Faith in The Market

Religion, Secularisation, and Economics

David Joseph Deutch
Abstract
The underlying premise of this work is that to use the terms ‘secular’ and
‘religion’ without proper definitions and methodological insight is an academic
mistake of the highest order. In light of such an assertion, this dissertation
provides a clear definition of both the term ‘secular’, and therefore
‘secularisation’, and ‘religion’. In regards to ‘religion’, a definition is drawn from
Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann’s ‘Social Constructivism’ to conclude that a
‘religion’ is a legitimating narrative that relates the order of the world to an
ultimate reality. In regards to ‘secular’ and ‘secularisation’, the dissertation
contends itself firstly with what the process of ‘secularisation’ entails. In doing
such, the conclusion is reached that reality, in a collective with multiple different
world-views, is ordered by an over-arching ‘metanarrative’ that is more
objective than the individual world-views. In light of such an assertion, it is
concluded that ‘secularisation’ represents the shifting from the traditional
Western metanarrative of Christianity to the metanarrative of modernity. A
detailed inquiry in Chapter Four asserts that the metanarrative of modernity is
one in which the world is believed to operate in a causally mechanistic fashion,
in the sense that phenomena are explained by the employment of ‘natural laws’
such as Newton’s Laws. As such, a ‘secular religion’ is a legitimating narrative, in
the Berger and Luckmann sense of the phrase, which is ordered by the
metanarrative of modernity. The final chapter contends itself with applying such
a definition to both the classical economic doctrine of Adam Smith, and modern
neoliberal economic doctrine. In light of such an endeavour, the dissertation
derives a clear model for what a ‘secular religion’ is.
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Introduction: The Rules of the Game
In the wake of the current European Debt Crisis, the technocrat has taken on the role of the messiah. They alone know the rules of the world and, therefore, they alone can help us appease the market. They tell countries, such as Greece and Spain, that they must show the world that they are playing by the rules in order to regain the faith of the market. These countries must make deep austerity cuts and sacrifice a generation to poverty simply because the market wills it. The international multilateral financial regulators, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, approve of the sacrifice and believe that it will appease the markets. With these forces in agreement, it naturally follows that if the PIIGS (Portugal, Ireland, Italy Greece and Spain) follow the commands from above, they will regain economic prosperity.\(^1\) The markets will flock to their bonds, as they are doing the right things to restore the faith. This evidently has not transpired. Greek bonds still are paying high yields, which make any form of debt unsustainable for the country.\(^2\) The question we should be asking in the face of this is: Why has this happened? Greece played the game, they implemented austerity and, in theory, they should have regained the faith of the market. Either, Greece has not stuck to the rules, which is evidently not the case, or those rules themselves are flawed.

What we have at this current juncture is a moment in history where the pervasive system of economic doctrine has revealed that it is no longer accurate, and maybe never was. The world is not operating along the correct lines and

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therefore the system has ceased to be self-evident. Moments such as this are truly invaluable for an analysis of humanity’s propensity to order beliefs under paradigms that we take to be ‘true’. The priests of the current economic paradigm stand by their remedies, as if their system of beliefs represents the fundamental ‘truth’ of existence. The problem with this position lays in the lack of recognition that humans collectively tend to defend their own dogmatically-bound realities. In the same way that Roman Catholic Christianity, during the Reformation, failed to recognise the ludicrous nature of a monopoly on reality, so too does dogmatic economics. As was the case during the Enlightenment when thinkers such as Spinoza and Locke decried the dogmatism of normative Christianity, a point is coming where it is necessary for humanity to reflect on the paradigms of ‘truth’ in which we construct our personal narratives. Instead of retreating into blind faith and hoping that the holders of ‘truth’ will save us, a broader recognition of the soft edges of our paradigms needs to be recognised. Rather than seek a definitive order to reality, our conceptions need to be malleable and able to extend. It is time for Gianni Vattimo’s notion of ‘the democratic principle of charity’ to play a part in our deciphering of the world.3

This dissertation concerns itself with the notion of conceptual paradigms and the ordering of our reality. Where traditional ‘religion’ once occupied such roles, we now have developed ‘secular’ models to serve the purpose, with economics being the decisive example of such a system. Not only does economics exert a dominant force in the modern mode of ordering reality, it also has, when all post-

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Enlightenment anti-religious bias is stripped away, aspects that are characteristic of traditional religion. It has belief in a transcendental force, in the form of the market. It has a church and a priest, these being the economic think-tank or the university, and the academically trained economist. Furthermore, it even makes metaphysical claims about the ‘true’ nature of the world. This dissertation will elaborate on these themes in order to further the understanding of paradigmatic systems of understanding reality, which we will assert are fundamentally intertwined with ‘religion’.

In light of such statements, this dissertation will present a clear and well-defined conception of ‘secular religion’. Through this exercise, an adequate treatment of reality’s ordering paradigms, in the form of both ‘secular’ and ‘traditional’ religion, will be provided. The first part will focus on defining what ‘religion’ is and why such a definitional paradigm should be employed. The first chapter of this section will deal with the concept of definitive ‘truth’ and how it met its end at the hands of Heidegger’s re-conception of Being in the form of *Dasein*. Using the philosophical conclusions regarding the transient nature of ‘truth’, it will then be demonstrated that Berger and Luckmann’s ‘Social Constructivism’, as outlined in both *The Social Construction of Reality* (1967) and *The Sacred Canopy* (1967), is the most adequate model for describing religion in today’s post-metaphysical world. Following this, the concept of the ‘secular’ and ‘secularisation’ will be reimagined employing a model formulated in the tradition of this constructivist definition of religion. Such a model will employ the concept

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that complex collectives of people, which contain multiple different world-views, are ordered under a shared ‘metanarrative’, and that ‘secularisation’ merely represents the shifting away from the traditional Christian ‘metanarrative’. As such, at the conclusion of the first part, ‘religion’, ‘secular’, and ‘secularisation’ will be clearly defined concepts.

The second part of this dissertation will seek to clarify the concept of ‘secular religion’ specifically, and the role that the metanarrative of modernity plays in the formulation of such systems. Thus, Chapter Four will identify the metanarrative of modernity, as being a mechanistic perspective on reality, and account for its rise. Following this, Chapter Five will, by analysing Adam Smith’s classical economic paradigm and the modern neoliberal system, demonstrate that economics is a ‘secular religion’. Through doing such, a fundamental insight into the nature of our ‘secular’ ordering paradigms, or ‘religions’, shall be gained.

At the conclusion of this undertaking, the dissertation will have achieved two particular outcomes. Firstly, it will have provided clear definitions for what ‘secular’, ‘secularisation’, ‘religion’, and ‘secular religion’ are. As these terms become wedded to a greater extent with the modern academic enquiry of ‘religion’, it is important to strive in providing clear definitions as to allow them to continue being of use as methodological tools. Secondly, this dissertation will shed light on the transient nature of our ordering paradigms, with the aim of providing an academic argument against dogmatic world-views. Through looking back to the violence of the Reformation, the results of dogmatic
adherence to particular truth claims should be evident.\textsuperscript{5} Such affirmations of dogma, whether it is to ‘secular’ or traditionally religious models, are firmly wedded to violent conflict. Through reflexivity of the horizons in which we all must exist, hopefully the dogmatic quests of the past can be avoided and the principle of democratic charity can truly be embraced. If not, we are destined to repeat history in the name of our perceived certainties.

\textsuperscript{5} Andrew Cunningham and Ole Peter Grell, \textit{The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Religion, War, Famine and Death in Reformation Europe} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1.
Part One: Religion in a Post-Metaphysical World

Chapter One: The Current State of ‘Truth’

Introduction
This dissertation will paint one possible model of religion, and its role in the way we come to understand reality. If it is to propose that our reality comes about through conceptual paradigms, then the logical first step for such a task would be with a reinterpretation of the foundations of our Western paradigmatic narratives. Further, bound within such a statement is a need to assert that the construction of such paradigms is in no way transcendental, and therefore universally true. As such, this section will argue, using the philosophical deconstruction of metaphysics undertaken by Nietzsche and Heidegger, that ‘truth’ is a historically inherited social consensus. In making such an assertion, this section will provide the philosophical grounding from which the rest of the dissertation’s undertaking stems.

Western thought, since the time of Plato, has searched for a ‘truth’ to reality. As such, our very conception of Logos is based on the notion that there is a fundamental truth to be sought. What has resulted from this is an inherent ideological position that finds its articulation in Western metaphysics. For Plato it was in the ‘essence’ of things, Kant saw it in ‘transcendental reason’ and Hegel saw it in the ‘spirit.’ Now, in a world that has hitherto been constructed around this ideological position, we have arrived at a point where these conceptions of

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‘truth’ no longer hold valid. In the wake of a mechanised reality where morality is apparently relativistic, Nietzsche and Heidegger contend that metaphysics has run its course and has, in regards to its traditional formulation, led to its own demise. As such, if Nietzsche’s conclusions are truly taken to heart, it is no longer possible to believe in an objective truth that transcends the historical opening. This section will seek to take the implication of Nietzsche and Heidegger’s deconstruction of metaphysics to heart and, thereby, demonstrate that the concept of ‘truth’ is a value-laden assertion. Therefore, using Nietzsche’s re-conception of the nature of Western Metaphysics and Heidegger’s rethinking of Being, this section will succinctly summarise the state of ‘truth’ in today’s intellectual world.

**Nietzsche’s “Revaluation of all Values”**

Nietzsche’s philosophical positions have had a profound influence on the conception of ‘truth’ in the twentieth century. His ‘philosophising with a hammer’ has torn down walls with its unbridled intent to deride domineering intellectual power bases. As such, if we are to engage in a rethinking of values, as that proposed in this dissertation, Nietzsche’s endeavour must be given the consideration that it truly warrants. Therefore, this section will analyse Nietzsche’s attempt to enact a “revaluation of all values,” in the form of his system of ‘nihilism’, and contend with its implications for objective ‘truth’.

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Nietzsche's ferocious critique of metaphysics begins to take on coherence in *Human, All Too Human* (1878). In this text Nietzsche takes his first true steps away from the philological training of his earlier years and moves steadily towards his famed philosophical positions.\(^{14}\) The most important thesis of the text, in terms of Nietzsche’s later development, comes in the first aphorism. In it, Nietzsche launches his revaluation by challenging the very foundations of Western thought. He rejects the conception of a ‘true world’ by observing that European thought has made the mistake of believing that its foundations lie in transcendental truths rather than in the historical philosophical legacy.\(^{15}\) This becomes obvious when Nietzsche asks the question:

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\text{[H]ow can something arise from its opposite—for example, reason from unreason, sensation from lifeless, logic from illogical...truth from error? Until now, metaphysical philosophy has overcome this difficulty by denying the origin of the one from the other, and by assuming for the more highly valued things some miraculous origin, directly from out of the heart and essence of the “thing itself.”}^{16}
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For Western thought, this belief in a transcendental origin has allowed societally ordained conceptions of the world to be impervious from critique or reflection, as their, apparently, transcendental nature assures that they represent the way things ‘truly’ are. In order to undermine such claims, Nietzsche utilises “historical philosophy.”\(^{17}\) This method allows him to account for the

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\(^{16}\) Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 1.

\(^{17}\) Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, 1.
development of specific values in Western thought, or, in his own words, attain a “chemistry of morals.” Nietzsche is thus drawn to conclude that, in fact, the opposites he mentions are one in the same. Therefore, if we accept Nietzsche’s conclusion that the foundations of logic are not transcendental but are in fact formed out of their opposites, does not this mean that Western logic and reason are in fact contradictory in their very nature? This initial attack represents Nietzsche’s first step in the direction of his theory of nihilism.

In the years following the publication of Human, All Too Human (1878), Nietzsche develops his initial attempt at a ‘chemical analysis’ into a full philosophical system, in the form of ‘nihilism.’ The central premise of his system lies in the observation that “the highest values devalue themselves” as they can never live up to their claims of being ‘eternal truths.’ Nietzsche states that, since all of Western thought has been founded on ‘values’ or ‘myths’ under the guise of eternal truth, our deeply held conceptions of the nature of existence are now rendered meaningless. What comes about once this devaluation has occurred is ‘nihilism.’ For Nietzsche there are two stages of ‘nihilism,’ “passive nihilism,” which is characteristic of a “recessition of the power of the spirit,” and “active nihilism,” which empowers humanity on their way to becoming the “overmen.” Passive nihilism, which represents the first stage, occurs when

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18 Nietzsche, Human, All Too Human, 1.
19 Nietzsche, Human, All Too Human, 1.
20 Vattimo, Nietzsche: An Introduction, 61.
21 Nietzsche, The Will to Power, 9.
22 Nietzsche, The Will to Power, 10.
humanity attains the knowledge that metaphysical categories are untenable.\textsuperscript{24}

Following this recognition, “the strength of the spirit may be worn out, exhausted, so that previous goals and values have become incommensurate and no longer believed.”\textsuperscript{25} What comes about in this state is an age of confusion and meaninglessness, humanity is set a drift in a world that no longer carries meaning and, as such, is left with a weakened spirit. Nietzsche’s proposed solution to this era of confusion is “active nihilism.”\textsuperscript{26} “Active nihilism” is characteristic of a state where humanity channels this newfound meaninglessness of existence into a liberating force.\textsuperscript{27} Now that humanity is free from historical structures, we are at a point where we can create our values anew and, through this process, truly recognise the temporal nature of such values.\textsuperscript{28}

While Nietzsche’s theories never really escape the spectre of Plato’s metaphysics, at the very least he achieves a rethinking of what, in the Western tradition, has been dubbed ‘true.’\textsuperscript{29} According to Nietzsche, our conceptions of existence stem from metaphysical categories that can never live up to their claim to transcendent truth. As such, we are left in a world where truth does not represent any ultimate order of things. According to Nietzsche, all we have is a “pure conflictual interplay of force and power, a conflict among interpretations

\textsuperscript{24} Blond, \textit{Heidegger and Nietzsche}, 113.
\textsuperscript{25} Nietzsche, \textit{The Will to Power}, 18.
\textsuperscript{26} Nietzsche, \textit{The Will to Power}, 18.
\textsuperscript{27} Nietzsche, \textit{The Will to Power}, 18.
\textsuperscript{28} Blond, \textit{Heidegger and Nietzsche}, 114.
with no mooring in reality,” in the form of his theory of metaphysics as a ‘Will to
Power.’

