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Legitimating a theodicy : Peter Berger and the search for meaning in post-Enlightenment society

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LEGITIMATING A THEODICY: PETER BERGER AND THE SEARCH FOR MEANING IN POST-ENLIGHTENMENT SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to provide an overview and examination of the thought of the significant contemporary sociologist, Peter L. Berger. Berger is concerned with the issue of how meaning is constructed in modern, secular, bureaucratic society. Furthermore, this thesis seeks to outline, and trace the development of, Berger's thought. To achieve this the thesis examines Berger's use of the disciplines of the sociology of knowledge and religion, along with contemporary studies in religion and theology.

Berger, by linking the function of a theodicy with that of making meaning, allows for theodicies to be conceived of in the broader context of making meaning in contemporary society. As such, a contemporary theodicy needs to include (indeed, it needs to be inclusive, rather than exclusive) such factors as the relationship between self, others, the world, and the transcendent so as to provide some basis for an authentic and meaningful existence. There is a need for a more inclusive theodicy (other than the traditional individualistic type) which has hermeneutic concern for the 'whole' (wholeness of self, wholeness in relationships with others, wholeness with the world/environment, and wholeness with the transcendent). However, this 'wholeness' will not be provided by over-arching, public, structures or systems; it will need to be through chosen, private means which reflect the Post-Modernist situation where 'closure' on a grand scale is unobtainable (Marshall, 1992, pp. 192 -193). Berger's work provides the possibility for this legitimation of a theodicy (or theodicies) which will provide meaning in Post-Enlightenment society.

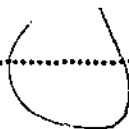The construction of meaning in contemporary society needs an ability to

cope with complexity, it needs to be reasonable, as well as contemporary (to cope with the plurality in modern society), and it is on the way (that is, not given to closure). Therefore any contemporary theodicy, or system of meaning, must be able to be historically concerned (that is, conscious of its origins and open to the future), empirical (that is, open to scrutiny and review), inductive (that is, dealing with concrete reality, not abstract theory), and concerned with people's lived experience. Berger's signals of transcendence allow for the legitimation of this private, deinstitutionalized religion; that is, they legitimate a meaningful theodicy for contemporary humanity. This theodicy, which is able to accommodate the wider view current in modern society provided by the ecological movement, interaction between the various religious traditions, the feminist movement, the reality of multi-culturalism, and the resulting pluralism from the above factors, can provide some basis for a meaningful and authentic existence in contemporary society. The signals of transcendence are able to correlate people's lived experience (their 'natural reality') to a reality which is "in, with and under" that natural reality (Berger, 1992, p. 155).

<u>DECLARATION</u>

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signature..

Date....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a description and outline of the thought of the significant contemporary sociologist, Peter L. Berger. Berger is concerned with the issue of how meaning is constructed in modern, secular, bureaucratic society. This thesis seeks to outline, and trace the development of, Berger's thought.

Wuthnow, Hunter, Bergesen, and Kurzweil (1984, p. 22) suggest that Berger displays a deep "concern with the problems of meaning in a culture being transformed by the seemingly inexorable forces of modernization." Indeed, Berger claims that "Men are congenitally compelled to impose a meaningful order upon reality." (Berger, 1967, p. 22). The construction of meaning is one of the primary requirements of each individual and of society as a whole. "If we hope to live not just from moment to moment, but in true consciousness of our existence, then our greatest need and most difficult achievement is to find meaning in our lives." (Bettelheim, 1982, p. 3). Modern, industrialized society has undergone many significant changes which affect the ability of the individual to construct meaning because the means by which society inculcated meaning in traditional societies have either gone or have been altered considerably (Beckford, 1989, p. 169).

Berger contends that due to the influences of secularization (Berger, 1967, p. 107) and, more importantly, pluralism (Berger, 1967, pp. 135 - 137), members of contemporary Western society are forced to choose between competing systems of meaning (Berger, 1963, p. 68), and that because of this necessity to choose meaning is able to be constructed (Berger, 1992, pp. 87 - 89).

Berger's analysis of the contemporary situation involves a thorough overview of many thinkers and intellectual movements. To achieve this Berger attempts to address this contemporary situation by analyzing "the essential elements of the whole. It is not clear whether the few who attempt [this]... are wise or foolish. Certainly some do a more convincing job than others. Berger as a generalist is plainly one of those whose performance is brilliant. His undertaking has been ambitious and energetic in the sense that he attempts to cover an immense span of intellectual territory." (Wuthnow, in Wuthnow, Hunter, Bergesen, and Kurzweil, 1984, p. 71).

To highlight the 'immense span of intellectual territory' which Berger does cover this thesis describes, and traces the development of, Berger's thought. The thesis also seeks to outline and describe Berger's analysis of contemporary society, particularly with reference to what aspects of religious meaning are compatible with modernity (that is, Berger's signals of transcendence; *infra vide*, pp. 74 - 88).

This description and tracing of the development of Berger's thought occurs in the three main chapters of the thesis:

In Chapter Two ('The Background to Berger's Thought') the various influences apparent upon Berger's thought are discussed (*infra vide*, pp. 16 - 31);

Chapter Three ('Review of Berger's Works on Religion and the Construction of Meaning'), along with Chapter Four, forms the heart of the thesis, and discusses Berger's four central literary works (*infra vide*, pp. 32 - 88); and

Chapter Four provides 'An Examination of the Central Themes in Berger's Work' (*infra vide*, pp. 89 - 116).

Organization of the Thesis:

The Abstract provides a brief discussion of the purpose of the thesis.

Chapter One provides an Introduction to the thesis which also includes an overview of the Organization of the Thesis, the Statement of the Problem, and discussion of the Methodology used in the thesis.

Chapter Two presents a discussion on The Background to Berger's Thought, and attempts to demonstrate the various influences apparent upon Berger's thought.

Chapter Three consists of the Review of Berger's Works on Religion and the Construction of Meaning, and is particularly concerned with the four central works of Berger in so far as these works provide the main corpus of Berger's enormous output. The discussion here develops the main themes in Berger's work, and also highlights the influences apparent upon Berger's work as outlined in Chapter Two. This chapter, along with Chapter Four, forms the heart of the thesis.

Chapter Four provides An Examination of the Central Themes in Berger's Work, and is an attempt to examine and outline four core areas of Berger's work which may be identified from Chapter Three; namely: Berger's methodology; Berger's discussion of secularization and pluralism; Berger's ethical and political position; and Berger's discussion of religious meaning and modernity.

Chapter Five provides a Conclusion to the thesis. It seeks to offer some

general discussion on Berger's work.

The Glossary provides definitions and some discussion of the central ideas, movements, and characters referred to in the thesis.

The Bibliography lists the central works of Berger referred to in the thesis, and also lists works which provide discussion on the issues dealt with in the thesis.

Statement of the Problem:

Contemporary Western society has undergone many changes to the way it is ordered and how people live within that society over the past fifty to one hundred years. Beckford (1989, p. 169) details many of these changes which Berger, through his sociological analysis of contemporary society, distils to two essential changes or influences; these being: secularization (Berger, 1967, p. 107) and pluralism (Berger, 1967, pp. 135 - 137).

Given these changes in contemporary society the ways in which meaning is, or the ways in which theodicies are, constructed has changed too. Berger links the function of theodicies in contemporary society with that of making meaning. Therefore, in spite of the collapse of traditional theodicies Berger maintains that religion still has a place to play in human culture. This thesis describes and outlines the ways in which Berger explores what aspects of religious meaning are compatible with modernity. This is the problem of legitimating a theodicy in Post-Enlightenment society.

This examination of the ways in which Berger explores what aspects of religious meaning are compatible with modernity is achieved by describing, and tracing the development of, Berger's thought.

Methodology:

Peter Berger has, over the course of more than thirty years, written an enormous amount of material. Some of the themes which he developed early on in his writings have remained influential throughout the course of his (ongoing) career, whereas other themes which Berger set forth in his writings early on in his career he either modified, adapted, or changed altogether in his later writings. Therefore, this thesis is essentially a description and outline of Berger's thought and work. The thesis also traces the development of Berger's thought and work. The thesis is descriptive in that the description, outline, and tracing of the development of Berger's thought and work is reliant upon the evidence offered in Berger's main literary works (so that Chapter Three, dealing as it does with Berger's four main literary works, along with Chapter Four, forms the heart of the thesis). The thesis examines Berger's use of the disciplines of the sociology of knowledge and religion, along with contemporary studies in religion and theology.

Berger employs a phenomenological, empirical, and descriptive methodology and, as such, the methodology of this thesis is similar to, and dependent upon, Berger's methodology. Berger is vitally concerned with the lived experience of humanity. His work is phenomenological and empirical "in the sense that it is concerned with human experience in everyday life. Its task is (most generally) to describe human experience as it is lived and not as it is theorized about - to account for social reality from the point of view of the actors involved." (Wuthnow, in Wuthnow, Hunter, Bergesen, and Kurzweil, 1984, p. 73).

For Berger, as a sociologist and a Christian, the choice of this methodology has taken the form of a 'vocation,' (Berger, 1992, p. 190) in so far as he achieves a congruency between his life, his profession, and the methodology which he employs within that profession.

CHAPTER II: THE BACKGROUND TO BERGER'S THOUGHT

Peter Berger was born in Vienna between World War I and World War II in the year 1929. His birth at this period of world history, witnessing in particular the phenomenon of Nazism and the response of the church in Germany to Hitler's political regime, seems to have had a profound influence upon Berger. The religious convictions held by Berger as a result of his location at this point in history were profoundly influenced by Neo-Orthodox Christianity.

The person at the centre of the Neo-Orthodox movement was Karl Barth (1886 - 1968). Barth read Kierkegaard, along with the Bible and Luther and Calvin, and came to believe that God was on a completely different plane from human thought; that there is an 'infinite qualitative distinction' between humanity and God. This 'distinction' is nowhere more evident than in the wars which had so ravaged the world. Barth maintained that all the efforts humanity makes to reach God lead nowhere. Humans have to acknowledge that they have no strength in themselves, and then they will be able to hear what God is saying to them. In 1918 Barth produced the first version of his Commentary on Romans, in which he showed how Paul had heard something of God's Word, and, although his own understanding and his words were totally inadequate, because he and his thought forms were captive to his own particular situation, yet, for all that, the letter did speak the Word of God, bringing a communication from the Wholly Other, the Transcendent God (therefore Neo-Orthodox Christianity was also known as 'theology of the Word').

Barth believed it was impossible to find any adequate theological categories,

but yet affirmed that it was essential to preach the gospel. He refused to claim any superiority in human terms for Jesus or for Christianity, but claimed very strongly that it was here that God chose to be revealed. Many of his followers thought this meant that he was calling them to a faith expressed in Existentialist terms, but this, too, he rejected, as just replacing one philosophical framework with another. For the rest of his life he was trying to work out in his Church Dogmatics how humanity can understand what God has revealed, while rejecting all of humanity's efforts to reach up and understand God alone and apart from God's revelation.

In his early days Barth tended to denigrate humanity, because so much trust had been placed in human powers. But once it was clear that in his teaching all power and grace came from God he was ready to point strongly to the Incarnation, to the fact that the Word of God took humanity upon Himself, to show the value that God gave to the human. Barth never set limits on God's grace, believing in the possibility of salvation for all, but also acknowledging the terrible power of evil which stands in the way of that hope. For central to his theology is God's judgement, that 'krisis' under which humanity falls whenever it tries to work out its destiny in its own strength (therefore, Neo-Orthodox Christianity was also known as 'theology of crisis'). Every human being and every human institution, even, or perhaps especially, the church, always stands under this judgement, which is why it is called the theology of crisis (crisis, in the sense of judgement or choice). It is also called dialectical theology, not in the Hegelian sense of moving from thesis through antithesis to synthesis, but because there is always both a yes and a no said to every theological statement. No human language can contain God's truth, so that, for example, if we say that God was revealed in Jesus Christ, we must also say that God was hidden there

because of the limitations of Jesus' humanity.

In the 1930's many German theologians and the vast majority of Protestant Christians saw Hitler as the hope of the nation, and, following the pattern of Christendom, adapted the life of the church to the changing patterns of Germany. Barth and a group of others rejected this line, formed themselves into the Confessing Church, and formulated the Barmen Declaration in 1934. The Confessing Church stood against Nazism because it saw it as being blasphemous. It claimed to contain the whole truth, leaving no place for God's "No." This provided the test case for much theology, and led to a creative reassessment of the role of the church over against the world and its patterns of thought.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906 - 45) was deeply involved in the Confessing Church, and decided to return to Germany from the U.S.A. when war came so that he could stand with his people against Nazism. Imprisoned in 1943 for his part in the plot against Hitler he continued his theological work, showing immense creativity. He was particularly concerned to work out the implications of the end of that Christendom situation in which most of the problems had been tackled in a theological framework, and in which religion was primarily seen as a search for personal salvation. He believed we need to find what he called a "religionless Christianity," that is, in these terms, a Christianity that is lived in the world and focuses on obedience to God, rather than a religion which is a search for personal salvation. The language of "religionless Christianity" became common in some quarters, often with a meaning very different from Bonhoeffer's. But large sections of the church have taken seriously his intention, which was part of the growing stress on the Incarnation as a real Incarnation, in which the humanity of Jesus is

taken as seriously as His divinity (a theology from 'below' as opposed to 'above'). Bonhoeffer offers "a kind of theological counterpart to Freud's criticism of immature religion, for the special religious corner is needed only by those who have not become adult in their faith. Understood in this way, Bonhoeffer's critique of religion is entirely acceptable." (Macquarrie, 1977, pp.157 - 8).

> Thus in his three years' work at his <u>Ethics</u>, Bonhoeffer began with the idea of the amplitude of Christ's lordship; then that of conformity with Christ became central; thirdly, he brought the world as penultimate under justification; and finally, he reasoned from incarnation to historical responsibility. Each line of approach deepened the two aspects - a more resolute Christ-centredness, and a more realistic openness to the world. (Bethge, 1967, p.625).

These two aspects - Christ-centredness and openness to the world - are central to an understanding of Bonhoeffer's theology. This is most clearly stated in the section of his <u>Ethics</u> entitled "Thinking in Terms of Two Spheres." Here Bonhoeffer says that

> Since the beginnings of Christian ethics after the times of the New Testament the main underlying conception in ethical thought, and the one which consciously or unconsciously has determined its whole course, has been the conception of a juxtaposition and conflict of two spheres, the one divine, holy, supernatural, and Christian, and the other worldly, profane, natural, and un-Christian... It may be difficult to break the spell of this thinking in terms of two spheres, but it is nevertheless quite certain that it is in profound contradiction to the

thought of the Bible and to the thought of the Reformation, and that consequently it aims wide of reality. There are not two realities, but only one reality, and that is the reality of God, which has become manifest in Christ in the reality of the world... There are, therefore, not two spheres, but only one sphere of the realization of Christ, in which the reality of God and the reality of the world are united. (Bonhoeffer, 1963, pp. 196 - 7).

Christianity is indeed rooted in and concerned with the ultimate; but before the ultimate comes the penultimate, before the last things comes the next to last things, and these are the every day social and ethical concerns of humanity.

Reality is no longer devalued (as by idealists) or revalued (as by positivists). 'To be in Christ' means to share in the world. Good, therefore, is not an abstraction but a process, movement, constantly accepting the world and people and taking part in their life; and so ethics is helping people 'to share in life,' it is the Christlike in the midst of the human. Christ sets up no foreign rule: the 'commandment of Jesus Christ... sets creation free for the fulfilment of the law which is its own.' Christ leads, not beyond, but right into the reality of everyday life. Christian life is no end in itself, but puts one in a position to live as a man before God, not to become a superman, but to exist 'for other men.' (Bethge, 1967, p. 624).

This is, perhaps, the reason why Bonhoeffer will best be remembered. That, above all else, he was a man for others. Bonhoeffer's charismatic appeal explains, in some way, the influence which he had upon the development of

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post-war theology. Bonhoeffer had a concern to work out the implications of the place of Christianity in the context of humanity having "come of age." The place of theology within this context led to the development of 'secular' theologies to somehow reconcile the Christian faith with the influence of secularization and modernity. These secular theologies led, in turn, to the notorious 'death of God' theologies on the one hand and also to the various 'liberation' theologies on the other. The development of these various theologies can be seen as reactions to the influence of secularization, modernity and the continuing phenomenon of totalitarian regimes of the left and of the right around the world (Berger, 1969, pp. 11 - 13).

These influences of secularization, modernity and totalitarian regimes (or, in a broader sense, the relationship between church and politics) which provided the source of much which Neo-Orthodox theologians wrote about are also strong influences upon the writings of Peter L. Berger. In his early book The Precarious Vision (1961 b), which was influenced (even if unconsciously) by Neo-Orthodox understandings, Berger drew a distinction between "religion" and "Christian Faith." Berger later revoked this position, writing in The Sacred Canopy (1967, pp. 179 - 185) that this distinction was an artificial one based upon methodological fallacies. Berger's later concern, which was hinted at in *Appendix II* of The Sacred Canopy (*Sociological and Theological Perspectives*, pp. 179 - 185), to confront the historical relativity of religion and to take seriously the concept of religion being a human product or projection and then to search for "discoveries" (as opposed to "revelations") within these projections for what he termed "signals of transcendence" became a reality with the publication of A Rumour of Angels (1969).

As mentioned above the influence of Neo-Orthodoxy on Berger's work, both in a positive affirmation and in a negative refutal, is evident in his published works. This, and other influences, may be traced through the corpus of Berger's work like the themes of a fugue are woven together into a work of musical composition. Sometimes one aspect of the theme is dominant, then another. So with Berger's work there are themes, such as Neo-Orthodoxy, which appear early on, but then are re-worked into other forms and then appear again to complement the 'composition' in its entirety. It is only by viewing the corpus as a whole, and how themes have developed over time in Berger's writings, that a sense of the art of Berger's work becomes apparent.

Another theme which Berger skilfully weaves into his writings includes a deep commitment to preserving the dignity and worth of humanity. Berger's humanistic concern (Berger, 1963, pp. 186 - 199) is grounded in a Kantian/phenomenological epistemology. Kant (1724 - 1804) drew a distinction between 'Phenomena' (that which can be perceived) and 'Noumena' (that which is beyond perception; "things in themselves"). Berger's concern, which stems from the intellectual environment of rationalism and scepticism inherited from the distinction made by Kant, dovetails neatly with the method of inquiry which he employs in his sociological investigations. Berger's methodology is empirical in that it deals with the lived experience of people (it is a pre-theoretical, inductive, 'bottom-up' approach). Berger is eclectic in his sources and does not let 'methodological purity' become an obstacle to addressing what actually 'is.' Berger's sociological concern (which is coloured, as mentioned above, by his theological concern; particularly as influenced by Bonhoeffer) is to create a tolerant and even compassionate society (Berger, 1963, pp. 183 - 185). This

concern for humanity led Berger to become interested in such political concerns as Third World development and modernization (Berger, 1969, pp. x - xi). Here again it is possible to detect the influence of Bonhoeffer upon Berger as issues of religion in contemporary society impinge upon political concerns. That is, to borrow from Bonhoeffer's terminology, whilst being concerned with 'ultimate' reality, Berger is compelled to address issues of 'penultimate' reality for this is the reality of everyday life.

Another influence upon Berger, particularly in his earlier works, is that of Existentialism (Berger, 1963, pp. 159 - 183). From Existentialism Berger gains a perspective on religion that requires of religion that it possess an ability to cope with complexity, that it is reasonable, as well as contemporary, that it is comprehensive and can cope with plurality, and that it is 'on the way' and in dialogue with, and cognizant of, the modern world as opposed to being fixed, absolutist, triumphalistic, and immutable (again, Berger is more concerned with "discoveries" as opposed to fixed "revelations"). Furthermore, Berger's humanistic concern and the influence of Existentialism compel him to adopt a methodology which is historically concerned, empirical, inductive, and concerned with lived experience. Above all else the Existentialist concern for authenticity further compels Berger to address issues of 'proto-typical' concern, that is the issues of everyday lived existence, so that the existent may make choices which do not lead to 'bad faith,' but bring personal (and social) freedom.

