That my approach to institutional theory has garnered most interest from students in business schools is ironic in that it derives from sources that hard-headed management theory would likely consider ridiculous. To put it baldly it derives from a double messianism, two unobservable subjects to come: the proletariat and God’s messenger. My initial preoccupation with the institutional level of analysis began when I was a neo-Marxist graduate student grappling with the inadequacies of instrumentalist understandings of class on the one hand, and with what appeared to be the absurd totalizations of structuralist Marxism on the other. (Given the systematicity they espoused, that Nicos Poulantzas committed suicide and Louis Althusser murdered his wife were emblematic of the failure of their theories.) As a political sociologist, I found it incredible that Marxism lacked any theory of the state, let alone democracy, that structuralist Marxisms could code vast swaths of the public sphere won as the result of popular agitation as “ideological state apparatuses.” I first entered the institutional domain by considering the symbioses and contradictions between market, state and democracy, and with what my mentor Robert Alford and I distinguished as systemic, structural and participational powers (Alford and Friedland, 1985).

My own understanding of institutional theory began as a religious question. “Bringing Society Back In” was written with Robert Alford after a long immersion in a city where God seemed a palpable political force (Friedland and Alford, 1991). Together with Richard Hecht, a historian of religions, I had been studying Jerusalem’s political struggles for eight years, a city where contests over the organization of space and time were simultaneously struggles over their meaning (Friedland and Hecht, 1996). The city humbled me, shredding my assumption that all social phenomena could be parsed with the categories of interest and power. Initially I thought this stony redoubt on the edge of the Judean desert was an anomalous zone where the ordinary laws of social gravity had been suspended. But the more I thought about the city’s politicized religions – a phenomenon that neither I, nor any of my intellectual friends, had taken seriously before - - the more I came to believe that there was as much faith in capitalism as there was material interest in religion, that there were commonalities between the bearded zealots of the Gush Emunim, “the bloc of the faithful”, who were assiduously settling the West Bank and Gaza, and the professionals who had captured the American corporations in the managerial revolution. That essay was motivated by a *sub rosa* desire to explore the notion that rather than being a historical oddity, the social processes I found in this triply

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1 I should like to thank my friends and colleagues for their suggestions, commentary and critique on this essay including Elizabeth Armstrong, Thomas Carlson, Doug McAdam, Huggy Rao, Gunther Teubner, Verta Taylor, Michael Dusche, Robin Wagner-Pacifici, Colleen Windham, as well as an anonymous reviewer. I am particularly indebted to Renate Meyer for her (and Peter Walgenbach’s) critique and suggestions for revision.
sacred center were everywhere. My institutionalism thus emerged out of thinking kapital and God together. It is this latter that seems to have caught hold of me.

Ever since Jerusalem I have been exploring the modalities of politicized religion, and particularly religious nationalism which theologically invests the nation-state, as a vehicle by which to develop an institutional understanding of the social (Friedland, 2001, 2002). An institutional project par excellence, it seeks to install religion as the basis of state authority and national identity, institution and collective subject, the classical site of societal power and the agency of collective representation. Unexpected and unheralded by theorists of modernity, to those who guard the intellectual gates it is a poser, a bastard, or perhaps a monster, an obscene hybrid. Politicized religion is variously judged to be neither truly religion, nor sometimes -- in what appears to be its most violent and apparently antinomian forms -- even politics.

Religion is frequently understood as a medium, or an ideology, through which groups reach for power and material resources within the nation state. The eminent historian of religions Bruce Lincoln, for example, argues in his *Holy Terrors* that religious conflicts in postcolonial states should be understood in terms of “rival claims to scarce resources” and that politicized religion in opposition to the governing regime is a response to the failure of the secular state to deliver “on its promise to provide material well-being for its citizens” (Lincoln, 2003:74-75). Lincoln reads politicized religious opposition as a power struggle by those elites displaced or marginalized by the “dominant fraction,” armed with their own legitimating discourse, whether it be secular or religious (Lincoln, 2003: 79,84). He writes:

> When objective conditions are good—peace prevails, prosperity in general, and all segments of society are generally healthy and well fed—the task of the religion of the status quo is easily accomplished, and there is little opportunity for religions of resistance to mount a serious threat. (Lincoln, 2003:86).

The implication is that religion becomes an oppositional political medium and thus prone to violence under conditions of material want and inequity.

Jurgen Habermas has likewise argued that radical Islam is not really about religion at all. Rather the politicization of Islam and its turn to violence are the result of the absence of democratic mechanisms by which the “life-world” can resist the “system-world” of an increasingly intrusive capitalism and state. Radicalized violent Islam emerges where the public sphere has been impoverished, internally by gross income inequality and an authoritarian state, externally as the result of the economic subordination and impoverishment imposed on the late-comer, geographically peripheral entrants in the world capitalist order. Additionally the West’s promotion of human rights is polluted by its promotion of its corporations’ interests and the promotion of its “leveling consumerist culture.” (2003:32-33) When a society’s communicative life-world is subordinated to the instrumental system-world of capitalism and the state both inside and out, communication is distorted, distrust endemic, and violent conflict inevitable. “The spiral of violence begins as a spiral of distorted communication that leads through the spiral of reciprocal mistrust, to the breakdown of communication.” (2003:35-37)

Political Islam, Habermas contends, is just “a new and subjectively more convincing language for old political orientations,” namely Arab nationalism (2003:33). Money and votes are the program for the prevention of religious radicalization.

Habermas also understands politicized Islam as a defensive reaction to the destruction of
pre-modern, traditional forms under historic conditions where the material benefits of modernity -- “compensation for the pain of the disintegration of customary ways of life” - - are absent (2003:32). Without an improvement in material conditions and the institutionalization of civil and political rights necessary to democracy, violent forms of politicized religion will continue to proliferate. Given that “fundamentalism,” even in violent forms, have also emerged in societies with vital democracies—India, Israel, Turkey and the United States, and that the demographic core of these movements are often not newly marginalized peasants and craftsmen, but members of thoroughly modern professional and bureaucratic middle class, these arguments are not very compelling (Friedland 2001).

Analysts also deny violent forms of radical Islam the status of politics. The great comparativist Islamist Olivier Roy argues that al-Qaeda represents a form of what he calls neo-fundamentalism: de-territorialized and anti-national movements that sacralize daily life, focusing on salvation and the purification of self rather than political program, seeking to reconstitute a pure, but egalitarian, umma rather than an Islamic state. Roy claims we must understand their jihad as redemptive rite, not as geo-political strategy. The neo-fundamentalists, Roy argues, “condemn the very concepts of democracy, human rights and freedom, whereas Islamists try to show how Islam represents the best form of democracy (through the concept of shura, or consultation) . . . Neofundamentalists refuse to express their views in modern terms borrowed from the West.” (Roy, 2004: 247)

Habermas likewise refuses to grant al-Qaeda’s “terrorism” any political rationality. Speaking of the authors of 911, he writes, “. . . they do not pursue a program that goes beyond the engineering of destruction and insecurity” (2003:29). Islamic terrorism, Habermas contends, “bears the anarchistic traits of an impotent revolt directed against an enemy that cannot be defeated in any pragmatic sense.” Neither Roy nor Habermas can imagine Islamic terrorism as a meaningful “political act.” That al-Qaeda seeks to expel infidel forces from the sacred lands of the umma, to topple regimes that fail to follow the shari’a, regimes which they understand to be sustained by their strategic alliance with the United States, seem to be actionable, realistic goals, at least no less so than the United States’ mission of expanding “liberty,” as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice put it, throughout the Islamic world. Indeed, one of the consequences of al-Qaeda’s relentless attacks was the withdrawal of American forces from Saudi Arabia in the lead up to the second Gulf war.

One refuses politicized religion its religious ends; the other – at least certain violent forms -- its political means. I wish in my work to grasp their conjunction, the ways in which its political modalities are determined by its religious ends, or more exactly, by the way its political practices extend the institutional logic of religion which derives authority from divine writ, grounds both individual and collective birth in divine creation, and locates agency in a self bound to God as opposed to an autonomous, self-interested monad. I wish, in other words, to consider the possibility that it is the institutional logic of religion, not the material or political situation of social groups recruited to politicized religion, nor even the religion’s theology, that accounts for their political practices, both their violence and their sexual preoccupation.

Political religion is difficult to grasp, not simply because of sociological doxa of secularization and differentiation (Casanova, 1994), but because in social theory religion is classically considered an exemplar of the cultural, as opposed to the socially
real, indeed as ideology, the conceptual theme of this volume. Most students of contemporary politicized religion likewise understand it as a mediation of a social real -- typically a group’s interest -- that is behind or outside, background or base. Others treat it as identitarian, an expressive alternative to interest-based politics, a new social movement or a peculiar form of the politics of recognition as opposed to redistribution (Fraser, 2004). It is precisely for this reason that religion, traditionally understood by social scientists as a medium through which the socially real comes to representation or as alternative to the most important social realities, offers a productive site by which to repose both institution and ideology as sociological questions. In this essay I wish to move from religion as an institution, to institution as a “religious” phenomenon.