**Martin Heidegger: Being and Truth**

Martin Heidegger, with his radical rethinking of the nature of existence,
continues along the path on which Nietzsche fell short. For Heidegger, like
Nietzsche, metaphysical categories have arisen out of the Greek historical
philosophical legacy. Although, Heidegger proposes that Nietzsche has not fully
escaped Platonic philosophical groundings, as his ‘Will to Power’ is still
representative of a metaphysical mode of thought. This is the case because, if
our interpretations are informed by conflicts of force, then we are still making a
statement about the finite nature of existence, or the Being of beings.

Heidegger takes Nietzsche’s attempt at a “revaluation of all values” and drags it
into, what he considers to be, the most important realm of philosophy, the
questioning of Being. As such, if we are to adequately analyse the concept of
‘truth,’ it is necessary to confront the ramifications of Heidegger’s rejection of the
notion of Being as presence.

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34 Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven: Yale University
Press, 2000), 38
35 It must be noted that the difference between ‘being’ and ‘Being’ is constituted
by the former being the noun, such as a ‘being’, and the latter being the verb, in
the sense that it is the way you experience reality. Used in a sentence, we could
say, for the former, “I am a being” and for the latter, “I experience that painting in
that way due to my Being”. Implicit in the object, being, is the lack of recognition
of the ontological difference, or a lack of recognition of the fact that there is no
right way to experience reality. Further, Heidegger’s use of the word *Dasein* has a
somewhat different meaning, hence the translators employment of the German
word rather than simply utilising ‘Being’. *Dasein* refers to the human manner of
Being as a shared characteristic amongst all humans no matter their historical
In Heidegger's magnum opus, *Being and Time* (1927), his radical rethinking of the nature of Being begins with identifying the source of the current conception of existence. He claims that our current conception of Being, meaning simply 'to be present', stems from Plato and Aristotle’s ontological positions. He states that:

> The outward evidence of this...is the determination of the meaning of being as *parousia* or *ousia*, which ontologically and temporally means “presence” [“Anwesenheit”]. Beings are grasped in their being as “presence”; that is to say, they are understood with regard to a definite mode of time, the present.

He concludes that:

> Beings, which show themselves in and for this making present and which are understood as genuine beings, are accordingly interpreted with regard to the present; that is to say, they are conceived as presence (*ousia*).

By exposing that which causes us to forget Being, the inherited ontological positions of the Greek philosophers, Heidegger exposes the question of Being as one that remains thoroughly unanswered. In other words, the ontological difference, the difference between Being as a verb and beings as a noun, has been

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neglected and forgotten due to inherited conceptions of Being, which equate the two.\(^{40}\)

The most profound consequence of Heidegger’s retrieval of Being lies in the rethinking of the nature of ‘truth’. This rethinking is brought about due to the fact that our inherited ontological position has in-turn produced our mode of thought, that being Greek *logos*.\(^{41}\) This is the case because, if Being is conceived of as consisting of ‘that which is present,’ we remain un-reflexive about the value-laden categories within which our thought operates. This un-reflexive nature inturn produces thought which articulates itself through definitive metaphysical truth claims, that being claims that declare to conclusively know the nature of reality outside of a historical aperture.\(^{42}\) Heidegger elaborates this concept by stating that:

> the history of Western thought begins, not by thinking what is most thought provoking, but by letting it remain forgotten... The beginning of Western thought is not the same as the origin. The beginning is, rather, the veil that conceals the origin...\(^{43}\)

In the above quotation Heidegger declares that by thinking of Being as only ‘that which is present’, Western thought, which finds its beginning in Platonic metaphysics, has concealed the ontological difference. As such, Heidegger


\(^{41}\) Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 155.

\(^{42}\) Vattimo, *A Farewell to Truth*, xxxii.

\(^{43}\) Vattimo, *A Farewell to Truth* 152.
exposes the fact that our conception of ‘truth’ is value-laden and, therefore, does not represent correspondence to an objective datum.\textsuperscript{44}

As such, according to Heidegger, ‘truth’ only exists in a particular historical opening or “horizon”.\textsuperscript{45} Therefore, rather than ‘truth’ being representative of a correspondence to an objective datum, it represents a historically determined consensus, which is reached by individuals from a shared intellectual tradition.\textsuperscript{46}

As such, devoid of this ‘horizon’, sensuous experience carries no meaning. Rather, we are only able to place meaning on our sensuous experience due to the fundamental nature of our Being as humans (\textit{Dasein}), which is in turn sensuous in its nature.\textsuperscript{47} This concept is confirmed through Heidegger’s assertion that, “Human intuition, therefore, is not “sensible” because its affection takes place through “sense” organs. Rather, the converse is true.”\textsuperscript{48} As such, rather than intuition being \textit{a priori} to sensuous experience, intuition is created through our sense organs and their “announcing” of the shared state of being, or the state of \textit{Dasein}.\textsuperscript{49} As such, ‘sensuous objectivity’ does not truly exist because this ‘objectivity’ only carries meaning within a ‘horizon’ that is determined through the sensuous announcing of socially ordained manners of Being.\textsuperscript{50}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{44} Vattimo, \textit{A Farewell to Truth}, 3.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Zabala, \textit{The Remains of Being}, 94.
\item \textsuperscript{46} Heidegger, \textit{Being and Time}, 19.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Martin Heidegger, \textit{Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973 [1929]), 31.
\item \textsuperscript{48} Heidegger, \textit{Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics}, 31.
\item \textsuperscript{49} Heidegger, \textit{Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics}, 32.
\item \textsuperscript{50} Blond, \textit{Heidegger and Nietzsche}, 15.
\end{itemize}
Conclusion: A Historical Consensus

The primary message underlying this philosophical discussion is that ‘truth’ is a construction built in a particular time, out of a particular stream of thought.

While it may appear so, the aim here is not to undermine the Western intellectual tradition or the things that it has achieved; rather, with this discussion, this dissertation’s intent is to lay the foundations for some reflexivity on current assertions of ‘truth’. For if we move through the world being unreflexive of what we have been told is ‘true’, we will never recognise when the way we perceive reality needs to be altered. Problems are not solved if we blindly accept the normative doctrine of ‘truth.’ Solutions to problems, such as the ‘end of economic growth,’ need to be radical in their very nature. They attack at the paradigm of ‘growth’ and, as such, attack what has been previously shown to be ‘true’. In conclusion, if our conceptions of ‘truth’ are not universal, in the sense that they do not transcend a specific historical period, then the paradigms of our reality are also historically determined.
Chapter Two: Constructivism – The Transient Religious Model

Introduction
In a world where claims to a universal mode of operation have become untenable, it is necessary to apply such assertions to the facet of existence that has specifically concerned itself with universality for the primary period of human existence, religion. In light of the previous chapter, if we are to adequately define ‘religion’, we must be wary of the tendency to make absolute claims regarding its nature. For instance, if trans-historical truth claims are untenable, then hard-line Dawkins-esque Atheism, and the embracing of scientific positivism that may come along with it, is just as untenable as the claim that there is a God who loves and cares for us. Rather, it is necessary for us to recognise both of these claims for what they are. That being, historically determined, socially ordained perceptions of reality. 51 As such, we cannot be content with treating religion as being different to any other socially held stock of knowledge. We, in the academy, must therefore analyse it as a socio-historical phenomena rather than subjective confusion or definitive truth. 52

While it is recognised that the statement that ‘knowledge is socially determined’ is a metaphysical one representing the ‘definitive state of knowledge,’ this ‘definitive state’ is as transient as we can hope to achieve. For just as Heidegger shows us, we can never truly escape our paradigms, as to live and communicate we must settle down in them. 53 In order to achieve such a balanced perspective

53 Heidegger, What is Called Thinking?, 137.
on religion and knowledge, this chapter will assert that the ‘Social Constructivism’ of Thomas Luckmann and Peter Berger is the best model for defining religion, and therefore for the task of this dissertation.

The Social Construction of Reality

Rather than providing a detailed explanation of Berger and Luckmann’s theory, only what is necessary for the argument of this dissertation will be recounted. As such, this section will provide an overview of the process by which habitualised actions take on socially ordained meaning. Through this process, knowledge of reality is objectified within a social collective and theoretical mechanisms are developed to justify the reality in question. These theoretical mechanisms, or ‘conceptual machineries’, dictate the fundamental way which we perceive and understand our reality. As such, a model will be provided of how our perceptions of reality are created through social activity.

The fundamental starting point of the system lies in humanities predisposition to sociability, or the manufacturing of complex social networks. Berger and Luckmann conclude that humanity does not exist in a world that is absolutely given, as many of our biological compatriots in the animal kingdom. Our particular ‘human self’ is not given at birth but is rather developed as a direct relation to our social environment. Regarding this, Luckmann and Berger state that:

The genetic presuppositions of the self are, of course given at birth. But the self, as it is experienced later as a subjectively and objectively

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recognizable identity, is not. The same social processes that determine the completion of the organism produce the self in its particular, culturally relative form.56

So, if the self is not a given finite being but rather a product of its social environment, then it follows that the events we experience as our ‘human self’ are also created through our social environment.

Berger and Luckmann’s system uses this initial starting point to then develop a methodology which details the process by which humanity comes from the point of an unformed being, predisposed to sociality, to a member of complex system of social knowledge. The initial stage comes in the form of ‘habitualisation’. According to Berger and Luckmann, by narrowing the scope of choices, humanity is able to relieve “the accumulation of tensions that result from undirected drives.”57 In other words, humanity is able to settle down and exist in a world that does not require consistent decision-making through the development of new process for every task. For example, the individual who may live as part of a community that needs to make a fire every night will not have to rethink the process every time they go out to collect sticks. They will have a particular method and pattern for their process and, as such, will not have to rethink the process every time a fire needs to be lit. As such, the process has become habitualised and, therefore, the action can be undertaken with minimal mental strain.

Prior to the construction of a socially shared reality, there is a need for the objectification of these habitualised actions. As such, for institutionalisation to occur, it is necessary for a collective to have a system of signs that provide an objectification of individual experience.\(^{58}\) Language is the most obvious form of these types of systems. Further, it is the most malleable, and therefore allows more complex manners of objectification. This is the case because, not only does language allow the objectification of the experience but it also acts as the house of the collective stock of knowledge.\(^{59}\) As such, it allows new knowledge to be objectified and incorporated in the existing system. In other words, if we can describe it with language, it becomes normalised to our primary social reality.\(^{60}\)

Following the objectification of habitualised actions, there is now the possibility of social reciprocity towards this habitualisation, which in turn allows it to become ‘institutionalised.’\(^{61}\) According to Berger and Luckmann, the process of institutionalisation occurs when “there is a typification of habitualised actions by types of actors.”\(^{62}\) Referring back to the previous example of the individual who collects sticks for their collective’s fire, now that he or she can objectify their stick collecting, they can share this knowledge socially through linguistic objectification. If this person’s habitualisation is objectively recognised in the collective, then an institution of ‘stick collecting’ is established, where this individual occupies the role of the ‘stick collector.’ Now that his or her method


has been socially objectified, the individual in the role of the ‘stick collector’ is the holder of the specific knowledge of efficient stick collecting, in the same way that a hunter is the holder of the knowledge of how to effectively hunt. \(^{63}\) Stick collecting now goes beyond that one individual, as it is an objectified mode of knowledge, or it has become ‘institutionalised.’

For individuals who were not present at the institution’s creation, or cannot draw on its initial meaning, there comes about the problem of continuing the objectivity of the institution in question. \(^{64}\) To adequately continue the institution, there is a need for it to be legitimated. The self-evident nature of the institution in question has ceased to exist and therefore, “in order to restore it...there must be “explanations” and justifications of the salient elements of the institutional tradition. Legitimation is this process of “explaining” and justifying.” \(^{65}\) According to Berger and Luckmann, there are different levels of explanations, which are employed in order to legitimise institutions. The first is “incipient legitimation” and it becomes “present as soon as a system of linguistic objectifications of human experience is transmitted.” \(^{66}\) Such an example would involve the answer, if it were enquired ‘why are those people collecting sticks?’, ‘because they are stick collectors.’ \(^{67}\) The next stage of legitimation is rudimentary theoretical stage. Legitimations common to this stage include sayings, proverbs, stories and poems. \(^{68}\) Rather than simply responding to the question of ‘why’ with ‘because’,

this stage responds with 'because the aphorism says so'. The next level of legitimation is the theoretical level, which involves an institution being legitimated by a differentiated body of knowledge.\textsuperscript{69} In other words, stick collecting could be legitimated by a complex theory regarding the necessity of such an institution. For example, if stick collecting is not performed in a certain manner then the collective’s fire may not cook food properly. This, therefore, legitimates the ‘stick collectors’ and their knowledge.

