of assimilation. While the latter power is especially evident in the Aufklärung in Germany, on the level of logic, if not on the level of fact, the process of Enlightenment in any country, notwithstanding Catholic or Protestant cultural dominance, can in a sense be referred to Reformation assimilation” (O’Regan, 1995, p. 43-44). This leads to a treatment in the PhG that treads between fact and logic.
To frame this persistent theme in Hegel’s oeuvre, we can turn to an earlier text, “Fragment of a System,” that addresses the notion explicitly. From an early date Hegel viewed the very notion of sacrifice skeptically, to the point that he regarded it as an impossible injunction:

In the religious life both man's relation to objects and also his action were interpreted [above] as a preservation of the objects in life or as an animation of them, but man was also reminded of his destiny, which demands of him that he admit the existence of the objective as objective or even that he make the living being itself into an object.[...] But it is necessary that life should also put itself into a permanent relation with objects and thus maintain their objectivity even up to the point of completely destroying them (1948, p. 315).

This passage, though quite opaque, introduces into religion the problem of the human relation to the object. It is imperative if humans are to live in truth that they should test their subjectivity by means of a persistent relationship with objects, endowing them with value and “life” in order to discover the potentialities and limits of subjectivity. In short, it is the fate of subjectivity to explore and prove itself in relation to objects, not by means of pseudo-religious flights from the world.

Hegel next depicts sacrifice as an attempt to master the reign of objectivity by breaking with particular objects. Yet objects themselves cannot provide the principle or the means to transcend humanity’s paradoxical dependence upon and sovereignty over objects. This paradox can only be worked out in practical relationships, not transcended all at once by means of ritual gestures. As he continues,

Even in all the increased religious union disclosed by the above-mentioned acts of integration [in worship] hypocrisy may still exist, namely, owing to one's retention of a particular property for one's self. If he kept things firmly in his own grasp, man would not yet have fulfilled the negative prerequisites of religion, i.e., would not yet be free from absolute objectivity and would not yet have risen above finite life. He would still be unable to unite himself with the infinite life because he would have kept something for himself; he would still be in a state of mastering things or caught in a dependence upon them. This is the reason why he gives up only part of his property as a sacrifice, for it is his fate to possess property, and this fate is necessary and can never be discarded (p. 315-6).

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9 This discussion owes much to Lukács’ examination of this text in The Young Hegel, p. 173ff.
This theme of the hypocrisy of mitigated sacrifice remains virtually the same into Hegel’s mature texts. Property becomes a fate that the intermittent sacrifice of a portion of one’s property cannot transcend. The limited nature of private property cannot provide the means to relate to the infinity of the divine life to which one is devoted, so monasteries do not escape this hypocrisy. This paradox remains whether one pursues sacrificial rites or the giving of alms:

In God’s sight man destroys part of his property [on the altar]. The rest he destroys to some extent by taking away as far as possible its character as private property and sharing it with his friends. The destruction of property [on the altar] is an additional negation of private ownership because such destruction is useless and superfluous. Only through this useless-ness of destroying, through this destroying for destroying’s sake, does he make good the destruction which he causes for his own particular purposes. At the same time he has consummated the objectivity of the objects by a destruction unrelated to his own purposes, by that complete negation of relations which is called death. This aimless destruction for destruction’s sake sometimes happens, even if the necessity of a purposive destruction of objects remains, and it proves to be the only religious relation to absolute objects (p. 316).

In accordance with religious prescriptions, the useless sacrifice atones for or “makes good” the finitude and selfishness of one’s own consumption. The syntax and meaning makes it unclear if the “religious relation to absolute objects” involves a destruction that is purposive or useless, but the point could be moot in that the passage acknowledges the weight of prescriptions regarding ritual sacrifice, which is the primary source of the problem regarding this paradox, since such prescriptions make the supposedly purposeless destruction of objects completely purposive, the purpose being to stand justified in regard to the prescriptions.

What I take from these enigmatic early ruminations on the subject by an already heterodox student of theology is a frank acknowledgment of the paradoxes and antinomies that the practice of sacrifice entails. Furthermore, there is already the tendency in Hegel to seek the extra-religious truths of religious phenomena. Here, one can see how the secular world of objects and purposes impinges on the otherworldliness of religion. Already there is a transfiguration of religion into politico-economic and epistemological registers. To understand that one has “consummated the objectivity of the objects by a destruction unrelated to his own purpose,” that is, made the object more completely objective by destroying it in a way opposed
to self-interest, entails a sense that quotidian appropriation involves a subjectivation of objects, just as the objectification of subjectivity involves an expropriation. In passages like this Hegel is already raising issues regarding the differing degrees to which objects are alienable in relation to various activities, such as consumption, labor and sacrifice, and working through the notion of sacrifice to reach a dialectical vision of the subject-object relation.

In regard to the close proximity between ritual sacrifice and charity, asceticism and the nature of one’s duty towards others, this skepticism regarding the practical viability of sacrifice only gets exacerbated as Hegel became a close student of Kant and began a constructive critique of his positions. In fact, one of the central notions in Hegel’s system, ethical substance or Sittlichkeit, marks a fundamental departure from Kant in that, instead of an appeal to the abstract, universal basis of morality, as with Kant, Hegel looks to the role played by locality and custom in promoting the ethical life. In appreciation of Kant’s reformulation of religion, Hegel claims in the Encyclopedia Philosophy of Mind. “As regards the starting-point of [the Mind’s elevation to God], Kant has on the whole adopted the most correct, when he treats belief in God as proceeding from the practical Reason. For that starting-point contains the material or content which constitutes the content of the notion of God” (EPG, #551, p. 282).

Thus, as is typical of Hegel, he takes as true Kant’s sense that, in terms of practical reason, morality is the truth of religion, in that the ultimate goal and function of religion is the shaping of one’s relations to others within a moral community. But Hegel differs from Kant by insisting that a merely rational assent to duty over interest will not suffice, for

the true concrete material [of the notion of God] is [...] the Mind, the absolute characteristic and function of which is effective reason, i.e. the self-determining and self-realizing notion itself—Liberty. That the elevation of subjective mind to God which these considerations give is by Kant again deposed to a postulate—a mere ‘ought’—is the peculiar perversity, formerly noticed, of calmly and simply reinstating as true and valid that very antithesis of finitude, the supersession of which into truth is the essence of that elevation (ibid.).

Mind as Liberty is the concrete content of God, which stands irremediably opposed to any “positive” aspects of religion, and certainly against dogmatic moral prescriptions, or the “mere
‘ought’” that here refers to Kant’s notion that duty and interest cannot coincide if an action is to be a moral one. Why “mere”? Hegel opposed abstract moral maxims, which he argued could only ever remain formal and could not provide the content necessary for truly ethical choices. Arguing within the framework of Hume’s “is-ought” distinction, what is, the real, is rational, but the ought lacks the reality necessary for motivating individuals in concrete situations. As Hegel translated this position into speculative terms, the infrastructure of reciprocity and recognition in society is much more the basis of morality than any isolated norms or prescriptions.

In response to Kant, Hegel also opposed the sacrificial overtone’s of Kant’s critique. Against Kant’s sacrifice of interest to duty, freedom in the play of passion is the engine of history itself, as well as the philosophical principle that makes history transparent to reason. Religion and morality need the heart, which means that people must be acculturated so that they will desire the good, instead of living a sacrificial life that never moves from the base, natural desires that one must negate in order to live morally. Thus, while building on Kant’s notions regarding the moral basis of religion, Hegel insists by contrast that the true moral basis is no longer that of the individual, but of the community.

If one could summarize Hegel’s treatment of Kant, he makes Kant more Lutheran than Kant’s focus on the moral basis of religion would seem to allow, since this would seemingly reverse the Lutheran priority of works over faith. To do this, Hegel has to transform the liberty that Kant’s critique achieved in regards to the individual’s spontaneous contribution to experience, but extended it to the moral sphere. This transformation makes Kantian freedom into more of a religious claim, in that this freedom is construed not only epistemologically but ontologically in regards to the meaning of history as the movement of Spirit in the world.

In this same text Hegel takes up this ontological claim as “the ‘mediation’ which [...] that elevation to God really involves,” Hegel reinstates a sacrificial, or at least ascetic, connotation to this movement. As Hegel describes this movement,
The finite, from which the start is now made, is the real ethical self-consciousness. The negation through which that consciousness raises its spirit to its truth, is the purification, actually accomplished in the ethical world, whereby its conscience is purged of subjective opinion and its will freed from the selfishness of desire. Genuine religion and genuine religiosity only issue from the moral life [translation]: religion is that life rising to think, i.e. becoming aware of the free universality of its concrete essence. Only from the moral life and by the moral life is the Idea of God seen to be free spirit: outside the ethical spirit therefore it is vain to seek for true religion and religiosity (EPG, #551, p. 282-3).

Note the specific connection to sacrificial asceticism. Spirit freeing itself from finitude is analogous to a sacrificial movement. What is critical to note here is that this is more epistemological than in the religious or ascetic. Hegel ascribes negation, purification, and purging to this movement, each of which inhabits the semantic domain of sacrificial connotations. However, with this sacrificial process it is the finitude of the limited, self-centered viewpoint that one must break with, as opposed to a process aimed at purifying the body or breaking one’s relation to property.

This investigation will now turn to Hegel’s expansive interpretation of Luther and the role of the German Reformation and the French Revolution in history. This will serve as a preparatory analysis for the examination of sacrificial rhetoric in the Phenomenology as a key moment in the elevation of philosophy over religion. Hence, before dealing with this notoriously complex text, we will turn to Hegel’s lectures on the philosophy of History to see how he interpreted the French Revolution in the context of other historical events, such as the Crusades and the Reformation, and thereby transformed the meaning of each, and religion in general, in light of his developing speculative philosophy.

**Crusades, Reformation, Revolution**

To begin with a counterpoint to Hegel’s interpretation of the Reformation, remember Marx’s lament about the German view of history:

German history prides itself on having travelled a road which no other nation in the whole of history has ever travelled before, or ever will again. We have shared the restorations of modern nations without ever having shared their revolutions. We have been restored, firstly, because other nations dared to make revolutions, and, secondly, because other nations suffered counter-revolutions; on the one hand, because our
masters were afraid, and, on the other, because they were not afraid. With our shepherds to the fore, we only once kept company with freedom, on the day of its internment (1972, p. 18).

This sense of German history reduces to a Marx’s claim that “Germany’s revolutionary past is theoretical—it is the Reformation” (ibid.) The shortcoming of this revolution, to Marx, was that it reinstalled authority at the same moment that it overcame it, for Luther “shattered the faith in authority by restoring the authority of faith” (ibid.) Hegel’s view of the Reformation could not differ more starkly, and this stems in large part from Hegel’s distinctly philosophical interpretation of history. In his series of lectures on The Philosophy of History, Hegel most completely expounds his novel view of history.

As opposed to a marxian view of history that breaks down into various stages of class struggle, Hegel adopts a schema wherein there are three ages of the world which each build to the breakthrough of freedom into the world spirit in the German age. Hegel separates the sweep of millenium into a three age structure varying according to the scope of freedom realized in the world at the time. In the first, Asiatic age, one, the tyrant, is free. In the second, the Greek age, some are free. In the third, the German age, all are recognized as free. These are treated as fundamental principles of the ages and societies involved, and not mere indications of quantitative freedom.

In light of this overarching structure in the lectures, to understand how important the Reformation as an irruption of freedom in the world was to Hegel, we must first acknowledge that “freedom” itself is not simply a characteristic of certain people or certain societies at certain junctures in history. Instead, freedom is a form of truth with ontological resonance, as Geist’s primary medium of non-coercive interaction. Freedom, woven through the cosmos, makes Hegel’s philosophy of history more than an intellectual history, or the history of an idea: it is the truth of the movement of history itself.

It would be a mistake, however, to read too much into the apparently monolithic “Germanic Age,” i.e., to read it in a Popperian way (1963) as a precursor to German fascism,
or as a racial concept. Instead, the frame of reference here is more the indigenous tribes of Europe who were only slowly Christianized, and retained a taste for the martial virtues of courage and honor into the age of chivalry even after they converted from paganism. It can thus be read in cultural terms as referring to the Germanic resistance to Christianization in Europe in favor of indigenous notions of freedom, and, conversely, the universalization of these notions through their religious sanctification via their infiltration of these notions into Christianity. In short, this age serves as a shorthand for both the Christianization of the Germans and the Germanization of Christianity. Thus it has less to do with race and more to do with a Mediterranean religion spreading to a northern people who in turn, according to Hegel, help realize its most important principle—namely, the absolute liberty of the individual as the image of God on earth.\(^\text{10}\)

The outcome of these dual, reciprocal processes of cultural interaction was to strip Christianity of its “positive” element and provide the scope of universality to indigenous German sensibilities. The culmination of this process revealed itself in the Reformation, and on this topic, Hegel speaks in uncharacteristically clear tones when he states, “This is the essence of the Reformation: Man is in his very nature destined to be free” (PH, p. 417). The essence of Christianity understood as the freedom of conscience, however, gives rise to some complications. First, it makes the inside-outside dichotomy complicated, as if this inmost kernel

\(^{10}\) This is not to downplay the nationalism found in a great deal of Hegel’s writing. Yet I would reject the attempt to read the future problems of German nationalism back into Hegel’s texts. There is nothing in Hegel of a nationalism that is more extreme than one can find in any number of texts in other countries at the time. Furthermore, it is imperative to keep in view, not only the fact that there was no unified “Germany” yet on the European stage, but also, in the years around and after the Napoleonic wars that shaped Hegel’s mature thought, the Deutschophone peoples at this time are defeated and scattered. For these reasons, when we read such passages as the following: “The time-honored and cherished sincerity of the German people is destined to effect this revolution out of the honest truth and simplicity of its heart” (PH, p. 414); “The Reformation originated in Germany, and struck firm root only in the purely German nations” (p. 419); and, especially, “the pure inwardness of the German nation was the proper soil for the emancipation of Spirit; the Romanic Nations, on the contrary, have maintained in the very depth of their soul—in their Spiritual Consciousness—the principle of Disharmony: they are a product of the fusion of Roman and German blood, and still retain the heterogeneity thence resulting” (p. 420-1), such historical and contextual qualifications are essential for sound judgment.
of the Gospel laid dormant until this freedom loving people unpacked it. Furthermore, in this
last age there is a tremendous obstacle to overcome, in that the insight into universal freedom
is recognized by most, yet the residual structures from earlier ages prevent the realization of
this insight in the world. It was Hegel’s—and, from his viewpoint, philosophy’s—overriding
goal to provide the means whereby such structures could develop in the modern world. That is,
the insight must be realized, not only in consciousness, but in institutions, customs, and ways
of life.

By making the last age German, the Reformation definitive for religion, and philosophy
in many ways Lutheran, one could argue that Hegel offers these lectures as a Lutheran view of
history,11 which Hegel relates not only to faith and doctrine, but to broader historical events.
Hegel views Luther’s Reformation as a decisive element of the German Age in World History.
In the Germanic age, one can read this historical event as the fulfillment of a people in its
resistance to Rome12 and its rejection of subservience, both secular and sacred, in favor of
freedom. In fact, it is not only the emergence of freedom in the world, but the movement of
history itself that is marked by freedom.

Nonetheless, as with Luther’s message of faith, Hegel’s paean to freedom could be
misinterpreted. To avoid a sense that anarchy or antinomianism were the final goals of history,
Hegel retains a Kantian view of freedom as the reasoning subject’s self-subjugation to the law
by means of its recognition of law’s legitimacy. To sound the notes furthest from anarchism,
Hegel writes one of his most infamous passages:

11 On Hegel’s tri-partite historical scheme, O’Regan relates this to the suppressed Joachimite tradition
of Lutheranism, which Hegel in some ways resussitated: “The excess of this view over the view of the historical
Luther was twofold: apocalyptically inclined investigation of history, a kind of gnosis with respect to history,
was legitimated; historical investigation was no longer confined, as it was in Luther himself, to the exegesis of
the great apocalyptic books, Daniel and Revelation, but made some attempt to understand extrabiblical ecclesial
and political events” (1995, p. 45).

12 As O’Regan contends, with Barnes, “central to the second or third generation Lutheranism was the
notion of the translatio imperi in which Rome ceded authority to Germany at the dawn of the fourth and final
The State is the Divine Idea as it exists on Earth. We have in it, therefore, the object of History in a more definite shape than before; that in which Freedom obtains objectivity, and lives in the enjoyment of this objectivity. For Law is the objectivity of Spirit; volition in its true form. Only that will which obeys law is free: for it obeys itself—it is independent and so free. When the State or our country constitutes a community of existence; when the subjective will of man submits to laws—the contradiction between Liberty and Necessity vanishes. The Rational has necessary existence, as being the reality and substance of things, and we are free in recognizing it as law, and following it as the substance of our own being. The objective and the subjective will are then reconciled, and present one identical homogeneous whole (PH, p. 39).

This passage stands nearly as a rebus for the interpretation of Hegel, in that issues and topics in need of decoding pile on top of one another. Here a philosophy of history, a purpose for philosophy, and a view of the history of philosophy all come together. To address the greatest obstacle to the serious study of Hegel, Popper and others castigate him for the formulation that the state is the divine idea on earth. What is most unfortunate is that critics target the divinization of the state and the absolution of a human institution, yet they fail to shift the statement dialectically and note the reciprocal way that it divests the divine of its transcendental status. Much like Durkheim’s notion that the moral community projects its consciousness of itself into religious symbols, Hegel here offers a quasi-projection theory of religion, one that Feuerbach will make even more explicit. Furthermore, if submitting to the law is read in a linear, top-down way, then this sounds authoritarian. However, if, as has happened more and more through the course of recent history, the content of the laws also include the means whereby the individual can respond to the juridical assemblage and reform it or shape it to the popular will, then this formulation simply translates into a community-specific description of life within the realm of the law.

In a similar way, Hegel employs techniques to make the Reformation less a specifically religious phenomena, while simultaneously resacralizing modern political developments as so many movements toward the freedom of spirit. In essence, Hegel depicts the emergence of freedom in the world as the movement of Spirit, the French Revolution achieved the freedom of conscience first articulated by Luther and launched in the Reformation. Because of the Augsburg compromise, the Reformation principle of freedom of conscience was again only a
principle for some, but not all, insofar as only the reigning princes freely exercised a choice regarding which faith to adopt. When the French people rejected not only their aristocracy, but also clerical rule, they made real in the world the emancipation from spiritual slavery that Luther had hoped would follow his revolt.

The net effect of this kind of interpretation is to pursue an extra-ecclesiastical history, beyond the confines of the two cities or two kingdoms schema, that acknowledges the mutually reciprocal relations of sacred and secular orders. In doing this, of course, and attempting to narrate spirit’s march through history, Hegel makes these gestures of incorporating and speaking for the essence of Lutheranism, yet the audacity of his philosophical project pushes orthodox Lutheranism to the breaking point. To address the point of greatest tension, Hegel’s positions regarding freedom are so one-sided in regards to the Lutheran paradox of absolute freedom and servility, how is it that Hegel can claim to be a Lutheran? That is, if the Reformation is now about formal freedom more than the content of faith, and even less about faith’s sacrifice of reason, one wonders how it is that Hegel can still claim to be a Lutheran?  

One answer, touched on in the previous chapter, is the processual aspect of Luther’s faith. Luther’s prior asceticism was essential to prepare the way for his reception of the sola fides doctrine, for he had personally exhausted works as the primary avenue of righteousness, which he could then doctrinally negate. Like Luther, Hegel speaks of a true movement of faith, and like Luther this faith does not reduce to the content of a catechism, but involves the movement and struggle within the individual to attain a state of righteousness. Even more unlike Luther, however, Hegel is not content to depict this relation between soul and God as a paradox. Instead, Hegel seeks to map the movements of objective and subjective spirit in ways

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13 In his letters, Hegel claims to be a Lutheran in many places, including his Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion and in letters to peers and superiors (1984, p. 531).
that are akin to those of grace and justification, but instead of a paradoxical abyss one finds complex intermediary movements.

To refer to this processual notion of faith, Hegel makes a distinction between original versus historical faith in the following passage from his *History of Philosophy*:

The divine Spirit which is comprehended, is objective; the subjective Spirit comprehends. But Spirit is not passive, or else the passivity can be momentary only; there is one spiritual substantial unity. The subjective Spirit is the active, but the objective Spirit is itself this activity; the active subjective Spirit is that which comprehends the divine, and in its comprehension of it it is itself the divine Spirit. The relation of Spirit to self alone is the absolute determination; the divine Spirit lives in its own communion and presence. This comprehension has been called Faith, but it is not an historical faith; we Lutherans—I am a Lutheran and will remain the same—have only this original faith. This unity is not the Substance of Spinoza, but the apprehending Substance in self-consciousness which makes itself eternal and relates to universality (*HP*, p. 73).

However close to Luther this language might appear, Hegel immediately takes his distance from Lutheran orthodoxy. Although reminiscent in ways of Luther’s “Bride of Christ” metaphor, the identity that he postulates transgresses the one-way flow of movement intrinsic to Luther’s notion of grace:

The talk about the limitations of human thought is futile; to know God is the only end of Religion. The testimony of the Spirit to the content of Religion is itself Religion [and] this testimony, this inward stirring and self-consciousness, reveals itself, while in the enshrouded consciousness of devotion it does not arrive at the proper consciousness of an object, but only at the consciousness of immersion in absolute Being (*HP*, p. 74).

When Hegel states, as above, that “the active subjective Spirit is that which comprehends the divine, and in its comprehension of it it is itself the divine Spirit” (ibid., p. 73), Hegel imparts activity to the human in the movement between subjective spirit and the divine, thus violating the Lutheran axiom of the utter passivity of the subject in need of divine grace. As O’Regan argues,

[Hegel] essentially ignores consistent Lutheran polemic against knowledge, freedom as autonomy, and human presumptiveness and pride in thinking that human being is

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14 Such an echo arises later in the same argument, when Hegel claims that, in the movement of faith, “This permeating and permeated Spirit now enters into conception; God goes forth into the ‘other’ and makes Himself objective” (*HP*, p. 74).
intrinsically capable of having a truly reciprocal relationship with God. As Hegel's complex vision—from the side of Lutheran orthodoxy in particular, arguably, misvision—allows for the expansion of Christianity beyond the precincts of the ghettoized 'holy,' it also allows Reformation Christianity to perdure into modernity, in fact, to be nothing short of its condition (1995, p. 43-44).

Lutheran faith thus teeters on the edge of philosophy. In mythology, picture-thinking, and the "enshrouded consciousness of devotion," subjective spirit can only behold, but this religious truth adopts more adequate form as Hegel’s interpretive sublation brings it towards more adequate conceptualization. The true content of religion enters the true form of philosophy, since conceiving one truly has, and becomes, that which one worships. This leads to the apotheosis of human reason itself, a complete reversal of the sacrificial scenario Luther defines when faith’s first work is to sacrifice reason: “The man who speaks of the merely finite, of merely human reason, and of the limits to mere reason, lies against the Spirit, for the Spirit as infinite and universal, as self-comprehension, comprehends itself not in a ‘merely’ nor in limits, nor in the finite as such. It has nothing to do with this, for it comprehends itself within itself alone, in its infinitude” (HP, p. 74). The proper conception of Christ Hegel links to a proper notion of reason, which allows one to conceive Christ as the unity of divine and human, and not merely picture it as the Crucifixion on the wall, or the dogma in the Creed. By redefining Luther’s achievement as the discovery and advocacy of the freedom of conscience. Hegel has to critique Luther at the same time that he connects to Luther’s authority, making his faith articulate by taking it into a post-religious language.

Here we get further insight into the transformation in the notion of sacrifice that Hegel develops. To conceive the sacrifice of faith properly, it is no longer one capacity or faculty of the human counterposed to the other. Rather, it involves the determinate negation of particularity that spirit might mistake for universality. In favor of the true universal, the particular must be negated, i.e. sacrificed. This is the philosophical translation of Luther’s doctrine, yet the sacrificial object is no longer reason, but modes of understanding that posit a static configuration of Verstehen in place of the movement of Vernunft. As Verstehen
subsumes the particular sensation into a category of understanding, the distinctness remains, but the particular must be put in motion in the process of subjective interiorization.

This articulation in the history of sacrificial rhetoric is decisive, and marked by a bold reversal even while maintaining authoritative links to a cultural hero. Still, this treatment is abstract in that we are dealing with the relations of the mind’s faculties both to one another and to its overall purposive activity. To understand better what this transition in sacrificial rhetoric means historically, it is better to turn to Hegel’s Philosophy of History and follow the trajectory there of spirit’s manifestations in ritual and sacrifice through the Crusades and leading up to the Reformation. Hegel downplays his distance from Luther in this text by duplicating Luther’s own disenchantment with sacrificial ritualism in the church as a historical development from the Crusades, through lay piety, to the Reformation. This will serve as a propadeutic as we move to the final analysis of Hegel’s logical and historical treatment in the Phenomenology, where we will analyze the strongest instance of sacrificial rhetoric. It is important to track the historical argument in detail, for I would suggest that this is Hegel’s second attempt at a transformative interpretation of history. The Phenomenology was the first, but it was so imbricated in a logico-deductive argument that the historical claims were difficult to track. Reading these in a reverse order, with the later but clearer historical exegesis as a propadeutic for the earlier, more heterogeneous argument, should allow for a fresh look at the stakes involved in Hegel’s sacrificial rhetoric.