The Institutional Logic of Practice

To understand politicized religion, one cannot reduce the logic of its institutional practice to a misrecognized distributional struggle over commensurable, culturally contentless powers. Social theory, and social movement theory in its various iterations of resource mobilization, has tended to focus on the structural question, the legitimate distributions of the good as opposed to the systemic question of the legitimacy and practical logic of goods, on who gets what as opposed to how and what is produced and distributed.

Pierre Bourdieu, a brilliant theorist of social practice, for example, believes that institutional fields follow “invariant laws,” deriving from their homologous logics (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:75). The homology derives from grounding the social in group relations, and the dynamism of social change in the struggle for group dominance, groups arrayed according to their differential relation to different forms of capital – economic, social, cultural, symbolic. It is only because Bourdieu has homogenized the principle of practice across fields -- the binary of domination -- that he can homologize groups across fields (Bourdieu, 1990:72; 1984:254; 1971:179-180). The several capitals are ultimately convertible in the “division in the labor of domination (Bourdieu, 1996:265; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:99). In Bourdieu’s hands the multiplicity of institutional ends evaporates into a unicity of means, capitals and powers over which groups struggle in their pursuit of legitimate dominance. Power, or authority, is the misrecognized meta-stake organizing each field, such that the value, or stake, in any given field is an illusio, a psychic and material investment in the game, a sense of relevance given by a habitus conditioned by the kinds of capital with which one is endowed, and the playing of “the game” itself (1990: 66; Widick, 2003). One’s habitus is a disposition resulting from the unconscious incorporation of one’s position vis a vis these powers. That one wants what one has a chance of getting and that one enters a field characterized by competition sustains the illusio, “the tacit recognition of the value of the stakes of the game,” the appearance that this arbitrary institutional value has substance (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:117).

Although distributional contests sustain the value of institutional values, the institutional logic of practice is otherwise. An institution’s specificity is located in the cultural premises of its production, not its distributions and group positions within that distribution. Institutions are not, as in the original statements of institutional theory, forms of social organization invested with value beyond their practical effects, or, as later work showed, with practical effects because they are legitimate net of their practicality
(DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). They are themselves practical regimes of valuation, in the
sense that they constitute institutional objects of value.

Institutional theory points to the institutional ordering of means-ends couplets,
regimes of practice, to what I have called “institutional logics,” that is, stable
constellations of practice, and the subjects and objects coupled to them (Friedland, 2001;
Friedland and Alford, 1991). One cannot begin with an autonomous subject in an
instrumental relation to an exterior object, a sovereign consciousness confronting a thing
present-at-hand. The objects of institutional life are meaningful, ready-at-hand in a
particular way, that is, they only exist as collective representations, representations
collectively accepted as real (Searle, 1995). It is not only that typifications of actors and
actions are co-implicated (Meyer et al, 1994; Meyer, 2008). Institutional practices are
both media for subjectification in that they enable and possess practitioners, and of
objectification in that those practices, and hence the subjects, hinge on their symbolic and
performative production of objects. It is through the institutional logic of practice that
the two are co-constituted.

Every institutional resource allocation -- of votes, money, property, force,
knowledge, meals, love, territory, blessings and sacraments -- is a material semiosis in
which the categories, instruments, and agents through which that object is produced or
distributed are brought to life and made real. All objects of institutional life are dually
constituted, both conceptually and practically, as categories that point to objects of
action, and actors who engage in material practices that enact them. Institutional objects,
as such, do not exist. They are known only through their conjoint conceptual and
practical specificity (Mohr and Duquenne, 1997; Breiger, 1974). The constitution of the
object is both causally and narratively linked to the practice, as that from which the
practice is understood to derive, not unlike the way placement derives from place (Smith,
2004: 50). This interdependent duality of category and practice is the core of an
institutional logic (Mohr and Duquenne, 1997; Mohr and White, forthcoming).

Meaning is materially constituted at the same time that materiality is
meaningfully constituted. One cannot interpret institutions by relying solely on words or
on things, but by both as they are deployed in practice, in that categories point to the
nature, and hence genesis, of an institutional object of which the material practice is
productive or to which it is responsive. Categories and practices are mutually
constitutive, that is, categories are known by the practices applied to them just as much as
practices only have sense in terms of the categories to which they are applied. An
institutional logic exists when institutional objects have a practical specificity and
institutional practices have an objective specificity.

If materiality is always institutionally meaningful, there are no brute facts, no
relation to things which are sufficient to explain practice--no social upon which the
cultural is built. If resources are useful because they are meaningful, then interests in
resources cannot easily be dissociated from the institutional conditions that establish their
value, their use, and hence what they are--no social without cultural constitution. And if
institutional categories depend on their practical enactment, there are no institutional
objects which do not depend on particular material configurations—no cultural without
social constitution. Institutional theory points to powers, and hence interests, that are
simultaneously cultural and material, powers and interests that are not necessarily
commensurable, but which can contingently be combined in different configurations.
The rise of female fasting by medieval European Catholic women, detailed by the religious historian Caroline Walker Bynum, is a pertinent example. Bynum documents a change in religious practice indexing a different attribute of an institutional object – God (Bynum, 1987). Fasting and feasting had steadily declined as church practices. Between the 12th and 14th centuries, women began to engage in heroic forms of fasting, often centered around devotion to the Eucharist, whose consecration, held in the hands of the cleric, had become an object of adoration as opposed to an accessible ritual food consumed in corporate commensality, a worshipped suffering flesh as opposed to a collectively consumed divine food.

Although Bynum does not cast her account in this way, these fasting practices were premised on two attribute shifts – one in the ontology of woman, the other in God. These women recast their bodies, not as erotic bodies to be negated – the normative view of the Church – but as an affirmative suffering, nurturant flesh, the meal-giver and the meal itself. “Fasting, feeding, and feasting were thus not so much opposites as synonyms. Fasting was flight not from but into physicality. Communion was consuming, that is, becoming, a God who saves through physical, human agony. To feed others was to offer one’s suffering as food.” (1987:250, 289). These women, Bynum argued, aligned their identification as food and food preparers with God’s flesh, who in becoming human also became food. And, driven by an insatiable hunger, in their mystical unions with Jesus, they identified themselves with God’s humanity as a feminine substance through Mary’s immaculate conception. In response to an increasingly inaccessible host, these fasting practices allowed women to become the Eucharist, to divinize their bodies, not as women, but as the human counterpart of Christ’s divinity, who like them was powerful in his very helplessness and who also bled in order to give birth to a new world.

By this shift in practice these women, of course, contested authority structures. At a time when women were being denied clerical roles, they challenged the authority of the priests, developing forms of lay piety outside clerical control, as well as beyond the authority of fathers whose marriage choices they could refuse and whose material wealth they could evacuate of significance. Those challenges to authority derived from their ability to index the substance of God through new ritual practices that shifted the meaning of both subject and object, affirming woman’s status as food and God’s humanity as woman. This shift in practice cannot, however, be reduced to a challenge to authority.

Although these historical religious practices might seem idiosyncratic, shifts in other institutional practices are no different. Mohr and Duquenne’s work on relief organizations in New York City between 1888 and 1917 illustrates the point (1997). They show how material practices – the provision of money, food, shelter, or work – were applied to particular categories of the people without money, thereby creating different institutional objects – the “destitute” and the “needy,” for example – upon which these relief organizations acted. The “destitute” – morally marked, inter-generationally poor – were required to work to receive aid as opposed to the morally unmarked, externally conditioned, downwardly mobile “needy” who were given shelter, food and money without this requirement, but were subject to investigation. By 1917, practices shifted such that both the “needy” and the “destitute” were subject to investigation and
the class-based, morally marked distinction between them largely eliminated. Poverty, as such, does not explain practice.

Researchers have pointed to the way new organizational practices reconstitute both the objects and the subjects of practice. In various domains major shifts in practice – nouvelle cuisine; alternative dispute resolution, the HMO, brand wine, interest groups, the hospice – were tied to ontological changes in the meaning of a meal, marriage, health care, wine, democracy, and life itself, as well as creating and being carried by new subject positions tied to those practices (Clemens, 1997; Monin, Croidieu and Friedland, 2008; Morrill, Zald and Rao, 2007; McAdam and Scott, 2005).

It is no different in the corporate market place. Beyond the spectacular ontological construction of the corporation as a legal person by the courts, Neil Fligstein has shown how the construction of the American firm sequentially changed from a site of production, to a seller of commodities, to a bundle of financial assets, each of which has been associated with distinct practices, organizational forms and types of subjects thereby authorized to assume control over it (Fligstein, 1985; 1990). Conceptions of control are alternative ontological constructions of the corporation, and hence property. What the corporation is cannot be dissociated from subject positions given authority to run it. Patricia Thornton has shown the same thing with regard to American publishing firms, in which the book moved from a literary production in which editors had primacy to a marketable commodity in which managers had control (Thornton, 2004). And Michael Lounsbury showed how new professional finance associations transformed the practices by which money was constituted through mathematical economics in the field of finance in conjunction with governmental deregulation (Lounsbury, 2002). Practice and ontology are coupled in an institutional logic.