Phenomenology provides a significant methodological tool for Berger. Berger adopts (and adapts) this methodology from the sociologist Alfred Schutz (1899 - 1959) who was concerned to explore the 'world-taken-for-granted.' This is the self evident world of the 'here-and-now' which demands ones

immediate attention. Phenomenology, as employed by Berger, requires the 'bracketing' of personal preferences and prejudices so as to be able to investigate the "doings of men." (Berger, 1963, p. 29). Phenomenology refers to the 'study of phenomena;' the study of what appears or what may be observed (similar to Kant's 'Phenomena;' *infra vide*, p. 26). The use of phenomenology requires that the investigator utilizes academic discipline and imaginative empathy. This requires the investigator to make an attempt to appropriate and understand what a particular phenomenon might involve for those people who are directly engaged with it. Phenomenology is a kind of thinking which guides the investigator back from theoretical abstraction to the reality of the lived experience. A phenomenologist asks the question "what is it like to have a certain experience?" In examining the qualities of the experience the investigator can then arrive at the essence of the experience. The phenomenological method is an inductive, descriptive research method. The task of the method is to investigate and describe all phenomena, including the human experience, in the way these phenomena appear in their fullest breadth and depth. To ensure that the phenomenon is investigated as it truly appears a necessary criterion is that the researcher must approach the subject and the experience with an open mind, accepting whatever data are given with no pre-conceived expectations. No data are ignored because of conflicts with theoretical frameworks or operational definitions. The concern of the phenomenological researcher is to understand both the cognitive subjective perspective of the person who has the experience and the effect that perspective has on the lived experience of that individual. (Kentish, 1992, pp. 42 - 48).

Given Berger's Existential/phenomenological methodology he is,

nonetheless, also concerned with society too, and therefore his work is of hermeneutic significance in that he draws (implicitly, at least) on the notion of 'Verstehen' (Berger, 1963, p. 146). Verstehen implies an understanding by one of the 'other.' Verstehen, like phenomenology, seeks to understand the meaning of an other's actions. Actions in themselves may prove ambiguous to an observer; unless the observer gains understanding of the meaning of an action then the observer is unable to fully appreciate the 'other' (person or society).

Berger (and Thomas Luckmann in The Social Construction of Reality) combines phenomenology along with the sociology of knowledge in his two most influential works: The Social Construction of Reality (1966) and The Sacred Canopy (1967). The sociology of knowledge, derived as it is from the work of Max Scheler, may be summed up in the statement that "Reality is socially constructed." (Berger, 1963, p. 136). Berger (and Luckmann) develop this thesis concerning the social construction of reality in a broad, all-encompassing way in The Social Construction of Reality, and then Berger applies the same methodological tools to the study of religion in The Sacred Canopy where Berger explores the historicity of religion given that religion is a social (human) construction, and also the subsequent socio-historical relativity of all religion.

The history of ideas provides Berger with an over-arching view of society and the (changing) role of religion in contemporary society. These changes in the way in which the world has been perceived include (following Roberts, 1980, pp. 810 - 819; and Berger, 1969, pp. 33 - 36): First; the change in perspective as a result of Copernicus establishing that our universe has as its centre the sun (that is, it is 'heliocentric') and that the earth (as opposed

to the previously assumed position; for instance, by the use of such terms as "sunrise" and "sunset") was not the centre of the universe, but just one planet in just one galaxy set amongst innumerable other galaxies. Second; René Descartes' (1596 - 1650) maxim "Cogito, ergo sum" ("I think, therefore I am") provided another shift in perspective from a theocentric world to an anthropocentric one, where humanity stands at the centre. Third; Kant's distinction between 'Phenomena' (that which can be perceived) and 'Noumena' (that which is beyond perception; "things in themselves") led to a reduction of religion to morality. For instance, Kant's 'Categorical Imperative' ("Act so that the maxim of thy will can always at the same time hold good as a principle of universal legislation.") tends towards an understanding of God where God becomes the condition for the possibility of humanity's moral autonomy. This whole shift in view from the Pre to the Post-Enlightenment is an enormous one. Though restricted to intellectuals initially, it became widespread in the Nineteenth Century through the means of the popular press and the new found power of the lower and middle classes. The metaphysical certainties of the Mediaeval world were gone (Jung, 1933, p. 204), and the process of secularization had begun in earnest. Along with this shift in 'mind-set' came a shift in politics too where the principles of 'liberty, equality, and fraternity' heralded in the secular, democratic state as a political given. Fourth; the Darwinian theses of 'Evolution' and 'Natural Selection' saw humanity's 'God-likeness' further shattered as humanity came to be seen as another creature subject to the same physical and genetic laws as all other creatures, and indeed having been derived from and owing its origin to other creatures. Fifth; along with these other trends a growing historical consciousness of the development of society, religion, and of ideas and philosophy emerged. The Judeo-Christian tradition came to be seen as one amongst many, and the texts which had

largely legitimated this tradition came under close scrutiny which confirmed their historical evolution and cultural setting. Hence the authority of the Bible and the church, and the traditional arguments for the existence of God came to be increasingly questioned and rejected. As modern, secular societies were developing under the influence of science, democracy, nationalism, and economic individualism religion failed to provide a coherent nomos (a coherent 'cement') given all these developments such as industrialization, scientific discovery, and rapid social change. This gave rise to the Romantic movement, and to the rise of English Literature which came to fill the emotional and experiential needs of people; that is, it provided a coherent nomos, a socially constructed reality relevant to the age (Eagleton, 1986, pp. 22 -23). Sixth; these critical studies of history, human nature, and culture gave rise to various 'Naturalistic' theories regarding the place of religion in society such as those forwarded by Feuerbach, Marx, and Freud. Feuerbach's 'projection' theory, and Marx's 'opiate' assertion provided a natural springboard for Freud's 'illusion' hypothesis. What served most to popularize the psycho-analytic technique were the revolutionary, yet widely popular (at least in academic circles), naturalistic interpretations of existence and, in particular, religion. In both Civilization and Its Discontents and The Future of an Illusion Freud maintained that religion has no empirical support, that it was an interim social neurosis, providing security from the harshness of reality, and that it had outlived its use, and that humanity would grow out of it through education. As mentioned previously, this view of religion was not original to Freud, as both Feuerbach and Marx both offered their own naturalistic theories regarding the origin of religion. Finally; the sociology of knowledge maintains that the very heart of the world that humans create is socially constructed meaning (Berger, 1969, p. 33 ff.). Humans necessarily infuse

their own meaning into reality. The individual attaches subjective meaning to all their actions. Given this social construction of reality Berger asserts that

> Religion thus serves to maintain the reality of that socially constructed world within which men exist in their everyday lives. Its legitimating power, however, has another important dimension - the integration of a comprehensive nomos of precisely those marginal situations in which everyday life is put in question. (Berger, 1967, p. 42).

These 'marginal situations' include: falling asleep/waking up and the transition period between them; dreams; disease; acute emotional disturbance; suffering; upheavals to the 'normal' order (for instance, war, and natural disaster); and death. Berger goes on to say that

> The implication of the rootage of religion in human activity is not that religion is always a dependent variable in the history of society, but rather that it derives its objective and subjective reality from human beings, who produce and reproduce it in their ongoing lives. (Berger, 1967, p. 48).

This takes place through the three-fold process of Externalization: which involves the outpouring of human being into the world; Objectivation: where the product of externalization confronts its original producers as a facticity external to and other than themselves; and Internalization: in which the structures of the external/objective world are transformed into structures of the subjective consciousness.

the point is that the *same* human activity that produces society also produces religion, with the relation between the two products always being a dialectical one. (Berger, 1967, p. 47).

This socio-historical consciousness (along with the other influences upon his work) motivates Berger to enter into a dialogue with contemporary society. As a result of this dialogue Berger developed the notion of 'signals of transcendence.' These signals "point toward the reality beyond the ordinary." (Berger, 1969, p. x). Berger outlined these signals of transcendence in his book <u>A Rumour of Angels</u> (1969) which drew on, as its inspiration, the theology of such Liberal Protestant theologians as Schleiermacher who, in Berger's opinion, had the courage to use the tools of the social sciences, which had previously been employed by those antagonistic to the theological task, to construct an inductive theology.

In <u>The Heretical Imperative</u>, Berger argues that, in the modern era, three different methodologies have been employed in an attempt to understand religious truth. The first, he terms 'deduction.' It involves reaffirmation of the authority of a religious tradition, in spite of the difficulties of doing so in the context of modern pluralism and within the assumptions of socio-historical relativism. An exemplar in the use of this method would be Karl Barth. He labels the second method 'reduction' and considers the work of Rudolph Bultmann to fall into this category. Here, the religious tradition is reinterpreted via modern, secular categories in the hope of making aspects of the tradition meaningful to the modernist mind. The last method,

'induction,' involves an attempt to uncover and retrieve essential experiences embodied in the religious tradition. It is both empirical and comparative, in that it takes all religious experience seriously in its search for transcendent reality. Friedrich Schleiermacher achieves paradigmatic status relative to this approach. (Gaede, in Hunter and Ainlay, 1986, p. 170).

The various themes and influences appearing in Berger's works (such Neo-Orthodoxy, Existentialism, phenomenology, the sociology of knowledge, socio-historical relativism, and his ongoing dialogue with contemporary society) enables him to achieve a synthesis of the Weberian and Durkheimian approaches to sociology (Berger, 1963, pp. 145 - 150). Put simply Durkheim's emphasis on the objective reality of society (which tended towards a functionalistic and positivistic approach which was very much in vogue in the United States of America when Berger began to investigate the social construction of reality and led to an impasse within the sociology of religion in that it dealt, on the whole, with such trivial issues as church attendance by using quantitative survey methods and did not explore the substantive issues raised by the socio-historical relativism of religion) tended towards "sociological reification" (Berger, 1967, p. 187); whereas Weber's emphasis on the subjective reality of society tended towards "an idealistic distortion of the societal phenomenon." (Berger, 1967, p. 187). This synthesis achieved by Berger enabled him to address the substantive issues raised by the sociology of knowledge with respect to the socio-historical relativism of religion (Wuthnow, in Wuthnow, Hunter, Bergesen, and Kurzweil, 1984, pp. 75 - 76). Whilst obviously being eclectic in his sources Berger, nonetheless, achieves an original approach to the sociology of religion in his attempt to 'transcendentalize secularity' (Berger,

1969, p. x) in his affirmation of the various signals of transcendence.

CHAPTER III: REVIEW OF BERGER'S WORKS ON RELIGION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF MEANING

This section seeks to outline and describe Berger's thought as evidenced in his written works, and, together with Chapter Four, forms the heart of the thesis. The discussion here develops the main themes in Berger's work, and also highlights the influences apparent upon Berger's work as outlined in Chapter Two. The examination of Berger's work is essentially chronological, and will focus on his three seminal works: (i) The Social Construction of Reality (with Thomas Luckmann) (1966); (ii) The Sacred Canopy (1967); and (iii) A Rumour of Angels (1969). The overview of Berger's thought, however, begins with an examination of Berger's popular introduction to the study of sociology: Invitation to Sociology... A Humanistic Perspective (1963). In this early work, Berger sets forth some of the themes which he re-works and expands upon in his later works.

Berger's latest work: A Far Glory: The Quest for Faith in an Age of Credulity (1992) is not reviewed here; for it forms a central part of Chapter Four ('An Examination of the Central Themes in Berger's Work'), in that it highlights some of the ways in which Berger re-works and expands some of the themes he deals with in the works reviewed in this chapter; and in that it also highlights some developments in Berger's thought.

INVITATION TO SOCIOLOGY... A Humanistic Perspective (1963):

Wuthnow, Hunter, Bergesen, and Kurzweil (1984, p. 22) suggest that Berger displays a deep "concern with the problems of meaning in a culture being transformed by the seemingly inexorable forces of modernization." In this introduction (or invitation) to sociology Berger attempts to address the issues surrounding the making of meaning in contemporary society (Berger, 1963, p. 68). This concern which Berger displays in this, and all his other works, is largely motivated by his interest in religion (Berger, 1963, p. 8), which Berger sees as being one of the significant humanizing forces in the modern world (Berger, 1969, p. xiii). Berger's interest in the preservation of the human element within contemporary society in no way implies that he is 'soft' or theoretically unsound. Berger is one of the few academics who seem to be able to find congruency between their life, their profession, and the methodology employed within that profession. Berger is most familiar with the sociology of religion, yet in this introductory book he attempts to construct a schema for sociology as a whole. He begins by describing sociology as an individual pastime (Berger, 1963, pp. 11 - 36), as a field of inquiry with Existential implications, exhorting practitioners not to rely too heavily on the 'tyranny of technique' (statistics, or obscure jargon), but to bracket their preferences and prejudices (following phenomenology) in the spirit of 'value-free' (after Weber) scientific inquiry so as to be able investigate the "doings of men." (Berger, 1963, p. 29). Berger insists upon the methodological stringency of value-free inquiry so that the practitioner is able to be free to discover the unexpected and the different ways in which social interaction is perceived by different sectors of society (Berger, 1963, pp. 15, 28 ff.). This implies both the need for description, and the possibility of prescription. Berger can be both conservative and radical at the self

same time. Whilst seeing sociology as an individual pastime, Berger is adamant of the need for an understanding of history to be part of the sociological endeavour as well; for the descriptive role of the sociologist is, in many ways, similar to the role of the historian (Berger, 1963, p. 32).

Berger then addresses the circumstances and historical setting in which sociology as a discipline was formulated (Berger, 1963, pp. 37 - 67). Berger claims that modern society emerged when "the normative structures of Christendom and later of the ancien régime were collapsing." (Berger, 1963, p. 42), and that the discipline of sociology developed in France after the Revolution (1789) against the background of the rapid transformation in society (Berger, 1963, p. 54). Whilst the attitude (the 'form of consciousness') necessary for sociological inquiry no doubt existed in former times, it would seem that sociology stems from a modern, Post-Enlightenment world-view. The socio-historical consciousness of the relativity of all world views, and the extent to which rapid transformations take place within a society engenders an attitude of inquiry as to why things are as they are and why they are not otherwise (Berger, 1963, p. 62). The 'Classical' world-view held that fixed, immutable principles evidenced in the world gave rise to eternal, unchanging principles. Whereas the historically conscious world-view avoids this outlook of the classical world-view which held that there is "an unchanging body of clearly formulated precepts, based on a supposedly unchanging nature." (Macquarrie, 1977, p. 506). With the decline in influence of the classical world-view a more sceptical and critical approach was taken to the investigation of such institutions as government, religious authority, the family, and society as a whole. Berger maintains that sociology "is constituted by a peculiarly modern form of consciousness." (Berger, 1963, p. 37). Geographical and

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social mobility meant that different world-views came into contact which results in sociological relativization (Berger, 1963, p. 62). This ability to 'see through things' (institutions, and the like) Berger terms 'debunking.' An example of debunking which Berger cites is Weber's analysis of the unintended outcomes of the Calvinist Reformation (The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism; Berger, 1963, pp. 51 -52). The capacity of sociology to provide alternative ways of looking at what are held to be norms is one of its great strengths according to Berger. Yet, along with this ability to see through things Berger would have the sociologist be aware of the need to maintain a broad and open mind on all aspects under inquiry so that sociology might also contribute to an understanding of society which enables people to be free and to live full human lives. For Berger there is a direct link between cynicism and compassion. By seeing things as they are one is freed from the naïve belief in purely ideological statements. Berger maintains that the ability to act freely is dependent upon being able to perceive the ideological constraints of one's own world-view, and thereby then being able to understand, if not appreciate, the world-view of 'others.' (Berger, 1963, pp. 130, 146, 183 - 185).

This ability to see clearly; to perceive society as it is, enables sociology (or, more particularly, one who has sociological understanding or 'consciousness') to make choices between varying and sometimes contradictory systems of meaning. That is, sociology (sociological consciousness) enables meaning to be made in the complex, contemporary, pluralistic situation of modern society (Berger, 1963, p 68). The social and geographical mobility inherent in contemporary society leads to a world-view where there are no fixed points and no closure (Berger, 1963, p. 73). This world-view is essentially a Post-Enlightenment one, and may even be

considered to be a Post-Modern one. Modern society has moved from the Pre-Enlightenment, to the Enlightenment, to the Post-Enlightenment (modern), to the Post-Modern. The Post-Modern world-view is one which disconfirms ideology, particularly religious ideology (theodicy) in its traditional form due to the secularization and pluralization of society. Post-Modernism's resistance to closure, rejection of absolute 'Truths,' empirical, anti-transcendental, questioning of 'metanarratives' derives from the view of the social construction of reality as provided by the sociology of knowledge. Nonetheless this world-view still values local and contingent truths. (Marshall, 1992, pp. 3 - 6, 18, 86, 157; Eagleton, 1986, pp. 22 - 23, 60, 107). Post-Modernism corresponds to Berger's notion of the 'public' and the 'private' spheres. The public sphere is over-institutionalized (dealing as it does with such 'social' concepts as 'sincerity' and 'honour'), whereas the private sphere is under- (or de-) institutionalized (dealing as it does with more personal concepts as 'authenticity' and 'dignity') (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 81). Value is still to be attributed to life; meaning is still to be sought from life (Marshall, 1992, p. 6); but the world-view ('Weltanschauung') deriving from the influence of the sociology of knowledge is a sceptical one which is prepared to question authority and the propaganda which those in power purport to be (the) 'Truth.' Berger maintains that the sociology of knowledge enables one to view society with clear sight (Berger, 1963, pp. 79, 128 - 140).

This scepticism is further required so that one is able to resist the definition of oneself which society imposes (Berger, 1963, pp. 83 - 109). In other words, society locates the individual (the world-taken-for-granted) through various mechanisms such as social control (where violence, economic constraints, ridicule, ostracism, popular social morality, and even one's

occupation and family may be employed by society to define and locate the individual within society) and social stratification (where the individual is ranked within society, and whereby power, privilege, and prestige are given to, or withheld from, the individual depending upon their particular social stratification). This social stratification and social control locates or situates (the 'sitz im leben'... 'situation in life') the individual within society. The various institutions within society such as family and occupation provide procedures through which human conduct is patterned. This gives to society a sense of objective reality such that, following Durkheim, society may be deemed to be 'there.' Or, as Berger puts it "society is the walls of our imprisonment in history." (Berger, 1963, p. 109). The facticity, or 'thereness,' of society further strengthens the view afforded by the sociology of knowledge that the 'world-taken-for-granted' is not the only way to perceive things (given that other societies view things differently), and that, because of this, scepticism is required so as to dis-believe (or to 'dis-confirm') the way in which society locates the individual, and to be freed from this limited view of self and of society (Berger, 1963, pp. 148 - 152).

Having explored the objective nature of society (after Durkheim) as the 'world-taken-for-granted' Berger then briefly overviews three methods of analyzing society which help to provide a more subjective view of society (after Weber). These three methodologies include: Role Theory which maintains that "Identity is socially bestowed, socially sustained, and socially transformed." (Berger, 1963, p. 116); the sociology of knowledge which maintains that ideas as well as humanity are socially located, and that reality is socially constructed. The sociology of knowledge is anti-idealistic in its tendency, and tends to ask the question "Says who?" (Berger, 1963, p. 129) of ideological assertions where a certain idea serves a

vested interest in society. When such an idea serves such a function it 'legitimates' the social construction of reality, whereby the idea (ideology) attempts to explain, justify, and even sanctify (or reify) that particular social construction of reality. Religion may at times serve such a function when, for instance, 'virtues' such as humility and respect for authority, or patient suffering is extolled as a virtue in the face of unjust suffering, then these 'virtues' provide a legitimation of the political authority, or as the assuagement of social rebellion (what Weber terms the 'theodicy of suffering'). The use of religion (or any ideology) like this is possible in so far as the ideology which has been reified is then 'internalized' into the life of the believer, where the world 'out there' becomes the world 'in here.' (Berger, 1963, p. 134). The third such methodology is Reference Group Theory which maintains that a reference group "is the collectivity whose opinions, convictions, and courses of action are decisive for the formation of our own opinions, convictions, and courses of action. The reference group provides us with a model with which we can continually compare ourselves." (Berger, 1963. p. 137). Of these three methodologies it is the sociology of knowledge which provides the greatest insight for Berger into the role and function of society. Berger later uses the sociology of knowledge as the theoretical bases for The Social Construction of Reality (1966) (co-authored with Thomas Luckmann), and again in The Sacred Canopy (1967).

This tension between the objective reality of society, whereby society defines who we are and what we do, and the subjective reality of society, whereby we define society, means that society is, in fact, 'precarious.' That is "Since all social systems were created by men, it follows that men can also change them." (Berger, 1963, p. 149). This balance between social reification (objective social reality) and idealism (subjective social meaning)

allows for detachment from the world of original socialization and for the construction of alternative worlds. That is, humans, so Berger maintains, are free (Berger, 1963, pp. 149 - 171). This 'freedom' is unable to be proved (or dis-proved either) by empirical means; yet freedom, nonetheless, is an aspect of human existence and reality. Freedom is exercised daily through choice ('authentic existence'), or denied through the flight from choice ('inauthentic existence'). Those who seek to be defined solely by the way in which society defines them exercise 'bad faith' because they refuse to act with individual responsibility. Obviously Berger makes use of the Existentialists (Sartre in particular) when he explores the area of freedom. For Berger freedom is an act of ecstasy; which for him means "stepping out, alone, to face the dark." (Berger, 1963. p. 171).

