Toward a Radical Naturalistic and Humanistic Interpretation of the Abrahamic Religions

In Search for the Wholly Other than the Horror and Terror of Nature and History

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In this sweeping work, Rudolf Siebert goes beyond and develops further and creatively applies the argument found in his recent three volume Manifesto in a relatively succinct form. Drawing upon the rich resources of the Critical Theory of Society of the Frankfurt School but also the vast tradition of critical philosophy and theology, Siebert offers a ‘critical’ analysis. A critical approach (from the Greek kritikos, able to discern) implies that religious phenomena are examined according to both their positive and negative impacts, with help from the critical theory of society. A critical approach is not neutral. Critical theorists of religion are engaged in informed assessments which enable action in the public sphere. Siebert’s focus is nothing less than some aspects of the three Abrahamic Religions - Judaism, Christianity and Islam - and their sacred writings - the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament and The Holy Qur’an.

According to the Rabbis, the modern antagonism between the sacred and the profane, or between the religious and the secular, had been unknown to the Torah, or even - so the dialectical religiologist may add - to the Tanakh, or to any other ancient sacred writing. Everything we do, so the Rabbis thought, had the potential of being holy, and according to the Torah and the Talmud those people who thought that there was no God, and that the world of nature and of man – family, society, state, history and culture – was entirely secular and profane, were considered to be foolish, false, corrupt, vile, evil, unwise, tainted, ignorant, stupid, unclean, impure, lawless, immoral, wicked, evildoers. They were seen as apostates, who were struck by fear without reason. They were disgraced, rejected by God and the community of the believers, as their bones were scattered and they were forgotten.

I. HOLINESS

In the Rabbis’ perspective, to be holy was to be different; to be set apart from the ordinary life of the people. The ordinary was often used as the opposite of holy. In Rabbinic discourse, to be holy was to rise to partake in some measure of the special qualities of God, the source of holiness. Holiness was the highest of human behaviour: human beings at their most God-like. Martin Buber wrote that
unlike today’s modern approach, Judaism did not divide life into the holy and the profane, but rather into the holy and the not-yet-holy.  
Similarly Finkelstone wrote that Judaism is a way of life that endeavours to transform virtually every human action into a means of communion with God.  
The Talmud enunciated the important principle of achieving holiness within the realm of the permitted.  
Jews were supposed to go beyond obeying the letter of the law, and refraining from what was forbidden, by finding ways of sanctifying every moment in their lives. People could be as holy as they allowed themselves to be. Ramban warned against the person, who managed to lead an unworthy life without technically breaking any of the Torah’s rules. Such a person was called a scoundrel within the bounds of the Torah.  
In the Rabbi’s view, the capacity for holiness was not restricted to spiritually gifted people. Anyone may attain holiness. God did not demand the impossible. There was no one who was entirely religiously unmusical, as Max Weber and Jürgen Habermas confessed to be. Still most recently the 82 years old Habermas stated that he had become old, but not pious.  
The critical theorist of religion observes that traditional societies are not only opposed to the profanization of the sacred, but rather try to overcome and reconcile the difference between the religious and the secular through the progressive sanctification of the profane, or through de-secularization.  
The relationship between the sacred and the profane is extremely dialectical.  

Community

In the view of the Rabbis, holiness was most easily achieved in the context of a religious community.  
It was difficult for a person to live a life of holiness without others. Noah was not able to do it.  
Even Abraham lapsed into unworthy behaviour when he was surrounded by people who were not striving for holiness as he was.  
When a community dedicated itself to the pursuit of holiness, its members supported and reinforced each other. Historically, when Jewish – or Christian, or Islamic, or Buddhist, or Hindu, etc. – communities have been at their best, the whole became greater than the sum of its parts.  
Ordinary people achieved an extraordinary measure of sanctity in their daily lives. The divine commandment You shall be holy has been understood by some Rabbis not as a command, but as a promise.  
Hatam Sofer promised: Live by these rules and your life will become special in the process.  

For Heschel, Judaism was an attempt to prove that in order to be a man you have to be more than a man, that in order to be a people, you have to be more than a people. Israel had been made to be a holy people. For dialectical religiology, secular socialist humanism determinately negates – i.e. criticizes, but also preserves, elevates, and tries to fulfil – positive religion, particularly the ethical theism of the three Abrahamic religions in terms of a post-theistic religiosity or spirituality.  

II. DISHARMONY

According to the comparative critical theory of society and religion, the modern difference, but also outright antagonism, disharmony, and dissonance between the sacred and the profane, the religious and the secular, revelation and enlightenment, faith and reason, which had been unknown to the Torah and the Jewish community as well as to any other traditional society, had started in Western civilization alone with the Renaissance and the Reformation; with the discoveries of Copernicus, and of Galilei Galileo, and of Isaac Newton, and of Rene Descartes, and reached a climax after the bourgeois enlightenment movements and revolutions in England, France, and America and with the Marxian enlightenment and the socialist revolutions.  
Around 1800, Hegel recognized in European culture three stages or estates of modernization and secularization:  
1. The first stage of the immediate and naïve religion and faith.
2. The second estate of the analytical understanding of the so-called educated people, of reflection and enlightenment.

3. The third stage of dialectical philosophy as theology, in which religion and reason had been reconciled for philosophers by the power of the dialectical notion – the self-particularization or self-estrangement, and the self-singularization or self-reconciliation of the universal – but not for the masses of the people living in civil society, not for the average bourgeois, not to speak of the proletarian.  

When Hegel looked at the origin, and the existence, and the full development and realization of the Christian community at the beginning of the 19th century, and saw finally its spiritual reality fall into this threefold disunion of estates or stages, it then appeared to him that this realization was at the same time its passing away, its destruction. Yet, the Lutheran Hegel asked himself whether he could really speak in all seriousness of the going under of the Christian community, since according to the Christian revelation and faith the *Kingdom of God* was grounded for eternity, and the *Holy Spirit* lived as such eternally in his community, and the powers of hell could not possibly overcome the Church. Hegel was fully aware that to speak about the passing away of the Church meant to end his whole philosophy of religion with a disharmony not only for Christianity but for all the other still living world-religions as well.  

Hegel, the believer, did not want to end his dialectical philosophy of religion in that negative way. Yet, he could not help it that this disharmony between religion and secular enlightenment was present, nevertheless, in the social and historical reality of Western civilization.

The Fall of the Roman Empire

Informed by the historian Gibbons, Hegel compared the European civilization of his time with the late Roman Empire and its fall. In the time of the late Roman empire, so Hegel remembered, the universal unity in religion had disappeared, and the Divine had been profaned, and God was dead, and, furthermore, the general political life was characterized by an extreme lack of advice, council, action, and confidence. Reason had fled exclusively into the form of private or abstract right, including property, contract, and the criminal violations of both, including their punishment. Because what was objectively in and for itself in state and religion had been given up, the particular physical and psychological well being of the private person – the bourgeois – had been elevated into the main purpose of the public life of civil society as the state of necessity and analytical understanding. For dialectical religiology, as in Greece before, so also in Rome civil society destroyed the state. Plato had tried to rescue the Athenian state through repressing civil society, but failed. Likewise, philosophy as well as religion failed in Rome in their attempt to rescue the state from civil society.

The Decline of the West

As in the late Roman Empire, argues Hegel, so it was also in modern civil society and the constitutional state around 1800 that the moral opinion of the individual – his own personal view and conviction without objective truth – has made itself into what is alone valid. The mania and addiction of private right, i.e. property and contracts, and of pleasure and consumption, are alone on the agenda and on the order of the day. When the time – the *Kairos* – was fulfilled in modern Western civilization, so Hegel argued in almost Biblical terms, so that the justification of facts and events through the dialectical notion was a real need, and this time was the beginning of the 19th century, then there was no longer present in the immediate consciousness of the people, in the reality of modern civil society, the unity of the internal religious and the external secular world of man, and in this antagonism nothing was justified any longer through religious faith. In Hegel’s view, the harshness of an objective command or order, an external insistence, the power of the
state could here no longer have any effect. For such measures, the antagonism and disharmony between the internal and external world of the individual has become too intense and the decline has penetrated too deeply into Western civilization.\textsuperscript{32} The theologian Hegel still remembered the \textit{Evangelium}:

\begin{quote}
You are the salt of the earth. But if salt becomes tasteless, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled underfoot by men.

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hilltop cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp stand, where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in the sight of men, so that, seeing your good works, they may give the praise to your Father in Heaven.\textsuperscript{33}
\end{quote}

In the present late capitalist society, nothing is justified any longer by faith or dialectical reason, and everything is treated positivistically, and almost everything has been technologized, functionalized, mechanized, robotized, computerized, and commercialized in globalized civil society.\textsuperscript{34} The baptized Catholic Adorno, the friend of the Left-Catholic Walter Dirks, and the other critical theorists Bloch and Fromm, agreed with the Catholic poet Eichendorff, a contemporary of Schelling and Hegel, that the realm of faith – the Medieval City of God – had ended.\textsuperscript{35}

\section*{Love}

For Hegel, however, when the \textit{Evangelium} is no longer preached to the poor classes in modern civil society, and when the salt has become tasteless, and when all the religious and metaphysical foundations have silently been removed from bourgeois society, then the truth could only be presented in representations, images, and symbols to the people, the proletariat or the precariate, whose reason remains thickset and stocky and undeveloped. Such a presentation could no longer help the urge, yearning, or longing of proletariat’s internal world for the totally Other than the external world of the senses with all its injustices.\textsuperscript{36} The simple people of the lower classes still stood closest to the extraordinary, unheard of, infinite love and pain and suffering of Yeshua or Jesus, the Christ, as they were portrayed in the Evangelium.\textsuperscript{37} However, in secular late bourgeois society this religious love, the Agape, as realization of the universal Golden Rule had been turned and transformed into erotic and sexual love, and pleasure, and consumption.\textsuperscript{38} Almost forgotten in secular late capitalist society, determined by money and power, is the universal religious commandment: \textit{Love your fellow as yourself} – as realization of the Golden Rule.\textsuperscript{39} When Rabbi Hillel, a contemporary of Rabbi Yeshua of Nazareth, was once asked by a gentile to summarize the Torah in one sentence, he offered a version of the Golden Rule, present in all great world religions:

\begin{quote}
What is distasteful to you, don’t do to another person.

The rest is commentary; now go study the commentary.\textsuperscript{40}

Hillel taught more precisely that people should love their neighbour because he or she was like them, subject to the same temptations that they were.\textsuperscript{41} Just as people excuse their own behaviour by seeing it in context, claiming that they were tired, angry, or misinformed, and, therefore, guilty of nothing worse than poor judgment, they should be prepared to judge the behaviour of others as charitably. Martin Buber understood this commandment as being connected with the preceding one in the book Leviticus: \textit{You shall not take vengeance}.\textsuperscript{42}

In Buber’s view, because all human beings were part of the same body, to hurt another person in an effort to get even, was to hurt part of oneself. Buber compared it to a person, whose hand slips while holding a knife and he stabbed himself. Should, so Buber asked, the person stab the offending hand that slipped to get even with it for hurting him? The person will only hurt himself a second time. So it was, so Buber concluded, when people, in anger, hurt another person, not understanding
\end{quote}
that they are all interconnected. For Buber, anger and a thirst for vengeance corroded the soul. For
dialectical religiology, informed by biblical and other world-religions, whenever an individual or a
nation did not practice the Golden Rule, the activation of the Lex or Jus Talionis, the law of
vengeance, was the iron consequence, as one historical event after the other can prove: World War
I, World War II, Fascist Holocaust; Cold War, the Vietnam War, the War of Terror, the Yugoslav Civil
War; the War against Afghanistan, Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay, the Gaza War, the
Lebanon War, the Rwanda genocide, the Sudan Civil War, the Libyan War, the quasi-assassinations
of Sadam Hussein, and of Osama Bin Laden, and maybe of Mubarek, and of Gadhafi, the global
financial crisis of 2008-2011, etc. The Torah stated:

If anyone kills any human being, he shall be put to death. One who kills a beast, shall make
restitution for it: life for life. If anyone maims his fellow, as he has done so shall it be done
to him: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. The injury he inflicted on another
shall be inflicted on him. One who kills a beast shall make restitution for it but one who kills
a human being shall be put to death. You shall have one standard for stranger and citizen:
for I the Lord am your God.