Institutions are ideological formations, not just in the sense that they are organized around languages that legitimate power as control over persons and things, but in that they produce powers by authorizing practices that constitute subjects and objects through which the authority relation is organized. Institutional theory thus points beyond distribution, the classical ground of ideology -- measured either as control over objective means or in trans-institutional operators like power, capital or utility -- to the hegemonic construction of incommensurable self-referential domains of activity and the extent of their scope as the systemic, as opposed to structural, ground of ideology. It is important to distinguish between shifts in the institutional architecture of society as opposed to the social architecture of institutions, that is, the difference between extending an institutional logic to a new domain of activity, such as the commodification of health care or the religionization of state authority, from the social extension or contraction of access to practices that follow existent institutional logic to different groups of people, such as the civil rights movement, feminist incorporations of women or micro-lending, although these distributional shifts may involve institutional shifts elsewhere, as, for example, in the case of the promotion of civil and political equality for women. The movement of African captives and the prerogatives of rule out of the category of property -- that is, the end of slavery and the rise of state bureaucracy -- were distributional struggles because they were conflicts over institutional boundaries. Giving primacy to the former occludes the determining importance of the latter.

Given that institutional ontologies are enacted practically and institutional scope is arbitrary, institutions are inherently ideological, not in the sense of legitimation, but of
Institutional languages constitute before they justify, and they can justify only because they constitute. As the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben comments, Émile Benveniste’s category of speech acts points to the institution of the law, in which “all language tends to assume a performative value.” Indeed he argues, “[t]o do things with words could even be considered as a residue in language of a magical-juridical state of human existence in which words and deeds, linguistic expression and real efficacy, coincide.” (Agamben, 2005 [2000]: 132). Although variable in terms of mechanisms of enforcement, language’s constitutive role is operative in every institutional domain, not to mention the “events” through which they are transformed (Searle, 1995, 2006; Wagner-Pacifici, 2008).

From this point of view authority, or relations of legitimate domination, is a second-order phenomenon, like other forms of social organization in and through which institutional life takes place. Shifts in practice are mediated through, but not derived from, challenges to authority. In the case of nouvelle cuisine, for example, Rao, Monin and Durand have shown how the rhetoric, roles and rules of cooking were transformed by a small group of well-placed chefs who transgressed culinary convention by emphasizing different dimensions of food – both in preparation and presentation -- joining the promotion of professional autonomy and aesthetic innovation, such that they were certified by the arbiters of taste and gradually took over the professional society of French chefs (2003, 2005). The making and the meaning of a restaurant meal were thereby transformed. Although it is certainly correct to move social movement theory away from its state-centricity, it would be misguided to give analytic centrality to “collective challenges to systems or structures of authority” in their definition (Snow, 2004: 11).

Challenges to institutional practice are necessarily dual, in that shifts in modal practices have huge distributional consequences, whether it be the commodification or de-commodification of an activity, the extension of citizenship rights to workers, students, children or patients, the extension or contraction of religious codes to the regulation of the life process or citizenship (Scott et al., 2000). At the same time the extension of new institutional logics shifts the ontological basis of the social, creating new objects at the same time that they generate new identities tied to those new objectivities. One cannot premise analytic distinctions between instrumental and expressive dimensions of changes in practice on the autonomy and causal priority of the former.

Nor can one neatly parse social movements into those oriented to one or the other of these dimensions, (Armstrong and Bernstein, 2008; Friedland and Mohr, 2004; Taylor and Van Dyke, 2004). Seeking to wend a way between the new politics and the old, class and identity, Nancy Fraser, for example, argues that we need to distinguish analytically between the politics of redistribution rooted in the social relations of class and a politics of recognition rooted in the cultural relations of status. These politics are distinguished by the nature of the collectivities that carry them—classes and status groups respectively. Fraser proposes a “bivalent” conception of justice drawing on both independent domains. For Fraser, “class is an artifact of an unjust political economy, which creates, and exploits a proletariat. The core injustice is exploitation, an especially deep form of maldistribution, as the proletariat shoulders an undue share of the system’s burdens, while being denied its fair share of the system’s rewards” (2004:231).
By deriving class from material distribution, Fraser naturalizes capitalism as an 
objective materiality, making its politics into a conflictual problem of group share. She 
thereby evacuates the specificity of capitalism’s institutional logic. Exploitation in 
Marxist theory and hence in much socialist ideology, derives not from maldistribution, 
but from the cultural materiality of property relations and the commodification of labor it 
makes possible. Marx’s theory of exploitation is a cultural theory, a theory of valuation, 
the labor theory of value asserting a specific regime of temporality through which value 
is produced, expanded and reproduced. In their cosmology distributional conflicts draw 
their transformative possibilities from their origin in capitalism’s contradictory 
institutional logic of accumulation. The institutional specificity of capitalism does not 
afford a culturally empty power contest between the dominant and the dominated, but a 
struggle over commodification, over the production of capital. Changes in institutional 
logic not only change the condition of access to things and activities, they create and 
destroy whole realms of practice and the subject positions that carry and are carried by 
them.

Institutional fields are structures of symbolically constituted, iterated powers 
whose exercise through interlocked congeries of practices—voting and legislating, 
buying and selling, officiating and participating in religious rite, marrying, cohabitation 
and love-making, the fighting of wars and signing of treaties, controlled experiment and 
observer—carried out by collectively recognized subjects—citizens, owners, 
congregants, families, officials, scientists—which presume and performatively produce 
values—democracy, property, divinity, love, sovereignty and knowledge.

I call these institutional substances, the central object of an institutional field and 
the principle of its unity. The category of substance derives from Aristotelian 
metaphysics where substance, or substantial form, is the foundation, or essence, of a 
thing which cannot be reduced to its accidental properties which attach to it nor to the 
materiality of its instances (Aristotle, 1998). For Aristotle, substance is not matter, but 
the form that makes matter a “this,” “that by virtue of which the matter is in the state it is 
in” (Aristotle, 1998: 167, 229). A substance exceeds its attributes, cannot be reduced to 
a thing’s materiality, and thus cannot be described, only pointed to and obsessively 
named. While the category of substance may be epistemologically problematic, it 
captures institutional reality rather well. Like Aristotle’s soul as the substance of human, 
an institutional substance does not exist; it is rather an absent presence necessary to 
institutional life. (Emile Durkheim likewise pointed to the profound gap between the 
social and its representation, totemic practices which, he argued, were enactments of the 
force of the clan, a force he named a “substance” (Durkheim, 1995: 191; Friedland, 
2004).)

Here I am building on Michel Foucault’s distinctive institutional method. In 
several historical studies, Foucault re-conceptualized sexuality as a practical substance as 
opposed to a physiological fact. He thereby refused the impulses of the human body—sex 
—as the primary constituent of sexuality, such that variations in interdiction might 
account for variations in its expression (Foucault, 1980 [1976]). In his histories of 
Western sexuality, Foucault displaced the study of moral codes and the erotic body with 
another conceptual object: the ethical practices of self-formation (Foucault 1990 [1984]: 
28, 250-251). He historically differentiated the dominant practices of self-formation not 
by the behaviors they forbid or promote, but by the substances upon which they operate:
“that part of himself that will form the object of his moral practice” (Foucault, 1990: 28, see also 25, 40-52). Adopting a Hegelian term, Foucault posited the category of “ethical substance” as the hermeneutic key for understanding sexuality as an institutional practice.

Heidegger’s Practical Ontologies

For Foucault social practice, subject formation and ontology were interdependent phenomena (Foucault, 1990: 26, 63). The same is the true for Martin Heidegger, the German philosopher with whom Foucault carried on an unmarked conversation during his intellectual career. Heidegger built his philosophy over what he saw as Western philosophy’s failure to derive either Being or the world from its substantialist ontology. Institutional substance, I would nonetheless argue, is a sociological analogue to God in his phenomenology of Christian religiosity, an approach that has surprising -- given his resistance to cast his work as a foundation for sociology’s ontic preoccupations -- relevance to the institutional project (Heidegger, 2004).²

Heidegger’s phenomenological ontology was worked out through his formalization of the structure of experience immanent to the practices of Paul and Augustine. Heidegger’s phenomenology of religion, was written in 1921 six years before his opus, Being and Time, whose origins he locates in a Christian anthropology.³ There and elsewhere Heidegger claimed that Western metaphysics had collapsed Being into being, the reality of things into their presence, their actuality or thereness (Heidegger, 1962 [1927]). Rather than an autonomous subject confronting an exterior world of things, he posited a space of being, Dasein, “there being,” a space where being appears, our condition one of always already “being-in-the world,” that is, “thrown” into a world of meaningful entities, the significance of those entities being co-constitutive of our own. The Being of humans is never present to itself, but located in between subject and object in the circumspective practices of Dasein, stretched along between being from birth and towards death (Heidegger, 1962: 426-427). Heidegger’s ideas contributed to the sociological thought of both Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault via his displacement of the subject-object dualism into an existential “being-in-the-world” and the “worldhood of the world,” inherent in the habitual, logic of practice, whose order and significance is only revealed in its disruption or supercession. If Bourdieu sociologizes Heidegger’s temporality, Foucault makes the practical-discursive contours of thinking constitutive of the being that is thought.

