**Religious Movements and Modern Societies: Toward a Progressive Problemshift**

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*The general purpose of this paper is to discuss systematically the terms in which the study of religious movements has developed, with particular reference to the foci of contemporary and immediate-future studies of religious movements in American society. Initially, attention is concentrated upon the intellectual tradition which formed the immediate background to the emergence of a specialized interest in religious collectivities. That tradition is specified in relation to the early work of Hegel and of Weber, with the highly influential formulations of Troeltsch being located* vis á vis *both Hegel and Weber. The notion of* consistent sectarianism *as it embryonically appears in early Hegel and more explicitly in the later work of Weber is given particular attention. Further observations upon the recent study of religious collectivities are followed by a discussion of the shifting sands of modern societal distinctions between the religious and the secular. Arguments are presented about the societal context of modern religious movements and relationships between organized religion and the modern State, with reference to the relationship between public and private domains of modern life.*

This discussion is aimed specifically at the discovery of a modern, progressive problem-focus (Lakatos, 1972) for the sociology of religious movements. In the late 1950s and for a large part of the decade of the 1960s the study of religious collectivities was dominated by the church-sect perspective. By the late 1960s or early 1970s that mode of analysis had become sterile—in the particular sense that many of its users were employing it in a primarily typological or taxonomic manner, with little regard for its *raison d'etre*. When—in the late 1960s and early 1970s—students of religion in modern societies were confronted with what has been variously described as "the new religious consciousness," "the new religious ferment," and so on, it was apparently felt by many that the church-sect perspective constituted a mode of analysis without a problem-focus. Thus, in effect, what were thought to be new *Problemstellungen* were announced, which—at least initially—did not need much help from the church-sect perspective. In another sense there was, in effect, a denial of the need for an empirical problem-focus—a denial which, at least implicitly, was legitimated in reference to the *symbolic-realist* rejection of "reductionism" and "consequentialism" (Bellah, 1970).[1] Gradually, however, the study of the new religious movements of the late 1960s and the 1970s has edged toward the establishment of a new problem-base. It is argued that developments of the late 1970s—probably hastened by the events and controversy involving the People's Temple—raise again the conceptual status and problem referents of the church-sect mode of analysis.

[1]This is not to say that the leading advocate of symbolic realism—namely, Bellah—has not pinpointed specific empirical problem foci for the study of religion. Such a view would be palpably false. The term "symbolic realism" is used here to connote tendencies within the "new-movements movement" to operate with something like a religious *a priori*, to pay considerable attention to the interiority of religious ideation, and to wonder what religious movements say about the portend for the interpretation of the modern human condition.

Embedded in what follows is a specific theme which needs explicit, preliminary adumbration. In noting that the post-Niebuhrian church-sect focus met its Waterloo at the hands of those trying to make sociological (as well as theological) sense of "the new religious consciousness" we should not overlook another important point. This has to do with the claim — advanced, to take a strong example, by Beckford (1975) — that church-sect analysis is above all redundant because of its inadequacies in respect of systematic treatment of the *organizational* aspects of religious collectivities. It is claimed that church-sect analysis is "an obstacle to the possibility of focussing sociological analyses sharply on questions about religious *organization*" (Beckford, 1975:97), both because it injects ethical and theological assumptions into "objective and ideally scientific studies" and because it encourages the assumption that sects and churches require different types of theory. But the question that is raised here in regard to this overall argument is as follows: What is *the point* of the study of religious — or any other forms of — organizations or movements? Without denying the attractiveness of organizational study, it has to be pointed out that the church-sect mode of analysis did *not* derive from an interest in organization *per se*. Thus those who now decry the church-sect approach on the grounds of its deficiency for organizational analysis are perhaps on even safer ground than they realize. But if one really takes that ground seriously then one has to face up to its radical consequence — namely the *analytical separation* of the church-sect approach from the organizational approach to the study of religious collectivities. In that case bewailing the long supremacy of the church-sect approach in the study of religious collectivities *itself* is made a redundant activity. The question then arises of stipulating the modern problem referent(s) of the church-sect mode — a task which permeates the pages which follow.

In the hands of Max Weber the church-sect mode of analysis was used in such a way as to assist in the historical *explanation of* the modern crystallization of the "organizational attitude." Thus one thrust of the German church-sect tradition was to account for the objects which now largely comprise the field of vision of the analyst of religious organizations *qua* organizations. Even more significantly in the present context, the church-sect mode originated in respect of definite *Problemstellungen*, reaching its relatively recent point of reckoning partly because of an entropy resulting from loss of that *Problemstellung* and partly from being faced with the putatively anomalous trends of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Such a circumstance undoubtedly exacerbated already existing worries to the effect that the church-sect mode was of limited use in organizational analysis *per se* — worries which had developed in large part in reference to the difficulty of conceptually relating study of religious organizations to the explosion in sociological interest in "complex organization" in the 1950s and 1960s. However, as important and as analytically genuine may be the desire to engage in activities of inter-conceptualization and theoretical co-ordination, the fact remains that dissonance can only result from regarding organizational analysis, which is geared to bringing the study of religious collectivities into line with general sociological analysis of organizations, *as a successor* to a mode of analysis which had rarely been employed in the *direct* pursuit of understanding organizational structures and processes.

Such considerations are required in the present context because the weight of the present argument *is* directed at the pursuit of a *Problemstellung* which genuinely succeeds the church-sect mode. The church-sect mode is taken very seriously and regarded very positively — but at the same time its historical limitations are addressed. Thus the reader should *not* expect a defense of the church-sect perspective, in the sense of trying to maintain a pristine version of it — nor even attempting to refine or update its conceptual structure. Broadly speaking we strive to comprehend the vicissitudes of church-and-sect in terms of its significance as a guiding principle for a large array of sociological topics of particular interest to the student of religion. The study of religious movements is *located in*

that prospectus. Or—to put the matter in a different format—the church-sect *Problemstellung* is used to provide parameters for the study of religious movements with reference to trends in certain modern societies, notably those which have to do with the relationship between the modern state and the individual.