Berger's methodology is eclectic in that it combines phenomenology (dealing with what 'is'), the sociology of knowledge, humanism, and Existentialism. In the spirit of 'value-free' inquiry he brackets his Neo-Orthodox Christian beliefs, yet is still quite concerned with values, ethics, and morality (Berger, 1963, pp. 188 - 199).

The sociology of knowledge provides a clear sighted view of society by suggesting that all categories invested with 'ontological' significance are arbitrary, incomplete, and, most importantly, reversible. Therefore there is a need to take all socially assigned identities with a grain of salt, including one's own. Having this perspective, or understanding ('Verstehen'), of society allows for the place of compassion within society in that the individual is then able to recognize the freedom of the 'other.' (Berger, 1963, pp. 183 - 184).

It is this humanistic concern and understanding which, for Berger, provides the ultimate reason for the continued pursuit of sociology as an academic discipline in the liberal tradition. "Unlike the puppets, we have the possibility of stopping in our movements, looking up and perceiving the machinery by which we have been moved. In this lies the first step towards freedom. And in this same act we find the conclusive justification of sociology as a humanistic discipline." (Berger, 1963, p. 199).

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY... A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge (with Thomas Luckmann) (1966):

Berger and Luckmann begin this work with a socio-historical overview of those people and those ideas which provide the theoretical substance and methodological justification for their endeavours in and with the sociology of knowledge. Indeed, "The present volume is intended as a systematic, theoretical treatise in the sociology of knowledge." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. v). To achieve this end Berger and Luckmann choose in an eclectic manner from those people and those ideas which they review so as to achieve a unique analysis of the sociology of knowledge and its concerns. Put simply, Berger and Luckmann contend that *the sociology of knowledge is concerned with the analysis of the social construction of reality.*" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 3).

As with Berger's discussion of freedom in Invitation to Sociology (1963) here Berger and Luckmann insist on the every day, commonsense, usage of such terms as 'reality' - "a quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition (we cannot 'wish them away')." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 1); and 'knowledge' - "the certainty that phenomena are real and that they posses specific characteristics." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 1). Therefore, "The need for a 'sociology of knowledge' is thus already given with the observable differences between societies in terms of what is taken for granted as 'knowledge' in them." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 3).

Whilst the term 'Sociology of Knowledge' ('Wissenssoziologie') was coined by the philosopher Max Scheler in the 1920's, Berger and Luckmann suggest three other contributing factors in the development of the sociology of

knowledge. First is the work of Karl Marx from whom the sociology of knowledge derives its root proposition "that man's consciousness is determined by his social being." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 5). From Marx comes also such concepts as: 'ideology' - "ideas serving as weapons for social interests."; 'false consciousness' - "thought that is alienated from the real social being of the thinker."; 'substructure' - "human activity."; and 'superstructure' - "the world produced by that activity." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 6). Second, "one can say that the sociology of knowledge represents a specific application of what Nietzsche aptly called the 'art of mistrust.'" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 7). The third factor Berger and Luckmann cite as being influential in the development of the sociology of knowledge is the development of historicism in which the "dominant theme here was an overarching sense of the relativity of all perspectives on human events, that is, of the inevitable historicity of human thought." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 7).

This socio-historical relativistic world-view (or consciousness) is a Post-Enlightenment one held mainly in Western societies largely because the factors leading to this secularized and rationalistic world-view are essentially Western in nature (factors such as: industrialization, technological development, the growth of complex economies and the prevalence of economic rationalism as the driving force of such economies, the need these economies have for highly trained personnel, and the development of highly organized, bureaucratic management structures). Given this mix of factors Western society has become secularized, rationalistic (in its economic processes), pluralistic, and modern (as opposed to 'traditional'). The insidious creeping of this economic model into the so-called 'Third World' or 'Developing' economies (through the activities of the

World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) will probably see a similar process occur within those societies and economies which become more highly industrialized and whose economies become more closely linked to the 'world economy.'

There is a parallel in the overall intention of Scheler's work and that of Berger (and Luckmann) in that Scheler sought "to throw a sizable sop to the dragon of relativity, but only so as to enter the castle of ontological certitude better." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 8). This intention, which Berger shares, is outlined by Berger in the Introduction to the 1990 edition of A Rumour of Angels (pp. ix - x) where he refers to his project of "relativizing the relativizers." This project (like Scheler's), of which The Social Construction of Reality is a part, involves showing "how the intellectual tools of the social sciences, which had contributed greatly to the loss of credibility of religion, could be turned on the very ideas that had discredited supernatural views of the world and on the people propagating those ideas." (Berger, 1969 [1990 edition], pp. ix - x).

Whilst Berger's (and Luckmann's) concern in The Social Construction of Reality is essentially theoretical this theorizing is, however, related to the everyday, concrete concerns of humanity. Berger and Luckmann base the content of SECTION I ('The Foundations of Knowledge in Everyday Life') of their book on the work of the sociologist (and Berger's teacher) Alfred Schutz. Schutz "concentrated on the structure of the commonsense world of everyday life." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 16). Therefore, "*The sociology of knowledge must concern itself with everything that passes for 'knowledge' in society.*" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, pp. 14, 15). Berger and Luckmann explore the concepts of 'reality' and 'knowledge' as they are

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taken in a commonsense way by "ordinary members of society." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 19). This task is essentially a descriptive one, relying as it does on "The phenomenological analysis of everyday life, or rather the subjective experience of everyday life" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 20). This analysis "refrains from any causal or genetic hypotheses, as well as assertions about the ontological status of the phenomena analyzed." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 20). As part of this analysis Berger and Luckmann seek to schematize the reality of everyday life; this is, in part, their contribution to the theory of the sociology of knowledge.

Within the world-taken-for-granted of everyday reality there are, in fact, multiple realities such as the transition between sleep and wakefulness. Berger (1967, pp. 22 - 23) later refers to these periods of transition as 'marginal situations.' One may even be "transported to another world" through play (theatre or art or music or even religion and ritual; Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 25), or one may be required to use a different language as opposed to the everyday language when one tries "to report about theoretical, aesthetic or religious worlds of meaning." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 26). Berger (1969, p. 59 ff.) later refers to these phenomena as 'signals of transcendence.' These 'marginal situations' and 'signals of transcendence' form a central part in Berger's attempt to 'relativize the relativizers' (1969 [1990 edition], pp. ix - x). However, reality, in the normal course of everyday reality, is objectivated. That is, reality has about it a givenness, which is paramount, and self-evident, and which is shared with others. Therefore, "there is an ongoing correspondence between *my* meanings and *their* meanings in this world, that we share a common sense about its reality." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 23).

Ainlay (in Hunter and Ainlay, 1986, pp. 43 - 46) summarizes Berger and Luckmann's foundations of knowledge in everyday life as: everyday reality is paramount; primacy is on the 'here and now;' the 'here and now' is usually defined in terms of standard time and space; everyday reality tends to be a highly pragmatic world; everyday reality demands our 'wide-awakeness,' that is, our full attention; we 'willingly suspend doubt' in everyday reality; and we compartmentalize everyday reality.

An example of the objectivation which occurs in everyday reality is language. Language makes real, or proclaims, the subjective interiority of the one speaking. That language can be understood signifies the shared sign system of those who speak or understand that language; that is, those who share the everyday reality of the subject. However, within a language system other factors other than everyday (objective) reality manifest themselves. These factors, such as religion, require a special language (and also a special understanding), as they seek to objectify very subjective experiences. Therefore, "language is pliantly expansive so as to allow me to objectify a great variety of experiences coming my way in the course of my life." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 39).

This objectivation available through language is a fundamental aspect of humanity's relationship to the external world. For "Unlike the other higher mammals, he has no species-specific environment... man's relationship to his environment is characterized by world-openness." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 47). This 'world-openness' requires of the human organism an "immense plasticity in its response to the environmental forces at work on it." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 48). Berger and Luckmann suggest that this plasticity is an inherent aspect of what it is to

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be human for "While it is possible to say that man has a nature, it is more significant to say that man constructs his own nature, or more simply, that man produces himself." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 49). This 'self-production' leads to the production of an ordered, social world; for, as mentioned previously (*supra vide*, p. 44), Berger and Luckmann contend that there is a 'correspondence' between self and others in the process of the social construction of reality. Humanity, so Berger and Luckmann contend, seeks always to create a stable external environment in the face of the 'plasticity' and 'world-openness' of human nature which requires that humanity externalizes itself in such a way which leads to order and eventuates in institutionalization. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 52).

It is here, at this point, when the collective externalization of humanity, which leads to institutionalization, that the objective reality of society takes on a givenness which becomes the world-taken-for-granted. For "All human activity is subject to habitualization." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 53). Institutions, with the givenness that they create, occur "whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors. Put differently, any such typification is an institution." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 54). As an institution's givenness becomes taken-for-granted it assumes a historicity and control of its own. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 54). As externalization leads to institutionalization, so habitualization leads to objectivation. "The process by which the externalized products of human activity attain a character of objectivity is objectivation." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 60). These two 'moments' (externalization and objectivation) are part of a three-fold dialectic that is at the heart of Berger and Luckmann's thesis concerning the social construction of reality; the third 'moment' being 'internalization.' Berger and

Luckmann maintain that each of these dialectical 'moments' correspond to an essential aspect of the social world:

Externalization   - *"Society is a human product."*

Objectivation   - *"Society is an objective reality."*

Internalization   - *"Man is a social product."* (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 61).

The institutional, social world requires legitimation so as to explain and justify itself to subsequent generations, or to newcomers to that society. This process occurs through socialization (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 61). A 'canopy' of legitimations surround the institutional order of society "stretching over it a protective cover of both cognitive and normative interpretation." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 62). Furthermore, these legitimations tend to be pre-theoretical in nature precisely because they deal with the shared reality of the commonsense, world-taken-for-granted knowledge of society. This pre-theoretical knowledge incorporates "the sum total of 'what everybody knows' about a social world, an assemblage of maxims, morals, proverbial nuggets of wisdom, values and beliefs, myths, and so forth." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 65).

This is the knowledge that is learned in the course of socialization and that mediates the internalization within individual consciousness of the objectivated structures of the social world. Knowledge, in this sense, is at the heart of the fundamental dialectic of society. It "programs" the channels in which externalization produces an

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objective world. It objectifies this world through language and the cognitive apparatus based on language, that is, it orders it into objects to be apprehended as reality. It is internalized again *as* objectively valid truth in the course of socialization. Knowledge about society is thus a *realization* in the double sense of the word, in the sense of apprehending the objectivated social reality, and in the sense of ongoingly producing this reality. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 66).

In the section of The Social Construction of Reality dealing with 'Society As Objective Reality' (following Durkheim), Berger and Luckmann describe society and institutionalization in such a way so as to make them seem fixed and immutable in their nature and in the way they are manifested within the world-taken-for-granted. "Institutionalization is not, however, an irreversible process, despite the fact that institutions, once formed, have a tendency to persist. For a variety of historical reasons, the scope of institutionalized actions may diminish; deinstitutionalization may take place in certain areas of social life. For example, the private sphere that has emerged in modern industrial society is considerably deinstitutionalized as compared to the public sphere." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 81). The emergence of this private sphere in modern industrialized societies seems, in large part, to be due primarily to the extent that that society moves from a traditional economic system (be it either agrarian, subsistence, or hunting and gathering) to an economy which enables the production of an economic surplus. "In advanced industrial societies with their immense economic surplus allowing large numbers of individuals to devote themselves to even the obscurest pursuits, pluralistic competition between subuniverses of meaning of every conceivable sort becomes the

normal state of affairs." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 86). Therefore, as Berger discusses later in The Sacred Canopy (1967, pp. 131 - 149), the issue of competing truth claims and the search for meaning that is required so as to choose an authentic lifestyle in modern society (*supra vide*, p. 39), as opposed to the uncritical reception of a tradition, is an issue which is relevant to modern, pluralistic, Post-Enlightenment, industrialized society. It remains to be said, though, that even within these various subuniverses of meaning all the various processes involved in legitimating that particular world-view, as opposed to other, competing, world-views, still operate. These processes, as mentioned above, are externalization, objectivation, and internalization. Within objectivation social reality may become reified. "Reification is the apprehension of human phenomena as if they were things, that is, in non-human or possibly supra-human terms." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 89).

To further 'explain' and 'justify' itself beyond the level of 'first-order' objectivations of meaning society requires 'legitimation.' "Legitimation as a process is best described as a 'second-order' objectivation of meaning... The function of legitimation is to make objectively available and subjectively plausible the 'first-order' objectivations that have been institutionalized." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 92). Legitimation is required to facilitate socialization from one generation to the next, for it is at this stage in society that the 'self-evident' nature of society, or of institutions, requires explanation and justification (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 93). There are different levels of legitimation: firstly, there is self-evident, pre-theoretical, knowledge; secondly, proverbs, moral maxims, and wise sayings develop as a folk-lore surrounding the pre-theoretical level of legitimation; thirdly, as a 'professional' class of story tellers, or, more particularly, law-

givers, develops, then explicit theories surrounding the folk-lore will evolve; the final level of legitimation is that of symbolic universes. "These are bodies of theoretical tradition that integrate different provinces of meaning and encompass the institutional order in a symbolic totality" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, pp. 94 - 95).

This fourth level of legitimation, concerning the construction of symbolic universes, represents the farthest limit by which legitimation is able to provide an all encompassing system of meaning. This is achieved by being able to incorporate the subjective experiences of individuals into an overall order. "What is particularly important, the marginal situations of the life of the individual (marginal, that is, in not being included in the reality of everyday existence in society) are also encompassed by the symbolic universe... The symbolic universe is, of course, constructed by means of social objectivations. Yet its meaning-bestowing capacity far exceeds the domain of social life, so that the individual may 'locate' himself within it even in his most solitary experiences." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 96). This over-arching ordering (nomos), or canopy, of meaning provides a means by which the subjective apprehension of biographical experiences (both the world-taken-for-granted, and those marginal situations, death in particular, which fall outside the province of everyday lived experience) may be incorporated into an overarching nomos, whereby one may be born, live, and die 'correctly.' (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, pp. 97 - 104).

> The origins of a symbolic universe have their roots in the
> constitution of man. If man in society is a world-constructor, this is
> made possible by his constitutionally given world-openness, which
> already implies the conflict between order and chaos. Human

existence is, *ab initio*, an ongoing externalization. As man externalizes himself, he constructs the world *into* which he externalizes himself. In the process of externalization, he projects his own meanings into reality. Symbolic universes, which proclaim that *all* reality is humanly meaningful and call upon the *entire* cosmos to signify the validity of human existence, constitute the farthest reaches of this projection. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 104).

Therefore, in summary, symbolic universes supply a broader meaning to those who 'inhabit' that symbolic universe, in that events which make "no sense" (that is, events which fall outside the world-taken-for-granted) require a deeper meaning for those who experience that event. Events which call everyday reality into question (what Berger calls 'marginal situations') likewise require the construction of a symbolic universe so as to provide meaning for those who experience such events. Within a religious context theodicies provide such a symbolic universe, or sacred canopy, so as to provide a religious legitimation of such experiences as those which fall outside the world-taken-for-granted (*infra vide*, pp. 63 - 64). These socially constructed (through the dialectical process of externalization, objectivation, and internalization) symbolic universes give meaning to such marginal situations which fall outside everyday lived experience by incorporating those experiences into a wider frame of reference through the inclusion of that experience within the symbolic universe. (Ainlay, in Hunter and Ainlay, 1986, pp. 43 - 46).

Having considered the origins of symbolic universes, Berger and Luckmann then proceed to examine how such symbolic universes may be maintained. Given that such symbolic universes are precarious, and that the reality

which they represent as the 'Reality' (or the 'Truth') may be brought into question by competing truth claims from other over-arching symbolic universes, then it is necessary for those within a particular symbolic universe to maintain that symbolic universe as opposed to another. Various forms of universe-maintenance are available. 'Therapy' as a form of social control attempts to encourage acceptance of the institutional definition of reality, whereas 'nihilation' attempts to deny the reality of phenomena which do not fit within the co-ordinates of one's symbolic universe. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, pp. 112 - 114). Symbolic universes may also be brought into question as societies move from a traditional framework, where mythology and theology maintain the symbolic universe of that society, to a modern framework, where philosophy and science distance the process of universe-maintenance (legitimation) from the world-taken-for-granted of the shared experience of the inhabitants of that society. This may lead to an anomic sense of meaninglessness and 'homelessness' for those within that society. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, pp. 110 - 112). Those with an interest in maintaining the established political power within society tend to have an affinity with those who administer monopolistic traditions of universe-maintenance within society. "In other words, conservative political forces tend to support the monopolistic claims of the universal experts, whose monopolistic organizations in turn tend to be politically conservative." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 123). As mentioned previously (*supra vide*, p. 38) "When a particular definition of reality comes to be attached to a concrete power interest, it may be called an ideology." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 123).

Religion is such a symbolic universe which provides what Berger calls a

'sacred canopy,' however this sacred canopy is open to empirical dis-confirmation as contemporary people are alienated from the pre-existing sacred canopy because it does not address the reality of their lived experience (by such things as anomic forces, pluralism of competing truth claims, subjective secularization, the swing from 'public' to 'private' religious expression, and so on). These empirical dis-confirmations require a contemporary theodicy so as to provide meaning to modern people. This denting of the sacred canopy leads to a 'precarious vision,' and to a sense of anomic homelessness in contemporary society.

Because of the changes within society brought about by the forces of modernity it is increasingly difficult for monopolistic claims of the universal experts to gain prominence over another group of universal experts from another symbolic universe because

> It is important to bear in mind that most modern societies are pluralistic. This means that they have a shared core universe, taken for granted as such, and different partial universes coexisting in a state of mutual accommodation... The pluralistic situation presupposes an urban society with a highly developed division of labour, a concomitant high differentiation in the social structure and high economic surplus... The pluralistic situation goes with conditions of rapid social change, indeed pluralism itself is an accelerating factor precisely because it helps to undermine the change-resistant efficacy of the traditional definitions of reality. Pluralism encourages both skepticism and innovation and is thus inherently subversive of the taken-for-granted reality of the traditional *status quo*. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 125).

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One of the creative aspects of Berger (in particular) and Luckmann's work is the synthesis they achieve between the poles of society as objective reality (after Durkheim) and society as subjective reality (after Weber). Part of this subjective reality is the process by which an individual comes to apprehend society 'out there' as society 'in here.' This subjective apprehension of society takes place through internalization; and through socialization in particular.

> The ontogenetic process by which this is brought about is socialization, which may be defined as the comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual into the objective world of a society or a sector of it. Primary socialization is the first socialization an individual undergoes in childhood, through which he becomes a member of society. Secondary socialization is any subsequent process that inducts an already socialized individual into new sectors of the objective world of his society. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 130).

Through the process of socialization the individual is given first, identity.

> The child learns that he *is* what he is called... To be given an identity involves being assigned a specific place in the world... Subjective appropriation of identity and subjective appropriation of the social world are merely different aspects of the *same* process of internalization, mediated by the *same* significant others. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 132).

Second, through the process of socialization the individual is given meaning.

Primary socialization thus accomplishes what (in hindsight, of course) may be seen as the most important confidence trick that society plays on the individual - to make appear as necessity what is in fact a bundle of contingencies, and thus to make meaningful the accident of his birth. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 135).

The third attribute given to the individual through socialization is order.

In any case, the world of childhood is so constituted as to instill in the individual a nomic structure in which he may have confidence that "everything is all right" - to repeat what is probably the most frequent sentence mothers say to their crying offspring.(Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 136; *infra vide*, pp. 82 - 83).

To maintain the subjective reality as internalized from the objective reality of society through socialization it is necessary that society maintain its validity through such mechanisms as therapy and nihilation (*supra vide*, p. 52). For the individual to maintain their subjective 'grasp on reality' it is important to retain proximity with like-minded others.

One cannot remain a Muslim outside the *umma* of Islam, a Buddhist outside the *sangha*, and probably not a Hindu anywhere outside India. Religion requires a religious community, and to live in a religious world requires affiliation with that community. The plausibility structures of religious conversion have been imitated by secular agencies of alternation. The best examples are in the areas of political indoctrination and psychotherapy. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p.158).

The adage *"extra ecclesiam nulla salus."* (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 158) implies that it is only possible to retain the plausibility of one's reality (subjective and objective) insofar as one remains in close proximity with others who share that reality. The socio-historical relativism of all symbolic universes challenges such tight definitions of reality, for then 'the world' becomes 'a world' set amongst others. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 172).

In The Social Construction of Reality (1966) Berger and Luckmann provide an important re-evaluation of the sociology of knowledge with respect to its understanding of the social construction of reality. The issues they raise far exceed the boundaries of sociology alone (they are concerned with all that passes as 'knowledge' within society) and, as such, their work is of great historical (with its use of the history of ideas) and philosophical (with its discussion of 'reality') importance too. Their discussion of the relationship between objective and subjective aspects of society reconciles previously contrary view points. This dialectic is central to their understanding of society and of the place and role of humanity within society. "The point is that society sets limits to the organism, as the organism sets limits to society." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p.182). Whilst concerned at a theoretical level, it is, nonetheless, Berger and Luckmann's intention that the sociology of knowledge be relevant to the lived experience of humanity; and that it lead to a humanizing of sociological theory.