Crusades and Medieval Religiosity

By treating history as at all relevant to the Reformation, Hegel adds the kind of particular complications that will allow him to reframe Luther’s insights into Christian worship and then reinterpret them in lines with his own speculative philosophy. When we read Hegel’s type of historiography, we encounter not only all the fragmentation in the outcome of the Reformations, but also the events leading up to the Reformation as much more complicated.
More articulated than a simple fall from true dogma, where Hegel and Luther meet is a
unifying, providential, vision at work in history, spirit as freedom moving through the world.

Just as he explored the French Revolution by resituating it in broader historical trends
originating with the Enlightenment, Hegel avoids the view that the Reformation represents an
absolute irruption in history. Instead of Luther’s single fall of the one Church away from
proper worship, Hegel presents a view of the Reformation prepared spiritually by preceding
events, namely, the Crusades and the products of their disappointment, the Mendicant and
Chivalric orders. One wants to add, of course, the development of nominalism, cultural
nationalism, vernacular literacy, the conciliar movement within the church, and, of course,
Renaissance humanism. But Hegel’s treatment of this historical progression does not depend
upon elements that blend political, religious and philosophical elements. Instead, as if to
produce a Lutheran view of history, not only do we read a history of the development and
overreaching of papal power, most clearly indicated in Innocent III’s call for the first Crusade,
or of the so-called Agricultural and Commercial Revolutions that led to surplus production and
the rise of urbanization and a literate middle class. In addition, Hegel tells a story of spirit’s
disappointment in the pursuit of its realization in the objective and material world, then its
movement towards its true terrain, the freedom of the self-conscious subject. The way Hegel
narrates these developments thus stands as a complement to a historico-political account, but
also as its higher meaning and truth. As Christ dies and the body disappears, we have an echo
of the morning and evening sacrifice discussed in the previous chapter on Luther.

In the Philosophy of History, Hegel depicts the Crusades as prefiguring the
Reformation, but in a negative way. With the Crusades first inspired by the call to sacrifice in
the project of reclaiming the Holy City, the Crusaders were soon disappointed. Here the
Protestant charge of fetishism against Catholic ritual worship gets directly linked to the
misguided pilgrimage of the Crusades: “[T]he vast idea of the union of the Finite with the
Infinite was perverted to such a degree as that men looked for a definite embodiment of the

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Infinite in a mere isolated outward object [the Host]. Christendom found the empty Sepulchre, but not the union of the Secular and the Eternal; and so it lost the Holy Land” (PH, p. 393). Note especially the consequential “so”—Hegel here makes the geopolitical defeat of the Crusades a result of a false interpretation of doctrine.

Although disappointed in their aims, the Crusaders did negate an error, and thus moved closer to the truth, which is essential to Hegel’s constructive use of skepticism. Hence, the Crusaders discovered a truth of sorts: “But in the Grave is found the real point of retroversion; it is in the grave that all the vanity of the Sensuous perishes. [...] In the negation of that definite and present embodiment—i.e. of the Sensuous—it is that the turning-point in question is found, and those words have an application: ‘Thou wouldst not suffer thy Holy One to see corruption’” (PH, p. 392-3).

Here finding and losing the divine, with the site of the Crucifixion recovered but the event long past and merely historical, moves the devotee to look beyond the material remnants of this religious truth, and incorporate it as a truth of subjectivity. In this dialectical movement, the negation of the divine embodiment casts Spirit back onto the embodied subject in the shape of the living human being. This dejection opened Christendom to better channels of lay piety than the macabre pilgrimages of murder and sacrilege. In Hegel’s eyes, the net result of the Crusades, despite their status as a corrupt endeavour and a geo-political disaster, was that Christendom was practically undeceived; and the result which it brought back with it was of a negative kind: viz., that the definite embodiment which it was seeking, was to be looked for in Subjective Consciousness alone, and in no external object; that the definite form in question, presenting the union of the Secular with the Eternal, is the Spiritual self-cognizant independence of the individual (PH, p. 393).

The attempt to re-realize the body of Christ in a substance or place is doomed. In the sacrifice of the body, one must not only kill Christ, the body itself must disappear totally to perform the determinate negation of sensuousness. Thus, not only the Crucifixion but the Resurrection is essential to Christian sacrifice, an emphasis that Luther sounded with his talk of an evening and
morning double sacrifice. Yet again, we see a formal similarity to Luther’s teachings, though the content has been transformed in much more anthropocentric directions.

Hegel treats the disappointments of the Crusade as history’s attempt to teach the same lesson for a second time, for mythological and superstitious accretions had overgrown the original lesson. There had been a fall towards the sensuous and the particular in the Crusades, as if the divine were limited to a specific location. To Hegel,

Christendom was not to find its ultimatum of truth in the grave. At this sepulchre the Christian world received a second time the response given to the disciples when they sought the body of the Lord there: ‘Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.’ You must not look for the principle of your religion in the Sensuous, in the grave among the dead, but in the living Spirit in yourselves (PH, p. 393).

Since the Crusades found the Holy Sepulchre empty, this discovery serves for Hegel as a second resurrection. Hegel here speaks the message of Spirit. The rejection of the community as a vehicle and embodiment of the divine led to the disastrous endeavour of the Crusades. The search for a finite and particular embodiment of the sacred, the referent of a demonstrative speech act—this search negates the role of the community and its customs. This negation of the living customs of a people in favor of a one-sided and intransigent critique: this is what links the Crusades with the French Revolution.

Just as the revolutionary negation of the French aristocracy, in then failing to maintain order, discredited the rule of Enlightenment reason, the Crusades discredited an outdated mode of authority. According to Hegel,

Through the Crusades the Church reached the completion of its authority: it had achieved the perversion of religion and of the divine Spirit; it had distorted the principle of Christian Freedom to a wrongful and immoral slavery of men’s souls; and in so doing, far from abolishing lawless caprice and violence and supplanting them by a virtuous rule of its own, it had even enlisted them in the service of ecclesiastical authority (PH, p. 394).

This corrupting ethos reaches its peak in a pilgrimage resulting in the slaughter of innocents, a piety in reference to this false basis, a blasphemy in regards to the freedom of conscience, and an evocation of a false versus a true sacrifice. There is in this again a double movement, the downfall of a false authority, and the initial restoration of the proper mode of worship.
To make the three-ages narrative a world-historical movement and not a story about the vicissitudes of Christendom, Hegel speaks of Spirit, and not the Popes, Crusaders, or Christians, as the protagonists of his story. Although in his opinion they are the carriers or avant-garde of this movement, the movement itself is Spirit’s own:

The fall of the Church was not to be effected by open violence; it was from within—by the power of Spirit and by an influence that wrought its way upwards—that ruin threatened it. Respect for the Papacy could not but be weakened by the very fact that the lofty aim of the Crusades—the satisfaction expected from the enjoyment of the sensuous Presence—was not attained. As little did the Popes succeed in keeping possession of the Holy Land (PH, p. 395).

A false basis is self-corrupting, and thus self-overcoming. This insight into the nature of the Reformation project continues with the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. That is, this is the historical lesson explored in a different register in that text. Hegel turns the disappointing end of the Crusade into a religious and an epistemological as much as a political event. A literalist interpretation of sacrifice and fetishism of particularity ruined these projects in a way that battle with an imposing and hostile neighbor could not. A continuous concern with the self-validation of communal norms must become the basis for social life and freedom itself:

Thus the world attains the conviction that man must look within himself for that *definite embodiment* of being which is of a divine nature: subjectivity thereby receives absolute authorization, and claims to determine for itself the relation [of all that exists] to the Divine. This then was the absolute result of the Crusades, and from them we may date the commencement of self-reliance and spontaneous activity. The West bade an eternal farewell to the East at the Holy Sepulchre, and gained a comprehension of its own principle of subjective infinite Freedom (PH, p. 393).

Hegel’s reference to the “West’s” principle contains the seed of this argument’s burden. How can one understand sacrifice in relation to this overarching principle? As with Luther, for Hegel the answer relates to the total interiorization of sacrifice, but with a radical shift in orientation. In reference to this “commencement of self-reliance and spontaneous activity,” Hegel indicates the efflorescence of lay piety and the mendicant orders in the wake of the first Crusades. As if a prefiguration or proto-Reformation, although still involved in ritual expression, Christian devotion turned away from material and particular objects towards a new or revived ethos of personal sacrifice through asceticism.
With keen historical insight, and against any proto-nationalist need to define and defend all things German, Hegel locates the origin of the Reformation in the movements of lay piety and the pursuit of the *vita apostolica* that gave history Saint Francis as well as the debacle of the Albigensian Crusades. As Hegel states it,

Spirit, disappointed with regard to its craving for the highest form of the sensuous presence of Deity, fell back upon itself. A rupture, the first of its kind and profound as it was novel, took place. From this time forward we witness religious and intellectual movements in which Spirit—transcending the repulsive and irrational existence by which it is surrounded—either finds its sphere of exercise within itself, and draws upon its own resources for satisfaction, or throws its energies into an actual world of general and morally justified aims, which are therefore aims consonant with Freedom (**PH**, p. 395).

Already at the end of the Crusades the practices consonant with freedom have taken hold, even if the principle itself will not appear until Wittenberg. Though the formulation of the “Ninety-five” theses marks the customary start of the Reformation, and thus the division of Western Christendom, Hegel appears to place that division further back in time.

After marking a break that sounds at this point every bit as decisive as the Reformation to come, Hegel claims that, with the end of the Crusades, “Christendom never appeared again on the scene of history as *one body*” (**PH**, p. 393). As a claim in the service of Hegel’s recontextualization of the Enlightenment, this reference to *one body* is an enigmatic phrase. Does Hegel mean a communion host? Does he mean the mendicant challenge to the church structure? Both make sense, for the Church and its monastic orders formed a coherent whole that fell apart as the *vita apostolica* movement turned positions akin to the Donatist heresy into a mode of ecclesiastical differentiation. If difference begins with the mendicants, then the fragmentation of the Church is no longer Luther’s fault, since it was already at work in Christendom centuries before his actions. Nonetheless, the “West’s” principle is the German principle, and remains so through the next course of its development. Though fragmentation ensues, and scission and misrecognition reigns in modernity, the greatest false and failed project of redemption dissolved under the weight of its own contradictions, and piety began to pursue a true path of self-realization as Spirit. Hegel thus sets the stage for the Reformation.
with the rise of lay piety and mendicant apostolic devotion, “the means by which Spirit was to be prepared to comprehend the grand purpose of its Freedom in a form of greater purity and moral elevation” (PH, p. 395). After the Crusades it was clear that Spirit had to find its proper vocation in the transformation of subjectivity itself, in developing one’s own freedom or preparing for the development of others.

The Mendicants and the Sacrificial Knights

Between the Crusades and the Reformation Hegel emphasizes the historical importance of two channels for the rising tides of lay piety. Leading among the many responses to the disappointment of the Crusades, Hegel speaks of two movements which particularly embraced the emerging principle of subjective freedom as the essence of devotion:

To this class of movements belongs in the first place the establishment of monastic and chivalric orders, designed to carry out those rules of life which the Church had distinctly enjoined upon its members. That renunciation of property, riches, pleasures, and free will, which the Church had designated as the highest of spiritual attainments, was to be a reality—not a mere profession (PH, p. 395).

The negation of a profession here makes the mendicants sacrificial ascetics of a different sort than the monastics. As indicated in the critique of the incomplete nature of sacrifice in the Phenomenology, to make the routinized, mitigated form of sacrificial asceticism a profession and a means of livelihood is manifestly self-contradictory in the face of the renunciation that sacrifice is supposed to employ. Nonetheless, though beginning with strict vows of poverty, the Franciscan order, being an order, could not avoid the fall into professionalization.

What is remarkable about Hegel’s assessment of the mendicant and chivalric orders is how closely Hegel attends to the originary principle here, as opposed to Luther. His reassessment distinguishes the monastic from the mendicant orders and complicates Luther’s blurring of distinctions. That is, Luther separated the duties of monastic asceticism and scriptural education, then saved only the latter. Thus, while preaching was an aspect of mendicant life, he rejects the mendicant order as corrupted by the works doctrine of monastic
asceticism. Even though his preaching and exegetical work would continue in much the same way both pre- and post-Reformation, he would reject it as an element of ascetic practical but embrace it under the rubric of pastoral care. In short, Luther keeps the teaching side of the mendicant movement, but rejects it as too entangled with professional asceticism.

By Luther’s time, the mendicant friars were barely distinguishable from monks in regards to daily practices, though their vocations of preaching and teaching the people put them in the heart of cities and villages. The rising density of continental Europe accounts in part for this blurring of the differences between monastic and mendicant orders, the former having originally sought to flee the world to the countryside, and the latter striving to sacralize the urban setting and take the Word directly to the people. Thus, what began as opposed modes of devotion—or rather, mendicants opposed in principle and arose to answer and correct the other’s shortcomings of the monasteries—became, in practice, over time, closely aligned. This had to do with the overarching authoritative structure of feudal society. These ascetic orders, whether monastic or mendicant, could not escape this determination, and so fall back into positivism and subservience.

Nonetheless, in the rise of the mendicants and the diffusion of lay devotion, the emphasis on the inculcation and development of subjective religiosity among the people marked a salubrious realignment of devotional practice. This reform movement stood out sharply from the received practices of the day, for “[t]he existing monastic and other institutions that had adopted this vow of renunciation, had been entirely sunk in the corruption of worldliness. But now Spirit sought to realize in the sphere of the principle of negativity—purely in itself—what the Church had demanded” (PH, p. 395). In this passage Hegel understands the movement of negativity as identical with the movement of Spirit, which he thus connected to sacrificial asceticism. Nonetheless, monasticism makes renunciation a profession, a profoundly contradictory life. The mendicants, at least in their founding rules such as those of St Francis, made preaching and begging the essential activities.
Hegel, then, in contrast to Luther and truer to the facts, views the mendicant movement as itself a reform of monastic practices. Though founded on principles that elsewhere Hegel has expressed as contradictory and doomed to incompleteness, the improvement of this mode of life as a channel of devotion over the Crusades and traditional monasteries was immense:

To counteract these evils [of corruption and worldliness], new monastic orders were founded, the chief of which was that of the Franciscans, or Mendicant Friars, whose founder, St. Francis of Assisi—a man possessed by an enthusiasm and ecstatic passion that passed all bounds—spent his life in continually striving for the loftiest purity. He gave an impulse of the same kind to his order; the greatest fervor of devotion, the sacrifice of all pleasures in contravention of the prevailing worldliness of the Church, continual penances, the severest poverty (the Franciscans lived on daily alms)—were therefore peculiarly characteristic of it (PH, p. 396).

Hegel supplies the term, and indicates that negation and the consecration of life are essential to sacrifice. Hegel not only treats this as “sacrificial” in terms of the patristic doctrines, he also explicitly names it as such, not as doctrinally derived, but as such in essence. Hence, repeatedly we see Hegel invoking an orthodox sense of asceticism as sacrifice, which makes his eventual use sacrificial rhetoric all the more interesting.

In addition to the mendicants, there was another mode of self-sacrificial devotion, closer to martyrdom, that broke with feudal self-interest. From the feudal aristocratic bellicosity with its pursuit of honor and glory, an articulation took place as this blended with a sacrificial ethos to form the chivalric orders:

The Orders of Knighthood were divided into three: that of St. John, that of the Temple, and the Teutonic Order. These associations are essentially distinguished from the self-seeking principle of feudalism. Their members sacrificed themselves with almost suicidal bravery for a common interest. Thus these Orders transcended the circle of their immediate environment, and formed a network of fraternal coalition over the whole of Europe (PH, p. 397, emphasis added).

15 Hegel continues by distinguishing the Franciscan pursuit of penances and poverty with “the Dominican order, founded by St. Dominic,” whose “special business was preaching” (PH, p. 396). Although it is true that the Dominicans took preaching as their specialization, the Franciscans took preaching as an avocation as well.

16 “The mendicant friars were diffused through Christendom to an incredible extent; they were, on the one hand, the standing apostolic army of the Pope, while, on the other hand, they strongly protested against his worldliness” (PH, p. 396). Looking ahead to Weber, as opposed to a disenchanted bureaucracy, the army remains a sacrosanct body.
Because we are here addressing historical instances of a sacrificial ethos in action, it is difficult to decide whether Hegel’s description of “suicidal bravery” as a sacrifice is his own view or that of the agents in question. At any rate, with this notion of sacrifice, which Hegel does not contradict or correct, the object and agent coincide. Here, the costliness of the sacrifice has reached its maximum, for the active register of martyrdom always remains as a residual potentiality that history might call again into actuality.

Moving from the French Revolution to the Enlightenment, and from this to the Reformation and even, ultimately, the Crusades, for all the critiques of Hegel as a thinker who is obsessed with teleology, Hegel’s interpretive strategy here works backward. As Hegel dissolved the sense that the Revolution or the Reformation were eruptions of unforeseen historical forces, he takes the reader through several diverse historical trends. In doing this, according to O’Regan,

One might see in the texts of Hegel’s mature period the presence of a trope that distinguishes Romantic discourse in general, i.e. the trope of *metalepsis*. In Romanticism this trope of adoption-substitution operates by apparently sanctioning a more standard religious language while emptying it, and substituting an immanent for its transcendent content. The result is a transcendent canopy for the immanent. In the third and final phase of Hegelian representation of the French Revolution, the trope is exercised on behalf of Christianity: adopted and absorbed by the Reformation, the secular, immanent content of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution are hollowed out to be substituted for by a content which, if sacred, also has secular reach (1995, p. 47).

One might add, with the Crusades as well, Hegel adds the religious significance, but not the significance consciously carried by the Crusaders. Rather, Hegel speaks of history’s, or Spirit’s, lesson as taught through the Crusades. This metalepsis, and this agenda, thus serve as an essential rhetorical tool in the exposition of Hegel’s speculative outlook. Metalepsis captures well the doubleness of Hegel’s strategies. Working backwards will allow him to reframe the present, and the future, and, having thus revalorized the notion of sacrifice at work in Christendom, he can then claim it as his own. This is where we bridge forward to the *Phenomenology* where, no longer as isolated events or a single figure, all of world history and philosophy enters the text in order to provide the grist for this metaleptic mill. The religious
and the philosophical will become indistinguishable in content, and only in form will Hegel make clear which has a future and which will become a relic of the past.

The Heterogeneity of the Phenomenology

In the Phenomenology, Hegel shows the myriad ways that human knowledge has attempted to give an account of itself. Hegel knew, as Habermas noted, that his system required presuppositions. Since he could not prove them within a system and still have them provide the external support of presuppositions, Hegel in the Phenomenology would proceed by a process of elimination. In this text, all previous attempts to ground reason would meet their fate. As the argument moves from perception to understanding to reason to spirit, in each section the text demonstrates that more resources are necessary if knowledge’s self-demonstration is not to end in contradiction and paradox. In the process, one by one, possible competitors get eliminated from the running, with the result that, by the end, the necessity of Hegel’s system is demonstrated by default.

The resources that Hegel utilized to achieve this demonstration could not solicit skepticism, which meant that they had to be those most amenable to other positions as well. As Habermas notes,

The critique of subjective idealism is at the same time a critique of modernity; only in this way can the latter secure its concept and thereby assure its own stability. In carrying out this project, critique can and should make use of no instrument other than that reflection which it encounters as the purest expression of the principle of modern times. If modernity is to ground itself, Hegel has to develop the critical concept of modernity through a dialectic residing in the principle of the Enlightenment itself (1987, p. 21).

Reflection here indicates not only self-consciousness, but also reflection on knowing as a process. This entails assessing not only objects of knowledge, but also the conditions and processes of knowing must become objects of knowledge. In this way, reflection acknowledges the sense that modern philosophy and thought has raised the self-conscious assessment of knowledge as a process to unprecedented heights. This knowledge achieved its
greatest wonders in experimental science, but other fields of knowledge as well. If Hegel could take the very essence of the Enlightenment, and the principle by which modernity understood itself as the emergence of subjective freedom, and launch a constructive critique of both the Enlightenment and naive notions of freedom, the way would be cleared for Hegel’s system to appear.

More than the text’s own designs, the Phenomenology serves as the hinge that takes the reader from the rest of philosophy and introduces her to Hegel’s mature system, which, by the end of the text, is adumbrated but still on the other side of the horizon. The text is constructed as an experience whose increments are arranged on a ladder, and when each stage has been understood fully, the ladder is to be rejected. The Phenomenology begins with Mind struggling to know itself with only limited resources. It works through philosophical modes of grounding knowledge that attempt to build on the immediacy of sense-perception, on the understanding, on the reasoning individual, and finally on spirit alive in a community. In the course of this examination it becomes clear that the movement of spirit is essential.

What is remarkable in this context is that, just as these adumbrations begin to announce the end of the text, it becomes clear that the path of the text is modeled on the stages of the Cross, for the text ends with an explicit crucifixion to announce the dawning of a new age in philosophy. What does this sacrificial rhetoric contribute to the text? How is it in keeping with its principles, and how is one to understand this within a genealogy of sacrificial rhetoric? If one understands the content of the Passion, how can one relate the orthodox particulars of that ladder in relation to the content translated into a philosophical form?

Readers who come to this text either from Hegel’s more historically grounded lectures, or from his Logic, will each note the degree to which the Phenomenology intermingles the historical and the logical, the concrete and the abstract, the figural and the conceptual. Such juxtapositions encourage readers in search of a heuristic device to seek a dialectical logic implicit everywhere. However, if there is one architectural feature that unifies
this strange text, it has more to do with a very specific and unique formal features. The text includes a series of composite sketches that cohere and, once set in motion, proceed to fall apart, but which nevertheless gather into a series that produces at least the semblance of a coherent narrative. In this text, as opposed to his more systematic works, the reader encounters Hegel’s use of Gestalten or Bildern, which has direct relevance both to Hegel’s sense of the relation between philosophy and religion, and also to his use of sacrificial rhetoric.

To the degree that the text does cohere, what is the narratological principle at work in the Phenomenology? Towards the end Hegel writes how, in contrast to the “becoming of Spirit [in] Nature” as “living, immediate Becoming” (PhG, #807, p. 492; p. 432), there is the other side of its Becoming, History, [which] is a conscious, self-mediating process—Spirit emptied out into Time [der an die Zeit entäußerte Geist]; but this externalization, this kenosis, is equally an externalization of itself [aber diese Entäußerung ist ebenso die Entäußerung ihrer selbst], the negative is the negative of itself. This Becoming presents a slow-moving succession of Spirits, a gallery of images, [eine Galerie von Bildern], each of which, endowed with all the riches of Spirit, moves thus slowly just because the Self has to penetrate and digest this entire wealth of its substance (PhG, #808, p. 492; p. 433).

Far from serving as a rhetorical flourish in the text’s peroration (a reading which would anachronistically impute to Hegel the distinction between rhetoric and philosophy drawn most starkly by twentieth-century Anglo-American philosophy), the co-implication of Bild [“picture” or “image’] and Bildung [“development” or “education’] is fundamental to Hegel’s textual practice in the PhG as a propadeutic to a more rigorously conceptual philosophical treatment. As John Smith writes, “the metaphoricity, the Bildlichkeit, of the Phenomenology refers to the rhetorical formation of the text as a whole, to the very mode of presenting the Spirit’s development in varying guises and expressions” (1988, p. 182). The irreducibly rhetorical nature of this text, in particular in the transitions between Bildern, resists the kind of closure that Hegel’s critics impute to his “system” and, I dare say, given the pivotal role the Phenomenology plays in received ideas concerning this “system,” the text constitutes a part of his total production that makes such totalizing gestures impossible. To expand on this, there is both an inside and an outside to this system, but both relate to the system in ways that are
deeper than mere ornaments, insofar as the topics of rhetoric and representation at least form a prefatory problematic to Hegel’s later works. My argument hinges on this notion that the Phenomenology is both inside and outside the “system”, which makes the sacrifice with which it finishes incomplete, always at work in the world, a project about which we will never say, “it is finished.”

Although the Bild method distinguishes the Phenomenology from other texts, its function within the text is both to unify and differentiate. For example, Bildern are used to bridge the divide between the “Reason” and “Spirit” sections. Stewart argues that the thematic unity between the two sections is supplied by the Bild method: “Just as the various moments of the dialectic before were unified in a single consciousness—thus making possible a comparison of consciousness with itself—so also here in ‘Spirit’ the various moments are unified in a closed self-correcting system of ethical substance” (2000, p. 298). That is, as Smith notes, “whereas the earlier chapters depicted ‘formations only of a consciousness’ (Gestalten nur eines Bewußtseins), this chapter contains ‘formations of a world’ (Gestalten einer Welt)” (p. 192). In a move typical in the Phenomenology, the differences depend upon the inter-relationship between community and history: “The role of the community in ‘Reason’ was static and abstract, whereas in ‘Spirit’ it moves through history, and this movement shapes the truth-claims of its people in a way that the ‘Reason’ chapter could not account for” (Stewart, p. 291). Since Hegel’s reading of Sophocles’ Antigone, for example, occurs at the cusp of the transition from “Reason” to “Spirit”, it marks a shift away from a focus on individual consciousness. It begins with the Greek Bild, wherein the individual has not yet fully emerged into history:

In the essence we are considering here, individuality has the meaning of self-consciousness in general, not of a particular, contingent consciousness. In this determination, therefore, the ethical substance is actual substance, absolute Spirit realized in the plurality of existent consciousnesses; this spirit is the community…. As actual substance, it is a nation, as actual consciousness, it is the citizens of that nation (PhG, #447, p. 267).