Christianity tried to invert and overcome this Lex Talionis in the Torah. The Sermon on the Mount
teaches:

You have learned, how it was said: Eye for eye and tooth for tooth. But I say this to you,
offer the wicked man no resistance. Do the contrary, if anyone hits you on the right cheek
offer him the other as well; if a man takes you to law and would have your tunic, let him
have your cloak as well. And if anyone orders you to go one mile, go two miles with him.
Give to anyone who asks, and if anyone wants to borrow, do not turn him away.

Judaism, Christianity, Islam

From a critical theory of religion perspective, not only the biblical religions, Judaism as the Religion
of Sublimity, and Christianity as the Religion of Freedom, but also Islam as the Religion of Law, and
all the other still living world-religions, were drawn into the always globalizing dichotomy between
religious faith and secular bourgeois, Marxian and Freudian enlightenment. For Hegel, in Islam the
human subject was not for himself or for herself against the unity of God, of Allah, into which he or
she has emptied out himself or herself. The subject did not retain his or her particularity against
this unity of God. Thus, the subject gave itself only the determination to immerse himself or herself into
the unity of Allah. The subject surrendered himself or herself into this universal unity of God. Islam has the same objective content as the Jewish religion. However, in Islam the
relationship of man to God has been broadened sociologically. In Judaism and Islam there remained
for man no particularity before the unity of God. The Jewish value of nationalism, which was very
different from modern nationalism, and which posited the relationship of the subject to the one
God, was missing in Islam. There was no national limitation in Islam. In the Religion of Law man
behaved as a purely abstract self-consciousness toward the one God. Christianity found in Islam its
opposite, because the Muslim religion moved in the same sphere with Christianity. Islam was like
the Jewish religion – a spiritual religion of subjectivity and not a nature religion. Yet, only in the
abstract, knowing spirit of the human subject was Allah for the self-consciousness and thus stood
with the Christian God on the same level, in so far as no particularity is retained. In Islam, whoever
feared God was pleasing to Him. Man has value only insofar as he posited his truth in the
knowledge that the one God was his or her Essence. Islam did not recognize any separation among
the believers, or between them and Allah. In Islam, before God the determination of the subjects
according to estate, status, rank, or class was superseded. There could de facto be estate, rank,
status, or class in Islamic countries, but that was considered to be only accidental and not substantial. There actually existed slavery also in Islam, and not only in Judaism and Christianity.52

The Messiah

The contrast between Christianity and Islam, suggests Hegel, consisted in that in the Rabbi Yeshua of Nazareth, called by his friends the Messiah or the Christ, spirituality was concretely developed, and that it was known as Trinity, i.e. as Spirit concretely superseding in itself Father and Son, and that the history of man – the relationship to the one God – was concrete history, and that it took its beginning from the natural will of man, which was as it ought not to be, and that it was the giving up and surrendering of this natural will: the becoming oneself of man through this negation of himself or herself toward his or her Essence.53 In Hegel’s view, the Muslim hated and banned everything concrete. God is the absolute One, against whom man retained for himself or herself no purpose, no particularity, and no peculiarity.54 However, the really existing human being did admittedly particularize himself or herself in his or her inclinations and interests, and these may even be wilder and more untamed, more uncontrolled, and more unrestrained, because concerning them the analytical reflection of the secular enlightenment was still missing. Yet then also, the very opposite was present in Islam, namely, to let everything fall, indifference against any particular purpose, and even against life.55 No practical purpose was valid as such essentially. As now, however, man was also practical and active, thus in Islam, the only practical purpose there could be was to produce in all human beings the veneration and worshipping of the One, of Allah. Therefore, fanaticism may arise in Islam. The dialectical religiologist observed such fanaticism at work in Jihadist terror acts in the Near East, Africa, Europe and North America toward the end of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century.56 The polemical rebelliousness and revolt of Christianity against that which ought not to be in what is the case in society and history reached its climax in the assertion of the believers that the rich and powerful murderers did ultimately not triumph over the innocent victim, the poor man, Jesus of Nazareth, called the Messiah, the Christ, and his friends under slavery, feudalism and capitalism, throughout the ages.57

Enlightenment

For Hegel, the analytical reflection of the bourgeois enlightenment and revolution, and of Jean Jacques Rousseau’s and Francois de Voltaire’s deism, stood on the same theological level with the Islam: that God had no content and thus was not concrete.58 That meant that in the bourgeois enlightenment and revolution, as in Islam, there was not present the appearance of God in the flesh, the elevation of Christ into the Son of God, the transfiguration of the finitude of the world and of man’s self-consciousness into the infinite self-determination of God.59 For the bourgeois enlighteners, as for Islam before, Christianity meant only a teaching. Christ was merely a messenger of God, a divine teacher, a teacher like Socrates, a Hebrew Socrates.60 Jesus was only more excellent than Socrates, since he was supposedly without sin. Christology of the modern enlighteners was like that of the Muslims: a half-truth – either Christ was only a man, or he was Daniel’s Son of Man.61 Thus, in the bourgeois enlightenment nothing remained of the concrete divine history. The modern enlighteners spoke of Christ as did the Holy Qur’an.62 The difference between this stage of bourgeois enlightenment and Islam consisted only in that the latter, the view of which bathed itself in the ether of the unlimited Infinite, as this abstract independence, gave up everything particular, enjoyment, status, rank, class, private knowledge, and all vanity as such. To the contrary, the standpoint of the bourgeois enlightenment, characterized by analytical understanding, since for its deistic position God was entirely transcendent and had no affirmative relationship toward the human subject, put man abstractly for himself, so that he recognized the affirmative Universal only in so far as it was in himself or herself, but only abstractly. Therefore, the bourgeois enlightener took
the fulfilling content of the affirmative Universal out of the factual contingency, accidentality, and arbitrariness of the everyday life world and history.

Reconciliation

Hegel recognized, nevertheless, even in the modern bourgeois deistic enlightenment and revolution a moment of reconciliation. In this sense, also the deistic enlightenment was a realization of faith in continuation of the declining Christian community. As all concrete content of the affirmative Universal had deteriorated and decayed in this enlightened subjectivity, which knew itself in itself infinitely, the originally Christian principle of subjective freedom had, nevertheless, become conscious in it. That which had been called internality in the Christian community, was now in the revolutionary bourgeois enlightenment movement developed in itself. It was now not only internality, i.e. conscience, but it was also the subjectivity that judged or differentiated itself in itself, and was thus concrete, and which was as its objectivity, which knew the Universal in itself, which it produced out of itself. This enlightened subjectivity was for itself. It determined itself in itself. It was the completion of the subjective extreme into the Idea in itself. For Hegel, the deficiency in this completion of subjective freedom into the Idea was that it was merely: bourgeois formalism. It lacked true objectivity. It was the last peak of the bourgeois formal cultural formation and education, without any necessity in itself. In Hegel’s view, it belonged to the true completion of the Idea that objectivity was let free: that it be the totality of the objectivity in itself. Thus, the result of this objectivity was that in the subject all was like a bubble, without real objectivity, without firm determination: without the concrete development of the affirmative Universal, of God. For Hegel, this last peak of the formal cultural formation and education of his time – the bourgeois revolution and enlightenment and restoration – was at the same time the highest rawness, crudeness, and, brute terroristic force, because it possessed only the abstract form of the cultural formation and education.

The Extremes

At the end of the 20th century and in the beginning of the 21st century, 200 years after Hegel’s death, the dialectical religiologist still observes two extremes that have developed in consequence of the decline and desubstantialization of the Christian community, particularly in the history of science, and of law, and of journalism, and being in collision with each other in terms of a global culture war:

1. Islam, characterized by the unfreedom of the abstract individual in the absolute region of freedom,

2. The bourgeois enlightenment, characterized by abstract subjectivity and formal subjective freedom without content.

Both extremes produced out of their abstractness and formalism revengeful fanatic terrorism and counter-terrorism, without regard for the religious Golden Rule or its secular inversion and translation into the categorical imperative, and later on into the communicative or discourse ethics, determined by the apriori of the unlimited communication community. The theological abstractness and formalism of Islam lead to religious terror against Western secular bourgeois and socialist enlightenment movements and revolutions. The philosophical abstractness and formalism of the bourgeois enlightenment led to a secular terror of virtue and democracy. The Chinese proverb is right: in its head the fish stinks first.
Clashes

In the first decade of the 21st century, the extremes’ revengeful clashes and collisions with each other climaxed in the September 11, 2001 catastrophe in New York, in terror and counter-terror attacks in the Near East, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Africa, Europe and North America, and in the killing of ten thousands of innocent victims on both sides, and in the hanging of Sadam Hussein, and in the shooting of Osama Bin Laden. When the saintly Pope John Paul II warned U.S. President George W. Bush not to invade Iraq and wage a war against it, he was totally ignored, in spite of the fact that he had strongly supported the neo-liberal counter-revolution of 1989 in Poland and in Eastern Europe. The Pope insisted that such a war would be immoral, and that it might turn the whole region into a quagmire with great animosity developing against Christians, which indeed it did. The born again, neo-liberal President Bush had the support of all the pro-life politicians in invading Iraq for reasons that later were proven to be entirely false. The infrastructures of several Iraqi cities were destroyed with tens of thousands of innocent people killed brutally and mercilessly, including hundreds of pregnant women. Two million people became refugees, having lost their homes and all of their belongings. More than three quarters of a million children became orphans, many of whom lost the will to live, which may explain the story of the Islamic suicide bombers, at least to some extent. As a result of the war, numerous Iraqi children were born deformed. When leading American neo-liberal, so-called pro-life politicians were asked as to the number of Iraqi people that lost their lives following the US invasion, their quick answer was: We do not keep account of such incidents, since we consider them merely as collateral damage. Obviously, the US self-proclaimed pro-life politicians view quite inconsistently the loss of the lives of Iraqis or – for that matter – Afghans, or Pakistanis, or Lebanese, or Libyans, or Palestinians, etc. not as a sacred element, but just as a thing: a piece of old furniture.

Idolatry

In American civil society, the continued manufacture and sales of weapons, along with the waging of wars, have turned into a great, lucrative business for what President Eisenhower has called the Military-Industrial-Congressional Complex. As a monopoly-oligopoly-capitalist country, the USA views money and wealth and power as its god. For this idolatry of capital anything is allowed to take place: even the vicious breaking of the Mosaic Ten Commandments, which all three Abrahamic Religions have in common, and which include among other rules, you should not steal or destroy the property of others; you should not kill; and you should not tell lies. When the Rabbi Jesus of Nazareth was asked who he was, there was only one answer that he gave: I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. For dialectical religiology, confronted with this biblical reality it is incomprehensive for US clergymen to formulate the slogan: If you are for-life, you vote pro-life. If a U.S. politician is pro-life and pro-peace at the same time, then the consideration of voting for such an individual would be appropriate. However, if such a politician proves to be pro-life and pro-war at the same time, then voting for such an individual should be totally out of the question. The idolatry of the maximalization of profit and power is the source of all other sins in private and public life. Under the guise of national defence and security self-proclaimed pro-life politicians in particular, and the clergy who support them, believe that they can do anything that crosses their minds. The old Romans used to say: Si vis pacem, para pacem, or Si vis bellum, para bellum. The neo-conservative U.S. President Richard Nixon invented the new slogan: If you want peace, prepare for war, and thus outdid the Romans. Today the critical theorist of religion may very well paraphrase President Eisenhower and speak of the Militarty, Industrial,Congressional, Media, University, and bourgeois Church complex.
Wars

There was a time when the Church spoke of justifiable wars in terms of the Augustinian Seven Point Just War Theory, and, as a result, initiated crusades to kill Moslems, to prevent them from taking hold of the holy places in Jerusalem and Palestine, and blessed both hostile armies and their murder weapons through the centuries up to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. A thousand years later, Pope John Paul II apologized with tears in his eyes, asking God and the world for forgiveness for the needless massacre of so many innocent lives in Palestine, in the Holy Land: Moslems as well as Jews. A couple of years later his successor, the German Pope Benedict XVI, stated emphatically: war is never justified under any circumstance whatsoever.