> This object is society as part of the human world, made by men, inhabited by men, and, in turn, making men, in an ongoing historical process. It is not the least fruit of humanistic sociology that it reawakens our wonder at this astonishing phenomenon. (Berger and

Luckmann, 1966, p. 189).

THE SACRED CANOPY... Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion (1967):

In <u>The Sacred Canopy</u> (1967) Berger applies "a general theoretical perspective derived from the sociology of knowledge to the phenomenon of religion." (Berger, 1967, p. v). This theoretical perspective is outlined by Berger, along with Thomas Luckmann, in <u>The Social Construction of Reality</u> (1966). Berger's contribution to the sociology of religion is unique, and, in fact, quite outstanding. For, in <u>The Sacred Canopy</u>, Berger, writing in his customarily clear and fluent way, demonstrates the relevance of the sociology of religion to the main stream of the discipline of sociology by locating the sociology of religion firmly within the orbit of the sociology of knowledge. This achievement is outstanding in so far as the sociology of religion has, on the whole, been peripheral to contemporary sociology and not been given the attention it deserves. As with Luckmann, Berger "criticized the taken-for-granted identification of religion exclusively with what happens in formal religious organizations; and he denied that rituals and doctrines exhausted the category of religious phenomena." (Beckford, 1989, p. 102). Berger's eclectic, and unique, synthesis of Durkheimian, Weberian, Marxist, Schutzian, and Meadian theoretical perspectives enables him to demonstrate the relevance of the sociology of religion, utilizing the sociology of knowledge for its theoretical basis, to the contemporary discipline of sociology. This synthesis which Berger achieves, through a re-shaping of already existing material, results in "a unique way of looking at the data of everyday life." (Wuthnow, in Wuthnow, Hunter, Bergesen, and Kurzweil, 1984, p. 73).

As with Luckmann, Berger

has often been at pains to situate his work in the framework of a sociology of knowledge which would go beyond the history of ideas and penetrate the central sociological question of how human beings are located in their social order. For both Berger and Luckmann, in fact, 'the most important task' of the sociology of religion 'is to analyse the cognitive and normative apparatus by which a socially constituted universe (that is, 'knowledge' about it) is legitimated' (Berger and Luckmann, 1963, p. 424). (Beckford, 1989, p. 101).

Berger's thesis in The Sacred Canopy relies heavily upon the theoretical framework which he developed in conjunction with Thomas Luckmann in The Social Construction of Reality. As a consequence Berger seeks "to push to the final sociological consequence an understanding of religion as a historical product." (Berger, 1967, p. vi). To achieve this end Berger utilizes the technique of phenomenological bracketing of truth claims, religious propositions about the world, and theology. (Berger, 1967, p. v).

The first section of The Sacred Canopy (entitled 'Systematic Elements') relies heavily upon The Social Construction of Reality, yet also expands and elaborates upon the previous position, particularly with respect to the link between the sociology of knowledge and religion.

The synthesis of Durkheimian (society as objective reality) and Weberian (society as subjective reality) view points achieved by Berger allows for a balance between the sociological reification of objective social reality and the idealism of subjective meanings. With reference to Berger's synthesis of Durkheimian and Weberian view points, Wuthnow maintains that

an exclusive emphasis upon subjective meanings leads to idealism; an emphasis on the objectivity of social reality leads to sociological reification. Both are distortions of social reality. These two he maintains, are correct only when seen together. (Wuthnow, in Wuthnow, Hunter, Bergesen, and Kurzweil, 1984, pp. 75 - 76).

Berger goes on to say that "Society is a dialectic phenomenon in that it is a human product, and nothing but a human product, that yet continuously acts back upon its producer." (Berger, 1967, p. 3). This dialectic is at the heart of Berger's thesis, and consists of three factors, or 'moments' as Berger calls them:

Externalization   - the outpouring of human being into the world.

Objectivation   - the product of externalization confronts its original producers as a facticity external to and other than themselves.

Internalization   - structures of the external/objective world are transformed into structures of the subjective consciousness. (Berger, 1967, p. 4).

As mentioned previously (*supra vide*, pp. 38, 46, 52), because of the instability, or precariousness, of the natural environment, humanity seeks to order this environment so as to make it meaningful. This ordering involves the process of externalization, which in turn involves the other two 'moments' in the three-fold dialectic of society; namely, objectivation and internalization. Therefore, "the socially constructed world is, above all, an ordering of experience. A meaningful order, a nomos, is imposed upon the

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discrete experiences and meanings of individuals." (Berger, 1967, p. 19).
Language plays a central role in ordering and interpreting experience.
(Berger, 1967, p. 20). Given that this nomos is socially objectivated the
'knowledge' which surrounds it tends to be 'pre-theoretical' in nature.
(Berger, 1967, p. 21). It is this socially objectivated, pre-theoretical
knowledge which is internalized in the course of socialization. (Berger, 1967,
p. 21). Socialization may be considered to have 'succeeded' to the extent
that the world-taken-for-granted becomes internalized into the life of the
individual, and provides that individual with identity, meaning, and order.
(Berger, 1967, p. 24; *supra vide*, pp. 54 - 55). "In other words, to live in the
social world is to live an ordered and meaningful life. Society is the guardian
of order and meaning not only objectively, but subjectively as well, in its
structuring of individual consciousness. It is for this reason that radical
separation from the social world, or anomy, constitutes such a powerful
threat to the individual." (Berger, 1967, p. 21). When people, either as
individuals or as groups, are dis-located from the socially established nomos
they will experience anomy (Berger uses the Anglicized spelling as opposed
to '*Anomie*'; Berger, 1967, p. 21). "The socially established nomos may thus
be understood, perhaps in its most important aspect, as a shield against
terror. Put differently, the most important function of society is nomization.
The anthropological presupposition for this is a human craving for meaning
that appears to have the force of instinct. Men are congenitally compelled
to impose a meaningful order upon reality." (Berger, 1967, p. 22).

This meaningful order may be called into question by those 'marginal
situations' which "reveal the innate precariousness of all social worlds."
(Berger, 1967, p. 23). These marginal situations include separation from
society, dreams and fantasy, and, above all else, death. "Seen in the

perspective of society, every nomos is an area of meaning carved out of a vast mass of meaninglessness, a small clearing of lucidity in a formless, dark, always ominous jungle." (Berger, 1967, p. 23).

These symbolic, socially objectivated, universes of meaning provide a canopy of taken-for-granted 'knowledge' whereby nomos and cosmos appear to be one and the same reality (Berger, 1967, p. 25). This 'reality' may be understood anthropologically (a theory of human nature) or cosmologically (as in more traditional societies; Berger, 1967, p. 25). Likewise, "Religion is the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established. Put differently, religion is cosmization in a sacred mode." (Berger, 1967, p. 25). As part of the process of externalization, whereby meaning is poured out into reality (Berger, 1967, p. 27), religion may be conceived of as "the audacious attempt to conceive of the entire universe as being humanly significant." (Berger, 1967, p. 28). Given the effects of secularization in contemporary society theories of human nature may assume a secular, scientific definition. However, it is worth remembering that "Viewed historically, most of man's worlds have been sacred worlds. Indeed, it appears likely that only by way of the sacred was it possible for man to conceive of the cosmos in the first place." (Berger, 1967, p. 27).

As with the discussion in The Social Construction of Reality Berger moves from the concerns of world-construction (the social construction of reality) to the concerns of world-maintenance (legitimation) in his discussion in The Sacred Canopy. "All socially constructed worlds are inherently precarious. Supported by human activity, they are constantly threatened by the facts of self-interest and stupidity." (Berger, 1967, p. 29). Socialization serves to internalize the socially constructed world within the subjective

consciousness of each of the members within a society. Social control serves to contain individuals and groups within socially defined limits; whereas, legitimation serves to explain and justify that socially constructed world. "By legitimation is meant socially objectivated 'knowledge' that serves to explain and justify the social order. Put differently, legitimations are answers to any questions about the 'why' of institutional arrangements." (Berger, 1967, p. 29). Berger's discussion of legitimation in The Sacred Canopy closely follows that put forward by Berger and Luckmann in The Social Construction of Reality (*supra vide*, pp. 49 - 51). What is unique in the present volume is the way Berger discusses religion and legitimation. Berger firstly reaffirms several points made, with Luckmann, in The Social Construction of Reality; namely, that the nomos provided by a symbolic universe involves "an all embracing *Weltanschauung*." (Berger, 1967, p. 32). Then, reiterating that "The essential purpose of all forms of legitimation may be described as reality-maintenance, both on the objective and the subjective levels." (Berger, 1967, p. 32). Then Berger goes on to make the link between religion and legitimation. "All legitimation maintains socially defined reality. Religion legitimates so effectively because it relates the precarious reality constructions of empirical societies with ultimate reality." (Berger, 1967, p. 32). Having made this connection Berger further suggests that "Religion legitimates social institutions by bestowing upon them an ultimately valid ontological status, that is, by *locating* them within a sacred and cosmic frame of reference." (Berger, 1967, p. 33). However, with respect to the link between religion and legitimation, Berger goes on to suggest that "Religion thus serves to maintain the reality of that socially constructed world within which men exist in their everyday lives. Its legitimating power, however, has another important dimension - the integration into a comprehensive

nomos of precisely those marginal situations in which the reality of everyday life is put in question." (Berger, 1967, p. 42). These marginal situations include:

sleep;

the transition between sleep and wakefulness;

dreams and nightmares;

death;

natural catastrophe;

war;

social upheaval;

the 'official' exercise of violence, for instance, in capital punishment;

physical illness; and

mental illness.

These marginal situations involve "standing, or stepping, *outside* reality as commonly defined." (Berger, 1967, p. 43). Marginal situations are, according to Berger, moments of 'ecstasy' where the individual "steps out, alone, to face the dark." (Berger, 1963, p. 171; Berger, 1967, p. 43). In other words, religion incorporates those experiences which would otherwise fall outside the world-taken-for-granted within a socially legitimated symbolic universe. In so doing, the fear of anomy is alleviated by an all embracing, sacred canopy of meaning.

Berger draws a clear link between religion and society by suggesting that religion is one of the great legitimating forces within society, and that religion and society share the same origin. "Rather, the point is that the *same* human activity that produces society also produces religion, with the

relation between the two products always being a dialectical one." (Berger, 1967, p. 47). Furthermore, Berger adds that "The implication of the rootage of religion in human activity is *not* that religion is always a dependent variable in the history of a society, but rather that it derives its objective and subjective reality from human beings, who produce and reproduce it in their ongoing lives." (Berger, 1967, p. 48).

This raises the issue of the plausibility and credibility of religion. "The power of religion depends, in the last resort, upon the credibility of the banners it puts into the hands of men as they stand before death, or more accurately, as they walk, inevitably, toward it." (Berger, 1967, p. 51). This is the problem of theodicy. Traditionally, theodicies sought to provide an explanation (religious legitimation) of how to live through anomic phenomena, and are typically explained in terms of the nomos (sacred canopy) established in the society in question (Berger, 1967, p. 53). Theodicies were often seen as the solution to individual suffering (a solution to the problem of evil). Weber terms such things as the legitimation of political authority, or the assuagement of social rebellion, as the 'theodicy of suffering.' (Berger, 1963, p. 134; *supra vide*, p. 38). The need people have for such theodicies, so as to provide meaning in otherwise meaningless situations, is highlighted by Ritschl

> From the bird's-eye view of the historian all this may not seem to
> have been tragic because in the course of decades and centuries such
> events can prove favourable or fade away. However, for the person
> alive at the time this perspective means little or nothing. Millions of
> people live in a state of hopeless aporia, in which any decision is
> meaningless. By that I mean not only the poor, say in West Africa,

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Asia and South America, but also their and our politicians, who are entangled in obligations before they even begin the process of decision. The history I have described behind the tragedy of world history consists of the untold individual stories of children who grew up in anxiety and hatred, mothers with too many demands made on them, failed marriages, disappointed husbands, embittered old people - individual destinies which are not only unfulfilled but unfulfillable. (Ritschl, 1986, p. 194).

For "It is not happiness that theodicy primarily provides, but meaning." (Berger, 1967, p. 58). This meaning is required by society, and individuals within society, by virtue of the anomic forces which disrupt, or even destroy, the established order.

Every nomos is established, over and over again, against the threat of destruction by the anomic forces endemic to the human condition. In religious terms, the sacred order of the cosmos is reaffirmed, over and over again, in the face of chaos. It is evident that this fact poses a problem on the level of human activity in society, inasmuch as this activity must be so institutionalized as to continue despite the recurrent intrusion into individual and collective experience of the anomic (or, if one prefers, denomizing) phenomena of suffering, evil and, above all, death. However, a problem is also posed on the level of legitimation. The anomic phenomena must not only be lived through, they must also be explained - to wit, explained in terms of the nomos established in the society in question. An explanation of these phenomena in terms of religious legitimations, of whatever degree of theoretical sophistication, may be called a theodicy. (Berger, 1967,

p. 53).

Theodicies, as socially constructed religious legitimations, provide an over-
arching canopy of meaning for those who inhabit that canopy of meaning.
Theodicies serve to maintain the institutional order of/in society. "Put
simply, theodicies provide the poor with a meaning for their poverty, but
may also provide the rich with a meaning for their wealth. In both cases the
result is one of world-maintenance and, very concretely, of the maintenance
of the particular institutional order." (Berger, 1967, p. 59). To dis-confirm
this theodicy is to create enormous social change as well. "In all cases, the
disintegration of the plausibility of theodicies legitimating social inequalities
is potentially revolutionary in its consequences" (Berger, 1967, p. 60). The
Western/Christian theodicy has, through secularization and pluralism,
suffered from empirical dis-confirmation and, therefore, has declined in
plausibility too. (Berger, 1967, pp. 78 - 79; *infra vide*, pp. 69 - 70).

Berger, in the second half of The Sacred Canopy ('Historical Elements'),
goes on to discuss the effect secularization has upon religious legitimation,
and the problem of the plausibility of religion caused by secularization (and
suggests in a few pages a way forward out of this problem in *Appendix II,
Sociological and Theological Perspectives*, which he later develops and uses
as the basis of A Rumour of Angels (1969)). However, throughout the
whole volume (of The Sacred Canopy) Berger remains faithful to his
expressed intention of pushing "to the final sociological consequence an
understanding of religion as a historical product." (Berger, 1967, p. v).

In spite of the collapse of traditional theodicies Berger maintains that
religion (those signals of transcendence, in particular; *infra vide*, p. 82 - 88)

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still has a place to play in human culture. This thesis describes and outlines the ways in which Berger explores what aspects of religious meaning are compatible with modernity. This is the problem of legitimating a theodicy in Post-Enlightenment society.

Legitimating a theodicy that has plausibility for contemporary society involves the construction of a system of meaning which is relevant to the lived experience of those living within Post-Enlightenment society. Such a contemporary theodicy needs to include such factors as the interrelationship between self, others, the world, and the transcendent so as to provide some basis for an authentic and meaningful existence (*supra vide*, p. 39). This task, of legitimating a contemporary theodicy, is taken up by Berger in <u>A Rumour of Angels</u> (1969).

Given that a religious legitimation of the socially constructed reality (a theodicy) requires a fundamental attitude which is "in itself quite irrational", and that "This attitude is the surrender of self to the ordering power of society. Put differently, every nomos entails a transcendence of individuality" (Berger, 1967, p. 54); then there is a sense in which religion is an agent of alienation. Alienation "is the process whereby the dialectical relationship between the individual and his world is lost to consciousness. The individual 'forgets' that this world was and continues to be co-produced by him." (Berger, 1967, p. 85). Religion has been such an effective agent of alienation because it posits that the socially objectivated knowledge of that which it considers to be reality is in fact of cosmic or divine, not human, origin. Because of this, social institutions which are deemed by religion to be of sacred or divine origin (for instance: monarchy, marriage, church, law, and so on) are seen to be necessities over which one, as a member of that

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society, has no choice or control. 'Bad faith' and 'false consciousness' (*supra vide*, pp. 23, 39, 42) then ensue because the individual feels alienated from society and that they are not able to influence the institutions which are, in fact, created by, and always interacting with, humanity. Therefore any contemporary theodicy, or system of meaning, must be able to be historically concerned (that is, conscious of its origins and open to the future), empirical (that is, open to scrutiny and review), inductive (that is, dealing with concrete reality, not abstract theory), and concerned with people's lived experience.

In Section II of The Sacred Canopy Berger examines the 'Historical Elements' of his sociological theory of religion. The process of secularization, along with pluralism (*supra vide*, p. 53), is held by Berger to be of central importance as an influence upon contemporary religion and religious institutions. Berger defines secularization as "the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols." (Berger, 1967, p. 107). This phenomenon is a modern one, particularly powerful in Western society (Berger, 1967, p. 108; *supra vide*, pp. 25 - 28). The economic process of industrial capitalism, accompanied by political secularization, along with the Protestant world-view which divested itself of such 'sacred' elements as mystery, miracle, and magic led to a situation where "Religiously speaking, the world becomes very lonely indeed." (Berger, 1967, p. 112). In this situation law and ethics replace the timeless cosmic order (Berger, 1967, p. 119). As 'the church' becomes the sphere of 'the sacred' it defines itself over and against 'the world' and, as such, develops a doctrine of 'two spheres' (one holy, the other profane; *supra vide*, pp. 19 - 20). The 'secular world' then achieves a status which is, in fact, a theological legitimation (Berger, 1967, p. 123). As people

have become increasingly dis-enfranchized, through the process of secularization, from the religious legitimations which were, but no longer are, meaningful then there is a serious problem of plausibility for these religious legitimations. This is because the process of secularization has lessened people's readiness to give their assent to a metaphysic which is open to empirical dis-confirmation. It needs to 'ring true,' that is, to be true to people's lived experience. Furthermore, the competing truth claims (pluralism), and availability of options (be they religious, philosophical, or to do with 'life-style') has led to a deinstitutionalization of religion. The normative claims of one religion, or sacred canopy, balance out the claims of the others. This, in turn, leads to a pluralistic market situation (Berger, 1967, p. 138), where "a 'religious preference' can be abandoned as readily as it was first adopted." (Berger, 1967, p. 134). In this situation "insofar as religion is common it lacks reality, and insofar as it is 'real' it lacks commonality." (Berger, 1967, p. 134). This process of secularization and pluralism seems to accompany a deinstitutionalization of meaning (*supra vide*, pp. 52 - 53). The legitimations which maintained the former social construction of reality and linked the precarious social reality found in society with ultimate reality have proved to be inadequate given the lived experience of people. As such, the theodicies which legitimated the socially constructed reality became open to dis-confirmation. That these theodicies were linked to political structures which used these theodicies to legitimate their position or power (for instance, the bureaucratization of the church; Berger, 1963, pp. 46 - 47; 1967, p. 140), to question the theodicy was a political action as well as a religious one (*supra vide*, p. 67). Therefore, there is a need to legitimate a contemporary theodicy which is true to people's lived experience.

Berger, by linking the function of a theodicy with that of making meaning (*supra vide*, p. 66), allows for theodicies to be conceived of in the broader context of making meaning in contemporary society. As such, a contemporary theodicy needs to include (indeed, it needs to be inclusive, rather than exclusive) such factors as the relationship between self, others, the world, and the transcendent so as to provide some basis for an authentic and meaningful existence (*supra vide*, p. 39). There is a need for a more inclusive theodicy (other than the traditional individualistic type) which has hermeneutic concern for the 'whole' (wholeness of self, wholeness in relationships with others, wholeness with the world/environment, and wholeness with the transcendent). However, this 'wholeness' will not be provided by over-arching (public) structures or systems; it will need to be through chosen, private means which reflect the Post-Modernist situation where 'closure' on a grand scale is unobtainable (Marshall, 1992, pp. 192 - 193). Berger's work provides the possibility for this legitimation of a theodicy (or theodicies) which will provide meaning in Post-Enlightenment society (*infra vide*, pp. 74 - 88).

Given that religion (that is, socially constructed religious legitimations) served to provide a coherent over-arching sacred canopy for a society, it remains to be said that due to the secularization, and subsequent pluralism, of/in society it is conceivable that such over-arching (public) religious universes will continue to lose their legitimating power and that more private, chosen religious preferences will pre-dominate with various sub-universes competing for membership. (Berger, 1967, pp. 127 - 153). Objective 'truth' is de-objectivated, or 'subjectivized.' (Berger, 1967, p. 157). Berger maintains that the factors which led to "this crisis of religion on the level of commonsense knowledge is not due to any mysterious

metamorphoses of consciousness, but can be explained in terms of empirically available developments in the social structures and social psychology of modern societies." (Berger, 1967, p. 156). These developments are outlined in 'The Background to Berger's Thought' (*supra vide*, pp. 16 - 31).

