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Socialism by Grace:

The New Visibility of Postsecular Social Work

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ABSTRACT

In conceptualising the new visibility of postsecular social work this thesis develops alternative perspectives to former secular, liberal and neoliberal hegemonies within the profession. Firstly secularism is considered as compromising deliberative and participatory democracy by inhibiting religious citizenship within the public sphere and in response the new visibility of postsecular social work incorporates the inclusion of religious perspectives into social welfare considerations with particular reference to faith based social action. Secondly liberalism is observed as perpetuating the marginalisation of religion, tolerated merely as a personal lifestyle choice, from public legitimacy and the new visibility of postsecular social work therefore recognises the contribution of public religion to addressing social welfare concerns in challenging this marginalisation. Thirdly neoliberalism is critiqued as an outcome of the marginalisation of religion from the public sphere by both secularism and liberalism and accordingly the new visibility of postsecular social work engages with political economy in the interests of social welfare and social justice. Resultantly the new visibility of postsecular social work affirms faith and reason as integral to public religion which is indicative of a *new politics of social work* that develops postsecular, post-liberal and post-neoliberal perspectives through the reconfiguration of Christian socialism.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

'What characterises the postsecular condition is not simply the refusal of religion to go away but more significantly the new public visibility of religion. And it is at this point, the point where religion has a public voice, that religion becomes political again' (Ward, 2009, p.131).

The strength of social work as a vocation is found in independence from both the State and market. This strength which enables the profession to define itself is rooted in a commitment towards social justice and respect for human dignity. Situated within emergent postsecular discourse this thesis further defines the profession through an engagement with public religion in response to the following research question: **How can postsecular social work be conceptualised?**

In particular this thesis develops a contemporary Christian socialist analysis of social work under neoliberalism whereby the new visibility of postsecular social work, as an original apologetic, is conceptualised as subverting secularism along with other correlating projects such as political and economic liberalism. Accordingly Chapter One - ***The Principle of Postsecular Social Work: Revisioning Liberal Secularism*** outlines a critique of liberal secularism within social work which typically manifests as *spiritual but not religious* rhetoric that marginalises faith as a personal lifestyle choice whilst diverting attention from the broader significance of public religion to social work concerns. In response, Chapter Two - ***The Pragmatics of Postsecular Social Work: Reconstituting Postsecular Society*** identifies the postsecular turn in critical theory as enabling a pragmatic engagement with public religion which paradoxically reveals an utopian character to religious citizenship that is congruent with social work vocation. For example, Chapter Three - ***The Politics of Postsecular Social Work: Reconfiguring Christian Socialism*** affirms the relevance of Christian socialism to the new visibility of postsecular social work by rejuvenating political commitments towards social welfare and social justice. In addition professional resistance to neoliberalism is developed in Chapter Four - ***The Paradox of Postsecular Social Work: Reconciling Political Economies*** which reconciles the post-liberal and post-neoliberal sympathies of postsecular political economy with feminist ethics of care whilst Chapter Five - ***The Practice of Postsecular Social Work: Restoring Vocational Ethics*** reconciles virtue ethics with reflexivity and narrative practice in affirming professional association, rather than regulation, which subverts neoliberal agendas within social work. Moreover Chapter Six - ***The Priority of Postsecular Social Work: Reaffirming Collaborative Solidarity*** endorses collaboration between social workers and faith based organisations with particular reference to faith based social action and left inspired

localism. In conclusion, by deploying postsecular reflexivity, themes from the previous chapters are developed in a synopsis which conceptualises the new visibility of postsecular social work as committed to social justice whereby *'postsecular society is normative. It includes an ethics of citizenship that aims at making it possible that all citizens can participate as equals in democratic procedures, including political debate about matters of common interest and hence in co-determining the development of society'* (Baumgartner, 2014, p.77).

This thesis is therefore characteristically inter-disciplinary in traversing theology, philosophy, politics, economics, sociology and social work which, as an academic syncretism, is nevertheless congruent with an *emic* perspective reflecting both my prior undergraduate training in social anthropology at the University of Cambridge and postgraduate qualification in social work at the University of Sussex. In addition, following a subsequent conversion to Christianity, the completion of this doctoral thesis is the culmination of research commenced as a former doctoral student of theology and further coincides with the completion of fifteen years of employment within local government social work organisations to Board level. Resultantly the identity politics embedded within this thesis highlights the significance of public religion to social work whereby social theology is additionally recognised as *'a renewed interest in the Church itself as embodying an alternative social vision to that of secular liberal economics or political thought and a greater doctrinal confidence in the sense of expecting the Christian tradition to have its own resources to engage with social and political problems rather than presuming the Church must always defer to secular social sciences and political ideologies on these questions'* (Hughes, 2014, p.76). Consequently rather than attempting to assimilate difference within a multi-faith project, this thesis represents a particular Christian perspective which develops a *thick description* of Christian socialism within the context of contemporary postsecular discourse which I suggest enhances an appreciation of the specificities of religious diversity within inter-faith society.

1. The Principle of Postsecular Social Work: Revisioning Liberal Secularism

'The Western academy is governed by the presumptive secularism of critique and it is with this governance that we must begin. Unseating governance of this sort is the very signature of political, social and cultural critique; it targets what is presumptive, sure, commonsensical or given in the current order of things' (Asad, 2009, p.2).

As a vocation social work operates within statutory parameters yet as a secularised profession religion subverts the presumptive secular paradigms upon which modern social work functions given the observation that *'everyone has the right to the freedom of religion or belief, either alone or in community with others and in public and or private, to manifest religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance'* (Article 9 of the Human Rights Act 1998 & Article 18 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights). This statute which defends religious freedom therefore paradoxically confounds politically liberal perspectives which have historically presumed that *'equality of participation among citizens in the public domain was dependent upon the bracketing out of matters of personal or subjective conviction, such as religious faith, on the grounds that these represented partial and partisan forms of reasoning not universally accessible and therefore inadmissible as acceptable forms of political or moral reasoning. Hence the separation of religion and politics and the assumption that the modern democratic State should be functionally secular or at least neutral towards the manifestations of religion in public'* (Graham, 2013, p.xiv). In comparison to typically liberal secular views on religion, however, I suggest that the above statute instead obliges social work to critically engage with public religion and religious citizenship in the interests of deliberative democracy which necessarily requires congruent political paradigms and theoretical perspectives particularly as the Equality Act 2010 additionally identifies religion, rather than spirituality, as a protected characteristic. With regard to theoretical context, the new visibility of postsecular social work may therefore firstly be conceptualised as a development of postsecular theory which represents considerable challenge to secularism within the profession given that in recent years theoretical consideration of an evolving postsecular society has emerged as an academic phenomena which continues to subvert secularist assumptions concerning the inevitable withdrawal of religion from the public sphere as illustrated by Nynas et al (2012), Beckford (2012), Braidotti et al (2014) and Schewel (2014). For although postsecular theory initially developed from philosophical and theological critique as typified by Connolly (1999), Milbank (2006) and Taylor (2007) postsecularism continues to attract significant intellectual recognition within the humanities and social sciences given that *'postsecularism, arriving after*

multiple transcending endeavours such as postmodernism, poststructuralism and postcolonialism, is commonly invoked to question the Enlightenment's handling of religion. It specifically questions the ways in which secualrism's imperatives have consigned religion to a space within presumably neutral forms of modern life in liberal-democratic polities' (Furani, 2016, p.1).

The privileging of secularism, which is identified within the intellectual limitations of political liberalism, logical positivism and empiricism has therefore become highly contested (Fountain, 2013). For example, modern secularism is critiqued by theologians such as Williams (2008) as marginalising religion as too irrelevant, irrational and inconsequential to warrant legitimacy within an expedient public sphere conditioned more towards the rationalisation of procedural and instrumental bureaucracy in the construction of civil society. Whilst in relation to secular fundamentalism which is associated with new atheism by McAnulla (2014) programmatic secularism is implicated in the eradication of the manifestation of religious citizenship through the implementation of an apparently neutral yet secular public sphere wherein any residual notion of religion is banished to the private realm of personal belief (Williams, 2008, 2012). Consequently secularism from a postsecular perspective is typically critiqued as a disenchanted utilitarianism which erases the religious Other whereby *'secularisation relates to the diminution in the social significance of religion. Its application covers such things as the sequestration by political powers of the property and facilities of religious agencies; the shift from religious to secular control of various erstwhile activities and functions of religion; the decline in proportion of their time, energy and resources which men devote to super-empirical concerns; the decay of religious institutions; the supplanting, in matters of behaviour, of religious precepts by demands that accord with strictly technical criteria and the gradual replacement of specifically religious consciousness by an empirical, rational, instrumental orientation; the abandonment of mythical, poetic and artistic interpretation of nature and society in favour of matter-of-fact description and with it the rigorous separation of evaluative and emotive dispositions from cognitive and positivistic orientations'* (Wilson, 1982, p. 149)[1].

Critiquing Secularism Within Social Work

To date the application of secularism within social work has therefore involved a tacit imposition of practical atheism as identified by Whiting (2008) in that transgressive faith based discourses remain unarticulated albeit that the residual traces of an evangelical Christian heritage within British social

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1 As cited by Graham (2013, p.36).

work is discernible within the atypical work of Bowpitt (1998, 2000). For example, in recognising the Christian foundation of British social work, Bowpitt observes that '*Christianity has been like the family silver, an acknowledged but rarely examined major premise of the Anglo-American tradition*' (1998, p.676). Furthermore overt discrimination is detectable in the '*considerable efforts which have occurred in many places to rewrite social work history with a view to removing traces of the contribution of religious groups*' whereby '*if church affiliated agencies are mentioned at all, they may be portrayed as over-zealous or incompetent meddlers operating poorly run agencies* (Crisp, 2014, p.3)[2]. Despite social workers demonstrating a greater affinity with Christianity than secular educators generally realise, religious literacy therefore remains an unmet need on social work training programmes mainly due to concerns regarding non-rational approaches to problem solving as well as exposure to proselytising (Furman et al, 2004), (Gilligan & Furness, 2006, 2012, 2014). This uneasy relationship between social work and its Christian origins having remained problematic within a dominant secular narrative which has come to prevail (Vanderwoerd, 2011). However despite this entrenched ambivalence, social work authors have begun to realise that religion and spirituality within inter-faith society are important to the profession as illustrated by Derezotes (2006), Holloway (2007), Moss & Thompson (2007), Mathews (2009), Crisp (2008, 2010, 2013), Furness & Gilligan (2012, 2013), Moss (2005, 2012), Liechty (2013), Starnino et al (2014) and Mulder (2015).

Critiquing Liberalism Within Social Work

Nevertheless, in my view, in the absence of any rigorous engagement with postsecular theory other than brief references by Neagoe (2013), Garde (2015) and Pandya (2016) social work scholarship has to date focused upon equality and diversity concerns whereby concession to religion, through an emphasis upon spirituality, is tolerated within an overarching liberal paradigm[3]. For example, liberal *spiritual but not religious* perspectives which advocate an understanding and toleration of spirituality typically characterise social work publications on religion such as those authored by Henery (2003), Wong & Vinsky (2008), Furness & Gilligan (2010) and Holloway & Moss (2010)[4]. This kind of new visibility of religion in social work being further evident in the work of Gray

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2   Crisp (2014, p.3) cites Scale (2011, p.353).

3   Although Neagoe (2013) explores the ethical dilemmas of professional social work in '*a (post-)secular society*' (p.1313) only brief references to secularism and '*the dawn of a post-secular era*' are developed in an article predominately concerned with specific practice issues rather than the overall implications of public religion to social work practice. In addition although Garde (2015) focuses upon *Postsecular Sweden* references to postsecular theory are minimal. Similarly Pandya (2016) only briefly references a postsecular context in relation to social work education.

4   The phrase *religious-but-not-spiritual* is taken from the title paper by Wong & Vinsky (2008).

(2008) and Crisp (2008, 2010) as well as professional publications such as the *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work*. Notably, however, Christianity as a religion rather than a spirituality is invariably portrayed as in decline, irrelevant or eclipsed by alternative new religious movements. For example, conversion to eastern spiritualities is represented as a personally liberating choice in rejection of the perceived prescriptive, oppressive and hypocritical influences of organised religion (Lovat & Morrison, 2000), (Gray, 2008). The emergence of spirituality within social work literature with reference to liberal social theory has therefore involved resistance to religious traditions along with the alienating, demystifying and disenchanting outcomes of western industrial capitalism which are associated with the secularisation of the profession (Gray, 2008). Resultantly learning from non-Western cultures is advocated as an antidote to oppressive religious dogma as well as professional secular imperialism in the promotion of eco-spiritualities which are identified with indigenous, global and new religious movements (Gray, 2005).

In particular liberal *spiritual but not religious* rhetoric within social work recognises spirituality within the context of non-oppressive practice in affirming reflexive consciousness which resists religious dogma as illustrated by Henry (2003) and Moss (2012). Correlatively Gray (2008) locates social work literature on spirituality within the broad theoretical parameters of late modernity which observes the rise of liberal individualism and its culmination in reflexive modernity by citing Giddens (1991) who emphasises a demise in tradition concurrent with an increased salience in individual perspectives. As such the new visibility of spirituality in social work correlates with a rise in reflexive individualism and also represents a counter-cultural attempt to address the alienating effects of modernity which includes an increased emphasis upon evidence based rationality within the profession. Indeed from a Weberian perspective, Gray (2008) acknowledges that social work was required to negate its religious and moralistic beginnings in order to embrace a secular and bureaucratic modern identity characterised by social scientific and empirical epistemology. However an increased interest in reflexive spirituality especially with regard to New Age and self-help rhetoric is considered by Gray as a counter-cultural move to re-establish qualitative meaning and purpose within the profession. Late modernity is therefore observed to be characterised by a crisis in personal identity whereby individuals find themselves in a constant state of self-questioning in the absence of any traditional foundations to knowledge. In a modern liberal secular society, whilst religious values are eroded, spirituality therefore becomes synonymous with a pluralistic culture in which citizens are free to select from a number of privatised lifestyle options. As such the associated decline in mainstream religion and emergence of new forms of spiritual expression are considered as releasing communities from religiously controlled sanctions as faith

becomes a matter of choice and reflection of autonomous identity rather than an obligation towards society (Gray, 2008). This shift of authority from external religious structures to individual choice thereby representing a post-traditional religious eclecticism in which religious identity becomes privatised, abstract, impersonal, narcissistic and more concerned with self-empowerment, self-actualisation and a personal quest for meaning rather than a collective act of worship or obligation towards the common good. For example, Maslow (1971) observes peak spiritual experiences as a route to achieving personal growth, integration and fulfilment rather than a contributory factor towards community generation. Within modern liberal secular society whilst religion is viewed as irrelevant to public and civil discourse, spirituality as a reflexive and privatised lifestyle choice is therefore celebrated (Gray, 2008). Accordingly spirituality within social work is observed to be *'a movement of the human spirit that refuses to be limited by, or to be defined by, economic restrictions, consumerist pressures, political constraints or ideologies'* (Moss, 2012, p.598). Resultantly the new visibility of religion in social work has increasingly become prominent within liberal paradigms whereby spirituality is considered within culturally competent and identity affirming contexts as illustrated by Patel et al (1998), O'Hagan (2001), Van Hook et al (2001), Moss & Thompson (2007), Gilligan & Furness (2012) and Nelson-Becker et al (2015). Nevertheless despite efforts towards the integration of religion and spirituality by social work authors such as Moss (2005), Holloway & Moss (2010), Furness & Gilligan (2010), Mulder (2015) and Carlisle (2016) I suggest that this preoccupation with privatised spirituality has eroded the significance of public religion to the profession resulting in the wider context of secular hegemony within social work having remained minimally critiqued which this thesis therefore seeks to remedy.