The fourth, and most important for our endeavour, level of legitimation is, what Berger and Luckmann term the “symbolic universe.”\textsuperscript{70} The symbolic universe represents a “theoretical tradition that integrate different provinces of meaning and encompass the institutional order in a symbolic totality…” and its establishment is necessary in order to have “the institutional order...be taken for granted in its totality as a meaningful whole.”\textsuperscript{71} In other words, this form of legitimation represents an integration of institutions into a broader enclave of meaning. This form of legitimation comes about due to a “process of subjective reflection, which, upon social objectivation, lead to the establishment of explicit links between the significant themes that have their roots in the several institutions.”\textsuperscript{72} As such, all institutions in the collective are interrelated as they all serve a purpose in the symbolic meaning of the socially ordained universe.\textsuperscript{73}

To continue the examination of stick collectors, a symbolic universe would

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\textsuperscript{69} Berger and Luckmann, \textit{The Social Construction of Reality}, 94.
\textsuperscript{70} Berger and Luckmann, \textit{The Social Construction of Reality}, 95.
\textsuperscript{72} Berger and Luckmann, \textit{The Social Construction of Reality}, 104.
\end{flushright}
involve a system that would place the stick collectors in a broader enclave of meaning. Say for example, the fires with improperly collected sticks would not burn properly because the gods are not satisfied with the manner of stick collecting. Here the institution is placed into a broader cosmological system where the gods need correctly lit fires to be appeased. This system can extend also to all other institutions of the society, such as hunting or childrearing, where they all have a set manner due to the will of the gods. Here, the symbolic universe would be the supernatural one of the gods. Therefore, symbolic universes are the highest form of legitimation, as they “proclaim that all reality is humanly meaningful and call upon the entire cosmos to signify the validity of human existence.” 74

While the symbolic universe itself requires a sophisticated level of theoretical contemplation, it may be necessary for further theoretical legitimacy to be developed if the primary reality becomes problematic. 75 In a society that is perfectly functioning, or, in other words, a society where every individual is perfectly socialised, the primary symbolic universe will be continuously perpetuated as it has reached the status of objective reality. This perfect socialisation is inevitably untenable as, since institutions are socially constructed, micro social universes can always attain a sufficient level of deconstruction as to cause the primary reality to become problematic. 76 As such,

theoretical systems of universe-maintenance are necessary to protect the primary symbolic universe.\textsuperscript{77}

These ‘conceptual machineries’ consist of detailed theoretical systems, which act to further legitimate already integrated institutions.\textsuperscript{78} In other words, they provide reasons for why certain institutions sit together and, therefore, constitute a symbolic universe. Examples of such theoretical systems include: mythology, theology, philosophy and science.\textsuperscript{79} According to Berger and Luckmann, these systems are ordered in terms of their progression of complexity. Regarding mythology they state that, it “is closest to the naïve level of the symbolic universe-the level on which there is the least necessity for theoretical universe-maintenance beyond the actual positing of the universe in question as an objective reality.”\textsuperscript{80} It must be noted, rather than positing that these systems are evolutionary, in the sense that they are progressively moving towards ‘truth’, Berger and Luckmann intend the progression to represent an increase of theoretical complexity within each system. For example, mythology is only dubbed ‘simplistic’ in the sense that it does not contain as many theoretical legitimations as other systems such as theology or science. Therefore, it is not that one is more correct than the other, but rather, the degree of specialisation of the experts of the particular system has increased. As such, with an increase in the theoretical framework supporting these systems, the conceptual machinery

\textsuperscript{78} Berger and Luckmann, \textit{The Social Construction of Reality}, 110.
\textsuperscript{79} Berger and Luckmann, \textit{The Social Construction of Reality}, 110.
\textsuperscript{80} Berger and Luckmann, \textit{The Social Construction of Reality}, 110.
becomes further detached from the knowledge of the everyday population. When a system of conceptual machinery no longer serves the purpose of adequately explaining the symbolic universe, it will strive to rid itself of inconsistencies. Through the elaboration of its concepts, mythology will shift into the realm of Theology. While mythology involved the constant intervention of 'supernatural' forces in the lives of the collective, due to the increasing complexity of theology, there comes about a degree of detachment from the world of the 'Gods'. No longer do the explanations for reality sit so closely to the general stock of knowledge. Rather, they sit with the monastic scholar of Christendom or the Zoroastrian priest of ancient Persia. Science represents both the most extreme detachment from the social stock of knowledge and the extreme case of complexity. It results in a society where the layperson has very little knowledge of the way in which the symbolic universe is held together, as it is described through a complex assembly of theoretical assertions. Rather than actually knowing how the world sits together, the average individual is merely assured that the experts remain the designated holders of the nature of reality. As such, as long as an individual remains adequately socialised, meaning they have objectified the symbolic universe, the conceptual machinery of their particular reality will suffice in explaining the institutional order in question.

**Conceptual Machinery and Metaphysical Claims**

The connection between the Heideggerian 'horizon of truth' and Berger and Luckmann’s 'symbolic-universe' and 'conceptual machinery' should be clear. For Heidegger, the 'symbolic-universe' would be representative of the 'horizon of

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truth’ and the ‘conceptual machinery’ would represent the metaphysical claim regarding the horizon of truth in question. Where Heidegger merely identified the historical opening, Berger and Luckmann have provided a detailed sociological account of the process by which this “historical aperture” of truth is established.\(^8^4\) Take for instance, High medieval Christendom. The ‘symbolic-universe’, being the interrelation between feudalism and the power of the Church, is supported by the metaphysical claim regarding the nature of God, both in regards to the divine nature of nobility and the Church being God’s house on Earth.\(^8^5\) It can therefore be sufficiently concluded that ‘conceptual machinery’ makes definitive metaphysical claims about the nature of reality in order to justify the ‘symbolic-universe.’

If it is safe to say that ‘conceptual machinery’ makes metaphysical claims about the nature of reality, then what is the real difference between religion and science? Firstly, according to Berger and Luckmann, science’s body of knowledge is further removed from the social stock of knowledge than theology’s, in the sense that it is only scientists that truly understand the ‘conceptual machinery’ that justifies our current reality.\(^8^6\) Secondly, science, apparently, no longer has ‘supernatural’ elements.\(^8^7\) Yes, these appear to be true in theory, but, in reality, is the scientific ‘conceptual machinery’ really any different to a theological one?

\(^8^4\) Vattimo, *A Farewell to Truth*, 32.
Berger and Luckmann’s first claim of differentiation, that science is further detached from the social stock of knowledge than theology, is misguided. Rather than taking to heart their own conclusions, Berger and Luckmann retain a certain amount of bias towards the current scientific system of knowledge, as shown through their desire to differentiate theology from science.\footnote{Berger and Luckmann, \textit{The Social Construction of Reality}, 112.} When contemporary material bias is stripped away, what becomes evident is that both these systems have the ability to be as detached from the social stock of knowledge as each other. In the Medieval Latin West of the past, theology was in essence wholly separate from the social stock of knowledge. In this period, and place, the layperson knew little of the intricacies of doctrine; the majority could not even read.\footnote{Joseph Lynch, \textit{The Medieval Church: A Brief History} (London: Longman, 1992), 24.} Furthermore, even if they could read their own language, Bibles were printed in Latin, which some clergy even struggled to understand.\footnote{Lynch, \textit{The Medieval Church: A Brief History}, 72.} An example of similar detachment is manifest today in the fact that the majority of people today are mathematically illiterate to the point where they cannot understand the current theory of matter. As such, it is hardly sufficient to say that science is further detached from the social stock of knowledge than theology is.

The second of Berger and Luckmann’s differentiable characteristics is the removal of ‘supernatural’ aspects from everyday life.\footnote{Berger and Luckmann, \textit{The Social Construction of Reality}, 112.} This declaration foregoes the historically determined nature of knowledge, which Berger and Luckmann’s endeavour seeks to achieve. For what occupies the realm of the ‘supernatural’ to
us, may be wholly natural to an individual from a different historical era. Further, at the core of it, things such as electricity and the microwave still occupy the realm of the supernatural. This is the case as there is no real difference between an apparently supernatural manifestation and a scientific mechanism that is not understood. In both cases, the experts of the society inform the layperson that ‘it is all ok because the keepers of truth understand the fundamental nature of the event.’ Take for instance, the wave-particle duality of light.\textsuperscript{92} The layperson may have solar panels on the roof in order to power their house, regardless of whether they understand the inner workings of the photoelectric effect or not.\textsuperscript{93} These panels appear just as natural to this individual as praying to God for a good year’s harvest did to the individual in the theologically dominated system. As long as the experts understand the nature of reality, the ‘symbolic-universe’ can be maintained.

As a result, Berger and Luckmann’s distinctions between science and religion are arbitrary. At the core of these two variations of ‘conceptual machinery’ are metaphysical claims about the nature of reality that are created to legitimate a specific ‘symbolic-universe’, or ‘horizon of truth’. Therefore, Berger’s interpretation of secularisation, as the stripping of religious elements from Western society, is fundamentally misguided.\textsuperscript{94} Even using the term ‘religious’ in such a definition is in itself problematic. Religion is not \textit{sui generis}; it is merely a different way of explaining the paradigm in which we live. Rather than utilising

\textsuperscript{92} Manjit Kumar, \textit{Quantum: Einstein, Bohr and the Great Debate About the Nature of Reality} (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 63.
\textsuperscript{93} Kumar, \textit{Quantum}, 142.
\textsuperscript{94} Berger, \textit{The Sacred Canopy}, 108.
our theological world-view to explain the world around us, we use a scientific one, comprised of elements and mathematic descriptions. As such, the traditional thesis of ‘secularisation’ is problematic, to say the least.

Conclusion
What has been presented in this chapter is a model for understanding human existence and the act of reality construction, which limits methodological bias in regards to the favouring of the modern system of understanding the world. Furthermore, through the utilisation of a system that recognises the transient nature of truth, it was possible to present a specific definition of the concept of ‘religion’. Such a definition was devised by utilising the ‘Social Constructivism’ of Berger and Luckmann in order to identify ‘religion’ as being a legitimating narrative, or ‘conceptual machinery’, that acts to justify a particular order of the world. Building on such a conclusion, the chapter identified the implicit bias within Berger and Luckmann’s system, in regards to their differentiation between the conceptual machineries of science and theology. By doing such, it was asserted that science merely represents a modern form of conceptual machinery that is not in any major way different from the theological narrative of reality.

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Chapter Three: Secularisation

Introduction
This chapter will present a somewhat novel model for the process of ‘secularisation’, and therefore provide a clear definition for what is meant by the adjective ‘secular’. For if it is the case that, as the previous chapter asserts, our current system of conceptual machinery is ‘religious’ in the same way that traditional religion is, then there is an urgent need to rethink the concept of ‘secularisation’. Such a model, regardless of the conceptual paradigm proposed in the last chapter, must be wary of a number of errors within various formulations of ‘secularisation’. For instance, if this dissertation were to assert that ‘secularisation’ represents a shift in the totality of ways that people explain the world, we would be as wrong as the ‘all or nothing’ approaches to secularisation, this being the paradigm that specifically prophesies the extinction of ‘religion’.96 Such an approach, fails to recognise the pluralistic manner in which people explain their world in modern Western society.97 As such, a less traditional way of thinking about ‘secularisation’ is necessary to serve the current purpose.

To adequately address the qualifier ‘secular’, this chapter will endeavour to achieve two intrinsically wedded objectives. Firstly, it will propose a model of ‘secularisation’ that addresses the prevailing problems in the various incarnations of the ‘secularisation thesis’. This model will assert that

‘secularisation’, rather than representing a shift in the way in which individuals ‘subjectively’ explain their world, represents a shift in the over-arching ‘metanarrative’ of the societal collective. By this, it is meant that the over-arching metanarrative, under which all ‘subjective’ conceptual machineries are ordered, has shifted. Secondly, this chapter will provide a historical account of how the West arrived at the point where this process of narrative shifting has come about. As a result, the methodological grounds on which this dissertation’s endeavour has been based shall be made wholly explicit.

Prior to commencing such an endeavour, the purpose of this particular chapter must be made explicit, in terms of the argument pursued in subsequent chapters. This chapter only intends to provide the bare methodological groundings for our model of ‘secularisation’. Thus, rather than detailing what the Western metanarrative has shifted to, this chapter will only focus on the metanarrative of the past. The reason for proceeding in such a way is that the modern metanarrative warrants its own extended treatment in order to adequately understand the current paradigms of reality. Therefore, this chapter will only deal with the methodological specifics and the pre-Reformation ordering narrative.

The Shifting of the Metanarrative
While a majority of social scientists from a range of disciplines agree that in the modern Western world, the nature and practice of religion has changed, ‘secularisation’ is by no means an agreed upon concept. Depending on the

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scholar and the discipline, this seemingly self-evident truth of modernity takes on vastly different meanings from the ‘orthodox consensus’, which championed the notion that as modernity proceeded religiosity would wane and eventually disappear, of its intellectual past. For contemporary scholars, it is now recognised that secularisation does not occur according to the extreme formulations of the past. In other words, it is now a general consensus that the sociological prophecy that traditional religion is destined for extinction is incorrect. Regardless of the fact that current theories are considerably more sophisticated and developed than their predecessors, they are all fundamentally incomplete. By this it is not meant that they are necessarily wrong; rather, it is meant that certain aspects are not made explicit enough, as is the case with Demerath's ‘meaning’ paradigm. As such, a specific incarnation of secularisation, which addresses a range of shortfalls in the various models of secularisation, shall be employed here. As Demerath suggests of all theories of secularisation, their findings and formulation are dependent on the perspective which the theorist proposing it holds. The formulation to be proposed here is no different. It is informed primarily by the social constructivism of Berger and Luckmann, Demerath's theory of 'secularisation and sacralisation', and the work of others such as Stark and Gregory. By synthesising these approaches, a

model of the phenomenon of ‘secularisation’, which addresses the shortcomings of previous definitions, will be articulated.

A preliminary task to laying out the model proper is to first identify two specific pitfalls that are common to theories of ‘secularisation’, which this formulation specifically seeks to avoid. The first pitfall it must navigate is in regards to the definition of ‘religion’ to be employed. A model, such as that of the Enlightenment proponents of secularisation, which simply states that ‘religion’ will wane as modernity takes hold, ignores the potentially ‘religious’ nature of existence.\(^{103}\) It assumes a black and white distinction between what is ‘religious’ and what is not. Such a formulation neglects the fact that in our ‘secular’ age, individuals still separate things off from the broader world, in a way that is akin to Durkheim’s dichotomy of the ‘sacred and the profane’.\(^{104}\) People still derive meaning and solace from systems of belief, or world-views. Just because these models, or ‘sacred things’, do not have a traditionally religious nature, does not mean that the place which individuals assign them in their ‘subjective’ interpretation of reality is not akin to the place that was once occupied by traditional religious systems. This blurring of the normative definitional paradigm becomes all too evident when we, in the religious studies field, attempt to grapple with the challenge of reaching a consensus regarding the definition of

\(^{103}\) Demerath, “Secularization and Sacralization Deconstructed and Reconstructed,” 57-80.