Berger sums up The Sacred Canopy by defining religion as "a human projection, grounded in specific infrastructures of human history." (Berger, 1967, p. 180). However, Berger insists that it is

> Only after the theologian has confronted the historical relativity of religion can he genuinely ask where in this history it may, perhaps, be possible to speak of *discoveries* - discoveries, that is, that transcend the relative character of their infrastructures. And only after he has really grasped what it means to say that religion is a human product or projection can he begin to search, *within* this array of projections, for what may turn out to be signals of transcendence. I strongly suspect that such an inquiry will turn increasingly from the projections to the projector, that is, will become an enterprise in anthropology. An 'empirical theology' is, of course, methodologically impossible. But a theology that proceeds in a step-by-step correlation with what can be said about man empirically is well worth a serious try.

> It is in such an enterprise that a conversation between sociology and theology is most likely to bear intellectual fruits. It will be clear from the above that this will require partners, on both sides, with a high degree of openness. In the absence of such partners, silence is by far

the better course. (Berger, 1967, p. 185; *infra vide*, pp. 86 - 87, 95).

Berger, as it happens, did not remain silent. He proceeded to attempt such a correlation between theology and humanity (based upon sociological theory) in his work <u>A Rumour of Angels... Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural</u> (1969) (*infra vide*, pp. 74 - 88).

A RUMOUR OF ANGELS... Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural (1969):

A Rumour of Angels represents the culmination of an argument which Berger developed over the course of the material reviewed in this section.

Berger begins with Invitation to Sociology (1963) in which he develops a general understanding of sociology. This understanding is one which is greatly influenced by the sociology of knowledge. Berger uses the sociology of knowledge to develop an understanding of the social construction of reality in the book of the same name, together with Thomas Luckmann, namely: The Social Construction of Reality (1966). Berger and Luckmann suggest that universes of meaning are created and maintained, through social processes, within society. One such universe of meaning is religion, and Berger analyses religion using an understanding developed within the sociology of knowledge in his book The Sacred Canopy (1967). So as to avoid the suggestion of methodological atheism, at the conclusion of The Sacred Canopy Berger suggests an approach to religion which he develops in A Rumour of Angels (1969) (*supra vide*, p. 72) which, nonetheless, retains a systematic methodology, as developed in The Social Construction of Reality and The Sacred Canopy, and sociological perspective.

Berger, in the Introduction to the 1990 edition of A Rumour of Angels, explains his rationale for completing the programme outlined above.

> First, I wanted to show how the intellectual tools of the social
> sciences, which had contributed greatly to the loss of credibility of
> religion, could be turned on the very ideas that had thus discredited

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supernatural views of the world and on the people propagating those ideas. I called this project 'relativizing the relativizers.' And second, I wanted to draw a very rough sketch of an approach to theologizing that began with ordinary human experience, more specifically with elements of that experience that point toward a reality beyond the ordinary. I called this approach 'inductive' and I indicated a number of experiential complexes that could be considered 'signals of transcendence.' I suggested that here was to be found the basis of a theological program rooted in what Europeans call philosophical anthropology and in the broad tradition of liberal Protestantism stretching back to Friedrich Schleiermacher. Unlike many expressions of the liberal Protestant tradition, however, such a program would not secularize the religious definitions of reality; on the contrary, it would, as it were, transcendentalize secularity. (Berger, 1969, pp. ix - x).

Berger's humanistic concern is also an important factor in seeing through this project. "Put differently, keeping alive the rumour of angels is to contribute to the humanization of our time." (Berger, 1969, p. xiii).

As Berger outlined in The Sacred Canopy (*supra vide*, pp. 69 - 70), secularization and pluralism have profoundly shaken the foundations of the traditional supernatural world-view. Berger defines the term 'supernatural' as denoting "a fundamental category of religion, namely the assertion or belief that there is *an other reality*, and one of ultimate significance for man, which transcends the reality within which our everyday experience unfolds. It is this fundamental assumption about reality, rather than this or that historical variation of it, that is allegedly defunct or in the process of

becoming defunct in the modern world." (Berger, 1969, p. 2).

Berger's concern is how to correlate the supernatural with the life-world, or world-taken-for-granted "within which we carry on our 'normal' activities in collaboration with other men." (Berger, 1969, p. 3).

Given that fewer people, at least within modern societies, are able to connect in any meaningful way with the religious legitimations which owe their origin to times and places far removed from the contemporary situation there is, as mentioned above (*supra vide*, pp. 69 - 70), a need to construct, or legitimate, a theodicy, or system of meaning, which is relevant to people in modern society. However, those who suggest that it is possible to hold a socio-historical world-view consistent with the sociology of knowledge, yet who also assent to the place of the supernatural within that world-view will find themselves in a 'cognitive minority.' (Berger, 1967, pp. 184 - 185; Berger, 1969, pp. 6 - 7). Such a person holding such a view is on the outside of socially legitimated views on religion, society, and philosophy: religion, because of the way revelation is central to 'orthodox' belief; society, because so many people within contemporary society are dis-enfranchized with such an orthodox view of religion in particular, and with organized religion in general; and philosophy, because the prevailing intellectual 'orthodoxy' does not admit to the place of the supernatural. It is into this unenviable situation that Berger sets forth the place and validity of the supernatural within contemporary society.

Berger refers to the 'Protestantization' of religious groups which is a result of the increasing secularization and pluralism within modern society. Berger is, nonetheless, an admirer of the honesty which Protestantism

(particularly such theologians as Schleiermacher) has maintained in its interaction with modernity. " It was Protestantism that first underwent the onslaught of secularization; Protestantism that first adapted itself to societies in which several faiths existed on equal terms, the pluralism that may be regarded as a twin phenomenon of secularization, and it was Protestant theology that the cognitive challenges to traditional supernaturalism were first met and fought through." (Berger, 1969, p. 17).

It is in this tradition that Berger sets forth his thesis on the relevance of the supernatural in contemporary society. Not in a spirit of accommodation, or reduction, or translation, but by developing an inductive theology (or theodicy, or system of meaning; Berger, 1969, p. 22).

From the perspective of sociology (in particular, from the sociology of knowledge and the history of ideas) Berger argues that it is possible to 'see clearly' (*supra vide*, pp. 35 - 36), or to be able to 'relativize the relativizers.' (Berger, 1969, p. 31). This socio-historical world-view has come about through the development of various intellectual movements. Berger refers to several of these movements, citing in particular:

the physical sciences   - where such people as Copernicus and Galileo challenged the cosmology of the Middle Ages;

the revolution in biology   - where humanity is not only alone cosmologically, but also subject to physical forces which are common to all other creatures;

the human sciences   - historical scholarship highlighted the

historicity of all religious traditions, and psychology attributed much within the religious traditions as being a projection of human needs and desires; and

the history of ideas and the sociology of knowledge   - highlight the relativity of the religious traditions. (Berger, 1969, pp. 33 - 36).

The sociology of knowledge, which provides a sociological perspective on the above developments, is one of the chief means Berger employs to carry out his task of 'relativizing the relativizers.' (Berger, 1969, p. 38). The sociology of knowledge

is concerned with studying the relationship between human

thought and the social conditions under which it occurs... One of the

fundamental propositions of the sociology of knowledge is that the

plausibility, in the sense of what people actually find credible, of

views of reality depends upon the social support these receive. Put

more simply, we obtain our notions about the world originally from

other human beings, and these notions continue to be plausible to us

in a very large measure because others continue to affirm them.

(Berger, 1969, p. 38).

Various factors such as social definitions of reality, social relations that take these for granted, as well as the supporting therapies (social controls) and legitimations provide a plausibility structure of the conception in question. (Berger, 1969, pp. 39 - 40). Plausibility structures help to maintain the integrity or uniqueness of a conception, institution, or any form of socially constructed reality. Berger maintains that the same

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mechanisms apply to the construction and maintenance of all forms of socially constructed reality. (Berger, 1969, p. 42). The formula *"extra ecclesiam nulla salus"* ("there is no salvation outside the church."), may just as well be put as the proposition that there is "no plausibility without the appropriate plausibility structure." (Berger, 1969, p. 42; *supra vide*, p. 56).

> The mystery of faith now becomes scientifically graspable, practically repeatable, and generally applicable. The magic disappears as the mechanisms of plausibility generation and plausibility maintenance become transparent. The community of faith is now understandable as a *constructed entity* - it has been constructed in a specific human history, by human beings... The formula, once an affirmation of unique authority, thus becomes a general rule... In other words, the theologian's world has become *one world among many* - a generalization of the problem of relativity that goes considerably beyond the dimensions of the problem as posed by historical scholarship. To put it simply: History posits the problem of relativity as *a fact*, the sociology of knowledge as *a necessity of our condition*. (Berger, 1969, p. 42).

Various attempts have been made by theologians to dismiss this view, most notably the Neo-Orthodox distinction between 'religion' and 'Christian faith.' (*supra vide*, p. 21). The effect of this view was to provide a theological legitimation of secularization. (*supra vide*, p. 69). Berger, however, is not prepared to pretend that such insights as put forward by the sociology of knowledge do not exist, or that such insights are unimportant; Berger attaches great importance to the insights of the sociology of knowledge, for

When everything has been subsumed under the relativizing categories in question (those of history, of the sociology of knowledge, or what-have-you), the question of truth reasserts itself in almost pristine simplicity. Once we know that all human affirmations are subject to scientifically graspable socio-historical processes, *which affirmations are true and which are false*? (Berger, 1969, p. 45).

The situation in contemporary society is one of pluralism, which includes "any situation in which there is more than one world view available to the members of a society, that is, a situation in which there is competition between world views." (Berger, 1969, p. 47). Modern society is less able to provide firm plausibility structure, and hence pluralism develops, because

Modern societies are, by their nature, highly differentiated and segmented, while at the same time allowing for a high degree of communication between their segmented subsocieties. The reasons for this, while complex, are not all mysterious. They result from the degree of division of labour brought about by industrial forms of production, and from the patterns of settlement, social stratification, and communication engendered by industrialism. (Berger, 1969, pp. 47 - 48).

This pluralistic situation requires one to choose from amongst competing world-views for a system of meaning. Such institutions as tribe or clan are no longer able to provide simple and all-embracing plausibility structures. The individual in modern society resides amongst competing sub-universes which tend to be secular (work, recreation, and community). This has largely contributed to the decline in the potency (plausibility) of traditional

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religious legitimations. The plausibility structures which previously defined 'the faith' are now on the edge, rather than at the centre, of modern society. So much so that it is possible to say that people now inhabit a different world. However, the present situation is just as much influenced by the same legitimating forces as in any other age; it simply manifests itself differently. (Berger, 1969, pp. 49 - 50). Gaede states that

> Society is pluralistic; it evidences heterogeneity of religious experiences and truth claims; we must take all or these empirical phenomena seriously; therefore, we cannot accept as a prior claim an exclusive truth. Thus the starting point of Berger's critique is an empirical statement about the nature of modern social conditions, from which he draws an epistemological conclusion about method, out of which he will derive (one may assume) some ontological assertions about religious truth. In other words, here once again is evidence of the impact of his sociological conception of reality upon his theological endeavour. (Gaede, in Hunter and Ainlay, 1986, p. 171).

Given that, as Berger maintains, nothing is immune from the relativization of socio-historical analysis, is it at all possible to legitimate a system of meaning that is "in, with, and under" (Berger, 1969, p. 52) the human projections which constitute religion? And is this system of meaning a pointer to a reality which may be called supernatural? Berger believes so, and begins his inductive theologizing by starting with humanity. In other words, Berger uses anthropology as the starting point for his theology. This theology is not "an empirical theology - that would be logically impossible - but rather a theology of very high empirical sensitivity that seeks to

correlate its propositions with what can be empirically known." (Berger, 1969, p. 53).

Berger suggests that various *'signals of transcendence,'* which are constituted by *'prototypical human gestures,'* provide the starting point for this inductive theology. (Berger, 1969, p. 59). These signals of transcendence are "phenomena that are to be found within the domain of our 'natural' reality but that appear to point beyond that reality." (Berger, 1969, p. 59). And, by prototypical human gestures Berger means "certain reiterated acts and experiences that appear to express essential aspects of man's being, of the human animal as such." (Berger, 1969, p. 59). Berger does not mean that these prototypical human gestures are 'archetypal' in a Jungian sense; rather, they belong, not in the depths but, in the realm of "ordinary everyday awareness." (Berger, 1969, pp. 59 - 60).

Berger uses a similar line of argument here to the one he used regarding freedom in his previous book Invitation to Sociology (1963) (*supra vide*, pp. 23, 39 - 40). This argument is grounded in a humanistic (Kantian/phenomenological) epistemology. (Abercrombie, in Hunter and Ainlay, 1986, p. 12).

The first of Berger's signals of transcendence is Berger's argument from order. (Berger, 1969, pp. 60 - 64). There is a propensity for order in society, as opposed to anomy. This 'nomization' is an inductive experience whereby fundamental trust in reality is expressed (Küng, 1980, p. 568 ff.). It is most evident in the comforting of a child by its parent. When the parent says to the child "Don't be afraid - everything is in order, everything is all right.", the parent's reassurance transcends *"the immediately present two individuals*

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and their situation , [and] *implies a statement about reality as such.*" (Berger, 1969, p. 62). Berger goes on to say that

> The argument from ordering is metaphysical rather than ethical. To restate it: In the observable human propensity to order reality there is an intrinsic impulse to give cosmic scope to this order, an impulse that implies not only that human order in some way corresponds to an order that transcends it, but that this transcendent order is of such a character that man can trust himself and his destiny to it. (Berger, 1969, pp. 63 - 64).

Berger's argument here, and with the other signals of transcendence, relies on an inductive process. (*supra vide*, pp. 29 - 30). "By 'inductive faith,' then, I mean a religious process of thought that begins with facts of human experience; conversely, 'deductive faith' begins with certain assumptions (notably assumptions about divine revelation) that cannot be tested by experience." (Berger, 1969, pp. 64 - 65). This line of argument is consistent with Berger's use of a humanistic, particularly Kantian, epistemology. Kant drew a distinction between 'Phenomena' (things as they appear), and 'Noumena' (things in themselves). Kant maintains that we cannot prove the noumenal, we can only prove the phenomenal. (Küng, 1980, pp. 537 - 551; *supra vide*, p. 26). Furthermore, apart from being derived from experience and empirical reality, the signals of transcendence belong to the common person and are consistent with Berger's emphasis (following Schutz) on the 'paramount reality of everyday life.' (*supra vide*, pp. 43 - 44).

The second signal of transcendence is Berger's argument from play. (Berger, 1969, pp. 65 - 68). Play is a basic experience of humanity (as is

order). To play might involve the play of children, or of the musician, or of the lovers, or the artist, or the actor. "In playing, one steps out of one time into another." (Berger, 1969, p. 65). Play is usually a joyful experience, and seems to bracket the 'serious' reality of life; yet it is "readily found in the reality of ordinary life." (Berger, 1969, p. 67). Though there is no way of proving it, it remains to be said that in play one enters another (eternal/supernatural) world.

The third signal of transcendence is Berger's argument from hope (Berger, 1969, pp. 68 - 73), whereby meaning may be found in those experiences which threaten socially constructed reality. Frankl (1969) is quoted by Coward (1990, p. 162) as claiming

> that a person finds meaning in life through self-transcendence in
> three ways. The first is giving to the world through creativity, such
> as in family, occupation, and creative works. The second is taking
> from the world by being receptive to others and to one's environment.
> The third is finding meaning in the attitude one takes to one's
> predicament when faced with an unchangeable situation. Life can
> never cease to have meaning because, even when one is deprived of
> both the creative and experiential ways to find meaning, there
> remains the opportunity to determine the manner in which one faces
> adversity.

In true Existential style, Berger suggests that absurdity cannot be avoided; however, meaninglessness can.

The fourth signal of transcendence is Berger's argument from damnation

(Berger, 1969, pp. 73 - 77), where when humanity is violated to such an extent that there is a cry for justice. There seems to be something fundamental to human nature which abhors injustice and inhumanity. Putting it positively, there is a profound care for humanity at the heart of our existence. (Berger, 1969, p. 181).

The fifth signal of transcendence is Berger's argument from humour. (Berger, 1969, pp. 77 - 81). Berger uses the argument from humour to reflect *"the imprisonment of the human spirit in the world."* (Berger, 1969, p. 78). This (tragi-) comic perspective relates to Berger's notions of freedom and social responsibility, which are arrived at through the process of sociological understanding ('Verstehen').

> Another option is what we regard as the most plausible one to result from sociological understanding, one that can combine compassion, limited commitment and a sense of the comic in man's social carnival. This will lead to a posture *vis-à-vis* society based on a perception of the latter as essentially a comedy, in which men parade up and down with their gaudy costumes, change hats and titles, hit each other with sticks they have or the ones they can persuade their fellow actors to believe in. Such a comic perspective does not overlook the fact that non-existent sticks can draw real blood, but it will not from this fact fall into the fallacy of mistaking the Potemkin village for the City of God. If one views society as a comedy, one will not hesitate to cheat, especially if by cheating one can alleviate a little pain here or make life a little brighter there. One will refuse to take seriously the rules of the game, except insofar as these rules protect real human beings and foster real human values. Sociological

Machiavellianism is thus the very opposite of cynical opportunism. It is the way in which freedom can realize itself in social action. (Berger, 1963, pp. 184 - 185).

All of these signals of transcendence belong to the common person (not to 'spiritual virtuosi'), and all are inductive in so far as they are taken from the empirical reality of lived experience. They are all pre-theoretical and are from the 'bottom-up.' That is, they are concerned with 'everyday reality.' Berger makes no claims to providing "an exhaustive or exclusive list of human gestures that may be seen as signals of transcendence." (Berger, 1969, p. 81). Other possible signals of transcendence which could perhaps be included (so as to provide an extension and update of Berger's suggestions) might be such gestures as:

a sense of care similar to the giving and receiving mentioned by Frankl (*supra vide*, p. 84);

significant relationships in which the above care is lived out;

a fundamental trust in reality which stems from the above care. (Küng, 1980, p. 568 ff.; Berger, 1992, p. 134); and

a sense of wholeness (with self, with others, with the world/environment, and with the transcendent).

In all of the above Berger seeks to revive "a spirit of patient induction and an attitude of openness to the fullness of human experience, especially as this experience is accessible to historical inquiry." (Berger, 1969, p. 94). As

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such, Berger would prefer to use the term 'discoveries' as opposed to 'revelation,' for the concept of revelation requires a deductive theological methodology, whereas the concept of discoveries requires an inductive theological methodology. (*supra vide*, p. 72).

Berger does not seek to prescribe the outworking of the signals of transcendence in a practical way, other than to say that confronting the traditions in a spirit of open dialogue and humility will enable the search for signals of transcendence to take place wherever they may be found. (Berger, 1969, pp. 94 - 98). This may involve the emergence of new groups which bear little or no resemblance to the traditional religious institutions, or it may be that the traditional religious institutions will adapt their practices to incorporate such signals of transcendence. (Berger, 1969, p. 99). In all of this though, one prototypical gesture will remain in Berger's opinion; and that is worship, whereby humanity "reaches out in hope toward transcendence." (Berger, 1969, p. 100).

Berger's humanistic concern compels him to maintain that 'penultimate' events find "their ultimate significance... in a reality that transcends them and that transcends the empirical coordinates of human existence." (Berger, 1969, p. 181). Again, it is immediately apparent the great influence which Bonhoeffer has had upon Berger. (*supra vide*, p. 20). The moral and political issues of modern society, which were of such grave concern for Bonhoeffer, must also be confronted in Berger's opinion, for the religious perspective is one which values and cares for the human. (Berger, 1969, p. 181). Truth, for Berger, is essentially a religious concept. (Berger, 1969, p. 182). And only by honestly searching for truth and justice will "the redeeming gestures of love, hope, and compassion... [be] reiterated in

human experience." (Berger, 1969, p. 106).

Here Berger concludes his dialogue with contemporary society which takes the form of A Rumour of Angels.

CHAPTER IV: AN EXAMINATION OF THE CENTRAL THEMES IN BERGER'S WORK

Chapter Four provides an examination of the central themes in Berger's work, and is an attempt to examine and outline four core areas of Berger's work which may be identified from Chapter Three; namely: Berger's methodology; Berger's discussion of secularization and pluralism; Berger's ethical and political position; and Berger's discussion of religious meaning and modernity.

Berger's latest work: <u>A Far Glory: The Quest for Faith in an Age of Credulity</u> (1992) forms a central part of this chapter, in that it highlights some of the ways in which Berger re-works and expands some of the themes he deals with in the works reviewed in Chapter Three; and in that it also highlights some developments in Berger's thought.