Critiquing Neoliberalism Within Social Work

Moreover further to the above critique of liberalism as having marginalised public religion from addressing collective social welfare concerns, I suggest that concurrent social work critiques of neoliberalism have also failed to recognise the contribution of religious perspectives to exposing neoliberal hegemony as an outcome of secular *laissez-faire* modernity. In response, the new visibility of postsecular social work is further conceptualised as engaging with critiques of political and economic liberalism through the reconfiguration of Christian socialism which affirms religious citizenship as congruent with social work vocation. Indeed I suggest that solidarity between social workers and faith based organisations in the interests of social welfare is particularly timely given the gathering evidence within social work of the detrimental effects that neoliberalism continues to have upon public service. Neoliberalism thus being defined as a) uncritical focus upon the efficacy

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of the unfettered free market as a mechanism for solving social problems by reforming citizens into customers and consumers with a concurrent attempt to eliminate any criticism regarding the social consequences (Goode, 2006), (Giroux 2004, 2010) b) governance which endorses market fundamentalism, competitiveness, self-interest, performance related quantifiable targets and economic determinism as typified by New Public Management principles (Steger & Ravi, 2010), (Davies, 2014) c) expedient roll back processes involving the retraction and privatisation of State interests concurrent to roll out marketisation strategies with an increasing emphasis upon a surveillance rather than regulatory role for the State (Peck & Brenner, 2009), (Peck, 2010), (Gane, 2012).

Neoliberalism, within the context of social work, is therefore acknowledged to involve a continued *'strive for unquestioned acceptance of the superior wisdom of the private sector, its first rate way of doing things and the transferability of its knowledge to other contexts despite the financial and economic crash of 2008 and subsequent austerity polices'* (Harris, 2014, p.7). Indeed the profound alienation experienced by the profession as an outcome of the imposition of corporate managerialism and authoritarian neoliberal agendas into practice contexts is observed by a range of social work authors including Carey (2008, 2015), Ferguson (2007, 2008), Houston (2008), Jordan (2010), Ferguson & Lavalette (2013), Gray & Webb (2013), Reisch (2013), Mearns (2014), McKendrick & Webb (2014) and Singh & Cowden (2015). For example, McDonald et al (2008) recognise the demoralising effect that neoliberal managerialism has wrought upon the profession whilst Ferguson (2007, 2008) notes the erosion of solidarity and humanistic values within social work following the imposition of neoliberal agendas which have induced atomisation within public services. Correlatively Houston (2008) critiques the encroachment of neoliberalism into social work as precipitating an insidious, reductive and distorted view of citizens as operating solely within *homo economicus* parameters wherein *service-users* are considered as mere rational maximisers of their own self-interest. An associated culture of contempt which maligns a disempowered, alienated and fragmented working class is further observed as contributing towards social injustice by Jordan (2010) whilst the marginalisation of socialist thought within social work education is acknowledged as undermining strategies of resistance to neoliberalism (Garret, 2013, 2013a). Moreover a climate of fear is associated with the imposition of neoliberal agendas and austerity measures into social work contexts by Ferguson & Lavalette (2013) whilst an increasing intensification of neoliberalism is observed by Singh & Cowden (2015) as undermining social democracy within the profession. Consequently as Jones (2014) outlines in his critique of neoliberalism amongst the political establishment, the sheer expense and quality assurance concerns associated with the outcome of

privatised monopoly growth within the public sector continues to highlight the detrimental effect that neoliberal cultures have upon public service.

In response social work critics Gray & Webb observe that *'the neoliberal rationality of competition, consumption and the marketisation of everything, including personal relationships and State-owned enterprises is the very opposite of social work's core values'* (2013, p.210) and propose a *new politics of social work* which redefines radical social work as resisting '*the exploitative and despotic regimes maintained by the capitalist class and its neoliberal economic order'* (ibid, p.3). Professional social work is therefore considered as owing *'as much to itself as to its citizen clients to confront the dominant neoliberal apparatus and capitalist class with every tactic available'* (ibid, p.6) in order to challenge the *'mainstream and conservative elements of social work as many social workers continue to acquiesce in the face of the neoliberal capitalist onslaught of austerity, injustice, violence and virulent greed'* (ibid, p.viii). Resultantly Gray & Webb assert that *'if we could achieve a better understanding of the destruction and disruption wrought by neoliberalism to which we are currently being exposed to in social work we would have a better chance of doing something about it. We believe a massive disappointment sits at the heart of what is happening in social work today and more broadly in liberal democracies. An ethics of commitment and community is required to inform a new politics of social work. We need to find each other to undertake this important task'* (ibid, p.viii). The marginalisation and subsequent othering of social work values by the colonising dominance of neoliberal hegemony into public services therefore remains of particular significance to the profession (Matthies, 2013). Consequently a return to the political is advocated by Gray & Webb (2009a, 2013) despite the recognition that *'we are persuaded, often by ourselves, that radical politics is futile. So we tend towards compromise, resignation and indifference. Mainstream liberal social work discourse has a tendency to limit and even dislodge our experience of what is important and urgent. It tries to persuade us that social work is politically neutral. Thus it can take over our voice and regulate our feelings into ones of apathy or disinterest'* (McKendrick & Webb, 2014, p.359).

Conceptualising the New Visibility of Postsecular Social Work

Nevertheless professional resilience is also affirmed by the acknowledgement that *'undoubtedly, one of the greatest virtues of social work is that it continues to think politically in these difficult times of crisis and austerity'* (Gray & Webb, 2013, p.3) and accordingly, in conceptualising the new visibility of postsecular social work, I suggest that liberal secular paradigms relating to religion

obscure the radical potential of religious citizenship to subvert neoliberalism. As such in comparison to liberal secular perspectives, I suggest that the emergence of postsecular theory represents an opportunity for social work to reconfigure religious citizenship as a marginalised and counter-cultural Other that potentially signifies a critical and emancipatory political ontology which is conducive to restoring, reviving and revitalising public commitments towards social welfare and social justice. Indeed *'postsecularism accords to religion an enduring value, a place at the table in politics and an abiding role in private life. Postsecularism recognises the persistence of religion and marks an acknowledgement of religious and secular pluralisms. It recognises the ethical resources and community-building efficacy that religious systems and practices can offer and acknowledges the function of religion in constructing and defending cultural identities'* (Rectenwald & Almeida, 2015, p.8). In particular I suggest in the following chapter that the postsecular turn in critical theory by lead thinkers such as Habermas (2006, 2006a, 2010, 2013) indicates a re-engagement with public religion within deliberative and participatory democratic practices which is congruent with social work vocation. For example, Habermas (1994, 1996) deploys the term deliberative democracy to denote the virtues of reasoned discussion and participation in democratic decision-making and community generation. As such the public sphere is privileged, preserved and sustained as the ideal space for reasoned communicative discourse ethics which is structurally different from the competitive nature of the free market and more responsive to humanist concerns than the instrumental and disenchanted State. Correlatively the new visibility of religion as a cultural hermeneutic wherein society is reinterpreted through the deployment of postsecular perspectives as illustrated by Ward & Hoelzl (2008) enables public religion to engage with social welfare concerns in ways that are distinct from both the State and market. Resultantly whilst secularism and associated empiricist methodologies renders religion invisible within the public sphere, postsecular thinkers affirm the new presence and fresh relevance of religion to politics (Oviedo, 2010). For example, the Church as a latent reservoir of collective, cultural and social resources is reconfigured within a liberation theology perspective which serves as a potential emancipatory social agent (Habermas & Ratzinger, 2006). Consequently postsecular theory re-politicises religion by engaging with the public sphere thereby, in my view, developing a post-neoliberal perspective which affirms public religion as relevant to addressing social work concerns.

In particular by demonstrating a sympathy between public religion and social welfare, I suggest in Chapter Three that Christian socialism remains significant to reviving commitments towards public service in resisting the colonising influence of neoliberalism into public life, thereby negating any secular notions of religion as problematic, dogmatic or divisive to social cohesion. As such an

appeal to the latency, longevity and particularity of the dialogical relationship between the State and ecumenical Church in Western democratic societies as outlined by Davies et al (2008) is upheld. Indeed given the new visibility of religion within the public sphere, the paradoxical illiberal legacy of liberalism in imposing programmatic secularist agendas is resisted. For example, Sweeney (2008) acknowledges secular perspectives as intellectually under resourced to fully comprehend the implications of religion in either domestic or international contexts whilst developments within postsecular sociology by authors such as McLennan (2007, 2010) critique the philosophical foundations of secularism which predisposes a hermeneutic of suspicion, incredulity and curiosity in sociological approaches to religious subjects. In comparison to the limitations of secularised sociology, postsecular sociology is therefore advocated as a restorative project of social and political renewal (Keenan, 2002, 2003). Resultantly I suggest that the challenge to social work is not for religious citizens to prove their rational and worthy Otherness to an apparently neutral but altogether secular public sphere but for social work itself to deploy acquired skills in reflexivity, rather than description, to examine the dynamics of secularism in marginalising public religion from addressing social welfare concerns. Consequently given the increasing prominence of postsecular theory in contemporary social and political thought, I suggest that a more collaborative approach between social, political and religious perspectives is required within social work if epistemologically resources are to be shared in ways that cultivate social welfare, social justice and respect for human dignity.

In summary by conceptualising the new visibility of postsecular social work, this thesis responds to the speculative reflection *'after neoliberalism, new managerialism and postmodernism, what next for social work?'* (Noble & Henrickson, 2011, p.128). Indeed, in my view, the new visibility of postsecular social work represents a hopeful paradigm for the profession by indicating a return to the political in the development of a transformative post-neoliberal *new politics of social work.* As such in comparison to liberalism and neoliberalism which typically negate the realities of social suffering by defining subjectivity as individual, rational, free and autonomous as outlined by Frost & Hoggett (2008) the postsecular perspectives proposed within this thesis instead focus upon the significance of public religion in addressing social vulnerability. Indeed ethical perspectives concerned with interdependence, reciprocity, mutuality, compassion, altruism and trust typically characterise post-liberal as well as post-neoliberal ethics and are therefore particularly relevant to social work discourse (Winters, 2013), (Pease, 2013). Resultantly by subverting secularism, the new visibility of postsecular social work recognises congruency between religious citizenship and social work vocation through mutual critiques of neoliberalism. Consequently within the context of

postsecular society, the new visibility of postsecular social work emphasises religious responsibilities rather than rights in addressing social welfare concerns which I suggest is characteristically sympathetic with Christian socialism or *Socialism by Grace*[5].

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5   The term *Socialism by Grace* is taken from the title paper by Milbank (1996). Christian socialism as a political movement is explored further in Chapter Three.

2. The Pragmatics of Postsecular Social Work: Reconstituting Postsecular Society

'The markets and the power of bureaucracy are expelling social solidarity from more and more spheres of life - that is the co-ordination of action based upon values, norms and a vocabulary intended to promote mutual understanding. Thus it is in the interests of the constitutional State to deal carefully with all the cultural sources which nourish its citizens consciousness of norms and their solidarity. This awareness is reflected in the phrase 'postsecular society'. This refers not only to the fact that religion is holding its own in an increasingly secular environment but that society must assume that religious fellowships will continue to exist' Habermas (2006, p.46).

In the previous chapter the relevance of postsecular theory to social work discourse was introduced. However the aim of this chapter is to focus more specifically on the postsecular turn in the work of Habermas, as well as the development of hope and utopianism in the social philosophy of Bloch, which is indicative of the wider cultivation of critical theory within the profession. The deployment of Habermasian ideas to date having proved fruitful to social work concerned not only with a critique of neoliberalism but also the relevance of communicative action and discourse ethics to practice contexts as illustrated by Gray & Webb (2009, 2013) and Houston (2013). In particular Habermas whose social and political thought, along with Bloch, evolved from the critical theory of the Frankfurt School provides a persuasive critique of neoliberalism as well as the persistent relevance of political ideals to public life which, in my view, is congruent with social work vocation. Indeed Houston affirms professional engagement with critical theory by acknowledging that *'the voice of the Frankfurt school in social work needs to be heard more clearly as it foregrounds the role of human agency, emotion, critical reflection and their connection with emancipatory action in combating nefarious ideologies. Such ideas directly challenge the neoliberal agenda that commodifies relations and negates social connectivity'* (2013, p.65). Accordingly pragmatic Habermasian discourse continues to engage social work with critical theory particularly in relation to the defence of democratic and virtuous discourse ethics within a preserved and sustained public sphere which I suggest additionally validates postsecular perspectives. However, in my view, the critical theory of Bloch also enables an utopian appreciation of religious citizenship which renders Christian socialism as particularly relevant to the new visibility of postsecular social work. Consequently both pragmatism and utopianism are conceptualised as integral to the new visibility of postsecular social work.

Habermas and Social Work

For example, Habermas compares the *lifeworld* which incorporates a reservoir of collective meanings that integrate our personal and community identities with the *system* which is organised by the State and dominated by finance, rationality, bureaucracy and instrumentality (Finlayson, 2005). In particular Habermas identifies the authoritarian and colonising potential of the State *system* to invade the *lifeworld* thereby displacing modes of integration based upon communicative reason. In advocating communicative action, Habermas therefore affirms discourse ethics in public life as incorporating an inherent and pragmatic mutuality of reason which is observed by social work authors as reaffirming the *sine qua non* of the profession through the preservation of dignity and integrity between citizens (Houston, 2007, 2007a, 2009), (Garrett, 2008, 2013), (William & Wilson, 2009) and Matthies (2013). For example, a dialogical paradigm for social workers is developed by William & Wilson (2009) based upon democratic and shared reason which upholds Habermasian claims that moral goodness requires forms of communication beyond instrumental concerns. As such although early Habermasian thought is indebted to Marxism his revival of ancient and medieval thought in relation to virtue and discourse ethics in a form acceptable to a modern generation is recognised as directly applicable to social work (Gray & Lovatt, 2007, 2008). Accordingly social work theorists have drawn upon Habermasian ideas by focusing upon the efficacy of communicative action as an exemplar of virtue ethics whereby Habermas is read as a neo-Aristotelian. For example, Habermasian proportionate ethics are proposed by Gray & Lovat (2006, 2008a) in response to denotological social care paradigms, litigious proof practice contexts and the intractable challenge of difference within pluralistic society. Virtuous communicative action is therefore considered to have occurred when consensus and social integration is achieved through discursive deliberation which replenishes the *lifeworld* and resists the encroachment of the *system* into every aspect of social life (Garret, 2008). Resultantly the public sphere as the ideal space for reasoned communicative exchanges, deliberative democracy and reciprocal discourse ethics is sustained by the value and significance placed upon open dialogue and transparent collective understanding. Consequently the public sphere is conceived as the discursive counterpart of civil society which in turn informs the political culture of the public sector as a forum which is structurally different from and politically resistant to the competitive nature of the free market (Maffettone, 2010). This virtuous and pragmatic preservation of the public sphere from dominance by both the State *system* and market fundamentalism, in my view, being entirely congruent with postsecular social work.

