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Catholicism and the Frankfurt School

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Abstract

The paper traces the development from the medieval, traditional union, through the modern disunion, toward a possible post-modern reunion of the sacred and the profane. It concentrates on the modern disunion and conflict between the religious and the secular, revelation and enlightenment, faith and autonomous reason in the Western world and beyond. It deals specifically with Christianity and the modern age, particularly liberalism, socialism and fascism of the 20th and the 21st centuries. The problematic inclination of Western Catholicism toward fascism, motivated by the fear of and hate against socialism and communism in the 20th century, and toward exclusive, authoritarian, and totalitarian populism and identitarianism in the 21st. century, is analyzed, compared and critiqued. Solutions to the problem are suggested on the basis of the Critical Theory of Religion and Society, derived from the Critical Theory of Society of the Frankfurt School. The critical theory and praxis should help to reconcile the culture wars which are continually produced by the modern antagonism between the religious and the secular, and to prepare the way toward post-modern, alternative Future III - the freedom of All on the basis of the collective appropriation of collective surplus value. Distribution and recognition problems are equally taken seriously.

Keywords: Frankfurt School; Critical Theory of Religion and Society; Cultural Marxism; History of Religions; Political Theology.

1. A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

The starting point of our discourse today is the *Eternal Word Television Network's (EWTN)* and Arcadia Films' made for TV docudrama entitled, *A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing*.¹ This film, which has been repeatedly aired by the EWTN, purports to tell the story of the 1960's American community organizer and social activist Saul D. Alinsky (1909-1972) and of his influence in the development of what is called "cultural Marxism." Specifically, the program deals with the supposed harm that socialism has done to Catholicism in the 19th and 20th and beginning 21st centuries: particularly, by *Gramsci* in Italy, the Fabians in England, and the Frankfurt School in Germany and in America.² It is this later issue upon which we focus.

The viewers of this movie are told that the Frankfurt School, the Institute for Social Research, had been founded by Vladimir Lenin, and that it was responsible for the crisis of Catholicism during and since the Second Vatican Council, particularly for thousands of priests and nuns who left their vocation, not to speak of many laypeople, who lost their faith and left the Church since the Council in the 1960's. It is also falsely stated that the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research "was brought to the U.S. from Europe after World War II, [and] developed 'critical theory' as a strategy to change, revolutionize, and bring down America by criticizing it."³ This is categorically false. The critical theorists of the first generation of the Frankfurt School, who at the invitation of Columbia University in New York City to re-establish their Institute at this Ivy League research university, first fled the ascendancy of fascism in Nazi, Germany by moving to Geneva, Switzerland in 1933 and then came to Columbia University in 1935.⁴ The Frankfurt School is further mendaciously and ideologically denounced in the film for supposedly developing "the 'sexual revolution, the search for pleasure,' as the "Critical theory exploited the differences between the sexes to excite gender conflict. It exploited their commonalities to incite gender confusion."⁵ Again, a complete interest-driven fabrication.

The conservative, Franciscan EWTN presents usually apologetically, and rightly, the great achievements of the performative power of the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth in history: the creation of hospitals and of universities, and the great works of art, of forms of religion, and of philosophies, and the liberation of the Roman slaves. However, while EWTN was honest about reporting the clerical sex scandals, it often forgot to mention and to repent other deeds of Christianity which could hardly be justified by the performative, or propositional, energy of Jesus's teaching: cruel heresy trials, Anti-Semitism, Anti-Judaism, Crusades and many other religious wars, the Holy Inquisition, witch hunting and killing, alliance with counter-revolutionary fascism through the Lateran Treaty with Benito Mussolini and the Reichskonkordat with Adolf Hitler, and the hate against revolutionary socialism and communism, etc. According to the Critical Theory of Religion and Society, (CTRS), informed by the only functionalist teaching of Rabbi Jesus of Nazareth, there have been false prophets, lying teachers, on the religious as well as on the secular side:

Beware of false prophets who come to you disguised as sheep, but underneath are ravenous wolves. You will be able to tell them by their fruits. Can people pick grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? In the same way, a sound tree produces good fruit but a rotten tree bad fruit. A sound tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor a rotten tree bear good fruit. Any tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and thrown on the fire. I repeat, you will be able to tell them by their fruits.⁶