For Heidegger phenomena are not constituted as the relation between subjects and present-at-hand historical objects, but as experiences, both the experiencing and the experienced. Heidegger’s religious phenomenology thus refused religion as a historical object, and hence God as a contemplative object, rather seeking to ground it in religiosity as “factual life experience” (Heidegger, 2004 [1921]: 19). One can understand the phenomenon of Christian religiosity only by understanding how one’s relation to the central content of its experience -- God -- is enacted in life, through the Christian’s “comportment” (2004: 43, 48). In contrast to Paul’s transcendent deity, Heidegger

² For example: “[T]he analytic of Dasein is not aimed at laying an ontological basis for anthropology; its purpose is one of fundamental ontology.” (1962: 244)
³ “The way in which ‘care’ is viewed in the foregoing existential analytic of Dasein, is one which has grown upon the author in connection with his attempts to Interpret the Augustianian (i.e. Helleno-Christian) anthropology with regard to the foundational principles reached in the ontology of Aristotle.” (1962: 492).
locates religiosity only as an enactment of divinity, a how, a set of practices in which divinity is immanent, hence, to be apprehended through a cultural phenomenology.

“Christian religiosity lives temporality,” Heidegger remarks (2004: 83, see also 19, 52, 57). Using Paul’s writings to the Thessalonians, Heidegger locates primitive Christianity in the practice of proclamation, not as content in terms of what is proclaimed about Jesus, nor in terms of Paul’s relation to the beleaguered congregation of Thessalonica, located neither in the theological or the sociological, but in terms of an enactment of Paul and the Thessalonians “having become” Christians, the congregation through Paul, a mutual knowing from having turned towards God, that is not a past present – a present that is no longer, but a necessarily present past – a past operative in the present, which is itself a projection into a future past, that is, a potentiality already inscribed in “having become” (2004:65-66). The bond between Paul and the Thessalonians is not a memory of a past transmission, but a continuing authentic relation. Paul repeatedly proclaims the being-present of God, a shared painful being-present upon which salvation depends. The enactment of Paul’s relation with the Thessalonians as a weak dependent, whose eternal life is contingent on their faith, parallels his and their submissive turning towards God as recipients of grace. Sustaining the knowing of one’s “having become” in the present, repeating the decision that constituted one’s having become, and hence not waiting for the inevitable return, is the guarantor that one will be saved in an anticipated, but indeterminate and unknown, future. “Paul is not concerned at all about answering the question of the When of the Parousia. The When is determined through the How of the self-comportment, which is determined through the enactment of factical life experience in each of its moments.” (2004: 75). One does not stop work to await Jesus, one anticipates him in continuing in one’s station as if it were not, that is, stripped of significance, as an enactment of “having become” a Christian (2004: 84). The painful, almost unbearable, hope of having become separates those who can sustain a present past from those who wait for Christ’s second coming as though it were a future present, something that will transpire in objective time considered as a string of temporal locations.

God, of course, is an absent presence enacted through the way in which one temporalizes, whether this real is understood as future actuality or present possibility. God, the central substance of Pauline Christianity, is immanent to the logic of practice, a practice that hinges on it. The phenomenology of messianicity depends on a determinate cultural category, on this Messiah. Heidegger will later transpose Pauline temporality, a particular form of temporalizing that derives from the way one enacts one’s relation to God, into the ecstatic structure of temporality in Being and Time, in which one is outside of oneself in the throwness of having been, the facticity of being among, and the projection of being ahead of oneself. And, replacing God with Being, whose potentiality is accessible through one’s confrontation with the absence of finitude, the possibility of of one’s impossibility, he will identify a particular form of temporalizing --resolutely anticipating, as opposed to awaiting, death, “its ownmost distinctive possibility” -- as the ground of authenticity, enacted in recurrent moments of vision and decision that make possible an authentic historicality (1962: 435-437).

Not withstanding Heidegger’s presupposition that Pauline temporalizing is authentic while Jewish temporalizing fallen, Heidegger here laid out an important program for the phenomenological study of regimes of practice, in which discursively
constituted objects -- here God -- take on their significance, and become actual, from the
way in which they are enacted by individuals who temporalize in determinate ways and
are thereby formed as subjects (2004: 78-79). Heidegger would repeat this
phenomenology of regimes of practice when he delineated the “essence” of modern
science in the practice of research as a procedure of knowing, based on an “always-
already-known” object sphere, an ontology of truth which binds the researcher as the
incarnation binds a believing Catholic. “We first arrive at science as research when and
only when truth has been transformed into the certainty of representation. What it is to
be is for the first time defined as the objectiveness of representing, and truth is first
defined as the certainty of representing…” (Heidegger, 1977) Modern’s science’s object
sphere is constituted through a methodology that both presumes and produces the world
through its calculable lawfulness, an objectification that also presumes the modern
subject, whose being is identical to its thinking, a subject whose being is the foundation
of representedness as the being, and thus the truth, of all things, of both nature and
history. As in his study of Pauline Christianity, Heidegger joins ontology, practice and
subjectification. Calculable objectivity, being located in numeric, lawful representation,
and the self-grounding, free and knowing subject who arrogates to himself the
representative of things which derive their being from their objectification,
objectifications structured into a “world picture”—each of the elements is tied to the
other. Subject and object are thus produced in concert through practices of
subjectification and objectification.

Heidegger’s phenomenology of Christianity provided the template out of which
he would later develop his own general phenomenological ontology. He philosophically
“secularized” Pauline and Augustinian Christianity. He also historicized Western
metaphysics as a Christian onto-theology wherein the creation of technology by the
“rational and willful human subject of representation” is modeled on divine creation from
the mind of God (Carlson, 2008: 41-43). I would suggest the possibility of his
transposition is located not just in a Christian anthropology, but in the “religious” nature
of all institutions. Religion appears to us as a distinctive kind of institution, replete with
rite, that is, with practices -- prayer, penitence, piety, pilgrimage, sacrament, charity --
that have a non-arbitrary relationship to what they signify, that is symbolic actions, as
well as with performative forms of speech, where use of language is a form of action,
referring to the reality it itself produces. Both cleric and laity literally speak and act
God’s presence into existence, an ontological substance that can never be reduced to its
attributes, nor to the practices that access or evoke it. Discourse, explication, is integral,
ot exterior, to religious practice. Nonetheless the truth of that discourse, and hence of
religious practice, is not primarily denotative. It is rather constitutive -- productive and
performative, a critical part of its institutional logic.

Institutional Logics
Institutions have logics. An institutional logic is a bundle of practices organized
around a particular substance and its secondary derivatives from which the normativity of
those practices is derived. Within any institution, the discursively laden practical
organization of bodies and things in its space and time signify those substances. This

4 “The real system of science consists in a solidarity of procedure and attitude with respect to the
objectification of whatever is” (Heidegger, 1977:127).
choreography of practice is not, properly speaking, a form of social signage. The practices through which those substances, as well as the subjects they imply—voting, democracy or representation, and citizen, for example—are symbolizations, in that they have a nonarbitrary relation to the signified, here democracy or representation.

Institutional substances cannot be directly observed, but are immanent in the practices that organize an institutional field, values never exhausted by those practices, practices premised on faith. Institutions invoke their substances in language; they repeat names. They are not, for all that, loosely coupled ceremonial legitimating exteriors (Meyer and Rowan, 1977), but unquestioned, constitutive interiors, the sacred core of each field, unobservable, but socially real. Unlike lesser institutional objects, they are the God-terms of social life, the limited set of things “for the sake of which” we live our lives, what Augustine referred to as that thing which is “enjoyed,” or loved for their own sake, unchangeable and eternal both in their attributes and their possession – obviously God in his case -- as opposed to those changeable and uncertain things which are loved because they enable one to possess other objects, and hence not enjoyed, but used (frui vs. uti) (Heidegger, 2004: 203-205). Institutional substances are, I suspect, a basis of common identification, possessions that possess institutional players distributed across organizations and groups (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008).

John Searle, the American philosopher, also conceptualizes institutional logic and I want to briefly explore its relation to my own. For Searle all institutions result from collective intentionality, that is desires and beliefs “directed at or about objects and states of affairs in the world” (2006: 16; 1995:23-25). Searle built his theory of institutions from the institution of language, which he posits as the foundation of all institutions (Searle, 1995, 2006). In his theory of speech acts collective intentions become socially productive only through the constitutive rules of language use. It is the ability of language to assign a status to things they do not have by their physical nature that distinguishes human beings and allows us to construct institutions. Institutions result from the conversion of collective intentionality into constitutive rules -- X counts as Y under conditions C – which assign status functions -- “a collectively recognized status to which a function is attached” -- to ontologically objective “entities that cannot perform those functions without that imposition” – like sound patterns count as words or forms of paper count as money (1995: 41).

