Community, Nature and the Sacred

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As part of a larger project on nature and the sacred in contemporary culture (see Szerszynski forthcoming), this paper will explore the relation between contemporary forms of community and transformations in the relationship between nature and the sacred. A conventional sociological reading of the emergence of modernity could be termed one of the 'denaturalisation' and 'desacralisation' of community. According to this narrative, pre-modern agrarian communities were rooted in place, around common activities in relation to nature, and were experienced as largely unchosen, natural, sacred and inevitable. Sociology from its inception has been charting the way that 'community' in this strong sense has been giving way in capitalist societies to 'society' - urban, mobile, chosen, fluid, disenchanted and detached from nature. However, in this paper I want to show ways in which modern forms of community are *still* intertwined with a sacralized nature, a nature that has been transformed in its meanings and sacralized in new ways. I first set the stage for this argument by laying out a historical narrative of religious history, building particularly on the work of Max Weber, Robert Bellah and Marcel Gauchet (Bellah 1970; Gauchet 1997; Weber 1965; 1985), but also drawing on anthropological writings. In doing this I chart the transformations of the relationships between nature and the sacred, emphasizing the way that these transformations made possible radically different forms of sociality.

It then focus on the contemporary Western secular, approaching it as the most recent stage in, and as highly conditioned by, the preceding history of the sacred. I explore the range of 'communities of nature' in contemporary society: 'aesthetic communities' such as: wave-like sociations of strangers bound by common subjective feelings in relation to natural places or to environmental risks; co-watching communities temporarily brought into being by 'media events'; and communities of practice, such as hiking, gardening and health subcultures. I also look at more ethically motivated communities: those living ethically motivated lifestyles; 'passive' supporters of environmental pressure groups; and active, sect-type social movements trying to transform society. I show how, as well as taking forms made possible by the 'modern sacred', they also recapitulate forms of sociality from earlier orderings of the sacred.

The Transformation of the Sacred

This paper will draw heavily on evolutionary theorists of religion such as Max Weber, Jürgen Habermas, Robert Bellah and Marcel Gauchet, all of who see the history of religion in terms of the working out of ideas and tensions within orderings of the sacred. Whereas the first three of these see later stages of religion as higher and more developed than the earlier ones, in that they are more open to change - and indeed can act as motors for social change - Gauchet by contrast interprets this history in terms of the systematic decay of primal religion towards a post-religious society. But all see this history as progressively constituting a self that is more autonomous, more clearly separated from its natural and social environment and more reflexively aware of its own possibilities for action and self-reinvention - and correspondingly different forms of sociality and community.

However, like Gauchet I want to stress the contingency of this history - not just of the process of religious change, but also of its end result, secular modernity. I do not want to present this history as the necessary outworking of universal reason. So, while my narrative will be one that seems to lead inexorably from primal religion, through Judaism, Christianity and the Reformation to arrive at the modern secular, this is only one branching route taken by the sacred in its transformations; there is

something more contingent to the direction of this story than allowed, say, by Habermas. And, while it *might* be accurate to describe the modern secular world as post-religious (for example if one confines the term 'religion' to what Bellah calls historical and early-modern religion), this does not necessarily mean that it is post-sacral. I want to suggest that contemporary culture exhibits not the disappearance but a *reorganizing* of the sacred. Firstly, the different periods of religious history (including the contemporary secular) are not as sharply delimited from one another as schemas such as that of Bellah might imply; each new epoch typically contains traces of the previous one, and can exhibit a partial return of characteristics of earlier epochs. Secondly, the transition from one dominant form of religion to the next (again including the appearance of the secular) can seem like an eclipse of the sacred in the terms in which it was organised in the closing epoch, but from a larger perspective can be seen as the emergence of a new sacral ordering. I will develop these claims in the rest of this paper, using Bellah's basic categories to organise my narration of the transformations in the sacred, and the emergence of new forms of individual-in-community.