2. Critical Theory of Religion and Society

During the late 1940's and 1950's, we developed the Critical Theory of Religion and Society (CTRS), which moved between the Catholic Theological Faculty of the Johannes Gutenberg Universität in Mainz, on one hand, and Max Horkheimer's and Theodor W. Adorno's Institute for Social Research at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität, in Frankfurt a.M., on the other. Both were mediated through the left, or critical, or reform Catholic editors, Walter Dirks and Eugen Kogon of the Frankfurter Hefte, Journal for Culture and Politics.⁷ The two pairs of dioscuroi, the believers and the enlighteners, were friends, but the believers never converted into enlighteners, nor did the enlighteners ever become believers. However, the two pairs of intellectuals respected each other and cooperated with each other. We developed the Critical Theory of Religion and Society with the help of Dirks and Kogon out of the Critical Theory of Society of Horkheimer and Adorno, of the later so-called Frankfurt School. We must admit that all the critical theorists from Horkheimer and Adorno, through Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse, to Jürgen Habermas and Axel Honneth, were concerned with the emancipation of the secularized philosophy from religion up to the present of the post-metaphysical thinking in the post-secular society.⁸ Yet, we must also stress that they all reflected on the controversial nature and relevance of the religious faith, and were willing to rescue its progressive elements, from saving justice to rational freedom, in the constellation of revelation and autonomous reason.

History of Religions

Our CTRS, or Dialectical Religiology (DR), traced the history of religions from the relative Medieval union of the sacred and the profane, faith and reason, through their modern disunion, toward their possible reunion in the future.⁹ We concentrated on the modern antagonism between revelation and autonomous reason, with the intent to reconcile them in a new way. We were aware that this antagonism between the religious and the secular, which for the past 500 years had continually deepened in the West, also produced splits in the religious communities themselves between believers who stressed revelation and tradition and negated Modernity, on one hand, and believers who were also open for the modern enlightenment, on the other. Likewise, we noticed that the general modern antagonism between the sacred and the profane was also divided enlighteners into those who negated religion and wanted it to disappear as fast as possible, on one hand, and enlighteners who were still open for religion and

wanted to rescue some of its progressive values into Modernity and Post-Modernity, on the other.

Reform Catholics

We definitely sided with our CTRS on the side of Walter Dirks and Eugen Kogon, who were open, critical, reform Catholics, and at the same time participated in the bourgeois, and Marxian, and later Freudian enlightenment.¹⁰ Walter had to go to prison and into internal exile for his Christian faith and his consequent, very early opposition to National Socialism. As theologian and journalist, Walter suffered much from fascism, together with his wife Marianne and his four children. Kogon was an Austrian Jew, who had converted to Catholicism, and had followed Thomas Aquinas, and had also become a critical Catholic. He then suffered much for his faith, and his consequent critique of National Socialism, particularly for seven years in the concentration camp Buchenwald, near Weimar, Germany's cultural center, where Goethe's Faust was born.

Critical Theory of Society

Max Horkheimer, the founder of the Critical Theory of Society, came from an assimilated Jewish, bourgeois family, which still prayed Psalm 91, and ate kosher.¹¹ In his Critical Theory of Society, he combined the bourgeois, Marxian and Freudian enlightenment movements. In 1933, when Adolf Hitler came into power and his Frankfurt Institute was occupied by the SA, Horkheimer had to leave fascist Germany into American exile. Adorno had a Jewish father and a Catholic mother, and was baptized a Catholic, and was educated a Protestant, and then participated in the bourgeois, Marxian and Freudian enlightenment.¹² He stayed as long as possible in Germany and England, and then followed Horkheimer into exile, not in the socialist Russia, but rather in the liberal America. Horkheimer and Adorno were enlighteners, who tried to translate progressive, theological elements mainly from Judaism, the Religion of Sublimity, and from Christianity, the Religion of Freedom, into the secular discourse of the modern culture experts: e.g., the Mosaic image- and name- prohibition into bourgeois and socialist enlightenment. They tried to reconcile Moses and Jesus, on one hand, and Kant, the greatest enlightener, on the other. They defined religion *as longing for the totally Other than the horror and terror of nature and history; as longing for perfect justice, and as unconditional love, which could not be found in this world; and as the longing that the murderer ought not to triumph over the innocent victim.*