While so called pro-choice politicians do not really do anything to force women into having an abortion, pro-life politicians and their clerical supporters continue most inconsistently and irrationally to provide all the lethal means for people to annihilate each other. While pro-choice politicians may be co-responsible for the killing of the unborn, only one at a time, amounting admittedly to a million a year in the American society alone, neo-liberal, pro-life politicians and supportive clergy are co-responsible for the continued waging of wars and for the brutal massacre of tens of thousands of pregnant women and their babies at a time, amounting to millions on a global scale. While for pro-life politicians it is unethical, and immoral, and criminal to kill the unborn, it is fully alright to kill mercilessly and brutally the unborn baby with the mother as well, which happens every time all kinds of most sophisticated weapons are used to bombard and destroy hospitals, schools, and residences, where civilians, non-combatants, live. For dialectical religiology, informed by biblical religion, naturalism, and humanism, it would be wise for clergymen and clergywomen, in their justified defence of life to condemn very strongly out of biblical, naturalistic and humanistic reasons the continued manufacture and sales of weapons and the continued waging of more struggles and wars, whether it be in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine, Lebanon, Libya, or elsewhere. In the USA, unfortunately, these destructive war elements and the idolatry and apostasy of the Golden Calf which they feed, are viewed as the Holy Cow, that as an idol, has become increasingly difficult to criticize on biblical, naturalistic, or humanistic grounds, and to take realistic steps to help to reverse this necrophilous, destructive trend into a biphilous, creative one.

Future

In the future both extremes must be transcended through their mediation. Human subjectivity must develop out of itself the concrete content of the Affirmative Universal; the Good Infinity; the Idea greater than which nothing can be thought, and which, therefore, also contains being and is; Heaven; Eternity; Beauty; Truth; the Eternal One; the Ultimate Reality; the X-Experience; the Entirely Non-Identical, the Absolutely New; the Totally Other. Yet, this Affirmative Universal must be thought of according to an internal necessity: that the human subject knows and recognizes this concrete content as necessary and as objective in and for itself. That precisely is the standpoint of the critical theory of society and religion, that the theological content takes flight into the dialectical notion, and that it receives through thinking and acting, through theory and praxis, its restoration and justification possibly in the form of a naturalistic-humanistic, not authoritarian, post-theistic mystical religiosity: i.e. in a materialistic, concrete supersession of Hegel’s logic as Logos-theology and -theodicy, which was originally rooted in the mystical theology of Master Eckhart and of Jacob Boehme, and which supposedly contained in itself all the categories that God thought before he created nature, and man, as the source of history. This new, post-theistic mystical Logos-theology would not start with the categories of Being, Nothing and Becoming, as did Hegel’s, but rather with the notions of Something, Infinite and Finite.
Working-class

In terms of dialectical religiology, as in the 19\textsuperscript{th}, 20\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st} centuries, the modern antagonism between the religious and the secular went deeper and deeper in civil and later in socialist society; particularly the fourth estate, the proletariat, the precariat, the working-class felt more and more abandoned by their teachers, intellectuals, and theologians.\textsuperscript{94} In Hegel’s view, these teachers had admittedly helped themselves through reflection and enlightenment. They had found their satisfaction in finitude, in subjectivity and its virtuosity, and precisely thereby in vanity. Yet, in such vanity the substantial core of the people could not find its own satisfaction. For the dialectical philosophers, philosophical knowledge had resolved the dissonance, disharmony and contradiction between the sacred and the profane in modern civil society. It had been the very purpose of Hegel’s philosophy of religion, and critical dialectical philosophy in general, to reconcile reason with the world-religions, and to solve even the otherwise unsolvable theodicy problem: philosophy as theology was the true theodicy: the instrumentalization of the slaughterbench and Golgatha of world-history for the purpose of the human and divine realm of freedom.\textsuperscript{95} It had been the purpose of Hegel’s philosophy of religion to recognize the evolution of religion and its many forms and paradigms as being internally necessary, and to discover in the revealed, or manifest, or biblical, or absolute religion – in Christianity, the Truth and the Idea.\textsuperscript{96} However, Hegel had to admit that this reconciliation between religion and dialectical reason had only been a partial one without an external. i.e. sociological universality.\textsuperscript{97} For Hegel, in this respect the dialectical philosophy was a separate sanctuary, and its servants constituted an isolated priesthood, which was not allowed to go together and to cooperate with the world, with modern civil society, and which had to guard the possession of the Truth. In Hegel’s view, how the temporal, empirical present, i.e., the bourgeois society, the third and fourth estate, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, would find their way out of the continually deepening antagonism between the sacred and the profane, and how this present would form, shape and find itself throughout all its culture wars, had to be left to it. It was not the immediate practical issue and task of the dialectical philosophy as theology and theodicy.\textsuperscript{98} Hegel’s greatest student, Marx, tried to take care of this deficiency in his teacher’s philosophy in his historical materialism with the help of Feuerbach.\textsuperscript{99} In spite of all the deficiencies intrinsic in Hegel’s philosophy, e.g. his theory of war used by the National Socialists and the Fascists, the critical religiologist can still see land with him, as once the ancient Israelites after their liberation from Egyptian slavery saw after their journey through the wilderness the new land flowing with milk and honey, or as Hegel once saw land with Heraclitus, whose dialectical logos-philosophy of becoming he took completely into his own Logic, which guided him to his anticipation of the Post-European, Post-Modern alternative Future III – a new American and/or Slavic world, characterized by the reconciliation of the particular and the universal, personal autonomy and universal solidarity.\textsuperscript{100}

Utopia

The critical theorist Adorno remembered the concrete utopia – not utopianism – of Hegel’s contemporary Eichendorff: the utopia of the imageless and nameless totally Other.\textsuperscript{101} For Adorno’s student Habermas, wherever this concrete utopia appears, whether in the Hebrew Bible or in the New Testament, in Master Eckhart’s or in Jacob Boehme’s mystical theology, or in Schelling’s Ages of the World, or in the young Hegel, or in Adorno when he quoted and interpreted Eichendorff, it was always connected with ideas of the sphere of relations with others, and with experiences of undisturbed intersubjectivity, of communicative praxis, of felicitous interaction, of reciprocity and distance, of separation and of successful, unspoiled nearness, of vulnerability and complementary caution.\textsuperscript{102} In Habermas’ view, these social ideas and experiences were more fragile than anything that history up till now – 2011 – had ever brought forth in the way of structures of communication: an ever more dense and finely woven web of intersubjective relations that nevertheless made
possible a relation between freedom and solidarity, that could only be imagined with interactive models, if at all.  

**Limitless Fulfilment**

Eichendorff, argues Adorno, had written in one of his poems the utopian verse:

> It speaks intoxicatedly the distance/
> As of future, great happiness.  

The conservative Catholic Eichendorff did not speak of the past happiness. So unreliable was already his Catholic conservatism at the time of Hegel and Schelling. Eichendorff’s *utopia* was a wandering, roaming, erotic one. As the heroes of his prose swayed among images of women, which played into each other and which were never contrasted against each other, so Eichendorff’s lyrics showed itself seldom bound to the concrete image of one particular sweetheart. In Adorno’s view, for Eichendorff any devotion to any particular or single beauty would already have been a betrayal of the universal idea of limitless fulfilment in the totally Other.  

Above the garden through the air,
one of the most enthusiastic and passionate love poems of the German language, neither the sweetheart appeared, nor did the poet talk about himself in relation to her. Only the rejoicing and the merriment were expressed:

> She is yours, she is yours!  

In Adorno’s view, in his love poem Eichendorff put on name and fulfilment an image-prohibition in the Mosaic and the Kantian sense. After the death of my German Catholic friend Edmund Bolz, a great teacher and for many years a prisoner of war in the Soviet Union, on May 19, 2011, his children Annette, Judith and Eva-Maria quoted on his memorial card – very much in the spirit of Eichendorff and Adorno – Psalm 18:

> You lead me out into the distance
> You make bright my darkness,

and confessed:

> Praemissus non Amissus

(Gone away, but not passed away-
Sent ahead, but not lost).

**Hidden and Sublimated Sexuality**

Adorno remembered that the open and unconcealed representation of sexuality was foreign to the older tradition of the German, but not of the French poetry. The German poetry on its middle level had to do penance, and atone, and pay dearly for this keeping secret of sexuality from the people with prudishness and a stagnant, low bourgeois shopkeeper idealism. However, for Adorno, in the greatest representatives of German poetry this keeping secret of sexuality turned into a blessing. The power of the unspoken, hidden, concretely superseded, sublimated sexuality penetrated into the word and gave it its sweetness.  

Even still the non-sensual, or non-sensuous, and abstract became with Eichendorff a parable for a formless, totally Other: archaic inheritance or heritage; earlier than the form and at the same time late Transcendence; and the Unconditional
beyond the finite shape and figure. Eichendorff’s most sensuous poem remained in the nightly Invisible:

Above treetops and crops
Into the splendour –
Who can guess?

Eichendorff, still being a contemporary of Schelling and Hegel, groped, touched, pressed, and felt his way to the line in Charles Baudelaire’s *Fleurs du mal*:

O toi qui la nuit rend si belle.

Eichendorff’s aroused romanticism led unconsciously to the threshold of modern literature, and music, and art in general: with its anti-conservative cancellation of power, rule, master and mistress, ladies and gentlemen, and particularly of the domination of one’s own Ego over the soul.

III. CRITIQUE OF RELIGION

From Hegel’s death in 1831, throughout the 19th and 20th centuries into the 21st century all European states produced continually more and more scientific advances as well as laws concerning marriage and family, including divorce, abortion, gays and lesbians, stem cell research, eugenics, euthanasia, and economy and polity and international relations. These contradicted the interpretation of reality and orientation of action of biblical as well as the other world-religions, and especially made Christianity less and less substantial in the Hegelian sense, and thus lead to more and more secularization, and even to the rejection of theism and the construction of a new Atheism in America and Europe. In 1844/1845 Hegel’s most outstanding disciple and critic, Marx, declared somewhat prematurely in his *On the Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy of Law* of 1843/1844 and in his *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, that he considered the critique of religion essentially completed, at least as far as Germany was concerned. For Marx, guided by Feuerbach, the critique of religion was the presupposition of all other economic, political, or cultural critique.

In Marx’s secular naturalistic-humanistic view, the profane existence of familial, social, economic, political, or cultural error was compromised after its heavenly *Oratio pro aris et focis* had been refuted. Man, who in the imaginary or fantastic religious reality of heaven where he supposedly searched for a super-man and found merely the reflection of himself, will no longer be inclined merely to find the appearance of himself, the non-human, where he searched and must search for his true reality. It must not be forgotten that the religion that Marx had before his eyes and which he criticized in Germany, France, Belgium and England, was mainly bourgeoisie religion, the music of which he liked because it reminded him that there was once a poor man, Jesus of Nazareth, whom the rich and powerful classes murdered, and let him ask the dominant European and American bourgeoisie in utter indignation: why do you make a liar out of him with every word you say, and with every deed you do? While for Marx the religious side was first of all the ideological cover-up for the secular side and its antagonisms, e.g. that between labour and capital, the religious side could also contain the power of truth to uncover, what should not be in what was the case on the secular side, and to overcome it. The religious side could produce the concrete utopias, by which the secular side could be judged and changed, e.g. the oldest religious utopia of the *land flowing with milk and honey*, where the Hebrew slaves, liberated from their Egyptian masters, were to go. There was for Hegel and Marx not only the dialectic between the sacred and the profane, but also the dialectic of the secular and the dialectic of the religious.
**Foundation**

According to Marx, the foundation of the radical (radix-root) non-religious, humanistic-naturalistic critique was: *Man makes the religion, the religion does not make man.* For Marx, religion was the self-consciousness and self-feeling of a man, who had either not yet acquired himself, or who had already lost himself again. However, in Marx’s view, man was not an abstract being, who was squatting or crouching outside the real empirical world. The man was rather the world of man, i.e. the family, the society, the state, the history and the culture, including art, religion, science and philosophy. This antagonistic civil society and constitutional state produced the religion, an inverted, wrong consciousness of the world, because the world is wrong: it is as it ought not to be. The religion is the universal theory of this wrong world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritualistic *point-d'honneur*, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn completion and supplement, its general ground of consolation and justification. Religion is the fantastic realization of the human being, because he or she does not have a true reality in the bourgeois as before in the feudal, or slaveholder world. For Marx, the struggle against religion was thus indirectly the struggle against that wrong world, the spiritual aroma or aura of which is religion. If Hegel had still been alive in 1844/1845, he would probably have accepted Marx’s radical humanism-naturalism, that man is indeed the root of family, society, state, history, and culture, i.e. art, religion, philosophy. However, he would also have asked further for the foundation of man, and if Marx would have answered nature, Hegel would have asked for the root of nature – the logic, because for him family, society, state, history, and culture concretely superseded man, as he determinately sublated nature, and nature superseded God’s logic: the Logos from whom all came, and to whom all returned. For Hegel, God’s logic and the world’s logic were still the same. The critical theory of religion still asks these questions, which Hegel may have asked his disciple Marx, and is precisely therefore more radical even than Marx.