Primal Religion

Bellah calls this first phase of religion 'primitive religion', with Australian aboriginal culture being the paradigm case, but I prefer the term 'primal'. For this kind of religion there is only one world, divine and natural at once, inhabited by what we would call natural and supernatural beings, and the aim of religion is to secure the reproduction of life within this world, rather than to escape it or to live according to laws originating from outside (Bellah 1970: 25-9). However, the very unity of this cosmos means that its key characteristic is plurality - in Heideggerian terms, there are (empirical) beings but no concept of (transcendental) Being (Heidegger 1962). Primal religion involves the experience of a mythic reality, woven into the empirical details of the physical world, with every natural feature experienced as related to the actions of mythical beings, and no clear demarcation between the human subject and the natural and supernatural world. The mythical beings, typically ancestral figures, cannot properly be called 'gods' as they do not control the world, and are not approached through worship, but through identification and the 'acting out' of primal myths. Related to the oral character of these cultures, the mythology is fluid and not rigorously formalised. There are no priests or separate religious institutions. The shaman, for example, is a 'technician' with a special ability to move between the living and the dead *within* this unified world, rather than a mediator of any external, transcendental truth - he remains bound to the same sacral/social order as much as the rest of his tribe (Gauchet 1997: 31).

We can use this ordering of the sacred as a reference point for future transformations. Primal religion is radically conservative; the fusion of the social, natural and sacral make such societies a limit case of 'community'. Tribal societies can roughly be divided into the totemic and the animic. Totemic societies such as Australian aboriginal cultures see the relationships between ancestors, land and living beings as having been laid down in a mythic, archaic era, and thus fixed and essential. By contrast, animic societies such as those of the circumpolar North (with their shamanism) see the cosmos in more fluid, ephemeral terms, with every being drawing on the vitality of others. But for both forms of society the human and natural are fused, and human sociality is seen as participating in a single cosmic order (Ingold 2000: 111-131).

Archaic religion

What Bellah terms 'archaic religions', such as the religious systems of Africa and Polynesia, are similarly monistic in their experience of a 'natural-divine cosmos', but here the deities are more definite gods, with which humans must interact in an ordered way. This phase is characterised by a multiplication of cults, engaging in worship and sacrifice, with priests and a fluid membership (Bellah 1970: 29-32). With the development of priests there is a relative shift from magic to religion - from the *ad hoc*, circumstantial meeting of needs and crises to a systematic regulation of relations with supernatural beings (Weber 1965: 28). But these beings are still understood as inhabiting the empirical world, as caught up directly in the affairs of human beings - and as multiple, rival possible sources of supernatural benefit. Religion is not concerned with other-worldly salvation, but still on securing existence in this world.

Archaic cultures are typically cultivators, so more settled than primal cultures, and are likely to have some concept of a moral code, of a systematic gap between actual reality and a normative ideal. For example, the Apa Tani, a permanently settled society of rice cultivators in India, are the only culture in their area to have private property in land and permanent shrines. Unlike neighbouring tribes such as the hunter-gatherer Chenchus, and the Daflas, who are primitive shifting cultivators, the Apa Tani have 'a collective sense of right and wrong' (Fürer-Haimendorf 1967: 77), and a 'concept of crime as an immoral and illegal act offending against society and not merely against the interests of an individual' (1967: 211). Nevertheless, sacred law is not seen as being grounded in a transcendent realm, distinct from empirical reality and able to be used as a critical reference point for it. Sacred and worldly hierarchies are seen as continuous - resulting, for example, in African ideas of divine kingship, where an individual is seen as encapsulating sacred order and power.

Historic religion

The emergence of 'historic religion', which includes the world religions of Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, occurs across the globe between 800 and 200 BCE, in what Karl Jaspers calls the axial age (Jaspers 1953). In a radical shift in the understanding of the sacred, the cosmological monism of earlier religion is replaced with a dualistic distinction between 'this' world and a transcendent reality understood to exist 'above' this world. With this shift the individual becomes progressively more distinct, with an internal conscience that can be set over against *de facto* collective behaviour. The breaching of the immanent sacral order and the idea of a transcendent foundation or source for all reality brings the possibility of philosophical thought about Being - of 'thinking the "One"' (Gauchet 1997: 48). And with historical religion we start to see the emergence of the secular - an impersonal, objective nature and a self-organized, autonomous social realm.

The historic religions are all in some way religions of dualism and world-rejection, involving a turning away from the world, whether through conforming to religious law, through a sacramental system or through mystical exercise (Bellah 1970: 32-6). With their emergence, religious concern turns from this world to the 'next' one, and for the first time salvation becomes the great preoccupation of religion. Religion becomes relatively demythologised, and a clear religious elite emerges as an alternative source of authority distinct from the political system. With the notion of a single transcendent realm, and of a singular 'truth', religious plurality comes to be seen in different way - as deviations from truth, in Christian terms as 'heresy'.