### The Problem Referents of Church-and-Sect: Hegel, Weber and Troeltsch

Even though the church-and-sect mode of analysis has been rejected by a number of recent students of religious movements, it is still far from dead. The circumstances of its rise and present ambiguous status need explication. Pursuit of that desideratum must involve detailed attention to the shifts in *Problemstellungen* upon which the church-sect mode of analysis, in particular, and the study of religious movements generally have been centered, including the terms in which the dominant mode of analysis was intellectually established. This cannot be the place to explore the entire history of the church-sect mode of analysis. In a short survey the best point of entry is the early work of Hegel.[2]

In his earliest work Hegel explored the circumstances of the acquisition by individuals of a moral law which arises from freedom. He contrasted that ideal with the tendency within the history of Christianity for there to have been an overall vacillation between, on the one hand, churches—which had the "policy of determining the motives, or the disposition, behind actions partly by public statutes and ordinances, partly by force necessary to give effect to these . . ." (Hegel, 1971:142)—and, on the other hand, *sects*. According to Hegel, as sects developed the more they "retained in . . . turn merely the laws and rules of their founders; and these became for . . . adherents not laws that issued from freedom but ecclesiastical statutes all over again" (Hegel, 1971:142). Then arose new sects—"and so on indefinitely" (Hegel, 1971:142). However, Hegel also argued that since the Middle Ages a new type of Christian sect had been in evidence, based upon "individuals sensing that they had the right to legislate for themselves" (Hegel, 1971: 145).

Hegel was thus interested in the religious conditions which had been conducive to the growth of individual freedom in the Kantian sense—a freedom based upon the employment of reason. That interest was framed by Hegel's concern with the manner in which "Spirit" became implicated in—or, better, became a central ingredient of—"the world."[3] When individuals were heteronomously commanded—as opposed to being self-guided in terms of the principles appropriate to a particular kind of activity—they were unfree, not morally autonomous. In that respect Hegel granted that Lutheranism and Calvinism had indeed thrown off most of the heteronomous, external observances stressed by the Catholic Church. On the other hand, they too had retained or subsequently acquired significant elements of what Hegel called positive rules. In the case of Lutheranism—particularly, argued Hegel, in its Pietistic variant—positive *rules for feelings* were externally upheld.

For Hegel the adult life of Jesus constituted the paradigm case of a free virtue springing

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[2]This paper does not delve into the misty pre-Hegelian uses of the church-sect approach, nor does it deal with the even more important issue in the present context of the uses of this approach between Hegel and Weber. See, however, Jellinek (1901). (O'Toole [1976] has briefly indicated the Marx-Engels use of the concept of sect.) A particular problem in relation to the present discussion is that Hegel's early writings did not become available until Herman Nohl's edition of 1907, while Jellinek, Weber and Troeltsch were certainly working with church-sect ideas in a manner bearing much resemblance to that of Hegel *before* 1907. However, this by no means precludes the likelihood of significant continuity between Hegel and Weber. See Robertson (forthcoming).

[3]For a relevant interpretation of Hegel on church and sect in the development of Christianity in Imperial Rome, see Avineri (1972:13-33). From a sociological point of view Hegel's work remains so relevant primarily because Hegel was particularly interested in the concrete, historical effects of religion (Lukacs, 1975), as of course was Weber.

from man's own being (Hegel, 1971:69ff.). Moreover, for Hegel the teaching of Jesus constituted an alternative to two other kinds of sect. The "philosophical sect" was one which regarded "the imagery of popular belief as unworthy of a thinking man but not as blameable," while the "positive sect" was one which went "so far as to put those who do not . . . believe in it . . . on the same level with morally bad men" (Hegel, 1971: 74). In contrast to both of these we find — according to Hegel — in the example of Jesus a third sect type which accepted "the positive principles of faith in and knowledge of duty and God's will, regarding it as sacred and making it the basis of faith, but held that it is the commands of virtue which are essential in the faith, not the practices in orders or the positive doctrines it enjoins or may entail" (Hegel, 1971: 75).

Thus Hegel's primary focus was upon what Max Weber was later to call "the consistent sect" (Weber, 1968: 1209). There is in fact little — if any — significant difference between the views of Hegel and Weber on this particular point. Whereas Hegel referred to the rise of Christian sects from the Middle Ages onward as being based on "individuals sensing that they had the right to legislate for themselves" (Hegel, 1971:145), Weber (1968:1209) maintained that "the consistent sect gives rise to an inalienable personal right of the governed as against any power, whether political, *hierocratic* or patriarchal. . . . Such freedom is the most basic Right of Man" (emphasis added). Weber insisted that "consistent" sectarianism was a post-Middle Ages phenomenon. But although disagreeing with Hegel on that empirical issue, Weber used similar terminology with which to address what may be called "inconsistent sectarianism." Weber (1968:1209) talked of "the power of religious compulsion," while Hegel (1971: 145) spoke of "fevered, wild, and disordered imagination" in reference to such sectarian attitudes.

Thus the guiding thread in Hegel's discussion of sectarianism is that of the religious origins of moral individualism — in the context of a more general concern with the entry of spirituality into "the world." In Weber's work the interest in sectarianism is that of the religious origin of *instrumental* individualism — in the context of a more general concern with the departure of spirituality from "the world" and sublimation of the processes of the latter, with particular reference to bureaucratic rationalism. Notwithstanding significant differences, a similar, underlying *Problemstellung* is evident. Sectarianisms were assessed and the most "genuine" picked-out for special attention. Sectarianism *in general* was of interest only in its providing a reservoir from which analytically to sift consistent sects for the purpose of accounting for particular features of the modern world in historical and civilizational perspective. Although unexplicated by Weber, it would appear that the specific meaning of "consistent sect" can be expounded in terms of consistency between the sect's relationship with the wider society and the sect's mode of internal governance. A sect in this perspective is inconsistent if it demands an independence and an autonomy for its collective self which is at the same time denied to its own individual members.

The *specific* differences between Weber and Hegel with respect to the general theme of church-and-sect center upon Weber's concern with processes of rationalization — more specifically with "methodical lifestyle rationality" (Baum, 1977; Schluchter, 1979). Broadly speaking, the focus on sectarianism in Weber's work was upon those aspects of certain kinds of Protestant sects which emphasized personal responsibility, complementary *legitimation* of persons before God and before other persons, and *consistency* in the relationship between conception of God and of worldly action (Weber, 1948:302-22). Weber was, in particular, interested in the manner in which religiously based standards that emphasized individual autonomy became gradually — across generations — so well-established and generalized that eventually individual orientation to the societal order (notably the economic component thereof) was bereft of direct religious backing. Bourgeois, individualistic capitalism was the result. Such was the essence of the Protestant Ethic thesis. But that same ethos facilitated not merely individualistic, entrepreneurial capitalism but *also* bureaucratism.

For both entrepreneurial capitalism *and* late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century bureaucracy depended upon impersonality, in the sense that both capitalism and bureaucracy are "without regard for persons" (Weber, 1968: 975). The capitalistic market and Weberian bureaucracy both operate according to universalistic and impersonal—as opposed to particularistic and personal—principles. In the one the laws of supply and demand operate, in the other the criteria of achieved merit and technical functionality. Both, according to Weber, were supported by substantially the same general "spirit."