**Protestation against Misery**

For Marx, the religious misery, which he saw around himself in the bourgeois world, was at the same time the expression of the real proletarian misery in antagonistic civil society, and the protestation against this real misery. Religion was dialectical in itself. The religion was ideology, understood critically as false consciousness and the masking of particularistic national and class interests, as well as its opposite, the sigh of the oppressed creature. Religion was the heart of a heartless capitalistic world. Religion was the spirit of spiritless bourgeois conditions. Religion was the opiate not for but rather of the people. Marx’s six definitions of religion show that he was, unlike Weber or Habermas, not at all religiously un-musical. Even Marx’s last opiate-definition, which usually alone is quoted by bourgeois scholars, shows a sensitivity for religion: what is wrong with taking an opiate against extreme pain and suffering in any slum of any American city, is that it may disable the proletariat to change its miserable conditions and abolish itself. For a dialectical theory of society and religion, informed by Marx, there is not only a dialectic between the sacred and the profane, but also a dialectic in the enlightenment and a dialectic in the religion, which are awaiting their resolution and reconciliation.

**Happiness**

For Marx, the naturalistic-humanistic annulment, repeal, abolishment, or cancellation of ideological religion as the illusionary happiness of the people was the demand for their genuine, real happiness. The humanistic-naturalistic demand, that the people should give up the religious illusions about their miserable condition, is the demand to give up a condition that is in need of illusions. A sane, good, and truly happy society would be one which would no longer need the continual canonization of heroes or saints, be it in Rome or elsewhere. The proletarian saint
would be the last in the history of sainthood.\textsuperscript{131} Thus, in Marx’s perspective, the naturalistic-humanistic critique of religion was in its very core the critique of the miserable capitalist valley of tears, the halo of which was religion.\textsuperscript{132} Marx’s critique was directed against religion insofar as it had turned into ideology, understood critically as untruth.\textsuperscript{133}

The Rose in the Cross

In his idealistic philosophy of law, Hegel had stated that what stood between reason as self-conscious spirit, and reason as present reality, what differentiated the former reason from the latter, and what did not allow people to find satisfaction in the latter, was the fetter of some kind of an abstraction, which had not been liberated yet into the dialectical notion.\textsuperscript{134} To recognize Reason as the Rose in the cross of the present and thereby to enjoy it, this rational insight was the reconciliation with the present, which the philosophy granted to those people, to whom once had come the internal demand to comprehend, and to receive in that what was substantial, likewise their subjective freedom, and to stand with the subjective freedom not in some particular and accidental element, but in that which was in and for itself.\textsuperscript{135} For Hegel, what is rational is or will be real, and what is real, is or will be rational.\textsuperscript{136} To the contrary, in Marx’s view, the historical-materialistic, humanistic-naturalistic critique of religion had picked to pieces the imaginary flowers, or the rose, on the chain, or on the cross, not so that the man would carry the chain or the cross without imagination and consolation, but that rather he would throw off the chain, or the cross, and break the living flower, or the rose.\textsuperscript{137} The humanistic-naturalistic critique of religion disappointed man, so that he may think, and act, and form and shape his reality like a disappointed man, who had come to his senses and understanding: so that he may move around himself, and thereby around his real sun. In Marx’s view, religion was only the illusionary sun, around which man turned, as long as he did not yet move around himself.\textsuperscript{138}

Naturalistic-Humanistic Position

Marx moved – in a quasi-Copernican sense – from the Hegelian, biblical, theistic position to a post-theistic socialistic-humanistic-naturalistic position.\textsuperscript{139} Man becomes the centre for man, but not necessarily in an idolatrist, but rather in a relative sense: there is something after communism.\textsuperscript{140} There will be no miserable tenement houses or projects any longer for the proletariat in New York, or in any other city.\textsuperscript{141} There will be no proletariat or precariate any longer. Persons, groups, nations, and states will recognize each other, and treat each other in mutual respect, and according to the Golden Rule, or the categorical imperative, or the apriori of the unlimited communication community, be it in Palestine, Israel, the Near East, Africa, or elsewhere.\textsuperscript{142} However, neither humanism nor naturalism must turn into idolatry.\textsuperscript{143} Neither nature, man, or history will be absolutized and considered to be ultimate. There will continue the longing that the world of appearance with all its injustices may not be the last word.\textsuperscript{144} Beyond finite nature and its evolution, and beyond finite man and his history, there will still be the totally Other than both. The wholly Other is beyond nature and history’s finite logic, as well as their laws, and their horror and terror, their tsunamis, hurricanes and tornados, and their wars, into which the logic as logos-theology and theodicy was once situated in Hegel’s System. No longer will the notions abstracted from nature in the history of mythology and philosophy and science be projected into logic as the thoughts of God before creation, but these projections will be taken back into the human mind, from which they came, and nature’s and man’s logic will be different from God’s Logic, and there will be more difference than similarity in the analogia entis.\textsuperscript{145} Often theology contained already in itself a humanistic-naturalistic moment: the consideration for the poor classes.\textsuperscript{146} As this humanistic-naturalistic element becomes thematic and central in terms of the abolishment of the poor classes
and their misery, it must ally itself precisely now with theology, in order to avoid idolatry, and to be able to resolve its metaphysical problems.\textsuperscript{147}

The Task

Thus for Marx it was the task of history to establish, after the Beyond of truth had disappeared, the truth of this-worldliness.\textsuperscript{148} It was first of all the task of philosophy, which stands in the service of history after the sacred form of human self-estrangement had been unmasked, to expose the secular self-alienation in its unholy forms. Thereby, the critique of heaven, or the religious, transforms itself into the critique of the earth, or the secular; the critique of religion into the critique of profane law, and the critique of theology into the critique of secular politics. It may also happen that the concretely superseded theology may be in the service of historical materialism and vice versa and that its task may be to help to realize not alternative Future I – the alienated totally administered society, or alternative Future II – the estranged, completely militarized society, but rather alternative Future III – the realm of freedom on the basis of the realm of natural and economic necessity, a just society as long anticipated by the Hebrew prophets, and in Plato’s \textit{Politeia}, in Aristotle’s \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, in Hobbes’s \textit{Leviathan}, in Locke’s \textit{Second Treatise}, in Rousseau’s \textit{Contract Social} and in Kant’s \textit{On Eternal Peace}, and long after Marx, only 40 years ago, in John Rawls’s \textit{Theory of Justice}, in which society would also not be ultimate and infinite, but rather finite and transitory.\textsuperscript{149}

Critical Theology

In the \textit{Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844}, Marx writes that it was only with Feuerbach that the positive, humanistic and naturalistic criticism of the religious and the secular began.\textsuperscript{150} In Marx’s view, the less noise Feuerbach’s writings made, the more certain, profound, extensive and enduring was their effect. Marx saw in them the only writings since Hegel’s \textit{Phenomenology} and \textit{Logic} to contain a real theoretical revolution.\textsuperscript{151} In contrast to the critical theologians of 1844, Marx deemed the concluding chapter of his own \textit{Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844}, entitled \textit{Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole} to be absolutely necessary.\textsuperscript{152} This task had not yet been performed by 1844. For Marx, this lack of thoroughness was not accidental, since even the critical theologian remained a theologian. Hence, so Marx argued, either the critical theologian has to start from certain presuppositions of philosophy, accepted as authoritative, or the critical theologian abandoned them in a cowardly and unwarrantable fashions, based on his doubts about these philosophical presuppositions due to the process of criticism and as a result of other people’s discoveries. The critical theologian abstracted from the philosophical presuppositions, thus showing his servile dependence on them and his resentment at this servility merely in a negative, unconscious, and sophistical manner. While with Hegel Jerusalem and Athens, theology and philosophy, biblical religion and ontology were still united, Feuerbach and Marx tore them apart and de-Hellenized them, as the Reformation and the bourgeois enlightenment had done before the Marxist enlightenment and revolutions, and as multi-culturalism does today in 2011.\textsuperscript{153}

Idealism as Idolatry

In Marx’s perspective, the critical theologian did his work either by constantly repeating assurances concerning the purity of his own criticism, or by trying to make it seem as though all that was left for criticism to deal with now was some other limited form of criticism outside itself. Marx thought of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century bourgeois criticism.\textsuperscript{154} The critical theologian also pointed – like Hegel before – to the limitations of the masses in civil society, in order to divert the observer’s attention as well as his own from the necessary task of settling accounts between criticism and its point of origin: namely, the Hegelian dialectical logic as logos theology, and German idealistic philosophy as a whole – i.e.
from the idolatry of human self-consciousness in terms of the projection of the human mind into the Absolute, the absolute Spirit.\textsuperscript{155} Such charge of idolatry can be made only from the theistic position of the Abrahamic religions, or of their concrete post-theistic supersession.\textsuperscript{156} Whoever speaks about idolatry, must include its opposite: a genuine theology as idology, which arrives through the negation of the negative – the idols, at the affirmation of the imageless, nameless, and notionless Eternal One, or totally Other than nature and man and the whole finite world of appearances.\textsuperscript{157} For Marx, the critical theologian diverted attention from this necessary task of raising modern criticism above its own limitation and crudity: its idealistic idolatry.\textsuperscript{158} Such critical idolology or demonology was indeed Marx’s and Freud’s greatest contribution to a truly critical theology as theodicy: a genuine Jewish contribution in spite of all the conformist neo-liberal Friedman’s and Greenspan’s.\textsuperscript{159} This continual struggle against idolatry as the source of all other sins – stealing, murdering, lying, etc. – rather than the nomadic life style of the Hebrews, seems to be the general theme in all variations of Anti-Semitism, or better still Anti-Judaism in Antiquity, Middle Ages, and Modernity.\textsuperscript{160}

Discoveries

For Marx, however, whenever discoveries, e.g. those of Feuerbach’s projection theory, were made regarding the nature of the critical theologian’s own philosophic presuppositions, he partly made it appear as if he were the one who had accomplished them, producing that appearance by taking the results of these discoveries and, without being able to develop them, hurling them in the form of slogans or catch-phrases at writers still caught up in the confines of subjective-, objective-, and absolute-idealistic philosophy.\textsuperscript{161} The critical theologian partly even managed to acquire a sense of his own superiority to such discoveries by asserting, in a mysterious way and in a veiled malicious and sceptical fashion, elements of the Hegelian dialectical logic, which he still found lacking in the criticism of that dialectic, and which have not yet been critically served up to him for his use against such criticism – not having tried to bring such elements into their proper relation, or having been able of doing so, asserting, let’s say, the category of mediating proof against the category of positive self-originating truth, in a way peculiar to Hegelian dialectic.\textsuperscript{162} For to the theological critic it seemed quite natural that everything had been done by idealistic philosophy, so that he could chatter away about purity, resoluteness, and quite critical criticism. Thus, the critical theologian fancied himself the true conqueror of idealistic philosophy whenever he happened to feel some dialectical element of Hegel lacking in Feuerbach. For, however much the critical theologian practiced the spiritual idolatry of self-consciousness and mind, he did not get beyond feeling to consciousness in terms of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Mind.\textsuperscript{163}