This world-denying character of historic religion allows the emergence of a centred self that experiences itself as distinct both from the nature and supernature. Human beings start to be conceived not just as members of a clan or tribe but humans as *such*, capable of salvation or enlightenment. The expulsion of the divine into a radically other world starts a dismantling of the sacrality of the natural and social world. Nature indeed starts to be constituted as an objective realm to withdraw from or dominate rather than a sacral cosmos to participate in or adapt to. The secular social too starts to achieve a degree of autonomy, with an unlocking of spiritual and worldly orders. For Gauchet this is taken furthest in Christianity, where, in contrast to the divine kingship of archaic religion, Jesus is an 'inverted messiah' - identified not with the highest in society, the sovereign, but the lowest. This symbolised not the continuity but the radical gulf between heaven and Earth, the infinite distance of the divine. God is seen as removed from human affairs, and the relation with God something inward, individual and open to all (Gauchet 1997: 117-24)

Nevertheless historic religion retains forms of 'communitarian' bridging between the natural and the supernatural, forms of belonging and sociality which mediate the relationship between the two. In Judaism this consists in the status of Israel as the chosen people; in Christianity the Church symbolises and promises to fill the gap between this world and a radical, absolute divine, now rendered more completely universal. In medieval Europe the Church is seen as possessing an objective treasury of grace and merit, from which it derives the power to remit the sins of its members, and the sacraments are a vehicle through which this grace - as if it was a 'mystical, miraculous substance' - could be distributed to the faithful (Bossy 1985: 54-5; Troeltsch 1931: 338, 468). Also, in a continuity with primal religion, the sacramental system of medieval Catholicism allows for the magical, ad hoc solution of worldly problems, rather than simply once-and-for-all salvation.

Similarly, while the sacred is here organized around a dualism of natural and supernatural, historic religions nevertheless continue to operate through the material and the bodily in ways that echo primal and archaic religion. In medieval Christianity, like the monistic cosmology of primal religion, supernatural realities are mapped on to physical features. Relics and places of worship are scattered everywhere - in chapels, springs, fountains, woods, as well as great urban centres - a sacred topography which organised worship and pilgrimage (Muchembled 1985: 101). Yet the meanings of these features are apprehended a different way than they would in primal and archaic religion - as pointing to external, higher realities. According to the symbolist mentality of the Middle Ages, objects, plants and animals were understood as *signs*, implicated in endless chains of resemblance (Harrison 1998: 15). The medieval *Quadriga* gave rules for the interpretation of both scripture and nature in terms of literal, allegorical, moral and supernatural levels of meaning. Through this method of interpretation natural objects and not just words were seen as referring, possibly to other objects and events in nature and history, but finally to moral and spiritual truths as laid out in scripture.

In terms of the body, too, historic religion echoes 'earlier' forms of religion, but reorders them according to the dualism between nature and supernature. In medieval Christianity the understanding of the body as 'sinful flesh' (Foucault 1979) coexists with what Mellor and Shilling call an 'open orifice' body, one where individuals continually merge with other people and the material environment. The attempt to discipline this body according to the dualistic ontology of historic religion produces a 'flight into physicality no less intense or passionate than its counterpart: the maximum enjoyment of pleasures'. The Church uses a battery of somatic techniques 'to manage the immersion of people within the natural and supernatural world', through fasting, abstinence and flagellation and through using the 'close contact' senses of taste and touch as paths to religious knowledge (Mellor and Shilling 1997: 37-41).

The reconstitution of the sacred as an absolute divine, expelled from empirical reality, makes possible two new forms of sociality, both arising in the Christian world in the forms of 'sect' and 'Church' (Troeltsch 1931). Both produce forms of 'society' radically different from the original concept of *societas*, which term originally indicated an alliance between individuals for a specific purpose (Arendt 1958: 23). Christianity originally adopts the sect form - a form of *societas* within the human world which is grounded not merely in this-worldly purposes but in a privileged relationship to the absolute divine. The Gospels' world-denying tendencies had been strengthened by the early Apologists, who saw the world as corrupted by original sin and the Christian as filled with supernatural grace. Such views helped preserve the Church's character as an ascetic enclave which defined itself over against the world - the sectarian community is one which is experienced not in quiescence but in struggle (cf.Bauman 2001: 17-18).