Hegel’s readings in the “Spirit” section are detailed and illuminating, but also tendentious and constructed to achieve an overarching narrative effect. As Schmidt describes this schema,
each of the three “worlds” surveyed in the chapter on *Geist* corresponds to a different culture. The world of the “True Spirit. Ethical Life,” which for Hegel was exemplified by the *Antigone*, is Greek. The world of “Self-Alienated Spirit. Culture,” which stretches from rise of the absolutist state, through the Enlightenment, to the Terror, is French. The world of the “Self-Certain Spirit: Morality,” from Kant to the Beautiful Soul, is German (1998, p. 25).

From the Greeks to modern societies one can trace a movement of self-conscious communities developing, but in the former, no self-conscious individual. Instead, the individual consciousness is submerged in its role. This is made clear by the fact that the intention, as a private phenomenon and thus completely individual, counts for nothing in Greek ethical life—the deed is all. Hence, in the *Bild* of Greek ethical life ethical consciousness is particular, not individual, consisting wholly in a role and its execution, and not in moral choice. With the Greeks, then, we can speak only of roles, not of full-fledged individuals. Liberty and freedom of conscience, translated as distance from the immediacy of roles, are not yet available at this stage, but emerge only with the transition to later *Bildern*, or, historically, as we move to the German Age. Because of the turn towards historically specific communities in the “Spirit” section of the *Phenomenology*, the norms that prevail in any of the historically specific Bildern in the “Spirit” section cannot be universalized in such a way that one could abstract norms from them that would determine the ethical substance of other communities. Each makes its appearance on the stage to reveal its structure, then each dissolves under the burden of its own contradictions and incomplete resources to resolve them.

The fundamental point that Hegel derives from this method is to look for truth, not in particular configurations of perception, knowledge, or customary norms, but to understand truth as the movement that Spirit makes through these instantiations, or, better, the dual movements of exteriorization and interiorization. One must then view the text, and the movement of history, as itself positing and negating a series of possibilities for knowledge to provide its own grounding, and for communities to develop their own resources for recognition and unification. Because the processual nature of knowledge takes center-stage, and not any particular form of Spirit, each determination of the form is nothing but a
magnitude vanishing into the totality of this truth which is the self-mediating movement of Absolute Spirit: “The true is thus the Bacchanalian revel in which no member is not drunk; yet because each member collapses as soon as he drops out, the revel is just as much transparent and simple respose” (PhG, #47, p. 27). The paradox in this complex metaphor is that, though he employs the synchronic image of the gallery, the text itself develops only diachronically. Such images, scattered here and there in the text, serve as metonymic figures of the text in which they occur. The most compelling and determining of these deploys a peculiarly Hegelian form of sacrificial rhetoric.

The Phenomenology’s Post-Christian Passion

I have suggested earlier that, though not perhaps unique, it is a peculiarity of Christianity that it entertains a notion of sacrifice wherein the sacrificial agent and object coincide. This is because the moralization and interiorization of sacrifice shifts along the object- and transformational-axis to such a degree that the use of an external object seemed to miss the primary point of sacrifice, which was a radical reconfiguration of natural and received modes of subjectivity. Hence, for a rhetorician to keep sacrifice resonant with Christian sensibilities, the agent and object of sacrifice must coincide. Yet with Hegel, this coincidence, typically, moves toward a situation where the notion of each is evacuated. In the process suggested by Hegel’s sacrificial rhetoric, one finds no distinct agents or objects which could then coincide. Instead, “we” do not behold or engage in sacrifice, for Spirit itself moves by means of a sacrificial process.

In this instance of Hegel’s rhetorical intensification of the text’s movement, the figure of sacrifice involves the collapsing of the rite’s two roles of sacrificial agent and object into one to the point that the distinction reveals itself as false, so that the erasure of the distinction between the sacrificial object and subject itself becomes sacrificial. The reason this is necessary is clear: the kind of coercion necessary for the sacrifice of an external object is clearly taboo.
given the voluntaristic ethos of modernity, and Hegel made the Lutheran, modernist
valorization of individual freedom of conscience a paramount achievement. This being so, the
voluntary self-sacrifice, as modeled by Jesus, the martyrs, and the ascetics is the only sacrifice
that does not elicit a sense of outrage, and violate individual liberty. Yet given Hegel’s position
on rituals, asceticism, and even the hypocrisy of sacrifice, how could Hegel describe his own
texts in sacrificial terms with so many disclaimers in his texts?

Luther avoided a coercive notion of sacrifice by making reason the bestial part of man,
so that no-one or nothing one else undergoes sacrifice, but only the bestial part of humans, a
part that has nothing to do with grace and righteousness. Hegel achieves this conflation of
sacrificial object and agent in addition to depersonalizing the sacrificial scenario altogether. In
the last pages of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel describes the final approach towards Absolute
Knowing, which is the recollection in self-consciousness of all the forms of Spirit experienced
through history. As Spirit’s march through history is marked by both a triumphant emanation
or exteriorization in plenitude as well as a humbling kenosis or hollowing out, the dialectical
expenditure of Spirit’s forms takes shape as a continuous and self-reproducing sacrifice.

History is a free contingent happening, an externalization (*Entäußerung*) of spirit
whose meaning is restored through the process of internalization (*Errinerung*). The
characteristics of freedom and contingency apply to history before its comprehension as a
manifestation of spirit. After this, all the contingency undergoes transformation and can be
seen to move teleologically towards the necessary and universal recognition of Absolute Spirit
as freedom. In the peroration of the text, Hegel describes this process in terms of a sacrificial
process wherein both moments of *Entäußerung* and *Errinerung* coincide in a process that
Hegel likens to Christ’s passion:

The self-knowing Spirit knows not only itself but also the negative of itself, or its limit:
to know one’s limit is to know how to sacrifice oneself [sich aufzuopfern wissen]. This
sacrifice [Aufopferung] is the externalization in which Spirit displays the process of its
becoming Spirit in the form of free contingent happening…. The two together [history
and the science of the changing forms of knowledge (*die Wissenschaft des
erscheinenden Wissens*)], comprehended History, form alike the inwardizing and
Calvary [Schädelstätte] of absolute Spirit (PhG, #808, p. 492-3; p.433).

The externalizations of Spirit here are the Bildern that Hegel depicts throughout the text as Gestalten to represent stages on Spirit’s way. The particular social formations that Hegel’s text moved through, both logical and historical, come to life, but then life departs, leaving them as mere shells scattered on the path to the Schädelstätte des absoluten Geistes. The externalizations are of Geist but are not Geist, and thus become limiting particulars that mask Geist if one mistakes the externalized, particular Bild for the self-transforming movement of Geist. To be clear that one knows the difference, and the moving limit between Entäußerung and Errinnerung, one negates and sacrifices the Bildern, the shells, of Geist.

This sacrificial rhetoric was effective and essential to Hegel because it induces both cognitive and affective movements in the reader. This is due to Hegel’s sense that, unlike the Kantian depiction of a rational morality, the heart and the passions are essential to Bildung as moral cultivation. The pathos of the loss of Greek beauty, and the renunciation of a nostalgic longing for its return, all are important components of Hegel’s rhetorical effects. These shells of spirit in the process of externalization can and should be loved, and thereby acknowledged as other, for “as Spirit comes to self-consciousness it knows itself and its limit; knowing this, it is capable of sacrifice.” The acculturation process (Bildung) continues as the Bildern of Spirit’s various forms approach the “Calvary” or, better, “Golgotha” (“hill or place of skulls”) of Absolute Knowing. The process resembles an inverted Walpurgisnacht, or a sanctified version of the Witches’ Sabbath. All are invoked, in multiple registers, crucifixion, bacchanalia, Walpurgisnacht, symposium. Here, the past Bildern, including the ones that stir the most longing, such as the noble Sittlichkeit of ancient Greece, are recollected, but only at the cost of knowing them as lost and gone forever, and retained merely as a past shape of Spirit. Here the loss and gain of knowledge take place simultaneously, as the immediate experience of spirit embedded in a community gives way to the self-conscious reflection on practices and customs that Hegel sees ushered in with modernity. It is not too strong a metaphor to speak of these...
transformations as the process of knowing as a form of sacrificing, with the cost a concrete index of the value of the knowledge achieved. Hence, it is not that a merely pathos-driven approach to self-knowledge is a necessary correlate of sacrifice, one also receives a cognitive dividend from Hegel’s sacrificial rhetoric.

In the Phenomenology the sacrificial movement happens textually, for the purpose of demonstration. Each reader re-enacts this and, as each reader participates as Geist, the sacrifice takes place again. Hegel’s sacrificial rhetoric does not lead to the conclusion that the text espouses a particular rite of sacrifice for the individual or society. We are always already sacrificing insofar as we participate in the movement of Geist in history, and Hegel’s interpretation of the Crusades and the French Revolution as nugatory sacrifices in history also demonstrates this truth. The starkest instance of this revalorization takes place in the double-image of the Cross and the Guillotine. While the historical Entäußerung of the Terror took place as events whose meanings consumed themselves in a paroxysm of self-negation, in the text’s Errinerung these events become significant in relation to this overarching schema of the Phenomenology’s Passion. Christ’s sacrifice historically returns to invert the nihilism of the Terror so that even the Guillotine becomes a vehicle of meaning, in at least the negative sense of a demonstration of the impossibility of realizing Enlightenment as absolute freedom. In short, the historical Terror produced deaths devoid of meaning, but, via the alchemy of sacrificial rhetoric, these deaths undergo the restoration of their significance as sacrifices in the process of Geist’s self-realization.

Hegel’s Iconoclastic Sacrifice of Sacrificial Rhetoric

Despite the attention that the Phenomenology has garnered, and it remains Hegel’s most read, discussed and cited text, it it important to remember that he viewed it as a stepping stone to the perspective necessary to comprehend his system. Once the reader had traversed the path laid out in this text, she would be ready to accept the importance of the Absolute as a
premise integral to philosophy’s proper business of unification. A key component of this unification was the incorporation of religion’s truths, but in a form that both preserved the content and made it more amenable to the needs of a post-Enlightenment world. When one thus takes into account Hegel’s distinction between philosophy and religion, this sacrificial rhetoric becomes a form unfit for the content, and it must give way to the more adequate form of philosophical conceptions, a shell that too must be sacrificed.

Hegel returned to this topic in many places, but one can find perhaps the most succinct treatment of the issues involved in the History of Philosophy. There one reads,

Philosophy stands on the same basis as Religion and has the same object—the universal reason existing in and for itself; Mind desires to make this object its own, as is done with Religion in the act and form of worship. But the form, as it is present in Religion, is different from what is found to be contained in Philosophy, and on this account a history of Philosophy is different from a history of Religion. Worship is only the operation of reflection; Philosophy attempts to bring about the reconciliation by means of thinking knowledge, because Mind desires to take up its Being into itself. Philosophy is related in the form of thinking consciousness to its object (HP, p. 63).

Philosophy addresses the same content as religion, but instead of religion’s diminished sense of the human capacity for reason and its projection of universal reason onto a divine subject, philosophy rejects this self-abasement and achieves the understanding that the human being participates in Geist as well. Indeed, it is only insofar as humans realize the immanence of universal reason that the divinity of the human species itself becomes actual.

Hegel does not let this distinction between religion and philosophy regress to a one-sided Enlightenment caricature of both. As he continues, “the distinction between the two should not be conceived of so abstractly as to make it seem that thought is only in Philosophy and not in Religion. The latter has likewise ideas and universal thoughts” (ibid.). Nonetheless, though the content overlaps, the form of exposition differs remarkably. Here a brief detour through Hegel’s historical treatment of religious forms will make the necessity of Hegel’s iconoclastic rejection of religious rhetoric and devotional figures much clearer.

Returning to the origins of the concept that serves as the fundamental premise of his entire outlook, Hegel traces the Absolute back to its earliest formulations in the religions that contributed to Western civilization:
The Absolute is Mind (Spirit)—this is the supreme definition of the Absolute. To find this definition and to grasp its meaning and burden was, we may say, the ultimate purpose of all education and all philosophy: it was the point to which turned the impulse of all religion and science: and it is this impulse that must explain the history of the world. The word ‘Mind’ (Spirit)—and some glimpse of its meaning—was found at an early period: and the spirituality of God is the lesson of Christianity. It remains for philosophy in its own element of intelligible unity to get hold of what was thus given as a mental image, and what implicitly is the ultimate reality; and that problem is not genuinely, and by rational methods, solved so long as liberty and intelligible unity is not the theme and the soul of philosophy (EPM, #384, p. 18).

Hegel treats this not as an enabling fiction, or flattering conceit, but as a primordial discovery concerning the nature of the world, and the content that Geist-as-liberty unites. Thus, though one might conclude from its status as a premise to his system that Hegel treated it as an epistemological postulate, or, as with Kant, an Idea of Reason that serves a regulative function, in fact, much like the religions he examines, Hegel accords this a radical ontological status. Hegel is careful, though, to distinguish stages of Geist’s conceptions, so that this concept does not devolve to an abstract or dissolute Geistlichkeit or “spirituality.” These stages inevitably place the analysis on a track of progress from inchoate to more articulate forms:

The highest definition of the Absolute is that it is not merely mind in general but that it is mind which is absolutely manifest to itself, self-conscious, infinitely creative mind [....] Just as in philosophy we progress from the imperfect forms of mind’s manifestation delineated above to the highest form of its manifestation, so, too, world-history exhibits a series of conceptions of the Eternal, the last of which first shows forth the Notion of absolute mind (EPM, p. 19-20).

Geist thus must be treated not as an indistinct capacity of perception or conception, but as a form of knowledge which takes both itself and its processes of reflection as objects of knowledge. Both the transparency of these forms and their articulation provide the criteria by which they can be ranked in the religions and philosophies of world history.

Once these rankings begin, it is little surprise to find Christianity possessing the most developed and articulated notion of Geist. Despite the religious chauvinism and the tendentious nature of the stages, they are not merely the residual markers of a bygone day of Western self-regard, but contributed decisively to Hegel’s sense of philosophy’s role in world history. At the
first stage, “The oriental religions, and the Hebrew, too, stop short at the still abstract concept of God and of spirit (as is done even by the Enlightenment which wants to know only of God the Father); for God the Father, by himself, is the God who is shut up within himself, the abstract god, therefore not yet the spiritual, not yet the true God” (EPM, p. 20). Already, I would suggest, we have a subtle articulation in religious polemical language. If the God of these religion is not true, it is also that they are not _yet_ true, for a cross-cultural movement of conceptual articulation has begun in which all human beings share. “God the Father” is not yet true, but not because this God does not exist, as some others do, or will. Rather, this God comes short of the articulation necessary to correspond to the ontologic-al premise of the Absolute that serves as the criterion for the truth of these religions.

When Hegel turns to the Greeks, one finds a surprising reversal. In the history of Christendom, it has been rare indeed for a figure to place the pagan Greeks and their hodge-podge collection of deities above the Hebrews and their monotheism. Yet this reveals that, for Hegel, unity is less a criterion of truth at this stage than articulation, manifestation, and determination. Thus, as was decisive for his break with Schelling, a determinate multiplicity marks an advance over an inchoate unity:

In the Greek religion God did, indeed, begin to be manifest in a definite manner. The representation of the Greek gods had beauty for its law, Nature raised to the level of mind. The Beautiful does not remain something abstractly ideal, but in its ideality is at once perfectly determinate, individualized. The Greek gods are, however, at first only representations for sensuous intuition or for picture-thinking, they are not yet grasped in thought. But the medium of sense can only exhibit the totality of mind as an asunder-ness, as a circle of independent, mental or spiritual shapes; the unity embracing all these shapes remains, therefore, a wholly indeterminate, alien power over against the gods (ibid.).

This is also an advance in that the Greek religion of the Beautiful draws on the entire human repertoire of responses in its worship. This is not a dessicated concept of the deity, but a sensuous apparition that begins to bridge the gap, which Christianity will decisively close, between the human and the divine. Christianity leaves behind the Greek dependence on sensation and its irresolvable disparities, for “in the Christian religion that the immanently
differentiated one nature of God, the totality of the divine mind in the form of unity, has first been manifested” (ibid.). The content has shifted, but the form of sensuousness and *Verstehen* remain. In his lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Hegel notes that, in representation, “the content remains for me something given—what is [called] positive and, to the extent [one is speaking] polemically, revealed, immediately given, i.e., not comprehended” (p. 249). The given, posited, revealed nature of representation remains, if not a scandal, then at least a provocation to philosophy. This content must be taken up by reason and its necessity made clear. As Hegel explained in relation to the representation of God as an existing being, “In representation there is a space. Thought demands to know the necessity of it. In representation there is [the content] ‘God is.’ Thought requires to know why it is necessary that God is” (p.406). In fact, religions lack the resources to transcend this form, with the result that “[t]his content, presented in the guise of picture-thinking, has to be raised by philosophy into the form of the Notion or of absolute knowledge which, as we have said, is the highest manifestation of that content” (EPM, p 20).

This then becomes the function of philosophy. In the modern division of labor, philosophy will take over from religion this content of *Geist* as Absolute, and will sacrifice its inadequate forms just as the *Bildern* of inadequate manifestations of *Geist* were sacrificed in history. Yet this description as a sacrifice too must give way to the sublimated language of *Aufhebung* (sublimation, sublation, abolishing, etc.), which, from an ambivalent and paradoxical term like sacrifice, keeps the positive and negative aspects not juxtaposed, but in living, constant motion. In describing philosophy’s work as both sublimating and canceling the truths of religion, one finds echoes of Byzantine and Reformation iconoclastic rhetoric. However, with Hegel’s agenda of negating picture-thinking from philosophy, it is not about any particular image, but a general formal transition from image to concept that philosophy, as Hegel sees it, must effect.
Conclusion

Hegel’s discourse constructs a central place for philosophy and the philosopher in the modern world. Because so many of the problems in world history resulted from people acting on contradictory principles or false conceptions, philosophy must set about resolving the fragmentation produced both by the specialization of knowledge and the differentiation of professions. While religion had once played this integrative role, its time for most had passed, and it was the work of the philosopher to take over this function and raise it to a new level. Although I suggest that the sacrificial rhetoric at the end of the *Phenomenology* played a crucial and perhaps singular role in Hegel’s oeuvre, I would note that, though religious “picture-thinking”, figural language and rhetoric in general now should give place to explicit conceptualization in Hegel’s text, it is of course impossible to employ a completely literal form of language. Indeed, throughout his texts Hegel returns to religious themes and language to articulate the nature of the work he claims for the philosopher. In the *Encyclopedia Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel frames this task in terms of the post-lapsarian condition itself:

Upon a closer inspection of the story of the Fall we find, as was already said, that it exemplifies the universal bearings of knowledge upon the spiritual life. In its instinctive and natural stage, spiritual life wears the garb of innocence and confiding simplicity; but the very essence of spirit implies the absorption of this immediate condition in something higher. The spiritual is distinguished from the natural, and more especially from the animal, life, in the circumstance that it does not continue a mere stream of tendency, but sunders itself to self-realization. But this position of severed life has in its turn to be suppressed, and the spirit has by its own act to win its way to concord again. The final concord then is spiritual; that is, the principle of restoration is found in thought, and thought only. The hand that inflicts the wound is also the hand which heals it (p. 43).

Hegel’s interpretation of this myth well captures his method of relating philosophy to religion by means of an immanent critique: just as in the *Phenomenology* Hegel turned modernity’s own means against its one-sided Enlightenment principles, in that same text Hegel turns the ownmost notion of religion against it by deploying sacrificial rhetoric.

To the religious specialists of his day, and most of those since, Hegel’s colonization of religion has seemed profanatory. To Bourdieu, this is an unavoidable result of the struggle
between the claimants to a community’s limited amount of cultural capital. Since it was primarily religious capital over which they struggled, this challenge could only appear to them as a profanation, for, from their perspective, philosophy of necessity had to remain an ancilla fides subordinated to religion. Given Hegel’s claim of philosophy’s superiority, to religious specialists the struggle with Hegel is cast in terms religious and ontological, not philosophical and epistemological, for

every dominated practice or belief is doomed to appear as profanatory, inasmuch as, by its very existence and in the absence of any intention of profanation, it constitutes an objective contestation of the monopoly over the administration of the sacred, and therefore of the legitimacy of the holders of this monopoly. In fact, its survival is always a resistance, that is, the expression of a refusal to allow oneself to be deprived of the instruments of religious production (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 13).

Hegel's unceasing claims to be a Lutheran made his contestation of the exegetical authority of the Lutheran ministers of his day an insurrection, and not an external attack. In laying claim to the tradition, Hegel arguably challenged their legitimacy and authority all the more effectively, which would allow the professor of philosophy to take over the reins of education just as Luther and Melanchthon had centuries before. As he sought to replace the representations of religion with the conceptions of philosophy, Hegel took a position in the iconoclastic tradition. If the university were to replace the church as the focal functional institution in the still-forming nation-state, the philosopher would be ideally placed to facilitate the transformation of society from a mere aggregation of individuals into a dynamic and interactive assemblage of distinct estates and spheres of civil society, a living manifestation of Geist.
4. The Ascetic, the Entrepreneur, & the Scholar: 

Webers’s Disenchanted Sacrificial Rhetoric

Introduction

This chapter takes the examination into the world of the scholar. No longer does the reader find explicit evocations of the sacred or the divine: in fact, Weber explicitly theorizes this disenchantment. This analysis will treat the divergent treatment of sacrifice and asceticism in two of Weber’s texts from two distinct periods, the pre- and post-war. In both texts sacrifice is useless expenditure, a figure of irrationality, though asceticism will receive very different treatment. Sacrifice plays no decisive role in the first text, the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (hereafter, PESC), but it does, especially in the peroration, of “Science [or “Scholarship,” Wissenschaft] as Vocation” [hereafter, “SaV”]. In addition to tracking the differences in audiences and historical context, this analysis explores the stakes involved in these deployments of sacrificial rhetoric. I examine how Weber uses his typologies and historical hypotheses to intervene in contemporary social issues. Primarily, I analyze how it is sacrificial rhetoric that allows Weber to champion the entrepreneur and the scholar, and thereby issue a call for them to take up their place in history and thereby serve the needs of the German nation.

As one of the first scholars to broach systematically the problems connected to comparative economic ethics, developmental economics, and the Realpolitik view of statecraft, Weber’s works form a pivotal node of influence in the history of scholarship. In addition, when one takes into account his detailed typology of religious agents, bold comparative hypotheses, and ambitious speculations about world-historical trends, Weber holds a singular place in the pantheon of modern scholars of religion. When one assesses the number of heuristic and hermeneutical tools he makes available to the scholar of religion, it is no surprise
that Geertz, in his influential essay, “Religion as a Cultural System” names Weber as one of the “transcendent” figures who have set down the framework and principles for the future study of religion and culture (1973, p. 87). The number of scholars Weber has influenced directly is vast, and include Talcott Parsons, Peter Berger, Wolfgang Schluchter and Randall Collins. This influence extends even farther if one includes Weber’s employment of the “ideal-types” method and his hypothesis of a world-historical transformation, the Entzauberung der Welt, or the “disenchantment of the world,” primarily known in anglophone sociology, via Berger, as the “secularization thesis.” Because of the prominence of these two aspects in Weber’s work, and because their elaboration has dominated the reception of Weber’s work, my analysis of Weber’s sacrificial rhetoric focuses upon the intersection of these two distinct but related theoretical contributions. This chapter will explore how Weber employs sacrificial rhetoric in a way that mobilizes his dramatis personae (the ideal-types) in order to produce a coherent and compelling sociological narrative of the development of rationality and its role in the emergence of Western hegemony.¹

In using the notion of sacrificial rhetoric to triangulate some of Weber’s ideal-types and his entzauberung-hypothesis, I hope to illustrate the way that, despite the implications of “rhetoric”, in this instance, as in many others, sacrificial rhetoric serves as the means to produce truth as well as obscure it, or, in other words, it allows the rhetorician and his auditors to achieve insight at the same time that it reproduces—and even creates—blindness. This type of analysis constitutes a rather atypical intervention in Weberian scholarship.² Because of the world-historical role Weber attributes to the emergence of science, and the marked scientism

¹As I will argue below, these two terms serve as the fault line separating a social-scientific from a rhetorical-aesthetic reading of Weber. To construct a coherent narrative Weber must employ his types, categories and processes with a minimal degree of internal tension and a maximum degree of consistency. To make the narrative compelling, however, beyond their concord with the aggregate of facts known about world history, the narrative must also present enough ironies, reversals, and theoretical return for the labor of redescribing historical facts into the sociological register to be worthwhile. Attending to the music made by these tensions and resolutions constitutes the primary objective of this chapter.

one finds in Weber’s texts, scholars have tended to treat Weber’s texts as neutral model-bearing and hypothesis-promoting media, and have paid relatively little attention to their rhetorical infrastructure. When mention is made of Weber’s rhetoric the tone is either one of aesthetic admiration (one thinks of Gerth and Mills describing Weber’s sentences as resembling “gothic cathedrals” in their foreword to *From Max Weber* [1958]) or epistemic exasperation. Against this tendency to negate the medium of textuality in the name of a neutral transmission of knowledge, the topic of sacrificial rhetoric, which cuts across all these objects of investigation, has the advantages of addressing Weber’s work as the interconnected system that it is.