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Habermas and the Postsecular Turn

Nevertheless despite an initial ambivalence towards religion, it is the recent postsecular turn in the latter work of Habermas which presents social work with an opportunity to cultivate virtuous discourse ethics within the public sphere with particular reference to religious citizenship. Indeed previously Habermas abstained from judging the truth of religion in comparison to other critical theorists, such as Horkhiemer and Bloch, who assigned a more substantive role to religion in the interests of social welfare and social justice (Duvenage, 2010). As such given his earlier intellectual debt to Marx, Hegel, Weber and Durkhiem, Habermas rehearsed familiar yet reductive structural functionalist, historical materialist and post-metaphysical critiques of religion which assume a decline in religious belief in the rational progress of society towards public reason. Although Habermas observed the sacred as an ancestral source of motivation, performative action and collective consciousness in the foundation of society, he therefore considered the subsequent rationalisation of religion as the inevitable outcome of the modern secular State which privileges procedural rather than substantive ethics in the maintenance of civil society (Habermas, 2002). Resultantly in early Habermasian thought religion only remains relevant to the extent that it can be translated or assimilated into discursive language through methodological agnosticism (Duvenage, 2010). Consequently early Habermasian discourse on religion remained cautious of theology in defending an inherently secular public forum within which religious diversity was tolerated yet subordinated to public reason (Adams, 2006).

However subsequent to an engagement with previously resisted continental and postmodern philosophy, Habermas has more recently asserted a postsecular perspective whereby a pragmatic dialogical relationship between public reason and religious faith is proposed (Borradori, 2003), (Sheedy, 2016). Concurrently in recognising the theological turn in critical theory Cistelecan acknowledges that *'even though still subjects of dispute as to their exact meaning and consequences the so called return to the religious and postsecular condition are by now unquestionable realities for contemporary social science. No school of thought has remained immune to this newly found irreducible statute of the religious phenomena; from the most rationalist liberals to the more fiery Leninist; theological issues have started to populate the research agenda'* (2014, p.9). In response to the coercive exclusion of religion from the public sphere in assertively secular societies, Habermas therefore proposes that religious views ought to be admitted into the deliberation process in order that the public sphere is rejuvenated by the inclusion of the complete experience of human existence (Lanczi, 2010). Indeed Habermas' self-proclaimed goal has involved the *'self-reflexive*

overcoming of a rigid and exclusive secularist self-understanding of modernity' (2010a, p.145). Resultantly Habermas recognises the revitalisation of faith communities in advocating postsecular reflexivity which enhances positive law and secular morality by observing that *'even today religious traditions perform the function of articulating an awareness of what is missing, lacking or absent. They keep alive sensitivity to failure and suffering. They rescue from oblivion the dimensions of our personal and social relations in which advances in cultural and social rationalisation have caused utter devastation. Who is to say that they do not contain encoded semantic potentialities that could provide inspiration if only their messages were translated into rational discourses and their profane truth contents were set free'* (Habermas, 2010, p.146).

In affirming deliberative and participatory democracy, Habermas therefore emphasises the redemptive inclusion of religious meaning into generally accessible language by considering that religious perspectives, as part of the public sphere, should be heeded when negotiating controversial normative questions given that faith is an important source of motivation and justification for citizens to participate in democratic practices (Reder & Schmidt, 2010). Furthermore in response to religious pluralism, Habermas (2006) asserts that it is in the interests of the State to treat with care all sources of conscience upon which citizens draw and observes that the uncontrolled secularisation of society risks jeopardising the project of deliberative democracy (Reder & Schmidt, 2010). Habermas (2006) therefore proposes that politically liberal cultures should endeavour to engage secular citizens in efforts to translate relevant contributions from faith traditions into publicly intelligible language. Moreover in corresponding political debates Habermas (2010) considers religious speech as a potential conveyor of truth which nevertheless requires translation into generally accessible language. As such Habermas advocates for dialogue between faith and reason in upholding moral, ethical and utopian visions of the Good which directly relate to public concerns regarding social welfare and social justice (Fiorenza, 1992). For example, in dialoging with the papacy, Habermas reaffirms Christianity as the nourishing source of hope, conscience and human dignity within Western society (Habermas & Ratzinger, 2006). Consequently Habermas cultivates a socially inclusive perspective which, in my view, signifies the opportunity for social work to become more accommodating towards public religion especially as faith communities often articulate insights into moral intuitions particularly in relation to social welfare concerns.

The postsecular turn in the work of Habermas as outlined by Harrington (2007) therefore incorporates a pragmatic counter-critique of a previously confident yet coercive secularist outlook which I suggest operates as an important source of authority for contemporary critiques of

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secularism within social work. Indeed Habermas (2010) acknowledges that the recognition of postsecular society by secular citizens, which is epistemologically attuned to the co-existence of religious communities, involves a change in consciousness that is no less cognitively exacting than the adaptation of religious citizens to assertively secular cultures. Accordingly postsecularism is acknowledged to be *'a condition in which secular citizens treat Others' religious expressions as not simply irrational or non-rational but with mutual and even agonistic respect and dialogic engagement. This mutual recognition and reciprocity involves what Habermas refers to as complementary learning processes in which the epistemic disposition of bearers of both secular and religious world views take seriously each Others' contributions to controversial theories in the public sphere'* (Weiner, 2015, p.400). As such the new visibility of postsecular social work is conceptualised as subverting any presumption of progress from religious belief to secular reason and is particularly indebted to the latter work of Habermas which as Browning & Fiorenza (1992) outline retrieves faith from the private realm of personal belief by restoring religion within the public sphere, thereby re-politicising religious citizenship within democratic processes. Resultantly the new visibility of postsecular social work upholds discourse ethics and critically engages with religious perspectives within the public sphere in order to ensure the democratic participation of all citizens in recognising the totality of human experience, including religious fellowships. Consequently the new visibility of postsecular social work is conceptualised as committed to deliberative and participatory democracy within the public sphere in the interests of social welfare and social justice which includes the incorporation of religious perspectives.

Pragmatism and Utopianism in the New Visibility of Postsecular Social Work

Furthermore I suggest that such pragmatic engagement with religion within the public sphere also paradoxically reveals an utopian character to religious citizenship which is indicative of a radical political consciousness that reflects a hopeful manifestation of utopian thought within the new visibility of postsecular social work. For example, as developed in the following chapter, the new visibility of postsecular social work represents an imaginative counter-cultural perspective which, in my view, restores the relevance of Christian socialism to social work whereby the theological virtue of hope becomes synonymous with an utopian critique which is neither naïve nor unrealistic but rather appeals to the speculative and radical. Indeed with reference to socialism *'any utopianism worth the name must engage in a significant polemic with the dominant culture'* (Bauman, 1976, p.3) which I suggest characterises the new visibility of postsecular social work as counter-cultural to the dominant ideologies of secularism, liberalism and neoliberalism within the profession. The

dialectic and symbiotic relationship between ideology and utopia, whereby ideology legitimates the existing political order whilst utopia challenges hegemonic dominance therefore represents a critical space in which emerging postsecular perspectives reconstitute postsecular society as a subversive phenomena. Indeed, in my view, the reconstitution of postsecular society involves an epistemological break from dominant ideology by imagining a situationally transcendent and radically alternative social ontology which exposes the contingency of secular paradigms. For as Ricoeur (1986) recognises, in the advent of liberal and capitalist hegemony the emigration of dominant ideology from the religious to the economic sphere serves as an opportunity for the subsequent utopian deployment of religion as a critical tool in unmasking the idol of the market. Resultantly whilst religion can function as an ideology when justifying existing systems of power, I suggest that the new visibility of postsecular social work recognises the emancipatory potential of religious citizenship to rejuvenate social projects for the common good. Contrary to countervailing views which implicate Christianity with the development of capitalism as typified by sociologist Weber (2010) this thesis therefore revives the radical and utopian premise of Christian socialism.

Indeed from a postsecular social work perspective, utopia represents a radical alternative to political mediocrity in both relativising the temporal and transforming the present given that utopia envisions *'a qualitatively new and ideal future characterised by justice, peace and greater harmony'* (Marsden, 1991, p.12). Utopia as reflexive and critical method is therefore progressive in reconstituting society which entails the expression of disaffection with the status quo in challenging the political present (Sargisson, 2007), (Morgan, 2015). As such utopia which is etymologically translated as *nowhere* represents a social dream that subverts and reforms the realities of dominant ideology through the preservation of critique (Sargent, 2008, 2010). The potential of utopia as a speculative critique is therefore the hope of reconstituting society through the proposition of alternative solutions to the challenges of the present (Baeten, 2002). Indeed utopia as critical social thought although often self limiting, partial and plural can represent the idealised goals involved with social struggles for political legitimacy. For example, Habermasian ideal speech acts wherein an immanent norm of consensus and cooperation emerges from dialogic reasoning represents an idealised aspiration towards deliberative democracy whilst Christianity incorporates a plethora of codified utopias for the religious life (Alexander, 2001). Similar to the Habermasian notion of the *lifeworld* the utopian social imaginary as recognised by Ricoeur (1986) therefore incorporates an ensemble of stories and symbolic motifs that project possible futures from the critical vantage point of *nowhere* (Langdridge, 2006). Resultantly the progressive character of utopia, through the critical imagining of alternative social projects, is a guide to social reform that counters the logical certainty

of the empirical world in appealing to the principle of hope (Stillman, 2007).

Accordingly I therefore suggest that the new visibility of postsecular social work is characterised by a politics of hope given that utopian practice as outlined by critical theorist Bloch (1986) incorporates an anticipatory consciousness which defines utopia as both a transgressive and progressive phenomena. Indeed utopia as an expression of hope acts not only as an emotion but more essentially as a directing action of a cognitive kind which includes the aspiration and anticipation of a still open future. In addition through the not-yet-conscious and not-yet-become the utopian function extends in an anticipating way existing social relations into future possibilities of being different. As such Bloch radically expands the scope of political utopianism in proposing the utopian instinct as a fundamental human trait which incorporates notions of the sacred into future possibilities for society (Daniel, 1997), (Agar, 2014). Contrary to the hermeneutics of suspicion which typically underpin secular critiques of religion, this principle of hope within critical theory is therefore deeply accommodating to the accompanying theological virtues of faith and charity. Moreover by suspending hermeneutics of suspicion which reduce the religious to the epiphenomenal, the anticipatory consciousness of hope reaffirms the *a priori* redemptive relevance of religion to politics. For example, Bloch (1986) incorporates *anamnesis* as recollection and *anagnorisis* as recognition into an acknowledgement of utopia as reactivating memory in redeeming the present and transforming the future. As such the dialectic relationship between hope and religion is implicit in the forward glance of utopianism wherein collective religious memory is implicated in the aspirational projection of idealised social relations. Consequently with regard to reconstituting postsecular society, I suggest that the hopeful and redemptive quality of utopia is integral to the new visibility of postsecular social work given that utopian critique enhances a more *'just, equitable and sustainable society which begins to provide the conditions for Grace'* (Levitas, 2013 p.xviii).

In summary the pragmatic restoration of religious perspectives within social work is therefore justified, in my view, by the postsecular turn in critical theory particularly as the new visibility of religion within politics revives utopian visions towards the common good. Indeed the reconstitution of postsecular society, in cultivating a more nuanced approach to religion, rejuvenates politics to the extent that the peripheral status assigned to religion in secular society becomes untenable (Geoghegan, 2004, 2007). Postsecular society as a heuristic phenomena therefore recognises that the achievements of secularism will not be lost by a more sympathetic approach to religion in the utopian reconstitution of society (Geoghegan, 2008). For example, as this thesis develops, the reconfiguration of Christian socialism within a postsecular paradigm subverts neoliberal hegemony

by cultivating social welfare projects which uphold the common good. Congruent with Christian socialism, utopian reflexivity therefore appeals to the imaginative potential of faith communities to address social welfare concerns. Resultantly the pragmatism of postsecular social work reconstitutes postsecular society as inclusive of public religion and religious citizenship whereby utopian critique is sustained in the interests of social welfare, social justice and respect for human dignity. Consequently the new visibility of postsecular social work is conceptualised as incorporating both pragmatism and utopianism in the cultivation of critical theory which affirms public religion and religious citizenship as congruent with social work vocation.

3. The Politics of Postsecular Social Work: Reconfiguring Christian Socialism

'I believe, along with radical orthodoxy in general, that only the Church has the theoretical and practical power to challenge the global hegemony of capital and to create a viable politico-economic alternative. I stand thereby in a long tradition of Anglican and Catholic Christian socialism which has always insisted on the necessity of the Christian component of the socialist one. In that sense I have always stood proudly amongst those who see themselves as conservative theologically, radical politically' Milbank (2009, p.xi).

In the previous chapter I considered how critical theory legitimates the inclusion of religious perspectives within the public sphere in the reconstitution of postsecular society. In this chapter my aim is to further explore the relevance of public religion to social work by conceptualising the new visibility of postsecular social work as additionally indebted to social theology with particular reference to Christian socialism and the radical orthodoxy movement. Correlatively Habermas (2010) acknowledges radical orthodoxy as a development of political theology whereby postmodern deconstructive methodology is deployed in the reconfiguration of social ontology within *a priori* theological rather than secular paradigms. This intellectual bridge between social, political and religious discourse within an over-arching postsecular perspective therefore signifying, in my view, an important epistemological shift towards the new visibility and validity of postsecularism within contemporary social work. In particular radical orthodoxy provides a rigorous critique of secular modernity and secularised sociology in exposing the Christian origin and temporality of *saeculum,* meaning age, which in the theological writings of Augustine retains a fluid, fragile and temporal connotation (Smith, 2004). As such although modern secularism as a political construct is acknowledged to have defined Western thought over the last couple of post-enlightenment centuries whereby the theological has either become discredited, turned into a harmless leisure activity or marginalised as a private commitment, the relatively recent manifestation of liberal secularism is characterised by theologians such as Milbank et al (1999) as exhibiting anxiety regarding a lack of ultimate ground. Indeed Ward (2014) recognises modern secularism as a culturally constructed and counter-intuitive liberal mythology which is paradoxically intolerant of a religious Otherness which proceeds and exceeds the modern secular State. Consequently I suggest that it is the religious Otherness of Christian socialism which characterises the *new politics of postsecular social work* as subversive to the dominant ideologies of secularism, liberalism and neoliberalism within the profession.