Although in the Middle Ages Christianity developed very different attitudes to the 'worldly', and the Church was transformed from an exclusivist social élite into a 'comprehensive, unifying and reconciling whole' (Troeltsch 1931:203), the sect as a communal form continued *within* Christendom. Medieval sects such as the Franciscans and the Hussites, and later, Protestant ones such as the Quakers and the Baptists, were all oriented around personal fellowship, sought moral perfection amongst their members, and tended toward social radicalism (Troeltsch 1931:331). The expulsion of the absolute divine makes possible the idea of a divine command that puts the sect at odds with the behaviour of empirical society, to the extent of perceiving themselves as beyond conventional moral law (Wilson 1970: 26-34).

But secondly the idea of society as a unified whole, a 'society of mankind', emerges only in the era of historic religion. The concept emerges late on in Roman thought, as a *societas generis humani* (Arendt 1958: 24), but develops further with the emergence of the medieval Church, which aimed to incorporate all of political and civic life into itself. This reconciliation with the worldly was made possible because of the medieval idea of the *Lex naturae*, whereby human impulses and human institutions were seen as ordained and blessed by God, so that it was possible at once to be a Christian and pursue a secular life (Troeltsch 1931:238-9). Yet at the same time at the heart of Christian being-in-the-world lies a constitutive tension between this-worldly and other-worldly allegiance - an inward mirroring of the dualistic ontology of historic religion that later becomes the source of individual social conscience that grounds modern democracy (Gauchet 1997: 130-1)

In the Middle Ages membership of the Church became inclusive, disconnected from any need for conspicuous displays of personal piety and commitment (Robertson 1970:124). This, coupled with the elevation of the Church from being a body *within* society to the very constitutive principle of society itself, meant that the primary way in which the communion of the Church was experienced was less in terms of the face-to-face relations of the sect, and more as an 'imagined community' of the faithful, both living and dead - and even, on one level, the whole of humanity. Society as a whole was conceived of as a body - *a corpus mysticum* - or as a family, bound together through sameness and *caritas* (Arendt 1958: 53-5).

Early modern religion

With the emergence of 'early modern religion' the paradigm and only case is Protestant Christianity. Bellah rightly notes similar shifts within Buddhism, Islam and other religions, but it is only the Protestant Reformation that leads to secular modernity. The Reformation - and to a lesser extent the Catholic Counterreformation - represents another great shift in the sacred, in which the gulf between God and world is at once made more absolute and vanishingly small. God is made sublime, unknowable; the world becomes profane, secular in a new way. Individuals are made more individual, through denial of the lower body, an emphasis on language and sight, but above all through a direct and unmediated relationship with the divine. Society comes to be understood not as a family but a contract; purposive politics emerges, and the sect achieves renewed importance.

With the divine's even more absolute removal from this world, it became apprehended under the figure of the sublime. With the now-perceived 'vast gulf between the *sublime* and the painful, lonely and finite world of humans', the world took on a more melancholic tone (Mellor and Shilling 1997: 107), as profane in a newly radical sense. In its original sense in the Classical world, the profane or worldly was itself understood religiously; indeed, 'profane' originally meant the space in front of the temple (*pro-fanum*), and only relatively less sacred, within an overarching sacral cosmos. The Christian banishment of spirits and demons from this world meant that the profane began to be understood in a more radical sense, as a space that was *only* profane, that had no relation to the sacred. With the Protestant Reformation this started to shift towards an absolute profane - the mirror image of the absolute divine - a space that that did not need a sacral reference point to make it intelligible (Gadamer 1975: 150; cf. Milbank 1990).

But at the same time as the Reformation radicalized the gulf between the empirical and transcendent worlds, the latter was also brought close to each individual. Following Weber's analysis in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930), Bellah describes the way that early modern religion flattened out the hierarchies in both the material and supernal worlds, so that the relation between the two worlds was no longer mediated through heavenly or earthly intermediaries. The rejection of the medieval cosmos freed Protestants from their organic bonds, only to bind them with the personal responsibility of fulfilling God's wishes themselves (Walzer 1968: 183). The Protestant faithful were to be a 'priesthood of all believers', rather than relying on the priesthood of others; their moral lives were thus predicated on self-reliance and self-discipline (Troeltsch 1931: 470). Members of sects such as the radical Calvinists were subject to a 'godly tension' by the constant need to display their worthiness and self-discipline to the other sect members (Walzer 1968: 318). The result was a shift towards salvation through worldly involvement. Religious piety was de-ritualised, and the service of God was thought of not in terms of specialised ascetic and devotional acts but as an inner orientation, the sense of a divine command that has to be acted out in all areas of this profane life. This formulation allowed the centred self of historic religion to operate outside world-denying practices, amidst the complexities of empirical social reality. Religious action was now 'conceived to be identical with the whole of life', and the world as an arena in which to work out the divine command. Grace was no longer seen as a miraculous substance imparted by the sacraments of the Church, but as a transformation carried out directly by God on the personality of the individual. Salvation thus became a direct relationship between the individual and the Divine, rather than being contingent on the former's participation in the *corpus mysticum* of the Church (Troeltsch 1931: 468-470).