In studying this specific conjuncture of ideal-types and hypothetical trends, sacrificial rhetoric will allow us to track different aspects of Weber’s œuvre in action. That is, one might analyze in isolation either the socio-religious agents described by the ideal-types, or the hypothetical trends to which they would wittingly or unwittingly contribute. By contrast, with sacrificial rhetoric as an organizing figure for the analysis, insofar as Weber uses it to describe the behavior of certain types of agents (the ascetic, the entrepreneur, and the scientist in particular) or applaud the progression of the trends that he hypothesizes (disenchantment, secularization and rationalization, in particular), I provide a vantage-point on the margin of the Weberian world that allows the analyst to address the effects of systematicity produced by Weber’s œuvre. As with the other writers studied here under the rubric of sacrificial rhetoric, the rhetorical framework will help to uncover, in addition to its objective truth-claims, the discursive and polemical contexts of Weber’s work. The starting point thus involves a shift of perspective: against the scientism that exerts a persistent shaping force in Weber’s work, we shall attempt to read Weber’s texts with close attention not only to their historico-sociological theses (the trends depicted and the typologies constructed), but also to their audience-specific rhetorical infrastructure and discursive effects. An initial premise of this analysis, then, is that texts are not merely the bearers of theories, and we must engage Weber’s not only as vehicles of information, but also as works, as persuasive interventions that continue to influence and shape generations of scholars, and thus as discursive events that do not cease to take place.
In addition to the validity and promise I see in a rhetorical analysis of Weber’s texts, an analysis that utilizes literary theories and social scientific explanations of sacrifice to foreground the figural networks of sacrificial rites opens many other possibilities. As a factor in the trends of *Entzauberung* and rationalization, Weber treats sacrifice and its close relative, asceticism, as major theoretical problems in his analysis, for few phenomena have so clearly contributed to the reign of culture over nature, and thus to world-historical developments, as these have. To Weber, sacrifice is not written into the fabric of the natural world, but is simply a cultural projection and product of the religious imagination, and, as such, constitutes a religious practice that is entirely explained by his theory of magic. For this reason, Weber's theory of sacrifice and my concept of sacrificial rhetoric are closely intertwined in that the social and not the natural effects of the rite are of utmost concern. Hence, this investigation’s theoretical construct, sacrificial rhetoric, clearly shares much with Weber's *Entzauberung*-hypothesis, since its initial premise is that, in its modern Western variants, sacrifice is less an object of description than an object of designation, less a practice to be found than one to be created.

Nonetheless, although Weber deploys sacrificial rhetoric at crucial sites in his texts, he tended to treat sacrifice as an improper material residue that clings to more legitimate religious forms, and thus did not closely analyze the tissue of ritual forms and speech-acts that not only frame but constitute sacrifice as a rite distinct from mere butchering. It is precisely this paradox, as with the other writers, that serves as the starting point for analysis: How could Weber engage in a mode of rhetoric whose organizing metaphor and figural networks invoke a practice that was invalid for him? In addition, from this outsider's perspective, can one draw the line between a neutral sacrificial theory and an interventionist sacrificial rhetoric? Also as with Luther and Hegel, their sacrificial rhetoric is not intrinsically interesting because it departs from communal usage (that is, though each does employ a unique usage of the term, for this usage to be rhetorically effective it cannot be unrecognizable to their audiences), but rather their usages are fascinating because in relation to their own premises and principles the term is anomalous. Thus, either as a strategic capitulation to their audiences, a necessary complication
of their positions, or a blending of both, where their theories deform in the face of contemporary social reception, their sacrificial rhetoric leaps off the page as a compelling object of scholarly scrutiny.

As a provisional response to these questions, it is clear that, whatever Weber thought of sacrifice, he was aware that it remained a compelling notion for his auditors, and thus constituted an important element in his rhetorical repertoire. Like Hegel’s conceptual sublation, here the term is used for the express reason that the religious connotations are still intact. These remain even if the world no longer provides a place for its public practice, but only for the description and designation of events, acts, and processes that take place, as it were, “off-stage”, as sacrifices. Although Weber refrained from using sacrifice in any speech act describing modern or contemporary behavior in the PESC, it plays an important role in “SaV” which I discuss later in this chapter. When addressing his fellow scholars as a distinct professional interest group, Weber does speak of sacrifice in both positive and negative terms but, finally, as something done by others, and to be eschewed by the rhetorical “us.” Does Weber exploit his auditors’ desire to sacrifice, even as he turns the term against the practice, since a valid and worthwhile sacrifice “for them” precisely requires the revocation of sacrifice? In exploring this equivocal use of the term I will relate it to the different groups Weber addresses.

As a preparation to the close-readings to follow, a few words at the outset are necessary in order to situate “sacrificial rhetoric” as an object of scrutiny in relation to Weber’s hypothetical process, the Entzauberung der Welt. According to this hypothesis, the modern world is defined in relation to an age-old critique of “magic” which, though once mounted by various religions in their rationalizing and systematizing phases, has led to unintended consequences. Unable to protect themselves against the astringent skepticism of their own critique of magic, this unwieldy instrument has led to a gradual diminution of religion’s own explanatory power and social authority. The exact causal mechanisms of this putative process seems to shift according to the context of Weber’s discussion. However, as an example of the Entzauberung der Welt, Weber cites the Protestant, and in particular Calvinist, rejection of the
sacraments as instruments of salvation:

That great historic process in the development of religions, the elimination of magic from the world which had begun with the old Hebrew prophets and, in conjunction with Hellenistic scientific thought, had repudiated all magical means to salvation as superstition and sin, came here to its logical conclusion. The genuine Puritan even rejected all signs of religious ceremony at the grave and buried his nearest and dearest without song or ritual in order that no superstition, no trust in the effects of magical and sacramental forces on salvation, should creep in (PESC, p. 105).

For the contemporary scholar of religion, the argument that traces a development in many religions, at the outset, but which is illustrated solely by Judeo-Christian examples, presents many problems concerning the provenance of the comparative study. Are Judaism and Christianity but one religion among others? One might think that, for Weber in this instance, developments in Judaism and Christianity were exemplary for other religions as well. Far from serving as a mere illustration of the general process, the Calvinist rejection of the sacraments is so thoroughgoing that that it is more than exemplary, and comes to serve as the ideal-type of the process. Nonetheless, the Calvinist, while the most methodical and total, does stand in a greater tradition, as Weber clarifies in a footnote: “The peculiar position of the old Hebrew ethic [...] rested [...] entirely on [...] the rejection of sacramental magic as a road to salvation” (PESC, p. 221-2). The ideal-type of the Puritan thus emerges as the figure who represents the telos of a millenia-long process, and one that continues into modernity.³

This prefigures a key point. Set in this context, the relation of this study to Weber’s hypothesis requires clarification. As demonstrated in an earlier chapter, Luther’s sacrificial rhetoric, which also effected a break with the sacramental mechanisms of the church and thus

³ One issue that remains unresolved is the exact relation between the religion’s displacement by science as the organon of knowledge concerning nature and society, and the loss of religion’s authority in modern societies: is one more the cause and the other the effect, or are they dialectically integrated? Furthermore, the mobility of the categories employed, and the way that the focus of analysis shifts from determinate (Christianity) to generic (“religion”) to indeterminate (“magic”), remains a problematic aspect of Weber’s texts, especially since most of the data for the Entzauberung-hypothesis, aside from inherited critiques of popular credulity in the ancient world and the religious discourses of the Far East, seems to derive from societies where Christianity is hegemonic.
paved the way for the Calvinist rejection of ritualism in general, forms a pivotal step in the *Entzauberung*-process. At the same time, Luther employed the figure of sacrifice in his commentary in order to preserve and revivify the reality of Jesus’s sacrifice as well as its role in the life of the Christian. The same kind of polyvalent effects we will discover at work in Weber’s text, for the following reason: insofar as sacrificial rhetoric is a mode of *rhetoric*, in the sense of not just a transmission of tradition but a self-reflexive elaboration of received idioms, it arguably constitutes an example of this trend of disenchantment; insofar as it remains stubbornly *sacrificial*, and preserves the idiom and scenario of sacrifice into a world that no longer sanctions the rite, sacrificial rhetoric constitutes a counterexample to the trend. How will this tension between instrument and effect affect Weber’s use of sacrificial rhetoric?

In several ways the *Entzauberung*-hypothesis stands in a paradoxical relationship to the rhetorical infrastructure of Weber’s own discourse. One hypothesis that I will argue here is that, just as, from Weber’s perspective, the historical religions employed disenchanting modes of discourse that *validated* their claims to authority vis-a-vis one rival phenomenon (namely, magic) but ultimately *undermined* that authority vis-a-vis another (namely, science), Weber’s use of sacrificial rhetoric in “SaV” both calls the community of scholars into being (or, what is the same thing, reaffirms the existence of a given collectivity by redefining its shared norms and goals) and also contradicts this complex speech-act in the very process of its performance. If I can demonstrate how specific choices that Weber makes in his various writings shift from the descriptive to the prescriptive register, then one of the indicators of the *Entzauberung*-hypothesis, the value-neutrality and objectivity of the scholar as a bearer of this emergent secular culture, will be seriously called into question. That said, my position is not that Weber’s discourse stands at odds to the express positions it espouses in a way that my discourse does not. Instead, I would argue that my text as well has blind spots and lacunae for which my discourse cannot account, and that this virtually defines the vocation of the scholar, and not, leaping ahead to the analysis to come, the raising of monuments that, though evanescently glorious and complete, are doomed to decay.
To introduce the following readings, I have suggested how sacrificial rhetoric serves as both an instrument of Entzauberung and its enemy, an instance of its progress and a firewall against it. Because of sacrificial rhetoric’s polyvalent proximity to Weber’s discourse, which both affirms and contests Weber’s Entzauberung-hypothesis, one needs to address Weber’s discourse on multiple terrains and with several itineraries. Hence, as opposed to an examination of Weber’s complete system of types and trends, this chapter will interrogate the obscure kinships that unite seemingly disparate phenomena. On one hand, we will attend to the complex interrelations between sacrifice, asceticism, and rationalization in regards to the world-historical roles they play in Weber’s developmental schemas. On the other hand, we will focus on Weber’s treatment of two figures from different social spheres but with marked affinities: the entrepreneur and the value-free, scientific scholar. In doing this, we will analyze the way that the Entzauberung-hypothesis informs Weber’s sacrificial rhetoric, which he uses to endow these two types with a progressive world-historical value virtually unique in his typology of the division of labor.

**The Entrepreneur**

The two types we will examine in light of Weber's sacrificial rhetoric are late products of the historical division of labor, the entrepreneur and the scientific, wertfrei scholar. Far more than other figures in his cast of characters, these are the ones for whom Weber serves as a philosophical spokesman. According to the analysis in PESC and “SaV”, the entrepreneur and the scientist stand at the end of a long history of ascetic transformation. Weber takes from Nietzsche the theme of the scientist as a descendant of the ascetic, but the entrepreneur understood in these terms is Weber's own contribution. In Weber’s analysis of the “heroic age”

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4 Nietzsche’s interpretation of asceticism as a primary expression of the will to power became a running theme in many of his mature works. Articulating a position that would have a great deal of influence on Weber, Nietzsche depicted asceticism as a way of life with a future that would live on in the scholar and the scientist. On this debt, see Szakolczai’s Max Weber and Michel Foucault: Parallel Life-Works (1998), a comparative study of Weber and Foucault and their responses to Nietzsche.
of entrepreneurial capitalism (beginning in the 16th, but culminating in the 17th and early 18th centuries) he speaks in terms of asceticism but not of sacrifice. While building on the work of exponents of bourgeois ethics such as John Locke (1963, 1975) and Adam Smith (1976), who each underscored the market value of prudence and thrift in the new economic order, Weber's excavation of the religious basis of these ethics marked a creative departure in the study of the rising bourgeoisie.

Weber chose to speak of the entrepreneur, and not the capitalist as an individual who has dispositional power over capital, or the bourgeoisie as an economic class. A question that emerges at the outset is, why speak of the entrepreneur and not, like Marx, the bourgeoisie? Liebersohn (1988) and Bendix (1962) each note that Weber worried considerably about the lack of a resilient middle-class faction in German politics. This is not to say that there were not owners of fixed and finance capital who could represent the propertied classes, but they tended to lack a historical perspective on the important role that the middle classes played in modern societies. That is, unlike their peers in France and England, the German bourgeoisie lacked the class consciousness to provide a counterbalance to residual aristocratic elements and the working classes. Bismarck’s Caesarism retained a place for aristocratic values in his consolidating nation-state, which only exacerbated the problems resulting from the fact that Germany never experienced its own bourgeois revolution.

As a tactic in the political issues of his day, it is not too much to say that in the PESC Weber chose a framework to turn his study of historical economic change into a paean to the heroic virtues of the bourgeoisie before they consolidated as a class. The capitalist could stand in for the entrepreneur, but Weber chose to make the risk encountered in investment criterial to

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5 It is difficult to underestimate the role that such philosophers played in articulating the rationale for middle class values. In making “prudence” and “enlightened self-interest” not only legitimate but ascendant values, these bourgeois philosophers helped overcome the kind of group-centered ethics that distinguished between kin, family and neighbor versus the stranger and the outsider. As trade was greatly enhanced by these developments, Weber makes this displacement of traditional communitarian values with bourgeois-economic values a key moment in economic rationalization. See Weber (1961).
his ideal-type, and the entrepreneur better carries this connotation. The capitalist, by contrast, could denote a simple relation of proprietorship, but the entrepreneur bespeaks a correlative mode of strategic behavior. Weber thereby avoids the marxian definition of the bourgeoisie as those who are factually determined by their relation to capital. Instead, Weber chooses to define them in relation to how they dispose of the capital, to distinguish the culture-bearers of emergent capitalism from the holdovers of feudalism.

Aside from the semantic implications of the ideal-types, there is a more proximate context to explain Weber’s preference this interpretation. Weber wrote in explicit opposition to Sombart’s depiction of the “quintessence” of capitalism. For Sombart, the privileged mode of behavior was the role of “calculation” in the rise of capitalism (1967, p. 125-9). Sombart’s calculability runs the risk of making the investment of capital into a purely functional, deductive mode of behavior. Instead of a formal mode of relation to resources, Weber emphasized risk to make the analysis more sociological, as indicated by his reference to “spirit” to speak of a group of like-minded people who have to take each other’s motivations into account. To avoid speaking of a group that was only then in the process of forming, combining the term “spirit” with ideal-type analysis allows Weber to negotiate this difficulty. Spirit indicates the transformation among a group of people as they begin to take account of the innovations introduced by disparate individuals among them and come to act in such a way that acknowledges the new parameters of behavior. This reference to spirit shifts the analysis decisively from calculability to the risk not only of venturing but of not venturing when the spirit of venture spurs one’s competitors.

With the PESC, Weber sought to effect social change through a sociological examination of the “heroic” age of capitalism, but woven into the analysis one can trace an epideictic treatment, an element of praise for the calling of the ascetic Protestant entrepreneur. In the service of this project, an exclusive emphasis on rationality and calculation would make the entrepreneur too closely akin to the bureaucrat. Weber was greatly distressed by the contemporary lack of a bourgeoisie as a German class conscious of its interest and role in history. Without
this class as a modernizing force in German life, and representing a force of rationalization distinct from the bureaucracy, the ballast of an aristocratic residue\textsuperscript{6} kept German society moored to authoritarian modes of thought and behavior. By employing scholarship within this reformist project, with Weber the baton passes from the idealist philosopher to the empirical scholar.

A more systemic reason, though, derives from the very nature of the PESC. In speaking of Weber’s "Protestant-Ethic" thesis, there is no general agreement about its precise premises or scope. Weber offered numerous qualifications of any direct monocausal reading (the Protestants gave birth to capitalism),\textsuperscript{7} which led to his comparative project on the economic ethic of the world religions, which would analyze the kind of brakes and hindrances these others maintained but Protestantism broke down. The problem with this, of course, is that it plants a nascent capitalism into the very heart of the human species, which religions too often hindered but which rationalization and disenchantment would inevitably overcome.

To study the interface of religion and economics, Weber emphasized the role of a specific type of individual. Weber did this in opposition to an economic determinism that discounted the role of individual agents in the processes of socio-historical development. Weber thought the Marxists of his day viewed religion as a residual phenomenon, since the individual as insignificant compared to the vast systems in which she is interpellated. This is not to say that Weber did not traffic in a similar kind of trend-watching; however, for him, such world-transforming developments must involve change in subjective orientation. Hence, in contrast to the vulgar marxism he opposed, religion for Weber is a critical cultural influence whose objective nature allows the sociologist to account for subjective responses and motivational factors that influence socio-historical development.

\textsuperscript{6} Weber surely had in mind not only the problem this class posed as a residual force in national politics, but also the groups that Smith excoriated with relish, the lackeys, sycophants, and other non-productive types that tended to accrete around aristocrats.

\textsuperscript{7} For the final word on these qualifications, see Weber’s “Anti-Critical Last Word on the Spirit of Capitalism” (1978). For other assessments, see Gordon (1980), Hennis (1988), and Troeltsch (1986).
Although the preference of individual over class is intrinsic to Weber's methodology\(^8\), this is not to say that any one individual is overwhelmingly important, even a Luther or a Calvin. Furthermore, the ideal-type does not focus exclusively on the psychological or the personal, but serves as shorthand for the agent shaped by social conditions and acting within a social environment. This is what the “spirit” in the title tries to capture: when a great number of interacting individuals come to share a similar value-framework, and each becomes, if not calculable, then at least predictable, on this basis. For this reason, after exploring the nature of the entrepreneur's asceticism, we then have the emergence of a new mode of normativity, one that retains the charisma of a pre-modern form of life precisely because of the connotations of sacrifice that Weber employs: the ascetic Protestant entrepreneur eschews the comfort of commodities to embrace the risks of capital, and capital one can only venture and accumulate but cannot hoard.

In PESC Weber restored the individual to the center of the analysis, first, by focusing on ideal-types and the social shaping of individual motivation and, second, by focusing on the transformation of asceticism as a value-laden, motivational structure. Weber proposed that “[o]ne of the fundamental elements of the spirit of modern capitalism, and not only of that but of all modern culture: rational conduct on the basis of the idea of the calling, was born—that is what this discussion has sought to demonstrate—from the spirit of Christian asceticism” (p. 180). In effect, this asceticism provided the values that catalyzed the gargantuan development of industry and capitalism in modern Europe and America. The Protestant form of asceticism allowed the scope of production to exceed the traditional limits of need and, since it tended to minimize consumption at the same time that it maximized production, promoted the reinvestment of surplus production back into the production process itself. Thus, it is characteristic,

\(^8\) This concern for subjectivity was a direct consequence of Weber’s social nominalism, a term Timasheff used (1955, p. 182) to describe Weber’s position on the “reality” of society. If Durkheim would be a social “realist” because he argued for the objective reality of “society”, would be a social “realist”, and Weber, who argued that “society” was only a secondary effect of the interaction of individuals, would be a social “nominalist”.
not to say criterial, of the entrepreneur to break with the immediate relation to natural desires. Living in accordance with the economic ethic of Protestant asceticism, the entrepreneur does not consume the proceeds of his labor, but reinvests the capital in his ventures. Labor and accumulation become parts of the entrepreneur's overall economic activity, but these do not become truly capitalist unless they culminate in investment that closes the ascetic-entrepreneurial cycle. For Weber to describe the rising bourgeoisie's economic activity as "labor" and not such resolving moments as "investment" or "accumulation" is a choice whose rationale and consequences brings us to the topic of sacrificial rhetoric. This analysis seeks to show that it is only by way of Weber's sacrificial rhetoric that wholly plausible "sacrifices" of the underclasses ⁹ are not described as such, while he casts the discoverers of a new form of voluptuous pleasure—which sees a mean in every end, the only end the accumulation of the means of accumulation—as the stoic agents of heroic asceticism.

From Sacrifice to a Modernizing Asceticism

Weber closely linked the modernizing aspects of asceticism to the type of the entrepreneur. Weber does this by explicating in detail the transformations of asceticism in pre-capitalist Christianity. Our analysis of Weber now shifts from the analysis of types to the explication of Weber's historical hypotheses. Asceticism is a form of practice, but also, in Weber's trends of rationalization and secularization, a topical hinge or mediating element between an archaic past and the most modern social activity. ¹⁰ Although Weber regarded asceticism as ultimately irrational, it was also one of the primary means of disenchancing magical practices. Weber treats sacrifice under the rubric of magic, understood as an anti- or pre-rational mode of worship. In

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⁹ In the introduction I discussed Marx's interpretation of Smith's labor theory of value as fundamentally sacrificial. One could also point to Marx's account of the primitive accumulation of capital during which the peasantry made the inaugural sacrifice by means of which great parcels of capital in the form of land was made available for accumulation.

¹⁰ Jameson developed this view that Weber employed "vanishing mediators" to make his historical trends more viable. See "The Vanishing Mediator; or, Max Weber as Storyteller" (1973).
the following quotation Weber depicts the change in ritual meanings as consequent upon shift-
ing conceptions of the deity, namely, as hinging upon the shift from divinities as arbitrarily-
motivated personages towards deities defined and rationalized in relation to an ethical code:

Suffering, voluntarily created through mortification, changed its meaning with the
development of ethical divinities who punish and reward. Originally, the magical coer-
cion of spirits by the formula of prayer was increased through mortification as a source
of charismatic states. Such coercion was preserved in mortification by prayer as well as
in cultic prescriptions of abstinence. This has remained the case, even after the magical
formula for coercing spirits became a supplication to be heard by a deity. Penances
were added as a means of cooling the wrath of deities by repentance, and of avoiding
through self-punishment the sanctions that have been incurred (1958, p. 274).

Rationalization of dogma and theodicy paves the way for ritual and practical changes.\textsuperscript{11} The
function and goal of asceticism shifts from an irrational supplication towards an ethico-
theological practice of regulation and normalization. By means of this shift from a tyrannical
to a moral deity, the magical connotations of sacrifice give way to its ascetic components.
Hence asceticism, despite its roots in a magical worldview, serves as a mediating factor
between traditional (sacrificing) and modern (economic) world views. Asceticism is thereby
able to change values—forward-looking in its sacrificial past, backward-facing in the present
until it adapts completely to modern economic processes. In leaving this magical past,
asceticism symbolizes the progressive capacity of religions.

Among most world religions, but especially Judaism and Christianity, the entire reli-
gious essence is defined by a dynamic anti-magical tendency: “The peculiar position of the old
Hebrew ethic, as compared with the closely related ethics of Egypt and Babylon, and its develop-
ment after the time of the prophets, rested […] entirely on this fundamental fact, the
rejection of sacramental magic as a road to salvation” (\textit{PESC}, p. 222). Sacrificial rituals first
get rationalized because of the changing nature of their recipient, for as the ritual shifts along
the efficacy-axis from magical to moral effects, it ceases to influence the world in a direct way

\textsuperscript{11} This primacy of the doctrinal foregrounds a rationalistic sense of religion that figures like Mauss
would contest. For Mauss, doctrines develop as second-order descriptions and rationalizations of ritual changes,
so that the doctrinal is not conceived as an autonomous or distinct mode of religious life. How this would
change Weber’s sense of asceticism, and its role in history, is a compelling question.
and becomes a type of utterance, a symbolic representation of obedience and a token of gratitude and penance. Sacrificial rites then must become moral gestures and not material tokens expressing the relationship.

Despite these doctrinal rationalizations, doxic conceptions of sacrifice’s magical efficacy persist, even as the ritual itself gets translated into mitigated and routinized forms of asceticism. With these developments forming a continuity between Judaism and Christianity, these two religions serve as the organizing pre-modern forces in Weber's postulated historical trends. Furthermore, because “sacrifice” gets outmoded by the trends of rationalization and secularization, one must read sacrifice as a term into Weber's rhetoric in the PESC. That is, sacrifice is an external but influential force at key junctures, with the result that one can trace the shape of its absence at key places. It will be absent because, as opposed to the utterly magical, irrational, and outmoded nature of sacrifice, Weber foregrounds the rationalizing and progressive side of asceticism while, at the same time, retaining its links to a magical past in order to pull this talisman out at key moments of his argument to support the irrationality of the calling and the role of the religion in the development of capitalism.) For these reasons, modernizing asceticism and outmoded sacrifice cannot mingle—until the two meet at key moments, such as the figure of the tradition-oriented laborer and the tragic future of the cage-bound entrepreneur, types whose social context comes to contrast and negate their express intentions.