On the broad canvas of universal history Weber thus saw the significance of the study of religious collectivities primarily in terms of the degree to which they cultivated orientations that resisted the heteronomy of what Hegel had called "positivity," and thereby emphasized what might be called "methodologies" of *activist* self-control in relation to "the world." Most sectarian movements in world history had rejected orthodoxies, only then to "succumb" either to heterodoxy for its own sake or to the original orthodoxy (the latter constituting the shift to churchliness). Such movements were not conducive to the spread of the rational individualism which Weber saw as a central ingredient in the making of the modern world.

Weber (1948:302-22) insisted that his essay on modern American religion was essential to the understanding of the arguments expressed in *The Protestant Ethic*. The ideas expressed in the former and which are not to be found so conspicuously in the latter center upon Weber's notion of the *legitimation of persons*. The crux of the essay on America is constituted by the thesis that in nineteenth-century America religious "sects"—primarily those of the "Protestant Establishment" (Ahlstrom, 1972:318-34)—functioned as vehicles for the simultaneous legitimation of individuals before God and before other persons. Voluntary membership of religious collectivities created a circumstance in which those groups certified individuals as worthy. This meant that certification of good-standing membership facilitated interaction based on *trust,* notably in business transactions. Implicitly Weber was surely referring in that context to the notion of the consistent sect. In effect Weber was saying that the groups to which he was referring were consistent with respect to their voluntariness and independence as collectivities on the one hand, and to their "production" of independently trustworthy individuals on the other. Of course, Weber placed emphasis on peer-group pressure inside these collectivities. Thus he did not see them as entirely non-heteronomous. Looked at from a different angle, Weber's argument was that individuals voluntarily subjected themselves to a continuous moral-religious test by joining a "sect" and that the aggregate result was a system of interactions in the wider society based on demands for proof of rectitude.

It is important in this respect to note that Weber claimed that gradually the element of moral-religious validation had been attenuated, in favor of a much more secular situation. The latter had two main components. First, the agencies of certification had become doctrinally vacuous. There had been a shift away from the significance of supernaturally-oriented agencies of certification of individuals toward agencies of the masonic-lodge type, where the emphasis was upon social construction, confirmation and validation of personal worth. Second, on the motivational side, Weber detected an increasing concern with social status as a secular form of legitimation of self. Although he did not spell-out the specific details, he was keen to emphasize that American capitalism was entering a bureaucratic, post-bourgeois stage. In ways which were not explicated in the context of his essay on American religion, Weber clearly saw that the emergent "iron cage" involved a shift to new forms of legitimation of persons. In that respect, Weber (1968:1210) briefly noted the significance of what has recently been called "the culture of professionalism" (Bledstein, 1976) in creating a framework for the crystallization of rational-bureaucratic capitalism, and connected sect discipline to that phenomenon. There very probably was significant continuity between the religiously-based emphasis upon certification of persons as legiti-

mate agents (ignored in Bledstein's analysis) and the emphases in the nascent American professions of the second half of the nineteenth century on the professional accreditation of individuals and the certification of particular occupational groups (as having "missional expertise" with respect to specific areas of individual and societal functioning).

In any case, Weber maintained that consistent, inner-worldly, ascetic sects of the West had played a fundamental role in the development of both capitalistic and bureaucratic structures. Central to that development was an ethos which stressed the suspension of mystically flavored, diffuse concern with the religious self and which devalued the significance of the inner-self as far as worldly action was concerned.[4] "The world" was thus provided with active agents who promoted and lived publicly in terms of the impersonal principles of capitalism or bureaucracy.

It is by now part of the folklore of sociology that Weber handed—as it were—the church-sect schema to his then-friend Ernst Troeltsch. It would seem that Weber's master conceptual structure slowly became that of the typology of forms of individual salvation— in a different sense, orientations to the world—a conceptual apparatus which appears to subsume the church-sect motif and "relegate" it to a distinctive aspect of the Western religious tradition. Weber's attitude toward Troeltsch's (1912) major neo-sociological work, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches and Sects,* was certainly qualified, particularly with respect to the theological texture of that book. And therein lies the clue to the problem of what was probably the most decisive shift in *Problemstellungen* in the history of church-sect analysis.

In his book of 1901, *The Absoluteness of Christianity and the History of Religions,* Troeltsch (1971) had presented a critique of Hegel's interest in and exposition of the historical manifestation of the essence of religion within the Christian tradition. Troeltsch had sought to show, *inter alia,* that the history of Christianity has been a history of *contingency.* In other words, Christianity had been from the beginning doctrinally syncretic and had exhibited—indeed, had been constituted by—certain major social *forms.* The churchly form and the sectarian form were the major such forms. A third form—or type—had been historically latent in the Christian tradition, namely mysticism. Troeltsch's interest in mysticism—with its individualistic-cultic character—appears to have rested mainly on its being a particularly contingent tendency of the modern world. Troeltsch's prediction was that because of secular processes of individuation, the modern world would increasingly witness forms of religion which would combine scientific and religious ideas in relation to the problem of individual meaning.

While accepting the Weberian diagnosis of the secularity of the modern world, Troeltsch wished to show that Christianity had *always* been "compromised"—and that its contingent character was indeed its hallmark and strength. In that sense *The Social Teachings* (published 1912) was a continuation of the critique of Hegel begun in earnest in *The Absoluteness of Christianity.* The "superiority" of Christianity was to be seen precisely in its intramundane mixing of the religious and the secular. Christianity did *not* represent a vehicle for the realization of "the idea of religion." The strength *and the future relevance* of Christianity resided in the dynamic of the relationship between its different forms, which lay at the heart of the social problem of Christianity.

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[4]Bledstein (1976)—with reference to the culture of professionalism—and Sennett (1977)—with reference to the culture of capitalism—both emphasize the *salience* of personal peculiarities in the late-nineteenth century context: minute actions and habits were clues to basic character. Certainly, Weber did not address this theme, which may seem to contradict his emphasis upon *impersonality.* However, much of the contradiction is removed when we see that in the Bledstein-Sennett scenario *undesirable* personal characteristics were to be weeded out and *publicly desirable* "personal" characteristics were to be made norms of professional or marketplace conduct.