The Radical Orthodoxy Movement

For example, by illustrating an *a priori* theological perspective within the context of liberal secular modernity, Milbank et al (1999) propose that with the advent of secularism the covenantal bonds between God and humanity became replaced by the contractual and idolatrous exchanges of the free market whereby political and economic liberalism negated religious citizenship in the establishment of secular order which eschewed metaphysical epistemology. From a radical orthodoxy perspective, this marginalisation of religion from the secular public sphere therefore involved a commodification of community as well as loss of an Augustine ontology of peace which affirms reason as fulfilling the intellect towards transcendental goodness known as God. The privileging of liberal secular modernity in the absence of a Christian ontology of peace is therefore considered as a fruitless exercise whilst the modern secular State is observed to be an impersonal mechanism of interest brokerage and bureaucratic control incapable of embodying any moral purpose. Accordingly secular modernity is characterised as parasitic and heterodox with the attempt of secular institutions to replace religious fellowships considered as a vacuous parody of Christian *communitas* in reducing social theory to purely empirical epistemology (Milbank, 2006). As such Milbank recognises post-enlightenment social theory to be an imploded project partly due to an inbuilt secular bias which is considered as no more justifiable than Christian perspectives. In response, radical orthodoxy with its incarnational and Trinitarian theology combines postmodern insight with Catholic sacramentality in critiquing secularism through the additional revival of the theurgic aspects of neo-Platonism whereby matter participates in the ideal which is pivotal to the redemptive potential of humanity. Moreover postsecular metaphysics revive Christian notions of virtuous political economy as incorporating gift-exchange which proceeds from Grace and becomes embodied within a reciprocal social economy between equals (Bengtson, 2016). Accordingly Milbank (2015a) cites the political philosopher Agamben (2007) in acknowledging that Christian theologians have historically deployed the Greek term *oikonomina* or *household economy* to elaborate upon the Trinity as a relational, abundant and interdependent dynamic. This relational economy being aptly described as *'the ever-flowing love that enlivens the Trinity is the model of human life. No Trinitarian theology speaks of competition among the Persons – does the Spirit compete with the Father and the Son to improve the performance of all three? Does each Person calculate the marginal utility of each procession in the divine economy?* (McCarraher, 2011, p.96). As such Anglicanism is characterised by the integration of the human and divine in the event of the Incarnation in addition to the centrality of the Trinity to social theology (Smith, 2004), (Milbank & Pabst, 2014b). Resultantly an associated social incarnationalism which integrates Grace and social action is developed within a

Christian social work paradigm (Noyes & Blond, 2013).

The new visibility of postsecular social work as informed by the radical orthodoxy therefore corresponds with Blond (1998) and Tyson (2008) in observing the scepticism of modern secular reason as contributing towards an erroneous disenchantment of humanity, community, economy and society. Indeed as noted by Cloke (2012) in an early philosophical exploration of postsecularism Blond (1998) examines the characteristics that are relevant to a desire to move beyond secular fundamentalism which includes the tendency for secular societies to a) exclude religiously moderate identities from the public sphere thereby allowing religion to fall into the hands of religious extremists who have the capacity to condemn other groups b) induce in public consciousness an uncritical assumption that the kinds of progress achieved by modern scientific methodologies can be replicated in other areas such as politics, ethics and social welfare which ultimately leads to market domination, the erosion of political literacy and a debased democracy c) accept a lack of hope and cynical pessimism within society which is becoming more acquisitive, individualised, privatised, unequal, polarised and vulnerable to market failure. In response, the radical orthodoxy movement revives British intellectual history which subverts utilitarian and secular liberalism in the name of Coleridge's '*old, spiritual, Platonic England*' (Milbank, 2009, p.ix). Furthermore in considering religion as a mode of both representing and organising personal and collective existence, proponents of radical orthodoxy such as Ward (2009) assert that only when people fully exercise their moral power and become visible again in the public sphere are they capable of participating as citizens in ensuring a just political order. As such secularism is observed to repress metaphysical doctrine and substantive moral diversity in the interests of civil order but by doing so paradoxically restricts the democratic engagement of religious citizens. Postsecular ethics in public life beyond the civil ethics of political liberalism are therefore proposed in preserving the democratic integrity of faith communities (Dosert, 2006). For example, postsecular Christian socialism is reconfigured in response to the flattened consciousness of hyper secularism which is associated with both social amnesia and the commodification of community (Martin, 2006). Resultantly I suggest that the political literacy of radical orthodoxy which particularly lends itself to a Habermasian preoccupation with translating theology into political narrative, is especially relevant to the new visibility of postsecular social work.

Christian Socialism and Postsecular Society

For example, in advocating Christian social action proponents of radical orthodoxy and

postsecularism such as Milbank (2009) and Blond (2010) reference Catholic thinkers Chesterton (2000) and Belloc (2007) in critiquing political and economic liberalism. Correlatively historic Christian social reform movements such as Victorian evangelical philanthropy and the revived medievalism of the Oxford movement are recognised as early counter-cultural traditions which were established to alleviate the alienating effects of industrialisation and Enlightenment rationalism (Milbank, 2009). As such in the nineteenth century it was the Christian left who defended the prosperity of the poor through the criticism of political authoritarianism, self-serving capitalism and land dispossession. Moreover Anglican reformers advocated for an extension of self sufficiency through the redistribution of capital to those indigent by wage labour (Groves, 2000), (Blond, 2010). Similarly Belloc and Chesterton reconfigured medieval systems in their rejection of *laissez-faire* economics which they critiqued as disenfranchising the most vulnerable members of society. In particular Chesterton (2000) recognised Christianity as a latent cultural resource in advocating guild systems of social and economic capital that upheld the democratic ideal of Christendom as cultivating a virtuous economy which places Truth and the Good above trade and goods in affirming the intrinsic and inexchangeable moral worth of Creation. Furthermore this Christian perspective was developed by Belloc (2007) who critiqued capitalism as denying sufficiency and security to the proletariat in his establishment of distributist leagues which endorsed guild models of social and economic capital as well as local self-governing co-operatives (Epstein, 2007). Resultantly the inherent Christian socialist ethics informing such initiatives responded to the alienation experienced by the working class caused by unregulated industrialisation and *laissez-faire* economics which later became synonymous with neoliberal modernity.

These characteristics of Christian socialism therefore began to develop during the middle of the nineteenth century when Christian thinkers began to consider how the social gospel could be best interpreted within the context of modern industrial society whereby *socialising Christianity and Christianising socialism* became central to the Christian Socialist Movement which drew Christians from all classes into politics in the interests of social welfare (Dale, 2000). As such since the late nineteenth century Christian socialism as a political and social movement has attracted a range of supporters and contributors such as Ludlow (1793-1857), Maurice (1805-72), Morris (1834-96) and Tawney (1880-1962) given that, historically, the British political left consisted of an eclectic array of diverse intellectual and social traditions which encompassed guild socialism, religious non-conformism, civil dissent, suffragist associations and co-operative unions (Wilkinson, 1998). In particular resistance to capitalism was demonstrated by lawyer and leader of the Christian Socialist Movement, Ludlow, who advocated that *'Christ's gospel is wholly incompatible with a political*

economy which proclaims self-interest to be the very pivot of social action...that gospel cannot stand with a system of trade based wholly upon the idea of profit...self sacrifice and not selfishness, brotherly love and not mutual discord and hatred are the highest manifestations of man's truest instincts' (Massanari, 1974). In addition theologian and author, Maurice, resisted the assertion that competition was central to humanity as irreconcilable with Christianity in advocating Christian socialism which affirms associational rather than competitive citizenship (Massanari, 1974), (Preston, 1988). Moreover economic historian and social critic, Tawney, defined a Christian inspired ethical, democratic, pragmatic and parliamentary socialism which was committed to equality and critical of *laissez-faire* capitalism (Dale, 2000). Consequently Tawney's Christian socialist colleague, economic anthropologist Polanyi (2001) recognised how *'capitalism is secular because it ascribes universal value to commodity exchange and money alone at the expense of the social, political, symbolic, cosmic and even religious significance of each person and all things...capitalist economy was born when perennial values like the sanctity of life and land were progressively abandoned and so was the idea that everything has more than just material meaning and economic utility. Stripped of their significance positions within social relations and their cultural significance, people and property were increasingly viewed as commodities whose value is determined by their market price. Step by step the market became dis-embedded from society and money was enthroned as the measure of all things, producing not just alienation, reification and commodified labour but also the commercialisation of human relations'* (Pabst, 2010, p. 589).

The Christian Socialist Movement was therefore upheld by social critic Morris (1993) as requiring *'intelligence enough to conceive, courage enough to will and power enough to compel'* (Morton, 1979, p.228) and correlatively successive Labour party leaders have proclaimed their affinities with Christian socialism in describing their faith based commitments towards social justice. For example, Hardie (1856-1915) as founder and first parliamentary leader of the Labour Party was profoundly inspired by Christianity whilst Lansbury (1859-1940) recognised that *'socialism, which means love, co-operation and brotherhood in every department of human affairs is the only outward expression of Christian faith'* (1934, p.37). In addition Smith (1938-1994) proclaimed that *'just as the Christian stands by the fundamental tenets of Christianity so the socialist should stand by the tenets of socialism. For me socialism is largely about Christian ethical values. Politics is a moral activity. Values should shine through at all times'* (Dale, 2000 p.207). Furthermore in early commentaries, Blair (1998, 2000) acknowledged how Christian socialism was pivotal to the emergence of the Labour movement by recognising that *'the Labour party and the nation are indebted to people whose Christian faith motivated their political service; individuals who were outraged by the social*

injustice they saw all around them and believed that it was their duty to stand up for the downtrodden; individuals who wanted to show compassion towards their neighbours and saw the Labour party as a means by which this could be done; individuals who saw a connection between the values of Christ and the values of Socialism' (2000, p.ix). Christian socialists within the context of progressive left politics were therefore *'among the more visionary and through going radicals of the left, advocating direct worker control over production and technology; a recasting of unions as updated versions of medieval guilds; the decentralisation of State power; a more harmonious and ecologically sensible relationship between countryside and city; and an alignment of moral and aesthetic criteria for the just evaluation of goods and their distribution'* (McCarraher, 2012, p.102). As such recognition of Christ's concern for the disadvantaged and marginalised has historically motivated a social and political manifesto which encompasses an utopian desire towards Christian unity; reconciliation between nations; world peace and general disarmament; redistribution to reduce inequalities between rich and poor within and between nations; the common ownership of the productive resources of the earth and a classless society which respects social, sexual and racial equality (Preston, 2001). In addition Christian socialism is characterised by suspicion of acquisitiveness; determination to resist the market and its associated values in public life; admiration of disinterested service; commitment to the common good; overt redistribution of tax; advocacy of trade unions, collective and co-operative movements; working class and community empowerment through mutual benefit associations as well as syndicates and banks; co-operative rather than competitive practices in public life and preference for fair trade rather than *laissez-faire* economics (Wilkinson, 1998). Consequently from a Christian socialist perspective, the Church embodies a counter-cultural and compensating moral counterforce to the alienating defects of the State and market given that poetic yet pragmatic Christian socialism serves not only as a critique to all forms of alienation and domination but also cultivates practices of hope and imagination in the development of social projects for the common good (Hogan, 2005).

Christian socialism is therefore acknowledged by Milbank (1996) as characteristic of the radical orthodoxy movement which is identified by Cloke et al (2012) as reconciling postmodern Christianity with the critical insights of materialist socialism thereby returning socialism to its Christian roots whilst motivating contemporary Christian social action. Christianity within the context of postsecular society is therefore affirmed as a truly public and deeply material religion in observing the Christian faith as '*not an abstraction...in our living as Christians we continually work with and in the world and the world works with and in us'* (Ward, 2003, p.463)[6]. Nevertheless

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6   As also cited by Paddison (2013).

despite the persistent relevance of socialism in addressing social welfare concerns as outlined by Derrida (1994) Eagleton (2011) and Jones (2014) Christian socialism remains compromised as a precarious hope within the context of secular and neoliberal hegemony. Indeed prior to resurgent socialist Corbyn becoming leader of the Labour party in 2015, Milbank acknowledged that *'socialism, like religion, now assumes a merely spectral reality in the modern secularised world. It has ceased to appear either plausible or rational and has instead been consigned to the realm of faith. Yet as with Christianity in the West we remain haunted by its excellence because nothing has emerged to replace it; we sense that just as a story of a compassionate God who became man was the final religion so also the hope of a universal fraternity based upon sharing was the final politics. With its demise we are delivered over to something somehow more secular than politics, to a future of infinite utilitarian calculations by individuals, States and transnational companies, of possible gains and losses, the greater and lesser risks'* (1996, p.532)[7]. This vision, I suggest, ever intensified following the financial crisis in 2008 whereby the hope of *socialism of grace* became replaced by *socialism for the rich* as described by Jones (2014) that witnessed bank losses but not profits becoming socialised with the assistance of public funds yet to the detriment of public services which remain subject to severe austerity measures. The concurrent re-branding of the Christian Socialist Movement to *Christians on the Left* in 2013 additionally illustrating, in my view, a dated liberal left ambivalence in continuing to embrace an once vibrant socialist tradition. A tradition which nevertheless recognises that *'socialism is essentially the tendency inherent in an industrial society to transcend the self-regulating market by consciously subordinating it to democratic society'* (Polanyi, 2001, p.242).

One Nation and the Common Good

However within the context of postsecular society, the reconfiguration of Christian socialism nevertheless remains discernible within the contemporary Blue Labour movement as well as paradoxically within the Red Toryism of Blond (1998, 2010) whom blue labour founder, Glasman, ironically credits as an important Labour thinker in having rehabilitated socialist language within mainstream politics (Glasman, 2010), (Blond & Glasman, 2010). For example, in comparison to New Labour which according to Blond (2010) accepted liberal variants of the free market, red toryism is purported as upholding the historic ideals of the working class in maintaining a shared vision of commonwealth in addition to a cogent, intellectual and practical proletarian identity. The

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7   In considering *The Finality of Christ in a Pluralist World* Williams (2010) encourages Christians within inter-faith society to reconnect Christology with anthropology thereby enabling a peaceful encounter with the religious and non-religious Other which involves *'a generous desire to share and the desire to learn'*.

replacement of Churches, trade unions, cooperative societies and associated social welfare organisations by an excessively centralised, bureaucratic, managerial and secular State subject to compliance based auditing and governing elites is, according to the red toryism of Blond, therefore a legacy of the political and economic liberalism endorsed by both Thatcherism and New Labourism. In response, Burkean conservatism is restored within a red tory paradigm that shares religious foundations in Catholic social teaching which is concerned with social welfare and the moral obligation of social reformers to address poverty, exploitation and deprivation (Blond, 2010), (Norman, 2010, 2013), (Glasman & Norman, 2012). As such Burkean ideals of civil, religious and political mutuality based upon self-organised associations are advocated as ultimately resisting both State and market authoritarianism (Blond, 2010). Burkean social philosophy, akin to Thomist natural law, therefore represents an alternative to Kantian utilitarian autonomy and political liberalism in considering citizens as subject to moral law as well as interconnected within a range of social, cultural and community relationships. Moreover in comparison to an emphasis upon freedom which is upheld by liberalism, Burkean discourse shares a Foucauldian recognition of the distributed, relational and productive dynamics of power which proceed and exceed the subject whereby in privileging *in media res* over *a priori* subjectivity citizens are obliged to negotiate and re-negotiate within existing political relations (Watkins, 2010). Historically it is when these deep structures of power become sublimated and transmuted within the emotive moral imaginary that a spontaneous and poetic politics therefore emerges as illustrated by the historic social commentaries of Coleridge, Ruskin and Burke (Eagleton, 2012). Accordingly reductive, mechanistic and utilitarian agendas are resisted by a political utopianism which is more predisposed to cultivating moral, religious and communitarian social projects that appeal to the collective imagination rather than free market values. For example, the Big Society neologism which derived from the red toryism of Blond is identified by social work critic Jordan (2010) as indicative of a revived neo-romanticism within politics. In particular Big Society discourse reaffirmed the importance of social relationships within conservatism whereby, in comparison to liberal individualism and Thatcherite negation of society, Cameron (2005) in an early speech acknowledged that *'there is such a thing as Society, it's just not the same thing as the State'*. Moreover red toryism, as reconfigured compassionate conservatism, illustrates a correlative Disraelian *One Nation* vision which recognises that *'power has only one duty; to secure the social welfare of the people'* (Carr, 2014, p.29). Resultantly *One Nation* rhetoric, in having additionally informed the Prime Minister's victory speech following the majority win by the Conservative party in the 2015 general election continues to be of significance to both conservative and socialist movements alike.