3. Human Suffering

Thus, the enlighteners Horkheimer and Adorno certainly did not do any harm to the believers Dirks and Kogon, nor to the faith of any other Jew or Christian, or any other positive religion, as charged by the EWTN. Also, the Frankfurt School was not founded by Lenin, as was stated

in an EWTN program. It was not Eastern Marxist but rather Western Marxist, if Marxist at all, as it was also deeply influenced by Kantian, Hegelian, Nietzschean, Kierkegaardian, and Freudian thought. It was in realty founded by the rich Jewish, German-Argentinian, cereal or grain merchant Hermann Weil, and his son Felix and his friends in Frankfurt. Father Weil became rich during World War I, shipping cereal and grain to blockaded, starved out Germany, and Europe. Weil was a businessman with a conscience, who wanted to explore the causes of human suffering under capitalism. For this purpose, Weil founded two institutes for social research, one in Frankfurt and one in Moscow. Because of his wealth, the donor Weil very much dictated what was to happen in both institutes. When Kogon, the author of *The SS State*, not Dirks, had any doubts concerning his faith late in his life, then the reason was that he did not like the cruel way how early Christian communism¹³ dealt with the fraud of Ananias and Sapphira;¹⁴ or that the Cardinal of Vienna did not help his large family during the seven years he was in the concentration camp Buchenwald; or that the Church did not fulfill the promises it had given during the Second Vatican Council, but rather betrayed them: particularly to open up the windows toward the modern world (*Aggiornamento*), and to enter into discourse with it, and to learn whatever good it may contain, as he and Dirks learned from and cooperated with Horkheimer and Adorno and their Frankfurt Institute. The writings of Horkheimer, Adorno, and Jürgen Habermas appeared in the *Frankfurter Hefte*. Dirks edited a book with Adorno in the Frankfurt Institute. During the last years of their ownership of the *Frankfurter Hefte*, before they sold them to the Social Democrats who named them *Neue Gesellschaft/Frankfurter Hefte*, Kogon wanted to make a whole issue on the theodicy problem, but Walter resisted. Walter did not want to talk about the theodicy. The theodicy was central to the Frankfurt School. However, it was not the Frankfurt School, but rather the theodicy problem that was shaking Kogon's faith at the end. Admittedly, the theodicy was a central issue also of the CTRS.

Berlin Jew

Also, my friend Gregory Baum was not harmed in his faith by the Frankfurt School.¹⁵ Gregory was a Berlin Jew, who as a boy had escaped to England and Canada from fascist Germany in the last moment before the start of World War II. Here he converted first to the Baptist Church and then to the Catholic Church, and even became an Eremite-Augustinian monk and a priest. Gregory did not get into trouble with the Church because of the Frankfurt School. We talked much about the Frankfurt School up to the point where Pope Benedict XVI quoted affirmatively Horkheimer and Adorno in his last encyclical letter.¹⁶ Gregory was sympathetic to what I told him, but the dialectical writings of Horkheimer and Adorno were too complicated for him. Negative thinking was not his cup of tea. He was an optimist. Like Walter Dirks, Gregory did not like to talk about the theodicy problem in spite of the fact that theology was originally theodicy. Thus, Gregory did not really learn enough from the Frankfurters, or from Kant or Hegel, Schopenhauer or Nietzsche whom they followed, in order to be bothered by them in his faith. Gregory's difficulties with the Church were more of a practical kind. They started with his rejection of 5 rules on sexuality newly issued by the Vatican. Thus, he was no

longer allowed to hear confession. In consequence, he left his order and the priesthood, but continued to teach theology in Toronto. He was finally excommunicated not because of any doctrinal issue, but rather because he married without being laicized, after having waited for the Vatican's decision for a long period of time. All this had nothing to do with the Frankfurt School. Gregory and I were very different: he was a Jewish boy from Berlin, and I was an Aryan boy from Frankfurt, with very different, even opposite, experiences, theology, and ethics. Yet, a deep friendship bound us nevertheless together for many years. Up to his death, we often spoke and wrote to each other in German.