Berger's Methodology:

Peter L. Berger, it would seem, is not taken seriously by the sociological 'establishment.' Whilst most commentators agree that he is an accessible and widely read contributor to sociological discourse, he is severely admonished for not ever having developed a, or contributed significantly to, sociological theory (something which Berger vigorously denies; confer Berger, in Hunter and Ainlay, 1986, p. 224). Berger does not appear in the listings of the 'Who's Who' of the social sciences, or in the sociological annuals, or in many dictionaries of sociology. However, he is one of the most widely read, living, sociologists. (Hunter and Ainlay, 1986, pp. 2 - 3). Wuthnow, commenting on Berger's work, claims that Berger's contribution to sociology has remained at an elementary level and that there is not much that is new to be found there (Wuthnow, in Wuthnow, Hunter, Bergesen, and Kurzweil, 1984, pp. 72 - 73).

Berger does, as mentioned above, feel that he has made his theoretical position and methodology obvious to all.

> One aspect of this, though, which I have always taken seriously is the obligation to make clear my methodology to others and to myself (and here, I think I must disagree with Ainlay's assertion that I have failed to indicate a methodology for sociology). I have tried to be clear about my *modus operandi* from the beginning and, in collaboration with Hansfried Kellner, restated my methodological presuppositions in Sociology Reinterpreted. These presuppositions have remained Weberian throughout and they are likely to remain so. If I have not written more extensively on these matters, it is because I always felt

that I had nothing very original to contribute here. (Berger, in
Hunter and Ainlay, 1986, p. 224).

Berger *has* pursued his own intellectual agenda; one which he acknowledges
has located him within a 'cognitive minority' (*supra vide*, p. 76). That Berger
is located within this, so called, cognitive minority would seem to highlight
and suggest more about the prejudices of those who judge his work, than the
worth of Berger's work itself.

Berger's eclectic synthesis of much social theory re-captures something of
the vision of classical sociology, and the substantive issues which it, as an
academic discipline, sought to address. Berger's eclectic approach combines
the works of such sociological 'greats' as Weber, Durkheim, and Marx.
(Hunter and Ainlay, 1986, p. 3).

> Berger's method appears to be very eclectic in its origins. He
> borrows his anthropological presuppositions and dialectical method
> from Marx, and his social psychology from Mead. His view of the
> nature of social reality as coercive and constraining depends a good
> deal on Durkheim, although he follows Weber in emphasizing the
> construction of social reality through subjective meanings.
> (Abercrombie, in Hunter and Ainlay, 1986, p. 16).

This eclectic synthesis achieved by Berger enables him to provide a unique
analysis and perception of modern society. The sheer accessibility of
Berger's work is unique too in that Berger's methodology compels him to
address issues of 'proto-typical' human concern, and to write about these
concerns clearly, fluently, and, at times, humorously. Whilst being eclectic

Berger will, nonetheless, stand as a unique contributor to the understanding and analysis of cultural issues in contemporary society.

The influence of Berger's methodology (inductive, empirical, phenomenological, and Existential) enables Berger to provide a unique overview of the affects of modernity upon society. Berger is concerned to address substantive and interpretive issues and aspects of sociology, but because of his eclecticism is often deemed to be 'light weight' in his analysis. However, Berger's eclecticism, which is seen to be a weakness in the sociological establishment's eyes, is actually one of his great strengths.

Berger frames these substantive and interpretive issues and aspects of sociology which he deals with (modernity, secularization, pluralism, religion, politics, and so on) within existing frames of reference. Berger draws on many sources to achieve his unique interpretive perspective (sources such as Neo-Orthodoxy, humanism, Existentialism, phenomenology, the sociology of knowledge, and the history of ideas). These sources enable Berger to conduct an ongoing dialogue with contemporary society, and the influences affecting it. Indeed, the depth and breadth of Berger's reading makes him a formidable scholar and a person of letters.

Perhaps Berger's eclecticism may, in part, be explained by the fact that his "meta-scientific presuppositions ... have religious rather than philosophical roots." (Berger, in Hunter and Ainlay, 1986, p. 223). And that, because of this, he has remained "in the antechamber rather than the inner sanctuary" of philosophical discussions "because I always felt that I had nothing very original to contribute here." (Berger, in Hunter and Ainlay, 1986, pp. 223 - 224). With reference to Berger's eclecticism Beckford

maintains that

> The influence of Kant, Hegel and Heidegger, no less than that of
> these philosophers' intellectual heirs, Max Weber and Alfred Schutz,
> is apparent in Berger and Luckmann's orientation towards the
> meaning of modernity as it is generated in social interaction and
> experienced in the consciousness. This phenomenological turn of
> German social thought is blended with some of Marx's insights into
> the dynamics of conflict and competition between social classes. And,
> particularly in Luckmann's perspective on religion, extensive use is
> made of Durkheim's understanding of the *sui generis* nature of social
> reality. The mixture of intellectual sources is completed with G. H.
> Mead's social psychological appreciation of the social process of self-
> and identity-formation. The result of this admixture of such diverse
> theoretical ideas is an unquestionably innovative synthesis.
> (Beckford, 1989, pp. 87 - 88).

It is with this understanding of society, and the forces which shape and
affect it, that Berger seeks to locate religion as still having relevance, even
given the secularized and pluralistic situation in contemporary society,
within Western society. To achieve this, Berger relies upon

> an 'inductive' model of theologizing, as opposed to a 'reductive' and
> deductive model. That is, he starts his religious analyses with very
> concrete, everyday life experiences, such as anxiety, humour, and
> laughter, love, hope, play, etc. In them he searches for signals of
> transcendence (that is, for clear indications of a reality which goes
> beyond the immediate here-and-now and which transcends our

physical senses and the limits of our clock-time). Such signals of transcendence are indeed the angels of our time, harbingers of a supernatural reality. He thus tries to open our eyes for an inductive type of religion which, if systematized theoretically, would lead to an inductive type of theology. (Zijderveld, in Hunter and Ainlay, 1986, p. 74).

Needless to say, there are those who remain unconvinced by Berger's analysis of the place of religion in contemporary society, and who also reject his notion of the signals of transcendence in so far that "During the course of modernization, we have eaten from a tree of knowledge, and thereby lost a paradise of faith in redemption and salvation. The true tragedy of modernization in this respect is that no deduction, no reduction and no induction can ever put the canopy of Meaning together again." (Zijderveld, in Hunter and Ainlay, 1986, p. 75).

Given Zijderveld's comments (and those of others too) Berger, nonetheless, maintains that belief is possible in the contemporary setting. Berger claims this, not because of some aprioristic insight of his but, because he believes it to be consistent with the lived experience of humanity; and that it is not reliant upon any pre-conceived theological or philosophical conceptions. Berger uses a similar line of argument here to the one he used regarding freedom in his previous book Invitation to Sociology (1963) (*supra vide*, pp. 23, 39 - 40).

God has not made it easy for human beings to believe, and the world provides good grounds for unbelief. I would prefer to pair belief with another, very conventional term - namely, *knowledge*. Some

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things I know, and some things I believe; generally speaking I don't have to believe what I know. Thus I know that $2 + 2 = 4$. It makes little sense to say that I believe this. But if I have before me a closed box containing apples, I may say that I believe it contains *four*; I'm not sure, but I have some reason to think that this is the number. In conventional usage, there is a stronger use of the word - as when I say that I believe in democracy, or in the integrity of my friend. Here too is a statement about something I don't know, but my belief is something stronger than a probability statement. It is an act that commits me and in which I invest something important, possibly that which is most important. In ordinary usage, of course, it is only this second type of belief that would be graced with the term "faith." (Berger, 1992, pp. 123 - 124).

Berger is content to admit that he does not have all the answers to the ontological questions which surround human existence. Silence in the face of this 'unknowing' is, in Berger's opinion, the most appropriate action. (Berger, 1967, p. 185; Berger, 1992, pp. 216 - 218).

Berger's Discussion of Secularization and Pluralism:

Berger seeks to provide a *via media* between exclusivist religious positions on the one hand and secular relativists on the other. Berger sees the real challenge of modern pluralism being to insist (against the relativists) that there are truth claims involved in religious propositions, without at the same time arrogantly asserting (in the manner of the exclusivists) that one's own is the only path to religious truth. (Berger, 1992, pp. 75 - 77).

> It is not easy to live with pluralism. Democracy, both as an ideal and as a set of institutions, makes it easier in terms of practical, political arrangements, but it offers no help in coming to terms with the underlying existential problem. Taking a philosophical view of the matter, the challenge of modern pluralism to religion can be easily stated: It is a challenge to hold convictions without either dissolving them into utter relativity or encasing them in the false absolutes or fanaticism. (Berger, 1992, p. 46).

For Berger it is truth which really matters, not the particular form in which it may happen to be expressed. "I am not finally troubled by the impact of cultural pluralism. The pluralizing forces of modernity do indeed relativize all belief systems, but the truth will come out again and again. *Truth resists relativization.*" (Berger, 1992, p. 77). The breakdown of the-world-taken-for-granted evident in the pluralism of contemporary society opens up the opportunity for the "individual in quest of religious truth to make something of a fresh start." (Berger, 1992, p. 127). Whereas previously Berger claimed that secularization was the most profound effect of modernity upon society (Berger, 1967, p. 105 ff.), and that pluralism was a side effect, or 'twin

phenomenon' (Berger, 1969, p. 17) of secularization (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 125), Berger now sees pluralism (and pluralization) as being the most significant effect of modernity upon society. (Berger, 1992, pp. 63 - 78).

The one overriding fact to consider - a fact that has become one of the truisms of the age, but which is true nonetheless - is that of cultural pluralism. The situation can be easily described: Through most of history, most human beings found themselves in a lifelong, single, highly integrated cultural environment; by contrast, today most human beings in the world - and the great majority in advanced industrial societies - constantly encounter foreign cultures, either by actual contact with representatives of those cultures or through various information media. The basic causes of this are also easily discerned, especially scientifically based technology, which has created an industrial economy, as well as the means of rapid transport and instantaneous communication that increasingly unify the globe. These powerful forces are at work worldwide, although obviously they are most powerful in the societies with the highest technological sophistication.... Pluralism also impinges on human consciousness, on what takes place within our minds. This internal, subjective process is what I have called 'pluralization.' Cultural plurality is experienced by the individual, not just as something external - all those people he bumps into - but as an internal reality, a set of options present in his mind. In other words, the different cultures he encounters in his social environment are transformed into alternative scenarios, options, for his own life. (Berger, 1992, pp. 66 - 67).

Given that "*Modernity is a gigantic movement from fate to choice in the human condition.*" (Berger, 1992, p. 89), and that humans are "*compelled to choose.*" (Berger, 1992, p. 89); Berger regards the pluralistic situation as a positive, rather than a negative, situation. This pluralistic situation was ushered in through the shift in the mind-set of the Western world borne by Descartes' maxim '*Cogito ergo sum,*' and the ever increasing individualism which this maxim heralded in. In such a situation the individual is no longer defined by the clan or tribe. Rather the individual is able to choose who they will be. There is a greater freedom involved in this choice, and Berger maintains that "*Only an individual with such a degree of freedom can be said to 'believe' at all. And again: Freedom presupposes solitariness. Thus it is only the solitary individual who can engage in an act of believing.*" (Berger, 1992, p. 87). However, there is an 'escape from freedom' when individuals look for their definition of self in such group factors as 'nation' or in totalitarianism; where the individual is defined by belonging to the group.

Berger is obviously addressing the reality of contemporary, industrialized, Western society. He is not denigrating traditional societies where there is a greater congruency between the 'self' and the 'group.' Berger is concerned to look for 'rumours' and 'hints' of transcendence in modern society given the breakdown of taken-for-granted structures in that society. Consistent with his argument in <u>A Rumour of Angels</u>, Berger holds that the breakdown of the taken-for-granted structures enables transcendence to become visible. (Berger, 1992, p. 127).

Berger highlights the important consequences of pluralism on contemporary society, and upon any theologizing which can occur given the implications of pluralism. Again, Berger takes a positive approach to the

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development of this pluralistic situation for the individual believer, seeing it as the opportunity for the individual to choose an authentic existence. The affect of plurality upon the church though is a threat to its claim to exclusive truth. This has led to a deinstitutionalization of religious belief.

Beckford maintains that

> This is all congruent with Berger's depiction of secularization as 'the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols' (1967, p. 107) and as the production of increasing numbers of people 'who look upon the world and their own lives without the benefit of religious interpretations' (1967, p. 108). Berger held that the problem of meaninglessness was intimately related to the effects of secularization on the level of social structures and consciousness alike. (Beckford, 1989, pp. 89 - 90).

Berger seems to take a far less anguished attitude towards modernity in his latest work <u>A Far Glory</u> (1992). This would seem to be, in part, due to the change in emphasis in his work from the effects of secularization upon contemporary society, to the effects of plurality and pluralization upon contemporary society and within the consciousness of those who inhabit that world. The pluralistic situation evident in contemporary society is one which, for Berger, enables truth to reappear for *"Truth resists relativization."* (Berger, 1992, p. 77). This attitude perhaps aligns Berger more closely with his friend, fellow sociologist, and former co-author, Thomas Luckmann. Luckmann has argued that "religion is a structural as well as a cultural feature of all societies and that its 'invisible' functions are

no less important for not being empirically available for observation and measurement." (Beckford, 1989, p. 102). These 'invisible' factors associated with religion, in Luckmann's opinion, include the increasingly private nature of religious conviction and expression centering on such themes as self-actualization, family, and nationalism. (Luckmann, 1967). Luckmann maintains that individuals need frameworks and systems of thought through which they can interpret their various experiences of life, and which enable them to make decisions about living. These frameworks and systems usually involve reference to ideas and concepts which stretch beyond anything an individual can see. In order to integrate one's experiences, Luckmann says, individuals refer to or use 'systems of meaning.' These systems of meaning run like a thread through the various sectors of a person's life, giving it coherence. Until relatively recently, there was, to a large extent, throughout the Western world, one 'system of meaning' which permeated every aspect of life. The Christian religion was the dominant source of this integrating system. It described the nature of the world and the nature of reality itself, and prescribed how one should live both in society and in one's personal life. In contemporary Western culture, the Christian 'world-view' no longer has a monopoly. To some extent, everyone has the opportunity of choosing their own systems of meaning and deciding for themselves what will have ultimate significance for them - at least in the private spheres of life. The public world has its own particular values and ways of operating which are built around economic factors, efficiency, productivity, and orderly management. In the private world, individuals can choose their own 'world-views' and values, and these systems are seen as personal and private. (Luckmann, 1967).

Berger is always at pains not to overstate his theological position regarding

the possibility of apprehending the supernatural (Berger's 'signals of transcendence' as he outlined in his book: A Rumour of Angels; *supra vide*, pp. 74 - 88) through empirical phenomena. For Berger

> Imputing transcendence to these 'gestures' is in itself an act of faith. The theological procedure advocated in that book is 'inductive,' *not* in the sense of modern scientific method, but in the sense of taking ordinary human experience as its starting point... Using more conventional Christian language, I might say that my approach is 'sacramental' - an apprehension of God's presence 'in, with and under' the elements of common human experience - though this usage might invite yet other misunderstandings. (Berger, in Hunter and Ainlay, 1986, pp. 231 - 232).

Berger, in A Far Glory, seems to share Luckmann's opinion regarding the positive merits of plurality, for the pluralism of contemporary society opens up the opportunity for the "individual in quest of religious truth to make something of a fresh start." (Berger, 1992, p. 127). It would seem that, for Berger, there is now '*The Problem of Ecclesial Belonging*.' (Berger, 1992, pp. 169 - 190). This problem of ecclesial belonging comes about, in part, through the above mentioned processes of rationalization, secularization and pluralization. More particularly, however, this problem is a result of the current state of the Christian denominations themselves. Here, Berger draws upon such antecedents as Kierkegaard who held Christendom in contempt, and Barth who considered that the church was always where God's judgement (or 'krisis') particularly applied and who was also influenced by the writings of Kierkegaard, and Bonhoeffer who did not see the 'world' as being evil but that it was here, in the reality of the world, that the reality of

God was realized. Berger is willing to concede that the institution of the church at least fulfils the sociological functions of

providing a frame of reference so as to make the tradition *available* to all

No miracles for us, no angels, no transfigurations; just a glimmering of transcendence in a transitory and usually solitary experience of wonder, a remembered sunset or a redeeming smile, or a long ago moment in church, or a passage in something once read. Needless to say, such experiences are much more fugitive and effervescent than the mighty visitations experienced by a Paul or a Teresa. To make sense of them, literally to be able to remember them, we require a frame of reference that typically derives from the institutionalized tradition in which we are rooted (by birth or a later event). (Berger, 1992, pp. 171 - 172);

and providing a plausibility structure for religious beliefs

In this, once more, religion is not unique; every belief requires such social support. One can only say that religion is particularly in need of it because of the extra-ordinary and (for most people) meta-empirical character of its affirmations.... I have never seen the gods; if I am to affirm my belief in them, I very much need social support for this belief. (Berger, 1992, p. 172).

However, Berger goes on to say that "religious institutions not only preserve, hand on, and make plausible a particular religious experience;

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they also, as it were, domesticate it." (Berger, 1992, p. 173). The question this raises for Berger is "Why belong at all?" For Berger "Denominationalism has created an etiquette of considerable insipidness" (Berger, 1992, p. 180) on the one hand; and on the other an unbelievable fanaticism. "It seems to me one of the great challenges of the pluralist situation to find a way of religious existence that rejects both these alternatives." (Berger, 1992, p. 181).

Because of Berger's unpreparedness to assent to either extreme of exclusivist religious positions on the one hand and the secular relativists on the other, Berger sees himself as something of a 'lone believer' (Berger, 1992, pp. 81 - 104), and as belonging to a 'cognitive minority' (Berger, 1967, pp. 184 - 185; Berger, 1969, pp. 6 - 7). This is consistent with his analysis of the deinstitutionalization of meaning, and the demonopolization of religious traditions within modern society (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 81; *supra vide*, pp. 48 - 49).

> There is no authoritative answer that applies to everyone. Again using traditional Protestant language, one might say that ecclesial belonging is a matter of "vocation," of what one may singularly be called upon to do. Vocations differ. It may be a legitimate Christian vocation to continue in one's original community, even if that community has become a very unappealing place. It may be equally legitimate to change one's ecclesial affiliation in a direction that promises less frustration. One may be called to inner emigration and one may also be called (as Simone Weil eloquently argued for herself) to the role of a solitary outsider. Vocations are relative by definition. This relativization does indeed have a peculiar, perhaps disturbing

affinity with the sociological realities of modern pluralism. (Berger, 1992, p. 190).

The ever present pluralism of modern societies (moral, sexual, religious, and cultural) does present important theological challenges. Berger may not have all the answers, but he sees the questions more clearly than most.

Berger's Ethical and Political Position:

With respect to the spheres of ethics and politics within contemporary society Berger applies the same balanced outlook to such concerns as he does with respect to religion in contemporary society. Berger's sociological concern (which is coloured, as mentioned above, by his theological concern; particularly as influenced by Bonhoeffer) is to create a tolerant and even compassionate society (Berger, 1963, pp. 183 - 185). This concern for humanity led Berger to become interested in such political concerns as Third World development and modernization (Berger, 1969, pp. x - xi). Here again it is possible to detect the influence of Bonhoeffer upon Berger as issues of religion in contemporary society impinge upon political concerns. That is, to borrow from Bonhoeffer's terminology, whilst being concerned with 'ultimate' reality, Berger is compelled to address issues of 'penultimate' reality for this is the reality of everyday life.

Just as Berger is content to respect any religious system which values humanity and gives to its adherents the freedom to choose and to debate issues within that tradition, and also to enter into dialogue with other traditions so that "Such dialogue becomes a common journey toward truth." (Berger, 1992, p. 77). So also is Berger content to respect political and ethical systems which respect the rights of the individual. Berger is concerned to see that justice be done, and that justice be seen to be done (Berger, 1992, pp. 209 - 211). It is this pragmatic way of seeing reality which led Mechling to refer to Berger as 'The Jamesian Berger.' (Mechling, in Hunter and Ainlay, 1986, pp. 197 - 220). Berger, whilst not being thrilled by this categorization (Berger, in Hunter and Ainlay, 1986, pp. 233 - 234), does nonetheless agree with O'Leary (O'Leary, in Hunter and Ainlay, 1986,

pp. 179 - 196) that there is a very real, and pragmatic, relationship between his (that is, Berger's) sociology of knowledge and politics.