For example, in response to the corrosive effects of managerial, commercial, corporate and financial rationales on public life and civil society Blond's advocacy of sustainable communities within a devolved, associational and civic localism is inspired by an *One Nation* communitarianism which emphasises social welfare (Sage, 2012). In addition by outlining a contemporary *Holistic Mission* for the Church of England, Noyes & Blond (2013) uphold a moral imaginary of Christian social action as a reservoir of hope in addressing social welfare concerns. Concurrently under Blond's direction of the think tank *Res Publica* Llewellyn et al (2014) advocate virtuous banking which returns ethos and long term social purpose to the heart of the financial sector with the aim of re-moralising the economy and restoring public trust in British institutions. Blond (2014) therefore defends his vision of the Big Society despite recognising that the project became inhibited by a conservatism which reverted to type as an utilitarian market fundamentalism. Correlatively *One Nation* Labourites Cruddas & Rutherford (2014) recognise that the integrity of the Big Society agenda became undermined by the retrenchment of State welfare, promotion of markets over social relationships and monopoly of big corporations. Undeterred, however, Blond nevertheless insists that '*the only political question that matters is the one asked by Plato 'What is the Good?' That is how we should judge every decision and event in time. The good should be what predominates and the good changes what exists into what ought to be. It is a revolution in the Judeo-Christian tradition and is exactly the kind of revolution we need today to move more conclusively beyond the failures of neoliberalism. There has never been a successful form of neoliberal economics. The legacy of neoliberal economics is the crash, the legacy is the new serfdom that we are currently witnessing in which people become impoverished and reliant on welfare while less people pay taxes, especially the corporations, for that welfare. What we have at the moment is the rhetoric of the free market and the reality of monopolies'* (Blond, 2014).

Moreover Blond (2014) reciprocally endorses Labour's *One Nation* vision which acknowledges the Labour movement as having evolved from religious roots in the development of a political party that has historically affirmed '*the value of work and workers, a balance of power between the State and the market, the protection of individual freedom and a necessary role for democracy in the governance of the country. It upheld freedom of religion, of association and a balance between customary practice and market control. It developed leadership and built popular movements of collective self-help and improvement, the building of societies, mutuals, burial societies, holiday clubs, food cooperatives and the trade unions which gave working people dignity and more control over their lives'* (Cruddas & Rutherford, 2014 p.31). In comparison to liberal universalism, Glasman therefore recognises that '*distinctive labour values are rooted in relationships, in practices that*

strengthen an ethical life. Practices like reciprocity, which gives substantive form to freedom and equality in an active relationship of give and take. Mutuality, where we share the benefits and burdens of association. And then if trust is established, solidarity, where we actively share our fate with other people. These are the forms of the labour movement, the mutual societies, the co-operatives and the unions. It was built on relationships of trust and mutual improvement that were forged between people through common action. They were transformative to the life and conditions of the working people. The Labour tradition was rooted in a politics of the Common Good, a democratic movement that sought its rightful place in the life of a nation' (2011, p.15). Jesus being identified by Glasman as historically central to the Labour movement in having given hope to the poor in resistance to both market and State domination (Davies, 2011), (Turnbull, 2014). The illustration of Catholic support in motivating Labour's *living* rather than *fair* wage campaign also demonstrating the visceral rather than abstract nature of faith communities in addressing social welfare concerns (Glasman, 2011). Resultantly by subverting State-market convergence under neoliberal hegemony as outlined by Milbank (2015) the Blue Labour movement repudiates '*the old politics of the secular left and the reactionary right'* in advocating *'a politics of the common good that recognises the legitimacy of estranged interests and brings about a negotiated solution to conflict through civic institutions that promote virtue'* (Pabst, 2015, p.1). Consequently in characterising the good society, Glasman advocates for *'coalitions between religious and secular, unions and employers, public and private sector, even Protestant and Catholic so that we can invite our exiled traditions home and have them engage with each other in creating new institutions, relationships and practices necessary to treasure quality and equality, power and responsibility, virtue and vocation and above all the strange combination of democracy and liberty that distinguishes the English political tradition'* (2015, p.14).

Within the context of postsecular society *radical centre* politics are therefore cultivated between blue labourism and red toryism given that *'Blue Labour and its opposite Red Tory are more than just dialogue partners – they share overlapping concerns: a critique of liberalism; an understanding of localism that includes religious institutions; a promotion of the politics of the common good; the cherishing of civic society; suspicion of unbridled atavistic capitalism and an understanding of the limits of secularism'* (Geary, 2014, p.3). As such the *post* in post-liberalism is recognised as exposing the inherent limits of political and economic liberalism given that post-liberal politics typically affirm trust, co-operation and reciprocity within social relationships (Milbank, 2012), (Milbank & Pabst, 2014). Indeed political and economic liberalism are observed to be singularly insufficient to establish the common good given that, in comparison, post-

liberalism encourages local civic participation, pluralist distribution and the flourishing of intermediate associations (Blond, 2010), (Sage, 2012), (Milbank & Pabst, 2014, 2014a), (Geary, 2014), (Bengston, 2016). The common good thus being defined as *'neither purely publicly provided nor exclusively privately owned but instead distributed communally across the whole of society and embodied in intermediary institutions and structures such as co-operatives, employee owned partnerships, community banks and civil welfare. For unlike the collectivist State of the unbridled free market, such and similar structures work for the social good'* (Pabst, 2011, p. 184). Resultantly Burkean inspired post-liberal discourse has enabled a new political consensus in centre politics in having additionally attracted the support of left leaning think tanks such as *Demos* and *Civitas* (Katwala, 2013). The ex-director of *Demos* having proposed a post-liberal future which although acknowledges the achievements of liberalism also recognises the entangled, differentiated, local and particular interdependencies of negotiated common life and purpose (Goodhart, 2014). Moreover the post-liberal turn in politics correlates with postsecular perspectives which appeal to conservatives and socialists alike given that concepts such as *civil society socialism* (Milbank, 2012, 2015a) and a *vocational economy* (Glasman, 2014)[8] are emphasised. Consequently in comparison to State socialism, proponents of Christian socialism acknowledge that *'any re-embedding of the economy and the polity in social reciprocity implies socialism in a generic sense of the priority of the associative over the economic and the political that may have little to do with what we have usually taken socialism to mean'* (Milbank, 2015a).

The hope for Christian socialism, in my view, therefore survives within contemporary post-liberal and post-neoliberal narratives which enables the new visibility of postsecular social work to negotiate the *complex space* of intermediate associations that Milbank (1997) acknowledges have historically characterised Christian socialism. As such I suggest that the politics of postsecular social work, in reconfiguring Christian socialism, inhabits a non-partisan common ground between the political left and right as well as the State and market as illustrated by *Who Is My Neighbour? A Letter From the House of Bishops to the People and Parishes of the Church of England for the General Election 2015* which not only encouraged all Christians to vote but also advocated for *'an approach to politics which can trace its roots on both left and right and which could be embraced by any of the mainstream parties without being untrue to their own histories'* (para. 92). The Labour MP for Barking & Dagenham having endorsed this letter along with the *'profound contribution by the Church to the political life of our nation. Christianity and the Church have always been part of that story. Not as a dominant voice but bringing an important perspective from an ancient*

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8 As cited by Turnbull (2014).

institution that is present in every part of our country as a witness and participant. From the introduction of a legal order and the development of education the Church has been part of out body politic, so it is incorrect to say that the Church should stay out of politics; it is morally committed to participation and democracy as a means and the common good as the end. One of the great things about faith traditions is that they do not think that the free market created the world. They have a concept of the person that is neither just a commodity nor an administrative unit but a relational being capable of power and responsibility and of living with others in civic peace and prosperity. Conservatives and socialists have shared these assumptions and they could be the basis of a new consensus' (Cruddas, 2015). The resurgence of socialism in contemporary politics which accompanied Corbyn's successful grass root Labour leadership campaign also justifying, in my view, the reconfiguration of Christian socialism within the new visibility of postsecular social work whereby *'re-imagined socialism is romantic, not scientific; humane and warm; passionate yet humble, its about rediscovering a political sentiment. It pushes against party orthodoxy, careerism and transactional politics'* (Cruddas, 2013, p.1)[9]. Consequently the spirit of *One Nation* socialism described by Cruddas (2013) as transformative rather than transactional, democratic, feminist, devolved and characterised by a sense of fellowship is developed in the following chapter with particular reference to political economy.

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9   Cruddas (2013) outlines his vision of *One Nation* politics as inspired by Christian socialist Lansbury.

4. The Paradox of Postsecular Social Work: Reconciling Political Economies

'Despite presenting some secular academic thought with an unwanted and seemingly contradictory conundrum – that of a progressive, left-leaning aspect of religiously inspired political activity...postsecularity not only offers conceptual possibilities for ethical crossover and practical possibilities for broad-based political organising, it also offers what might be thought of as a rather different mode of academic attentiveness: the potential for critical openness to what are often subtle yet nonetheless important examples of different ways of understanding' (Cloke & May, 2014, p.916).

In the previous chapter I outlined how the new visibility of postsecular social work is indebted to Christian socialism particularly in relation to contemporary *radical centre* political narratives. In this chapter my aim is to further develop the relevance of postsecular political economy to social work by cultivating intra-secularist rapprochement which in this thesis reconciles postsecular political economy with an ethics of sexuate difference[10]. As such whilst the cultivation of postsecular political economy is considered as congruent with social work vocation, postsecular feminism is also developed in response to a paternalistic parochialism and *noblesse oblige* that I suggest inhibits the positive contribution of public religion to social welfare and social justice concerns. In particular postsecular feminism is recognised as inherently intra-secularist in conserving liberal secular commitments towards equality whilst also reconciling the post-liberal and post-neoliberal sympathies of postsecular political economy with feminist ethics of care. Accordingly intra-secularist rapprochement is acknowledged to subvert any clearly delineated polarities between secular and religious citizenship given that *'postsecularism presents an opportunity for a space in which religious and secular world views can co-exist and enter into dialogue; a rapprochement of ethical praxis...Understanding postsecularism as offering a revival of debate grounds our conceptualisation of postsecular ethics as based upon collaboration, praxis and an inter-subjective sense of identity'* (Herman et al, 2012, p.59). In comparison to early anti-secular apologetics associated with radical orthodoxy, contemporary postsecular rapprochement paradigms have therefore emerged as reflexive critiques of the secular era which enable a more conciliatory foundation for a changing public consciousness regarding the contribution of religion to society (Cloke, 2011). For example, postsecular theology is considered as offering *'hybrid interpretations*

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10 Feminist philosopher Irigaray (1993) proposes an ethics of sexual difference in advocating ethical relations between men and women. Irigaray (2002) subsequently reconfigures sexual to sexuate difference in privileging the cultural, linguistic and theological differences between men and women. The term sexuate difference is therefore deployed during this thesis.

of religiosity and spirituality within a framework that adopts numerous ostensibly secular values and perceptions' (Lahav, 2016, p.415) whilst social activism, involving collaboration between faith and secular groups in the co-delivery of social welfare services, is emphasised (Jones, 2013). A more tolerant intra-secularist approach, akin to Habermasian postsecular pragmatism, has therefore emerged from postsecular rapprochement perspectives which are substantially dependent upon the mutual acceptance between secular and religious organisations of the possibility of working together. Resultantly Habermasian recognition of the reciprocal cognitive demands required by both secular and religious citizens in including religious discourse into an accountable public sphere is acknowledged albeit that an asymmetrical burden on faith communities to prove rational legitimacy remains prevalent (Beaumont & Baker, 2011), (Calhoun et al, 2013).

Postsecular Political Economy

Within the context of postsecular political economy, intra-secularist collaboration therefore recognises that *'there is a potential with postsecular rapprochement to embody both an expression of resistance to prevailing injustices under neoliberal global capitalism and an energy and hope in something that brings more justice to all citizens rather than simply rewarding the privileged few'* (Cloke & Beaumont, 2012, p.32). Indeed as outlined in the previous chapter, the discernible social theology informing contemporary political debates reflects a Habermasian postsecular turn to and inclusion of religious perspectives within the public sphere following the exhaustion of secular responses in addressing social welfare concerns upon a sustainable basis. For example, Ward (2012) recognises that the moral relativism identified with new capitalism requires urgent reconsideration whilst Milbank & Pabst (2015) observe the meta-crisis in capitalism as exacerbated by excessive financialisation which is typically fuelled by unsustainable economic abstraction. Moreover Blond (2010) critiques the servile State as having become overly deferential to the market and unduly concerned with administrative, bureaucratic and regulative tasks rather than the cultivation of virtue in the education of critically conscious citizens whilst Pabst (2016) examines the potential of political liberalism to slide into despotism under corporate capture of the State. In response, a post-financial crisis urgency in scrutinising the morality of our political economy is advocated in non-partisan collaboration with the ecumenical Church as illustrated by Williams & Elliot (2010), Pabst (2011) and Sentamu (2015). For example, virtuous economics is acknowledged as an urgent matter of good housekeeping whereby altruism, belonging, reciprocity, mutuality and non-productivity are integrated within sustainable and holistic growth patterns which emphasise ethical social relationships (Williams, 2010). The former Archbishop of Canterbury having advocated for a left

inspired localism which recognises '*the nature of sustainable community, seeing it as one in which what circulates, like the flow of blood, is the mutual creation of capacity in building the ability of the other person or group to become in turn a giver of life and responsibility*' (Williams, 2011, p.5). Moreover by respecting human dignity in appealing to the principle of gratuity which exceeds the utility of market exchange, the incumbent Archbishop of Canterbury recognises that '*in an economy without gratuity ones gives only out of duty. Gratuity invites humanity to give because of love. Gift cultivates relationship; relationship in turn cultivates solidarity and solidarity creates an economy where no one is left behind*' (Welby, 2015, p.24). Accordingly Christian political economy is characterised as '*an economy of gift-exchange where people assist each other – not based on economic utility or legal obligation but in a spirit of free self-giving and receiving by members of a social body greater than its parts...Guilds, cooperatives and employee-owned businesses...exemplify the concrete reality of a mixed economy that combines gift-giving with economic exchange. In Britain there are even grass root initiatives to apply this approach to public services and welfare provision. The idea is to foster civic participation based upon self-organisation, social enterprise, reciprocity and mutuality which help produce a sense of shared ownership. This approach seeks to balance liberty and responsibility as well as rights and duties. Whereas State models risk reducing people to needy recipients of public benefits and market models risk degrading citizens to passive consumers of private services the Catholic Christian vision of civil economy is the real 'third way' that encourages active, voluntary membership of people who give as well as receive*' (Pabst, 2011, p.58). Consequently by conceptualising postsecular political economy, economics becomes effectively socialised given that the '*Christian notion of the economy subordinates it to the social because it is as far as possible about nurturing a social or civil economy. It recognises that pursuing your own interests doesn't have to be be antithetical to having social or mutual concern*' (Milbank, 2013a, p.28).