The message which Troeltsch apparently wished to convey was that pessimism about the irrelevance of the Christian religion to modern conditions was misplaced in view of its having always been in one way or another "compromised." In a very special sense Weber too wished to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity. But, for Weber, the latter demonstration was necessary only insofar as he sought to show that a modern orientation of purposive/instrumental rationality (which largely defined modern *reality*) could only have come about *via* the prior development of a (religious) orientation which had crystallized a particular, positive conception of the world. In the latter individuals were to act in terms of conscientious adherence to principles of normative consistency. The simultaneity of individual transcendence of the concrete *status quo* and the positive acceptance of "the world" as a site for rational action was the centerpiece of Weber's characterization of the breakthrough into modernity. Whereas Troeltsch sought, in part, to demonstrate the relevance of Christian religion to the modern world, Weber sought to show that religious interests had helped to create a world which was *not now susceptible to religious framing.*

As has often been noted, there is irony in the fact that Troeltsch's theological-philosophical approach to what later came to be called religious movements or organizations gained an ascendancy in Western sociology, in comparison with the relative neglect of the more sociological approach of Max Weber. However, Weber's sociological interest in religious movements was *nearly always* constrained by a *Problemstellung* of an *historical* kind, namely the making of the modern "iron cage." (Thus neither Troeltsch nor Weber had purely sociological interests.) And that may account in part for the greater appeal of Troeltsch to many sociologists of religion, notably in the American context. There the general problem of the relationship between religion and society has surely been of greater cultural significance than the *making of the modern secular world* in the Weberian sense, precisely because of the American reluctance to accept the extreme form of the secularization thesis.

*From the Classics to the Present*

The specialized study of religious movements has been dominated by an interest in the marginality of certain types of religious movements. In highly ideal-typical terms it may be said that the *specialized* focus on sectarian (or sometimes *cultic*) marginality has been manifest in three major phases of study of religious movements. In the first phase — beginning with the impact of Niebuhr's *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (1929) — the primary interest was in the sociocultural correlates and determinants of types of religious movements, with particular reference to the internal and external social-structural factors which constrained them. The second phase — ushered in by Yinger's *Religion in the Struggle for Power* (1946) — was characterized by a guiding interest in the issue of eufunctionality/dysfunctionality. Whereas the first phase had primarily involved attention to the fates of religious movements — particularly the vulnerability of sectarian movements — the second phase, while clearly involving continuation of the concern with contingency, subsumed that focus under a broader interest in the *societal significance* of different types of religious movements. Throughout both of those phases the study of religious movements was dominated conceptually by the church-sect mode of analysis derived from the work and teaching of Troeltsch. In its neo-Troeltschian form, church-sect analysis was centered upon the issue of the kinds of *compromise* which religious movements had to make. On the one hand, the sect was compromised in its lack of societal leverage by its concern with diffuse individual commitment to a highly structured doctrine and, on the other hand, the church was compromised in its lack of diffuse and intense commitment to a highly structured doctrine by its relatively high degree of societal centrality.

Always problematic in regard to the American context by virtue of the separation of church and state, the church-sect analytic — while certainly not being consigned to

the oblivion—was rendered even more problematic in the third phase of the study of religious movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The scope and diversity of new religious movements in those years seemed to defy much of the apparatus of church-sect analysis (Robbins, et al., 1978), and focused attention on the overall phenomenon rather than on the characterization of particular movements within the "ferment." Thus a subtle but crucial shift occured on the focus on religious movements. The master question became that of comprehending the "meaning" of new religiosity as a sociocultural trend rather than that of locating particular movements within the analytic apparatus of church-sect typologizing. This, in itself, constrained sociologists to pay increasing attention to an aspect of church-sect typologizing which had enjoyed a problematic career—namely, a cult type of religious movement. During the 1970s "cult" has in fact become a "buzzword" in the lay population—its connotation being that of a movement or a religious tendency which cannot conveniently be placed within the "safe" margins of the conventional array of types of religious movements. It has supplanted the term "sect" in pejorative potency in the wider society. More specifically, the generalized focus on cults constitutes a site of cultural concern (Robertson, 1978a:243-57) with respect to what is to be accepted as a genuine, as opposed to spurious, religious commitment. The term "cult" thus tends to indicate a collectivity whose "religious genuineness" is in doubt.

The alleged insufficiency of conventional church-sect analysis was revealed in the early 1970s in the increasing focus on the *minutiae* of what adherents sought and gained from the new religious movements. That, in turn, inovlved a sharper focusing of the relationship between the orientations of the movements and the attributes of their *general-societal* settings. Previously the sociological concern with the latter had been pitched at a high level of abstraction—exemplified in Yinger's (1957; 1970) attempts to typify religious movements along an axis defined by contribution to societal integration, on the one hand, and contribution to individual religious need, on the other hand. In the early part of the third phase of interest in religious movements, sociological attention was turned increasingly to what it was that movements actually demanded of, for, or in relation to society. In other words, more attention was paid to the possibly autonomous postures and transformational capacities of religious movements *vis à vis* their societal contexts.

A particularly important development of the third phase has been its increasing focus on the degree to which societal participation is *combined* with attention to individual religious need (Robertson, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978a and 1978c). That in turn has created opportunities for seeing religious movements not so much in *organizational* terms, but as manifesting a variety of different modes of relationship between individual and society. The previous history of religious-movement analysis was marked—particularly in phase two—by a strong impact of sociological organization theory, so much so that the sociology of religion often treated religious movements in the same manner that one treated *any* type of collectivity (Robertson, 1970:3-4 and 113-49). That treatment become so "sociologized" that the cultural element of religious organization and action was very frequently *bracketed*. As the new religiosity was becoming evident in the late 1960s, however, sociologists of religion attended less to the purely social aspects of religion and more to religious ideas. Accordingly, the period since the late 1960s has witnessed a considerable interest in the relationship between the contents of religious ideas and changes in the operation of modern societies. However since the mid-1970s increasing extra-sociological interest in the alleged "mind control" practices of "the cults" has led to a specialized interest in the psycho-social dynamics of marginal religious and politico-religious movements. Like the purely organizational focus evident among some analysts of the 1960s, the contemporary concern with the dynamics of conversion to and control within cults and sects frequently brackets the distinctively ideational components of these religious movements.

In the most general terms, the major shift of focus which has occured in phase three is from a concern with religious movements as organizations facing problems of contingency, *relative to* the wider sociocultural settings, to an emphasis upon the kinds of relationship between individual and society exhibited *in* the new religious movements. That development has involved a partial recovery—although not very explicitly—of a significant turn in Weber's work (Robertson, 1977; Robertson, 1978a: 118-43). After his early interest in church-sect analysis, Weber had turned away from the study of types of religious collectivity to the study of types of quest for individual salvation—though his interest in religious sects was consistently focused throughout the work as a whole on the relationship between sectarianism, on the one hand, and types of individual and organizational rationality, on the other hand (Swatos, 1976).