For Weber sacrifice was doomed to the past while asceticism had a future. That is, asceticism, in its mode as a mitigation of sacrifice, becomes a bearer of rationality. But at the level of the posited, often religious value spheres for which one cannot offer justifications or proof since they function as the ultimate principles from which one would deduce justifications and proof, there is a continuity between them, for each is only the historical instantiation of a Weberian socio-cultural constant: namely, the ultimate irrationality of every end that cannot be taken dialectically as some sort of means. Even as the process of rationalization reshaped the world, and capitalism took hold in the modern era, asceticism and methodological organization, as the progressive element in practice, continued to give access to charisma, with all its
magical residue. Weber’s heroic treatment of the Protestant ascetic calls forth just such a charismatic—and thus magical—response. By casting the behavior of the entrepreneur as ascetic, Weber keeps a consecrating element of religiosity alive in capitalist practices.

Asceticism Mediates Between Sacrifice & Calling

Asceticism is one of the few terms to stay with Weber from pre-history to the present. Though it has magical origins, from sacrifice to asceticism to the calling it retains this irrationality even as it constitutes the primary means towards the rationalization of behavior. Through several distinct historical stages, “Christian asceticism […] has had a definitely rational character in its highest Occidental forms as early as the Middle Ages, and in several forms even in antiquity. […] In the rules of St. Benedict, still more with the monks of Cluny, again with the Cistercians, and most strongly the Jesuits, it has become emancipated from planless other-worldliness and irrational self-torture” (PESC, p. 118, [emphasis added]). With the Cluny and Cistercian reforms, the mode of monastic asceticism turns from physiological hardship to organized economic behavior. By sharpening the distinctions between irrational and rational asceticism, Weber even gives the impression that, in confronting these irrational aspects, asceticism overcomes the negative elements on its own, under its own impetus, without the impingement of social factors. Asceticism so understood would be a microcosm of the rationalizing world as a whole, insofar as the disciplined tension it involves constitutes the very interface between a rationalizing agency and the irrational, resistant res of the subject.

In the same passage as above, Weber quickly turns from the irrationality asceticism overcomes to describe the beachheads of rationality it has gained:

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13 A more specific treatment would see the various modes of rationality developed within the monastic institutions as pegged to the type of clientele (the aristocracy at some, the trading classes in others, reformed sinners of all classes in still others).
It had developed a systematic method of rational conduct with the purpose of over-
coming the _status naturae_, to free man from the power of irrational impulses and his de-
pendence on the world and on nature. It attempted to subject man to the supremacy of a purposeful Will, to bring his actions under constant self-control with a careful con-
sideration of their ethical consequences (_PESC_, p. 118-9).

Nevertheless, asceticism, as a rational transformation of sacrifice, still carried forward an irra-
tional core. Because of its paradoxes it is useful: though worldly as opposed to other-worldly asceticism is defined by its methodical means, it still posits ends that are ultimately irrational, which forestalls the need for Weber to ascribe an end to the individual’s calling. What is rational in asceticism is its methodicalness: indeed, it would seem to reside entirely in—and as—its methods and means as these shift from otherworldly to worldly ends. The utter dis-
 junct between the means that one employs (worldly work) and the ends that one desires (other-
worldly salvation) constitutes the heart of the Protestant scandal, and the irrationality of every call.¹⁴

From these brief passages we get the essential elements of Weber's Protestant asceticism: the rationality of a methodical and disciplined lifestyle, coupled with the irrationality of an end pursued so single-mindedly that it is scandalous from the perspective of natural or earthly values. In the course of delineating the contributions to capitalism made by the Protestant mode of asceticism, Weber provides only the briefest hints that other conditions were on hand to permit the development of capitalism to proceed. That is, in order to empha-
size the role of Protestant asceticism, Weber has to take other elements necessary to the devel-
opment of capitalism for granted. These elements have a history too, though, and Weber offers a more or less arbitrary historical demarcation regarding the inaugural moment of capitalism.

¹⁴ Though scandalous on many fronts, the Protestant ascetic entrepreneur reaches a peak of irrationality and scandal because, if one measures rationality in terms of means-end propriety, or the adjustment of one to the other, then monastic ascetics, who believed in their works, were more “rational” than Protestant ascetic entrepreneurs, whose means (ascetic worldly behavior) explicitly could not achieve the posited end (salvation).
Asceticism Contra Eudaemonism

After examining asceticism in its relations to magical practices such as sacrifice, which it rejects and replaces, and to rational capitalist enterprise, whose emergence it prepares, it would be tempting to think that we have an adequate grasp of the phenomenon. The pursuit of a methodical and disciplined way of life, however, seems hardly specific enough to distinguish asceticism as a unique historical force. A brief comparison with Catholic monasticism and pagan husbandry should help us delineate the contours of Protestant asceticism more clearly.

In keeping with his treatment of ideal-types in the PESC, when he discusses monasticism Weber does not describe the feudal system and the monastery's place within it, nor the forms of discipline that shaped the days and years of the monks. Instead, he describes the effect on the religious imagination of the monk as an ideal-type:

> the most important thing [among Catholics] was the fact that the man who, *par excellence*, lived a rational life in the religious sense was, and remained, alone the monk. Thus asceticism, the more strongly it gripped an individual, simply served to drive him farther away from everyday life, because the holiest task was definitely to surpass all worldly morality (PESC, p. 120-121).

One way that Weber denies the continuity of ascetic practices in favor of the singularity of the Protestant form is to insist that everything changes once the ideal figure of the monk is rejected by the Reformers. Yet according to Weber's ideal-type analysis, this totalizing gesture, the desire to overcome desire and reject the world entirely, remains a part of asceticism even in its Protestant variety. With Protestant asceticism, however, the totalizing gesture changes value: instead of rejecting the world as a whole, the test becomes the degree to which one can embrace it and adjust to its demands. But the ideal persists, only with changed methods.

Once Catholicism and its self-punishing, irrational element is left behind, asceticism leaves the monastery and serves for Weber as a short-hand term for behavior that is methodical and planned as well as prudential and anti-appetitive, for “[t]his worldly Protestant asceticism acted powerfully against the spontaneous enjoyment of possessions; it restricted consumption,

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15 This is the gap that both Silber (1993) and Kaelber (1998) address.
especially of luxuries” (PESC, p. 170-1). Unlike otherworldly asceticism, with Protestant asceticism the project is not at all about going hungry to be an entrepreneur. Instead of a rejection of consumption, the Protestants discovered temperance, a rejection, not of consumption, but of the pleasure that accompanies consumption. This rejection of pleasure and luxury, however, was not an otherworldly end in-itself, but was instead the dynamic interface between the rational and the irrational in the ascetic project:

The campaign against the temptations of the flesh, and the dependence on external things […] was […] not a struggle against the rational acquisition, but against the irrational use of wealth. But this irrational use was exemplified in the outward forms of luxury which their code condemned as idolatry of the flesh, however natural they had appeared to the feudal mind. On the other hand, they approved the rational and utilitarian uses of wealth which were willed by God for the needs of the individual and the Community [anstatt der von Gott gewollten rationalen und utilitarischen Verwendung für die Lebenszwecke des einzelnen und der Gesamtheit] (PESC, p. 170-1; p. 145).

To Weber, the Protestant problematization of economic behavior reduced to a critique of certain modes of consumption and investment, not a rejection of property or gain. It is telling that here we see Weber refer to rational versus irrational uses, not of “wealth”, but of “expenditure” [Verwendung], a term that blurs the distinction between liquid or fungible assets like money or consumer goods and capital as an instrument of wealth accumulation. One wonders how one would distinguish a rational from an irrational investment of capital, for instance, since every such venture entailed risks by definition. Is this rhetoric of “rationality” only a way to describe the successful entrepreneur as more rational—and thus more deserving—than the unsuccessful one? If so, beyond the transition from the focus on the individual to the group as it develops through the interaction of isolated individuals, it is very difficult indeed to clarify the distance between Weber’s description and the agent’s own report concerning the significance of this success, other than, of course, a translation into a social scientific idiom.

Another point of contention arises from the binary relation between the “natural” modes of consumption regnant in feudalism and the rational modes of asceticism in early
Protestant capitalism. For purposes of illustration this simplifies things for Weber, but never has there been a culture which accepts at face value a “natural” mode of consumption. In every cultural formation there is acceptance and rejection of varying modes of consumption, and usually these are not categorical but matters of degree. In comparing the feudal mansion and the bourgeois household, which might be similar in scale, a scold could see distinctions that are more aesthetic than ethical. Of course, from the Protestant viewpoint, since the aesthetic appreciation of worldly goods was regarded as seductive and sinful, the aesthetic cannot be separated from the ethical, but the economic significance of these aesthetic distinctions are mixed at best.

At another level, it is somewhat obscurantist to frame the emergent Protestant entrepreneur against the feudal mode of social organization. The feudal mode of social organization, defined in relation to the three estates of the oratores, bellatores, and laboratores, or the clergy, the aristocrats, and the serfs (Duby, 1968, 1980), was altered almost beyond recognition by the rise of the towns and an urban middle class during the agricultural and commercial revolutions of the tenth to thirteenth centuries. Nevertheless, the contrast for Weber and the Protestants he discusses is too telling to pass over. As Weber puts it, “over against the glitter and ostentation of feudal magnificence which, resting on an unsound economic basis, prefers a sordid elegance to a sober simplicity, they set the clean and solid comfort of the middle-class home as an ideal” (PESC, p. 171). Weber frames the opposition with the Protestant middle-class against aristocrats, not the peasantry, since from the view of the latter the Protestants might appear more opulent than ascetic. When Protestants defined their social principles against “feudal” forms, as Weber did in the passage above, it was against the residues of feudalism which had been slowly passing for centuries. Hence, a more illuminating contrast would be with the banking families of the Italian peninsula, the Fuggers or the leading members of the Hanseatic league. But then again, the distinctions here would be faint and marginal at best, and such a comparison would put Weber too close to the conclusions of Sombart, for whom capitalism began not with the Protestants but precisely with such refinements in monetary calcula-
tion and financial instruments. Weber compares the Protestants with their perceived predecessors, the aristocrats from whom they self-consciously strove to distance themselves, and not their contemporary competitors, which makes the Protestant ascetics seem more unique, perhaps, than they really were.

Instead of such a comparison, I would like to take Weber at the very level of analysis that he desired: that of the methodical rationalization of behavior in the quotidian pursuit of wealth. For such a comparison, given Weber’s emphasis on the Protestant household rather than any one individual, the closest type of organization in the West would be, not the feudal estate, but the Greek oikos, or household. Comparing these we might discover other distinguishing features as we analyze the relative singularity of the institution. Whether one turns to the eudaemonistic ethics of Aristotle\(^{16}\) or the depiction of the ideal practitioner of husbandry in Xenophon, the adult male Greek as the manager of familial resources stands in favorable comparison to the Puritan as a hands-on and diligent steward of wealth.\(^{17}\) Despite the similarity between the eudaemonistic Greek husband and the ascetic Protestant father, Weber nonetheless depicts Protestant asceticism as deeply opposed to any eudaemonic ethics:

> the *summum bonum* of this ethic, the earning of more and more money, combined with the strict avoidance of all spontaneous enjoyment of life, is above all completely devoid of any eudaemonistic, not to say hedonistic, admixture. It is thought of so purely as an end in itself, that from the point of view of the happiness of, or utility to, the single individual, it appears entirely transcendental and absolutely irrational (PESC, p. 53).

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16 Briefly, happiness (*eudaemonia*), rightly construed, is the highest good. To be happy, though, one must live a philosophically sound and socially honorable life. Thus, far from hedonism, pagan *eudaemonia* is not hedonistic in the slightest, and incorporates a complex social ethic as well. When Weber virtually equates the two in the following excerpt, he is being disingenuous. It is virtually unheard of for a society’s ethic to embrace any and every natural desire.

17 In Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus*, Ischomachus instructs Socrates on the particulars of running a well-ordered estate. For the husband to run it well requires immense energy, methodical application, and an attitude that embraces constant learning. On the topic that Weber saw as pivotal to the development of capitalist wage-labor, conscientious workers motivated by incremental wages and not a fixed sum, Ischomachus places the burden on the master and not the workers: “truly great is the man who can accomplish great deeds by the strength of his mind rather than by muscle, [...] for ruling over willing subjects, in my view, is a gift not wholly human but divine, because it is a gift of the gods: and one that is obviously bestowed on those who have been initiated into self-control” (1994, XXI.8-12, p. 209).
How then might one account for the surface similarities of pagan husbandry and Protestant entrepreneurism? If the Protestant ascetic rejects the happiness of eudaemonism, it is because of his anxiety about salvation, not because he rejects the goods that make life livable. Thus the Protestant ascetic rejects “happiness”, but rejects it abstractly, and not materially. For this reason Weber rejects the term “self-denying” as a description of Protestant asceticism. This allows Weber to avoid overt sacrificial connotations with this asceticism, for it is not the self that is denied, but the self that does the denying—saying no to the haphazard, the short-term, the dissolution represented by any pleasure that is an end in and of itself. In other words, the ascetic transposition of any action or goals into means reaches towards an ever-receding horizon of ends, a problematic that instantiates, in novo, the crisis of instrumental rationality. If the Protestant ascetic rejects happiness, he does so more in theory than in practice, or, better, more in the dispositional way he affirms his economic success, not by avoiding it.

For the Protestant ascetic, then, the given natural goods of life have to be rationed but not denied beyond every concern with health or well-being. However, when one accumulates capital and commodities but rejects the pleasures of accumulation and possession, when, in short, the economic agent pursues the means to satisfy well-being but rejects that end, in what way precisely is this ascetic? When one rejects gluttony, but does not embrace fasting, is this not to embrace the Aristotelian mean? In what way does this asceticism differ from the mean-ethic of Aristotle, which purposefully pursues the highest good as happiness? Or the marks of the good husband in Xenophon? Thus, again, we see the rejection of eudaemonism in theory but not in practice. The reason for this is that, rhetorically, ancient eudaemonism is not sacrifi-

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18 This position stands in sharp distinction from the realism of Aristotle’s ethics, where the minimal necessities of life are regarded as essential to the pursuit of virtue.

19 In the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle discusses a triadic ethical model that is fundamentally distinct from the dualism that is endemic to Judaism and Christianity. In it, between any two excessive forms of behavior, say cowardice and rashness, there is a third term, courage, that constitutes the ethical ideal. My point here is that this ethic is not so different from the rational, methodical ethic of the Protestant ascetic. This Christian sacrificial pathos defined against the Aristotelian tradition requires more exploration.
cial, and does not convey any sacrificial pathos. To reject this helps Weber construct his paean to a supposedly non-eudaemonistic, unprecedentedly ascetic entrepreneurial class. Of course, the pagan husband practiced sacrifice in a much more literal sense than the Protestant father, but this practice was a delimited and specific religious practice, as opposed to the diffused and pathos-laden sacrificial asceticism that Weber attributes to the Protestant entrepreneur. If the behavior, a methodical and rationalizing pursuit of wealth, did not differ much between the two, then the primary difference seems to be the emotion and pathos of the Protestant condition, which the pagan would have rejected, if not on ethical, then at least on aesthetic grounds. Once asceticism has left otherworldly monasticism behind and has become this-worldly again, we have a Christian ethic that approaches … the heights of pagan ethics, but with a bonus—the surplus-value of ascetic charisma produced by the effective use of sacrificial rhetoric.

Asceticism or Addiction?

It is this same type of abstract rejection of happiness and pleasure on principle, while pursuing its material conditions in practice, that allows Weber to describe the entrepreneur, maniacally committed to the accumulation and investment of capital, as a *nouveau* ascetic. To do this Weber employs a narrow definition of desirable goods, whereby consumer goods are desirable in that they satisfy “natural” needs but forms of capital as means of investment and accumulation are not. In this way, Weber defines investment capital as an unnatural and undesirable object so that its avid pursuit can remain ascetic. The desire for capital accumulation is thus tacitly depicted as an irrational end, to distinguish it from simple, eudaemonistic greed. But it would be as legitimate to describe the Protestant pursuit of capital as the discovery of a new mode of desire, one that is unfettered by the physiological constraints of satiety or need. In this light, the Protestant ascetic would be a member of the libertine *avant-garde*, a figure of delirious desire, an addict. It is not difficult to find passages where

20 Because of the machinic nature of capital in its manifestations of fixed capital, the notion of the unconscious as a machine connects directly here. The pursuit of *délire* and *jouissance* as an integral element of
Nietzsche excoriates the pathological basis of Christian asecticism, and this diagnosis could certainly extend to Weber’s entrepreneur. Even if one were to dismiss the polemical edge to Nietzsche’s diagnosis, current discourse in sexuality studies and queer theory also underscore the unstable nature of the subject, not the autonomous governor of a free will.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, for one, has taken the lead from Foucault’s *History of Sexuality* volumes to write provocatively about the category of the “addict” as an unstable and expansive element of contemporary juridico-medical discourses. She writes of the fundamental changes in the taxonomies that circulate in the natural sciences once they overlap with the medico-juridical categories in which the expanding nation-state invests. At first, the notion of addiction was tied directly to a specific type of substance: “From as far back as Mandeville,” she argues, “the opium product, [...] the cartel-vulnerable commodity crop for export as opposed to the subsistence crop for home use, was seen as having a unique ability to pry the potentially unlimited trajectory of demand, in its users, conclusively and ever-increasingly apart from the relative homeostasis of need” (1993, p. 135). Opium, capital, religion—all are objects of desire whose consumption is unbound by merely physical needs.

But this substance was really only the focusing point for an aspect of subjectivity. As addiction traveled from a relation to a substance towards putatively “aberrant” forms of sexuality, as with Kraft-Ebbing, new aspects of addiction came into view. If not bound to a substance or a physiological response, “then the locus of addictiveness cannot be the substance itself and can scarcely even be the body itself, but must be some overarching abstraction that governs the narrative relations between them” (p. 131). The name of this abstraction, distilled from the subject, is a will that should be free but is not. Sedgwick locates a launching point for the mobilization of the will which will soon single out the addict in the Reformation, a particularly ironic notion since Luther explicitly proscribed this notion in his polemic against capital tells us more about its operation than the capitalist hero construed as rationalizing ascetic. On this topic, see Deleuze and Guattari (1977, 1987).
Erasmus’s *De libero arbitrio*, entitled *De servo arbitrio*, or The Bondage of the Will. The framework of belief and assent, however, entails certain notions of the freedom of the will that Luther’s theological strictures were not able to contain. As Sedgwick argues,

> So long as an entity known as “free will” has been hypostatized and charged with ethical value (a situation whose consolidating moment in the Reformation already revealed, at the same time, the structure of its dramatic foundational fractures and their appropriability to the complex needs of capitalism) […] for just so long has an equally hypostatized ‘compulsion’ had to be available as a counterstructure always internal to it, always requiring to be ejected from it (p. 133-4).

After these complications, when the topic does return to the fixed object, the narratives that accrete around these objects matter much more than before. Sedgwick well captures the power of these cultural narratives, and the obvious interest in avoiding becoming an object of them:

> In the taxonomic reframing of a drug user as an addict, what changes are the most basic terms about her. From a situation of relative homeostatic stability and control, she is propelled into a narrative of inexorable decline and fatality, from which she cannot disimplicate herself except by leaping into that other, even more pathos-ridden narrative called *kicking the habit*. From being the subject of her own perceptual manipulations or indeed experimentations, she is installed as the proper object of compulsory institutional disciplines, legal and medical, that, without actually being able to do anything to “help” her, nonetheless presume to know her better than she can know herself—and indeed, offer everyone in her culture who is not herself the opportunity of enjoying the same flattering presumption (p. 131).

Once medico-juridical discourses have taken this identity-construct as the object of their practices, it is sure to have a role to play in society at large. Indeed, the figure of the addict has become such a mobile entity that its moorings loose from any particular substance (such as opium, alcohol, or other intoxicants) or behavior (such as homosexual acts, crime, gambling, etc.). This unmooring of the addict from any particular substance or behavior in the world goes so far that we have the strangest entity of them all, the *exercise addict*. As Sedgwick concludes, “if exercise was addictive, nothing couldn't be; the exercise addict was really the limit case for evacuating the concept of addiction, once and for all, of any necessary specificity of substance, bodily effect, or psychological motivation” (p. 132). Even though the addict was
once the figure of a subject whose exercise of will was lacking or insufficient, now “the assertion of will itself has come to appear addictive” (p. 133).\textsuperscript{21}

Her essay succeeds in destabilizing the dichotomy of addict/free subject, and proliferates moments of compulsion and voluntarism along the axes of two types of narrative, that of becoming-addicted and kicking-the-habit. If the Protestant ascetic could be depicted within the narrative of “kicking the habit” of a eudaemonistic pursuit of consumer goods and other satisfactions, the Protestant ascetic would simultaneously fit into another narrative, that of “becoming addicted” to the pursuit of the accumulation of capital. We would thus have to split the unity of our singular ideal-type of the “entrepreneur” and speak instead of different species embedded in different narratives, the ascetic consumer as opposed to the addicted entrepreneur.

With Sedgwick we shift from the ascetic entrepreneur to the addict or libertine, to the point that we now have the simultaneous addict and kicker. This underscores the arbitrary but powerful effect of sacrificial rhetoric, even when it strives to cover its tracks and employ cognate terms like “asceticism” and abolish the term “sacrifice” altogether. The moral credit that accrues to the entrepreneur by virtue of Weber's rhetoric can reverse to a debit by employing the simple tactic of re-describing a form of abstinence as an inverse mode of desire, which monastic practices taught quite well. It is only Weber's deft handling of asceticism against the irrationality of sacrifice, and his insistence on the terminology of asceticism, with its sacrificial overtones, that keeps more unflattering depictions of the early Protestant entrepreneur foreclosed. The entrepreneur-as-ascetic requires a narrative to provide the values and framework in which to understand his monomaniacal pursuit of wealth accumulation as an instance of a certain form of ethical model, that of asceticism inflected in the Protestant ethos. This also requires a second-order abstraction, rationalization, which situates asceticism in a broad frame-

\textsuperscript{21} Sedgwick turns to habit as an outside of the addiction/voluntarism dichotomy. Even though she dismisses Nietzsche along the way, he has much to say about the effect of habit in the mode of a rhetoric that is significantly deflated from that of sacrificial rhetoric.
work to allow it to partake both of the magical charisma of the religious sphere and the sober rationalism of the economic sphere.

This is not to impugn Weber’s treatment of the ascetic Protestant entrepreneur, for the historical context made his advocacy of the middle class bear a different polemical value than this analysis carried after its translation into an American context. Nonetheless, the addicted entrepreneur has benefited from numerous normalizing discourses, with the effect that the queerness of this type of behavior has been effectively masked. Weber’s text contributed to this normalization greatly, of course, even as he pushed the heroic figures of the ideal-type of the entrepreneur into the past. In addition, by speaking of spirit, Weber situates the entrepreneur, in both ascetic and addicted aspects, in relation to other such entrepreneurs, and their numbers lead each to think the others normal, indeed, as embodying the norm of this way of life as completely than him or herself. This projection of venturesome rationality and steadfast methodicalization onto others contributed as much to developing the spirit of entrepreneurial self-consciousness as any of Calvin’s strictures on salvational mechanisms. Thus, Weber’s turn to the “spirit” of capitalism—a kind of collective mentality that is both shared to a degree but also attributed to others when there is no counterindicating evidence to block the attribution—22—is both a sociological description and the pleased self-regard of this class, their “tale of the tribe” that Weber developed and then related in various narratives.

This is no more rhetorical, moreover, than the Protestant redefinition of worldly ends as mere means toward the proof of otherworldly salvation. To make an end a means—is this rational, irrational, or sacrificial? It depends upon one’s rhetorical resources. By positing asceticism as a second-order mode of life structured in sharp opposition to merely natural

22 In a way, Weber’s movement from individual to spirit is never more true than when we speak of capital, for its use-value is defined in relation not to one’s own needs, but to those of untold and unknowable others. The only limits to capital’s use-value in any particular instance involves not only estimates regarding the scope of the market (with one widget per person) but an intensive estimation including the effect of advertising. Thus capital, just like opium, becomes a consumer product whose demand-curve has little to do with the physiological needs of any one individual.
drives, and not as the re-education of the body or the redefinition of values—that is, not as one mode of acculturation among others, but as anti-nature itself—asceticism retains a sacrificial aura, even while engaging in the same earthly pursuits as those eudaemonistic others. Such is the power of sacrificial rhetoric.

Again, this is not to say that Weber’s account of the Protestant entrepreneur as an ascetic is wrong, or a misattribution. In describing these Protestants as themselves subjectively voluntaristic but actually operating according to iron laws of rationalization and secularization, Weber attributes an ersatz normativity to entrepreneurial behavior which my analysis, borrowing from Sedgwick, would undermine. At the very least, both narratives, that of ascetic rationalization and addictive libertinage, apply equally well to the Protestant entrepreneur, though the former better captures this subject’s own ideals.