Correlatively several papal injunctions against the socio-economic inequality wrought by market fundamentalism is attributed to a resurgence of interest in Polanyian economics which affirms the socially embedded nature of economic interaction by critiquing the social alienation caused by economic abstraction (Somers & Block, 2014), (Holmes, 2014). In particular systemic economic abstraction is recognised as involving a '*process that Polanyi described as dis-embedding, that is the removal of economic activities from social and other relationships in which they had occurred and carrying them out in a context in which the only important relationships are those defined by the economic activity itself. In essence economic activity becomes abstracted from social relations*' (Carrier, 1998, p.2). From a Polanyian perspective, economic abstraction or economic virtualism is

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therefore implicated in economic inequality and social alienation given that society is subordinated to the logic of the market whereby *'our lives are made to conform to the virtual reality of economic thought. Globalisation, transnational capitalism, structural adjustment programmes and the decay of welfare are all signs of the growing power of economics, one of the most potent forces of recent decades. In the last thirty years economics has ceased to be just an academic discipline concerned with the study of the economy and has come to be the only legitimate way to think about all aspects of society and how we order our lives. Economic models are no longer measured against the world but instead the world is measured against them, found wanting and made to conform'* (Carrier & Miller, 1998). Indeed with reference to Polanyi (2001) Pabst observes that *'in anthropology it is argued that the idea of a purely self-interested homo oeconomicus in pursuit of material wealth reduces the natural desire for goodness to a series of vague, pre-rational feelings. As such it marks a radical departure from older ideas of political animals in search of mutual social recognition through the exercise of virtues embodied in practices and the exchange of gifts – instead of a mechanical application of abstract values and the trading of pure commodities'* (2012, p.454)[11]. Nevertheless by re-embedding economics within social relationships, Polanyi recognises *double* or counter movements within society which cultivate socially protective practices and redistribution systems through democratic, legislative and civil processes that alleviate the alienating effects of economic abstraction, commodification and market fundamentalism. Consequently Ebner (2015) notes the similarities between Habermasian critique and substantive Polanyian economics whereby *'Habermas shares Polanyi's concern with the corrosion of social solidarity in the course of capitalist development. Indeed Habermas identified marketisation with the spread of instrumental rationality as an economising ends-means calculus in support of practical interests that differs from the substantive meaning of communicative reasoning that promotes inter-subjective understanding...Habermas emphasises that the Polanyian scheme of the 'double movement' provides crucial insights into the the process of marketisation and its societal effects. In particular its normative content informs the need for balancing market dynamics and political regulation in order to preserve the coherence of social relations among the citizens of political communities'* (p. 375 & 379).

The post-neoliberal character of Polanyian economics, in addition to Catholic social teaching, is therefore sympathetic with socially embedded civil economies centred upon mutualist enterprises, co-operatives and credit unions which limit secular logic of market convergence with the neoliberal

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11 Pabst (2012) observes that the Polanyian economic critique outlined in *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* therefore represents an alternative political economy to that of Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.

State (Pabst, 2009, 2014). Indeed the socially embedded and relational political economy of civil society is acknowledged as diffusing both market and State domination (Pabst & Scazzieri, 2012). Moreover Thomist political theories of social justice as distributive, contributive and interpersonal are also recognised as integral to social flourishing (Blond, 2010), (Rowlands, 2014). As such the State is observed to be an instrument but not necessarily the substance of solidarity which in turn requires a pluralist model of diverse intermediate local associations that preserve community and civil well-being as illustrated by *'the idea of subsidiarity; the principle that decisions should be devolved to the lowest level consistent with effectiveness. Subsidiarity derives from Catholic social teaching and it is a good principle for challenging the accumulation of power in fewer and fewer hands'* (House of Bishops, 2015, p. 24). Postsecular political economy therefore typically reflects Catholic social teaching which advocates *'correcting the way market forces work so that they serve the public interest and the common good. It is not anti-business but pro-human'* (Longley, 2014, p.8).

Accordingly by cultivating postsecular political economy this thesis illustrates a Polanyian *double movement* which advocates socially protective practices that alleviate the alienating effects of neoliberalism. For example, as developed further in Chapter Six, faith based organisations are recognised as providing alternative social care models to those assumed by contractual or acquisitive motivations (Williams, 2004, 2012). Correlatively voluntary associations are observed by Giner & Sarasa (1996) and Giarelli & Spina (2014) to embody the pro-social ethics of civil altruism within mixed economies of social welfare provision as well as hybrid, pluralistic and localised democratic practices which I suggest are compatible with the collaborative local governance models outlined by Emerson et al (2011). Moreover social enterprises and co-operatives typically incorporate ethical capital given that community relations are emphasised in comparison to market and State abstraction (Bull et al, 2010). Indeed social enterprises are recognised as contributing to neo-Polanyian counter-movements given that reciprocity, redistribution and exchange within a substantive social economy are equally accentuated (Roy & Hackett, 2016). Despite concerns regarding fragmented public monopolies being passed over to private oligopoly, social enterprises and co-operatives are therefore acknowledged as offering co-produced public service alternatives and initiatives (Teasdale et al, 2012), (Conaty, 2014). Concurrently in addition to social enterprises, mutuals and co-operatives, Blond (2010) advocates for public sector employees, as some of the most managed workers in the UK, to implement their own public services through asset ownership and local spin-out schemes whilst blue labourism endorses a more egalitarian political economy which incorporates *'greater democracy in the economy and the polity:*

for example workers' representation on company boards, vocational training, self-governing towns, cities and regions as well as regional and sectoral banks that support small businesses. Much of this is a development of Catholic social thought including Pope Benedict's social encyclical Caritas in Veritate and the notion of a civil economy that fuses contract with the gift and places reciprocity at the heart of society' (Pabst, 2015a, p.4)[12]. Resultantly given that conservatism within the context of social work is recognised by Lee (2014) as preserving practice from a centralised, technocratic and parsimonious public sector, I suggest that the opportunity to reconstitute local civil economies in the delivery of social work services at least represents a vocational alternative to a profession which is differentiated from centralised governmental agendas by a radical integrity which is responsive to community need. For example, the piloting of social work practices under the remit of non-profit Community Interest Companies has enabled social workers to implement innovative social care services (SCIE, 2011). Consequently if social work as a profession which is founded upon social reciprocity, solidarity and mutual assistance is to thrive within the wider marketisation of public services then, pursuant to the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2013, due regard to statutory frameworks which endorse social value as mandatory within public service commissioning remains of crucial significance to professional development.

Postsecular Feminism and Political Economy

However despite the significance of *radical centre* politics within the new visibility of postsecular social work, especially in relation to political economy, the marginalisation of perceived abstract liberal principles within red toryism and blue labourism has attracted feminist criticism especially with reference to the *'overt masculinity of radical conservatism'* (Blears, 2011, p.147) and '*entirely male clique'* of blue labour (Goodman, 2011, p.559)[13]. Correlatively Habermasian discourse is acknowledged by Jagger (1983) as characteristically masculine-neutral which formulates normative assumptions based upon the exclusion, invisibility and assimilation of feminine subjectivity whilst neoliberalism is similarly recognised by Simon-Kumar (2011) as indifferent to sexuate difference. Moreover in relation to the complex public policy context of professional social work which remains predominately a female vocation, Gray et al (2003) caution against male political visionaries espousing simplistic social enterprise rhetoric spanning the neoliberal-communitarian spectrum. Concurrently Bradotti (2008, 2009) also warns against a reactionary neo-conservatism

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12 In an earlier text Pabst notes that *'in Caritas in Veritate Pope Benedict XVI deploys a pre-secular metaphysics and anthropology in order to develop a postsecular humanism and political economy'* (2011, p. 179).
13 Goodman (2011) writes as a Labour MP in comparison to female contributors to Geary & Pabst (2015) *Blue Labour: Forging a New Politics* wherein a feminist analysis is notably absent.

associated with the new visibility of religion within politics which she considers places feminism in a precarious position[14]. For example, Rowlands notes the absence of women's voices in Anglican social theology and Catholic social teaching which she describes as characteristically *fraternal traditions* whereby Anglican feminist theologians *'have expressed concern that the language of the 'common good' has been deployed as a paternalistic and patriarchal tool within the internal life of the Church, a feeling that has intensified during the recent debate on women bishops'* (2014a, p.142). Indeed despite faith based social action being predominately undertaken by women, the Anglican Church remains characterised by male leadership which has only recently conceded the admission of women into the episcopacy[15]. Accordingly feminist critique of religion typically aligns with a secular left perspective which articulates preference for *'Christian socialism but without the God attached'* (Cooper, 2015). Consequently prevalent institutional sexism within religious organisations, in my view, paradoxically inhibits the development of a more egalitarian postsecular political economy which ironically aims to re-embed hierarchical economic systems within virtuous social relationships.

In response, however, despite an understandable feminist ambivalence towards the patriarchal dominance which has historically underpinned religious privilege, proponents of postsecular feminism nevertheless insist that *'questions of women, gender and feminism are in fact of crucial significance to the postsecular'* (Bracke, 2008, p.53). As such the postsecular turn within feminism *'refers to a renewed attention to religion within feminist scholarship'* (Smiet, 2015, p.7) in response to *'secular feminism which still has a blind spot with regard to the significance of Christianity in many women's lives and the role of theology in the shaping of Western thought. Even in the work of feminist theologians, it is difficult to find any acknowledgement of just how effective the secular sisterhood has been in silencing women's theological voices'* (Beattie, 1999, p.114). Postsecular feminism therefore examines *'the relationship between religion and agency in order to demonstrate how the categorisation of religion as a concept shapes the practice of feminist engagement with religion and how situating religious subjectivity in its own grammar makes the secular assumptions of feminist critical social theory manifest'* (Vasilaki, 2015, p.2). Accordingly postsecular feminism subverts any presumption that feminism is an exclusively secular phenomena or that sex-ularism, as the co-option of feminism and emancipatory politics under the pretext of enlightened secularism, represents progressive feminist politics (Midden, 2014), (Bradotti, 2014), (Bradotti et al, 2014). Rather postsecular feminism reclaims religious subjectivity which, in my view, is illustrated by the

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14 In the UK over 75% of the near 90,000 qualified social workers registered with the HCPC are women.
15 The contribution of women to faith based organisations, including female volunteerism, is observed by Furbey et al (2006), O'Neill (2009), Greed (2011) and Green et al (2012).

neo-Thomist observation that *'women and men are equal with respect to what is essential to the nature of the species of humanity; namely the possession of an intellectual nature enabling the individual to know God'* (Porter, 1990, p.38). Resultantly postsecular feminism incorporates a politics of recognition, representation and redistribution in enhancing social equality between the sexes and is additionally intra-secularist by developing rapprochement between secular and religious feminism. Consequently by acknowledging postsecular feminism as reconciling feminist interests, I suggest that the new visibility of postsecular social work has the capacity to retain liberal secular commitments towards equality whilst also reconciling the post-liberal and post-neoliberal sympathies of postsecular political economy with feminist ethics of care.

For example, Polanyian critique of neoliberalism as illustrated by feminist philosopher Fraser (2013, 2014) affirms social reproduction and affective labour as counter-cultural to the abstracted economics of market fundamentalism which is implicated in the commodification of care. In addition feminist economist Nelson (1998, 2006) re-embedds mechanistic metaphors of the economy into socially humane contexts by acknowledging that *'economics should be about how we arrange provision for our sustenance. This core corresponds better to the common sense use of the term economics and to its etymological roots in Greek words meaning 'household management' than does the present central concept of the idealised market. This core grounds the discipline both socially and materially. Economic provisioning and the sustenance of life becomes the centre of study whether it be through market, household or government action and whether it be symmetric exchange, coercion or gift. This definition dethrones choice, scarcity and rationality as central concepts and relegates them to the status of potentially useful tools. It brings previously taboo or fringe subjects like power and poverty into the core'* (Nelson, 1998, p.90). Feminist economics therefore typically identifies market fundamentalism, with its emphasis upon economic abstraction, as a masculine-neutral construct in comparison to feminist political economy which recognises that *'humans are born of women, nurtured and cared for as children, socialised into family and community groups and perpetually dependent upon nourishment and shelter. The neglect of these aspects of human life is often justified in philosophical and other scholarly work by the argument that they are unimportant or intellectually uninteresting or merely natural. It is not just coincidence that they are also areas of life thought of as women's work. If we grant that connection to one another and to nature is indispensable for human existence then homo economicus appears in a new light...the Cartesian view, the abstract, general, separated, detached, emotionless, masculine approach taken to represent scientific thinking is radically removed from and clearly seen as superior to the concrete, particular, connected, embodied, passionate and feminine reality of*

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material life' (ibid, p.81). Resultantly feminist economics, in my view, correlates with a postsecular emphasis upon *oikonomia* or *household economy* as *praxis* which can only be appreciated in relation to social context. Consequently by re-embedding abstracted economic systems within virtuous socio-economic relationships, I suggest that feminist analysis paradoxically concurs with the post-liberal and post-neoliberal sympathies of both red toryism and blue labourism which together seek to cultivate a more relationship-based egalitarian political economy.

Furthermore I suggest that feminist social work also correlates with the post-liberal and post-neoliberal sympathies of postsecular political economy. For example, feminist social work recognises how social inequality between the sexes contributes towards women's economic subordination which is especially exacerbated when their socially conditioned roles as unpaid and privatised carers remain invisible and undervalued (Dominelli, 2002). As such caring work is acknowledged to be feminised, devalued and marginalised from the public sphere in deference to reified masculine-neutral universal ideals of *homo economicus* which privileges liberal citizenship as autonomous, free and independent (Tronto, 1994). Moreover within the masculine-neutral liberal public sphere abstract rights, impartiality and rationality become prioritised in comparison to feminist emphasis upon relationality, mutuality and altruism (Gilligan, 1982). In response feminist ethicists propose the embodied dynamics of care as a more preferable foundation for ethics than the universal and abstract principles of political liberalism (Jantzen, 2001). Indeed despite feminist resistance to the idealisation of self-sacrifice in relation to caring, feminist ethics of care represents an alternative social work paradigm to liberal principles of autonomy, self-interest and associated utilitarian care management models. Moreover altruism as an enduring tendency to enhance the welfare of others through kindness and compassion is observed by Jefferies et al (2006) to be a particularly feminised practice whilst high levels of altruistic values are demonstrated by social work students entering the profession which remains predominately a female vocation (Ngai & Cheung, 2009). The notion of an invisible heart as intrinsically motivated by love, compassion and altruism in caring for others is therefore compared to the invisible hand of market forces by feminist economist Folbre (2002). Nevertheless feminist ethics of altruism remain elusive within social theory mainly, in my view, due to a liberal secular ambivalence towards the lingering theological legacy of substantive altruistic principles. Christianity being the ultimate source of altruism in abiding by Christ's second commandment to *love your neighbour as yourself* (Grant, 2001), (Gordon, 2002). However I suggest that the reconfiguration of altruism by social ethicist Levinas as outlined by Ferreira (2001) and Rigby & O'Grady (1989) enables a postsecular feminist recognition of altruism as incorporating mutually reflexive respect which limits self-sacrifice whilst enhancing

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hospitality between equals. Consequently I suggest that postsecular feminism, which is indicative of post-liberal and post-neoliberal discourse, is integral to postsecular political economy as well as the new visibility of postsecular social work.