> I believe that he is correct in seeing the notion of 'cognitive respect' as a crucial link between the two spheres. Within the frame of reference of the sociology of knowledge, and indeed of sociology in general, 'cognitive respect' means that one takes with utmost seriousness the meanings held by living human beings in any given situation. This, again, is what *Verstehen* is all about; of course, this is a methodological, not a moral, principle. It links up, though, with a particular stance in politics. It is conservative, at least in the (Burkean) sense of respecting the common values and traditions of people, and of rejecting all notions of 'raising the consciousness' of people or of otherwise pretending to know better than they what is good for them. This conservatism, of course, also predisposes one toward democracy as a form of government and toward the market economy. This notion of 'cognitive respect' is a unifying thread in my work on development strategies, on 'mediating structures' and on human rights. It is also at the root of my criticisms of socialism and of the pretensions of intellectuals, the 'New Class' and other putative 'vanguards of the people.' (Berger, in Hunter and Ainlay, 1986, p. 233).

Berger owes, in part, a debt to Kant with respect to the relation between politics and religion. This entails a demarcation between purely authoritative assertions of God in the spirit of dialectical theology, and the purely rational proof of God in the spirit of natural theology. Therefore there is reference made, not to theoretical orthodoxy, but to practical

(orthopraxis) knowledge of God, manifested in one's actions; in a similar way to Kant's categorical imperative

> Act so that the maxim of thy will can always at the same time hold good as a principle of universal legislation.

God is then understood as the condition for the possibility of humanity's moral autonomy. So that for Kant and others the Enlightenment became the liberation from self-imposed tutelage; and therefore the legitimation of the questioning of (any) authority. This might be represented schematically in a simple way as follows:

PRE - ENLIGHTENMENT :   ignorance, intolerance, parochialism

POST - ENLIGHTENMENT :   democracy, liberalism, nationalism (as opposed to tutelage to colonial powers, or religious authorities).

The pragmatic Berger has a preference for the Western democratic system simply because he believes that it works

> If one believes in the rights of the individual, then one must believe in the superiority of the Western legal system that has uniquely institutionalized these rights. If one holds a moral preference for people having enough to eat as against people starving, then one must deem Western-derived capitalism a superior way of arranging the economy. None of these positions preclude criticisms of one's own society and of its institutions any more than they preclude respect for other cultures; but they presuppose that one's experience has yielded some measure of truth. This is why the charge of "cultural

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imperialism" is often facile: Any affirmation of truth is "imperialistic" since it must presuppose its superiority over the corresponding affirmation of error. (Berger, 1992, pp. 71 - 72).

Here Berger finds himself in a bind. Berger's analysis of modernity concerns itself with some central concepts and propositions, such as:

Modernization - Though oriented and perhaps even inspired by classical social theory, Berger approaches the relation between culture and social change from a unique angle, one derived from the sociology of knowledge. His pre-eminent concern is with the effects of modernization upon human consciousness. (Wuthnow, in Wuthnow, Hunter, Bergesen, and Kurzweil, 1984, pp. 54 - 55; Beckford, 1989, pp. 89 - 90);

Technology - Technology, bureaucracy and pluralism, then, are the dominant institutional features of modernity. All, Berger maintains, have distinct effects on human consciousness. (Wuthnow, in Wuthnow, Hunter, Bergesen, and Kurzweil, 1984, p. 56);

Bureaucracy - Bureaucracy... has distinct consequences for the world view of modernity. Among these are the perceptions that society is organizable and manageable as a system, that the various elements of experience are capable of being ordered into a taxonomic structure where the affairs of daily life are to be carried out in a regular and predictable fashion, that human rights are related to bureaucratically identifiable rights. (Wuthnow, in Wuthnow, Hunter, Bergesen, and Kurzweil, 1984, p. 56);

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Functional Rationality - Underlying both technological production and bureaucratic organization and thus also carried over into the totality of experience is a basic functional rationality. This is not an intellectualization of the world but rather 'the imposition of rational controls over the material universe, over social relations and finally over the self' (1973: 202). (Wuthnow, in Wuthnow, Hunter, Bergesen, and Kurzweil, 1984, p. 57); and

Pluralism - Pluralism, as Berger contends, manifests itself in several ways in modern societies. Its most important form is socio-cultural pluralism - the pluralism of symbolic universes where values, morality, and belief systems of a sometimes very different character are placed in a position of having to co-exist. Historically, this kind of pluralism was carried by urbanization, but at present it is also carried by mass communications and public education. (Wuthnow, in Wuthnow, Hunter, Bergesen, and Kurzweil, 1984, p. 57).

Furthermore, Berger rejects any Marxist or neo-Marxist theories of Third World underdevelopment, simply because he believes this analysis to be empirically false.

Thus most Liberation Theologians believe that Third World underdevelopment is caused by capitalism; that the Third World is poor because the First World is rich - that is, our wealth depends on their poverty; and, most important in terms of political implication, that socialism is the way out of Third World poverty. It is my opinion, based not on some ethical theorizing but on the reading of the

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evidence, that every one of these beliefs is empirically false. (Berger, 1969, p. 152).

This, then, is Berger's bind; he believes, because of empirical experience, that capitalism is a 'morally safer bet' (Berger, 1986, p. 12) than Marxist political systems. That economic rationality, as displayed by capitalism, is one of the major causes of the disintegration of traditional societies, which Berger is aware of, leaves Berger having to assert a 'hardnosed utopianism,' which, in the final analysis, as Berger admits, fails.

> Berger (1986) later acknowledged that this attempt to have the best of both worlds ('hardnosed utopianism') was a failure. The even-handed approach therefore yielded to a one-sided debunking of socialism and an equally partial eulogy of the benefits of development in the capitalist mode. The ethical dilemmas associated with Third World development are not so confidently resolved, but capitalism is described as on balance 'the morally safer bet' (1986, p. 12). (Beckford, 1989, pp. 94 - 95).

Berger's humanistic concern compels him to maintain that 'penultimate' events find "their ultimate significance... in a reality that transcends them and that transcends the empirical coordinates of human existence." (Berger, 1969, p. 181). Again, it is immediately apparent the great influence which Bonhoeffer has had upon Berger. (*supra vide*, pp. 19 - 20). The moral and political issues of modern society, which were of such grave concern for Bonhoeffer, must also be confronted in Berger's opinion, for the religious perspective is one which values and cares for the human. (Berger, 1969, p. 181). Truth, for Berger, is essentially a religious concept. (Berger, 1969, p.

182). And only by honestly searching for truth and justice will "the redeeming gestures of love, hope, and compassion... [be] reiterated in human experience." (Berger, 1969, p. 106).

Berger's Discussion of Religious Meaning and Modernity:

Having explored some of the issues which stem from Berger's analysis of modernity, it now remains to examine the central problem of this thesis (apart from the purpose of providing an overview and examination of Berger's thought), namely: In spite of the collapse of traditional theodicies Berger maintains that religion still has a place to play in human culture. This thesis describes and outlines the ways in which Berger explores what aspects of religious meaning are compatible with modernity. This is the problem of legitimating a theodicy in Post-Enlightenment society.

Berger's claim that "Men are congenitally compelled to impose a meaningful order upon reality." (Berger, 1967, p. 22) highlights the need people have for a meaningful existence. However

> secularization frustrates deeply grounded human aspirations -
> most important among these, the aspiration to exist in a meaningful
> and ultimately hopeful cosmos... There are, of course, secular
> 'theodicies,' and they clearly work for some people. It appears,
> however, that they are much weaker than the religious 'theodicies' in
> offering both meaning and consolation to individuals in pain, sorrow
> and doubt. (Berger, 1977, p. 79).

For "It is not happiness that theodicy primarily provides, but meaning." (Berger, 1967, p. 58). This meaning is required by society, and individuals within society, by virtue of the anomic forces which disrupt, or even destroy, the established order.

So as to legitimate a meaningful, contemporary theodicy Berger suggests various signals of transcendence which are "phenomena that are to be found within the domain of our 'natural' reality but that appear to point beyond that reality." (Berger, 1969, p. 59; *supra vide*, pp. 74 - 88).

Berger, in his latest work (A Far Glory), says this about the signals of transcendence

> I have long thought that the signals we can find in ordinary,
> everyday life are of decisive importance: The recurring urge of human
> beings to find meaningful order in the world, from the overarching
> edifices constructed by great minds to the assurance that a mother
> gives her frightened child; the redemptive experiences of play and
> humour; the ineradicable capacity to hope; the overwhelming
> conviction that certain deeds of inhumanity merit absolute
> condemnation, and the contrary conviction as to the absolute
> goodness of certain actions of humanity; the sometimes searing
> experience of beauty, be it in nature or the works of man; and many
> others one could easily enumerate. Each of these, though quite
> ordinary in many cases and almost never perceived as supernatural,
> *point toward* a reality that lies beyond the ordinary: The order my
> mind imposes on the world intends an order that was there before my
> mind began to work on it. If my game or my joke can temporarily
> supersede the tragic dimensions of the human condition, I can
> envisage the possibility that tragedy is not necessarily the last or
> most important thing one can say about that condition. If I can hope
> even in the face of death, then I can at least entertain the thought
> that death may not be the last word about my life. And so on.

These experiences clearly do not unambiguously or compellingly testify to transcendence. Each of them can be amply explained in secular terms that bracket or exclude transcendence. Order may indeed be the product of human minds, and nothing else; *out there*, in the end, may be nothing but meaningless chance or chaos. My playing and my joking may be useful ways to escape for a few moments from the tragedy of being a vulnerable and mortal being, but in the end, the joke may be on me. I may hope all I want, but all my hopes will finally be dashed not only by my own death but by the eventual destruction of everyone and everything in whom or in which I have invested hope. To see in these experiences signposts toward transcendence, therefore, is in itself a decision of faith. There must be no illusion about this, no manoeuvre to bring in the hoary proofs for the existence of God by the back door. But the faith in these signals is not baseless, nor is it a mental *acte gratuit*. It takes my own experience seriously and dares to suppose that what this experience intends is not a lie. (Berger, 1992, pp. 139 - 140).

As mentioned previously (*supra vide*, p. 69), the construction of meaning in contemporary society needs an ability to cope with complexity, it needs to be reasonable, as well as contemporary (to cope with the plurality in modern society), and it is on the way (that is, not given to closure). Therefore any contemporary theodicy, or system of meaning, must be able to be historically concerned (that is, conscious of its origins and open to the future), empirical (that is, open to scrutiny and review), inductive (that is, dealing with concrete reality, not abstract theory), and concerned with people's lived experience. The signals of transcendence allow for the legitimation of this private, deinstitutionalized religion; that is, they

legitimate a meaningful theodicy for contemporary humanity. T is theodicy, which is able to accommodate the wider view current in modern society provided by the ecological movement, interaction between the various religious traditions, the feminist movement, the reality of multi-culturalism, and the resulting pluralism from the above factors, can provide some basis for a meaningful and authentic existence in contemporary society. The signals of transcendence are able to correlate people's lived experience (their 'natural reality') to a reality which is "in, with and under" that natural reality (Berger, 1992, p. 155; *supra vide*, pp. 81, 86 - 87). The influence of Bonhoeffer, who debunked the notion of there being two separate realities in existence (one divine, the other worldly), on Berger is again apparent. (*supra vide*, pp. 19 - 20).

Berger's contribution to sociology, and to the sociology of religion in particular, involves an innovative methodological synthesis which enables Berger to utilize the sociology of religion in a way which addresses the situation in contemporary Western society (Beckford, 1989, pp. 170 - 172).

To effectively address the place of religion in contemporary society, as outlined by Beckford, Berger utilizes an 'inductive' theological methodology whereby human experience 'correlates' with another reality; namely, a supernatural reality. This inductive process of 'correlation' is seen by Berger to be reasonable (Berger, 1992, p. 155; Berger, 1969, p. 53). However

> Nothing that has been said here makes the crisis brought on by
> moral pluralism disappear. Just as religious certainty is hard to
> come by in the pluralistic age, so is moral certainty... In the earlier

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discussion of religious experience I emphasized the element of trust - trust, that is, in my own experience... What I must do then is undertake the previously mentioned *prise de conscience* - to recollect what I know, and have faith that what I know is truth. This is not a formula for immunity against the corrosive effects of relativity. If relativity is a stormy sea of uncertainties, this faith does not magically make the waters recede so that we can march through them on a dry path. What it does do is give us courage to set sail on our little boat, with the hope that, by God's grace, we will reach the other shore without drowning. (Berger, 1992, p. 211).

In the final analysis, for Berger

The choice is finally between a closed world or a world with windows on transcendence. It goes without saying that the latter is more hopeful. However, this does not make it less reasonable: Hopelessness does not have a superior epistemological status. Indeed, one might say that, philosophically, it is more reasonable to hope than to despair. (Berger, 1992, p. 142).

This, then, is the role which Berger's signals of transcendence serve: to provide hope in life, trust in one's experience and in the future, and courage to live a full and authentic existence. As such Berger's signals of transcendence do legitimate a theodicy which does provide meaning in Post-Enlightenment society.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

Berger has written so much that any assessment of his work will suffer from not being able to review all of his output. This thesis has sought to provide an overview and examination of the central aspects of Berger's enormous output. It is possible to detect an evolution in the development of Berger's thought and work. One example of this is the way in which Berger has addressed many of the issues which were of concern to the Neo-Orthodox Protestant theologians such as Barth and Bonhoeffer, having been so strongly influenced by them at an early stage, and then moving away from such a theological position because of his later sociological convictions (1967, pp. 179 - 185; *supra vide*, pp. 16 - 22). The influence of Bonhoeffer, particularly in the realms of ethics and politics, however, remains a significant influence upon Berger to this day (*supra vide*, pp. 105 - 111). Another example of the evolution of Berger's thought and work is in the areas of secularization and pluralism (*supra vide*, pp. 96 - 104).

Berger's methodology enables him to address issues of 'proto-typical' concern, the issues of everyday, lived existence. As discussed previously, this has led some to accuse Berger of methodological simplicity (*supra vide*, pp. 90 - 95). This, however, *is* Berger's concern; that is, to address the human situation as it is lived. Berger is vitally concerned with the lived experience of humanity. His work is phenomenological and empirical "in the sense that it is concerned with human experience in everyday life. Its task is (most generally) to describe human experience as it is lived and not as it is theorized about - to account for social reality from the point of view of the actors involved." (Wuthnow, in Wuthnow, Hunter, Bergesen, and Kurzweil, 1984, p. 73).

Berger is concerned with the phenomenon of everyday life and, apart from his use of phenomenological methodology, offers a form of philosophical/theological anthropology which is not only refreshing in its accessibility but also of profound significance with respect to the implications it has for life and for the study of sociology, theology, philosophy, history, and anthropology (Berger, 1969, pp. ix - x). Berger (and Luckmann) provide an important re-evaluation of the sociology of knowledge with respect to its understanding of the social construction of reality. The issues they raise far exceed the boundaries of sociology alone (they are concerned with all that passes as 'knowledge' within society) and, as such, their work is of great historical (with its use of the history of ideas) and philosophical (with its discussion of 'reality') importance too. Their discussion of the relationship between objective and subjective aspects of society reconciles previously contrary view points. This dialectic is central to their understanding of society and of the place and role of humanity within society. "The point is that society sets limits to the organism, as the organism sets limits to society." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p.182). Whilst concerned at a theoretical level, it is, nonetheless, Berger and Luckmann's intention that the sociology of knowledge be relevant to the lived experience of humanity; and that it lead to a humanizing of sociological theory.

> This object is society as part of the human world, made by men,
> inhabited by men, and, in turn, making men, in an ongoing historical
> process. It is not the least fruit of humanistic sociology that it
> reawakens our wonder at this astonishing phenomenon. (Berger and
> Luckmann, 1966, p. 189).

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For Berger, as a sociologist and a Christian, the choice of this methodology has taken the form of a 'vocation,' (Berger, 1992, p. 190) in so far as he achieves a congruency between his life, his profession, and the methodology which he employs within that profession. Because of the methodology of his approach Berger finds himself in a 'cognitive minority,' (Berger, 1967, pp. 184 - 185; Berger, 1969, pp. 6 - 7; *supra vide*, pp. 76, 91, 103). Berger finds himself in such a situation because he suggests that it is possible to hold a socio-historical world-view consistent with the sociology of knowledge, and also assent to the place of the supernatural within that world-view. Such a person holding such a view is on the outside of socially legitimated views on religion, society, and philosophy: religion, because of the way revelation is central to 'orthodox' belief; society, because so many people within contemporary society are dis-enfranchized with such an orthodox view of religion in particular, and with organized religion in general; and philosophy, because the prevailing intellectual 'orthodoxy' does not admit to the place of the supernatural. It is into this unenviable situation that Berger sets forth the place and validity of the supernatural within contemporary society.

Berger attempts to be entirely honest and not to overstate his theological position regarding the possibility of apprehending the supernatural (Berger's 'signals of transcendence' as he outlined in his book: A Rumour of Angels; *supra vide*, pp. 74 - 88) through empirical phenomena. Berger is content to admit that he does not have all the answers (*supra vide*, p. 95). Therefore, Berger is unable to provide an over-arching system of meaning in the contemporary situation. This, however, is not a weakness or fault in his work but, rather, is an honest attempt to legitimate a theodicy which does provide meaning in Post-Enlightenment society.

Rather than providing an (or one) over-arching system of meaning, Berger allows for choice to be made between varying and sometimes contradictory systems of meaning (Berger, 1963, p. 68), so that meaning may be made from the necessity of having to choose between systems of meaning, and thereby the construction of meaning takes place (Berger, 1992, pp. 87 - 89; *supra vide*, pp. 96 - 104). To achieve this Berger draws upon a wide range of thinkers and disciplines in the formulation of his thought and work. Whilst this creates an eclectic and, at times, repetitive approach (much of the material in The Sacred Canopy is simply a re-working of material from The Social Construction of Reality; which forms a large part of A Far Glory too) to the material Berger examines, it remains to be said that the conclusions which Berger reaches are independent of others and, as mentioned above, whilst these conclusions have put Berger outside various intellectual 'orthodoxies,' he remains an innovative, creative, and astute commentator on contemporary society.

Though Berger's thought and work are eclectic and, at times, repetitive, he provides a refreshing analysis of contemporary society, and his suggestions as to the construction of meaning in contemporary society does legitimate a theodicy (or theodicies) which does provide meaning in Post-Enlightenment society.

GLOSSARY

Alienation - is the process whereby the dialectical relationship between the individual and their world is lost to consciousness. The individual "forgets" that this world was, and continues to be, co-produced by their actions. (Berger, 1967, p. 85). That is, objectivation is reified.

Anomy (*Anomie*) - the absence of a nomos, or nomic order. The concept of *anomie* was first developed by Durkheim (<u>Suicide</u>, 1951, Glencoe, Ill., Free Press). Berger uses the Anglicized spelling. (Berger, 1967, p. 21).

Bureaucracy - "Bureaucracy, carried by a large number of institutions in contemporary society, but particularly by the modern state, also has distinct consequences for the world view of modernity. Among these are the perceptions that society is organizable and manageable as a system, that the various elements of experience are capable of being ordered into a taxonomic structure where the affairs of daily life are to be carried out in a regular and predictable fashion, that human rights are related to bureaucratically identifiable rights. As with technological production, this orientation is originally derived from the various encounters the individual has with bureaucratic structures but is carried over into an overall perception of the world." (Wuthnow, in Wuthnow, Hunter, Bergesen, and Kurzweil, 1984, p. 56).

Cosmization - derived from Eliade (<u>Cosmos and History</u>, 1959, New York, Harper, p. 10 ff.). The socially established nomos appears as a microcosmic reflection of the universe.

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<u>De-Institutionalization</u> - pluralistic competition between truth claims of various sub-universes of meaning may weaken the claims a universe of meaning has to absolute 'Truth.' (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 86). Secularization and pluralism contribute to this situation.

<u>Existentialism</u> - despite the diversity, certain basic characteristics bearing on philosophy and ethics are noteworthy. Existentialist literature offers valuable phenomenological insight into the human condition. Stress has been placed on

a) subjective individuality, or personal involvement, as distinguished from being merely theoretical and detached, in making moral choices. Sartre says, "existence precedes essence," subjectivity must be the starting point for genuine understanding. This characteristic is therefore set alongside another

b) a strong opposition to 'systems' which, like Hegel's, tend to fit human existence into abstract or pre-conceived moulds. At its best Existentialism urges each individual to discover for themselves what their own 'authenticity' as a person requires of them. It calls for setting aside the rationalization of behaviour and mere conformity to the 'crowd.'

A third claim, made in its most dramatic form by the atheistic Existentialists, is that

c) human existence is basically absurd (Sartre, Camus); that humans have been thrown into a world that lacks cosmic meaning (Heidegger). Nietzsche's proclamation through Zarathustra of the death of God helped to

mould this perspective. Life is not simply paradoxical, as in Kierkegaard's view; life is absurd in the fundamental sense that there are no rational, theological, or philosophical categories for explaining it. Humans must accept the reality of their 'being-towards-death' (Heidegger) without Kierkegaard's hope in God who meets the person who reaches out in faith from their 'sickness unto death.'