Religious Transcendence

Marx had to admit on closer inspection, that the theological criticism movement had been genuinely progressive at its inception and beginning.\textsuperscript{164} Yet in the final analysis, Marx saw the critical theology to be nothing else but the culmination and consequence of the old idealistic-philosophical and especially Hegelian Transcendentalism, twisted into a theological caricature. For Marx, this was an interesting example of historical justice, which now assigned to theology, which had always been the idealistic philosophy’s spot of infection, the further role of portraying in itself the negative dissolution of idealistic philosophy, i.e. the process of its decay: a historical nemesis. Marx had to admit in his further exposition, that on the other hand Feuerbach’s discoveries about the nature of philosophy did still call – for their proof at least – for a critical discussion of philosophical dialectic. In the view of dialectical religiology, indeed, the critical theologians, in so far as they have really been critical and progressive and thus have liberated themselves from the idealistic idolatry of human self-consciousness, and do no longer project the human mind into the divine Spirit, remain still theologians, because Hegel’s untwisted Transcendentalism, freed from all idolatrous, anthropomorphic projections, remains precisely that, not as a positive, but rather as a negative
eschatological notion: the Highest Idea, including being; Ens a se; the Divine One as the negation of negations, and the desire of desires, and the denial of denials; the One who denies of every other that it is anything except himself; the One to which nothing is to be added; the Not-God; the No-Ghost; the Apersonal, Aspiritual, Formless One, who is pure, sheer, and limpid and without Duality; the One, into whom people sink eternally from negation to negation; the Thing in itself, including God, Freedom and Immortality; the Good Infinity; the Identity of the Identity and the non-identity; the Supreme Being; the Ultimate Reality; the Absolute Future; the X-Experience; the imageless and nameless totally Other, the Unconditional, shortly the Transcendence. 165 This negative-theological Transcendence remains after Marx had, with the help of Feuerbach, taken the theological content – Being, Essence, Notion – out of Hegel’s Logos-theology, and had put it back, where it had supposedly come from: into the human mind. 166 Lenin transformed Hegel’s still theological logic into the secular Alphabet of Revolution. 167 It is not accidental that even up to the present – 2011 – Hegel’s idealistic logic has still not yet been replaced by a historical – materialistic one. 168 What, according to Habermas, has connected the religious and the secular, ethical monotheism and radical enlightenment, throughout modernity, has been that moment of human Self-Crossing Over, Self-Exceeding, or Transcendence, which opens up, admits and concedes first of all for the Ego, which is caught up in its particular environs, the distance to the world in its totality, and to itself, without which cannot be acquired personal autonomy or universal, i.e. anamnestic, present, and proleptic solidarity on the basis of a linguistically mediated mutual recognition of and respect for each other’s dignity. 169 The acceptance of such Transcendence, shared by believers and enlighteners, does in no way touch upon the conviction of the critical theorists of society that nothing of theological content will continue unchanged in history. 170 Every theological content has to expose itself to the test, to migrate into the secular dimension. However, this bringing of theological contents into the secular universe of argumentative discourse, and solidary living together and cooperation, is the very opposite of the neo-pagan regression behind the self-understanding of personal autonomy and universal solidarity, which entered world history through the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic prophetic teachings. 171 Hegel’s, Hölderlin’s, and Schelling’s Mythology of Reason had concretely superseded into itself the prophetic teachings of the Abrahamic religions. 172 This mythology of reason has nothing to do with the contemporary fascist or neo-conservative praise of a this-worldly polytheism or pagan mythologies, which terminate the majority of the human subject, and which have been spread throughout late capitalist society in fascist and liberal form: e.g. in Rosenberg’s Myth of the 20th Century or in the New Age movement of the 21st century. Marx was as little willing or able to dissolve the religious into the secular without residual through profanization, as the old Rabbis – or for that matter – the orthodox Priests, Bishops, or Ministers, Imams, or Ayatollahs – were able to dissolve the profane into the sacred through sanctification. 173 If religion has ever made substantial contributions to the humanization of man, and if the secularization of individual, family, society, state, history, and culture cannot be stopped in the long run – in spite of some sporadic counter-revolutionary appearances of de-secularization and return to religion e.g. in Eastern Europe, then – in order to help resist utter re-barbarization – progressive semantic materials and potentials are to be rescued from the depth of religion and the mythos by an inverse cipher theology into the secular discourse of the expert cultures, and through it into communicative practice in the life world, still characterized by mimetic rationality and run over the medium of ethical and moral values and norms, and even into the instrumental action in the economic and political subsystems of the modern systems of human condition, and action systems, otherwise characterized by functional rationality, and run over the media of money and power, and into social movements, which are directed against the inner colonization of the life world by the economic and political subsystems. 174 In the perspective of the dialectical religiologist, while there is no possibility of an idealistic return of the secular to the religious, as Hegel, Goethe, or Beethoven had still assumed, there is, nevertheless, the possibility, that progressive religious
elements may be rescued in secular historical - materialistic form: e.g. the Exodus motive from the Abrahamic religions.  

**IV. SOCIALIST DECISION**

During the 20th century, the Protestant theologian and philosopher of history, Paul Tillich, tried through a radical humanistic, existential reinterpretation to reconcile both sides of the modern antagonisms between Jerusalem and Athens, between theology and philosophy, between biblical religion and ontology, and finally between the religious and the secular in late capitalist society.  

Tillich was not only influenced by Schelling and Hegel, but also by Marx. If it had not been for Tillich, Max Horkheimer could not have taken over the directorship of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt a.M.; and the critical theory of society could not have been developed, at least not in the way it has been. As brave anti-fascist, Tillich also went into exile with the Jewish critical theorists. For Adorno, who had written his doctoral thesis on Sören Kierkegaard under Tillich, the theological work of this great thinker and friend constituted the last trace of theology in the traditional systematic and symbolical sense. When Paulus visited Western Michigan University, where this essay is written, in 1960, he asked his former student and assistant, the late Dean and Vice-President Cornelius Loew, what would become of his systematic theological work? Cornelius, who had translated and edited much of it, answered: nothing, because Americans cannot think systematically. Paulus’ wife Hannah counselled his students, who later on became professors at Western Michigan University, not to study theology, but rather move into art or into Religionswissenschaft instead. They chose comparative religiology instead of theology. The students participated in Seminars at the University of Chicago, which were taught by Tillich and Mircea Eliade. The students did not follow the religious socialist Tillich, because his theology was too systematic, but rather the religious fascist Eliade.  

The students did not know that Tillich had written the *Socialist Decision* in Sils Marie, where Nietzsche had composed his Zarathustra in 1933, before he emigrated from fascist Germany to the USA, in spite of the fact that he considered this book to be his greatest work.  

When Tillich came to America, he kept his best book hidden, because American society was very conservative, and he did not want to hurt his likewise conservative friends, who made great sacrifices in order to bring him to the States. Since he could not introduce himself to the conservative American society with his *Socialist Decision*, he replaced it with a new book, *On the Boundary*, which did not deal with the class antagonism, but rather with the contradiction between the religious and the secular.  

When Tillich visited Kalamazoo in 1960, he was not aware that from a parish in this town had come the famous and infamous, originally Canadian fascist and Anti-Semitic Radio-Priest, Charles Coughlin, the friend of Henry Ford and of Dr. Joseph Goebbels, who represented everything what he fought against throughout his life.  

**Ultimate Reality**

The theologian Tillich searched for the *Ultimate Reality* in biblical religion as well as in ontology, and even in modern secularity. In his theology, Tillich confronted three symbols of the divine self-manifestation – 1. the Creation, 2. the Christ, and 3. the *Eschaton* – with some ontological concepts. Tillich found seemingly insuperable contradictions between the theological symbols and the ontological concepts. However, Tillich tried, nevertheless, to show that such contradictions between theology and ontology were not necessary, and that each of these theological symbols demanded and had received ontological interpretations. For dialectical religiology, informed by Horkheimer and the critical theorists of society, ontology – i.e. talk about Being, Essence and Notion – was rather problematic.  

For ontology, Being is the most universal category. However, it is questionable whether the Universal is really more essential, and if it is really a greater concern for the people than the Particular or the Singular, as the philosophers of Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and
the earlier Modernity believed up to Hegel. The ontological question is analogous to the social question: whether the functions at the peak of the social pyramid of the system of human condition, or of the human action system, of the ministers of state are really more essential than those of the policeman at the street corner. It is not entirely clear whether the all-embracing policies and decrees of the government and the ministers are really more significant or more wasteful, barren, dull, dreary and desolate, than the settlement or the arbitration of the conflicts between parties in the village inn. It may very well be that the faith in the Universal is not merely the rationalization of the greatest power, corresponding to the separation of command or order on one hand, and of its execution, or performance, on the other. The concrete supersession of this logical antagonism between the Universal and the Particular had been the main theme of Hegel’s philosophy, his logic, his dialectic. Hegel succeeded theoretically in the mediation of the Universal and the Particular in the Singular not only in his logic, but also in his philosophy of nature, law, history, art, and religion: especially in his Trinitarian Christology. However, in the practical life of late bourgeois society, there remains the question of the rotation of the functions of the constitutional state or of the division of labour in late capitalist or socialist society in general, so that the servant or the maid may for some time become the policeman or police woman, or even the minister of state, and vice versa. While Horkheimer had no doubt that the servant or the maid could accomplish this rotation, the critical theorist of society doubted seriously if the minister of state could do so. Tillich followed Hegel’s logical mediation of the Universal and the Particular in the Singular theoretically in his theology and in his ontology.

Creation

According to Tillich’s theology, first of all, creation by the Word out of nothing described the absolute independence of God as Creator, the absolute dependence of creation, and the infinite gap between them. Tillich had to admit that the ontological question arose immediately at several points. Tillich had to ask, how the eternal Logos, the principle of God’s self-manifestation, was related to the secular contents of the world process. The classical answer to this question, which was still present in Schelling’s and Hegel’s philosophy, had been that the essences, or potentialities, or categories of the secular world, were eternally present in the divine Spirit or Mind. This answer had either to be accepted or replaced by another one. Every answer was necessarily again an ontological one.

The Christ

Secondly, the Christological confrontation with ontology had led to the question, whether there was a necessary conflict between the universal Logos and the particular Logos, who was present in the personal life of the singular Jesus of Nazareth, as the Christ? The Primordial-Christian, Apocalyptic Paradigm of Christianity, and the following Old Church Hellenistic Constellation, and the Medieval Roman Catholic Paradigm, and the Reformation Protestant Constellation, did not believe in such an unavoidable conflict between Christology and ontology. For most Christian paradigms, the universal Logos, i.e., the divine self-manifestation, was actively present in everything that existed in nature and history because everything was continually made through it. Yet, only the ultimate divine self-manifestation showed, what Martin Luther had called, the heart of the Divinity, God for man, eternal God-manhood in its very centre. The universal Logos and the particular Logos as the power of a singular personal life were one and the same Logos. Only against the background of the universal Logos was the particular, singularly, incarnate Logos a meaningful concept. For Tillich, biblical religion had shown the ontological implications of one of its fundamental assertions in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel:

In the beginning was the Word:
The Word was with God
and the Word was God.
He was with God in the beginning.
Through him all things came to be,
not one thing had its beginning but through him.
All that came to be had life in him
and that life was the light of men,
a light that shines in the dark,
a light that darkness could not overpower….