In summary by reconciling post-liberal, post-neoliberal and feminist interests in cultivating a more egalitarian and socially protective postsecular political economy the social value and inherent dignity of caring work is affirmed. For example, I suggest that reconciliation between feminist and religious interests is illustrated in practice by *Citizens UK* which, as a civil organisation, is founded upon collaboration between faith based organisations, trade unions and community organisations. In particular *Citizens UK* facilitates a social care campaign which advocates that *'government should enable a social care system that delivers quality to the recipient and dignity to the care worker. This means consistency, training, community engagement, a living wage and the integration of health and social care'*. Operating between the market and the State *Citizens UK* as an intermediate association therefore represents civil intervention into social care provision which includes concern that those with care needs, as well as their carers, are protected from exploitation by a market orientated care industry. As such *Citizens UK* campaigns for the end of reduced fifteen minute care visits by endorsing person-centred care services which respect the qualitative rather than functional aspects of care provision. Resultantly the *Citizens UK* social care campaign, in my view, illustrates Polyanian initiative in upholding socially protective practices which challenge the alienating effects of commodified care services[16]. Moreover this civil campaign typifies the paradox of left inspired, yet socially conservative, social activism which aims to preserve social care from the detriments of free market economic liberalism. To this effect the *Citizens UK* campaign demonstrates the potential of postsecular rapprochement to reconcile feminist, religious and secular interests and is also significant in having originated within civil society rather than the social care sector or social work profession. Consequently by seeking to reconcile political economies within the context of postsecular society, Polyanian *double movements* which demonstrate a sympathy with Christian socialism are advocated as particularly characteristic of the new visibility of postsecular social work, the practice of which is developed further in the following chapter.

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16 As a former employee of *Citizens UK* Glasman critiques the *'economic and political liberalism that has subordinated diversity to homogeneity, institutional mediation to individualised care packages, vocational training to transferable skills'* (2015, p.17). In an early text Glasman (1996) references Polanyi (2001) in critiquing the market utopianism inspired by Hayek (2001).

5. The Practice of Postsecular Social Work: Restoring Vocational Ethics

'Postsecular ethics draw on the traditions of virtue and relational or better dialogical ethics, centred on interaction which allows for a collaboration of strengths and encourages a positive engagement with Otherness. There are also connections with theo-ethics as well as the values and virtues of faith, grace, love and hope which bring an excess beyond material logic and provides a motivating factor for faith based praxis in postsecular spaces' (Herman et al, 2012, p.69).

In the previous chapter the new visibility of postsecular social work was conceptualised as reconciling the post-liberal and post-neoliberal sympathies of postsecular political economy with feminist ethics of care. In this chapter vocational ethics are further restored as a counter movement to the dominance of secular virtue ethics and encroaching neoliberal agendas within the profession. Virtue ethics in relation to social work are therefore critiqued from a postsecular perspective whilst professional association, rather than regulation, is identified as accentuating the vocational identity of social work[17]. In particular vocation as calling is cultivated through an emphasis upon reflexivity whereby postsecular social work is conceptualised as sharing with social theology a sympathy with narrative practice. As such the new visibility of postsecular social work affirms ethical integrity within the profession including social work education which is acknowledged to be *'an extraordinarily complex subject because it draws upon a wide range of other academic disciplines and synthesises from those disciplines its own chosen set of beliefs, precepts, ideologies, doctrines and authority. As a profession, social work requires its practitioners to understand intricate and often seemingly impenetrable behaviours and situations whilst not having the same level of objective scientific support for their analysis and conclusions to assist them and upon which to rely'* (Croisdale-Appleby, 2014 p.15). Accordingly by restoring vocational ethics, the new visibility of postsecular social work subverts neoliberal and utilitarian paradigms which are indicative of wider anti-intellectualism relating to the profession. For example, philosophical and even political approaches to social work education, which include the theories of Aristotle, are criticised by government advisor Narey (2014) in favour of models that focus upon individual, parental and familial pathologies. However, in response, postsecular social work concurs that *'only with analytic and critical skills, underpinned by a deep commitment to social justice can social workers*

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17 Vocation is defined by Glasman as including *'within itself a calling, or something that is appropriate for the person that comes from within, to work that is authentically your own and not defined exclusively by its external rewards or demands but characterised too by internal goods that are rooted in a tradition of practice. A vocation requires discipline and judgement, 'good doing' and constrains vice through the concept of good practice, institutionally enforced. Honour, skill, loyalty and dedication are necessary for the preservation and renewal of value, which is judged by other practitioners and not exclusively by the price system'* (2015a, p.178).

effectively resist the dominant discourse of individual and social pathology which has come to characterise neoliberal welfare across Europe and beyond' (Singh & Cowden, 2009, p.240). Resultantly postsecular social work is conceptualised as sympathising with social activist pedagogy as advocated by social work educators Preston & Aslett (2013) and Morley (2016) in resistance to the depoliticised and market orientated models of neoliberalism. Consequently by cultivating rapprochement between secular and religious perspectives which critique neoliberalism, the new visibility of postsecular social work is further conceptualised as intra-secularist given that *'crude secularism whether couched in moral, sociological or methodological terms is undoubtedly problematic and in need of self critical deconstruction. But postsecularism here is not a matter of turning back the clock or simply opening ourselves up anew to the all embracing joys of the religious life and spiritually driven enquiry. Rather it is a matter of applying to secularism the sort of probing and sceptical analysis previously meted out to religious apologetics whenever the latter was thought excessively to govern empirical or philosophical understanding. In that sense postsecular questioning can be viewed as reflexively intra-secularist rather than anti-secularist. And in that light one would be predisposed to note the commonalities as much as the disjunctures between secularist and religious outlooks with respect to certain values and procedures'* (McLennan, 2011, p16).

Critiquing Virtue Ethics from a Postsecular Social Work Perspective

Despite the recognition that *'to think about the virtues is to take measure of the distance separating us from them, to think about their excellence is to think about our own inadequacies and wretchedness'* an ethics boom has emerged within social work which continues to shape the profession although concerns relating to power, legitimacy and credibility have eclipsed an understanding of virtue in the classical sense (Banks 2006, 2008)[18]. For example, although Pullen-Sansfacon (2010) deploys virtue ethics as derived from Plato and applied through Socratic dialogics, the subsequent development of practical rather than religious or even philosophical reasoning amongst social work students illustrates, in my view, a modern secular approach to virtue ethics. This secular approach to social work ethics is also notable in the work of Banks (2006, 2008) who revives neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics and Fook (2002) who develops a postmodern contextual analysis of power which resits ethical relativism. The application of secular approaches to virtue ethics has therefore become prominent in contributing towards the verification of the profession which has only recently become integrated with the health professions under the regulatory

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18 This quote from Comte-Sponville (2002) is cited by social work academic Banks (2008, p.1).

authority of the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC). Indeed, in my view, the privileging of virtue along with denotological and utilitarian ethics now informs the standards of proficiency and performance expected of professionals registered with the HCPC. For example, the HCPC's *Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics* (2016) includes the requirement that registrants must promote and protect the interests of service users and carers, communicate appropriately and effectively, work within the limits of their knowledge and skills, delegate appropriately, manage risk, report concerns about safety, be open when things go wrong, be honest and trustworthy and keep records of their work. An emphasis upon *praxis* or practical wisdom in acquiring and maintaining virtue is therefore upheld by the HCPC whilst the cardinal virtues of prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice as outlined by Banks (2006, 2008) are applicable to the role of the virtuous social worker. Consequently the attainment of arête, as virtuous excellence, is achieved through the fulfilment of a secular code of conduct which regulates the profession.

Nevertheless as outlined by Clifford (2014) the increasing prevalence of virtue ethics within social welfare professions also reflects a rise in regulatory control whereby an emphasis upon moral character and individual professional judgement obscures the social complexities of practice. As such I suggest that the dominant meta-narrative of virtue ethics has increasingly become entangled within denotological, utilitarian and authoritarian paradigms which necessitates adherence to the abstract rules of regulation. Indeed unlike the former General Social Care Council (GSCC) professional regulation under the HCPC no longer requires a reciprocal obligation for employers to support registered professionals with the provision of supervision and training. Moreover whilst the consequences of under performing as a virtuous social worker are omitted from the HCPC's *Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics* a reading of the HCPC website reveals a case history chronology which names and shames social care practitioners who have failed to adhere to the standards of regulation and have been punished by their removal from professional registration (Mugisha, 2013). The shadow of modern virtue ethics, in my view, is therefore an authoritarian and instrumental consequentialism which is intolerant of transgressive professionals which also manifests in the systemic scape-goating of social workers. For although the HCPC commands that registrants must act in the best interests of others in treating service-users with dignity and respect whilst protecting their confidentiality it would appear that the same courteous virtues are not extended by the HCPC to unvirtuous practitioners. Whilst virtue, denotological and utilitarian ethics differ in philosophical ontologies but in many ways have become conflated within HCPC discourse, ethical integrity has therefore become further compromised by the encroachment of a prescriptive, depersonalised and secular universalism which disciplines professionals through externalised

conduct criteria. Resultantly despite an ethics boom within social work, it is apparent that having become integrated with the health professions, social workers will increasingly become obliged to prove legitimacy within growingly prescriptive, medicalised and authoritarian parameters.

In response, the new visibility of postsecular social work neither defends transgressive, deviant or dangerous professionals from a neo-Foucauldian perspective nor advocates a sceptical anti-humanist critique of virtue ethics. Rather a supplementary postsecular paradigm is conceptualised whereby the classic significance of virtue is restored through an appreciation of *eudaimomia* or well-being. For example, I suggest that the classic virtue ethics of Aristotle are imbued with notions of the Soul no matter how modern neo-Aristotelian virtue ethicists either consciously or unconsciously erase this awkward issue from the secularised academic record. To deploy an edited interpretation of Aristotelian virtue ethics to legitimate and regulate a profession without an appreciation of the ancient theology which has historically informed ethical discourse therefore presents as problematic. Rather, classically, Aristotle acknowledges an essential *a priori* human Soul as inseparable from the body which is characterised as rational, vital and full of potential. Virtue is therefore achieved by *poieses*, the production of the Soul, through the cultivation of *praxis* and *theoria* which integrates political action and philosophical contemplation (Aristotle, 2009). From a postsecular social work perspective, the pursuit of the prescriptive characteristics of the virtue ethicist in the absence of the dynamics of Soul growth is therefore a fruitless exercise. Instead a purposeful and theological understanding of virtue ethics as an embodied dynamic between *poieses*, *praxis* and *theoria* is crucial to understanding the new visibility of postsecular social work as engaging with the holistic and relational processes of virtue within philosophical rather than prescriptive paradigms. Consequently the new visibility of postsecular social work acknowledges a politics of the Soul as outlined by Milbank (2012a) whereby the classic significance of virtue to social work ethics is restored[19.]

Accordingly postsecular ethics require a religious literacy which is nevertheless inhibited by an authoritarian and secular approach to virtue ethics. For example, the qualitative, discrete and redeeming ethics of compassion, mercy, reconciliation and forgiveness are difficult to prove within a sceptical, scornful and empirical world. Indeed the hermeneutics of suspicion which are applied to religious subjectivity as identified by Christian philosopher Ricoeur (1970) reflect a programmatic secularism that I suggest discriminates against religious citizenship. The theo-ethics of faith, hope

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19 Without a concept of the Soul Milbank (2012a) critiques secular liberalism as not only apolitical but also asocial as well as non-humanist and illustrative of shallow sophistry.

and charity nonetheless providing a powerful rationale in caring for socially vulnerable people (Cloke, 2010). For example, Christian respect for human dignity is articulated as *'the reverence I owe to every person is connected to the reverence I owe to God's creative world, which brings them into being and keeps them in being...It means there are no superfluous people, no 'spare' people in the human world. All are needed for the good of all'* (Williams, 2007)[20]. Postsecular ethics therefore affirms common humanity through a reciprocal rather than confrontational relationship with difference, mutuality and interdependence whilst theo-ethics acknowledge *'the significant theological shift in Western Christianity towards a more socially engaged faith that eschews previously conversion-orientated agendas in favour of embodied enactment of the essence of belief, such as agape and caritas, amongst marginalised groups in contemporary society...Christian theo-ethical notions of agape and caritas refer to God's unconditional love for the world and a motivation to express the love of God in practical action for others respectively'* (Williams, 2014, p.193). The Thomist reconciliation of classic virtue ethics with Christianity also affirming *agape* and *caritas* as perennial expressions of Grace which, in my view, is illustrated by the observation that *'Christian pedagogy and Christian following both begin and end with the commandment to love: true service is loving. And love is always political, that is always implicated in a field of differential power relations'* (Ward, 2009, p.275).

From a postsecular perspective, Christian love as *agape* is therefore paradigmatic of the universal benevolence enshrined within modern secularised ethics (Bengtson, 2016). Indeed Habermasian recognition of the complimentary learning processes involved with translating religious ethics into secularised language requires sustained deliberation within the public sphere despite secularised humanism often revealing an intellectual debt to Christianity (Calhoun et al, 2013). For example, Habermas acknowledges that *'universalistic egalitarianism, from which sprang the ideals of freedom and a collective life in solidarity, the autonomous conduct of life and emancipation, the individual morality of conscience, human rights and democracy is the direct legacy of the Judaic ethic of justice and the Christian ethic of love'* (2002, p.149). Accordingly Christianity is made visible through an account of the historic emergence of social work during the Victorian and post-war eras when social welfare provision was immersed within Christian discourses of charity and philanthropy (Davies et al, 2008). Moreover the welfare State is acknowledged to embody the ethics of Christianity in having pioneered many social welfare initiatives and reforms (Cloke et al 2012),

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20 Russell (2015, p.11) cites this quote from the former Archbishop of Canterbury in addition to his observation that *'every person is related to God before they are related to anything or anyone else; that God has defined who they are and who they can be by his own eternal purpose...This means that whenever I face another human being, I face a mystery...I stand on holy ground when I encounter another person'* (Williams, 2007).

(Bowpitt, 1998), (Vanderwoerd, 2011). In addition the practical acts of compassion involved with case work are recognised as synonymous with the Christian legacy of appreciating the intrinsic worth of each person whereby humanity is recognised as loved through unbounded Grace (Biestek, 1967), (Bowpitt, 2000). Charity as compassion and unconditional response to immediate need is also understood to bear witness to the loving character of God (Bowpitt, 2000). With reference to Bowpitt (1998) I therefore suggest that the new visibility of postsecular social work acknowledges how Christian ethics within social work have survived albeit in secularised ethical service to others. For example, the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) as the professional association for social workers in the UK, in my view, reflects more accurately the vocational purpose upon which the profession is based given that, in comparison to the HCPC, the *BASW Code of Ethics* (2012) endorses the ability of social workers to act ethically in respecting human rights and promoting social justice. Furthermore in solidarity with those who are socially vulnerable, professional social work aims to alleviate poverty and promote social inclusion which entails community organisation and political engagement that impacts upon social policy and service development. Professional social work also respects human dignity by challenging discrimination, maintaining professional integrity and contributing to the continuous improvement of the profession, including the evaluation of research (BASW, 2012). Within the context of postsecular society, I therefore suggest that the *BASW Code of Ethics* sympathises with the ethics of Christianity which have historically motivated social welfare initiatives. Resultantly in comparison to the regulatory role of the HCPC, I suggest that ethical service is affirmed by professional association, rather than regulation, which is particularly relevant to restoring vocational ethics within social work. Consequently professional association re-politicises and reinvigorates the vocational identity of social work, thereby subverting the authoritarian influence of both State regulation and market domination.