A particularly evident feature of the third phase has been the greater empathy, indeed sympathy, exhibited on the part of the analyst, compared to previous attitudes towards religious movements. It is no accident that in the American sociological context at least, a "pro-religious" orientation on the part of some prominent sociological practitioners developed generally in the same period as the "new religious movements" motif crystallized. For some scholars, at least *some* of the new religious movements have constituted welcome harbingers of new modes of individual existence. They were on occasion seen as the bearers of potentially effective critiques of the wider society. Since Jonestown, this orientation has been considerably refined—so that now the "symbolic realists" have become much more selective in their expressions of religious sympathy. The main emergent criterion in this regard seems to be that of the degree of authoritarianism (or totalitarianism) of the new movements.

It seems clear that as church-sect analysis became a distinguishing feature of the sociology of religion in general, and of the sociology of religious collectivities in particular, from the early 1930s, its substantive *raison d'etre* became less obvious. However, during the period of the late 1950s and 1960s—when the typologizing attitude was at its height—there were still two overlapping sets of *Problemstellungen,* even though for many practitioners the latter may have been more latent than manifest. First, there was the Yinger-based contrast between the sectarian tendency *in the direction of* individualism and the churchly tendency *in the direction of* "societal authoritarianism" (Yinger, 1957; 1970). Second, there was the Wilson-based interest in the degree to which sectarian movements were vulnerable to the attenuation of pristine values (Wilson, 1959; 1961). Clearly these foci can be traced back to the classic concerns of Weber and Troeltsch. The first motif is, however, out of line with Weber's main interests, to the extent that there was no particular interest in "consistent" sectarianism—the sectarianism which, in Weber's perspective, was promotive of nineteenth-century individualism, the spirit of capitalism and the bureaucratic ethos. Indeed Yinger appeared to claim that the promotion of all individualism was antisocietal (Robertson, 1978c). The Wilson-based interest has, in contrast, led to a recent concern, at least in Wilson's own work (Wilson, 1973; 1976), with the problem of the degree to which sectarianism can lead to reformulation of societal values. (As far as modern industrial or "post-industrial"—in contrast to pre-industrial—societies are concerned, Wilson's adamant conclusion is that sectarianism no longer has such a capacity.)

By the early 1970s the delicately balanced, paradigmatic consensus on the significance of church-sect analysis of collectivities *qua* collectivities no longer obtained. Rejection of a major tradition of analysis has both confirmed and denied salient features of the major themes to be found in the works of Hegel, Troeltsch and Weber. On the one hand, confirmation is to be seen in the extent to which many have found in the recent "ferment" validation of the view—notably of Weber—that "the world" is entirely secular. Many of the new movements have been seen in those terms as responses to and attempts to overcome

that circumstance. On the other hand, denial is to be found in the selective rejection of the Weberian contention that no difference can be made to the secularity of the modern world by the new movements.

We must be careful, however, not to exaggerate the discontinuities between the 1970s studies of the new religious movements and the previous church-sect orientation. It would appear that the sociological study of such movements has been gradually led back to the older concern with the societal *consequences* of different types of religious activity (Robbins and Anthony, 1978). "Symbolic consequentialism"—the focus on the sociocultural consequences of developments in the religious sphere—had been a major target of the empathic approach of "symbolic realism." It has, however, made an apparently inexorable re-appearance. Its latent—and now more manifest—survival can in large part be attributed to the extra-sociological, public—indeed political—interest in the private and public implications of the newer movements (particularly since the Jonestown tragedy). In other words, the problem of consequences has been imposed on the sociologist of religion. It would, however, be more accurate to say that from the late 1960s there set in a reaction against the allegedly arid taxonomic tendencies of church-sect analysis and that the consequentialistic strand of the latter was submerged in the implicit attempt to overcome the supposed deficiencies of the church-sect orientation. Now—in the late 1970s and early 1980s—interest in consequences has clearly returned, thus reviving aspects of the 1950s and early 1960s church-sect orientation to the issue of the eufunctionality/dysfunctionality of religious movements.

However, we also must not exaggerate this revival of consequentialism. For even though there is at present much concern with the personal and societal consequences of religious movements—notably "the cults"—a more strongly emergent interest, in our view, is that concerning the *compatibility* of major societal trends, on the one hand, and religious, mystically-flavored concern with self, on the other hand (Robertson, 1978a, 1978b, 1978c); Robbins and Anthony, 1978). (It is precisely at that point that the relevance of the Weberian *Problemstellungen* becomes problematic.) This subtle—thus far latent—refocusing of the consequentialist attitude involves an embryonic concern with viewing religious movements in reference to general-societal (and civilization) trends. Such refinement points beyond both consequentialism and reductionism, but *not* to symbolic realism.

One of the most important aspects of the ongoing American controversy about the rights of individuals, families and "cults" is a sharpening of the focus on the limits of societal authority in relation to the extra-societal interests of the individual. It is no matter that the new movements *may* indicate secularization rather than "religionization" (Wilson (1976); for in coming to terms legally and politically—as well as socially and psychologically—with the new cultism, "society" is, willy nilly, involved in the issue of what constitutes its own boundaries, and in a sense its own foundations (Fenn, 1978). The fascinating legal issues which surround the debate about the new movements—particularly since the eruption of the controversy surrounding the People's Temple—should not be allowed to obscure the wider *sociological* problem. Or, better, the legal and constitutional issues should be seen as embodying crucial sociological issues.

It is argued here that the most important aspect of the study of the new movements is not the question of whether they constitute a new, viable form of transformative religiosity, let alone the question of what gives rise to them. The central, most general problem has to do with their general significance with regard to changing conceptions of the relationship between individual and society, and between extra-societal agencies and society itself. In view of the nonconformity of many of these movements to the Weberian principle of "consistency," it is interesting to note that in part because of their "inconsistency" (that is inconsistency between claims concerning collectivity autonomy and denial of individual autonomy), they apparently create the necessity for those who claim to act on behalf of

*society* to formulate principles of *consistent societal participation*. Such considerations give rise to a number of matters centered upon the differential significance of religious movements and organizations in the production of "legitimate persons" for societal roles and statuses and upon the degree to which "society" is willing to allow, for example, "cults" to be useful havens in a heartless world.