Ordination

In the 1950's, I did not let myself be ordained after a full theological education at the Universities of Mainz and Münster. However, this also had nothing to do with Horkheimer and Adorno, or the Frankfurt School, or any other member of it, but was rather due to the fact that the Church did not theologially reflect on the horrible, moral catastrophe of having allied itself with fascism through the Lateran Treaty with Benito Mussolini and the Reichskoncordat with Adolf Hitler, which is still valid today in the German Federal Republic, and through the treaties with other fascist states, e.g., Spain, Portugal and Croatia, because of its fear of and hate against socialism and communism.¹⁷ There was complete silence. There was no real repentance and remorse. Now, after the war, the former fascist clergy were promoted and rewarded, while the martyrs against fascism were forgotten: e.g., the fascist Catholic theologian and church historian Joseph Lortz, who could teach freely at the University of Münster and convert students to the NSDAP before and during the National Socialist period, on one hand, and the socialist, Jesuit Alfred Delp, on the other, who as member of the Kreisauer Kreis, was charged with high treason, in relation to the Staufenberg assassination attempt of 1944. Delp was found guilty by Roland Freisler, a convert from communism to Nazism, in his blood-court in Leipzig and was sentenced to death by hanging. He was executed in Berlin, Plötzensee, on February 2, 1945, being only 37 years old. Delp, a former student in the Dieburg college, in which I taught and got married, was committed to a personal socialism, based on a theonomous humanism, in spite of a Papal prohibition against Catholics becoming members of any form of socialism of 1931, which has not yet been rescinded up to the present, 2020. This happened two years before the Catholic Adolf Hitler came into power in January 1933, who, not like the brothers Strasser or Ernst Röhm, would protect the private ownership of the means of production, and thus the private appropriation of collective surplus labor, and would liquidate all forms of socialism and communism, which, if successful, would abolish all private property of the means of production, e.g., of Krupp, Thyssen, Bosch, Opel, etc., and would transform all private appropriation of collective surplus value into a collective one. Catholics, Protestants, fascists and liberals shared the hate and struggle against socialism and communism.

While the German prisoners of war were still coming home from the Eastern Front, the Soviet Union, it was completely forgotten that a little more than a decade earlier, four million baptized

Europeans had engaged in the crusade Barbarossa. Just as the Medieval Crusaders had marched to Novgorod, and Napoleon to Moscow with 800,000 men, so too the Barbarossa crusade of the fascist armies invaded the Soviet Union, and moved to Leningrad, Moscow and Kiev, where they killed 26 million Russians and 6 million Jews, and devastated every city, town and village. There were also thousands of army chaplains marching with them, who forgave their sins as they were committed. The Regens of the Priest Seminary of Mainz, Joseph, Maria Reuss, had been one of them. He wore the cross and the swastika on his uniform. He witnessed how thousands of Russian children were shot and slaughtered. On the back of a tank, he fought against atheistic communism so fanatically that he did not even notice how his feet were freezing off in the icy cold Russian winter. Later on, he had to be operated on without anaesthesia. Later, unable to be at the battle front, he served as chaplain in an SS prison in Paris, where he accompanied the prisoners daily to the gallows, or to the firing squad places, and when the executed were German soldiers, he wrote consoling letters to their relatives at home. After the war, Reuss still did not allow socialist students to enter his seminary. Constantinian Christianity continued under the Adenauer restoration. In August 1945, an American, Catholic, Army Chaplain of Polish origin blessed with holy water the first atomic bomb, which was dropped on Hiroshima, and, after having seen the horrendous damage, blessed the second bomb, which was dropped on Nagasaki; both bombs killing ten thousands of people, including also Catholic priests, and nuns, and their little disciples. When in this constellation, I was not able to let myself to be ordained, Constantinian Christianity, and not the Frankfurt School, was the reason.

Constantinian Christianity

Today, EWTN continues this Constantinian Christianity, including its anti-socialism and anti-communism, in America and elsewhere. It continually protests against Vatican attempts to have a treaty with Communist China. It imitates the anti-socialism of the conservative, populist Fox News, which has 3.68 million viewers, far more than its competitors, i.e., centre-oriented CNN, and the rather more left-wing MNSBC.¹⁸ Thirty-four percent of American adults chose the right-wing Fox News as their favourite news network in recent years. Right-wing EWTN even shares a contributor with right Fox News: Raymond Arroyo. During a Fox News Program on the Democratic National Convention on August 20, 2020, the traditional, Catholic Raymond Arroyo ridiculed a reformed Catholic nun for having taken off her Medieval habit following the Second Vatican Council, and for having dressed in modern clothing, and for continually travelling on a bus in order to help marginalized people. On the same day, EWTN celebrated the feast of the great Medieval saint Bernhard of Clairvaux, the son of a French feudal lord, and praised his writings on love, but forgot completely to critique his most powerful as well as most problematic propaganda for the second crusade, which cost the lives of innumerable Jews and Arabs. Today, in August 2020, Fox News is pure propaganda for the Trump Administration, surpassed only by the One American News Network, OANN, or by the right-wing, national web portal Breitbart News Network. With Fox News, EWTN