‘religion’. 105 So, to utilise the term ‘religion’, even with qualifiers such as subjective or institutional, is doing a model of ‘secularisation’ a disservice. As such, any model, which seeks to go beyond simply saying that ‘religious institutions have less hold on society than they did before modernity’, must endeavour to provide a definition of religion along with the methodological formulation.

The second pitfall, which must be navigated, is the ‘all or nothing’ formulation of secularisation. The ‘all or nothing’ formulation, which was prominent in 1960’s among scholars such as Berger and Wilson, posits that as a society we are moving from a wholly ‘religious’ way of deriving meaning towards a wholly ‘secular’ method. 106 In the first instance, critics accuse such formulations of fabricating a romanticised past where religiosity was once dominant. According to Mary Douglas, these idealised formulations are nothing but academic wishful thinking. 107 Further, Rodney Stark proclaims that the religiosity of European Christendom was shallow at best, and that the Christian faith was never truly accepted and embraced by the masses. 108 On the secularised side, such ‘all or nothing’ theories ignore the fundamentally pluralistic nature of modern life. 109 Rather than seeing ‘religion’ disappear, in the current stage of modernity,

traditional ‘religion’ has simply become one of the many ways which people explain their world. Furthermore, this pluralism of world-views means that people are able to have multiple world-views inform their picture of reality. One such example can be found in the fact that ‘religious’ means and ‘scientific’ means are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Evidence even suggests that, “societies with faith in science also often have stronger religious beliefs.” As such, a model of secularisation, which endeavours to account for these problems within previous formulations, must avoid the ‘all or nothing’ paradigm.

The model of secularisation to be proposed here will actively address these problems and, thereby, avoid the pitfalls of our methodological forebears. For this model, ‘religion’ has a dual but specific meaning. The first meaning will pertain to the traditional Western religious institutions, namely the Catholic Church and the various Protestant centres of power. It is necessary to specifically speak of these institutions because secularisation is fundamentally a Western phenomenon, informed by events in European history. This assertion by no means intends to exclude other parts of the world, which are going through similar processes. Rather, this statement is a testament to the continuing extent of Western colonial domination, in this case specifically pertaining to cultural domination. The second meaning of ‘religion’ is the one that has been laid out in the previous chapter. This definition asserts that ‘religion’ is akin to ‘conceptual machinery’, which justifies the institutional order of reality. If this definition is

applied to the process of ‘secularisation’, then we can conclude that secularisation merely represents the replacing of one world-view, or ‘conceptual machinery’, for another.

Such an assertion brings us to the mode in which the second pitfall listed above will be remedied. Evidently, in the formulation of secularisation that posits religion to be a conceptual machinery, we are still working in extremes as religiosity persistence is neglected. If we were to simply say that Western society utilised the Christian conceptual machinery and that they now utilise a scientific one, we are still foregoing the pluralistic nature of existence and the multiple competing conceptual machineries, which need attention. Regardless of the differing terminology, we are still guilty of assuming a pious past and proclaiming a purely scientific future. To adequately avoid such a formulation, the model proposed here will not assert that we are moving in a linear and inevitable fashion from piety to rationalism. It is extremely unlikely that in the inherently subjective experience, which characterises human existence, that there has ever been a society where one narrative uniformly explains reality for the totality of individuals within a collective. Such a system would need to be of the utmost simplicity regarding the differentiation of labour, as even the slightest deviation in experience would result in a differing perspective on the prevailing institutional order. As such, the model proposed here will take into account

114 Stark, “Efforts to Christianize Europe, 400-2000,” 105-123.
the pluralistic nature of human existence as to avoid the pitfall of the ‘all or nothing’ formulations.

In order to adequately avoid the myth of a previously uniform past, this formulation of secularisation proposes that a complex society, similar to those which have characterised the last twelve hundred years of Western history, is bound together by an over arching metanarrative that has been objectified to a greater degree than the subjective world-views held within smaller blocks of society. If we take the model of institutional order, proposed in the previous chapter, then we recognise that systems of existence are legitimated by particular conceptual machineries. Combining such a model with the assertions of Stark and Douglas, that human existence has always been relatively pluralistic, we arrive at an interesting conclusion.\footnote{Stark, “Efforts to Christianize Europe, 400-2000,” 105-123; Douglas, “The Effects of Modernization on Religious Change,” 457-484.} It becomes evident that, while subjective conceptual machineries have always been important, there must be a broader over-arching ordering principle under which reality derives its objective status. There must be a socially accepted ‘fact’, which is able to transcend cultural boundaries, that is truly taken for granted and, therefore, acts to order every part of existence. If this were not the case then the large cooperative collectives of people, such as those that have characterised European history since the Holy Roman Empire, would not be possible.\footnote{Peter Brown, \textit{The Rise of Western Christendom} (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 436.} As such, it must be the case that, in complex societies, which include multiple distinct smaller cultural
groupings, subjective conceptual machineries must be ordered by an over-arched metanarrative, which acts to order ‘reality’.

If the above notion of the ‘metanarrative’ is accepted, then secularisation takes on a rather different form. In the tradition of Demerath’s ‘secularisation and sacralisation’ paradigm, we can assert that ‘secularisation’ is characterised by the loss of ‘religious’ meaning, in the Durkheimian sense of the phrase, of a previous over-arching paradigm and the sacralisation, or objectification, of a new one.\textsuperscript{119} This means that the ‘matter of fact’, which once structured the world that the various sections of society inhabit, no longer holds a privileged position in the ordering of reality. Following from this, if the community is to remain unified, a new ordering principle must come into being. In the current manifestation of ‘secularisation’, this means that where Christianity once provided the institutional and doctrinal framework for society to operate as a cohesive whole, it no longer acts as such. As should be evident when we take into account the vast plurality of conceptual machineries in modern Western society, this shift does not mean that everyone in the broader collective suddenly sheds his or her historically informed world-views. Rather, it only pertains to the broader ordering system. This shift, as has been the case in western society, manifests itself in institutional terms, which may then trickle down to the individual perspective. What this means for the previous over-arching paradigm is that it merely becomes another ‘subjective’ method for explaining reality. If we take the decline of Christianity as an example, we can observe that the

\textsuperscript{119} Demerath, “Secularization and Sacralization Deconstructed and Reconstructed,” 57-80; Durkheim, \textit{The Elementary Forms of Religious Life,} 36.
institutions that propagate the Christian over-arching paradigm have lost the ability to order societies actions directly, as is apparent in the fact that people work on Sunday and eat meat other than fish on Friday night. This decline in institutional influence has then allowed for ‘secular’ modes of socialisation to occur, such as government school systems. This shift then in turn causes a decline in individual religiosity. What results is that Christianity is reduced to the status of simply another ‘subjective’ means of explaining the world, albeit a historically important one. This model is therefore able to account for both the decline of traditional religious institutions, regarding their ability to influence society, and personal religiosity. As such, secularisation, utilising the model of metanarratives, represents the ‘subjectification’ of a previously ‘objective’ ordering paradigm and, if the over-arching collective is to remain such, the rise of a new ordering system.

Inevitably, like all models, this formulation does not provide a ultimately ‘true’ account of the sociological process that it claims to describe. Nonetheless, it provides a model that adequately accounts for the discontinuities of ‘secularisation theory’. Firstly, it specifically accounts for the definition of religion by employing Berger and Luckmann’s ‘constructivist’ model, which states that a ‘religion’ represents a conceptual machinery that acts to legitimise a given institutional order. Secondly, it addresses the ‘all or nothing’ problem by accounting for and specifically addressing the plurality of worldviews, which constitute human existence. Finally, it identifies the nature of secularisation as an institutional phenomenon that works closely with individual perspectives, as

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120 Gregory, The Unintended Reformation, 327.
metanarratives are institutional by nature and their changing constitutes an institutional shift that may be followed by individual shifts. As such, the ‘metanarrative’ model of secularisation will sufficiently serve the purpose of informing the endeavour of this dissertation.

The Unintended Secularisation of Reality
For the model proposed above to adequately hold weight, it is necessary for the shifting of the previous ordering principle of Western Europe, which was characterised by Christian truth claims as propagated by the Catholic Church, to be properly accounted for. As such in this section, it shall be shown that the shifting of the metanarrative, away from Catholic Christianity, of western society was a product of the Reformation. This is the case, as the Reformation resulted in the continued questioning and undermining of ecclesiastical authority and, therefore, eventually the monarchical structures that it shared its divine authority with.\textsuperscript{121} Placing this event in terms of the constructivist methodology presented in the second chapter, the Reformation represented the point at which the previously objectified view of reality was no longer self-evident and, therefore, became problematic.\textsuperscript{122} By disputing the central claims of the metanarrative, the reformers across Europe brought the ordering system of Christendom into a realm where it was no longer able to provide an objective grounding for reality.\textsuperscript{123} This is what occurred during the Reformation and eventually led to the secularisation of Western society.

In order to adequately account for such a process, this section will be divided into three parts. Firstly, it will make explicit the role and the status of the institution that propagated the ordering narrative of Christendom, that being the Catholic Church. Following this, it will address how the Reformation specifically undermined the Church’s metanarrative by bringing the ecclesiastical authority into question. Finally, the actual shifting of the narrative shall be brought to light by analysing a specific aspect of life, which was previously ordered by Catholic truth claims. By viewing the shift in what constituted ‘knowledge’ following the Reformation, the thesis regarding secularisation shall be strengthened. As a result, it shall be demonstrated that the Reformation was the event that resulted in the shifting of the metanarrative of Western reality.

During the medieval period, the Church was the over-arching institution that determined the metanarrative under which reality was to be articulated. Regardless of the fact that the Church was the direct inheritor of the legacy of Rome, this power was not a fundamental aspect of its being. The pagans of Europe did not simply convert, and instantly endow the Church with a transcendent power such as it had during the high medieval period. Rather, the Roman Church’s power to dictate the narrative of reality was derived from the wedding of the Western medieval political system and the Church’s transcendental truth claims. The result of such a union would inevitably be a

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political system endowed with a divine legitimacy and a religious system that was supported and enforced by worldly power. This wedding of institutions acted as a mutually reinforcing relationship where Monarchs were Monarchs because it was God’s will and the Church was a powerful institution because it was the bearer of God’s truth. The end result of such a relationship was a strongly propagated system of institutional legitimation where the Church’s truth claims were built into every facet of existence.

The first example of such a union came about as a result of the coronation of Charlemagne, King of the Franks, as Holy Roman Emperor. Due to a combination of his winning favour with Pope Leo III and the Byzantium Empress Irene becoming embroiled in a dispute regarding the iconoclastic nature of Byzantine Christianity, Charlemagne was able to position himself as the inheritor of the Imperial title. While the King gained no wealth or land from his crowning as Emperor on Christmas day 800 AD, the “title was of more lasting significance than any number of conquests; for it meant that, after more than four hundred years, there was once again an emperor in Western Europe.” This united Christendom, now under one ruler, would bring large swathes of the continent under the heading of the Holy Roman Empire. In doing so, he was able to unite multiple communities and realities under the one heading and therefore under

128 Norwich, Absolute Monarchs, 55-57.
129 Norwich, Absolute Monarchs, 57.
the shared conceptual machinery, as propagated by the politico-religious union between his court and the Papal institution.

This becomes obvious when what happened at the Christmas mass in Rome in 800CE is investigated. If it was the case, as written by Charlemagne's courtier and biographer, Einhard, that Pope Leo III crowned the ruler of Western Europe with a title that “he was far from wanting”, then theoretically the Pope had cemented the power given to the Papacy in the forged *Donation of Constantine*.\(^{131}\)

In giving Charlemagne the title of Emperor, he had given himself, and future Popes to come, the role of the endower of legitimate rulership. In other words, what the Pope really achieved was an implicit elevation over the Emperor of the West, which, in doing so, had asserted the Papacy’s superiority over the monarchical institutions that would characterise the high Middle Ages.\(^{132}\)

Regardless of whether this was the case, or that Charlemagne had in fact crowned himself, both the Church and the Frankish court gained equally due to the mutually beneficial relationship that divine authority gifted. The Papal institution had its worldly protector, the Holy Roman Empire had its divine legitimacy, and Western Europe had its institutionalised metanarrative. Due to the fundamental success of this endeavour, throughout the medieval period, monarchs sought the Church’s blessing in all of their endeavours and hoped to gain its recognition as legitimate Christian rulers in order to perpetuate the

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\(^{132}\) Norwich, *Absolute Monarchs*, 57.
model of institutional integration.\footnote{Mayr-Harting, “The West: The Age of Conversion (700-1050),” 101.} Therefore, as a result of the successes of Charlemagne’s model, the Church, with assistance from the medieval political system, was able to become the entity that determined the metanarrative, under which individual world-views where ordered.

The Reformation represents the period where this ability to dictate the fundamental metanarrative of existence was undermined. Prior to this, the Papacy and the ecclesiastical appendages were exclusively able to determine what constituted Christian truth-claims. For as Pope Innocent I stated, “any just pronouncement might be confirmed by all the authority of this See, and that the other Churches might from thence gather what they should teach.”\footnote{Pope Innocent I, “Innocent I, 401-417. On the Papal Authority,” in Documents of the Christian Church, 86.} This ability, due to the institutional wedding between the political and the religious systems, remained relatively consistent throughout the medieval period. The Church in Rome had retained its conceptual monopoly from Charlemagne’s coronation throughout the turbulent events of the high medieval period, specifically the Crusades and the major heresies, such as the Cathars and the Waldensians, up until Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to a door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg and birthed a hermeneutic revolution.\footnote{Mayr-Harting, “The West: The Age of Conversion (700-1050),” 101; Gregory, The Unintended Reformation, 2; Malcolm Lambert, Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002 [1977]), 113; James M. Kittleson, Luther the Reformer: The Story of the Man and His Career (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 2003 [1986]), 106.} The reason why these theses, and the movement that followed, were able to radically disturb the Church’s conceptual monopoly is twofold. Firstly, there was a growing
recognition of the gap between the doctrine of Christianity and the practice of ecclesiastical officials, which, according to Luther, "as a result, the whole of Christendom has fallen abominably." 136 So, rather than just being forgotten, these theses struck a chord with a wider range of people. 137 As such, a consensus of acute discontent with the pervading institutional arrangement was brought about. Secondly, the invention of the printing press was fundamental in both initiating the cry for reform and facilitating the hermeneutics of the Reformation, which acted to maintain the discontent with the pervading order of things. 138 Without the printing press, the distinct divide between the actions of ecclesiastical officials and the words of scripture would not have been as widely recognised as it came to be. 139 Furthermore, without the press, Luther's theses would have not reached as many people as they inevitably did. 140 Evidently, what these, and a range of other nuanced factors, achieved was that they brought the metanarrative, as perpetuated by the Catholic Church in Rome, to a point where it was no longer self-evident.