These status-functions generate powers, both authorizations and obligations. Status functions are not power, but “vehicles of power” (2006:18). Institutions are composed of nested status functions that generate iterated networks of these enabling and constraining deontic powers (2006: 15). Searle thus understands the logic of institutions as propositionally ordered power structures in that the acts that they authorize or oblige can be nested and interlocked. These acts have a logic because the intentionality that produces them also does, or as he says, because “human attitudes…have propositional contents with logical relations” (2006:15).

Status functions fuse a represented status and the function that this collective representation enables it to perform. It is the relationship between status and function, or put differently practice and purpose, that is at issue. Searle understands status functions as assignments of values, goals or purposes (1995: 19). “Roughly speaking,” Searle writes, “functions are causes that serve a purpose” (2006: 17). For Searle, the normatively laden, observer-relative function derives from the collective intentionality
that drives the assignment of the status. “Where do the purposes come from?” Searle writes. “In any case it is not essential for the main argument . . . that functions are observer relative, though I note it in passing” (Searle, 2006: 17).

Institutions convert exogenous purposes into deontic powers. In Searle’s account these powers, not the purposes, become the “desire-independent reasons for action” that are understood to ground institutional life (2006:19). Indeed these powers are purposes. Searle’s institutional account thus gives primacy to the deontological, to the practices one can and must do, not to the value or purposes they serve, nor for the matter to the institutional objects that occasion these practices (1995:36). For Searle, in fact, institutions evolve out of brute power relations. Marriage and property, he argues, “originate in the sheer physical and intentional facts involved in cohabitation and physical possession, respectively” (1995:81). Not unlike Bourdieu, institutions reduce to power, these institutions being ways to stabilize possession. Institutions are structures of power whose purposes are analytically external to their constitution, located in an extra-institutional collective intentionality.

Institutions, I would argue, have a logic not because of the propositional qualities of human attitudes and the acts they enable, but because practices and substances are internally co-constitutive. Deontic powers -- authorizations and obligations -- trace out the logic of practice with respect to a purpose, a value, or in my terms, a substance, the most general “function” in an institutional field. An institutional substance would be part of what these philosophers call a “free-standing Y,” that is, it is a status-function that has no brute reality upon which it stands, only the practices through which it is enacted (Smith, 2003: 25). Substances are known through their powers, but are not reducible to them.

By comparison to the presence of things, an institutional substance is an absent presence towards and around which practice incessantly moves, known only through this movement, not unlike the way a space is known through its architectural enclosure. Institutional logics are ontological enactments, a what done through a how, popular sovereignty through democratic election, justice through juridical practices that classify actions according to the binary of legal and illegal, divinity through pilgrimage and prayer, romantic love through intimate exchange of body and word. Institutional practices subjectify as they objectify. Romantic love, for example, is an institutional logic that specifies how one makes, has and shows love, and hence is a lover. Love, loving and lover are co-implicated.

These symbolic practices are the visible face and the condition of possibility of institutional substances, and hence the source of their identity across time. Like an unknowable God, a substance is known through its enactments, its operations, the practices which presume it. These practices come as congeries, a kind of symbolizing skein, whose self-referential interlocking help substantiate that institutional logic. Belief in the objectivity of the substance affords space in which practices can change; new practices can be added and subtracted, and yet still legitimately claim to index the same substance.  

Categories and practices are modular, mobile and hence recomposable. This suggests the utility of thinking of institutional logics as production functions, the ways in which particular combinations of elements—substances and practices—recombine, and yet cohere and produce particular congeries of effects, as opposed to

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5 As John Searle argues, institutional practices are “referentially opaque.” (1995: 29)
variable attributes of fields, in other words, more like chemistry than physics (Mohr and Duquenne, 1997).

The telos of each institutional field is to produce, accumulate, control, distribute, manage, express, perform or access the substance. The substance becomes a basis for hierarchical ordering, the institutional content of power. Given that substances are knowable only through the practices that perform and appropriate them, how this is done cannot be dissociated from what is produced, accumulated or accessed. This means that it is not possible to cleanly differentiate between behavior driven by a logic of consequences and a logic of appropriateness, between the ontological and the deontological (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008; March and Olsen, 1989). Appropriate practices are reciprocally tied to substantive consequences, the deontological to the ontological.

Like religion, an institution’s practices are ontologically rational, that is tied to a substance indexed by the conjunction of a practice and a name. An institutional substance is the highest, most general value in a field. It doesn’t matter whether one believes in the reality of a substance; what matters is that one knows that others believe and to participate in the practices of an institutional field one cannot act as if one does not believe. Prayer to God is not so different from the realization of profit, which is, after all, an accounting convention derived from monetized property rights. (Likewise capital or equity only exists via representations, not as the thing itself (Smith, 2003: 28)). Property does not exist in itself, but is rather a substance immanent to the exercise of a set of rights, which are themselves created ex nihilo by the state. Like God, one can never know the substance in itself, either through one’s senses or through one’s reason. Institutions all depend, not on illusio, but on faith in the substances around which their practices are organized. Every institution is a religious institution: a linked set of practices, subjects and an unobservable substance that joins the two.

This means one cannot delimit religion’s institutional specificity, as Bruce Lincoln has done, in a discourse that claims for itself a “transcendent status,” “whose concern transcends the human, temporal, and contingent…” (Lincoln, 2003:5). Every institution rests on transcendent claims, on a metaphysical foundation that cannot be reduced to the phenomenal world, even if it does not invoke a God. The creator God is only known through His creation. Institutional substances are not divine beings, but they are first causes, ultimate reasons that explain human behavior. Institutional practices render immanent the central institutional substance, the God term necessarily invoked by name while it is evoked by practice. In that institutional powers are organized around these substances, indexed and evinced through institutional practice, themselves unobservable, they depend on faith, on submission to the institutional logic of practice, on an institutional enchantment.

Institutional logics depend on making the invisible substance visible. Those substances are as gods. The philosopher of religion Thomas Carlson has described the word of God in the thinking of John Scotus Eriugena, a substance is “seen in all things visible while remaining itself invisible,” or as Eriugena himself wrote it “creates all things and is created in all things (Carlson, 2008: 93). The energy and creativity of institutional life derives not just from the indeterminacy of the “God” term, but from the tension between these transcendent terms and the practices which make them immanent.\(^6\)

\(^6\) Thomas Carlson links the indeterminate human and the negative anthropology implied by mystical theology, the unknowable human who models and is modeled on his divine unknowable counterpart, the
As every prophet knows – not to mention the mystics, divinity can never be reduced to church practice, but neither can it be divorced from it either. Institutional life requires us to act as if we believe in the value and, in fact, we tend to refuse to reduce it—knowledge, property, sovereignty, love, let alone divinity—to the organizational structures, the social relations, the practices, which index, perform, produce and distribute it. Practices enact substances, but as the case of the medieval mystical women and the rise of the hostile take-over both indicate, practices can change because the substance – God and property in this case -- is always excessive to the practice, excessive because they are themselves indeterminate. And institutional practices can change in part because they are themselves excessive to the substance, dependent on mechanisms and other logics far distant from their core, and yet always insufficient in that they can never secure their own operations without reference to the primary substance.

Not only do transformations in ontology imply changes in practice, but practical changes can create the conditions under which the ontology itself is transformed. Institutional logics all likely generate their own internal contradictions. That open, even dialectical, relation between substance and practice – between transcendence and immanence -- whose effects thinkers have a tendency to either absolutize as idealism, the influence of analytically separable values or categories, or materialism, the influence of control over the analytically separable materialities of practices -- is a critical source of agency and institutional change, where actors seek to promote alternative practices to index, produce, perform an institution’s central substance (for the changing practices of romantic love, see Swidler, 2001), or take practices and categories from one field and import them to another (for the migration of disciplinary technique, see Foucault, 1979). An enormous amount of politics within and between institutional fields revolve around these relations. The variable relation between practice and substance remains to be explored.

Institutional Logic: The Case of Justice and the Law

We can see the transcendent-immanent relation between substance and practice within the institution of the law, in which justice must translate into juridical practices of ascertaining and producing legality and illegality. Juridical justice has an institutional specificity. As legal theorist Gunther Teubner points out, juridical justice depends just as much on inequality within the law as on equality before it. Juridical justice, unlike political justice, which hinges on a universalizable aggregation of equal citizens, depends on the production of inequalities, “the unequal treatment of what is not equal, which provokes the search for more and more elaborate legal constructs … (Teubner, 2008).

Justice is required by four insurmountable gaps, or indeterminacies, in juridical practice: first, between code and case, that is between the rule and its application; second, between code and social norm, that is the transformation of extra-legal norm into law; third, between different social norms and their respective legal codes, law’s mediation

God who, as Borges writes, is a “substance capable of endless modifications” (2008:35). I understand my own institutional theory as a sociological parallel to Carlson’s understanding of the “indiscrete image” of the human who can only create in his indistinction, his incompleteness, his lack of self-sovereignty, that is we have always been post-humans submitted to institutional substances which we cannot know, objectify and represent for certain, but upon which our subjectivity and our agency depend.