*Refocusing the Study of Religious Movements*

Fenn persuasively suggests that in the United States "religious and political symbols have been closely intertwined over the past three hundred years despite the institutional separation of Church and State" (Fenn, 1978:49). But it is tempting to argue that the intertwining of which Fenn speaks has occurred *because*, rather than in spite, of the constitutional separation of church and state. More specifically, we would argue that the separation of church and state in the United States has rested in considerable part upon a (changing) image of what religion does—or at least can do—for society, *via* individual religiosity. Or, to state the point from the opposite perspective, the separation of church and state facilities a continuous, problematic interest in what religion "really is" and "what religion does" for the secular domain. Two somewhat paradoxically related consequences flow from these points. On the one hand, religious and political symbols are indeed intertwined—because, in a uniquely American manner, religion is continuously of potential political, if not ideological significance. On the other hand, the competitive, non-party-linked religious situation allows for common symbols (often analytically addressed as "civil religion") to stand transcendentally over religious particularisms (Martin, 1978:241-3). In any case, the separation of religion and state in America, while in part a matter of adaptation to the *contingencies* of religious heterogeneity, is in itself a *politico-religious* value. On the one hand, that value-commitment embodies a conception of society as made up of a series of voluntary memberships. On the other hand, and by the same token, it reflects a view that Americans are not simply members of a society—they are in but not entirely of America as a national entity.

These points may be illustrated in reference to two of the better known normative statements on religion in America. Jefferson argued that each man should be a sect unto himself, while Eisenhower stated that he didn't care what kinds of religious commitment were maintained so long as each American had *a* religious commitment. These views—although the first almost certainly had a more subtle shading—may surely be regarded as "official" versions of what Parsons argued, in special reference to America, is the primal function of religion in the social system: "the regulation of the balance of the motivational commitment of the individual to the values of his society—and through these values to his roles in it as compared with alternative considerations concerning his ultimate 'fate' . . . and the bases on which this fate comes to have meaning for him" (Parsons, 1960:302-3).[5] The important point about this statement is, of course, that it emphasizes the functional-motivational significance of religious commitment. Parsons was speaking as a sociologist—attempting to capture what religion *actually does*. However, it has become increasingly clear in recent years that the functional aspect of religiosity has assumed what might be called a parasociological significance. In other words, political, legal and other more-than-sociological pronouncements on such matters as religious rights and definitions of religion are in large part based upon what religious commitments (of various kinds) actually "do"

[5]Survey data on modern America have shown again and again the highly instrumental character of individual religious commitment. For a recent survey and summary of such data, see Hoge (1976). The instrumentalization of religion is a "method" for avoiding secularization of the world—the "religious cost" being reduction of the radical otherhood of the divine.

for society. The specifics of the deistic context in which Jefferson uttered his well-known remark concerning sectarian individualism should not disguise the apparent fact that at the end of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century there were widely held views in America concerning the benefits to the American political system and to American society generally of each individual feeling himself or herself responsible to a higher, godly agency in relation to positive, worldly conduct. In less clear-cut terms roughly the same kind of reasoning probably lay behind Eisenhower's pronouncement.

Thus "the identification of authentic religion . . . is a problem not only for the theologians and sociologists, but for officials concerned with social policy" (Fenn, 1978:58). Again we might fruitfully adjust Fenn's insight by saying that the identification of authentic religion has become a *particular* province of many of those concerned with social policy, with the role of the sociologist now being that of analyzing the ways in which religion is defined and disputed. In that respect a major sociological interest in the modern period should be that of making analytical sense of the way in which *religion as a societal category is produced, reproduced and transformed* (Touraine, 1977:110ff.) During the last few years—and particularly since Jonestown—the most publicized respect in which the definition of "authentic religion" and the meaning of and possible limitations upon religious freedom have become important is that pertaining to alleged "cultic mind control." But that is, of course, only one dimension of a multi-dimensional situation in which the issue of authentic, societally acceptable religiosity has become contestable and contested. In addition to the traditional church-state problems—such as Bible reading and the revitalized issue of praying in American public schools—in recent years church-state relations have been rendered problematic in legal and regulatory activities of, *inter alia,* the Internal Revenue Service, the National Labor Relations Board, the Labor Department, the Census Bureau, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

The extension of the power and regulatory activity of the state along these and other lines represents in a major sense a process of secularization. It must, however, be emphasized that such expansion is accompanied by increasing individuation. Durkheim's historical view of and predictions about the amplificatory relationship between the crystallization of the state, on the one hand, and the general process of individuation, on the other hand, are particularly relevant in that connection (Durkheim, 1957). In one important respect, however, Durkheim's scenario has been rendered problematic. Because of his view that the state-individual relationship was the central dimension of human societies, Durkheim was eager to *prescribe* means by which that relationship could be promoted. But Durkheim's prescriptive elements veil what Fenn calls a paradox: "that the process of secularization increases the likelihood that various institutions or groups will base their claims to social authority on various religious grounds while it undermines the possibility for consensus on the meaning and location of the sacred" (Fenn, 1978:55). As Fenn (1978:55) further argues: "demands to be taken seriously (claims to social authority) therefore multiply as uncertainty increases regarding the sacred bases to such claims."

The widespread contemporary use of the term "mission" on the part of many corporate bodies in addition to those ostensibly devoted to religious concerns symbolizes the major thrust of the points which Fenn has made. Sociologists (as well as those in other disciplines) have used the term *government by objectives* (Swanson, 1980; Touraine, 1977) to indicate the situation in which modern organizations seek in the same process to set their values and goals *and* to enlist the positive adherence of individual members. Unlike the kind of bureaucratic organization which Weber adeptly characterized in the early twentieth century—the organization whose values and goals are taken as self-evident—the modern bureaucratic organization does not operate within a heavily contextualized *frame* of unquestioned values. Within oligopolistic contexts of competition between modern organizations, organizational elites are constrained to *produce* their own values, goals and forms of

legitimacy relative to prevalent categories of societal concern, and *at the same time* to enlist and sustain the commitment of participants (or, alternatively, to maintain a flow of participants). This means that relevant individual values must be regarded as discoverable, makeable or alterable.[6]

In ideal-typical terms the contrast between pure Weberian bureaucracy and late twentieth-century bureaucracy may be sketched as follows. One of the most salient features of Weberian bureaucracy was its relative lack of attention to its own value context and to the values of its individual members. That kind of bureaucracy was indeed, according to Weber himself, largely founded *in an historical sense* upon the consistent-sectarian "production" of *appropriately anonymous* individuals. What is here called "appropriate anonymity" has directly to do with Weber's notion of the legitimation of persons (Weber, 1948). In effect the legitimate person of classical Weberian bureaucracy (and capitalism) was, as it were, produced by certification for trustworthy involvement in worldly activities, a certification made basically possible in *historical* terms by the *mutual relationship* between self-responsible, individual attempts to prove oneself before God *and* one's human fellows relative to unquestioning acceptance of God and the God-giveness of the world as a site for religiously significant action. The *modern* complex organization, in contrast, is relatively value-focused and also tends in the direction of the structuring of at least the parameters of the life values of its individual participants.