The fact that the Reformation movement became so widespread is evidence that the previously ‘objectivated’ ordering paradigm was no longer serving its purpose as the taken for granted underpinning of reality. Although, once this point was reached, the previous metanarrative was not simply replaced, as there

140 Marty, *Martin Luther: A Life*, 34.
was no ‘objective’ model to replace it. Beyond the united discontent with the Catholic Church, there was little agreement among the different parties seeking reformation about how this would actually be achieved. This becomes evident when the divide between the moderate reformers, such as Luther himself, is contrasted with some of its more radical components, such as Thomas Muntzer and the Anabaptists.¹⁴¹ For if it was the case that, as according to the principle of sola scriptura, scripture was the sole basis for determining Christian truth claims, then what interpretation of scripture was the correct one?¹⁴² This lack of a united ‘objective’ system was the reason why Protestant Christianity did not simply just replace the Roman interpretation as the over-arching metanarrative. The lack of a self-evident metanarrative, according to Berger and Luckmann, is all that is necessary to disrupt a conceptual machinery and, therefore, the broader institution, which it legitimates.¹⁴³ Therefore, as a result of the disruption of the previous Catholic metanarrative and the lack of a unified new one, the Reformation represents the event that disrupted the over-arching metanarrative of Western Christendom.

This shifting of the ordering principle of reality, away from the traditional one of Christendom, becomes apparent when we observe the point where Christian truth claims began to be segregated from the broader societally objectified experience. The most potent example of this comes in the form of the quest for a

system of knowledge that was not based on Christian doctrine.\textsuperscript{144} Prior to such a model being developed, all ‘knowledge’ of the natural world was filtered through Christian truth claims. This was the case as, prior to the first universities opening, ‘education’, as defined by the teaching of the classical categories of learning, took place primarily within the monasteries.\textsuperscript{145} Subsequently, due to the fact that Christian truth claims pervaded every facet of existence, universities, when they came about, were also fundamentally Christian in their mode of instruction and the students’ manner of living, which was essentially monastic.\textsuperscript{146} While the shared metanarrative was strong, new discoveries were easily rectified and normalised by the over-arching paradigm, as was the case with the integration of Aristotelian natural philosophy in the twelfth century.\textsuperscript{147} Only when the ordering system itself became problematic, did the broader mode of ‘knowing’ need to be replaced. In other words, as the truth claims, which were fundamentally wedded to medieval modes of ‘knowledge’, were brought into the realm of ‘subjective opinion’, it was necessary for a system of knowing, which was not dependent on religious belief, to be developed. As such, this ‘sectioning off’ of Christian beliefs from ‘knowledge’ represents the beginning of the shifting of the metanarrative, under which reality is ordered.

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\item[144] Margaret Jacob, \textit{The Enlightenment: A Brief History with Documents} (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2001), 42.
\end{enumerate}
Conclusion
Through undertaking this brief, but wide ranging, discussion of the ‘secular’, and therefore what is meant by ‘secularisation’, a point has been arrived at where these concepts should be clear. The first section of this chapter endeavoured to methodologically outline a model of secularisation that addresses the pitfalls that many other theories have been unable to avoid. Through such an endeavour, it was proposed that ‘secularisation’ represents the shifting of the metanarrative of reality. Where Christianity once was the primary ordering principle, under which all other conceptual machineries were rectified, ‘secularisation’ has meant that this is no longer the case. As a result of this shift, the power of traditional religiosity has waned regarding its ability to dictate the manner in which reality, and therefore society, is to be ordered.

Following this, the chapter has endeavoured to demonstrate how and when this shifting of the metanarrative came about. Following the rise of Charlemagne, the Church held an important role within the religio-political system of the medieval period. This union allowed the Roman Church to define the parameters of the ordering principle, which united all the culturally diverse groups of Europe under one over-arching worldview. Following the Reformation, this ability was disrupted due to the fact that the Latin Church’s truth claims were no longer taken to be self-evident. The principle of *sola scriptura* meant that the Church’s doctrinal parameters now had to compete with a range of differing interpretations regarding the lived Christian experience. As such, Christianity role as the ordering metanarrative was lost because its doctrine moved into the
realm of subjective belief. This becomes evident when observing Christian truth claims’ exclusion from ‘knowledge’ following the Reformation.

Following the methodological endeavours of the first part of this dissertation, we have arrived at a place where we can adequately discern a few important concepts. According to Berger and Luckmann’s constructivist system of institutional order, a ‘religion’ represents a conceptual machinery that provides legitimation for a given institutional order.\textsuperscript{148} According to the interpretation provided by this chapter, individual conceptual machineries, when groups with differing world-views are integrated into a single ordering system, are ordered under a metanarrative. This metanarrative, for the European world, has traditionally been that of Christianity, as propagated by the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{149} Following the Reformation, the ability to order the conceptual machineries of the diverse cultural groups, which constitute the broader European community, was disrupted. As such, any conceptual machinery, which was developed out of the metanarrative that emerged following the Reformation, can, in our definitional paradigm, be dubbed a ‘secular religion’.

\textsuperscript{148}Berger, \textit{The Sacred Canopy}, 32. \\
\textsuperscript{149}Gregory, \textit{The Unintended Reformation}, 21.
Part Two: Modernity, ‘Secular Religion’, and Economics

Chapter Four: The Mechanistic Metanarrative of Modernity

Introduction
Following the Reformation, Roman Catholic Christianity no longer had the ability to be the unifying element it once was. By bringing the metanarrative of Western Europe into a state of disrepute, the Reformers had assured that no longer could vast sways of Europe share the conceptual umbrella of old. Thus, Europe became once again a continent splintered by the Wars of Religion, where competing dogmatic truth claims demonstrated their true propensity for violence.\(^{150}\) If there was ever again to be a Europe wide consensus regarding the nature of reality, a new system of understanding the world needed to be developed. This chapter will specifically argue that this new system was a causally mechanistic world-view that was derived from the principle of ‘rationality’. Not only does this perspective of reality, such as Roman Christianity once did, lie at the heart of our political institutions, it also defines our day-to-day interaction and perspective with and of the world. For those who subscribe to this modern default-shared picture of reality, we are rational agents living amongst a sea of causal interactions that are governed by ultimate rules of nature. While it must be recognised that civility does break down between countries that prescribe to the same over-arching metanarrative, as was the case during the First and Second World Wars, in the same way that Catholicism provided a shared reality for the countries embroiled in conflict, these perspectives inform our modern conflict realities as much as they inform our perspective of a world at peace.

To adequately derive this metanarrative of modernity, a number of steps will need to be undertaken. Firstly, it is necessary to make explicit the problems that were brought about by the Reformation movement with regards to deriving a consensus regarding the ‘true’ nature of reality. Following from this, the rise of the causally mechanistic worldview will be accounted for through three distinct steps. The first stage involves the unification of mathematics with natural philosophy, through Galileo’s discoveries and formulations. The second stage was achieved by Descartes’ expansion of the role played by mathematics in deriving knowledge about the natural world. Out of such an application arose the mechanistic system, which we utilise today in order to understand reality. The final step for this metanarrative to be instituted came about through Spinoza’s application of a mechanistic worldview to elements of social interaction and systems of governance. By doing this, Spinoza influenced the development of a democratic political system, which would allow a mechanistic worldview to be institutionalised. As a result, this system was able to become the over-arching metanarrative of modernity.

‘Truth’ Interrupted
The Reformation resulted in a radical discontinuity in Christianity’s ability to provide the objective grounding for reality. No longer was the Church in Rome broadly accepted as God’s house on Earth, and no longer were its assertions able to proceed unchallenged. On the other side of the recently formed theological divide, the reformers’ interpretations of Christian truth were just as fallible. The theological disputes born out of hermeneutics resulted in a splintered front

151 Gregory, The Unintended Reformation, 82-83.
regarding the nature of ‘true’ Christianity. The ‘objective’ system of existence, which had survived since 800 CE, was now a matter of opinion and interpretation.

This now apparently ‘subjective’ nature becomes apparent when the process by which the various Protestant truth claims were arrived at is explicitly analysed. As previously stated, the first principle for garnering Christian truth during the Reformation lay in the ‘infallible’ holy word of scripture. The embracing of such a principle resulted in the papal institution being stripped of its ability to provide the definitive interpretation of God’s word and, therefore, it was also stripped of the authority to determine what specifically constituted Christian truth claims. According to Luther, this ability was lost due to the fact that, “we are all priests…and have all one faith, one Gospel, one Sacrament; how then should we not have the power of discerning and judging what is right or wrong in matters of faith?”

The only problem with such a principle, if there were not one final adjudicator on earth such as the Pope, is that there would inevitably be radically differing opinions on what was to be derived from scripture. As such, the unified cry from the reformers, which called for the creation of a system of Christianity that followed the word of God, was never to find a unified doctrine from the interpretation of scripture. A further point of dispute lay in the principle of sola scriptura itself. The Reformers could not agree on whether the ‘true’ Christian practice meant having a Church that strictly followed the Bible or a system that

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153 Luther, “The Appeal to the German Nobility,” in *Documents of the Christian Church*, 208.
retained certain inherited traditions.\textsuperscript{154} While magisterial reformers, such as Luther, Zwingli and Calvin, desired to retain traditional elements, such as the writings of the early Church Fathers, many desired to see them stripped from Christian practice and doctrine all together.\textsuperscript{155} Amongst the reformers, not only was the actual interpretation of the scriptures in dispute but also so was the question of whether Christian practice should be derived from scripture alone. Contrasting such a state with that of the period of ecclesiastical domination, it becomes apparent why such claims were relegated to the realm of ‘subjective belief’.

The second principle, which was utilised to derive the true way in which Christianity was to be practiced, was that of divine inspiration. For many, truth claims regarding the nature of God went beyond the simple reading of scripture; they lay in direct communion with his word. According to Zwingli, one of the reformers who was most vocal about his communion with the divine, “[i]f we are to receive and to understand anything, it must be give from above.”\textsuperscript{156} Such sentiments were also echoed by many of his rival contemporaries.\textsuperscript{157} Reliance on individual inspiration from above was always going to be a point of contention, as there was no real way to prove that your inspiration was truly derived from God. As such, the claims to spiritual endowment were multiple and frequently in complete opposition to each other. One such example of dispute is that had

\textsuperscript{157} Gregory, \textit{The Unintended Reformation}, 97.
between Zwingli and Luther. Zwingli wrote that, “I know for certain that God teaches me, because I have experienced the fact of it.”\textsuperscript{158} Luther responded, “[b]eware of Zwingli and avoid his books as the hellish poison of Satan, for the man is completely perverted and has completely lost Christ.”\textsuperscript{159} If hermeneutic interpretation did not produce enough disagreement, claims to divine inspiration definitely did. As such, post-Reformation Christianity was marred by persistent and vibrant disagreement, which led to a range of vicious conflicts, such as the Thirty Years War.\textsuperscript{160}

In the face of such dispute and chaotic uncertainty, in order to adequately order and make sense of the world, it was necessary for a new ‘objective’ system of reality to be developed and implemented. For, as quickly became apparent in the wake of the wars of Reformation, Europe could not continue as a somewhat unified whole with such radical disagreements regarding the nature of reality.\textsuperscript{161} As such, there was a need to dispose of the dogmatic adherences of the past, with the goal of creating new systems that did not produce differing knowledge depending on an individual’s particular religious affiliation.

\textsuperscript{158}Zwingli, “Of the Clarity and Certainty of the word of God,” 90.
\textsuperscript{159}Gregory, \textit{The Unintended Reformation}, 98.
The first major watershed for this process of creating a novel system of knowing arose with Galileo (1564-1642).\textsuperscript{162} Like many Renaissance mathematicians, Galileo sought to gain an equal place for his science alongside the Church ordained Aristotelian natural philosophy, which, like the Church, had a conceptual monopoly regarding knowledge of reality. More specifically, Galileo sought to reform natural philosophy as to include mathematics within the methods of deriving knowledge of and from the world.\textsuperscript{163} The traditional view of mathematics, as held by most natural philosophers, was that it was a lesser science. Rather than describing and attaining the true ‘form’, in the Aristotelian sense of the word, of things, it only dealt with quantities and measurements. The mathematical model was therefore not thought of as overly important in the process of deducing the principles of reality.\textsuperscript{164}

As such, the importance of Galileo’s \textit{History and Demonstrations Concerning Sunspots} (1613) is twofold.\textsuperscript{165} Firstly, within it, he successfully championed the empirical observation of events, or objects, in order to attain knowledge regarding the ‘form’ of the subject in question. Secondly, and in the process of achieving the first, he successfully undermined Aristotelian natural philosophy, which the Church has become so firmly wedded to. These points were reached through his being the victor in a dispute regarding the nature of sunspots, which

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\textsuperscript{163} Dear, \textit{Revolutionizing the Sciences}, 71.
\end{footnotesize}
he was embroiled in with the Jesuit mathematician, Christopher Scheiner.