Understanding the variability of institutional logics will require a theory of the conditions of symbolization, that is, when categories become constitutive as opposed to nominal and legitimating.
between institutional heterologies or incommensurable logics; and fourth, between law and life, that is the institutional limits of the law to regulate domains of social activity that cannot be legalized, the recognition of the incommensurabilities of law to life. In the first instance, justice is a question of referentiality; in the second, translation and what Teubner calls ecological adequacy; in the third, commensuration, partitioning, allocation and segregation of incommensurable domains of activity and their codes; and in the fourth, suspension, restraint and positive inaction that demarcates the limits of juridical justice. It is in this last indeterminacy, in the presumption that one knows what juridical justice is not and cannot be that the inequality, or impassibility, of law to life must be enacted beyond justice, if not unjustly.

Law cannot reason without this substantive rationality as its principle of practice, which is, as Teubner points out, no principle at all. Although Teubner casts justice as a process of legal self-transcendence through “which the law protests against itself,” (2008: 11), I would argue that justice, like God, is the transcendent substance necessarily immanent to the practice of law, grounding the elaboration and application of the structural code of legal and non-legal by which new categories of action are produced so that unlikes are not equalized. Each of these four indeterminacies requires justice as substantive reason, as an absent presence which is forever deferred in practice, but must be cited and believed in for law not only to be justifiable, but to be actionable. Although each is excessive to the other, the law depends as much on justice as justice depends on the law. As Teubner writes: “No philosophical theory of justice or other external authority can dictate the normative content of law. It is law itself that puts the law on trial.” (2008: 14). Justice and law are mutually supplementary.

These four aporia each pose problems insoluble by law alone. Justice, however, functions differently according to the indeterminacy. In the first three, it is the content of the law (determining a violation, formulating a rule, deciding which legal code shall be relevant) that is at stake as instances of justice; in the fourth, it is both the law’s existence and its limit and hence the limits, the possibility and impossibility, of juridical justice. In the first three, justice is transcendent, but not contradictory to the law. In the fourth, justice is contradictory to the law, and thus destroys law and justice both. In the first three, justice bridges between law and world, which conditions both the code and its application; in the fourth, justice marks the limits of the law, and hence of justice itself. In the first three, justice must be immanent to a legal practice that is always inadequate to it; in the fourth, it cannot be. Here, justice is truly blind.

Justice, Teubner argues, is “the subversive practices of law’s self-transcendence,” that process that “interrupts, blocks and sabotages the routinized recursivity of legal operations” (2008:12). The institutional logic of juridical justice, he contends, is unique: “Justice begins where the law ends” (2008:16). Putting aside its uniqueness, he thereby locates the dialectic between transcendent substance and immanent practice between an external justice and an internal self-referential legal system. To effect this move Teubner draws on Derrida, who makes the incalculability of justice the condition of possibility of

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8 The legal paradox poses the question: “Is it lawful to apply the distinction between lawful and unlawful to the world?” I don’t see why this is not the paradox of every institutional logic, inherent in the indeterminacy of its referential scope. One could pose the same question of truth, salvation and love and their vexed relation to science, religion and kinship, for example. What would make juridical justice unique is that justice is exterior to the law.
deconstruction, to ground an approach to justice that points beyond the polyvalent rationalities of Luhmann’s systems theory (Derrida, 2002 [1990]: 243). In this understanding rather than a contingency formula within the domain of the law, but excessive to practice, justice becomes a formula for transcendence, indeed a religious experience without God.

Derrida makes justice the extra-institutional ground of every institution. Radicalizing Carl Schmitt’s decisionist understanding of sovereign authority, Derrida argues that the foundation and the implementation of the law, its formation and application, partake of the same logic of indeterminacy, of incalculability, because the decision can never be accounted for by the law, that there is a necessary lawlessness – both a violence and a faith -- within the law. For Derrida justice requires a decision, an immediate, undecidable decision that cannot be decided by rule, a madness, “that must rend time and defy dialectics” (Derrida, 2002: 244, 255).

Derrida generalizes this aporetic structure as an attribute of religious institution, not religion as institution, but institution as religious, in that it relies on “a general structure of experience,” the phenomenological ground of religiosity (Derrida, 1998: 18, 19, 33). Religion here comprises two separate sources—faith and the experience of belief to which it is integral, on the one hand, and the sacred, or the unscathed on the other (Derrida, 1998: 33). Messianicity and chora are Derrida’s names, his proper names, for faith and the unscathed respectively, the two sources of the religious. Messianicity refers to the unexpected coming of an other, the elemental faith, the second, a Greek name for place, to a memorial space inaccessible to memory, a place named in Plato’s cosmogony, the Timaeus (Derrida, 1998: 17). The sacred, the unscathed, points to an inviolable, unmarked space, which is neither the inscription, nor the inscribed, but the space of its possibility (Derrida, 1998: 27; 1995:106). If the first operates as an uncertain, temporal event forever repeated in the performative conventions of institutions, an event repeating the logic of the first institution, the second operates as a singular impassible space upon which all territorialities—both bodily and national, as well as the languages they deploy, are premised. These two constitute an illegible structure of experience which is itself not experienced, but is the trans-historical, trans-cultural basis of justice.

The religious figures the secret of sociality, of address, of authority, of institution. There is, Derrida declares, an “abstract messianicity” in the institution of the institution, of the founding of the law, “a ‘performative’ event that cannot belong to the set that it founds, inaugurates or justifies. Such an event is unjustifiable within the logic of what it will have opened.”9 Faith in a “present-absent witness,” in an absent God, a living dead, guarantees every pledge and property, every naming and nomination. The logic of the address contains both sources of religion, the faith that must undergird the promise to respond, the promise to tell the truth, that presupposes an absolute witness guaranteeing iterability and truth, and the sacred, or the unscathed, in which the singularity of both self and other, which presupposes an abstract space of inscription, which he calls a desert in the desert, in which the finite, embodied self and other, and the events of revelation, take place.

It is from this faith and this sacred that “an invincible desire for justice” derives (Derrida, 1998:18). Justice for Derrida is an impossible approach to the singularity of the other who arrives unexpectedly that must be confronted in applying the law to each
person, each case, an excessive non-juridical inside juridical practice. Justice is other to law, grounded in a relationship to an unexpected and unscathed other, to an unassimilable singularity, grounded beyond the law in friendship, generosity, and indeed love (Derrida, 1998, 1990). Justice here locates those space/times where the law cannot go. This messianicity points to the just society as “a universalizable culture of singularities, a culture in which the abstract possibility of impossible translation could nevertheless be announced.”

Such a justice is trans-institutional. Justice here would not be the figure that love takes within the law, but as it effects law’s decomposition. Such a justice is not the transcendent paradoxically immanent to the law, it is the outside inside of not only every law, but every institution, every social bond, and hence no longer juridical justice, except as it appears in the extraordinary, extra-legal authority of judges and the sovereigns under which they serve to suspend the law, or what is the same thing, decline to apply it, that is where they grant a pardon, declare an emergency, determine that some aspect of existence is outside the law, or look the other way, transcendent moments of profane messianicity. Justice cannot determine the limits of the law. But when justice loses the possibility of a relation to the law, when it is no longer law’s supplement, it is its effacement. Derrida, and hence Teubner, refuse to divide the aporetic between those internal to the practice of the law and those that cannot, indeed must not, be assimilated to the law. As Derrida notes, we risk both the very best and the very worst from the incalculability of decision. The danger of the worst is too great to lose the institutional specificity of justice. And this is, I think, the salvific meaning of Teubner’s statement: “In the last instance, justice is the attempt to overcome the rupture between immanence and transcendence.”

**Institutional Contradiction and the Movement of the Social**

Institutions create the conditions of possibility of a specific practical regime of valuation, but cannot assure the value will in fact be valued. Just as rationality cannot account for its own application, rational choice cannot derive values, only preferences based upon them. Or put in their language, they can derive preferences, but not “affects,” which here refer to the value of the consequences of the performance of an act (Abell, 1996). The incalculable boundary between institutions, and hence what regimes of valuation will be hegemonic, is the single most important political issue facing a society. The referential scope of an institutional logic -- to what objects, persons and activities it refers -- is explosive because institutions depend on the naturalization and inconspicuousness of their conventions, on the taking of institutional(ized) ontologies as inhering in the nature of things. Extending alternative metaphorical orders profanes, not by an absence or abrogation of the deontological, but by the breaching of an ontological other, the intrusion of an alternative, heterologous presence.

Institutions cannot guarantee their own boundaries, the scope of their reference. Beyond the realist distributional struggles among groups -- including struggles over what Fraser has labeled “recognition” -- that have animated social theory, the contingency of valuation and the incommensurability of expansive regimes of valuation are what make institutional boundary politics possible (Cloutier and Langley, forthcoming; Thornton and Ocasio, forthcoming). As the failure of theories of market failure and secularization both attest, we, in fact, have no adequate theory about how the boundaries of institutions shift,
the ways in which different activities, persons and objects are appropriated, claimed
and/or captured by one field as opposed to another, or subject to their blending as in the
case of religious nationalism (for institutional transformation as a result of “turbulent
overlay,” here rock and roll and early Christian Church, see Mohr and White,
forthcoming.)