The latter characteristic is to be seen in the emphases on careers as providing meaning and on notions pivoted upon the theme of organizationally facilitated *development* of individuals. The notion of personnel development rests in part upon ideas to the effect that individuals can be "cycled" or "re-cycled." The idea that lives can be made and remade in reference to a context of as-if assumptions concerning "value clarification" differs significantly from the notion that individuals leave behind their "real selves" in the performance of basic "worldly" actions. The much-discussed breakdown of the boundary between private and public life (Lasch, 1979; Poggi, 1978; Sennett, 1977; Unger, 1975) may best be expressed by saying that personal life has become increasingly a public matter in the *special sense* that aspects of private life have become subject to public "production" or at least, that the boundary between private and public is increasingly contested in the same sense that the boundary between the sacred and the secular is contested.

Unger (1975) has nicely captured major aspects of this public/private situation within his propositions concerning a trend towards *immanence* in modern society. Drawing in part upon the ideas of Swanson (1967), Unger argues that the process of immanentalization involves most basically the secularization of transcendence. That process, in turn, involves a remaking of the divine, a process of sanctifying the secular world. In effect this process blurs certain long-held (Western) distinctions between the mundane-human realm and the realm of transcendence. For now these distinctions are increasingly compressed into *this worldly* application. It is argued, more specifically, that there is a "double-edged process of privatization of public bodies and publicization of private ones" (Unger, 1975:175):

> Private institutions assume more and more of the responsibilities previously committed to government, or, without undertaking its responsibilities, they begin to resemble its organization and to imitate its power . . . At the same time, a wealth of public bodies come into being that are only perilously connected with one another and that are as close, in interest, outlook, or mode of organization, to "private" institutions as they are to the traditional agencies of government.

[6]It should be emphasized we do *not* wish to imply that there is no basic stability of values in modern societies. We would argue—along lines similar to those of Eisenstadt (1978)—that all societies have basic "codes," but that these codes are during periods of rapid change or turbulence subject to dispute and uncertainty as to their application and institutionalization as "ground rules." To repeat, in different form: "worldly" organizations do not produce or alter *high-level* value commitments.

What are the implications of such considerations for the study of religious movements? One of the most obvious—already suggested in the foregoing—is that we should regard the field of religious movements and organizations as *relatively* undefined, precisely because its boundaries are contested in "the real world." The sociologist has to inspect the contested nature of "the field of organized religiosity" and analyze the processes of intra-societal (and perhaps trans-societal and inter-societal) categorization and "production" of religiosity.

Rather more difficult issues arise in connection with the modern relevance of Weber's notion of the consistent sect. In one sense it is clear that many "inconsistent" religious movements will continue to be attention-drawing precisely because of their "inconsistency." But the more important issue has to do with the relationship between *modern* forms of sectarian, or cultic, religion and the economic, political and administrative modalities of late twentieth-century society. Consistent sectarianism was critically facilitative in the development of entrepreneurial capitalism and of the bureaucratic modes to be found in capitalist societies. Even when capitalistic and bureaucratic structures had become relatively self-sustaining *via* the purchase gained by the spirit of capitalism and bureaucracy, the (consistent) sects, according to Weber, continued in late nineteenth-century America to provide legitimate persons to "the world." Weber saw religion as becoming much less positively related to "the world" after that time. But the problem of the kinds of religious movement which are consistent with the functioning of modern societies remains a genuinely sociological one, *regardless* of the merits of the iron-cage thesis.

Weber's concept of the consistent sect has been elaborated here with general reference to the fit between the freedom which the sect demands and the "Kantian freedom" promoted among its individual members. Weber argued that sectarian distance *from* "the world," combined with an emphasis upon *individual* ascetic responsibility *in* "the world," led to a transformation *of* "the world," eventually leaving a vacuum at the level of personal religiosity. That vacuum constituted a site for the construction of personal values.

Where we need to advance beyond Weber is in emphasizing the implications of the complementarity of the secularized "world" and of the relatively free space for the construction of personal values, with particular reference to the issue of legitimacy. It is clear that in recent decades states and large-scale bureaucratic collectivities have sought increasingly to legitimate themselves in terms of what they claim to do materially and idealistically for their members or clients. After World War II, this kind of orientation to individuals and groups came increasingly to be centered upon indirectly claiming legitimacy with respect to economic affluence and "social security"; in more recent years, diffuse notions of "quality of life" have been thematized, partly in terms of a context of declining opportunities for affluence (Poggi, 1978: 134-49). It is in respect of the latter that there is a confluence of the identity-seeking and "life-style" patterning actions of individuals and the legitimacy-seeking actions of state agencies and large-scale bureaucratic collectivities.

We are enabled to pinpoint two major sets of factors relevant to the study of modern religious movements. First, state and large-scale bureaucratic activity increasingly encroaches upon the sphere of ostensibly religious activity. On the other side of the coin, ostensibly religious collectivities themselves have—particularly since the rise of "social-Christian" movements at the end of the nineteenth century—attempted to legitimate *themselves* to the wider society in terms of widening or adding to the category of "religion." Second, the modern tendencies discussed here indicate that general societal orientations toward religious movements are undergoing significant shifts in criteria concerning what constitute easily and less easily tolerable religious forms.

We may distill from these two sets of factors a modern successor to the *Problemstellung* — centered in historical terms on the affinity between the consistent sect and the emergent spirit of modernity—adumbrated by such people as Hegel, Jellinek and, above all Max

Weber. It must be quickly added, however, that in one important sense it is not possible to find a "genuine" successor to that *Problemstellung*. This is so because the study of religious movements has become a relatively *specialized* subject of inquiry, while, as we have shown, such a perspective on *any* aspect of religion was alien to the two most important developers of that classical *Problemstellung* — namely Hegel and Weber. But in another sense we may be more optimistic, for if the present sketch is at all viable it becomes increasingly impossible *not* to center the study of religious movements within the context of societal and civilizational trajectories of change.

Perhaps the most promising point of entry in this respect has to do with the proposition that to a significant degree all historical societies have had, or have in the loosest sense, policies — *however latent* — concerning the degrees to which particular forms of religious movement were or are relatively compatible with dominant characteristics or trajectories of change. Weber's consistent sects were thus in part able to exert the transformational impact that Weber claimed for them *because of* their affinity with relatively autonomous developments in secular — notably economic and political — spheres.