According to Aristotelian natural philosophy, the celestial realm was perfect and eternally unchanging in its form of motion, that being it’s orbiting in perfect circles.\textsuperscript{166} Scheiner had thought the observed sunspots to be objects orbiting the sun that were to small to be, in the Aristotelian sense, ‘properly ordered’.\textsuperscript{167} Galileo on the other hand concluded that these sunspots were manifestations on the sun’s surface itself. Using empirical measurement, Galileo drew the conclusion that when the sunspots appeared near the edges of the sun, there was an apparent shrinkage regarding their diameter.\textsuperscript{168} What resulted was that Galileo proved that it was possible to derive conclusions regarding the nature of manifestations through empirical measurement and mathematical calculation, and by doing such he successfully undermined Aristotelian natural philosophy. Such achievements were instrumental in laying the ground for the mechanistic model, which would take the place of scripturally informed Aristotelian natural philosophy.\textsuperscript{169}

\textbf{The Metanarrative of Modernity}

The model that rose in the wake of Galileo’s work, and the Reformation that had caused the ‘truth’ of old to no longer be self-evident, provided a new way of understanding the world that was divorced from the over-arching institutions of

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\textsuperscript{167} Dear, \textit{Revolutionizing the Sciences: European Knowledge and its Ambitions, 1500-1700}, 69.
\textsuperscript{168} Galilei, “History and Demonstrations Concerning Sunspots (1613),” 97.
\textsuperscript{169} Robert Pasnau, \textit{Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 290.
\end{flushleft}
This was a ‘rationally’ derived system of mechanistic causal interactions, as articulated by the endeavours of a range of thinkers, including Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz. By ‘rational’, we are invoking the traditional meaning as championed by Descartes. He specifically proposed that ‘rationality’ was the process by which humanity utilised their mental capabilities to derive the underlying assumed tenets on which systems are constructed. According to Descartes, through such an endeavour, humanity would strip away the false truth on which our conceptions of reality are built. Such an exercise was distinctly contrasted with knowledge of the world that was informed by traditional religious sources. In order to make sense of the world, such a mode of deriving knowledge gave birth to a ‘causal’ and ‘mechanistic’ perspective of reality, as epitomised by Newton’s laws. This view of reality, in the face of the metaphysical disorder provided by the post-Reformation intellectual landscape, proposed that the world is governed by infallible laws that dictate the manner in which reality unfolds. Such a view of reality was extended to the totality of human existence due to Spinoza’s ethical and political developments, which were underpinned by his one substance doctrine. This conceptual leap allowed rationality to inform the rights based model, which underpins the modern

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operation of the state. As such, due to the institutional wedding between this model and the state, the system rose to the status of metanarrative following the European political revolutions of the eighteenth century.

Following Galileo, the next thinker to contribute to this rise of the metanarrative of ‘rationality’ was Descartes. As Descartes served as a soldier in the Thirty Years War, he witnessed the problems that conflicting dogmatic truth claims could produce first-hand. In light of his experiences, Descartes sought to build a system of knowledge that provided absolute truth in the way that hermeneutics evidently could not. In order to achieve such a system, Descartes asserted that “everything should be completely overturned” and that knowledge “should begin again from the most basic foundations.” As such, Descartes rejected the traditional premises of Aristotelian natural philosophy. Rather than relying on the traditional interpretations of others, he proposed that the world should be known through sola ration, or by reason alone.

Through his meditations, Descartes came to develop a system of understanding the natural world that was wholly novel when compared to that of traditional Aristotelian scholars. Through the guise of Descartes’ dualism, which

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177 Gregory, The Unintended Reformation, 114.
179 Descartes, “Meditations on First Philosophy,” in Meditations and Other Metaphysical Writings, 18.
180 Gregory, The Unintended Reformation, 115.
proposed that the world of thought and the physical world were comprised of wholly different substances, he proposed that matter was essentially dead weight that was driven by mechanistic interactions.\textsuperscript{182} For if all properties that were not mathematical in nature, such as colour, taste, smell and so on, were part of the world of thought and not the physical one, then all interactions in the world could be described through purely physical descriptions.\textsuperscript{183} In other words, since characteristics of objects were not part of the physical world, then only mathematical elements of matter need be dealt with when describing natural processes. As such, Descartes championed a view of the world that reduced natural phenomena to the interaction of differing quantities of blocks of matter, which behaved in line with specific mathematically derivable laws.

This orderly system of causal interactions, which were governed by divinely ordained rules of nature, proved incredibly popular and influential among the Enlightenment thinkers.\textsuperscript{184} The system’s appeal, rather than lying in the inalienable truth that Descartes sought, lay in the benefits that could be reaped from its application.\textsuperscript{185} For if elements of ‘subjective’ human experience were stripped from the calculation of reality, the world appeared orderly and easily calculable. One only need look around at the mechanical marvels that humanity has reaped since Descartes’ meditations to be sure of such a statement.


\textsuperscript{184} Israel, \textit{The Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750}, 29.

\textsuperscript{185} Dear, \textit{Revolutionizing the Sciences: European Knowledge and its Ambitions, 1500-1700}, 97.
Due to the fundamental success of Descartes’ system, such mechanistic perspectives began to be applied to realms other than that of natural phenomena. What resulted was a system that applied mechanistic principles to social interactions. Such a development was facilitated primarily thanks to Spinoza’s monism. While Spinoza was greatly indebted to Descartes, in terms of a mathematized perspective on reality, the philosophical tenets of his system differ greatly. As a result, Spinoza’s philosophical system lies at the heart of our current political worldview in a way that Descartes’ does not, as Descartes’ system is primarily concerned with the material objects of reality.

Where Spinoza and Descartes fundamentally differ is in regards to their perspective of the nature of matter and thought in the physical world. While Descartes believed that thought and matter were two wholly different substances, hence the phrase “I think, therefore I am”, Spinoza famously derived that everything shared a fundamental nature. In his posthumously published magnum opus, *Ethics* (1677), he asserted that mind and body, God and nature were all of the same fundamental essence because “besides God, no substance can be...conceived.” In light of such a belief, Spinoza contends that, since all parts of reality are fundamentally intertwined, then all aspects of nature are governed by one set of rules. Such a belief, while still obviously mechanistic, is

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at complete odds with the dualism of Descartes.\footnote{Steven Nadler, \textit{A Book Forged in Hell: Spinoza's Scandalous Treatise and the Birth of the Secular Age} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 121.} For in the world of Descartes, God still functioned as a definitive Being who possessed divine providence and will. As such, within Descartes’ system, religious institutions and scripture were still very much a source of authority. Spinoza's system, with its doctrine of monism, prescribed that since God was ultimately part of all substances, then any claims to superiority based on divine providence were totally invalid.\footnote{Jonathan Israel, \textit{A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 33.} Such a claim, if taken to heart, has the ability to completely undermine the existing ecclesiastical and political order. In light of this, Spinoza decisively contributed to the construction of a political philosophy that was both mechanistic in its perspective and, due to such a perspective, espoused equality in its doctrine.\footnote{Nancy K. Levene, \textit{Spinoza’s Revelation: Religion, Democracy, and Reason} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 143.}

Through making such a conceptual leap, and applying causality to a democratic political system, Spinoza laid the ground for rationality to be politically institutionalised, and therefore become the metanarrative of modernity.\footnote{Jonathan Israel, \textit{Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 43.} While the political liberalism of Locke and Hobbes was also influential in facilitating the political revolutions of the eighteenth century, Spinoza’s doctrine of inalienable equality and ‘rights’ proved a decisive influence on the evolution of the current
incarnations of democracy. Such an influence is made explicit by historian Jonathan Israel. As a scholar who writes prolifically on the Enlightenment, he contends that there were two very specific streams of thought throughout the period. In his view, there were those who subscribed to the moderate Enlightenment, which was characterised by a dualistic perspective akin to Descartes’, and a radical stream, who subscribed to Spinoza’s monism. Those who were part of the moderate stream, such as Hobbes and Voltaire, due to their belief in the difference between the spiritual and the physical, were supportive of the existing status quo as, if they were explicitly aligned with the Church, it was divinely ordained or, if they believed the masses to have less rational ability than the nobility, it kept them in line. In distinct contrast, those who subscribed to Spinoza’s monism were devoutly democratic because, since everything in nature shared a fundamental essence, no man should be elevated above the other. The perspective is summarised by Spinoza’s declaration, within his Theological-Political Treatise (1670) that “[h]uman society can thus be formed of natural right...”, in the sense that it does not hinder the individuals’ natural right “to do all it has the power to do.” He concluded that such a right is solely preserved

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197 Israel, Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752, 250.
within “such a society...called democracy.” Spinoza’s utilisation of the conception of ‘rights’ is furthered by a contrast between his system and that of Hobbes. According to Spinoza:

I always preserve the natural rights in its entirety, and hold that the sovereign power in a state has a right over a subject only in proportion to the excess of its power over that subject; that is always the case in the state of nature.

Evidently Spinoza, and therefore those who prescribed to the radical Enlightenment, held a view of society that was mechanistically democratic due to inherent natural laws, in the form of the ‘rights’ of the individual. Due to the success and influence that such a system had, as is evident in the tenets of the American and French Revolution, it is safe to contend that modern democracy is an inherently mechanistic system that views individuals as equal agents with inalienable rights. Due to the fact that the modern Western political system is informed by such a view of reality, the metanarrative of rationality was able to be institutionalised.

Conclusion
As previously mentioned, the reason why Christianity became the dominant metanarrative of the medieval period was that it became firmly wedded with the political sphere. Such an imbrication allowed that particular conceptual machinery to order and inform the totality of differing lived experiences within European Christendom. The institutionalisation of a democratically aligned

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199 Spinoza, Theological-Political Treatise, 200.
‘rights’ based model achieves the same ends. Rather than the rules of our existence being divinely ordained, they are now informed by laws that are apparently inherent in the nature of humanity. Such a system paints an ordered picture of reality that is akin to the one of a divinely instituted order. Where it was once asserted that God wills things to be so, it is now believed to be Newton’s laws governing the universe. Where we once believed that social hierarchies are the way they are due to the divine will, we now, in theory, concede that they follow from the innate equality of humanity. In other words, in the face of the disruption of reality, that the Reformation gifted, a mechanistic system was devised in order to paint a coherent picture of reality that did not depend on your particular religious affiliation. Spinoza’s endeavours allowed such a system to be utilised in the description of not only material interaction, but also that of human society. Such a development thereby allowed the system to be institutionalised, and thus to become wholly self-evident. Subsequently, it can be concluded that the metanarrative of modernity consist of a mechanistic system of rules and laws.
Chapter Five: The Invisible Hand – The ‘Secular Religion’ of Economics

Introduction
In the current Presidential election in the United States, ‘jobs’ and the ‘economy’ are the two catchcries; in the Eurozone, economists are crunching the numbers to reach pragmatic solutions over the current debt crisis; and in Australia, cancer-like economic growth needs to be assured for the Labour government to be re-elected. In the same way that the ecclesiastical officials advised rulers of how they should run their kingdom, so now do economists. They dictate what social spending can be afforded, they advise on what strategic resources are necessary for growth, and the devise strategies regarding the goal of gaining full employment for the country. In short, economics determines how the state, and therefore the shared reality, is run. What should be immediately evident is that economics is a theoretical abstraction that underpins our modern existence. In light of our previous methodological undertaking, a legitimating system of this order is evidently able to attain the status of a conceptual machinery and, therefore, a religion. Furthermore, in light of the specific classification of what ‘secular’ means, this system can be called a ‘secular religion’. This chapter intends to place such a statement beyond a doubt.

To adequately achieve this task it is necessary to undertake a number of steps. Firstly, it is important to define economics explicitly, and to provide a brief history of economic thought. Following this, the system of thought dubbed ‘classical economics’, as primarily developed by Adam Smith, will be specifically
shown to be a secular religion. Finally, the neo-liberal economic paradigm, as it is the current dominant paradigm of economic thought, shall be shown to be a secular religion. Through an analysis of these two systems, it will therefore be shown that economics adheres to this dissertation’s definition of a secular religion.

The Rise of Economics

According to the definitive textbook on economics of the early 20th century:

Political Economy and Economics is a study of mankind in the ordinary business of life; it examines that part of individual and social action which is most closely connected with the attainment and with the use of the material requisites of wellbeing.

Evidently, economics has not and cannot serve such a purpose for the totality of human existence. Rather, such a statement is specific to a particular time and place where economics’ prized institution, the market, is an everyday feature of reality. As such, economics specifically owes its formulation to the creation of a ‘market’, in the modern sense, in the form of mercantilist trade. This section will seek to provide a brief historical overview of the rise of this discipline and its appendage, the market.

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Prior to delving into the rise of this discipline, it is essential that the specific nature of economics is made explicit. According to John Kenneth Galbraith, the discipline of economics is one that concerns itself specifically with a number of specific issues. The first of these issues are the Theory of Value and the matters of distribution.\textsuperscript{206} The Theory of Value specifically contends with the question of devising what determines the price paid for goods and services rendered.\textsuperscript{207} In contrast, distribution contends with the way in which the gains from these goods and services are distributed.\textsuperscript{208} As the discipline has evolved, it has come to deal with the broader issues that derive from value and distribution. These include the questions of equitability of distribution, as taken on by Karl Marx, questions of overall economic performance of a country, questions of employment, such as how to attain full employment, and investigation of the money supply and inflation.\textsuperscript{209} As is befitting the metanarrative of modernity, economics contends with these issues in a mechanistic fashion, which applies rules of operation to these social phenomena as if they were purely physical, and therefore describable by universal laws.\textsuperscript{210} As such, what is meant by economics is the branch of enquiry that develops rules and theories to account for questions of the value of goods, distribution of wealth, and the issues that are intimately intertwined with these primary ones.

\textsuperscript{206} Galbraith, \textit{A History of Economics}, 6.
\textsuperscript{208} Galbraith, \textit{A History of Economics}, 6.
Prior to Adam Smith’s systematic analysis of the Theory of Value and the distribution of wealth, there had been no such enquiry as there had not been the historical conditions present to warrant one. Prior to the rise of mercantilist trade at the end of the fourteenth century, there had simply not been a widespread self-assigning institution of price-determination as most trade was conducted on an individual-to-individual basis.²¹¹ According to Galbraith:

the market, though growing in importance with the passing centuries, was a minor aspect of life. The great rural masses of men and women grew, made of killed what they ate or wore and surrendered a part of it to a hierarchy of lords or masters for their right to do so...²¹²

Not to completely detract from the notion that there was a medieval incarnation of the market, but it is just the case that it was not a factor in everyday existence and, thus, was not something theoretically dwelled upon.