Based on values that are incommensurable and which cannot be rationally
adjudicated, values unobservable and thus dependent on faith, whose actual valuation is
always contingent, institutional boundaries are vulnerable to political contest, to
extension and constrictions of material reference, to the promotion of new practices to
index existent values and even the development of historically new institutional logics
(Clemens, 1997; Meyerson, 2003; Meyerson and Tompkins, 2007; Scott et al, 2000).
Institutional boundary shifts involve the prospect of incommensuration, of a kind of
placelessness, and the indeterminate subjectification that these open make institutional
boundary movements explosive, energized, the playground and the battlefield of the
gods.

These are the politics of world-making and hence the privileged locus of some of
the most important social movements whose condition of possibility are the production of
institutional contradiction. Although all social movements may be involved in “targeting
system of authority in institutional structures” (Taylor and Van Dyke, 2004: 268), it is
important to distinguish movements that contest authority in order to shift distributions
from those that contest ontological orders. An institutional approach should be capable
of restoring the sociological relevance of meaning to such social movements’ means and
ends, in contrast to state-centered approaches that stress the structure of power between
authorities and challengers as a determinant of whether and how social movements
emerge to challenge the status quo (Tilly, 1978; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001). In
this approach, social movements are analyzed as organizational means, instruments by
which groups realize interests such as power or income, or attain exogenously given
goals. The problem with such an approach is not only that movements with “cultural”
goals that do not target the state fall out, but the content of collective subjectivity, the
institutional ground of activism, is never of primary concern (Armstrong and Bernstein,
2008; Van Dyke, Soule and Taylor, 2004; Taylor and Van Dyke, 2004). As the school of
“contentious politics” recognizes, institutional conditions – the historical emergence of a
national, democratic, capitalist state -- shaped repertoires of action (McAdam et al.,
2001). The implication is that other institutional sources of social movements also shape
social movement practices, which may or may not be transported into the state arena
(Clemens, 1993; Van Dyke, Soule and Taylor, 2004; Young, 2001).

On the other side, an institutional approach also challenges those who argue that
social movements preoccupied with identitarian cultural issues are somehow distinct
from “old” class-based movements, given the emergence of post-industrial society with
its appropriations and productions of private life, the increasing autonomy of culture as
both a product and a force of production (Melucci, 1996). Social movements seek to
create new subjects, both collective and individual, at the same time they reconfigure the
object world. They thereby not only make history, they seek to enact new forms of
histroricty—rationality, progress, redemption, liberation, domination. The production of
new identities and new forms of historicity have been emphasized, in particular, as the
distinctive quality of what are called “new” social movements. Alberto Melucci speaks
of the new movements like environmentalism and feminism as symbolic assaults on the dominant codes, while Alain Touraine understands them as producers of new forms of historicity (Melucci, 1996; Touraine, 1981). If the emplacement of a new institutional logic always involves the formation of new subjects, objects and practices linking the two, it is not clear what constitutes the “newness” of these social movements.

Social movements often seek to effect institutional boundary shifts, transformations in the dominant institutional logic. Social movement theorists shied away from the force of ideas because they wanted to avoid the assumption that institutional order depended on consent. I would suggest it is just the opposite: The reorganization of consent often depends on historical force. Institutional transformations require power, the deployment of resources, self-conscious collective organization, even – and especially -- the exercise of force. Shifts in institutional architecture are occasions in which hegemony fails, and power, denuded of legitimacy, is on display. But while it may be central to institutional transformation, an institutional approach requires that we rethink power, premised as it now is on the hard side of the materialist-idealist dualism, in part a Christian legacy of late medieval nominalism whose omnipotent God could no longer metaphorically guarantee the world nor render its order accessible (Blumenberg, 1983 [1966]: 170-173).

Social theoretical approaches to power have followed in the tracks of the materialization of nature that arose in the wake of nominalism in which we take a natural material substrate upon which we are presumed to imprint exterior categories and values, identifying the first with the social and the second with the cultural. Theoretical frameworks typically understand power as a social relationship to materiality, a control over bodies and things. William Sewell’s now-classic essay, revising Giddens’ concept of the duality of structure through the categories of “rules” and “resources,” is a case in point (Sewell, 1992). Rules refer to “cultural schemas.” Resources, in contrast, are objects and attributes of human beings that can be used to “enhance or maintain power.” Schemas are deep and virtual, resources evident and actual. (Sewell has elsewhere defined culture as the semiotic dimension of human social life, and practice as purposeful practical activity (1999: 44, 47-48).) Social structures conjoin the two. Sewell thereby de-culturalizes power, locating it in the control of resources specified independently of the institutional sites in which they are produced and allocated. Resources, Sewell argues circularly, are known by their capacity to “enhance or maintain power” which is known by control of resources.

An exemplary analysis of nineteenth century American anti-abortion politics that applies Sewell’s schema-resource approach also reveals its limits. As Beisel and Kay show, power was a central stake for abortion’s opponents (Beisel and Kay, 2004). Both physicians and suffragettes opposed abortion because they were concerned about the low fertility rates of Anglo-Saxon Protestant women and its implications for racial political and cultural dominance (Beisel and Kay, 2004). Both racialized and religionized citizenship – Anglo-Saxon and Protestant; both understood abortion as murder. However the difference between the two hinges on the social ontology of the sexual body. While both physicians and suffragettes identified woman with her womb, they did not align body and property the same way. For the physicians, the married woman’s womb belonged to her husband and to the polity, as a white, Protestant nation-state. For the suffragettes, who had fought against abolition, no human body – neither slave working
body, nor female sexual body -- could be alienable property. Suffragettes argued that abortion was a woman’s response to involuntary sexuality imposed on them by their husbands, a problem whose resolution hinged on their being given equal political and civil rights. For the physicians, male sexual drive was natural and woman had no right to deny it; for the suffragettes, who cast unwanted sex as “marital rape,” they did. For the physicians, sexual difference translated into political inequality; for the suffragettes, it did not. The feminists sought to expand the logic of citizenship into the family; the physicians did not. Resources, in fact, are not shared, but contested, between the feminists and the physicians. There are no powers, hence resources, which are not culturally constituted, nor are there meaningful rules which are not materially conditioned. The conditions of use of resources, indeed their constitution and the subjects who use them, are organized through institutions. In 19th century anti-abortion politics, Anglo-Saxon babies only “count” because they are mediated through the institution of democracy.

It is particularly tempting to treat groups as though they are present-at-hand, materially substantial, the sociological contingency being their political mobilization, the classic in-itself/for-itself conundrum. Collective subjects – whether classes, nations, races -- always presume an unfoundable ontology (Anderson, 1983; Brubaker, 2002). The politics of ethnic groups provide a pertinent example. Rogers Brubaker and David Laitin have argued that the weakening of states, “the decline…in states’ capacities to maintain order by monopolizing the legitimate use of violence in their territories” and the reluctance of regional powers to intervene in the domestic conflicts of their neighbors and allies, helps explain the recent rise of ethno-nationalist violence (1998). This takes as an explanation what needs to be explained in that ethnic violence is both an indicator and a source of break-up of the state’s monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. Brubaker and Laitin understand the rise of ethno-nationalist violence in part as a result of the declining payoffs to “framing” conflicts as ideological struggles between capitalism and communism (Brubaker and Laitin, 1998). “Today,” they write, “these incentives to frame conflicts in grand ideological terms have disappeared.” “Ethnicity” they underline, “is not the ultimate, irreducible ‘source’ of violent conflict in such cases. Rather, conflict driven by struggles for power between challengers and incumbents are newly ethnicized, newly framed in ethnic terms.”

While I applaud their denaturalization of the ethnos and their emphasis on its political construction, I do not think that some objective power struggle can be posited as an explanatory motor of the transformation. This formulation neutralizes what needs to be explained, namely the ethnicization of power, its constitution as a collective subject in whose name it is possible to speak, or as Brubaker writes elsewhere, “groupness as an event (Brubaker, 2002:168). This formulation treats ethnicity as a resource, instrumentalized by powers constituted outside it who, through violence and framing, are able to constitute groupness (Brubaker, 2000). Power, which has no cultural content, cannot explain the conditions under which its resignification, the substance of the units through which it is organized and hence its interest, becomes thinkable, possible, and effective. Political representation, and hence power, is not culturally neutral, but has specific institutional contours. The whole analytic emphasis on “framing” assumes that there is some objective social space on which the “framers” stand. The social, as such, does not exist.
Power is both culturally constitutive and constituted. It is constitutive in that resources, and particularly human bodies, their presentation and their risk, are the elemental mechanism through which an institutional substance is substantiated in the sense that that for which one is willing to stand, to risk bodily pain and even death, must consequently be real. The presentation of human resources, and the human above all, simultaneously signifies and produces meaningfulness. Power is also culturally constitutive because the reach of institutional boundaries can neither be adjudicated by reason nor experience. Power is necessary to institutional transformation because institutions depend on faith, on unsecured credit, on ungrounded knowledge. It is often through social movements that power, and hence the arbitrary faith, upon which existent institutions ultimately depend, is forced to reveal itself; denaturalized, culture “exposed” as mere ideology. Social movements aim at and are founded on the production of institutional heterologies, on the revelation of arbitrary regional ontologies, of which the displays, often spectacular, of power are indicative.