The Word was the true light
that enlightens all men;
and he was coming into the world.
He was in the world
that had its being through him,
and the world did not know him.
He came to his own domain
and his own people did not accept him.
But to all who did accept him
he gave power to become children of God,
to all who believe in the name of him
who was born not out of human stock,
or urge of the flesh,
or will of man,
but of God himself.
The Word was made flesh,
he lived among us,
and we saw his glory,
the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father,
full of grace and truth…. 200

Ontology, argues Tillich, was able to receive the Christological question: the place, in which the
universal Logos manifested itself particularly, singularly, existentially, and unconditionally. The
universal Logos appeared in a particular, singular, concrete form. To say that Jesus as the Christ was
the particular, and singular, concrete place, where the universal Logos became visible, was an
assertion of faith, and could be made only by that person, who was grasped by the Christ as the
manifestation of his ultimate concern. 201 But it was not an assertion that contradicted or was
strange to the search for Ultimate Reality. For Tillich, the name Jesus the Christ implied an ontology.
Theodicy

John’s Prologue and its contradictions force upon the dialectical religiologist the drama of the theodicy question: the global landscape of tears, screams and shouts. If the world was created by God through the universal Logos, where does its darkness come from: all the horror and terror of nature and history, in which almost everybody eats almost everybody. If there exists such secular darkness, can there be a good God and universal Logos at all? Yet, this evil darkness does indeed exist: Auschwitz and Treblinka, Dresden and Hiroshima have really happened. Thus, can there possibly be a good God and a universal Logos, or is the God of ethical theism dead, indeed? Or is the darkness of the world merely the result of man’s sinfulness, or more specifically of the non-acceptance of the Light, of the religious enlightenment, of the particular, singular, incarnate Logos, the Christ, and his teachings, the Sermon the Mount, by a majority of Jews and of humanity. Yet, the darkness of the world was there before the Christ, and remained after his historical appearance and disappearance, in spite of the fact that it could not overpower the Light. Where does the curse of finitude come from? Maybe, the infinite God – as the mystics said – could not double himself up and create through the universal Logos another Infinite, and therefore the finite and all the perils of human beings exist: loneliness, abandonment, injustice, meaninglessness, illness, ageing and death. Where does the necrophilous and nihilistic capitalism come from, which transforms all particular purposes into means again, and which thingifies, commodifies, instrumentalizes, and functionalizes everything and everybody without an ultimate end. Without capitalism there would have been no fascism in the 20th century, and its war of revenge and of colonial and empirical thievery, and the cheap – labour – concentration – camps, and the killing of 27 million Russians and 6 million Jews and many others. At this time – June 2011- there is no adequate theoretical religious or ontological solution to the theodicy problem. The transition from the God of theism to the God of post- or non-theism, or naturalistic-humanistic religiosity is caused more by the unresolved theodicy problem than by the theistic God’s imprisonment in the antagonism of subjectivity and objectivity.

God on Trial

The dialectical religiologist remembers that the Rabbis in Auschwitz no longer accepted the traditional Jewish retaliation theodicy or the test theodicy, but instead put God on trial. The Rabbis charged God with having broken the covenant, which promised the Hebrews’ protection from their enemies. Yahweh would never forget his covenant. Quickly he would come to his peoples’ rescue, imposing his covenant once and for all. Now, the Jewish people called for Adonai in their deepest distress and despair, and all what came were the SS men, and their dogs, and the gas chambers. The Rabbinical court suspected even that God had concluded a new covenant with Adolf Hitler and fascist Germany. After three days, the Rabbis found God to be guilty as charged. However, after the trial of God the Rabbis and other Jews walked over to the gas chambers holding their hands over their heads. The Torah states that the Lord had said to Moses to take the blasphemer outside the camp, and to let all who were within hearing lay their hands upon his head, and let the whole community stone him. For the later Rabbis that had been a puzzling incident. It was not clear to them, whether the blasphemer had cursed God, or had cursed someone else using the name of God, or had simply pronounced God’s name without due reverence. For the critical theory of religion, no matter whether God had blasphemed himself by breaking the Covenants, or if the Rabbis had blasphemed against him by putting him on trial, the last word was atonement-reconciliation. Nevertheless, there were also Jews, who after the trial of God never prayed again, and today 89% of the Jewish population of the State of Israel are non-believers and secular, not because of science, but rather because of Auschwitz. The story is of relevance not only for Jews,
but for Christians and Muslims as well, who up to Auschwitz had shared the traditional retaliation and test theodicy with the Jews, and who are still concerned with the theodicy problem.219

Radical Christianity

From its very start, long before Marx and naturalist-humanist Marxism, critical and radical Christianity protested and rebelled, sometimes almost atheistically, against the darkness of the world, characterized by class-domination and exploitation, in the name of the religious enlightenment of the universal, and particular, and singular Logos, of Jesus, the Christ.220 Critical Christianity’s revolt continued at least in the radical religious underground, determined by the Albigenses and Waldenses, by the Franciscans and the Dominicans, by the Brothers of the Free Spirit, by the Edomites, by Thomas Münzer and his revolutionary farmers, etc, even after the authoritarian, hierarchical Christendom went through the Constantinian turn and allied itself with the Roman state – which had executed Christians on the charges of atheism and high treason for three centuries – and with other states and empires from one Christian paradigm to the other up to the Lateran Treaty with Benito Mussolini, and to the Empire Concordat with Adolf Hitler, which is still valid today – in 2011 – in the German Federal Republic.221 This radical humanistic Christian underground continued through the anti-fascist priests and ministers of the 20th century, the worker-priests in France, the liberation theologians and the Basic Christian Communities in Central America, etc, while conservative Christendom allied itself with fascism and neo-liberalism, which as different as they are, nevertheless, share their hate against socialism, and finally produced the present-day neo-conservative Protestant and Catholic radio- and television priests and ministers in Europe and the USA, up to the neo-liberal Fox News, particularly Glenn Beck and Ann Coulter, who think they are redeemed by Jesus, a redemption which they deny to the other party, the Democrats, who supposedly are more secular.222 This radical, enlightened, humanistic, revolutionary Christianity continued in the underground, while above the authoritarian, hierarchical, counter-revolutionary Christendom provided ideological legitimation to slaveholders, feudal lords, and capitalists, and consolation to slaves, serfs, and wage labourers.223

Eschaton and Eschata

For Tillich, the third manifestation of God, after creation and Christ, which he confronted with ontological categories, was history, running toward an ultimate end, the historical-eschatological-apocalyptic element in the Abrahamic religions: the Eschaton – the community between God and his people in the New Jerusalem – and the eschata – no more tears, death, mourning, sadness, and no more breaking of words, worship of obscenities, murderers, fornicators, fortune tellers, idolaters or any other sort of liars.224 For Tillich, there was the most difficult question that demanded an ontological answer implied in the historical-eschatological view of the Abrahamic religions. It was the meaning of the Eschaton and the eschata or the relation of the temporal and the Eternal. If people identified the Eternal with the temporal continuation of life after death, they have made a very poor ontological statement by confusing Eternity with endless temporality.225 If people, in opposition to this, say that Eternity is the simple abstract negation of temporality, they have also made a very bad ontological statement by confusing Eternity with timelessness. In Tillich’s view, there was, however, a third ontological answer, which does justice to the meaning both of time and of Eternity. According to this third answer, Eternity concretely transcends, i.e. negates and contains temporality, but a temporality that is not subject to the law of finite transitoriness: a temporality, in which past and future are united, though not negated in the eternal Presence. Then, history runs toward its ultimate end in the Eternal, and the Eternal participates in the moments of time, judging and elevating them to the Eternal. For Tillich, such statements were ontological in a half-symbolical gown. No theologian could escape them. Those theologians, who still used primitive – mythological language deceive themselves and the people, if they do not realize, that the phrase life after death
contained an ontology of a highly questionable character. For Tillich, as for his friend Walter Benjamin, history was not closed but rather open: there was still the possibility of the rescue of the hopeless, and that the murderer would not triumph ultimately over his innocent victim.  

The God above God

In response to the dramatic, macro-paradigmatic, historical change from Modernity toward Post-Modernity, which started with the end of World War I and has continued through fascism, World War II, neo-liberalism, the Cold War between capitalism and socialism, and the present collision between Islam and secular Western capitalism and socialism, toward alternative Future I – the totally administered society, and alternative Future II – the entirely militarized society, or maybe alternative Future III – the free and reconciled society, and its eclipse of God, Tillich’s existential, symbolical theology moved beyond the God of the ethical monotheism of all three Abrahamic religions toward the God of post-theism.  

According to Tillich, the God above God is the ultimate source of the courage to be in the present world-historical transition period. This was the result of Tillich’s demand to determinately negate the traditional theism. Only if the God of theism was concretely transcended could the anxiety of doubt, and meaninglessness, and guilt be taken into the courage to be.  

Mysticism

The God above God was the object of all mystical longing in East and West: even the mystical post-theism of the critical theorists of society as the result of the radical interpretation of biblical religion in terms of naturalism and humanism: the humanization of nature and the naturalization of man. However, in Tillich’s view, Oriental and Occidental mysticism also had to be concretely negated in order to reach the God above God. Mysticism did not take seriously enough the concrete reality and the doubt concerning it. As mysticism plunged directly into the Ground of being and meaning, the totally Other, it left the concrete world of finite values and meanings behind. Therefore, mysticism did not solve the modern problem of meaninglessness. In terms of the present religious crisis situation in the West, this means that Oriental mysticism is not the solution of the problems of Occidental liberalism or existentialism. The God above the God of theism is not the devaluation of the meanings, which doubt has thrown into the abyss of meaninglessness in consequence of World War I, and fascism, and World War II and the wars in Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, etc, and the approach of alternative Future I – the totally administered society: the God above the God of theism is rather their potential restitution. Nevertheless, in Tillich’s view, radical and absolute faith agreed with the faith implied in mysticism in that both transcended the theistic objectivisation of a God, who is a being. For mysticism such an objectified God was not more real than any finite being. For the courage to be, such an objectified God has disappeared in the abyss of meaninglessness, with every other value and meaning connected with him.

Dialectical Encounter

The God above the God of theism, suggests Tillich, is present, although hidden as Deus absconditus, in every divine-human encounter. The three Abrahamic religions and the corresponding theologies were aware of the paradoxical or dialectical character of this encounter. They were aware that if God encounters man, God is neither Object nor Subject, and is, therefore, above the antagonistic scheme into which theism has forced him, in spite of the second and third commandment of the Mosaic Law. They were aware that individualism or personalism with respect to God were balanced by a trans-personal Presence of the Divine. They were aware that the forgiveness of sins can be accepted only if the power of acceptance is effective in man: biblically speaking, if the power of grace is effective in man. The Abbot Andrew Marr, OSB, of St. Gregory’s
Abbey, Three Rivers, Michigan, speaks of the *strange and hidden ways grace works* in some people, who may have been effected without ever knowing. The Abrahamic religions were aware of the paradoxical or dialectical character of every prayer, of speaking to somebody to whom man cannot speak, because God is not *somebody*; of asking somebody of whom man cannot ask anything, because he gives or gives not before he is asked; of saying *thou* to somebody who is nearer to the I than the I is to itself: shortly, God transcends and resolves the subject – object antagonism, which underlies all antagonisms in nature and history: Nicolas of Cusa spoke of the *Coincidentia oppositorum*. Each of these paradoxes, or negations, or dialectics drives the religious consciousness toward a God above the God of theism.

**Participation and Individualization**

The courage to be in the present late capitalistic world, which is rooted in the experience of the God above the God of theism, unites and transcends the courage to be as a part and the courage to be as oneself. It avoids both extremes, the loss of oneself by participation in a fascist or socialist mass movement, and the loss of one’s world by individualization in atomistic liberal civil society. The acceptance of the God above the God of theism made people a part of that which was not also a part, but is the ground of the whole. Therefore, peoples’ self was not lost in a larger whole, which submerged it in the life of a limited group. If the self participated in the power of Being-itself, it received itself back. That was so because the power of Being acted through the power of the individual selves. It did not swallow them up as every limited whole, every collectivism, and every conformism does.

**The Church**

This was why the Church, which stood for the power of Being – itself or for the God who determinately negates the God of the world-religions, claimed to be the mediator of the courage to be in the late capitalist society. However, so Tillich argued, a Church, – or for that matter a Synagogue or an Umma – which was based on the authority of the God of theism, entangled in the subject-object antagonism, could not make such a claim. It inescapably developed into collectivism itself. However, a Church, so Tillich argued, which raised itself in its message and its devotion and its *mimesis* to the God above the God of theism without sacrificing its concrete symbols – Creation, Christ, Eschaton – could mediate a courage to be, which could take into itself doubt, meaninglessness, guilt, and death. It would be the Church under the cross, which alone could do this. It would be the Church, which preaches the crucified Jesus the Christ, who cried to God who remained his God after the God of confidence and providence had left him in the darkness of doubt and meaninglessness, and torture and death:

> And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice:
> Eli, Eli lamah azavtani ?
> (My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?)

For Tillich, to be a part of such a Church was to receive a courage to be, in which one could not lose one’s self, and in which one received one’s world.