I have argued that by means of sacrificial rhetoric Weber was able to purify the behavior of the Protestant entrepreneur by connecting it to the rigors of post-monastic asceticism. Although arguably more methodical and systematic than the behavior of other economic agents in different historical contexts, Weber describes the economic role of the Protestant ascetic as unprecedented precisely because he conjoined two seemingly opposed principles, the sacrificial ethos of the religious virtuoso and the pecuniary motives of the capitalist entrepreneur. Although I argued that the figure of the ascetic is inherently unstable, and easily transforms into its moral opposite, the addict, by his canny usage of sacrificial rhetoric Weber is able to prevent this flip in polarity and keep his rational ascetic capitalist from becoming a libertine addicted to an emergent form of accumulation. Nonetheless, with a more nuanced account of the sacrificial nature of asceticism, which takes into account Sedgwick’s contribution (and thus also Foucault’s, Freud’s and Nietzsche’s), I argued that Weber’s static and artificial depiction of putatively “natural” needs and desires, against which he employs his sacrificial rhetoric, allows him to normalize the queer and even perverse behavior of these agents whose methodical behavior bespeaks equal parts reason and obsession.
The Scholar’s Ascetic Renunciation of the Sacrifice of Intellect

My previous analysis read the PESC through the lens of sacrificial rhetoric and traced a specific path through that well-traversed terrain. Weber’s portrait of the scholar, however, does not rely as exclusively as the PESC on asceticism as a form of sacrifice that is both mitigated (because rationalized in relation to its magical origins) and valorized (because a means of rationalization itself), but instead employs an even more explicit sacrificial rhetoric, albeit one quarantined as merely figurative usage. The lens of sacrificial rhetoric that we have been elaborating will place Weber’s understanding of scholarship and the fateful consequences of its ethos of specialization in a direct relation to the PESC and the various historical trends that Weber theorized in many of his works.

In his lecture entitled Wissenschaft als Beruf, or “Science as a Vocation” (hereafter, “SaV”), Weber’s employment of sacrificial rhetoric stands out from that of the the two previous authors we have discussed, but in a way marked by accretion and elaboration less than deviation. That is, in Weber’s texts we find sacrifice addressing a condition of subjectivity, as with Luther, as well as Hegel’s deployment of sacrifice as instrumental in the differentiation and articulation of socio-historical possibilities. With Weber’s usage, however, when he depicts those who would abandon the stringent call of scholarship in favor of the Siren song of religion as making a “sacrifice of the intellect,” we must read this sacrificial rhetoric as more fully ambivalent than either of the two previous authors conveyed. Sacrifice’s dual registers as “sanctioned” in the sense of both prescribed and proscribed come into full effect with Weber. As I will show, despite a superficial reading according to which Weber would simply excoriate those individuals weak-minded enough to stay within the value-sphere of traditional religions, Weber in fact deploys distinctions and oppositions in such a way as to make this option fully as viable, and, in many ways, even more desirable, than the choice to follow the life of scholarship. It is mainly because such a sacrifice is literally impossible for some individuals that Weber weaves tragic pathos through the essay. This reading, then, will work through the various dichotomies that Weber deploys so as to keep this sacrifice ambiguous, and his auditors torn.
between the options of “sacrificing the intellect” and ascetically rejecting, or sacrificing, that sacrifice.

This essay is also distinctive in that here Weber employs sacrificial rhetoric even more explicitly than in the PESC. They are tightly linked by a common influence, since for both of the types depicted, the entrepreneur and the scholar, Weber credits their rationalization and discipline to the influence of asceticism. However, in neither essay could one speak of Weber as describing the afterlife of asceticism as if it were a thing of the past, for it is much more a case of asceticism’s reincarnation as a perennial mode of rationalization, and its migration into new socio-cultural spheres. This spirit, once evicted from the monastery, was set to roam about the world. Nonetheless, whereas Weber saw the Protestant ascetic entrepreneur as a figure from the past, the scholar, though beset by challenges, Weber views as a type with a future.

There are also methodological differences between the two texts that readers must bear in mind. In the former, the reader encounters a scholar’s treatment of the theological motivations of the early Protestant entrepreneur; in the latter, a scholar’s address to his own community through the medium of a rhetoric that treads the balance between descriptive and prescriptive registers, even though its prescriptions entail the proscription of all speech-acts but description and demonstration. Furthermore, though delivered as one scholar addressing others, it incorporates a rich tapestry of religious voices, from the prophet to the ascetic to the pastor. In fact, much of the text’s rhetorical effect derives precisely from employing familiar forms to convey content that is explicitly at odds with what Weber’s auditors have learned to expect. Because this serial courting and trumping of expectations is in many ways isomorphic with the procedures of experiment and research, the delivery of this lecture performs an initiation to the scientific vocation itself.

The State of Scholarship in Post-WWI Germany

The historical context that Weber faced in the time of his “SaV” lecture was fundamentally different than that of just a few decades ago. When Weber was composing the PESC, the
greatest problem facing Germany was the lack of a middle class element to provide a ballast between the authoritarian residual aristocracy and an increasingly militant and organized working class. As Bismarck’s “Caesarism” gave way to less skilled politicians and more short-sighted leaders, the duties of leadership called out for a firmer base than the judgment of a single individual. Where was the class who could steer the state in a contentious world? The PESC was written in such a way to awaken the slumbering propertied classes to their historical role and the contemporary duties as the bearers of cultural values that were essential to the health of the state. In the wake of the war, the state itself had suffered an ignominious defeat, and all the institutions and disciplines that had contributed to the German state’s rise now experienced their own doubts and crisis. If the university and knowledge in general could no longer count on the overarching value of the nation-state as the guarantor of its own validity, where could the working scientist look to justify his life and his work? Could scholarship provide its own legitimation apart from its role in producing an educated populace devoted to the glories of the nation? In this crisis of science, much of these worries centered upon a renewed debate concerning the fact-value distinction.

By the time Weber matured as a scholar, the structure of the German university system was well-established. The disciplines had attained coherence in terms of their objects of study and their methods of investigation. In a way analogous to the European colonial scramble for territory in the global south, the disciplines had parceled the natural and cultural worlds between them, and each stood ready to defend its claims to this territory. In Weber’s usage, as we will see, the fact-value distinction does not rest on the faultline between the Naturwissenschaften and the Geisteswissenschaften. Instead, all the disciplines in the university were forms of Wissenschaft, or organized knowledge, and all had to commit themselves to the laborious process of establishing and verying facts. Traffic in values, as we will see, was firmly exiled from Weber’s university.

23 The locus classicus for this distinction is Dilthey (1988).
As befits the neo-Kantianism that was nearly hegemonic in Germany in the early twentieth century, Weber offers what is in effect analogous to Kant’s critique of reason. In this essay, Weber endeavours to produce a critique of scholarship that will circumscribe its domain of inquiry and legitimate its proper authority. In line with this analogy, the deployment of sacrificial rhetoric to define the scholar’s duties against competing interests simply underscores the sacrificial subtext of Kant’s deontological ethics. Moreover, it offers an overlooked connection between Kant’s epistemology and his ethics, or between the first and second Critiques. Unlike Kant, however, Weber will manage to double the individual scholar’s duty with the interest of scholars as a group, in such a way that the two levels align and scholars can present a united front in the charged milieu of a post-war state in crisis. That is, the scholar’s individual disinterestedness does not come into conflict with the pursuit of the group’s interests.

At the outset, one point to emphasize is that, despite the connotations of the phrase “objective science” since Nagel as the “view from nowhere,” Weber’s *Wertfrei* science does not entail a scientific perspective analogous to an archimedean point as an essential precondition of analysis. In fact, I suggest that it is precisely to oppose such “otherworldly” depictions of scholarship that Weber begins his lecture with an institutional and comparative analysis of scholarly labor. Furthermore, both in regards to quotidian scholarly practice and advocacy as a group, far from disinterestedness, Weber seeks to awaken in his audience a sense of their shared interests, and thus call into being the spirit of the group, the community of scholars.

At the end of the first world war, facing the problem of an America new to but triumphantly treading the world stage, Weber raised the specter of the Americanization of the university. This historical juncture frames Weber’s lecture, and provides the moral impetus for his treatment of the scholar as not only an ideal type, but also as a figure who can intervene against—or at least resist, even in the face of tragic failure—the inexorable tendencies that

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24 Kant’s moral philosophy pivots on the subject committing to a duty that is legislated entirely by reason, without any admixture of interest, for the *sine qua non* of a properly moral action is to act only with the aim of fulfilling one’s duty (1956). For an authoritative treatment of this topic, see Wood (1970).
Weber depicts in his work. Weber calls on the community of scholars to form an *arriere-garde* group, as it were, to stem the tide of dissolution and preserve some guild-like regulations as a barrier to educational marketization. The starting point of this rhetorical performance, then, is a quest for the correct set of distinctions that will allow this group to become aware of its commonality and, as a result, become actively self-policing proponents of their own shared interests. What, then, is the spirit of scholarship that binds them together as a distinct social group? To answer this question, Weber weaves structural and individual issues together, and, to do this, sacrificial rhetoric provided much-needed resources.

Weber begins with the university as an economic structure and system. In it in Weber’s day there were two processes of note: its role in a social system means that statistical regularity, probabilities and, hence, mediocrities override individual charisma and achievement; moreover, the guild-like structures of the traditional university were getting replaced by market-driven practices, to the point that few students conceived of education as an apprenticeship, and instead began, like the Americans, to feel that they were purchasing knowledge. Nonetheless, unlike markets, according to Weber the university is neither demotic nor democratic, but an intellectual guild that holds a monopoly on an increasingly important commodity in the nation-state—value-free knowledge. Thus, Weber acknowledges the university and the disciplines as owners—and thus accumulators—of a form of capital, who seek to stave off expropriation. Self-knowledge on the part of scholars, who cannot be reduced to bureaucratic office-holders or entrepreneurial profit-seekers, might, if won, perform just such a function.

Weber’s disenchanted view of truth as a function of discourses embedded in institutions provides a starkly material basis to his descriptions of scholarship as a vocation. Painfully aware of the contradictory status of the scholar’s position, Weber limns the ways that the guild-like aspects of the discipline come into conflict with evaluations prevailing in the social milieu, especially in America. The dispossession of the scholar is like the expropriated peasantry who do not merit a mention in the PESC. Because the value of a product in capitalist
society is determined by market forces, the scholar’s work regarded as a unit of output from a delimitable process is bound to seem ephemeral and unimportant, especially since the march of science will soon make even the most provocative advance obsolete. This commodification of knowledge-production accords neither with a labor theory of value, which apportions value according to the amount of labor that went into the process of its production, nor with what Arendt has depicted as a pagan or aristocratic mode of valuation, which acknowledges the ephemeral nature of every achievement as the precondition for its possible immortality, precisely because of these sacrificial qualities. At this point Weber begins to employ a sacrificial rhetoric to inculcate in his auditors a mode of self-valorization tailor-made for the paradoxically prestigious but marginal figure of the scholar.

Art, Science, Fate

To frame the specific features of scholarly production, Weber turns to art for a provocative and telling juxtaposition. In this contrast, art has a dual role to play: it both stands as science’s opposite, and contributes to its development. To begin with the former, according to Weber, science by definition progresses, but art does not. As opposed to the artist, the scientist does not achieve distinction by fashioning a singular and perfect work, but by contributing to an ongoing process. This means that the work itself is conceived as a self-surpassing project that does not seek the singular and unsurpassable irruption, but rather a contribution to an ongoing process. Weber underscores the ephemeral nature of scientific work by contrasting it with that of the artist:

A work of art that truly achieves “fulfillment” will never be surpassed. [...] No one will ever be able to say that a work that achieves genuine “fulfillment” in an artistic

25 The discussion of these opposed modes of valuation, and their relation to work and labor, is in Arendt’s The Human Condition (1959).

26 This notion hardly accords with the latter role that art plays for Weber, for there art serves as a means of rationalization in the progressive conceptualization and explanation of nature. That is, this non-progressive notion of art would seem to contradict or at least complicate his depiction of renaissance art as providing the experimental approach to nature that would pave the way for science.
sense has been "superseded" by another work that likewise achieves “fulfillment.” Contrast that with the realm of science, where we all know that what we have achieved will be obsolete in ten, twenty, or fifty years. That is the fate, indeed, that is the very meaning of scientific work (“SaV”, p. 11).

Without explicitly invoking sacrifice in this passage, Weber poses as starkly as possible the opposition, the currency of which extends to the ancient Greeks and beyond, of a valorized distinction between the permanent and the transitory. While works of art partake of permanence in their singular achievements, the scientific work is not only contingently subject to the vicissitudes of the transitory world, they are only produced to be superseded by way of their relation to other such works both as precedents and descendants.27 I would argue here that the contrast is implicitly a sacrificial one, and, what is more, is explicitly rhetorical. This distinction is not an ontological claim, for it is virtually impossible to argue that any cultural product achieves a “timeless” or “universal” status, in that any possible status only holds in relation to the changing evaluations of a community of interpretation, which are always marked by complex relations of continuity and discontinuity.28 Works of art whose appreciation seems to persist longer than others merely have certain aspects that more persistently register as valued according to relatively more persistent criteria. From this observation, one derives not a categorical notion of universality or fulfillment, but a quantitative notion of longevity. By contrast, Weber invokes a putatively universal, classical criteria of art as geared towards perfection. Thus, art here serves as a rhetorically constructed counter to the scientist in order to pose such stark dualities as eternal-ephemeral, permanent-evanescent, and fulfilled-truncated in order to evoke a proper frame of mind in his audience for the impact of his sacrificial rhetoric.

In contrast to the artist, whose work can possibly attain the status of universal relevance and “fulfillment”, the scientist produces work whose level of completion can only

27 Causabon, the scholar of religion in George Eliot’s *Middlemarch*, embodies the untimeliness of much scholarly work, since one can only study what is contingently available in one’s social milieu at a given point in time.

28 For early, agenda-setting works that deal with the problem of aesthetic reception, see Iser (1974, 1978) and Fish (1980).
ever be relative, finished by the scientist but a merely contingent contribution to the field as a whole. By defining the work of art in terms of a teleological notion of perfection, Weber can depict scientific achievement as, by contrast, a species of work defined in reference to its transience. So pivotal is this notion of scientific evanescence that Weber employs the telling device of underscoring its undemonstrated status, since demonstration is unnecessary when “we all know that what we have achieved will be obsolete” (“SaV”, p. 11). For this to be so, Weber would need to exclude all nomothetic sociological projects, as well as all paradigm-shifting works that set the stage for generations of scholars to come. In other words, this rhetoric of obsoletion depends upon a wholly positivistic sense of science as the accretion and revision of data in the form of established facts.

As the price of this rhetorical construction, Weber offers a sociologically “thin” conception of artistic production. One gets little sense from his description that artistic production involves acculturation, training, the transmission of knowledge, and, eventually, strategic efforts to situate one’s work in relation to expectations produced by a received tradition. Nonetheless, in relation to science Weber informs his audience that there were two great leaps: the Platonic concept as a window onto being and the experimental apparatus as a means of unearthing the secrets of nature. Since art as a means to knowledge plays a part diachronically in Weber’s synchronic distinction between art and science, if these factors are taken into account, the categorical distinction between scientific and artistic work constructed by means of criteria such as permanence and transience becomes problematic, a matter of degree, perhaps, at most. Instead, Weber invokes the artist’s ideology of artistic production, the art-for-art’s sake of fin-de-siècle modernism. Of course, this is not merely a case of simplification for the sake of comparison, for the markers of permanence and transience are essential to

29 The most extreme example of this viewpoint among social scientists is Stark’s SSSR Presidential Address, “Putting an End to Ancestor Worship” (2004).

30 Contrast this with Bourdieu’s analysis of the artistic “field” of production, a viewpoint which more closely parallels Weber’s treatment of the scientist (1995).
Weber’s sacrificial account of scientific labor. The slide from “fateful” to “sacrificial” takes place precisely as a result of the weak sociological account of art, for, unlike art, whose ideologically-projected possibility implies immortality, science, like all human endeavours, entails impermanence, which relates the pathos of personal finitude to that of one’s work.

After defining scientific work in its specificity as a labor of transient and relative value, Weber takes a further step to make this condition not merely contingent, but essential to the scientific ethos. He literally gives voice to the scientific work in a way that underscores its alienation in relation to the “will to permanence” that Weber imputes to the scientist: “Every scientific ‘fulfillment’ gives birth to new ‘questions’ and cries out to be surpassed and rendered obsolete [jede wissenschaftliche “Erfüllung” bedeutet neue “Fragen” und will “überboten” werden und veralten]. Everyone who wishes to serve science has to resign himself to this” (“SaV”, p. 11; p. 85, emphasis added). The resignation here requires one to give up the lust for permanence, what Arendt spoke of as the pagan thirst for this-worldly immortality. This raises a question to hold in reserve as we proceed through the lecture: does this sense of resignation or asceticism imply a more Christian sense of self-sacrifice than Weber’s professed “polytheism” might lead one to suppose? By invoking this desire for immortality as precisely what the scientist must overcome, Weber moves very close to a Nietzschean contrast between a Greek (or, at least, pre-Socratic) aesthetic construed as the affirmation and “metaphysical” overcoming of individual finitude (1967), and the Christian ascetic attitude that negates individual interest in the pursuit of a ratified form of subjectivity, the one true faith.

This Christian sense of sacrifice gets underscored by Weber’s use of a weighty opposition, that between fate and goal. Such language would surely resonate with an audience who just lived through World War I. Towards the end of the passages contrasting art and science, Weber insists that “to be superseded scientifically is not simply our fate but our goal. We can-

31 In her biography of her husband, Marianne Weber quotes a student’s moving account of Max’s sense of scholarship as cross-bearing (1975, p. 663).
not work without living in hope that others will advance beyond us” (“SaV”, p. S 11). This transition from fate to goal imputes a sense of ownership to the scholar, with the effect that Weber attributes an immortality of sorts to the process of scholarly production writ large, even if the individual scholar’s work gets swallowed in anonymity. In this contrast—between fate and goal, between the blind force of pagan destiny and the providential future in an androcentric cosmos—one can read an isomorphic form of Weber’s spirit/cage rhetoric, and, indeed, the basis of his sociology. That is, for Weber an essential movement takes place when the subject registers the objective structure of the world and incorporates these facts into the value-spheres that determine the desires and motivations of that subject. By sifting through history and its transformations in search of the world-historical figures whose motivational structures best encapsulated the trends dominating their day, Weber makes the subjective transformation of fate into goal\(^{32}\) the most important category of objective facts both for the entrepreneur and the scholar, and for a sociology that would reserve a place for human initiative in the face of overdetermining social structures.

Among the facts defining this perspective that we must address is that of the scientist’s fate as defined by Weber. If Weber’s depiction of art forms a telling contrast with the scholar, and if science from the point of view of the individual producer is evanescent and replete with signs of alienation, on what model of progress does this depiction depend? It must be one where all inversions of Weltanschauungen are complete, all possible laws discovered, with no second Copernicus on the horizon and no more prophets to call for reform. Indeed, this is isomorphic with the end of the age of revelation which Calvin and others decreed in order to put an end to the radical flare-ups of the Protestant Reformation. Thus, a positivistic sense of science confronts and confirms a canonical sense of “real” religion, both of which are conditions for the mediation of distinct spheres of fact and value upon which so much of Weber’s epistemology and, dare one say, cosmology, depends. That is, Weber’s notion of science and

\(^{32}\) This closely resembles Nietzsche’s notion of amor fati, but with much less exuberance.
religion are both intrinsic to the fatefulness that Weber describes.

Weber’s Trajectory of Scientific Development

Weber lived in fateful times, and his audience for this lecture likely had a keen thirst for pronouncements concerning the contemporary world and its future. Of the many works assessing Western civilization and its fate, Spengler was only the most famous. Indeed Nietzsche’s pronouncements regarding the fate of the West was one of the key components of his surging popularity. Yet whether or not this hunger for fateful pronouncements was prevalent in his audience, it is a key organizing conceit of his lecture that such a thirst was prevalent in the universities of the day. Further, since education was quickly losing its guild-like structures and re-organizing around market mechanisms, Weber saw a great many of his peers who were all too willing to don the mantle of the prophet and provide the supply to meet this demand.33

In many ways, then, Weber’s assessment of the current state of scholarship and society comes very close to meeting this demand as well. One factor that makes his ruminations on the Zeitgeist different from those of his rhetorically constructed others is that he addresses these proclamations as problematic because of the Zeitgeist. That is, Weber problematizes the conjunction of the prophecy-supplying professors and their student clientele, and yet in many ways his discourse meets this problem on the same terrain. Weber’s correlation between the incremental and linear progress of science and the end of revelation hinges upon his hypothesis that he and his audience were witness to the acceleration of a process that was coming to define the world ever more decisively:

Thus the growing process of intellectualization and rationalization does not imply a growing understanding of the conditions under which we live. It means something quite different. It is the knowledge or the conviction that if only we wished to understand them we could do so at any time. It means that in principle, then, we are not ruled by mysterious, unpredictable forces, but that, on the contrary, we can in principle control

33 Weber’s language changes to describe this type, but two of his common labels are Kathederpropheten (“lectern prophets”) and Professorenpropheten (“professor prophets”). Both capture the problematic juxtapositions of opposed modes of authority that such figures deploy. Generally, I will speak of “prophet-scholars” to underscore with the hyphenation the same kind of hybridity.
everything by means of calculation. That in turn means the disenchantment of the world ("SaV", p. 13).

In posing the Entzauberung-hypothesis, Weber necessarily transitions from the historian to the sociologist, which in his view involved the pursuit of nomological or nomothetic claims, a law that persists and achieves a limited, context-sensitive generality. That is, this hypothesis is not only a more or less adequate description of the past as seen from the vantagepoint of the historian. Instead, it is a logico-inductive hypothesis with which Weber not only intended to account for history until that time, but also to predict, probabilistically, the future, and thus rival the prophet-scholars. These epochal hypotheses connect with others that, together, map out a fractured and fragmented world. As we will see, even his trajectory of the rise of science is built upon the necessity of these fractures.

The similarities between the predictive-hypothesizing scientist and the prophet-scholar were not lost on Weber, but he explicitly cannot acknowledge them for Weber lambastes the value-promoting professors as the simulacra of religious prophets. Though he meets them on their ground, Weber cannot underscore their similarity at risk of becoming undifferentiated—or at best rival siblings—in the eyes of his audience. This tension runs throughout the lecture, since to confront one’s opponent is simultaneously to approach them and court the risk of entanglement and ultimate indistinguishability.

Nonetheless, though Weber resembles his scholar-prophet opponent when he assesses the age, it is precisely his theory of science, which has incorporated Hume’s critique of the notion of causal law, that makes his pronouncements less prophetic than those he opposes. But the fact that he can speak of sociological laws at all raises another risk: the very same nomothetic mode that allows him to speak of the fundamental facts of the present and future ages, also undermines the pathos of his tragic depiction of science as an anti-art beset and

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34 For an excellent account of Weber’s methodology, see Ringer (1997) and Kalberg (1994).

35 One could make the case that these are indeed the simulacra, and the wertfrei scientist is the true copy, but which would be the original, the priest, or the prophet?
defined by its ephemerality. For there is a permanence of achievement possible, even if not as a “final word.” If science is not defined by its humble evanescence, the sacrificial framework of this prophet of the post-prophetic trembles.

To return to the decisive steps that Weber mentions in the history of science, Weber cites the Platonic concept as a window onto being and the Renaissance development of experimentation in art and science. In the experiment there is an implied dialectic here between the comparison and segregation of phenomena into concepts coupled with the attention to particulars endowed with the capacity to challenge and re-order the conceptual framework. If we typify these two elements as taxonomy and technology, the problem with the humanities that Weber surely understood is that they are almost wholly dependent upon the taxonomic operations of science, which is why he attributed such a prominent role to the ideal-type as a component of a comparative project conceived under the rubric of experimentation.

Because of this dependence on taxonomies, scholars in the humanities are particularly susceptible to the desire for the “set of all sets” and other utopian projects, such as discovering the essence of literature or other arts, art as the essential expression of humanity, etc. Unlike Plato, for Weber the conjunction of the good, the beautiful and the true in the realm of the Ideas or Forms would be a monistic fantasy where true sacrifice is not only unnecessary, it is impossible, for if the world is monistic, nothing is lost, and thus truly sacrificed, if one gains standing in light of the one true God, Weber not only separates the true, the good and the

36 While these terms denote two discrete phenomena within science of such specificity that they cannot account for the whole of science, if defined largely enough, given Weber’s choice of terms, they will suffice. Taxonomy, as the production of systematic tables of classification that map out a delimited sphere of particulars, species or exempla in a coherent way, here stands metonymically for all the practices that would bring order to the plethora of particulars. Technology, by contrast, must incorporate experimentation and observation since both more abstract practices have decisively contributed to, and progressed through developments in technology. The impact on human life is felt most clearly in reference to technology, yet the impact of taxa and types on Weltanschauungen is difficult to overestimate.