Protestant bodies were distanced from the natural, supernatural and social environments, subordinated to and controlled by the mind, and by cognitive belief, linguistic symbols and narratives.

Closed off from others, 'people began to stand as *individual bodies* outside ... sacred communities' (Mellor and Shilling 1997: 46), creating a bodily form suitable for contractual relationships based on abstract ideas (Mellor and Shilling 1997: 42) Freed up from the *sensual solidarities* of medieval Catholicism, the dominant form of sociality thus became the banal *association*, a form of sociality based on instrumental goals (Mellor and Shilling 1997: 166). This was a return of the *societas* of archaic religion, but now governed by the dualism of historic and early modern religion. Initially the *societas* remain attached to this transcendent sublime - religious impulses became disaggregated, and gave rise to a number of secular institutions that stand outside the state - corporations, political parties, institution of health and education - and social movements (Bellah 1970: 36-9).

The dismantling of the traditional, organic bonds between the individual members of medieval society made it possible to think of a purposive, methodical politics quite distinct from the ultimately conservative notion of politics as the mere 'preservation and health of the body politic' (Walzer 1968: 182). But in time this became displaced by a more abstract sublime, with banal associations increasingly detached from transcendent values and instead governed by instrumental efficiency.

With the Enlightenment it is an absolute, singular nature that takes on the sublimity of God, especially in the New World, where 'nature provided the theological frame on which to hang a civil religion of the American republic' (Albanese 1990: 62). The perception of the American landscape in terms of the sublime helped symbolically ground the self-conception of a new nation on the edge of an empowering wilderness, subject only to the natural, universal law of human rights and duties (Albanese 1990: 50). In American democracy this sublime underpinned the Declaration of Independence, with its lofty universalism and contract theory of government. Nature was seen as 'an ideal and metaphysical principle', and conscience was the individualized version of universal moral law (Albanese 1990: 58-64).

Modern religion

Bellah posits a fifth stage of this religious history, post-Kantian 'modern religion', which continues some of the features of early modern religion yet exhibits a final collapse of the dualism that was characteristic of historic and early modern religion. But rather than a return to the monistic, single reality of primal and archaic religion, this is the emergence of a 'multiplex' reality, filled with different perspectives and possibilities. Religious action has become even more demanding than it was for the Puritans, with an 'increasing acceptance that each individual must work out his own ultimate solutions' (Bellah 1970: 39-44). Taken in its most inclusive sense, this last form of the sacred includes and shapes the contemporary secular.

For examples of this shift, Bellah points to theologians such as Paul Tillich, Rudolf Bultman and Dietrich Bonhoeffer who radicalize the Reformation autonomy of the individual believer, but also to the emergence of self-religions and do-it-yourself religion (cf. Heelas 1996; Roof 1999). With the dropping of the doctrinal certainties and Puritan character ideals of early modern religion, culture and personality are seen as endlessly revisable, and answers to religious questions are sought not just in scripture but in secular art, thought and practices (cf. Gauchet 1997: 200-7; Lee and Ackerman 2002).

At its most minimal level, this shift results in the shift towards the 'denomination' as the paradigm form of religious collectivity. This renouncing of the absolutism of church or sect for an accommodation to a pluralist society is a partial return to the pluralism of archaic religion, but in a modern form (Martin 1962; Niebuhr 1975). But also under modern - and particularly late modern - conditions there is a wider dispersion of the sacred, with its own forms of collectivity. As Weber put it, '[t]he many gods of old, without their magic and therefore in the form of impersonal forces, rise up from their graves, strive for power over our lives and begin once more their eternal struggle amongst themselves' (Weber 1989: 22-3). It is the 'aesthetic community' that is the paradigm form of sociality within the modern sacred. Zygmunt Bauman develops his account of contemporary aesthetic communities from Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (Kant 1978), for whom judgements of beauty implied an 'aesthetic community' of those who agreed with that judgement. For Bauman the aesthetic community 'has no other foundation to rest on but widely shared agreement, explicit or tacit', has an objectivity which is 'woven entirely from the friable threads of subjective judgements', and involve no ethical

responsibilities or enduring commitments (Bauman 2001: 65). Similarly, for Michel Maffesoli, contemporary sociality is marked by a shift away from the classic modern individual, gathering together with others in banal associations in order to pursue common goals, and towards a "neo-tribal" culture structured into new affectual collectivities oriented to the sheer warmth or 'puissance' of fellow-feeling (Maffesoli 1996).