The first real period where markets, as we know them today, were a major factor in existence came about during the era of mercantilism.²¹³ Due to the bitter conflicts resulting from the Reformation, feudal blocks, instead of being united under the sway of Rome, coalesced into pseudo-national fronts that prescribed their loyalties to particular over-arching lords or monarchs.²¹⁴ This new organisational structure, coupled with the advancements of sea exploration, as typified by Columbus’ discovery of the New World in 1492 and Vasco da Gama’s trip along the Cape of Good Hope in 1497-1498, caused international trade to

essentially double during the period 1500-1800. The system that specifically facilitated this marked increase in trade would come to be referred to as mercantilism. The fundamental aim of such a system was to overcome what modern economist would call ‘transaction costs’. A ‘transaction cost’ is essentially any cost incurred in the process of propagating specific economic activity, in this case international trade. In light of this concept, Dani Rodrik contends that, “the bargain that a sovereign struck with private companies under mercantilism was essentially this: You, the company, pay for the institutional infrastructure, and in return I will allow you to make monopoly profits from the resulting trade. As such, the mercantilist system was characterised by state-ordained trading companies who were granted specific rights over areas, and monopolies over certain products. These state-ordained facilitators of trade in turn set the rules, and therefore the foundations, for what later be called ‘the market’ to propagate.

The intellectual bridge between the mercantilism of the early colonial period, and the era of economics proper, was brought about by the cementing of the notions of a mechanistic reality, which operates according to specific laws, within analysis of wealth and trade. Such a task was initially achieved by the group of French thinkers, who would later come to be known as the

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Physiocrats.\textsuperscript{219} According to Charles Gide, the Physiocrats were “the first to realise that all social facts are linked together in the bonds of inevitable laws, which individuals and Governments would obey if they were once made known to them.”\textsuperscript{220} In direct contrast with the policies of mercantilism, the Physiocrats were primarily concerned with the finances of the state and the maintenance of independent agricultural.\textsuperscript{221} Such a stance came about due to their belief and reliance on the conception of the interrelated nature between social interaction and natural mechanistic laws. It was posited that, since nature is naturally multiplying, the only way to derive an economic surplus was through well-controlled agriculture, which in turn supported the natural social hierarchy.\textsuperscript{222} As such, the key concept that the Physiocrats developed is the idea that a theoretical system can describe and support the ‘natural’ mode of operation. They extended the notions of infallible laws to social manifestations, and, in doing such, laid the grounds for the all-encompassing system of economics to be developed.\textsuperscript{223}

The first, and most influential, theoretical formulation of economics proper comes in the form of Adam Smith’s articulation of market principles in his canonical text, \textit{An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations} (1776). Smith’s theoretical endeavours were influenced by two particular developments. Firstly, in the wake of the scientific revolution and the rise of a

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\item[221] Galbraith, \textit{A History of Economics}, 50.
\item[223] Galbraith, \textit{A History of Economics}, 56.
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world ordered by natural laws, Smith’s system sought to extend such order to the world of commerce. Secondly, in the late eighteenth century, the Industrial Revolution was beginning to stir. In light of these developments, Smith sought to articulate a system of commerce that would suit the conditions created by the division of labour in the factory setting, which is famously demonstrated through Smith’s analysis of the pin factory. As the remaining classical period merely represents the further articulation and explication of Smith’s principles, regarding our endeavour, there is no need to currently proceed further. Evidently, what eventuated out of Smith’s grounding was a theoretical system that still orders, and describes, commerce in the twenty-first century.

In light of such a brief overview, some fundamental points must be stressed. Smith’s system represents a theoretical formulation specific to its time. Prior to the advent of mechanised production and the division of labour, the market, as we know it today, did not exist. This is the case because there was nowhere near the number of goods to be distributed, and, thus, there was no need for multiple channels of sale or fundamental division of labour. In the wake of the developments provided by the mechanistic worldview, cheap manufactured goods became a fundamental part of existence, as made explicit by Smith’s analysis of the goods that sustain the average worker. These developments combined with the providential perspective regarding the development of

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humanity, which is characteristic of Smith's thought, brought about this articulation of 'market principles', which in turn snowballed to create the 'market' itself.\textsuperscript{228} Keeping the endeavour of the first chapter in mind, rather than Economic doctrine being an all-encompassing transcendent truth, it must be recognised that Smith's system is a particular 'truth' for a particular period.

\textbf{An Inquiry into the Smithian Paradigm: The Religious Nature of Classical Economics}

In light of such insight, this section will classify the system known as 'classical economics', as primarily developed by Adam Smith, as being a secular religion. Having spent the first half of this work dealing with the concepts of 'secular' and 'religion', the path has been adequately laid for such a task to be undertaken. Nonetheless, prior to continuing, it is necessary for us to briefly recount the definitional paradigm within which this task lies. Concerning the term 'secular', according to Chapter Three, what is meant is a conceptual machinery, or worldview, that has spawned out of the metanarrative of modernity. Regarding the contentious term 'religion', according to our constructivist methodology, it is a conceptual machinery that acts as a legitimating force for a particular symbolic-universe. In other words, a religion is a particular theoretical system that acts to legitimate, or propagate, a particular order to the world. Specifically, according to Berger, “[r]eligion legitimates so effectively because it relates the precarious reality constructions of empirical societies with ultimate reality.”\textsuperscript{229}

As such, this section will argue that classical economics represents a theoretical formulation that has spawned from the metanarrative of modernity, and

\textsuperscript{229} Berger, \textit{The Sacred Canopy}, 32.
legitimates a particular socially ordained order to the world, which is related to an ultimate reality. In order to demonstrate this, each of the above characteristics will need to be addressed. Firstly, the ‘secular’ aspect will be addressed, by demonstrating that classical economics operates according to the premise that commerce can be deciphered and predicted through the use of infallible laws. Secondly, in order to demonstrate the systems’ legitimation of a particular order of the world, the mechanism of the market, known as the ‘invisible hand’, will be addressed in light of its all-encompassing nature and the fact that it promotes an apparently ‘ultimate-reality’. At the conclusion of such an analysis, classical economics shall be conclusively identified as being a ‘secular religion’.

The secular nature of Smith’s system should be truly self-evident. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasis its specific relation to the metanarrative of modernity, and therefore with our particular definition of ‘secular’. As is made abundantly clear in his essay, “The History of Astronomy” (1795), Smith was a dedicated proponent of the casually mechanistic worldview as developed by Descartes and Newton.230 As such, this perspective of reality underpins his moral and economic philosophy. Specifically within Smith’s economic formulations, there is the belief in a ‘natural’ mode of operation for human existence. Rather than ‘natural’ simply meaning unencumbered, Smith utilises the word in a way that is typical of Descartes’ and Newton’s ‘laws of nature’. Following in the tradition of seeking to apply a scientific approach to social interactions, as most famously undertaken

by his fellow Scotsman David Hume in his *A Treatise on Human Nature* (1739-40), Smith characterised commerce as being governed by laws, which, if left unencumbered, would bring about certain outcomes. The most evident displays of these kinds of laws come in the form of Smith’s concept of human nature, in regards to commerce. Smith states that:

The division of labour, from which so many advantages are derived, is not originally the effect of any human wisdom... It is the necessary, through very slow and gradual consequence of a certain propensity in human nature... the propensity to truck, barter and exchange.

Smith’s broader system of market equilibrium is built on the foundation provided by this apparently ‘natural law’ of human nature. In the same way that the principles of gravity, when applied to the human body, still dictate its fundamental mode of operation, so too does the apparent propensity to barter influence the overall market system. The modern notions of demand being met by supply, and the natural equilibrium this brings, are tied in with the natural law to barter. As such, Smith presents a system that is mechanistic in the sense that it is governed by natural laws of human nature, which are in turn applied to the broader system. Therefore, it can be said that Smith’s theoretical formulation corresponds to the particular definition of ‘secular’ as presented in Chapter Four.

Adam Smith’s mechanistic model of commerce is not simply a theoretical abstraction; rather, it is an all-encompassing system that proclaims to describe, decipher, and thereby legitimate a higher ‘truth’ and understanding of reality.

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Smith’s system was not intended in the secular nature with which it has become linked. Rather, in keeping with Smith’s Newtonian perspective on God, his system is intertwined with a divine notion of providence.\textsuperscript{233} This relation should become evident when Smith’s famed ‘invisible hand’ is properly dwelled upon. This concept is only explicitly mentioned by name three times within the writings of Smith; nonetheless, these times are all in support of a naturally guided ethical state.\textsuperscript{234} As stated previously, Smith’s system is underpinned by what he believes to be a fundamental aspect of human nature, that being the propensity to barter. Built into this natural tendency is the desire to serve one’s own interests. According to Smith, for an individual seeking the staples of life:

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\text{[I]t is in vain for him to expect it from their benevolence only. He will more likely prevail if he can interest their self-love in his favour, and show them that it is for their advantage to do for him what he requires of them.}\textsuperscript{235}
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He continues that, “[i]t is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest.”\textsuperscript{236} Taking this thought to the broader macro scale, Smith concludes that wealth and goods are most cost-effectively distributed when these natural propensities are left to their own devices. For Smith, through the “study of his own advantage”, a worker seeks to be employed in the service that is greatest to

the broader society. In regards to producers, Smith proposes that since the manufacturers and merchants have a natural propensity to sell at home, they will sell what there is adequate demand for at home, and what is not desired will be sold elsewhere, where there is adequate demand. As such, Smith concludes that:

By preferring the support of the domestic to that of foreign industry, he intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as may other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention.

These propensities of the market, combined with the natural price adjustments present in an unencumbered economy, will lead to the greatest shared prosperity due to the cheaper prices of goods, adequate employment, and adequate profits. As such, Smith’s system proposes that commerce produces the greatest moral outcome when the ‘natural’ order is left to its own devices.

What should be apparent, is that within Smith’s conception of the natural order is a system that proclaims and legitimates a certain action, or way of living, as being ordained by some sort of ultimate reality. Such a view becomes clear when the above sentiments are placed within the context of Smith’s moral philosophy, as outlined in *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). Two passages are of critical importance. The first states that:

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In every part of the universe we observe means adjusted with the nicest artifice to the ends which they are intended to produce, and admire how everything is contrived for advancing the two great purposes of nature, the support of the individual and the propagate of the species.\textsuperscript{241}

The second passage of importance is more directly related to commerce and economic order. Regarding the consumption of goods by the rich:

They consume little more than the poor, and in spite their natural selfishness and rapacity...they divide with the poor the produce of all their improvements. They are led by an invisible hand to make nearly the same distribution of the necessaries of life, which would have been made, had the earth been divided into equal proportions among all its inhabitants, and thus without intending it, without knowing it, advance the interest of society.\textsuperscript{242}

Evidently, due to his belief in a Newtonian providence, Smith is assured that the actions within the world are directed by a divine force to produce the best possible outcome. Such sentiments are obviously apparent within the first quotation. The second quotation extends such a belief to commerce, and, in doing such, proselytizes the belief that in acting in our own self-interest, the world will naturally produce a divinely endowed equilibrium. In regards to a constructivist definition of religion, Smith's system of commerce utilises an apparent definition of an ultimate reality to legitimise the inequality of wealth around him. Due to a providential belief, he evidently believes that humanity acting in its own self-interest will improve the shared lived experience of everyone. In light of such an

\textsuperscript{241} Adam Smith, \textit{Theory of Moral Sentiments} (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007 [1759]), 87.

\textsuperscript{242} Smith, \textit{Theory of Moral Sentiments}, 187.
assertion, it should be evident that Smith's system is religious in nature as “it relates the precarious reality constructions of empirical societies with ultimate reality.” As such, Smith’s system, according to our definitional paradigm, is religious in nature.

While it is not possible to delve into Smith's underlying thought patterns, it is possible to analyse his circumstances. Smith was raised by his Calvinist Mother, he signed the Calvinist Westminster confession when he took the chair in Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow, and he was deeply influenced by the thought of Newton. Invoking Weber's interpretation of Calvinism and the fact that God's favour is demonstrated through worldly achievements, it can be discerned that Smith's philosophical system was developed in light of such beliefs of Calvinistic providence. These beliefs were in turn complemented and systematised, or 'secularised', by his affinity with the Newtonian systems. What such a perspective produced was not only a notion of universal order, but also a system that legitimised the harsh realities of life in the late eighteenth century. Smith was able to observe the suffering around him and be assured that, within this apparently inequitable world, over-arching forces were at work to right the wrongs. In short, Smith developed a system that was a legitimization of the highest order. Not only did it legitimise self-interest, but it also legitimised the whole inequitable system of commerce that was propagated by the colonial

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243 Berger, The Sacred Canopy, 32.
enterprise. He created a religious system, albeit a secular one, that described and justified an apparently ‘ultimate reality’ within the exploitation of the early industrial economic order. As such, there is no doubt that, within our definitional paradigm, the classical economics of Adam Smith is representative of a ‘secular’ religious system.

Capitalism and Freedom: The Religious Nature of Modern Economics
In Britain, the ideological parameters of Smith’s system became firmly institutionalised, in the form of a neoclassical economic system, following the overturning of the tariff on the importation of grains in 1846. Such a development, through ideological pressure, eventually resulted in the broad liberalisation of continental economies during the 1860s. During this period, the logical and concise arguments for a Smithian model legitimised unregulated international trade, domestic commerce, and, following the institution of the gold standard, flow of gold in and out of countries. As Rodrik makes explicit, this regime of international liberalisation was eventually untenable due to its impact on domestic producers and the distribution of wealth. As such, it came to an end on the continent in the late 1870s, but was maintained in non-European countries through imperial force.