37 On this topic too Weber takes his distance from Plato. This transition and bridge between a terrestrial erotics and transcendent truth had great currency in Christian neoplatonism through the ages, but it is a framework that Weber opposes with his sacrificial rhetoric. This is not to say that Christian neoplatonism does not court its own mode of sacrificial rhetoric, one in which the costs of love in this world becomes a
beautiful, he sets them at odds with one another. Concepts are not subsumed into a monistic ideality, but each remains a candidate for a competing and irreducible sphere of values.\textsuperscript{38}

\textbf{Polytheism Versus Systematic Religious Ethics}

Faced with this audience of scholars, still reeling from the chaos and disappointment of the war, Weber explicitly addresses their fears, and science’s inability to assuage them. To introduce the fact-value distinction, which plays such a central role in the production of Weber’s polytheistic world and in scientific practice, Weber clarifies the proper service that the scientist can render to the political realm, specifically, and society in general. To frame the utter incapacity of science to decide issues of value, Weber raises the specter of nationalism, an especially charged topic in the aftermath of the war. He states:

\begin{quote}
I do not know how you would go about deciding “scientifically” between the value of French and German culture. Here, too, conflict rages between different gods and it will go on for all time. It is as it was in antiquity before the world had been divested of the magic of its gods and demons, only in a different sense. Just as the Greek would bring a sacrifice at one time to Aphrodite and at another to Apollo, and above all, to the gods of his own city, people do likewise today. Only now the gods have been deprived of the magical and mythical, but inwardly true qualities that gave them such vivid immediacy. These gods and their struggles are ruled over by fate, and certainly not by “science” (“SaV”, p. 23).
\end{quote}

If the role of the gods is to serve as projections and guarantors of a given society’s self-conception, the passage is remarkable for the continuity that persists on this level despite the centuries of disenchantment that separate Athens and Sparta from the warring nations of Europe. That is, despite the disenchantment of the world, nothing has changed regarding the inevitability of international struggle or the necessity of sacrificing to a national deity. If science cannot adjudicate the competing claims of exclusive nationalism, or extol cosmopolitanism or

necessary precondition of achieving love of the transcendent. In fact, Kierkegaard notes that is is the case in regards to Abraham’s offering of Isaac (1983).

\textsuperscript{38} This is relevant to the stakes in his argument against the “vulgar marxists” of his day, as well as the “economic ethicists,” for if all is reducible to economics, there is no need for the disciplines, specialization, and the university as a whole.
the idea of a “greater Europe,” might it help to establish the truth of other value-spheres?

Unfortunately, Weber explicitly proscribes the scientific analysis of the truth of values, although he does open science to the analysis of their validity.\(^\text{39}\)

To illustrate further the fact-value distinction, Weber makes the rhetorical choice of citing perhaps the most consequential rhetorical event in the history of Christendom, the “Sermon on the Mount.” In reference to this Weber illustrates the firewall that separates those who investigate and prove facts and those who hold or espouse values:

> What man will take it upon himself to provide a “scientific refutation” of the morality of the Sermon on the Mount, and in particular its dictum “Resist not him that is evil” or the metaphor of turning the other cheek? And yet it is clear that, regarded from a worldly point of view, what is being preached here is an ethics of ignoble conduct. We must choose between the religious dignity that this ethics confers and the human code of honor [Manneswürde] that preaches something altogether different, namely, “Resist evil, otherwise you will bear some of the responsibility for its victory” (“SaV”, p. 23).

In this passage Weber presents the religious ethics of Christianity in opposition to a “worldly” or “human code of honor.” To keep the dualisms isomorphic, Weber describes the religious ethic as, not “non-noble” or offering an alternative vision of human accomplishment, but as a contrary and “ignoble” from the worldly perspective. Weber thus builds upon a contrast which ignores the very particularity of religio-cultural complexes that he explores in his comparative work, in favor of a dualistic portrait apparently derived from an intra-religious opposition of “this-worldly” and “other-worldly” phenomena. For his purposes here, true religion is truly otherworldly, and not one other variant of a Manneswürde that was developed to serve particular interest groups and subjugate others. As we will see, when Weber underplays the quotidian nature of intra-religious struggle, he keeps the prophet-scholar clearly outside the religious realm, instead of depicting him as the rival sibling of the priest who would engage the latter in hopes of redefining the very notion of religion. With Weber’s reduction of religion to

\(^{39}\) Science stands as means-testing, but never ends-positing. This restriction avoids but does not overcome the crisis of instrumental reason itself, and what Nietzsche saw as the instability of the relation between ends and means, indeed, their reversibility one into the other.
individual otherworldliness,\textsuperscript{40} the scholar can neither approach nor take an indifferent distance from religion, but must draw away with regret, longing, or hostility.

Weber appears to speak less as a scholar of religion than as a member of a community speaking to an audience of his own people, a group that is predominantly either explicitly Christian or Christian acculturated. This leveling of all social ethics in contrast to the otherworldly ethics of Christianity reveals how closely Weber’s rhetoric hews to the Christian world view general among his audience, a dualism according to which opposed principles must either be of God or the Devil:

According to his point of view, each individual will think of one [ethic] as the devil and the other as God, and he has to decide which one is the devil and which the God \textit{for him}. And the same thing holds good for all aspects of life. The awe-inspiring rationalism of a systematic ethical conduct of life that flows from every religious prophecy dethroned this polytheism in favor of the “One thing that is needful.” Then, when confronted by the realities of outer and inner life, it found itself forced into the compromises and accommodations that we are all familiar with from the history of Christianity (“SaV”, p. 23).

Between the imperative of individual choice, and a history of degradation and compromise, Weber protects the integrity of the prophetic voice. Yet with all the decisive framing of options in this passage, there is an ambiguity to address. Is “this polytheism” which prophecy dethroned simply the \textit{ad-hoc} nature of deciding for oneself, or is it the polytheistic world itself? Because Weber insists on multiple objects of individual devotion, we must prefer the former reading.\textsuperscript{41} While the world might have become polytheistic again with the sharpening of the fact/value distinction, the prophetic principle that depends on the necessity of single-minded devotion remains as the gold-standard of individual attainment. On this matter, then, a subtle

\textsuperscript{40} Perhaps the Lutheran “priesthood of all believers” vision of religion determines this opposition, in that it allows Weber to excise the role of priestly will to power from “true” religion concerned only with the individual’s relationship to ultimate—and ultimately otherworldly—ends. If so, this would be quite effective as a rhetorical move, given his audience, though for the scholar of religion it is a dubious simplification to make religious struggle important only between religion and other religions, or irreligion, and ignore the fact that the site of religion in and of itself is always a contested site of struggle as well.

\textsuperscript{41} The following portion of my arguments draws from multiple sources, but in particular from Kalberg’s essay entitled “Weber and Rationalization in Religion.” There he argues that, for Weber, a dualistic world view is an essential general precondition for rational religious action (1990, p. 81).
but essential point regarding the conditions of sacrifice need clarification. Owen and Strong suggest that Weber depicts a pluralistic world where sacrifice is not only possible, but necessary. It is only in the face of many plausibly valid recipients of an individual’s sacrifice that one can truly speak of sacrifice. Against this view, however, I would suggest that, while the world might be pluralistic or “polytheistic” in the sense that there are many possible value-spheres to inhabit and principles to uphold, according to Weber no individual can or should be polytheistic if one would be an individual in the robust sense that Weber implies. Hence, Weber himself cannot be said to be polytheistic, for there is only one god or value for the “us” that Weber constructs in the course of his lecture. For Weber’s fateful, sacrificial rhetoric, only a monotheistic temperament will suffice. Now, after the death of God, with the return of a polytheistic world (produced, ironically, by the fact-value distinction as handed down by that arch-Protestant, Kant) coupled with the criteria of ascetic consistency—only now is true sacrifice possible. With the soul of the scholar split between intellectual cleanliness (more than conscientiousness, this term connotes the prohibitions of hygiene that stimulated the early ascetics, together with the will to truth) and the religious commitments of one’s native community, only now is the scholar’s true sacrifice—the sacrifice to truth of any value-sphere that requires the sacrifice of truth—both possible and necessary.

Here, then, Weber rejects as “polytheism” a kind of situational ethics that could shift, depending upon circumstance and occasion, between the ethos prescribed by an otherworldly religious prophecy and the noble ethos of “human” honor. Weber narrates in the course of the paragraph the irruption of a prophetic utterance and its ethical consequences, its agonistic encounter with and eventual displacement of a merely human ethos, and the subsequent fall back into polytheistic compromise that ensued with the institutionalization of the Christian

42 The relations between received notions of Bildung and Weber’s notion of individuation and Persönlichkeit are exceedingly complex. Suffice it to say, Weber opposed the sense that scholars needed to shoulder the burden of forming “individuals” through a broad program of Bildung. Indeed, this essay is expressly framed against the idea that scholarship is capable of forming a total response to the needs of the developing individual. On this topic, see Mommsen (1987) and Ferrarotti (1987).
church. This narrative is nearly identical in trajectory to that told by Protestant reformers such as Luther and Calvin, as well as scholarly theologians such as Troeltsch (1971, 1977, 1986). What is revealing here is that the narrative is a Christian one, but Weber treats the transition from the “Sermon on the Mount” to the imperial Church as an instance of a larger pattern by an act of sociological redescription. From Christian versus pagan Weber turns to speak of “religious prophecy” versus “the human code of honor,” as if the two were only ever in opposition and not dialectically related, since the prophet’s voice would not carry far if both the prophet and the message were not recognized as consonant articulations of prevailing notions of honor and prestige. That is, though the “awe-inspiring rationalism of a systematic ethical conduct of life” that emerges from the religious, other-worldly prophecy does fall back into the merely human by means of “compromises and accomodations,” there is little sense here that the religious prophecy itself emerged as an articulation of the resources provided by this very same human code of honor. In extrapolating away from the historical transition from Christ to Christendom in such a way that mimics a disenchanting, social-scientific explanation, all the while preserving the very claims to otherworldliness and absolute origination that Christianity claims for itself, Weber marks out a space where invocations of sacrifice echo in both scientific and religious registers. Though redolent with a universalistic image of pre-institutional Christianity, a longtime image for those who advocate Christian ecumenism, Weber uses this to dismiss the prophet-scholars as agents of compromise and accomodation.

This is especially powerful in the way that it depicts the prophet-scholars as serving two masters, reason in the university and faith in the church. In opposing the polytheistic situational ethic of one who might either resist evil or not, depending, not upon a prior devotional decision, but upon prevailing circumstances, the rationalism that here inspires awe is essentially monotheistic in nature. Consistency in the face of changing circumstances, devotion to systematicity instead of disparate tactics or strategies: these are taken for granted as the absolute norms to which the rational subject should submit, and not only in the realm of the laboratory or within the confines of the constructed experiment, but in the very subjection to the calling of
science, and in the conduct of life in its entirety. To drive the point home, and, in a sense, close the circle that moves from religious history to sociological redescription to moral inquiry and back to religion, Weber situates the moral principle that he develops in relation to Christianity, for consistency is the norm that governs one’s choice of ethical perspective, or, figuratively, of which god to worship. Weber thus re-enacts the early Christian encounter with pagan religions and, in taking not the Church and its compromises and accommodations but the prime prophetic instance of Jesus’s teaching as the gold standard, Weber breaks with the desultory moralism that allows a person to utilize a multiplicity of means and ends in blending prophecy, scholarship, and demagoguery.

The Moralization of Logical Consistency

Although Weber’s temperament and his ethical position can be described as monotheistic, it is not a monistic world that he describes. To respond to the issues prevalent in the society of his day, such as the rise of intransigent political factions, ambivalent attitudes towards the war, and the unstable relations between democracy and authority, Weber keeps his discourse situated at the point where polytheism and monotheism were both plausible options for the individual, which was also, of course, the time when martyrdom, and its sacrificial interpretation, was also a real danger that one had to face. Against this, Weber turns to the last contribution that science can make in the service of clarity, and at the same time we reach its limits. We can and should tell you that the meaning of this or that practical stance can be inferred consistently, and hence also honestly, from this or that ultimate fundamental ideological position. It may be deducible from one position, or from a number—but there are other quite specific philosophies from which it cannot be inferred (“SaV”, p. 26).

“Meaning” in Weber’s italicized sense he treats as a function of consistency. Consistency and honesty (the latter of which Weber treats as the logical consequence of the former) form the basis for science’s contribution to society. The scientist, then, serves as the guarantor of the various truth claims in circulation both inside and outside the university. It is not by chance that Weber depicts this as a species of divine devotion, nor that it occurs here quarantined explicitly under the rubric of figural language:
To put it metaphorically [emphasis added], if you choose this particular standpoint, you will be serving this particular god and will give offense to every other god. For you will necessarily arrive at such-and-such ultimate, internally meaningful conclusions if you remain true to yourselves. We may assert this at least in principle. The discipline of philosophy and the discussion of what are ultimately the philosophical bases of the individual disciplines all attempt to achieve this. If we understand the matter correctly (something that must be assumed here) we can compel a person, or at least help him, to render an account of the ultimate meaning of his own actions (“SaV”, p. 26).

Weber here emphasizes sacrifice’s theological context, but this could also serve as a metaphorical explanation of the most explicitly economic concept, opportunity cost. Weber gives science the same role in the society that Hegel assigned to philosophy in the university, namely, to adjudicate between truth-claims and resolve the conflicts that inevitably follow from both specialization and the division of the world of knowledge into distinct disciplines. The scientist must therefore expose the fault lines between and within value spheres in order to preserve the charged, polytheistic form of the world, and thus the possibility of sacrifice. Sacrifice here serves as the figure for the intractable gap between fact and value, conduct and concept. Indeed, it is along the pathway canalized by Luther’s rhetoricalization of sacrifice, and the subsequent hypertrophy of sacrifice’s interior and private as opposed to its external and public aspects, that Weber can connect devotion to a god with a rational account of one’s actions and motivations, which would be the sanctioned, public form that this private phenomenon of sacrifice would take.

From this scenario, a paradox ensues: science helps preserve polytheism (the multiplicity of valid perspectives and value-spheres) even as it serves the monotheistic principle of consistency. As Weber puts it, “in nonfigurative language, life is about the incompatibility of ultimate possible attitudes and hence the inability ever to resolve the conflicts between them. Hence the necessity of deciding between them” (p. 27).43 The scientist can assess the systematicity and coherence of value-spheres, each with a view toward their consistency. Yet the

43 I find in this emphatic embrace of the intractability of choice many points that echo Schmitt’s “decisionism” (1985), a connection that Mommsen acknowledges as well (1974, p. 7). This is not to say, of course, that this reveals some latent fascist element in Weber’s politics, but it could suggest a shared diagnosis of political ills that were then besetting Germany.
ultimate god which one would serve resides at the level of logico-conceptual analysis, and for Weber these gods are represented more by Aristotle and Kant than by Plato and Hegel. Indeed, the very possibility that the so-called laws of identity and non-contradiction might themselves be culturally relative Weber excludes without so much as an argument. However, since Hegel, the Aristotelian principles of identity and non-contradiction have at least been called into question, and according to the strongest interpretation have been reduced to one value sphere—or view of philosophy—among others, and can no longer serve as the universal criteria by which propositions and principles might be judged. By denying the dynamism and transformation of categories in favor of a static, taxonomic model of conceptual structures, Weber is able to blur the boundaries between the natural and social sciences, as well as between the sciences and the humanities. The net effect of this is to give the scientist the opportunity to assess the validity of disparate value spheres, either confirm their coherence or illuminate their inconsistencies, and, finally define the precise type of sacrifice they would require.

The greatest difference between Hegel’s coronation of philosophy as the queen of the disciplines and Weber’s depiction of the scholar’s vocation is that, whereas Hegel’s sense of philosophy is clearly triumphant, Weber deploys a sense of humility in regards to the treatment of value spheres, a humility that simultaneously reserves the right to assess the validity of each value position. It is precisely in approaching the ultimate religious significance of his position that Weber most closely courts paradox:

the inner needs of a human being with the “music” of religion in his veins will never be served if the fundamental fact that his fate is to live in an age alien to God and bereft of prophets is hidden from him and others by surrogates in the shape of all these professorial prophets [Kathederspropheten]. The integrity of his religious sensibility must surely rise up in rebellion against this (“SaV”, p. 27; p. 106).

Weber here invokes a distinction between true and false religions. Because the age of revelation and true prophecy is over, Weber disavows his own prophetic undertones when he speaks of the future fate of scholarship and society. That is, Weber offers a prophetic denunciation of false prophets, the scholar whose prophetic aspirations degrade into demagoguery. The lecture thus achieves an isolation of the enemy, the professor-prophets, which is not an ideal-type,
but the sophist in a new form and in a new institutional setting. For Weber, the distinction is not, as with Luther, a doctrinal difference. Instead, as with Weber’s definition of the state as the monopolization of violence within a circumscribed territory, Weber’s indignation here derives from a concern with the regulation of social space, and reason’s legitimate monopoly of rhetorical force in the classroom.

What is most important here, however, is to note that, according to Weber's hypothesis, the time for prophets and religious revival is over. Furthermore, though apparently a “scientific” claim, Weber will not treat this as evanescent and soon to be superseded, but as the final word regarding an epochal, world-historical trend. Because this is “an age alien to God and bereft of prophets,” any professors or other prophesying surrogates who muddy this clear if tragic vision of the contemporary and future situation are not only sinning against religion, they are violating the calling of the scientific scholar.

To summarize, Weber verifies his distinction between true and false religions by asserting unequivocally that the epoch of prophecy is over. In addition to the epochal rejection of contemporary prophecies, Weber offers a sociological explanation, to the effect that a true prophet is only such to the extent that she is recognized as such by a genuine community, for he claims that “academic prophecies can only ever produce fanatical sects, but never a genuine community” (“SaV”, p. 30). Weber apparently makes the validity of the prophet hinge upon the validity of the community from which he emerges or that coalesces around him.

The fundamental problem that Weber’s position raises is that it begins a regress of

44 This recourse to communal recognition marks a significant continuity between Weber and Hegel, but one distinction is that Hegel invokes a functional difference while Weber invokes an epistemological one. That is, while Hegel in the Phenomenology assesses the validity of different value-spheres or instances of Sittlichkeit in reference to the community’s ability to resolve conflict and avoid collapse, he typically avoids the binary distinction between true and false or authentic and inauthentic in favor of a more verifiable distinction between degrees of functionality, whether the societies resources for negotiating tensions and contradictions are workable or not.

45 Although Weber’s treatment of the charismatic figure in Economy and Society often seems to separate the charismatic figure from the group, Weber also speaks of charismatic education, so there are many transactions between individual and group to track, a point Tyson has made on several occasions.
authentification from one social phenomenon towards another, for one would also need to
know what makes a community genuine. The classroom as a contingent gathering of merit is
only different in degree from the voluntary, self-selecting organizations that Durkheim and
Weber both saw as essential to ameliorating the stark dichotomies of society and individual.
But how is one to distinguish the inauthentic “fanatical” from legitimate and genuine? Does this
allow one to grant any legitimacy to new religious movements? Might it be that this is a
polemical construction that Weber keeps distinct from his sociology of religion, with the effect
that its polemical use-value is to describe as “fanatical” the student-disciples that the prophet-
professors gather? That is, what would authenticate the community itself, if the quality of the
prophecy that it recognizes as such cannot serve as a criterion? Weber does not here say,
except insofar as he derives from the epistemological distinction between true and false religion
a value-distinction between “fanatical” and “genuine” communities, not true or false dogma. In
this way, Weber seems to make a judgment concerning the very fabric of the community itself.

Faith, Commodities, and Iconoclastic Rhetoric

To delineate further the distinction between religion and science, Weber turns to theology as that aspect of religion which best represents the rationalizing element at work within the
irrational sphere of religion. Despite its rationalizing function, Weber rejects theology's
scientific pretensions by distinguishing between different modes of transmitting and possessing
knowledge:

Note that for theology these assumptions lie outside the realm of “science.” They are
not “knowledge” in the sense ordinarily understood, but a form of “having.” Whoever
does not “have” them—faith or the other requisites of holiness—will not be able to
obtain them with the help of theology, let alone any other branch of science. On the
contrary, in every “positive” theology, the believer reaches the point where St.
Augustine's assertion holds good: “Credo non quod, sed quia absurdum est.” The

46 “Positive” is here in the vernacular sense of affirmative or optimistic, but in the technical sense that
Hegel also employs, as non-rational, authoritative, and imposed
talent for this virtuoso achievement\textsuperscript{47} of “sacrificing the intellect” is a crucial characteristic of men with positive religion\textsuperscript{48}. [...] The tension between the value spheres of “science” and religious salvation cannot be overcome. Properly speaking, it is only the disciple who makes a sacrifice of the intellect to the prophet, and the believer to the church (“SaV”, p. 29-30).

It is thus a first principle for Weber that tensions between religion and science are unresolvable. But first principles and axioms of all kinds serve as initial “articles of faith” in any logical demonstration or argument. To avoid having the axiomatic religion/science opposition become a mere article of faith, Weber has to make the means of arriving at such first principles criterial. Theology might formulate religious experience into logical concepts, and rationally systematize religious doctrine, but the starting point, religion in its primitive form, involves some form of revelation, and thus reduces to a mode of faith that one either has or does not. Positive religion, in the sense of authoritatively posited, forms the base and precondition of every theology, and no theology can exist without the presuppositions provided by the imposition of positive religion. Thus, while science involves a complex process of hypothesizing, experimenting, negating and validating, religion and its primary means of knowledge production, \textit{sacrifice}, both reduce to a simple form of human expropriation and divine appropriation. In this way, Weber employs a quasi-Lutheran notion of sacrifice, where sacrifice as a proper act of devotion does not involve work but a sharp rejection of human forms of achievement, the highest of which, to Weber, was reason and science.

In another, more familiar turn, Weber converts sacrifice into a negationist term meant to decry the fetishization of faith and its prophetic vehicles. Because positive religion and sacrifice belong to the category of having, they are especially vulnerable to critiques that depict them as commodities. The irony here is that, though this notion of sacrifice revolves around

\textsuperscript{47} I would suggest that this ascription of virtuosity to the sacrifice of intellect illuminates a great deal of the overall strategy of Weber’s rhetoric here. This “virtuoso act” might be one that the constructed “we” can recognize and even appreciate, but must at the same time reject outright as an indefensible act. Nonetheless, it is its very indefensibility that can be applauded and honored.

\textsuperscript{48} Note that Weber puts in quotation marks what is not in the quotation: there is a direct translation of faith into sacrifice here that closes the circle with Luther.
entirely interior phenomena, this invisibility provides a *tabula rasa* for a multitude of illustrations and depictions. Weber’s critique of contemporary sacrificial agents, who quite literally know not what they do, employs a scathing image of shoppers for antiques who seek to “furnish” their barren souls:

many modern intellectuals experience the need to furnish their souls, as it were, with antique objects that have been guaranteed genuine. They then recollect that religion once belonged among these antiques. It is something they do not happen to possess, but by way of a substitute they are ready to play at decorating a private chapel with pictures of the saints that they have picked up in all sorts of places, or to create a surrogate by collecting experiences of all kinds that they endow with the dignity of a mystical sanctity—and which they then hawk around the book markets. This is simply fraud or self-deception (“SaV”, p. 30).

The prophetic proclamation regarding the end of prophecies here adopts another mode of expression. Employing a theme that has had currency since Plato at least, to impugn one’s opponents it is enough to mention their mercenary motives. In his *Sociology of Religion*, Weber noted that the prophet, unlike the priest or the magician, performs his calling without remuneration.49 The object of Weber’s critique, “modern intellectuals,” can include both the professorial prophets and their disciples, and the deflating language of a marketplace for spiritual goods has lost none of its potency since Luther’s day—or indeed, since Socrates’. As with Plato’s depiction of the sophists, one will always win by pitting the mercenary against one who, like Socrates, was willing to sacrifice for the truth.

This imagery of markets and old trinkets constitutes an iconoclastic rhetoric that echoes Hegel, as well, in aiming not at the production of images, but at the realm of doctrines. This rhetoric has the exact effect of defining what it means to be a scholar: to refuse to confine oneself to palatable ideas, and to exile oneself from the primary value-sphere. But various historical religions have adopted the tenets or iconography of previous traditions, precisely because of the authority that derives from their antiquity. The correlation between antiquity and authority was particularly strong in the Hellenic world, with the effect that Christianity’s

49 The status of the magician is defined both in relation to a world whose forces are open to influence or manipulation, and in relation to other individuals who can employ him for their purposes.
incorporation of the Hebrew Bible into its canon constitutes a process not dissimilar to the one
that Weber depicts in the passage above. What Weber wants to legislate, however, is that such
sifting through the relics of past faiths is now no longer legitimate. The normative effect of
this language is that the very possibility of new religious movements becomes impossible, so
that religious creativity in the contemporary world could only take the form of sect-formation
in relation to received religious traditions. The true prophet’s voice cannot call for others to
follow along paths toward revelations leading to new religions, for the age of such new begin-
nings is over.

Like the familiar charge of mercenary motives, the accusation of a lack of integrity also
conjures the spectral figure of the sophist, he who speaks well but without sincerity, or, in
Weber’s term, “seriousness”:

To anyone who is unable to endure the fate of the age like a man we must say that he
should return to the welcoming and merciful embrace of the old churches—simply,
silently, and without any of the usual public bluster of the renegade. They will surely
not make it hard for him.\(^{50}\) In the process, he will inevitably be forced to make a
“sacrifice of the intellect” [“Opfer des Intellektes” zu bringen] one way or the other.
We shall not bear him a grudge if he can really do it. For such a sacrifice of the intellect
in favor of an unconditional religious commitment is one thing (“SaV”, p. 31; p. 110).