In this latest form of Western religion the sacred has been introjected into human interiority - in a 'cult of man' which sacralises an abstract, absolute 'humanity', understood as underlying the differences between empirical human beings (Durkheim 1969; cf. Westley 1978; 1983); in the divine law seen as governing the self-legislating moral subject (Kant); and in the interpretableness but ultimate unknowability of human inwardness (Freud). But if the sacred shifts into the human, so too did it take up residence in the material and natural. In what Mellor and Shilling call the *baroque modern*, early modern forms of embodiment and relations to the material and natural are hybridized with a partial return to the open-orificed embodiment that characterized the medieval period (Mellor and Shilling 1997: 51-3). The distancing from the material world involved in the privileging of sight is mitigated by a more tactile form of sight, as other senses are channelled through the activity of 'looking'. But whereas in the middle ages this more sensual immersion in the natural occurred in the context of sensual solidarities, now it takes the form of sensuous anxiety. The cognitive body options that disciplined Protestant bodies had at the same time performed their immediate relationship to the absolute divine, and helped ground the abstract solidarity of *Gesselschaft*. Under modern conditions these body options become more sensuous, emotional and aesthetic, but rather than returning people to the sensual solidarities of medieval life, this shift replaced the cognitive and spiritual anxiety of Protestants with the bodily anxiety of consumer culture and risk society. Under such conditions community is transient yet profoundly embodied, grounded not in a unified transcendent sacred but one collapsed and dispersed in multiplex reality.

Conclusion - Community and Nature in Contemporary Culture

Although contemporary 'communities of nature' generally take the form of aesthetic communities, grounded in the *de facto* commonality of subjective feeling, nevertheless they also recapitulate forms of sociality characteristic of earlier orderings of the sacred. Let me conclude by briefly considering a number of such communities:

- face-to-place communities (I take this term from John Urry) - these are constituted through common subjective feelings in relation to natural places, performed in the form of 'pilgimages' to auratic places. This phenomenon recapitulates the sacral materiality of primal religion, in which objects and places are seen as having supernatural significance, as marks of the activities of supernatural beings, but in modern subjectivized form (Ivakhiv's study of Glastonbury and of Sedona, Arizona). These are what Bauman terms carnival communities, offering temporary respite from mundane modern existence - in pockets of relative sacred within an absolute secular (Bauman 2000: 199-201).

- co-watching communities temporarily brought into being by 'media events' such as natural, technological and health disasters. These are wave-like sociations of strangers bound by common subjective feelings in relation to environmental and health risks. The collective suffering and exceeding of human control forms a de facto community of fate - but one that is still subjectively grounded in the perception of hazard.
  communities of practice, such as hiking or gardening subcultures, who periodically 'escape' into specific experiential relationships with nature - these seem baroque modern in their sensual visuality, but lack the anxiety of many baroque modern forms of embodiment

- those living ethically motivated lifestyles - these echo forms of sociality characteristic of historic religion, where the expulsion from the empirical world of the absolute divine made possible the idea of an abstract deontological code or law

- deviant food and health subcultures (health/whole foods, complementary medicine), bound not by shared moral codes but shared forms of embodiment (Hamilton)

- 'passive' supporters of environmental pressure groups such as Greenpeace - like the Church of the Middle Ages, this is a communitarian mediation of the divide between empirical and transcendental realities. It accommodates itself to worldly existence by constructing an identity for their supporters entirely compatible with the non-heroic world of employment and family. It is a collective bearer of ecological wisdom and virtue - and one that can remit the sins of its supporters, leading as they are lives in the mainstream.

- active, sect-type social movements trying to transform society - these are most like the early modern religion of the Protestant Reformation, and particularly that of Protestant sects - the public bearing of witness, the refusal to compromise with established powers, the willingness to break societal norms in the name of a higher moral law, and the demand on each individual to play their part.

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