We should not, however, restrict the notion of affinity to such cases as the classic Weberian relationship between the Protestant sects and the spirit of capitalism and bureaucracy. There have been other types of affinity which bear more directly upon the relatively conscious "policies" concerning religious, particularly deviant-religious, movements. At the most explicit level there have been types of religious or quasi-religious movements which acquire a reputation for fulfilling functions which are widely — if often ambiguously — regarded as beneficial for society.[7] Of course, many religious movements of the modern period have aroused contrasting attitudes concerning the degree to which they have an affinity with the character of modern secular society. The specialized sociological debate (Robbins and Anthony, 1978) in this respect may be regarded as a thematized version of the much more diffuse and uncoordinated attitude sets of various groups in the wider society, including religious collectivities themselves.

The notion of affinity is *particularly* applicable to those societies which have historically been dominated by Protestantism, even more particularly those either lacking substantial Catholic minorities or where, as in the U.S., Catholic minorities have arrived well after the pattern of a Protestant dominance has been established (Martin, 1978: 237-62). This is because Protestantism has tended to uphold the idea of religion not being co-extensive with the state. Protestant societies have, in other words, been particularly promotive of the distinction between the worldly-secular and the individual-religious domains. Thus, even though Protestant societies have been the seedbeds for and major sites for the promotion of individual and group religious freedom and tolerance, they have at the same time been particularly "conscious" of *the issue* of affinity. (Which is not to say that in the modern period the issue of affinity will remain so Protestant-society centered.)

One of the strongest implications of the present analysis is that in the trend from transcendence to immanence, which makes for the re-aligning — if not the actual obliteration of — the distinctions between public and private, the secular and the sacred, and the state and civil society (cf. Robertson, 1976), there is a sense in which the state itself becomes a "church," *although not by "old European" criteria an ostensibly religious "church."* One might go even further and suggest that in that circumstance the modern controversies about authentic and inauthentic (acceptable and dubious) religion have to do with the relation-

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[7]Possibly the paradigm case of such movements in modern history has been the Salvation Army, particularly with the British context. In the 1890s and early part of the twentieth century the Army claimed for itself a mission to "reclaim" the outcast and immiserated and to provide welfare services which the State was unwilling or unable to accomplish (Robertson, 1967).

ship between the "societal church," on the one hand, and *orders* whose relationship with the "church" is contestable and often contes*ted*. From a somewhat different angle, it might be said that in a number of societies in the modern world certain kinds of collectivity—in particular, but not necessarily only, those claiming to be authentically religious—seek and compete with each other for "spiritual booty" (to use a Weberian phrase).

Thus the problematic of *affinity* takes us beyond consequentialism and reductionism, while avoiding the symbolic-realist tack. It also takes us beyond church-and-sect, but *without* rejecting the tradition of church-and-sect.

*Conclusion*

What has been proposed is a definitely *problem-centered* focus for the analysis of religious movements, one which facilitates the comprehension of their *historical-sociological signifi-cance*. The benchmark in this respect has been the Hegelian-Weberian conception of the consistent sect in relation to what we often now call the modernization process. The particularly modern twist which has been given to the tradition of concern with the theme of sectarian consistency is as follows. Traditionally, sectarianism has been seen as an orientation or response to "the world." (Other forms of collective religion have been seen—*via* such concepts as church and denomination—as "religious ways" of being *in* "the world.") The classic sociological approach to sects—crystallized by Weber—involved a particular focus upon those sects which took the "in-but-not-ofness" of Western sectarianism to its most "consistent" extremes. (Here we add a nuance to the notion of sectarian consistence with which we have been working.) But, according to Weber, the rationalization of the sectarian attitude was, in effect, its own undoing—an undoing which at the same time helped structure the ideational contours of classical industrial society. In symbolic terms, we may say that sectarian rationality had been passed into "the world," depriving the sectarian response of its leverage capacity in relation to "the world." Thus religion tended increasingly in the direction of subjectivistic reaction to "the world."

Thus far we have stayed with Weber's insights. However, to those insights we now add—in neo-Durkheimian mode—that *the relationship between* the privatized realm of individual religiosity and "the world" becomes problematic. (Symbolic realism and all putatively sociological views proclaiming the end of a dualistic conception of modern "reality" are to be seen as *symptoms* of the modern situation, *not analyses of it*. Extreme symbolic realism and views of a family resemblance make a to-be-analyzed feature of modern reality the basis of a quasi-theological perspective.)[8] The problematic nature of the relationship resides primarily in the fact that the generalized nature of concern with self is no longer conveniently seen as a response *to* "the world," but rather that "the world" itself becomes adjusted to—or at least has problems of adjusting to—the autonomy-in-interdependence of the level of individual existence.

Thus a kind of parity—or tendency toward parity—between "the world" and the salvational concerns of individuals obtains. Hence the concern with, what for want of of a better word, we have called *affinity* in the preceding discussion. The modern talk about the breakdown of distinctions between sacred and secular, private and public, civil society and the modern state is, in this perspective, best understood in reference to a crucial stage in the

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[8]The jabs at "symbolic realism" in this essay should *not* be seen as constituting a rejection of the idea that religious symbols have played a crucial—indeed determinative—role in human history. See, for example, the remarkable essay by Bellah on familial symbolism in Christianity, in relation to the incest taboo (Bellah, 1970: 76-9). See also Parsons (1979). The "real" question as regards symbolism within the confines of the present essay has to do with the power of available symbolic resources to "deal with"—rather than circumvent—the objective problems of affinity discussed in the foregoing.

differentiation (including concomitant, problematic processes of *integration*) of "the world" and the individual. Sociological near-sightedness leads us to fail to see the wood for the trees. The trees in this particular case are mainly what are journalistically known as "cults."

Church-and-sect has become a problematic perspective because of changes in the religion-society and individual-society connections. That does not mean, however, that the underlying impulse which gave life to that perspective should be discarded. In fact it might well be argued that it is through changes of particular interest to the student of religion that some modern sociological conceptions of the analysis of social collectivities may best be appreciated. We speak in particular of the so-called resource mobilization perspective (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Denying the strength of reductionist, deprivationist and strain-oriented approaches to organizations and movements, the resource mobilization school argues that would-be leaders of social movements induce, channel, and crystallize the demand and the supply of certain "things." As far as modern religious or quasi-religious movements are concerned, it can be seen that the plausibility of this approach depends in considerable part upon the generation of "spiritual booty" and the "marketing" of personal meaning *via* some of the processes discussed in the present essay—a development which is closely related to the shift in the balance of transcendence and immanence (in favor of the latter) and to a concomitant free-floatingness of the relationships between the ideal and the actual, and the sacred and the secular. Without attending to those and related factors the student of religious movements relinquishes a very significant purchase upon the modern relationship between religion and society.

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