There is a fascinating distinction at work here. By implying that one might make a “false”
sacrifice of the intellect, whereas some can “really do it,” what is Weber stating about his
opponents? In addition to a familiar charge of insincerity made against the sophist and the
false prophet, Weber could here invoke a narrative about the nature of knowledge the connota-
tions of which would surely not be lost on his audience. Once the intellectual has bitten the
apple, there is no going back, and any pretensions towards faith and religiosity only reveals the
demagogue dressed in the robes of the priest.

\(^{50}\) Unless one can be like a man, one must sacrifice one’s intellect. The gendered reference to those
who would avoid equivocation in contrast to those who inhabit a liminal position between religion and science
surely deserves scrutiny. The connection of women with mediation and liminality, and the further connotation
that such propensities are degraded and inferior to the capacity to inhabit a single sphere and work within its
specialized strictures, one cannot regard as a merely contingent turn of phrase. On the relations between gender
and sacrifice, see Jay (1991) and Kristeva (1982).
Against insincere and false sacrifices, Weber holds up the true sacrifice which, though proscribed for him and his audience, they can at least recognize as authentic:

But morally, it is a very different thing if one shirks his straightforward duty to preserve his intellectual integrity [intellektuellen Rechtsaffenheitspflicht]. This is what happens when he lacks the courage to make up his mind about his ultimate standpoint but instead resorts to feeble equivocation\(^\text{51}\) in order to make his duty less onerous. And that embracing of religion also ranks higher to my mind than the professorial prophecy that forgets that the only morality that exists in a lecture room is that of plain intellectual integrity (“SaV”, p. 30-31; 17.111).

There is an implicit phenomenological basis to this sociological explanation. As the basis for an authentic community in the classroom, seriousness here would have less to do with sincerity than the systematic adherence to protocols which would bring certain types of speech into their appropriate social spaces. The argument, as above, is that religious innovation in its true form can only derive from the proper spaces, ones that allow for the play of recognition and critique. While one might think such play could take place in the lecture room, the guild-like structures of the German university system of Weber’s day made it much too authoritarian for a dialogical or critical exchange between professors and students ever to take place. For this reason, Weber sought to construct a firewall that would keep demagoguery and prophetic enunciations outside of the university’s walls, a move that seems correlative to his notion of the nation as spatially delimited. Weber posits a stark demarcation between the world and the lecture room: the latter must be kept sacrosanct, with all the echoes of a religious invocation of the separation of the spheres that this implies. The problem for Weber is that the spatial delimitation of the types will not suffice, for, as my analysis of Weber’s lecture has shown, nomadic speech acts transgress the boundaries of disciplines and institutions, even in Weber’s own lecture. Each instance of Weber’s discourse—and in this his lecture is not exceptional—is so imbricated...

\(^{\text{51}}\) It seems as if the meaning here is that one must either devote oneself to science, or sacrifice one’s intellect in an act of faith. Either is legitimate and possible given the character of the individual, but any attempt to do both is illegitimate. But aside from the professor-prophets, demagogues and other contemporary sophists, there seems another category: that person who would or will inhabit one of the value spheres, but cannot yet decide which to choose. What is the status of this equivocation? a “dark night of the soul”? One must have always already decided which god one would serve? How does one make a legitimate place for conversion, the series of vacillations this entails?
cated with description and prescription, scholarly analysis and prophetic utterance, that it is impossible to quarantine all traffic in values and other “extra-scientific” phenomena.

If one doubts, at this point, the very possibility of value-free science, one can readily recognize the problems that flow from value-professing scientists. To combine piety and the pose of the renegade is what Weber seems most to oppose. Any bridging of religion and science thus becomes “feeble equivocation,” for one would thereby fail to recognize the full force of the scientist’s atheistic vocation. One can either shirk this calling or heed it: these are the only options available in reference to such mortally opposed value-spheres, for a double-game like that of the professor-prophets subverts the state’s pursuit of the pure functionality of its sanctioned roles. Thus, Weber wholly rejects those who would play multiple language games at once in order to accrue the dual prestige of the prophet and the scholar. The paradox that Weber’s lecture enacts, however, is that his discourse blends the prophetic with the scientific in exactly the same way as would the proscribed prophet-professor’s, the difference being that Weber here designates the blending as a problem. Though this performance cannot achieve perfect modal consistency, it is not therefore in any sense a failure. Indeed, it is precisely this heterogeneity of its speech acts that Weber’s lecture was rhetorically successful. In this light, it constitutes a lasting contribution precisely because it is a problematization that does not escape the structure of its problematic.

The Scholar’s Ascetic Rejection of Sacrifice

In addition to the iron cage of market forces, Weber also spoke of the “intellectual sacrifice” that defines the scholar’s relationship to the value commitments that give comfort and orientation to the non-scholar. Because the rejection of this sacrifice defines the minimal condition for non-prejudiced, objective scholarly work, a bifurcated sense of sacrifice comes into play in the same essay. Needless to say, Weber’s attempts to cultivate an ethics of specialization by means of sacrificial rhetoric still speak to the contemporary scholar, and to the scholar of religion perhaps foremost among them.
Weber’s rejection of religion and values in the classroom, in connection to a rejection of any “sacrifice of the intellect,” is especially poignant when one reads this back onto the starting point of “Science as a Vocation.” The contemporary scholar is in the midst of an expropriation that harks back to those of the landed peasantry in pre-Reformation England. As the scholar gets stripped of the means of production becomes an intellectual proletarian herself, once the library and laboratory are gone all that is left is this “intellect” and the conscience necessary to reject its sacrifice. Weber endorses an ascetic outlook by inveighing against any who would make a sacrifice of intellect and seek to ally the mortal enemies of science and religion. The comfort that follows from sacrificing the intellect to rejoin them is unworthy of those who would not shirk their vocation, while the nostalgic desire to return to religion that the intellect sacrifices to “face up to fate” is all but worthless, an object of disdain in the aristocratic ethos of the scholar. Here the genitive reversal is prevented: one can sacrifice one’s intellect, but true intellect cannot make a sacrifice, though the professor-prophets might mimic one. To sacrifice one’s intellect means not only rejecting the primacy and autonomy of intellect itself, but also the intellect’s intimation that no god exists to receive the sacrifice. Weber thereby makes a move along the production-axis from a Tyloorean gift-sacrifice to a Maussian productive one, for in sacrificing the intellect one actively rejects the fatefulness of the disenchanted world and actually produces the place for God—even if only an absent placeholder, as Weber makes clear—in the course of the sacrificial process itself. A great deal of the “fateful”, pagan pathos of Weber's rhetoric has to do with this sense that participating in the prevailing spirit of the age is to live in an iron cage.

A final mode of sacrificial rhetoric comes into play in regards to the pathos of Weber’s writing. Here and elsewhere this stems largely from the fact that, as indicated by his quotation from Isaiah at the end of “SaV,” Weber cannot seem to operate in line with his own scholarly strictures. That is, even Weber’s hypertrophied ascetic propensities do not prevent him from succumbing to the metaphorical seduction, or the prophetic and apocalyptic tone. With Weber sacrificial rhetoricizing both employs the figure and proclaims its obsolescence.
Far from being a singular failure or an idiomatic contradiction that besets Weber’s texts alone, this reveals a constitutional paradox at the heart of discourse, what one might call the inherent and intractable rhetoricality of discursive production. Whenever a speaker addresses an audience and seeks to persuade it, she inevitably traffics in norms and values that she cannot ratify in the self-same discourse, for they must serve as the implicit conditions of possibility of this specific discursive instance. Insofar as Weber’s discursive production interferes performatively with the very phenomenon it seeks to describe and validate (the inevitability of world-historical trends of disenchantment and specialization, the necessity of the scholar’s ascetic renunciation of religious consolation and the charisma that accrues to those who employ the prophetic mode of enunciation, the impossibility of any rapprochement between facts and values, science and religion), I believe that, instead of a unilinear trajectory of disenchantment and secularization, a more dialectical notion of the relation between the secular and the sacred is necessary to address the role of auto-authorizing texts such as Weber’s, and the way that they transform received idioms of religious authority into new modes of hegemony and power.

I hope that my treatment of Weber’s discourse illustrates something criterial about the nature of scholarship, viz. that the relation between scholars is mutually-supplementing because each text, argument and concept is rhetorically self-corrupting, and for this reason critique and eventual refutation is not a tragic fate that befalls the scholar’s work (pace Weber), but its very condition of possibility.

This view would not simply reject, but would treat as situationally responsive, and thus strategically determined, the pathos-rich distinctions (fact-value, science-religion, and, more abstractly, infinite-ephemeral, meaningful-meaningless, etc.) that Weber employs to articulate

52 There is a temptation to speak of the conditions of possibility of discourse in general, but there is only ever “discourse in general” as a referent of specific discourses. That is, there is no such thing as “discourse in general,” scientific or otherwise, except as an interpellated fiction from within specific instances of discourse.
the structure of the scholar’s vocation. Weber’s use of sacrificial rhetoric was essential to this project. By placing science and religion on the same plane in reference to asceticism, but at odds by means of sacrificial rhetoric, Weber counters the prophet-scholar who would collapse the two, or seek some sort of value-bearing synthesis. In putting them both on the same level as possible perspectives that the individual might adopt, Weber does not treat science as an archimedean point from which one might judge religion. Instead, he speaks to the gathered scholars as if to a group of peers, an interest group or faction that needs to become aware of its shared interests and perspectives. Because every discipline presupposes its object, Weber’s lecture emphasizes the type of topics and projects that cannot fall within the scholar’s domain. In fact, this process of border-construction is so emphatic that Weber in effect calls the community of scholars into being around this fundamental exclusion.

**An Aesthetic Conclusion**

In light of Weber’s emphasis on the human response to the prevailing structures and trends that determine the world as an objective fact, some scholars have emphasized the impact that Nietzsche had on Weber’s thought. Nietzsche’s impact on Weber depended on the fact that he was a predecessor whose concerns closely resembled Weber’s own, and, consequently, whose positions Weber must address. Because these positions were not only limited matters of conjecture on scholarly matters but addressed the nature of civilization as a whole and the future course of human nature and society, this shadow was especially long. David Owen and Tracy Strong, for instance, read Weber’s account of the modern world as fated to become more and more cage-like in reference to the pathos stirred by Nietzsche’s claims regarding the putative “death of God.” In reference to the scholar in particular, they hold that,

Weber's view that the turn to religion under modern conditions involves a ‘sacrifice of intellect’ and his commitment to a ‘polytheism’ of ultimate orientations to life simply expresses his acknowledgment of Nietzsche's account of the death of God. Against this background, Weber's stress on the importance of intellectual integrity should be seen as an endorsement of Nietzsche's claim that honesty expressed as intellectual probity is the preeminently necessary modern virtue (2004, p. xxxiii)

On some of these points I largely agree with Owen and Strong, for one can readily verify that
the repercussions of mixing Christian asceticism with the article of faith that God is truth led to
the bastard offspring of modern science, where the self-denying practices of the ascetic
coupled with the “will to truth” of the scholar led to the figure of the scientist as the dis-
interested producer of truths. After this correlation, however, Owen and Strong continue, stat-
ing that

the pathos with which Weber invests this virtue, namely, that it is our very truthfulness
that deprives us of the illusions (for example, illusions concerning the meaning and
value of science) from which we might otherwise draw comfort, precisely echoes
Nietzsche's own recognition that it is the commitment to truthfulness cultivated under
the aegis of Christianity (or, more strictly, the ascetic ideal) that undermines Chris-
tianity (ibid.).

Here I believe that Owen and Strong are in danger of overestimating Weber’s proximity to
Nietzsche, especially when they suggest that Weber’s “pathos” in the lecture “echoes”
Nietzsche’s. First, Nietzsche stages, provokes and revokes pathos on so many topics from so
many different perspectives that this generalized mention of a singular, intertextual
“Nietzschean pathos” arouses skepticism. Furthermore, while there is certainly much pathos in
Weber’s lecture, it is of a different texture than Nietzsche’s, one less prone to ironic treat-
ment, one where nostalgia for the days before the death of God is not scorned, as often hap-
pens in Nietzsche’s texts, but is courted in order to undergo a transformation. Thus, a more
sufficient reading needs to account for the textured aesthetic effects of Weber’s asceticism.
Indeed, the notion of sacrificial rhetoric provides essential resources to Weber’s “pathos-
transforming” discursive project.

The topic of Weber’s proximity to Nietzsche is a provocative one. Because of their
shared Greek idiom of fate and tragedy, and the sacrificial origins of Greek drama, so much is
shared that the strongest distinctions emerge more clearly. Between Nietzsche and Weber there
is a sharp difference in aesthetic response to the tragedy of the “death of God.” For Nietzsche,
this world-historical event provokes a “Dionysian” response, a joyful affirmation of its neces-
sity, while for Weber, the death of God becomes an objectively fated conjunction between
ascetic self-discipline and the will to truth whose consequences will be ambiguous at best, and
thus the cause of anxious reflection. In this lecture Weber, like the Greek tragedians, produces a sense of ambivalence by invoking the evanescent fate of humans and their desire for immortality, specifically through the pathos of the scholar caught in these inexorable developments, all in order to conjure an identification with and between the members of his audience. The passions he stirs Weber will channel into the service of their collective self-interests.

The framing of paradox remains one of the most persistent tools Weber employs to provoke a response in his audience. In fact, a great deal of his lecture aims precisely at drawing the net of antagonistic trends and irresolvable conflicts as closely about each member of the audience as possible. In doing this, Owen and Strong suggest that

Weber is, carefully and precisely, specifying the fateful character of scientific activity and commitment to that activity. In other words, Weber is specifying the conditions of “love of scientific fate” in all its difficulty. From this Nietzschean perspective, Weber's concern with what it is to have a vocation for science is a concern with what it is to love one's fate as a scientist, that is, to embrace our condition of being thrown into the world as it is (p. xxxiv).

The first part of this assessment, regarding the connection to Nietzsche, and Weber’s variation on *amor fati*, is patent and clear. But the authors’ invocation of the world “as it is” blurs a fundamental point. If we are to retain the agnosticism that makes the polytheism of ultimate perspectives more than simply a species of liberal tolerance, then we must speak not of the world “as it is,” but of the world as Weber rhetorically constructs it, a world where sacrifice and the conflict of values are essential to its very fabric. In other words, my difference here with Owens and Strong is that they treat the lecture as purely descriptive, whereas I would view it as a type of performance wherein the speaker, the audience, and the world as a whole are constructed anew. To treat the lecture as a straightforward description of the scholar’s predicament is to adopt the perspective that Weber constructs for his audience. While I do not seek an “outside” of this lecture, or an objective perspective on it, I do seek an analysis that does not read the text solely from the perspective of the addressee-position constructed by Weber’s rhetorical gestures. In short, this reading must assess the degree to which any scholarly reading remains within the parameters that Weber sets, but also avoid the wholesale adoption of the perspective that Weber constructs.
I noted at the outset that Weber’s aesthetic achievement was quite distinct from Nietzsche’s provocative assessments of the scholar’s genesis and condition. To assess Weber’s distinctive treatment, one must go back to his words about passion as the sine qua non of an individual’s life work. Here we have the paradoxical picture of a speaker attempting to describe the universe as disenchanted and cold, in order to elicit the spark of passion from the audience. In a passage from *The Gay Science* entitled “On the aim of science,” Nietzsche addresses the dialectical relationship between the ascetic and the voluptuary,

> What? The final aim of science should be to give man as much pleasure and as little displeasure as possible? But what if pleasure and displeasure are so intertwined that whoever wants as much as possible of one must also have as much as possible of the other.... Even today you still have the choice: either as little displeasure as possible,... or as much displeasure as possible as the price for the growth of a bounty of refined pleasures and joys that hitherto have seldom been tasted. Should you decide on the former, i.e. if you want to decrease and diminish people's susceptibility to pain, you also have to decrease and diminish their capacity for joy (1974, p. 37-38).

Nietzsche presents an account where options range from a still point of minimal oscillation to a life swinging from extremes of jubilation and suffering. What I would take away from this is that the entire range would, for Nietzsche, fall under the concept of asceticism. Here Nietzsche, and Weber after him, will attempt to wrest the history and practice of asceticism from the possession of Christianity, since both recognize that asceticism as a mitigated and strategic form of sacrifice formed a set of practices with a future far beyond that of any particular religion. Indeed, not only will this future extend beyond Christianity, it will extend, according to Weber, beyond religion in general, into the domain of science. As with Weber’s paean to passion, Nietzsche opposed a simplistic image of scholarly asceticism as cold and life-denying:

> With science one can actually promote either of these goals! So far it may still be better known for its power to deprive man of his joys and make him colder, more statue-like, more stoic. But it might yet be found to be the great giver of pain!—And then its counterforce might at the same time be found: its immense capacity for letting new galaxies of joy flare up! (ibid, p. 38).

Weber too employs strategies so that his rhetoric produces a specific effect: faced with Weber’s depiction of a world for the scholar approaching absolute zero, he counts on his
audience’s commitment to produce their own warmth, to undertake the alchemical process of turning that fact into a value. For the scholar,\textsuperscript{53} as Weber and Nietzsche depicts him, the point becomes not the cool, neutral position of the observer, or the blase attitude of Simmel’s metropolitan. Weber wants to awaken the group to their interests and direct their passions towards these interests, and not others that are actually opposed. Weber heats up the scientific ethos in a way opposed to the positions of the prophet-professors. This is the tightrope that Weber walks by describing the world as cold and tragic in reference to scientific production in order to elicit great pathos in the heart of the scientist as a producer.

In regards to the aesthetic rendering of this sacrificial pathos, Nietzsche often emphasized the myriad ways of expressing the “will to power,” whereas Weber continues in a key more appropriate to an audience whose members have just lived through a sacrificial undertaking of the worst kind, total war. Weber calls on his fellow scholars to become more ascetic, to undertake greater but different sacrifices, in becoming ascetic enough to forego sacrifice as it has been inflected since Luther, at least, as the production of faith. In this, Weber perhaps knew his audience a bit more than Nietzsche knew his, though, of course, the latter insisted that he wrote (and lived) posthumously. Weber’s sacrificial rhetoric remains compelling, though the changing nature of the university and the nation-state have led to different problems than the prophet-professors of Weber’s day.

Weber’s wish, the decentered engine of his lecture, is to engage an audience composed of individuals, each of whom was capable of making the transition from accurate facts to appropriate values for themselves, without Weber finding it necessary to pepper the facts with evaluations and other prophetic elements. Both in his comparative studies and in the construction of his lectures. was this soul of the other, understood as a black box where commitments are conjured and motivations born, that so preoccupied Weber. Weber wanted to address indi-

\textsuperscript{53} Wittgenstein defines this rejection of the cool for the opposites of hot and cold as indicative of the religious sensibility (1979). Perhaps here we should expand this to speak of sacrifice and asceticism.
vidually, and call into being as a group, these adepts at the negotiation of facts and values, in particular those who were committed to the view that the former never derived from the latter. That is, as a conscientious scholar, Weber’s great fear was that his peers would be seduced by prophet-professors into adopting invalid value-spheres. From within these spheres, they would shirk their scholarly duties by deriving their facts from their values instead of, as he thought every conscientious individual must, their values from the facts. By focusing so obsessively throughout his career on the problem of the social construction of subjectivity and the subject’s motivated response to these determining social structures, this aporia became the needle that he would attempt to thread. Weber’s sacrificial rhetoric flags facts with values (the transition from magic to religion and feudalism to capitalism as positive developments of a process of rationalization) and disguises values as facts (the goal of Wertfrei scholarship as a firewall against the demagoguery abroad in a defeated and dejected nation), in such a way that, in the very act of prohibiting this blurring, Weber offers a virtuoso performance in their mutual imbrication.
5. Conclusion

In this text I have set out to study an astonishingly long-lived, effective and flexible mode of persuasion. The notion of “sacrificial rhetoric” as an object of scrutiny has provided the lens to analyze a certain kind of claim about the world, a claim that, at its limit, would address the genesis of value and the nature of being. As persuasive as this type of discourse can be, the framing device of “sacrificial rhetoric” has helped us cast a cold eye on its resources and effects. Insofar as sacrificial rhetoric is a mode of rhetoric, understood not only as persuasive speech but also as the self-reflexive elaboration of received ideas, this concept arguably constitutes an example of a disenchanting instrumentalization of religious phenomena. However, insofar as this rhetoric is obdurately sacrificial, and preserves the idiom and scenario of sacrifice into a world that no longer sanctions the rite, sacrificial rhetoric constitutes a mystifying discourse that promotes the consecration of misrecognitions. For these reasons, this investigation has haunted a crossroads where paradoxes are not only contingent, they are the necessary counterparts of this linguistic deployment.

This study has shown that, far from serving as a simple figure of speech, or a veil of values cast over a fact, sacrificial rhetoric has served as an instrument for considerable work in the world. With it, Luther reined in the aspects of the Reformation that most troubled his aristocratic patrons, legitimated the pastor as a distinct figure of authority over the laity, and all the while avoided recanting his proclamation of the “priesthood of all believers.” Hegel, by contrast, used sacrificial rhetoric to marshal all the pathos and devotion of religion and channel it into the socio-ethical, nation-building program of his speculative system, and at the same time stave off charges of impiety and atheism from the clergy whose authority he siphoned away. Weber, finally, employed sacrificial rhetoric to cast the entrepreneur and the scholar as
heroic figures adept at assessing the fateful nature of factuality and rationally adapting their behavior, and even their values, to meet the demands of the day.

Furthermore, I have shown how sacrificial rhetoric, as a rhetoric, constructs its own other in order to stage the triumph of its values. If in each case it was, respectively, the pastor, the philosopher, and the scholar who truly sacrifices, it was the sophist who sacrifices truth. In addition to this feature of sacrificial rhetoric, in the introduction I developed a model that could account for two of the most important effects of sacrificial rhetoric, namely, disaggregation and consecration. Luther disaggregated faith from reason and consecrated both the supremacy of faith and the function of the pastor. For his part, Hegel disaggregated truth as the movement of spirit in the world from its Bildern and other fixed manifestations, then consecrated this movement as the dynamic liberty of humans, history and Geist. Finally, Weber disaggregated the ascetic entrepreneur from the greed-driven adventurer and the scholar from the prophet-professor, then consecrated the entrepreneur and the scholar as well as the historical movements they represent, the disenchantment and rationalization of the world. Each of these figures used sacrificial rhetoric to situate themselves within the social structure and a dynamic division of labor, and they did this by speaking of sacrifice in such a way that they told a story about themselves in a conflictual and costly world.

If this investigation has revealed anything to me, it is that the disciplines in the modern university are historical products, and there are innumerable trajectories that one could follow to narrate their emergence. Indeed, it is imperative that scholars interrogate the received narratives of their field's disciplinization. Recently, this necessity became clear at a public forum. At the fall 2005 convention of the American Academy of Religion, Slavoj Žižek, always the provocateur, asked rhetorically if we—not only scholars of religion, but all cosmopolitan, ironic, cynical scholars—if we have connived to “outsource belief”? Does the entire scholarly enterprise pivot upon the notion that there are people in the world who inhabit a simpler form of subjectivity than our own, one less prone to skepticism, sudden flashes of insight and reversals of perspective? Have we projected onto others a “natural” way of inhabiting the
world, of believing in the world, that we then take it upon ourselves to study, to analyze, and explain so that we cosmopolitan adepts can then utter the truth of the faith that only others actually live?

This question could not have been directed towards a better audience. Whether as citizens or scholars, how reassuring it is to participate in this game of projection and (mis)recognition, a game where our expectations are always fulfilled? This investigation has attempted to trace the route that led us to this place. If we scholars value our ascetic commitments to truth, our refusal to “sacrifice our intellects,” from what can we derive this value except from the conviction that somewhere someone else has in fact made such a sacrifice? If in today’s society the priest and the scholar stare at one another from across an abyss, how might this change if one narrates a story of how these rival siblings came to this impasse?

This investigation sought to show, first, that the way people speak about sacrifice is consequential, and to show this it examined the sacrificial rhetoric of three of the great *hierophants* (to use Eliade’s term) of the modern age. Second, this investigation has shown that, because a sacrifice is not a thing but a process, not an object but a movement, it serves as a resource for the generation of narratives. In particular, this study has shown how, by invoking the values of the nation-state as a value sphere, and situating their work in reference to its well-being, Luther, Hegel and Weber, as pastor, philosopher and scholar, each constructed a sacrificial narrative of their own authority.
Appendix 1. Greimas Square of Gift, Theft, Exchange and Sacrifice
**Appendix 2. Summary of the Axes of Variation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Axes of Variation</th>
<th>Asymptotic Endpoints</th>
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<tr>
<td>practical-axis</td>
<td>ritual &lt; &gt; rhetoric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>object-axis</td>
<td>inflation &lt; &gt; mitigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>valence-axis</td>
<td>sacralization &lt; &gt; desacralization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>production-axis</td>
<td>gift-relation &lt; &gt; consecration-effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transformational-axis</td>
<td>objective &lt; &gt; subjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>efficacy-axis</td>
<td>magical &lt; &gt; moral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>referential-axis</td>
<td>indicative &lt; &gt; performative</td>
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