**Symbols**

A person could become aware of the God above the God of theism in the anxiety of guilt and condemnation, when the traditional symbols of the Abrahamic and other world religions, that had once enabled men to withstand the anxiety of guilt and condemnation, had lost their power in Modernity and in the transition to Post-Modernity. When the symbol of *Divine Judgment*, which
all three Abrahamic religions have in common, was interpreted by the Freudian enlightenment as a mere psychological complex, and Forgiveness as a remnant of the father-image, what once had been the power in those symbols could still be present and create the courage to be, in spite of the experience of an infinite gap between what is the case in bourgeois or socialist society and what ought to be.\(^\text{249}\) The Jewish, Christian, or Islamic courage to be returned in post-theism, but not supported by the faith in a judging and forgiving God, as it had been the case in all forms of theism.\(^\text{250}\) It returned in post-theism in terms of the radical and absolute faith, which says Yes, although there was no special power that conquers guilt. The courage to take the anxiety of meaninglessness, guilt and death upon oneself, is the boundary line up to which the courage to be can go.\(^\text{251}\) Beyond it, there was mere non-being, or nothingness.\(^\text{252}\) Within it all forms of courage were re-established in the power of the God above the God of theism. For Tillich, the courage to be was rooted in the God who appears when the God of theism has disappeared in the anxiety of doubt, meaninglessness, guilt, and death in the context of nihilistic late capitalist society.\(^\text{253}\)

**V. SOLUTION TO THE DICHOTOMIES**

With the help of Hegel, Marx, and Freud, Tillich’s friend, the analytical social psychologist and critical theorist Erich Fromm, radically, naturalistically-humanistically interpreted the Hebrew Bible and its traditions toward a post-theistic religiosity, concentrating throughout his life work on the notions of God, Man, History, Sin and Repentance, the Way-Halakha, and the Psalms, particularly Psalm 22, in the context of and in opposition to the more and more reified and commodified globalized late capitalistic society, moving toward alternative Future I – a necrophilous, totally mechanized, bureaucratized, computerized, and robotized technocratic society, and alternative Future II – an even more necrophilous, more and more militarized society, aiming at the collision of civilizations and corresponding ABC wars, and in support of tendencies toward alternative Future III – a biophilous society, characterized by a humanized technology, the sublimation of aggression, and a socialist humanism or humanist socialism.\(^\text{254}\) According to Fromm, in the evolution of religion the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic idea of the One God had expressed a new answer for the solution of the religious and secular dichotomy as well as other antagonisms of human existence.\(^\text{255}\) Man could find oneness with the world of nature and history, not by regressing to the pre-human state of evolution, but by the full development of his specifically human qualities: love and reason.\(^\text{256}\) In Fromm’s view, the worship of God was first of all the fight against and the concrete and determinate negation of idolatry.\(^\text{257}\) On an earlier stage of religious evolution, the notion of God had been formed according to the economic, social, and political notions of a tribal chief or king.\(^\text{258}\) In the next stage of religious evolution, the God-image had been developed according to a constitutional monarch, who was obligated to man to abide by his own principles: love and justice.\(^\text{259}\)

**The Theos Agnotos**

In the next stage of religious evolution, this God became the *nameless God*: the *Theos Agnotos*, the God, about whom no attributes of essence could be predicated.\(^\text{260}\) This God without positive attributes was worshiped *in silence*.\(^\text{261}\) This God had ceased to be an authoritarian God. Now man had to become fully independent. That meant that man had to become autonomous even in relation to God.\(^\text{262}\) Man even argued and bargained with God concerning justice.\(^\text{263}\) Fromm found in negative theology as well as in mysticism the same revolutionary spirit of freedom, which characterized the God of the revolution against the ancient slaveholder society and state of Egypt, which is yearly remembered, celebrated, and hopefully practically imitated in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: during Passover, and the Christian Last Supper or Eucharist.\(^\text{264}\) Fromm could not express this revolutionary naturalistic-humanistic spirit better than by quoting Master Eckhart:
That I am a man
I have in common with all men,
That I see and hear
And eat and drink
I share with all animals.
But that I am I is exclusively mine,
And belongs to me
And to nobody else,
To no other man
Nor to an angel nor to God,
Except in as much as I am one with him.

In the perspective of the critical theorist of society and religion, this mystical-political revolutionary spirit of Master Eckhart and Fromm is to be translated into the immediate context of the present macro-paradigmatic transition period between Modernity and Post-Modernity, which at this moment is characterized by an anti-utopian, anti-intellectual, neo-fascist or neo-liberal, conservative-revolutionary or, better still, counter-revolutionary mass-culture and culture industry in the service of a global corporate ruling class. It is to be practiced by masses of people, who are frustrated and angry, because in the catastrophic and continuing world-wide financial crisis of 2008, caused by anti-Keynesian, neo-liberal de-regulation and privatization since President Reagan, they have lost their jobs, their homes, their pensions, and who always were, or have been more recently politically disenfranchised. These masses are to be motivated and guided by thoughts derived from Moses, Jesus of Nazareth and Mohammed, from Hegel and Kant, and from Marx and Freud, against that which ought not to be, and thus is against God in the status quo of, and in “what is the case” in late bourgeois society: against alternative Future I – extreme capitalist exploitation and domination, against alternative Future II – one more and more aggressive conventional war after the other, and finally inter – civilizational ABC war, and toward alternative Future III – a global society of justice and peace and harmony. In the perspective of the comparative dialectical religiology, Fromm and the critical theorists are as little as Buddha, Moses, Kant or Marx apostates or god-less people: post- or non-theistic religiosity is not abstract atheism, and the Theos agnostos, the nameless God, is being unknown, nevertheless most real in and beyond nature and history.

X-EXPERIENCE

While the Rabbis read in the Torah of Yahweh – I am who I am, or I shall be who I shall be, and while Hegel spoke of the consciousness of the absolute Spirit beyond the subjective and objective spirit, and while Marx de-mythologized, and de-ideologized, and de-anthropomorphized, and defined religion as sigh of the oppressed creature against the oppressor, and as the heart of a heartless world, and remained silent about any reality beyond nature and history, and while Tillich taught about the Ultimate Reality, the Ground of Being, and while Altizer spoke of an atheistic Christianity, and Bonhoeffer of a non-religious Christianity; and while Adorno and Horkheimer announced the longing for the totally Other than the horror and terror of nature and history, which had once been called Heaven, or Beauty, or Eternity, Fromm explored the post- and non-theistic religiosity of the X-Experience. In his psychoanalytical – not theological – analysis of the X-Experience, Fromm identified, with the help of the Rabbis, Hegel, Marx, Freud and Tillich, its five main aspects or characteristic elements. The first characteristic was that people had experienced life as a problem:
as a question, which needed an answer. The non-X-person, or the positivist, did not feel a deep disquiet about the existential and social, economic, and political dichotomies of life in modern civil society. For the non-X-person, life as such was not a problem. The positivist was not bothered by the global landscape of cries and tears, and feels no need for a theoretical or practical solution to the dramatic theodicy problem in its religious or secular forms. He is – at least consciously – satisfied with finding the meaning of life in the status quo of family, civil society, political state, international relations, or culture; in money or power, in sex, car, or career, or even – like Kierkegaard’s aesthetic or ethical man – in acting in accordance with his conscience: I did what I thought was right. Hitler, the positivist, did precisely that. For the positivistic metaphysics, what ought to be has collapsed into what is the case in late capitalist society: what is, ought to be – even death. To the mundane or secular positivist, life as it is makes sense. The non-X-person does not feel the pain of his separateness from man and nature, nor the passionate wish and longing to overcome this separateness, and to find at-one-ment.

Hierarchy of Values

Secondly, for Fromm, there existed a definite hierarchy of values for the X-experience. In this hierarchy, the highest value was the optimal development of man’s own powers of reason, love, compassion and courage to be, and to resist, and to overcome non-being. All religious and secular achievements were to be subordinated to these highest human spiritual or X-values. For Fromm, the hierarchy of values implied Oriental and Occidental mysticism, but without asceticism. This hierarchy of values did not exclude secular pleasures and joys. It was not ascetic. The dialectical religiologist remembers that neither Moses, nor Jesus of Nazareth, nor Mohammed was a mystical or an ascetic person. Through his hierarchy of values, Fromm tried – concretely superseding the idealistic models of Hegel, Schelling, Hölderlin, Goethe, Beethoven, and Mozart – to reconcile the secular and the religious consciousness, insofar as it made the secular life part of the spiritual life, and the secular life was permeated by the spiritual aims of the X-experience in the context of liberal civil society.

Functional Rationality

Closely related to the hierarchy of values was the third aspect of the X-experience: the concrete negation of the modern non-humanistic, merely instrumental rationality of means and purposes, aiming from its very start tangentially toward alternative Future I – the aggressive and necrophilous totally technocratized and bureaucratized signal society. For the average person, so Fromm explained, particularly living in the non-dialectical – bourgeois – materialistic culture of the modern commodity exchange society, life was a means toward ends other than the person himself or herself: these ends were money, power, pleasure, the production, distribution and consummation of commodities, etc. If man in bourgeois society was not used by others for their needs and ends, he or she used himself or herself for his or her own purposes. In both cases, he or she became a mere means. For the X-person, man was an end, and never a means. Furthermore, the whole X-attitude toward life was one in which each event, even the smallest one, was responded to from the standpoint of whether or not it helped to transform man in the direction of becoming more and more human. Whether it was art, literature, music, religion, philosophy or science, joy or sorrow, work or play, whatever happened was a stimulus to his or her becoming stronger and more sensitive. For Fromm, this process of constant inner metamorphosis and of becoming part of the world of nature and society and history in the act of living, was the aim toward which all other aims were subordinated. Man was not a subject opposing the objective world in order to transform it instrumentally and manipulatively for profit. Man was rather in the world in order to make his being in it into the occasion for constant self-transformation. Therefore, the world was not merely an object standing opposite to him, but rather the medium in which he discovered his own realty.
and that of the world ever more deeply. Also man was not a subject, the most indivisible part of human substance, an a-tom, in the Greek sense, and as such an Ho Idiotaes, or an in-dividual in the Latin sense. Man was not even Descartes’ Cogito ergo sum, his lofty thinking subject, which dominated the modern history of philosophy and science and traditional theory up to the arrival of the critical theory. Rather, man was a true Self that was alive and strong precisely only to the degree to which I ceased to hold on to itself and was responding to the world. It would contradict not only Moses, the prophets, the Rabbis, the mystics, Hegel, Kant, Marx and Tillich, but also Fromm’s own idology if man – on the top of the hierarchy of values – would become for himself another idol: another Golden Calf in the form of race, nation, or charismatic leader, or super-man. Fromm’s X stands not for the world of nature or the world of man, society and history, but rather for the location before and beyond the system of finite life, nature and man, where once Hegel’s Logic, his Logos-theology, had been situated with all its categories and God-concepts from Being through Essence to the Notion and the absolute Idea.

X-Attitude

Fromm described the fourth characteristic element of the mystical X-experience, the X-attitude, as letting go of one’s Ego, one’s greed, and with it of one’s fears and anxieties; a giving up of the wish to hold on to the Ego, as if it were an indestructible, separate entity; a making oneself empty, in order to be able to fill oneself with the natural and human world with all its negations and negatives, and to respond to its challenges, and to become one with it, and to love it. For Fromm, as for Master Eckhart before, to make oneself empty did not express passivity, but rather active openness. If one could not make oneself empty, one could not possibly respond to the world. One could not see, hear, feel, love, if one was filled with one’s Ego; if one was driven by greed. This kind of mystical X-attitude was quite different from the older one, which psychoanalysis had called receptiveness. It had been passive. The emptiness of the X-attitude, however, was active: just as inhaling was as active as exhaling. It was an active transcending of the Ego otherwise imprisoned in its particular environments.