Instituting, the movement of institutional boundaries, tends towards violence. Most major institutional emplacements—the establishment of law, capitalism and wage labor, the nation-state, democracy, and, of course, established and disestablished religions, have occurred only through the sustained exercise of violence. It is important to remember that it was the unprecedented barbarity of the wars of religion that prompted efforts to attenuate or sever the link between sovereignty and God (Lincoln, 2003:56-58). The violence accompanying religion’s recent entry into the public sphere was matched by an even greater, incidence and intensity of violence accompanying its displacement as the original ground of the nation-state, not to mention the violence over which religion would be the religion of state. Indeed, in Europe it was the struggle over which God represented the absolute that contributed to the absolutization of the sovereign state (Blumenberg, 1983: 89-91).

And reciprocally, it is also the case that power is culturally constituted. Ann Swidler has argued that culture -- as symbols, stories and rituals -- provides a "tool kit' or repertoire..from which actors select differing pieces for constructing lines of action (1986: 273)." Swidler reverses Parsons' instrumental organization of means in pursuit of culturally defined, internalized ends, by stressing the external cultural delimitation of actionable means. We should, she proposes, analyze culture as conditioning action "not by shaping ends they ['its holders'] pursue, but by providing the characteristic repertoire from which they build lines of action" (1986: 284).

Institutional theory points to the ways in which means and ends are not necessarily independent. The ends, the ontological projects, which movements pursue, often shape the means through which they seek to attain them. It is not just that fact and value, what is and what ought to be, are bound up with each other in the constitution of any new project. Means of action are bound up with the ends, which give instrumental actions sense and put them in motion.

For example, Richard Hecht and I studied the struggle over the organization of space and time in Jerusalem in the post-1967 period (Friedland and Hecht, 1996). These contests were simultaneously over the material choreography of space and time, as well as over the meaning of that space and time. In Jerusalem social movements’ spatio-temporal practice was both an instrument to achieve material control and to express and secure its ontology. Movement strategies were conditioned not just by their powers, but
by their cosmologies. The means chosen were meaningful, emblems or instances of the distinctive reality in which the movement was grounded. Comparing the religious nationalist Jewish movement known as the Gush Emunim, or “Bloc of the Faithful,” with the secular Labour Zionist movement that dominated the foundation of the state of Israel indicates the ways in which means are made simultaneously actionable and meaningful by their integral connection to the ends pursued. While both the Labour Zionists and the Gush Emunim sought to conquer and settle land, the land’s meaning as an instrument and the means by which it was to be achieved diverge. Religious nationalist Jews understand their settlement within a redemptive historicity, one in which the land taken is promised by God to the Jews as an eternal patrimony, in which the settlement of the land is taken to be an indicator and a means by which the messianic movement of history is to be realized. Because the Gush Emunim elevated the religious commandment for Jews to settle eretz israel above all other obligations enumerated in the Torah, they were able to cooperate with secular non-observant Jews, who would not accept religious regulation of other aspects of their lives, as well as to coopt the Zionist tradition of settlement. In contrast to the Labour Zionists, who evaluated settlement by its contribution to state power and economic autonomy, the religious Zionists settled the land without regard to its defensibility, usually making their first, typically extra-legal, moves into places to which a ritual connection could be established. Unlike the Labour Zionists who embraced socialism and saw a land-based life as a way to “normalize” the Jew, the religious Zionists rejected socialism, creating privatized suburbs. This enabled them to reconstitute the pioneering tradition with a middle class base and to exploit the natural logic of metropolitan suburbanization. It also made them oblivious to the fact that because of the often-exposed geographic positions and the absence of most adult males during working hours, their settlements have been a drain on the military capacity of the state.

The contests between religious nationalist movements and the secular nation-state do not seem so different from those faced by eighteenth and nineteenth century nationalists, democrats or socialists who reached for power against existent classes and powerful institutions developing in the process distinctive identities, forms of organization and new social practices (Hunt, 1984; Sewell, 1985). The expressive tactics of feminist movements, likewise, have been conditioned by and sought to extend the practical logic of gendered identity grounded in the logic of families and non-state arenas (Clemens, 1993; Taylor and Van Dyke, 2004). Eyerman and Jamison have shown the ways in which successful social movements from environmentalism to socialism created new public spaces in which new identities, new knowledges and new organizational forms conjointly emerged (1991:66-93). While theorists like Swidler are rightly concerned to move away from models that analyze culture as consensual, internalized subjectivities, the move towards publicly available, externalized ways of organizing action reverses the old instrumental-expressive, means-ends dualities, in which the instrumental world remains as an external, objective limit to cultural refashioning. The role of culture in constituting that world and its intelligibility drops from view.

The cultural constitution of means is evident in contemporary politicized religions. These are characterized by a particular conjunction of practices. On the one hand they are preoccupied with the regulation of sexuality—homosexuality, abortion, marriage, divorce, pre- and extra-marital sexuality, evolution. On the other hand, they
tend towards bodily violence—the killing of officials, of non-believing opponents, of enemies inside and out. That violence is either enacted in the present or anticipated in an apocalyptic future. In the former case its violence is typically by their own hands, not a distant technical killing, but one in which their own lives are close at hand, if not consumed, in the acts themselves.

Politicized religions seek to ontologically recast both life and history, and to rejoin the two (Friedland, forthcoming). For them the collective return to God, like the original turn, is a miracle, something not assimilable to natural law, to the temporality of progress, to the machine logic of rationalization. Their violence expresses the extraordinariness of that divine force. It expresses God’s historicity, in which the adherents of politicized religion not only believe, but participate. Where Shi’ites traditionally endured, waiting for the return of the missing Imam, a kind of hidden messiah, the Ayatollah Khomeini built the doctrine that one was to actively emulate the model of Husein in Karbalah, cut down by the Ummayads, to struggle against injustice and to seek martyrdom. This model was subsequently diffused among Sunni militants, who increasingly celebrated the suffering of their enemies which they took to be indicators of Allah’s intercession (Israeli, 1997). Religious Zionists likewise understand themselves to be preparing the “footsteps of the Messiah,” preparing the ground, by their settlement of the covenanted lands helping to speed the Messiah on his way. Many Christian fundamentalists in the United States understand history as a struggle between Christ and the anti-Christ, through which the latter seeks the erosion of American sovereignty particularly through international financial regimes, leading to a violent struggle in which they will be called upon to bear witness and from whose horrible devastation they will be delivered. Hindu nationalists likewise historicize the coming of their Gods, seeking the modern-day restoration of Ram’s mythic kingdom (Friedland and Hecht, 1998).

The religious nationalist political practices of sexual regulation and physical violence are ontological enactments, comportments that index God’s absent presence, the divine as sovereign, whose sovereignty is grounded in its relation to life, a life which must be excessive to the law and whose excess is precisely what grounds the sovereign’s authority (Friedland 2007). Although it is hardly the solution they would imagine, politicized religion thus aims precisely at what Hannah Arendt and Giorgio Agamben discern as the crippled core – life -- of modern politics (Arendt, 1958; Agamben, 1998). Indeed one could argue that politicized religion displaces death, which Foucault identified as the ground of the modern episteme and its “positivities” of language, life and labor—each constituted by “man’s” finitude—“the spatiality of the body, the yawning of desire, and the time of language.” Politicized religion effaces man as the sovereign observer, strives for an anti-hermeneutic original language, restores an origin to man, and thereby displaces death as the basis of value (Foucault, 1971: 314).

The conditions under which it is possible to reject the classical Weberian approach emphasizing the role of “world images” in shaping both the ends and means to and through which action is oriented still must be specified (Weber, 1946). It is a daunting task, but it is our task for in most social movements, reality is at stake, not just distribution, access or power. Successful social movements must remake the world according to their own codes, must make their ideas matter, that is make them material. Instances and referents must be created in the practice of the movement. Social
movements reach for resources as a condition of their reality-making, but they do so in ways which are conditioned by the reality they are seeking to make.

We must stop the dance between angels and grain prices, between expansion to ideals and reduction to interest. To extrude meaning as a proper analytic object on the grounds that it is not observable is to fail to observe that taken-for-granted, unobservable meanings are the condition for the observability of the social effects of resources. Such a social science represses the conditions of its operations; it fails to understand the conditions under which sense is no longer common; it resorts to the catch-all, the Bermuda triangle of materialist social science – crisis -- to explain what needs to be explained: crisis. The conditions under which particular ideas and identities mobilize large numbers of people to enact their projects, and transform the world is largely unexplored territory.