The fourth, and basic, contention of Existentialism is that

d) each person possesses the inescapable freedom to choose, which is the fundamental fact of being human and the *sin qua non* for a qualitative existence. All Existentialists agree that the quality of life is up to the individual to determine.

Existentialism perhaps lends itself to extravagances, but in the hands of its saner practitioners, these are avoided. Indeed, one might say that it saves us from still wilder extravagances, and especially the extravagance of trying to construct a philosophy without first scrutinizing in all its accessible dimensions the locus in which all philosophizing takes place - our own human experience and existence.

The 'Classical' world view held that fixed, immutable principles evidenced in the world gave rise to eternal, unchanging principles. Whereas now the modern world view gives credence to the lived Existential experience of the moral agent; and the context in which that person lives out their life. This historically conscious world view avoids the traps into which the classical world view fell by supposing that there is "an unchanging body of clearly formulated precepts, based on a supposedly unchanging nature."

(Macquarrie, 1977, p. 506).

Existential philosophers seek to gain philosophical perspective through describing and evaluating the human condition. The fundamental claim of Existentialism is that humans are only truly human to the extent that they discover their own nature (essence) through decisive action (their 'existence'), as opposed to receiving some prescribed nature of existence. Each person, so Existentialism contends, possesses the inescapable freedom to choose, which is the fundamental fact of being human and the sin qua non for a qualitative existence. Existentialists assert that the quality of life is up to the individual to determine.

A contemporary, historically conscious, world view must, of necessity, be able to enter into dialogue with, and be relevant to, the world, and the issues of that world, in which it finds itself. This contemporary world view takes seriously the locus in which all meaning is constructed - our own human experience and existence. That is, by using an empirical, inductive method which is concerned with historical particulars this world view takes seriously the lived experience of humans. (Macquarrie, 1973; Macquarrie, 1980).

Externalization - the outpouring of human being into the world. (Berger, 1967, p. 4).

Functional Rationality - "Underlying both technological production and bureaucratic organization and thus also carried over into the totality of experience is a basic functional rationality. This is not an intellectualization of the world but rather 'the imposition of rational controls over the material

universe, over social relations and finally over the self ' (1973: 202)."
(Wuthnow, in Wuthnow, Hunter, Bergesen, and Kurzweil, 1984, p. 57).

Hermeneutics - is the theory and method of interpreting meaningful human action. (Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner, 1988, p. 112).

Humanism - a concern with humanity rather than with God or nature is the central tenet of humanism. Humanist Marxist sociology is that which takes humanity, rather than social structure, as its central focus. (Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner, 1988, p. 116). For Berger, a humanistic perspective to sociological inquiry is vital in that it enables freedom to be realized in society. (Berger, 1963, p. 199; Berger, 1966, p. 189).

Ideology - when a particular definition of reality comes to be attached to a concrete power interest it may be called an ideology. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 123).

Institutionalization - the collective externalization of society, which has about it an objective reality (or givenness), as a result of the habitualized actions and reciprocal typifications of society. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, pp. 53 - 54).

Internalization - the structures of the external/objective world are transformed into structures of the subjective consciousness. (Berger, 1967, p. 4).

Legitimation - the term legitimation is derived from Weber and refers to socially objectivated 'knowledge' that serves to explain and justify the social

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order. Put differently, legitimations are answers to any questions about the 'why' of institutional arrangements. Legitimations are mostly pre-theoretical in character. (Berger, 1967, pp. 29 - 31).

Liberal Protestant Theology - developed into an anti-dogmatic and humanitarian reconstruction of the Christian faith. Liberalism, which came into being in the Nineteenth Century, may be defined as the holding of liberal opinions in politics or theology. F.D. Schleiermacher (1768 - 1834) was a leading figure within Liberal Protestant theologians. Schleiermacher defined religion as 'a sense and taste for the infinite,' or as the feeling of absolute dependence. He also contended that religion was based on intuition and feeling and that it was independent of all dogma, he saw its highest experience in a sensation of union with the infinite. Schleiermacher held that the variety of forms which the feeling of absolute dependence takes in different individuals and societies accounts for the diversity of religions, of which Christianity is the highest, though not the only true one. (Cross and Livingstone, 1984, pp. 821, 1243 - 1244). Berger has a high regard for the work of the Liberal Protestant theologians, and Schleiermacher in particular. Berger uses a process of 'induction' which "involves an attempt to uncover and retrieve essential experiences embodied in the religious tradition. It is both empirical and comparative, in that it takes all religious experience seriously in its search for transcendent reality. Friedrich Schleiermacher achieves paradigmatic status relative to this approach." (Gaede, in Hunter and Ainlay, 1986, p. 170). Berger refers to the 'Protestantization' of religious groups which is a result of the increasing secularization and pluralism within modern society. Berger is , nonetheless, an admirer of the honesty which Protestantism (particularly such theologians as Schleiermacher) has maintained in its interaction with

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modernity. " It was Protestantism that first underwent the onslaught of secularization; Protestantism that first adapted itself to societies in which several faiths existed on equal terms, the pluralism that may be regarded as a twin phenomenon of secularization, and it was Protestant theology that the cognitive challenges to traditional supernaturalism were first met and fought through." (Berger, 1969, p. 17).

It is in this tradition that Berger sets forth his thesis on the relevance of the supernatural in contemporary society. Not in a spirit of accommodation, or reduction, or translation, but by developing an inductive theology (or theodicy, or system of meaning; Berger, 1969, p. 22).

Marginal Situations - situations which drive a person close to or beyond the boundaries of the order that determines their routine, everyday existence. (Berger, 1967, p. 23).

Modernization - "Though oriented and perhaps even inspired by classical social theory, Berger approaches the relation between culture and social change from a unique angle, one derived from the sociology of knowledge. His pre-eminent concern is with the effects of modernization upon human consciousness. These effects, of course, are wide-ranging, influencing core assumptions about everyday life, and experience of time and temporality, the formation and experience of the self, the interpretation of symbolic universe of meaning (religion in particular), and the nature of political reality. Berger, in his characteristically sweeping and comprehensive fashion, covers all of these areas.

Of all his intellectual forbears, it is chiefly from Weber that Berger derives

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his orientation. As with Weber, the infrastructure of modernization is rationality, especially as it is embodied in the economic and political apparatus of society. In this he sharply distinguishes himself from Marxist theory on the subject, a theoretical perspective that explains the peculiarity of modern institutions almost entirely in terms of the peculiarity of modern capitalism. For Berger, functional rationality is the determining variable in modern society, yet it is not simply a functional rationality which spontaneously emerges and is diffused in society. Of principal importance in the origin, evolution, and transmission of modernization is the rationalized, indeed technologized, economy and its related institutions. Of critical importance in the inner-dynamics of modernization are the rationalized political institutions of society, particularly the modern bureaucratic state." (Wuthnow, in Wuthnow, Hunter, Bergesen, and Kurzweil, 1984, pp. 54 - 55).

Neo-Orthodoxy - a title applied to the theological principles of Karl Barth and his followers (supra vide, pp. 16 - 22). Neo-Orthodoxy is also called dialectical theology on the ground that, in distinction from the dogmatic method of ecclesiastical orthodoxy, which treats God as a concrete Object (via dogmatica), and the negative principles of many mystics, which forbid all positive affirmations about God (via negativa), it finds the truth in a dialectic apprehension of God which transcends the 'Yes' and the 'No' of the other methods (via dialectica). Its object is to preserve the Absolute of faith from every formulation in cut-and-dried expressions. (Cross and Livingstone, 1984, p. 399).

Nomization - the propensity for order in society, as opposed to anomy. (Berger, 1969, pp. 60 - 64).

<u>Nomos</u> - a meaningful order which is imposed upon the discrete experiences and meanings of individuals. (Berger, 1967, p. 19).

<u>Objectivation</u> - the product of externalization confronts its original producers as a facticity external to and other than themselves. (Berger, 1967, p. 4).

<u>Phenomenology</u> - provides a significant methodological tool for Berger. Berger adopts (and adapts) this methodology from the sociologist, Alfred Schutz (1899 - 1959) who was concerned to explore the 'world-taken-for-granted'. This is the self evident world of the 'here-and-now' which demands one's immediate attention. (confer Schutz, A., tr. Walsh, G., and Lehnert, F. [1967], <u>The Phenomenology of the Social World</u>, Ill.: Evanston). In the sociology of knowledge, phenomenologists have concentrated on the way in which commonsense knowledge about society feeds back, through social action, into the moulding of society itself. (Bullock, Stallybrass, and Trombley, 1988, p. 645). Phenomenology, as employed by Berger, requires the 'bracketing' of personal preferences and prejudices so as to be able to investigate the "doings of men." (Berger, 1963, p. 29). Phenomenology refers to the 'study of phenomena'; the study of what appears or what may be observed (similar to Kant's 'Phenomena;' *supra vide*, p. 26). The use of phenomenology requires that the investigator utilizes academic discipline and imaginative empathy. This requires the investigator to make an attempt to appropriate and understand what a particular phenomenon might involve for those people who are directly engaged with it. Phenomenology is a kind of thinking which guides the investigator back from theoretical abstraction to the reality of the lived experience. A phenomenologist asks the question "what is it like to have a certain

experience?" In examining the qualities of the experience the investigator can then arrive at the essence of the experience. The phenomenological method is an inductive, descriptive research method. The task of the method is to investigate and describe all phenomena, including the human experience, in the way these phenomena appear in their fullest breadth and depth. To ensure that the phenomenon is investigated as it truly appears a necessary criterion is that the researcher must approach the subject and the experience with an open mind, accepting whatever data are given with no pre-conceived expectations. No data are ignored because of conflicts with theoretical frameworks or operational definitions. The concern of the phenomenological researcher is to understand both the cognitive subjective perspective of the person who has the experience and the effect that perspective has on the lived experience of that individual. (Kentish, 1992, pp. 42 - 48).

Pluralism - rival definitions of reality compete with each other for a share of the 'market.' (Berger, 1967, pp. 135 - 137). "Pluralism, as Berger contends, manifests itself in several ways in modern societies. Its most important form is socio-cultural pluralism - the pluralism of symbolic universes where values, morality, and belief systems of a sometimes very different character are placed in a position of having to co-exist. Historically, this kind of pluralism was carried by urbanization, but at present it is also carried by mass communications and public education." (Wuthnow, in Wuthnow,Hunter, Bergesen, and Kurzweil, 1984, p. 57).

Pluralization - because of the cultural plurality involved in society where pluralism occurs, members of that society are faced with choosing between equally valid options for life (be they religious, philosophical, or 'life-style).

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This subjective process of choice in a pluralistic situation is called by Berger 'pluralization.' (Berger, 1992, p. 67). *"Modernity is a gigantic movement from fate to choice in the human condition."* (Berger, 1992, p. 89). Humans are *"compelled* to choose." (Berger, 1992, p. 89).

Post-Enlightenment Society - is marked by an increasing secularization (the process whereby sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols; stemming from René Descartes' [1596 - 1650] maxim "Cogito, ergo sum." ["I think, therefore I am."], which displaced the prevalent theocentricism with a solidly based anthropocentricism) and rationalism (stemming from Immanuel Kant's [1724 -1804] distinction between 'Phenomena' and 'Noumena' ['things in themselves']. Kant maintains that we cannot prove the noumenal, we can only prove the phenomenal).

This increase in secularization and rationalism undermined the Pre-Enlightenment metaphysic with its traditional arguments for the existence of God and the authority of the Church and the Bible (confer Chadwick, 1990).

Post-Modernism - society has moved from the pre - Enlightenment, to the Enlightenment, to the Post - Enlightenment (modern), to the Post - Modernist (where there is a dis-confirmation of all ideology, particularly religious ideology [theodicy] due to the secularization of the European mind [confer Chadwick, 1990]).

Post - Modernism may be seen as a retreat into irrationality; a coming to terms with a world where God is dead (the modern metaphysic), and where

the author is also dead. The Post - Modernist world view reflects the change in world view from post - Newtonian physics (dealing with a closed, predictable system / structure... a Post - Enlightenment view) to Einsteinian physics (dealing with an open ended, unpredictable system / structure... the Post - Modernist view).

Post - Modernism resists closure, yet also affirms that we cannot live without trying to make sense of reality (Marshall, 1992, pp. 192 - 3). Post - Modernism gives up absolute Truths; instead it works with local and provisional truths (Marshall, 1992, p. 3). Post - Modernism is empirical; it does not have a transcendental identity (Marshall, 1992, p. 4). Post - Modernism involves a critical questioning of power and values, but also affirms the need for these (Marshall, 1992, pp. 4 - 5). Post - Modernism involves "an incredulity toward metanarratives." (Marshall, 1992, p. 6; Küng, 1980, p. 504). "The post - Modernist movement resists totalizations, absolute Identity, absolute Truths. It does, however, believe in the use - value of identities and local and contingent truths." (Marshall, 1992, p. 6). Post- Modernism claims that words, ideas, creeds, and structures can become idols (Marshall, 1992, p. 18); and that "the twentieth - century Occidental subject is still a mixture of the mediaeval 'I' believe; the Cartesian 'I' think; the Romantic 'I' feel; as well as the existential 'I' choose; the Freudian 'I' dream, and so forth." (Marshall, 1992, p. 86). Furthermore, Post-Modernism maintains that history is not teleological, not linear, which privileges both the 'origin' and the subject of consciousness who interprets, and thus controls, the past from the perspective of the present. (Marshall, 1992, p. 157).

Post - Modernism corresponds to Berger's notion of the 'public' and the

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'private' spheres. The public sphere is over - institutionalized (dealing as it does with such 'social' concepts as sincerity and honour), whereas the private sphere is under - (or de -) institutionalized (dealing as it does with more personal concepts as authenticity and dignity; Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 81).

Eagleton maintains that the antecedents of modern secular society are: science, democracy, rationalism, and economic individualism; and that religion has failed to provide a coherent nomos ("a coherent cement") given the changes that have taken place within society since the late nineteenth century (industrialism, scientific discovery, and social change). This gave rise to the Romantic movement, and to the rise of English Literature (which fills the emotional and experiential needs of people; that is, it provides a coherent nomos, a socially constructed reality). (Eagleton, 1986, pp. 22 -23 ff.). For Post-Modernists it is language which produces meaning. (Eagleton, 1986, p. 60).

Projection - the concept of projection was first developed by Feuerbach. Both Marx and Nietzsche derived it from Feuerbach. It was the Nietzschean derivation that became important for Freud. Berger (and Luckmann) use the term 'externalization' to convey a similar concept. (Berger, 1967, p. 180).

Reification - is the apprehension of human phenomena as if they were things, that is, in non-human or possibly supra-human terms. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 89).

Religion - a human enterprise in so far as this is how it manifests itself as an empirical phenomenon. Within this definition the question as to whether

religion may also be something more than that remains bracketed, as, of course, it must be in any attempt at scientific understanding. (Berger, 1967, p. 190). Therefore, religion is to be understood as a human projection, grounded in specific infrastructures of human history. (Berger, 1967, p. 180).

Secularization - the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols. (Berger, 1967, p. 107).

Signals of Transcendence - are phenomena that are to be found within the domain of our "natural" reality but that appear to point beyond that reality. (Berger, 1969, p. 59). These signals of transcendence are constituted by 'prototypical human gestures,' which are certain reiterated acts and experiences that appear to express essential aspects of humanities' being. (Berger, 1969, p. 59).

Sociology - may be defined as the study of the bases of social membership. More technically, sociology is the analysis of the structure of social relationships as constituted by social interaction, but no definition is entirely satisfactory because of the diversity of perspectives which is characteristic of the modern discipline. (Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner, 1988, p. 232).

Significant contributions have been made to the discipline by

Karl Marx (1818 - 1883) - all social structure was class structure, and the history of all societies was the history of class struggles. In his

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fundamental methodology, Marx argued that social existence determines consciousness (an important insight for the sociology of knowledge), and that ideology ('ideas serving as weapons for social interests') is merely a superstructure ('the world produced by human activity'), economic relations being the substructure ('human activity'). (Bullock, Stallybrass, and Trombley, 1988, p. 793; Berger and Luckmann, 1966, pp. 5 - 6).

Max Weber (1864 - 1920) - held that sociology would concern itself with the meaning of social action and the uniqueness of historical events rather than with the fruitless search for general laws. (Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner, 1988, p. 233); and

Émile Durkheim (1858 - 1917) - exhibited a far more confident view of the achievements of sociology, claiming that it had shown how certain moral and legal institutions and religious beliefs were the same in a wide variety of societies, and that this uniformity was the best proof that the social realm was subject to universal laws. (Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner, 1988, p. 233).

The synthesis of Durkheimian (society as objective reality) and Weberian (society as subjective reality) view points achieved by Berger allows for a balance between the sociological reification of objective social reality and the idealism of subjective meanings. "Society is a dialectic phenomenon in that it is a human product, and nothing but a human product, that yet continuously acts back upon its producer." (Berger, 1967, p. 3).

Sociology of Knowledge - "The need for a 'sociology of knowledge' is thus already given with the observable differences between societies in terms of

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what is taken for granted as 'knowledge' in them." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 3).

Whilst the term 'Sociology of Knowledge' ('Wissenssoziologie') was coined by the philosopher Max Scheler in the 1920's, Berger and Luckmann suggest three other contributing factors in the development of the sociology of knowledge. First is the work of Karl Marx from whom the sociology of knowledge derives its root proposition "that man's consciousness is determined by his social being." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 5). From Marx comes also such concepts as 'ideology' - "ideas serving as weapons for social interests."; 'false consciousness' - "thought that is alienated from the real social being of the thinker."; 'substructure' - "human activity."; and 'superstructure' - "the world produced by that activity." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 6). Second, "one can say that the sociology of knowledge represents a specific application of what Nietzsche aptly called the 'art of mistrust.'" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 7). The third factor Berger and Luckmann cite as being influential in the development of the sociology of knowledge is the development of historicism in which the "dominant theme here was an overarching sense of the relativity of all perspectives on human events, that is, of the inevitable historicity of human thought." (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 7).

Sociology of Religion - in sociology, there are broadly two approaches to the definition of religion. The first, following Durkheim, defines religion in terms of its social functions: religion is a system of beliefs and rituals with reference to the sacred which binds people together into social groups. In this sense, some sociologists have extended the notion of religion to include nationalism. This recent perspective is criticized for being too inclusive,

since almost any public activity - football, for example - may have integrative effects for social groups. The second approach, following Weber, defines religion as any set of coherent answers to human existential dilemmas - birth, sickness or death - which make the world meaningful. In this sense, religion is the human response to those things which concern us ultimately. The implication of this definition is that all human beings are religious, since we are all faced by the existential problems of disease, aging and death. (Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner, 1988, p. 207). Weber's definition of religion is similar to that of Luckmann's, who equates religion with symbolic self-transcendence. Thus everything genuinely human is *ipso facto* religious. (Berger, 1967, pp. 175 - 177; Luckmann, 1967).

The synthesis of Durkheimian (society as objective reality) and Weberian (society as subjective reality) view points achieved by Berger allows for a balance between the sociological reification of objective social reality and the idealism of subjective meanings. "Society is a dialectic phenomenon in that it is a human product, and nothing but a human product, that yet continuously acts back upon its producer." (Berger, 1967, p. 3).

Technology - "Technology, bureaucracy and pluralism, then, are the dominant institutional features of modernity. All, Berger maintains, have distinct effects on human consciousness. Truer to the argument, each of them has a corollary at the level of consciousness. Together they allow one to speak of modern consciousness or, in turn, the symbolic universe of modernity. True to Weberian form, Berger maintains that technological production was initially carried in the West by industrial capitalism though this economic structure is presently only one among other possibilities." (Wuthnow, in Wuthnow, Hunter, Bergesen, and Kurzweil, 1984, p. 56).

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Theodicy - theodicies traditionally sought to provide an explanation (religious legitimation) of how to live through anomic phenomena, and are typically explained in terms of the nomos ('sacred canopy') established in the society in question. Theodicies were often seen as solutions to individual suffering (a solution to the problem of evil). Berger sets theodicies within the broader context of making meaning. As such a contemporary theodicy needs to include such factors as the interrelationship between self, others, the world, and the transcendent so as to provide some basis for an authentic and meaningful existence (confer Berger, 1967, pp. 53 - 80).

Verstehen - is usually translated as 'understanding.' This concept has formed part of a critique of positivist or naturalist sociology. It is argued that sociology should not analyze human action from 'the outside' by copying the methods of the natural sciences. Instead, sociology should recognize the meanings people give to their actions. (Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner, 1988, p. 265). The term is used to denote understanding from within, by means of empathy, intuition, or imagination, as opposed to knowledge from without, by means of observation and calculation. The term was employed in particular by Weber. (Bullock, Stallybrass, and Trombley, 1988, p. 894).

World-taken-for-granted - is derived from Schutz (Collected Papers, Vol. I, p. 207 ff.). This is the socially objectivated world which is the commonsense world of everyday life. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966. p. 16).

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