supports Trumpism, arguing like the Evangelical Right, e.g., Ryan Helfenbein from Liberty University, that, concerning the questionable, moral, authoritarian character of President Trump, God sometimes writes straight with crooked lines. From the Evangelical Right comes the news that the Chinese communists have produced and released the COVID-19 virus pandemic in order to destroy the free capitalist West; that strict measures against the pandemic undermine the American economy; that walls should be built around cities governed by the “dirty Democrats,” e.g., New York, in order to protect healthy America. Democrats are attacked and demonized, and Trump is defended and deified. Recently, one women’s program of EWTN glorified the enormous, economic accomplishments of President Trump, particularly for people of color, and the poor. For the upcoming Presidential elections of 2020, preachers of EWTN break the law as they support the Presbyterian candidate Trump and his Republican Party against the badly Catholic candidate Biden and his Democratic Party, supposedly because the former is against abortion and the latter is for it. EWTN is against abortion, but not against the death penalty, and not against war, e.g., the continual drone assassinations of foreign leaders in other, sovereign airspace, and not against fascism, but always against socialism and communism. Fox News and EWTN seem to follow Alex Jones’ far-right American conspiracy theory website, InfoWars, according to which the Deep State, meaning the Federal bureaucracy, uses the fear of the coronavirus in order to open the doors for the left’s New World Order, and Globalization, and to destroy America. No matter what happens, the right ecosystem, including Fox News and EWTN, insists on the conviction that the pandemic is a conspiracy against Trump, and therefore rejects the recommendations of the medical experts, at least to some extent, e.g., Anthony Fauci, a famous immunologist, as being servants of the Deep State. Also, EWTN follows the instincts of President Trump as the highest norm of the public sphere, situated between civil society and political state, rather than the Evangelium, the Sermon on the Mount.

4. Revolution and Counter-Revolution

In the view of the CTRS, for the past four months, three different groups of people have been present in the streets of American cities, including Kalamazoo, Michigan: two revolutionary, and one counter-revolutionary one. Members of the far-right Proud Boys group and counter-protesters, Antifa, violently clashed Saturday afternoon, August 15, 2020, at Arcrobinadia Creek Festival Place in downtown Kalamazoo, resulting in arrests. Assistant Chief Vernon Coakley of the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety said a few people were arrested, but didn’t know exactly how many. The American civil war was the last bourgeois revolution. Thus, one present group or movement marching through the American cities today demands racial justice for all African American and people of color, and takes down both secular monuments of confederate officers and also religious monuments of missionaries, who were connected with the pre-bourgeois, feudal enslavement of the so-called American Indians, or

native people. Besides these people, who complete the bourgeois revolution, march another group, which initiates a democratic-socialist revolution, and which demands economic justice, or class equality, for all wage laborers, i.e., the collective appropriation of collective surplus value, the resolution of the final social contradiction between private and collective appropriation of collective surplus labor. A third group opposes both revolutionary movements on the American streets, a counter-revolutionary movement of authoritarian populists, of Trumpists, which include also members of the police and the army. Vice President Joseph Biden represents the New Deal, bourgeois, revolutionary group. Senator Bernie Sanders represents the social-democratic, revolutionary group. President Donald Trump leads the conservative revolutionary, or counter-revolutionary movement, opposing all forms of socialism inside and outside the country, with the help of Catholics and Evangelicals, Fox News and EWTN. At this moment, the bourgeois and democratic-socialist, revolutionary groups, are allied with each other against the counter-revolutionary, white-supremacist Trumpism. The Presidential election in November 2020 will decide the winning group for the immediate future, in one way or the other.

Theodicy

When Karl Heinz Haag left the Jesuit seminary St. Georgen near Frankfurt, and joined Horkheimer and Adorno in their Institute of Social Research, and was promoted and habilitated under them on a thesis that disproved and demolished the scholastic theodicy, his Jesuit teachers came to the occasion in great friendliness, only asking: *how can we say it better now?*¹⁹ Haag also did not let himself be ordained, but continued to teach and research as a Catholic philosopher and theologian.

Hope

Jürgen Moltmann did not lose his Lutheran faith when he became the student of the old Marxist Ernst Bloch, who was initially close to the Frankfurt School, and who influenced it greatly from the start, particularly in matters of religion.²⁰ Bloch enlightened young Moltmann about the utopian and revolutionary elements in Christianity. Moltmann's Christian theology of hope would never have come into existence without Bloch's Marxist philosophy of hope.