Nonetheless, one fundamental aspect of the European economic system remained liberalised, that being the financial system in the form of the Gold Standard. What this meant was that capital could flow freely from one country to

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another as every European country allowed for their currency to be converted, by a set ratio, into gold.\textsuperscript{250} This system, much like Smith’s liberalisation of trade, was believed to naturally correct trade imbalances due to a decrease in the amount of currency in circulation.\textsuperscript{251} The ultimate collapse in the liberalised monetary system came about during the 1930s in the form of the Great Depression. As a result, the Smithian classical liberalism, which was no longer a self-evident description of the way the world worked, was replaced by the mixed economy as proposed by John Maynard Keynes.\textsuperscript{252}

The Keynesian epoch of government intervention, in order to dampen economic downturns, met the same fate as its neoclassical liberal forebear. The 1970s, due to a range of factors, was a decade characterised by economic stagnation, high inflation, and high rates of unemployment in developed countries.\textsuperscript{253} The Keynesian system of well-regulated markets was no longer self-evident, and, as such, there was a need for a new paradigm.\textsuperscript{254} The system that rose to take the position of old hegemonic economic discourse was that of neoliberalism. Accordingly, this is the paradigm that will be dealt with in this section.

\textsuperscript{250} Rodrik, \textit{The Globalization Paradox}, 34-35.
\textsuperscript{253} David Harvey, \textit{A Brief History of Neoliberalism} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 12.
The fundamental tenets of the neoliberal system are remarkably similar to that of Smith's liberal paradigm. In the same way that Smith believed markets to be self-regulating entities that were guided by a state of moral equilibrium, so too do the main figures of the neoliberal paradigm, such as Milton Friedman and Friedrich von Hayek.\(^{255}\) Regardless of such similarities, these are two different systems that have arisen out of different circumstances and different streams of thought. Where Smith's system is influenced by the concept of divine providence and the notion of a mechanistic like moral equilibrium, the neoliberal model is somewhat different regarding its underlying premises, primarily due to the Cold War context in which it arose. The elements of mechanistic like moral equilibrium remain, but the concept of providence is replaced by the catchcry for ‘freedom’.\(^{256}\) Bound up within such a simplistic rallying point is the fundamental belief that with economic freedom comes an existence free of coercive forces.\(^{257}\) As such, the neoliberal system prescribes a similar role for markets as a Smithian system, albeit for subtly different reasons.

In light of the above introduction, this section will primarily concern itself with the task of designating modern neoliberal economic doctrine as being religious in nature. Following on from the previous section, there is no need to designate it as being ‘secular’ in nature as it is directly influenced by Smith’s system, and is therefore evidently ‘secular’. As such, this section will specifically concern itself with the ‘religious’ nature of this dogma. In order to achieve this, it is necessary

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\(^{255}\) Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 20.


to identify neoliberalism as a system that legitimates a particular course of action for individuals and other actors, that being un-bridled self-interest, through the relation to an ultimate reality. In Smith’s case, the ultimate reality is intertwined with a divinely ordained providential order. In contrast, the neoliberal paradigm’s ‘ultimate reality’ lies within the ultimate goal of attaining unbridled human freedom. Through the combination of these two factors, the Neoliberal economic paradigm will be demonstrated to be thoroughly religious in nature.

For neoliberalism to achieve ‘religious’ status, within our definitional paradigm, it is first necessary to make explicit its role as a legitimating system. As stated above, both in Smith’s system and the neoliberal paradigm, self-interest is the core principle, and, is therefore the form of action that is legitimated. This becomes evident when Milton Friedman’s core principle for the market economy is reflected upon. He states that the central tenant of the market economy is that “[i]ndividuals co-operate with others because they can in this way satisfy their own wants more effectively.”258 Such an implicit ode to Smith is complemented by much more explicit recognition in Free to Choose: A Personal Statement (1979). In the introduction to this text, Friedman states that “Adam Smith’s key insight was that both parties to an exchange can benefit and that, so long as cooperation is strictly voluntary, no exchange will take place unless both parties benefit.”259 The quotation hinges on the notion that self-interest is the mode by

258 Friedman, Capitalism and Freedom, 137.
which humanity can achieve mutual benefit in all facets of life. As such, both systems act to legitimate the pursuit of self-interest.

Regardless of the ends, the ideological means, in regards to the ‘ultimate’ reality that the legitimation is bound to, for this shared endorsement are markedly different. Smith’s championing of self-interest stems from his belief in a conception of a divinely ordained providence, which is influenced by his Calvinist and Newtonian ideological commitments. Rather than a belief in some sort of divine providence, the neoliberal standpoint is influenced by a belief in the supreme right and supreme benefit for broader society of human ‘freedom’. This belief, moving beyond the titles of texts within the neoliberal canon such as Friedman’s *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962) and Von Hayek’s *The Constitution of Liberty* (1960), is made explicit through the founding statement of the Mont Pelerin Society. This society consisted of group of economists, philosophers and historians who were devout adherents of the philosophy of Friedrich Von Hayek. Notable members included Milton Friedman, Karl Popper, and Ludvig Von Mises.\(^{260}\) The statement reads:

> The central values of human civilization are in danger. Over large stretches of the earth’s surface the essential conditions of human dignity and freedom have already disappeared... The position of the individual and the voluntary group are progressively undermined by extensions of arbitrary power.... The group holds that these developments have been...fostered by a decline in the belief in private property and the competitive market; for without the diffused power and initiative

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\(^{260}\) Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 20.
associated with these institutions it is difficult to imagine a society in which freedom may be effectively preserved. 261

The reason for this view, that economic freedom and political freedom are intimately wedded, is because "by enabling people to cooperate with one another without coercion or central direction, it reduces the area over which political power is exercised." 262 In light of this, “by dispersing power, the free market provides an offset to whatever concentration of political power may arise.” 263 In other words, in the neoliberal paradigm, a liberalised economy allows people to operate in a mode that is most free of coercive forces. Such a mission statement, complemented by Milton Friedman’s assertion that “freedom is a rare and delicate plant” and Hayek’s pursuit of “Liberty”, lend weight to the assertion that the neoliberal paradigm is bound by an ultimate belief in, and championing of the elusive and transcendental concept of ‘freedom’. 264

Combining the two assertions above, neoliberalism’s religious nature is explicitly obvious. It is a system that prescribes unregulated economic activity, in the form of a market economy underpinned by the principle of self-interest, in order to attain a state of ‘freedom’, which it views as the ultimate good. Evidently, within our definitional paradigm, this is a religious system. Regardless, even for conservative definitions, there is no argument against the assertion that the notion of ‘freedom’ is a somewhat unattainable, and therefore a transcendental

262 Friedman and Friedman, Free to Choose: A Personal Statement, 2.
263 Friedman and Friedman, Free to Choose: A Personal Statement, 2.
concept. For if it is a general consensus that ideas are derived from worldly experience, then we can safely assert that we are driven by external stimulus to take the positions we do. If Friedman and Hayek seek a world ‘without coercion’, then what leads us in the propagation of our desires and beliefs? Where do we gain ideas and desires if not by the push and pull of realities stimuli? Even if the individual chooses to answer these questions with a transcendental justification, ‘freedom’ proper is still left out of the equation. Further, ‘freedom’ is a non-existent concept for social collectives. For no matter what formation it may take, these collectives exert push and pull factors on individuals in order to actually create and articulate the individual. For as Berger and Luckmann assert, there is no individual without the collective.\textsuperscript{265} In light of this, ‘freedom’ is not only transcendental, in the sense that it relates to some sort of ‘ultimate’ reality, by our somewhat unorthodox definitional paradigm; it is also transcendental within an orthodox view of reality. In light of the above assertions, is should be evident that neoliberalism is a legitimating system that relates its legitimation to an ‘ultimate’ reality, and is therefore a ‘secular’ religion.

The dominance of such a paradigm has resulted in what has been dubbed as “faith-based policy”.\textsuperscript{266} In other words, the Western world has arrived at a point where the neoliberal paradigm has served its purpose as a legitimating system. Self-interest has been completely theoretically rectified in regards to its ability to serve the greater good of humanity. One only need refer to the constant ‘free-
market’ rhetoric, and the derogatory slur of ‘protectionism’. Such developments only further this dissertations assertion that it is in fact a ‘secular religion’.

**Conclusion**

By providing an analysis of one of the primary secular religions of the modern period, it was possibly to utilise the definitions provided by the previous chapters of this dissertation. In light of this definitional undertaking, it was possible to utilise two distinct characteristics to identify a ‘secular religion’.

Firstly, for it to constitute a ‘secular’ ordering narrative, it must be ordered and formed by the mechanistic metanarrative of modernity. Secondly, for it to constitute a ‘religion’, the system must be a theoretical narrative that serves to legitimate the world in reference to an ‘ultimate reality’. By employing these two particular characteristics, it was possible to first identify Smith’s classical economic paradigm to be both mechanistic, as Smith believed the ‘market’ to operate along the lines of specific rules and laws, and as a religion, as it legitimatised unbridled self-interest in the name of the greatest moral outcome. Following this, the modern economic paradigm of neoliberalism was analysed. Like Smith’s system, it was mechanistic in the sense that it contends that the market operates as a self-regulating entity. Further, it was religious in the sense that it legitimised self-interested action in the name of the ultimate reality of ‘freedom’. In light of this analysis, this chapter conclusively demonstrated economics to, within this dissertation’s definitional paradigm, be a secular religion.
Conclusion: The Extending of the Horizon
This dissertation has provided clear definitions for the concepts of ‘secular’, ‘secularisation’, ‘religion’, and ‘secular religion’. It began by addressing ‘religion’ in light of the philosophical conclusions of Heidegger and Nietzsche regarding the socio-historical construction of concepts of ‘truth’. In the wake of this conclusion, Berger and Luckmann’s ‘Social Constructivist’ model of religion was shown to be the most apt definitional paradigm. Thus, it was asserted that ‘religion’ represented a conceptual machinery, or theoretical narrative, that sought to legitimate a particular order to the world in reference to an apparently ‘ultimate reality’. In light of such a system, it was necessary to address Berger and Luckmann’s apparent differentiation between a scientific conceptual machinery and a religious one. It was concluded that there was no real difference, and therefore it was necessary to rethink the concepts of ‘secularisation’ and the ‘secular’.

Chapter Three provided a clear model regarding the nature of ‘secularisation’, and, in light of the model, what the process entailed. Using the conclusions from the first two chapters, it was asserted that complex social collectives, that contain different groups with differing world-views, are ordered by an over-arching metanarrative. Following the presentation of this model, the rise of the Christian metanarrative and the shift away from it were accounted for. It was asserted that the rise of the metanarrative took place with the coronation of Emperor Charlemagne in 800CE as this produced an institutional union between the Church and the State. This system broke down following the Reformation, as the Christian metanarrative was no longer objectively self-evident to the broader
collective.\textsuperscript{267} Thus, if Europe was to remain an ideologically united continent, it was necessary for a new metanarrative to come into being.

Chapter Four concerned itself with making explicit the nature of the metanarrative that arose in the place of Christianity. It was asserted that the metanarrative of modernity was a causally mechanistic system, which perceived the world to be ordered by mathematically derivable rules and laws of nature. The rise of such a metanarrative was accounted for through the analysis of Galileo’s achievements, the mechanistic philosophy of Descartes, and the institutionalisation of natural law within the political system in the form of ‘human rights’, which came about thanks to Spinoza’s monism. In light of such a conclusion, it was then asserted that a ‘secular religion’ was a legitimising narrative that was ordered by this causally mechanistic perspective.

Finally, this definition was applied to Adam Smith’s classical economics and the neoliberal paradigm in order to demonstrate that economics is a ‘secular religion’. This was achieved by showing that these paradigms were both mechanistic in nature, in the sense that they operated along the principle of ‘natural laws’ and rules, and religions, in the sense that they legitimise a particular order to the world in relation to an apparently ‘ultimate reality’. In regards to Smith’s system, it was shown to be mechanistic due to its employment of the concept of the ‘invisible hand’ of the market. In regards to its religiosity, it was shown to legitimise a particular order of the world in relation to an ultimate reality through its legitimation of self-interested action due to the belief that it

\textsuperscript{267} Berger and Luckmann, \textit{The Social Construction of Reality}, 106.
achieves the best moral outcome as a result of an overarching providential order. The neoliberal paradigm was also mechanistic in the same way that Smith’s paradigm was, as it operated along the premise that the market was a self-regulating entity that operated along the lines of natural laws. Further, it was also a religion as it legitimises self-interested action in the name of the ultimate concept of ‘freedom’. As such, economics was shown to be a ‘secular religion’.

Two fundamental tasks were achieved by completing this undertaking. Firstly, a novel definition of ‘secular’ and ‘secularisation’ was provided. Since secularisation is a popular topic in the fields of social science and religious studies, it is necessary for it to be clearly and well defined. This dissertation has progressed such an undertaking by providing a novel model regarding this social process. At the very least, this model can be discredited and rejected in the search of furthering the academic discourse. While in the best-case scenario, it can be added to the academic toolbox to be employed in garnering understanding of religious and ‘secular’ phenomenon in the future. Thus, it is obvious that this undertaking has had definite methodological benefits for the academy.

The second undertaking that was achieved within this dissertation strays outside of the confines of the academy but by no means excludes it. This work intended to concern itself with the role of dogmatism in regards to particular world-views and paradigms of knowledge. The academy is as guilty as any individual in such dogmatism as we often don’t recognise our own ideological commitments. To utilise the language of Heidegger, of course we must settle down in horizons of
knowledge in order to be able to garner any coherent narrative of the reality that we occupy. The problem comes when we do not allow our paradigms to extend and shift. Economics provides an excellent example of a stagnation of conceptual paradigms. Where economic principles are no longer self-evident, the discipline has a tendency to maintain its model of reality. Such dogmatism is currently presenting itself in the Euro-crisis, where austerity and labour market reforms are being enforced when research proves that these alone do not promote growth. Thus, the model presented in this dissertation calls for reflexivity on our paradigms in the hope that dogmatism can be escaped.

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268 Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 231.
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