Naturalistic-Humanistic Transcendence

This active naturalistic-humanistic transcending into the immanence of nature as well as of man, society and history, constituted the fifth characteristic of the X-experience. Yet, here again Fromm found the same problem as in the case of the word religion or religious in general. According to Fromm, transcendence had traditionally and conventionally been used in the theistic sense of God’s transcendence, not as a human phenomenon: i.e. as naturalistic-humanistic transcending. Like Adorno, Horkheimer before, and Habermas afterwards, Fromm dealt with the transcending of the Ego and with leaving the prison of its particular and singular selfishness and separateness. In Fromm’s view, whether people conceived of this transcendence as one toward God, or one into world-immanence was merely a matter of conceptualization. In psychoanalytical terms, the experience was essential, no matter whether it referred to God or to the natural or human world; whether it was understood theistically or post-and non-theistically. In Fromm’s perspective, the mystical X-experience, whether theistic or post- and non-theistic, was characterized by the reduction, or even the disappearance of the narcissism, which dominates atomistic, liberal civil society. In order to be open to the world as nature and history and to transcend his Ego, man had to be able at least to reduce, or better still completely to give up, his asocial or socio-pathological narcissism: or in other words, the pathological rationality, characterized by a merely ideological recognition, that permeates the familial, economic, political and cultural dimensions of the non-communitarian, socially and culturally torn apart late capitalistic society. Furthermore, man had to give up all forms of incestuous fixations, and of all that massive greed, which in the present global capitalistic crisis has reached a unique climax, as it tends toward Post-Modern alternative Future I –
the totally bureaucratized, technocratic society and Post-Modern alternative Future II – the most aggressive war society.\textsuperscript{301} Man had to overcome his destructiveness and his necrophilous tendencies through creativity.\textsuperscript{302} Man had to be able to be biophilous and to love life. Man had also to have a criterion for differentiating between a false X-experience, rooted in hysteria and other forms of mental illness – the syndrome of evil or decay, necrophilia or love of death, symbiotic, incestuous fixations and malignant narcissism: the non-pathological experience of love and union.\textsuperscript{303} Man must have a concept of true independence and autonomy.\textsuperscript{304} Man had to be able to differentiate between rational and irrational authority, between a true idea and an untrue ideology, between the willingness to suffer for his conviction and masochism.\textsuperscript{305} The great Medieval Jewish thinker, Moses Maimonides, postulated physical and mental health as a necessary requirement for the true prophet.\textsuperscript{306}

\section*{Naturalistic-Humanistic Religiosity}

For the critical theorists, the so called utopian goal of alternative Future III – a rational and free, biophilous, and sane, and just society, characterized by the reconciliation of personal autonomy and universal solidarity, and by friendly and loving living-together, was more realistic than the realism and pragmatism of contemporary liberal and neo-liberal political leaders.\textsuperscript{307} For Fromm, the realization of alternative Future III – the new society and the new man, was possible only if the old motivations of profit, power and intellect, which dominate late capitalist society, were replaced by new ones – by being, sharing, understanding; if the marketing character was replaced by the productive, loving personality; if the authoritarian, cybernetic religion was superseded by a new radical naturalistic-humanistic religiosity.\textsuperscript{308} Those people, who were still authentically rooted in the theistic Abrahamic religions may continue in their faith, hope and love, and all their good works.\textsuperscript{309} However, for those many people who are no longer authentically rooted in the theistic or earlier world-religions, the crucial question was that of conversion to a naturalistic-humanistic religiosity without religion, without dogmas, without institutions, and without irrational authorities. Such naturalistic-humanistic religiosity had long been prepared by the movement of non-theistic religiosity from Buddha through Master Eckhart to Marx.\textsuperscript{310} People were not confronted in modern civil society with the choice between selfish bourgeois materialism – sex, car and carrier – and Ego-bound benefit calculations on one hand, and the Jewish, Christian or Islamic notion of God, on the other.\textsuperscript{311} In alternative Future III, secular social life itself – in all its aspects in family, civil society, constitutional state, history and culture, in work, leisure or personal relations, will be the expression of the religious spirit, and no separate institutional religion will be necessary any longer.\textsuperscript{312} Positive religious elements will be rescued in secular form.\textsuperscript{313} Fromm’s demand for a new post – and non-theistic religiosity was in no way an attack on the existing theistic or other world-religions, be it Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Daoism, Hinduism, or Buddhism.\textsuperscript{314} It did, however, mean, that e.g., the Roman Catholic Church, beginning with the Roman bureaucracy, the Curia, had to convert itself to the spirit of the Gospels.\textsuperscript{315} It did not mean that the so-called socialist countries in Eastern Europe had to be de-socialized, as it then really happened through the victorious neo-liberal counter-revolution of 1989, but rather that their fake socialism, their so called red fascism, would be replaced by a genuine naturalistic-humanistic socialism.\textsuperscript{316}

\section*{Meaning}

In Adorno’s perspective, already long before Auschwitz and Treblinka, the notion of meaning had become problematic in late capitalist society on its way to alternative Future I – total global economic and political administration, as refugium of the more and more fading theology.\textsuperscript{317} Already before Auschwitz, Treblinka, Buchenwald, and Dachau it was in the face of the historical experience in late Modernity an affirmative lie to ascribe or attribute in any way a positive meaning to natural or human existence. That had consequences deep into the form and content of art, religion, and
philosophy. While they have nothing any longer outside of themselves to which they could hold on to without ideology, so what they are missing can no longer be posited by any subjective act. The critical theory of society and the dialectical religiology contain – like their poetical counterpart, the works of Franz Kafka, or of Bertolt Brecht, or of Samuel Beckett – a negative, inverse cipher-theology, which as it pushes beyond the mere abstract negation of meaning in globalizing antagonistic late capitalist society, concretely supersedes the traditional theological categories and extrapolates others out of nothing.  

The theological turn-over, which happens in this process is, of course, not of the kind of a theology, which is happy already when its issues are dealt with at all in modernity, no matter what judgment results, as if at the end of the tunnel of metaphysical meaninglessness, the representation of the world as hell, the light of meaningfulness would shine into it again. For dialectical religiology, informed by Adorno, neither Becket nor the critical theorists must be affirmatively misunderstood and armed.  

Beckett’s works and the critical theory of society and dialectical religiology are absurd not through the absence of all meaning, in which case they would be irrelevant. They are rather absurd through the negotiations and proceedings about meaning. The work of Beckett and of the critical theorists is dominated not only by the obsession of a positive nothing, but also by one of a developed and thereby, so to speak, deserved meaninglessness, which, however, could not be reclaimed as positive meaning. Today, Beckett and the critical theorists do justice against all de-secularization attempts through consequent determinate, concrete, specific negation of meaning, to the postulates of and the longing for God, freedom and Immortality, or the totally Other, which once constituted the meaning of the works of great art, religion, and philosophy.  

Modern literature as well as the critical theory participate through their highest representatives in the dialectic that they organize in themselves and teleologically express that there is no meaning, and that they precisely, thereby, preserve in concrete, determinate negation the category of meaning: that precisely is what makes their further interpretation possible and what demands it.

From the City of God to the City of Progress

In line with Fromm’s dialectical view of history, later Medieval culture flourished because people followed the vision of the City of God. Modern civil society flourished because people were motivated and energized by the vision of the growth of the earthly, secular City of Progress. In the 20th century – and the dialectical religiologist may add the beginning of the 21st century as well -, this secular vision deteriorated to that of the Tower of Babel, which is now beginning to collapse and will ultimately bury everybody in its ruins in Post-Modern, alternative Future I – totally administered society, and Post-Modern, alternative Future II – war society. The fate of the Croatian City of Dubrovnik, once the competitor of Venice, situated south of the Island of Cordula, where the critical theorists of society met for discourse with the Zagreb Praxis Group as well as in the Inter-University Centre of Post-graduate Study [IUC] Dubrovnik after World War II for several years, may be an example for the Babylonian self-destruction of capitalist society. Dubrovnik – where in the IUC we developed over the past 37 years our international course on the Future of Religion and our dialectical religiology, and in which we experienced the Yugoslav civil war from 1992-1997, which cost the lives of 200,000 people, and the Serbian bombardment of the city – which had survived not only Napoleon, but also the transition from Ustashca-fascism to self-management socialism, and most recently from socialism to neo-liberalism, is now afraid of its total destruction, its death.  

Daily, up to twelve huge foreign ocean liners of different nations anchor in front of the city and thousands of visitors stream through the city day in and day out, and are told stories by tourist guides, which they can hardly understand because of the lack of historical consciousness and amnesia. The inhabitants of Dubrovnik cannot stand the continual stream of masses of foreigners, and therefore leave their homes. Residents no longer go into the old, walled city because of what this tourist industry has done to it. The City Commission is not able to limit the foreign ships to two a day, because of the city’s hunger and greed for the maximalization of profit required after the
victory of neo-liberalism and the destruction of the self-management system. The city, which up to recently did not even allow advertisements in its walls, is destroying itself because it cannot curb collectively its suicidal greed. The City of Yalta, Crimea, Ukraine -where in February 1945 Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin divided Germany, and Europe, and the world into a capitalist and socialist power realm up to the victorious neo-liberal counterrevolution of 1989, and where for 11 years we have developed an international course on Religion in Civil Society and our critical theory of religion – suffers a similar fate as Dubrovnik: self-suffocation through the mania of unregulated, completely privatized, limitless profiteering and consequent financial and cultural crises. Dubrovnik and Yalta are symbols for the inner contradictions of global capitalism and for its downfall.326

**Toward the City of Being**

If – so Fromm argued – the religious City of God and the secular Earthly City of Progress were thesis and antithesis in the sense of the Hegelian dialectical logic, then a new synthesis was the only alternative to the chaos and barbarism of alternative Future I and II: namely, alternative Future III – the synthesis between the spiritual core of the Late Medieval World and the development of rational thought and science since the Renaissance.327 Fromm called this alternative Future III, this synthesis, the City of Being, rather than of having, in which the City of God and the City of Progress would be determinately negated, i.e. criticized, as well as preserved, and elevated, and fulfilled.328

Long before Fromm, Brother Eckhart of the Dominican Preaching Order, the Vicar of Thuringen, the Prior of Erfurt had spoken about this being, in his Talks of Instruction.329 Prior Eckhart instructed his spiritual children, the monks in the Dominican Monastery in Erfurt, Thuringen, as they sat together at Collation, that people ought not to consider so much what they are to do as what they are: let them but be good and their ways and deeds will shine brightly. If you are just, your actions will be just too. Master Eckhart admonished his clerical audience that they should not think that saintliness came from occupation. Saintliness depended rather on what one is; the kind of work one does, does not make us holy, but we may make it holy. However sacred a calling may be, as it is a calling, it has no power to sanctify, but rather as we are, and have the divine Being within, we bless each task we do, be it eating, or sleeping, or watching or any other. Whatever people did who had not much of God’s nature, they worked in vain. Thus, so Master Eckhart concluded his instruction on being, take care that your emphasis is laid on being good and not on the number or kind of thing to be done. The monks were rather to emphasize the fundamentals on which their work depended: being rather than action, or having.330

**Alternative Futures**

In the perspective of the comparative dialectical religiology,while the Post-Modern, alternative Futures I – the totally bureaucratized society, and the Post-Modern, alternative Future II – the entirely militarized society are very undesirable, they are, nevertheless, also very possible and probable.331 While Post-Modern, alternative Future III – the truly democratic society, in which the sacred and the profane as well as universal solidarity and personal autonomy would be newly reconciled, is very desirable, it is, nevertheless, also very impossible and improbable, and hard discursively and institutionally to prepare and to achieve under present, late capitalist conditions.332 It remains, nevertheless, the ethical demand to resist or at least to transform Post-Modern, alternative Future I – the totally mechanized, computerized, robotized, signal society, and under all circumstances to prevent Post-Modern, alternative Future II – the complete war society, and to promote passionately Post-Modern, alternative Future III – the City of Being, in which the antagonisms of late capitalist society would be overcome not only formally, but rather also substantially – democratically. Here, man could fully realize his whole human potential in response to the world. Here, also, would be kept alive the longing and yearning for the One, whom the traditional believers still call Dao, Brahma. Nirvana, Ahuramazda, Elyon, Shaddai, Yahweh, Elohim,
Adonai, Father, Allah, and which the traditional philosophers still name the Good, the Gnosis Gnoseos, the Theos Agnotos, the Absolute, the Unconditional, the Notion including being, the Absolute Monad, the Thing in itself, the Transcendent, and which the critical theorists of society have concretely negated into the X-experience, or the Non-Identical, or the Absolutely New, or the totally Other than the finite, phenomenal world of the senses: with all its injustices, snares, terrors, arrows, weapons, plagues, illnesses, scourges, havocs, confusion, chaos, battles, wars, wicked people, disasters, catastrophes, severe storms, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, tsunamis, tornadoes, deadly devastations, hurts, troubles, lack of safety, insecurities, dishonour, meaninglessness, boredom, aging and death, as well as predatory animals like lions, adders, sharks, killer whales, and crocodiles, as well as many forms of human predators and prey.  

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