Political Theology

Johannes Baptist Metz did not lose his faith or his friendship with Karl Rahner when he began to learn from Bloch, as well as from Horkheimer and Adorno, and from Walter Benjamin and Jürgen Habermas.²¹ Without the Frankfurt School, Baptist would not have been able to develop his new political theology on the side of the working class, against the fascist, political theology of Carl Schmitt, Adolf Hitler's jurist and political theologian, and to contribute to the development of the Latin American liberation theology. Also, Baptist students, e.g., Helmut Peukert and Edmund Arens remained members of the Catholic Church, in spite of the Vatican's opposition to the new political theology and to liberation theology.

Liberal Theology

Also, Hans Küng's difficulties with the Church did not come about because of the Frankfurt School.²² In December 1978, Hans was forbidden by the Vatican to teach Catholic theology because of his attitude toward the Infallibility Dogma of Vatican I. This critical attitude Hans did not need to learn from the Frankfurters. For Hans, Horkheimer and Adorno and all the other critical theorists were simply atheists, or agnostics, with whom he could not make common cause. There was no cooperation between Küng's Ecumenical Institute in Tübingen and Horkheimer's Institute for Social Research. Karl Rahner criticized Küng and did not support him, not because he was influenced by the Frankfurt School, but rather because he was supposedly too close to Protestant liberalism. Hans was rather inclined toward a tamed capitalism rather than to the humanistic or democratic socialism of the Frankfurters, which however did not prevent him from talking with German Social Democratic politicians sometimes. Among his real friends, however, were the retired President of the German banking system, and the owners of Coca-Cola, as most generous donors for his Ecumenical Institute in Tübingen.

Post-Metaphysical Thinking

There are many more examples showing that the Frankfurt School had no destructive effect on religion in general, and on Christianity in particular. The Critical Theory of Society rather empowers the believer to become self-critical, and precisely thereby helps the faithful to be honest, and thus, to become a better, more prophetic and hope-filled believer in the midst of the post-secular world, who when seeing injustice being done even becomes a disturbing factor – a practitioner of “good trouble, necessary trouble”²³ – in order to resist becoming locked up completely in this world's finite systems of immanence.²⁴ In his last masterpiece on faith and reason, *Also a History of Philosophy: The Occidental Constellation of Faith and Knowledge*, and *Rational Freedom: Traces of the Discourse about Faith and Knowledge*, post-metaphysical thinker, Jürgen Habermas, has summed up the open, secular, enlightenment position of the Critical Theory of Religion and of the Frankfurt School toward religion from its very start in Horkheimer's work, *L'île heureuse* [“The Isle of Happiness”] to the present. The critical Catholic theologian Edmund Arens, a former student of both the Catholic critical political theologian Metz and of the critical theorist Habermas, has affirmatively summarized Habermas's two-volume work.²⁵ According to Habermas, secular Modernity has turned away from religion and theology with good reasons. However, reason would itself waste away and become emotionally and intellectually stunted with the disappearance of every thought that transcends what is in the world in its totality. The defense and protection against this entropy was a point of contact between the Critical Theory of Society and post-metaphysical thinking in general, on one hand, and the religious consciousness, on the other, as long as the latter incarnated itself in the liturgical praxis of a community, and as long as it thereby asserted itself as a present form of the objective spirit. Why not the absolute Spirit, the CTRS must ask?²⁶ Why this reduction?

Nevertheless, in the critical theorist Habermas's view, the religious rite claims to establish the connection with a Power that broke out of the Transcendence and into the finite world. As long as the religious experience can still lean on and base itself on this liturgical praxis of representing a strong Transcendence, it remains a thorn in the flesh of a Modernity, or even Post-Modernity, which has succumbed to the suction, the vortex, the maelstrom toward a being entirely without Transcendence. For Habermas, and the CTRS, so long as the religious experience keeps open for secular reason the question of whether there still exists unsatisfied, semantic contents of such Transcendence, which wait to be translated from the sacred into the profane dimension, religion will remain a vitally relevant and needed discourse partner in the historical and eschatological struggle to create a more humane, reconciled, virtuous and peace-filled future society of freedom in solidarity with all.²⁷

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²³ Statement made by the late John Lewis – who was an ordained Baptist minister, who received many Honorary Doctorates of Law, and was a 33 year Congressman from Georgia - on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama on March 1, 2020 during a march that commemorated the March 1, 1965 “Bloody Sunday” march of peaceful protestors who were beaten by police for crossing the bridge. See: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/how-we-rise/2020/07/23/five-things-john-lewis-taught-us-about-getting-in-good-trouble/>.

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