Postsecular Reflexivity and Narrative Ethics

Accordingly in seeking to promote professional association, I suggest that postsecular reflexivity and narrative practice are especially pivotal to restoring vocational ethics within social work. Indeed professional reflexivity is primarily concerned with qualitative practices which cultivate creativity and imagination in the development of counter-cultural paradigms whereby practitioners are considered as active and critical thinkers who participate in socially negotiated narratives through inductive analysis and heuristic methods (Sheppard, 1998), (Sheppard et al, 2000). Commitment to reflexivity also recognises professional expertise as process orientated in that negotiating meaning through inter-subjectivity enhances therapeutic and relationship based approaches to practice

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(Butler et al, 2007), (Trevelyan et al, 2014). In addition self-reflexivity acts as an inhibitor against unethical behaviour through incorporating ethical imperatives which check the impulse towards self-creation against the demands for accountability within public service (Lowery, 2005). Reflexivity as a self-defining process therefore depends upon critical engagement with socio-political relationships in the exploration of ontological and identity trajectories (D'Cruz et al, 2007). Moreover the cultivation of reflexivity indicates a postmodern turn towards contextual ethics in which the cultural poetics of autobiography and biography share with ethnography a focus upon the local, personal and specific (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). As such the epistemic shift towards reflexivity and narrative practice re-orientates social work towards ethnographic and person-centred discursive contexts (Hall & White, 2005), (Briskman, 2013). Indeed narrative epistemology correlates with the emergence of interpretative social theory which recognises the coincidence of narratology, reflexivity and the ethics boom as affirming micro-political practice as a virtuous project (Fraser, 2004), (Taylor, 2006), (Wilks, 2005), (Crawford et al, 2002), (Hoshmand, 2005). Resultantly given that White (1997) acknowledges reflexivity as pivotal to subverting dominant ideologies which influence practice, I suggest that postsecular reflexivity is crucial to conceptualising the new visibility of postsecular social work as incorporating counter-narratives to secular, liberal and neoliberal hegemonies within the profession. Consequently with an additional commitment to localised, discrete and heuristic practice, postsecular reflexivity within social work correlates with post-liberal and post-neoliberal perspectives which emphasise human association, trust and fellowship within social relationships.

The virtues of reflexivity and narrative practice are therefore particularly significant to postsecular social work which, in my view, is illustrated by Christian philosopher Ricoeur (1990) who explores narration as an art that attends to the intrinsic, spontaneous and autochthonous rhythms of sociality. In particular Ricoeur privileges narrative as the origin of innate and reflexive knowledge as well as inalienable and virtuous personhood by developing a neo-Aristotelian notion of emplotment as poetic reconfiguration whereby reflexive narrative both mimics heterogeneous action and sustains meaning between people. Narrative as an opening into reflexive and imaginative practice therefore translates action into living testimony whilst orientating phenomenology towards inter-subjectivity. In addition narrative as post-semiotic story-telling integrates linguistic and concordant processes which are characterised by temporality. In reconfiguring personhood as a quest for narrative, Ricoeur therefore observes reflexivity as a linguistic reflective moment of both intellectual clarity and moral responsibility (Venema, 2000). Moreover whilst narrative entails chronological sequencing, Ricoeur acknowledges the temporal organisation of emplotment as prone to subversion

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by the mythic and moral conveyance of the story (Watson, 2008). As such humanity is observed to abide by the morality of cultural stories whilst narrative reflexivity is deployed as a virtuous methodology (MacIntyre, 2007). In addition the significance of narrative and reflexivity in integrating life stories within personal, inter-personal and social contexts is aligned with feminist epistemology whereby the poetics of memory resonate with the allegory of Mnemosyne, mother of the muses (Caverero, 2000). Narrative and reminiscence as discontinuous, relational and dependent upon others, rather than describing disembodied universals therefore illustrates meaning without definition in recognising the qualitative uniqueness of each person. Indeed classically the primacy of narrative, oratory and anamnesis subordinates the technocratic interests of writing by affirming authentic subjectivity (Derrida, 1989). Consequently from a postsecular perspective, narrative practice is integral to human association given that *'we may belong to our particular narratives and world views but our inhabitation of these stories is what qualifies us to belong to a broader history as well. As homo narrans we find our place in the world through the specificity of language and context that constitute the ways in which we participate in what Ricoeur terms; the game of telling'* (Graham, 2013 p.207).

With regard to vocational ethics, the primacy of narration in constructing temporal ordering therefore requires considerable reflexivity by social workers as contextual narrative unfolds. Indeed encouraging the reconfiguration of narrative in the promotion of alternative plots to dominant scripts is key to narrative social work (Carson & Madoc-Jones, 2011). The narrative turn in social work practice, in addition to the ethical dimensions of emplotment, therefore diffuses autobiographic and biographic boundaries in the attempt that narratives retain integrity (Riessman & Quinney, 2005), (King, 2008). As such the preservation of narrative practice is of considerable interest to social workers concerned with the encroachment of reductive neoliberal and database technologies into professional contexts. For example, Parton (2006) identifies how in recent years social work has witnessed a profound change in the form of knowledge from the social to the informational whereby the privileging of information technology in the organisation of data has displaced relational, eclectic and humanist practices in deferral to computer ontology. In particular the subsequent flattening of consciousness is acknowledged to inhibit the ways in which human identity is represented given that personal testimony has increasingly become restricted within technical parameters. Correlatively concerns regarding research governance having become overly regulated within quantitative research paradigms is identified as having eroded contextual, localised and qualitative practices (Domenelli & Holloway, 2008). Moreover the encroachment of neoliberal paradigms into social work through the privileging of evidence-based rather than qualitative social

work is recognised as detrimentally impacting upon practice (Harlow et al, 2013). In response, positivist and empirical social work perspectives which entrap practitioners within mechanistic forms of technical rationality are resisted in proposing a return to heuristic, tacit and discrete practices which are congruent with narrative traditions (Webb, 2001). For example, encouraging professional development and empathy in social workers through an engagement with narrative practice is acknowledged as pivotal to broadening reflexive, critical and creative thinking within the profession (Turner, 2013), (Hickson, 2016). Qualitative and evaluative practices are therefore recognised as incorporating conceptual rather than instrumental processes which in turn necessitate reflexive and discursive practices in the interests of social authenticity (Sanderson, 2003). Resultantly the fallacy of social science in regarding empiricism as paradigmatic is subverted by reflexive and narrative social work practices which illustrate alternative virtuous methodologies to neoliberal technologies. Consequently the restoration of narrative practice within postsecular social work requires intellectual commitment to attending to the inalienable, relational and embodied aspects of human association and biography.

With regard to postsecular society, the virtuous cultivation of reflexivity and narrative practice also correlates with narrative theology which as Ward (2006) observes sustains faith through socially embodied discourses whereby biblical hermeneutics engages with the emotions, desires, intuitions and hopes of religious communities in the shaping of intelligible stories. Reflexivity and narrative practice are therefore particularly relevant to post-liberal theology which emphasises scripture, semiotics, biblical hermeneutics and cultural linguistics (Pecknold, 2005), (Hampton, 2009). In particular and in comparison to universal abstraction, post-liberal theology recognises the narrative quality of biblical texts, such as those typified by parables and psalms, as integral to contextual and pastoral care whilst post-liberal theologians typically consider the Church as a gospel shaped narrative space wherein Christians learn to embody narrative texts of Grace within discrete and heuristic contexts (Surin, 1989), (Loughlin, 1996). Contrary to liberal abstraction, the parabolic nature of ministry as pastoral hermeneutics therefore weaves together both joyful and painful experiences in the reflexive deployment of narrative and story-telling practices (Graham et al, 2005). Resultantly narrative ethics are recognised as integral to religion given that *'narrative renders theological discourse public and plausible in the face of Enlightenment challenges to the cognitive plausibility of Christian doctrine and its retreat into privatised subjective belief. It no longer claims universal, objective status but as one way among many of rendering reality. Narrative enables theology to connect with literary and other imaginative genres and relates to lived experience in ways that enable it to respond to pastoral and existential issues. Narrative also*

reminds us of the narrative nature of biblical literature and provides alternatives to propositional, doctrinal approaches to theology. Narrative is not merely a dramatisation of Christian doctrine but the very essence of its structure' (Graham, 2013, p207). Accordingly Christianity is acknowledged to embody a historic narrative which re-enacts an economy of salvation whereby *'the Church as a political agent has to be a community capable of telling its own story and its own stories, visible as a social body and thus making claims on human loyalty'* (Williams, 2004). Resultantly the recovery of the story of the Church as a narrative grounded within an ontology of peace represents a site of resistance to programmatic secularism and authoritarian agendas in affirming human association and fellowship (Markham, 2011).

In summary by restoring vocational, reflexive and narrative ethics within practice, the new visibility of postsecular social work invites the profession to reappraise public religion given that *'the turn to the postsecular is a critical reflection within secularism itself; secularism becoming conscious of that which it has abjected'* (Ward, 2012a p. 467). As such I suggest that the new visibility of postsecular social work represents a discursive opportunity for the profession to retrieve what secularism has marginalised which is an appreciation of religious citizenship as committed to social welfare. Moreover given that reflexivity is acknowledged by Ronald (2008) as crucial to understanding the significance of religion to social work, I suggest that postsecular reflexivity invites analysis of the ethical, social and political narratives which inform social work engagements with public religion. Postsecular reflexivity, in my view, therefore orientates social work towards religious perspectives regarding social welfare concerns whilst also recognising an affinity between religious citizenship and social work vocation. Accordingly methodological agnosticism which defines secular discourse as apparently value free as critiqued by DeVries (2013) is resisted by postsecular social work in preference for postsecular practices which are congruent with religious perspectives. For example, in addition to reflexivity and narrative practice, I suggest that appreciative inquiry and critical social work methodologies are integral to the new visibility of postsecular social work particularly as ideological concerns are recognised as opportunities for reflexive, discursive and collaborative problem-solving. Indeed critical social work is *'primarily concerned with practising in ways which further a society where domination, exploitation and oppression are resisted'* (Fook, 2002 p.17) in the development of *'perspective that sees itself as part of a progressive political project...which begins with a rejection of contemporary social arrangements and seeks to establish another more equitable and just state of affairs'* (Gray et al, 2012 p.259)[21]. Appreciative inquiry therefore develops social constructivist approaches to

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21 These aspects of critical social work theory are also developed by Morris (2006).

epistemology which promote critical reflection and counter reductionism by focusing upon personal as well as systemic strengths in highlighting initiative and imagination within social work (Bellinger & Elliot, 2011). In addition the context-sensitive character of appreciative inquiry in promoting personal narrative and mutual generation of understanding resonates with solution focused models within social work practice (Fouche & Light, 2011). Resultantly appreciative inquiry correlates with Beatitude theology and Platonic philosophy whereby Socratic methods encourage collaborative learning processes that catalyse transformations towards the Good (Sandu, 2011). As such appreciative inquiry and critical social work methodologies are conducive to cultivating religiously literate and qualitative practices which establish trust within social work practice[22]. Consequently postsecular reflexivity enables the restoration of vocational ethics within social work by affirming virtuous human association which in turn resists the encroachment of neoliberal, prescriptive and authoritarian regulative agendas into practice contexts.

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[22] Religiously literate practices are considered as integral to social work by a range of authors including Cnaan & Broddie (2006), Campbell & Glunt (2006), Harden (2006), Hula et al (2007), O'Connor & Netting (2008), Dinham & Shaw (2011), Lietz et al (2006), Bunn & Wood (2012) and Harr & Yancey (2014).

6. The Privileging of Postsecular Social Work: Reaffirming Collaborative Solidarity

'The nature of the postsecular condition suggests that while practical care and service constitutes the essential praxis of public theology, faith based contributions must not be marginalised by their own hesitancy to speak of faith in public. Public theology is not only concerned to do theology about public issues but is called to do its theology in public with a sense of transparency to those of other faiths and none. While there may be times when the Church speaks and people do not listen that is never a reason for not speaking at all' (Graham, 2013 p.233).

In the previous chapter the practice of postsecular social work was conceptualised as restoring vocational ethics to the profession. In this chapter congruency between religious citizenship and social work vocation is further illustrated by a case study relating to *Transformation Cornwall* which is a faith based organisation supported by the Church Urban Fund with the aim of *tackling poverty together in Cornwall.* In particular faith based social action is considered as demonstrating initiative in addressing social welfare concerns which I suggest renders postsecular society as both normative and instructive to the social work profession. As such collaborative solidarity between social workers and faith based organisations is advocated given the observation that *'collaborative spaces of rapprochement are intimately tied to an intuitive response to neoliberal excess which prompt religious and non-religious citizens to put aside possible moral or ideological differences in order to engage in common or political praxis. Spaces of care, in particular for homeless people, asylum seekers, victims of trafficking, victims of indebtedness and other socially excluded groups have been shown to be key discursive and praxis arenas for postsecular rapprochement...it is here that religious, secular and humanitarian motivations appear to coalesce around mutual ethical concerns and cross-over narratives'* (Williams, 2014, p.192). Consequently in response to social vulnerability, the new visibility of postsecular social work is conceptualised as congruent with faith based social action in reflecting the ethics of both Christian socialism and left inspired localism.

Faith Based Social Action

Over the past three decades faith communities have increasingly become visible in the provision of social welfare services and their growing influence continues to be widely recognised despite the activities of some, such as the Salvation Army, having a long history of social and charitable service dating back to the Victorian era (Cloke et al, 2012). The new visibility of faith based social action is however largely attributable to the Big Society legacy which emphasises a greater role for faith

communities in the provision of social welfare services. For example, *Holistic Mission: Social Action and the Church of England* (Noyes & Blond, 2013) acknowledges that the *'government is increasingly recognising the gateway of Church social action as an unique access into communities and understands that in many of the cases that we describe the Church is already the de facto provider of local public services most notably health, social and investment services'* (Noyes & Blond, 2013). By deploying social enterprise terminology *Holistic Mission* therefore outlines an ethical alternative to private monopoly growth within social welfare provision in advocating a greater role for the Church in the future provision of social welfare services. In particular with reference to the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2013 which requires public sector commissioning strategies to demonstrate the positive economic, social and environmental outcomes of service procurement *Holistic Mission* highlights the efficacy of the Church as a unique hyper-local brokering, enabling and mediating institution with considerable cultural, social and material resources in addition to a history of providing universally accessible services. Consequently *Holistic Mission* acknowledges the Church as having a unique insight into social welfare provision which is recognised by statutory agencies and civil organisations as facilitating collaborative approaches to community need whereby *'the Church has a unique role in society because of the diversity of its members, the holism of its ethos, the extent of its reach and the hyper-localism of its action...it accesses people and places that other organisations cannot. As well as acting as a social bridge across communities, churches also act as gateways into communities'* (Noyes & Blond, 2013, p.9).

Accordingly by enhancing responsible social action, faith based organisations are considered as providing alternative and supplementary social welfare services to the bureaucratic cultures of statutory social care provision and consumerist models purported by both the private and public sectors. As such the Church is endorsed as a committed and ethical competitor to the profiteering and cherry picking cultures of privatised monopolies whilst faith based organisations are recognised as highly motivated in providing holistic services within local strategic partnerships (Spencer, 2006, 2008). Resultantly *Holistic Mission* embraces the opportunities provided by public sector commissioning strategies in enabling diversification within social welfare markets as a site for faith based organisations to become more involved with public service delivery given that *'enabling the Church to re-enter the public square and public service provision is crucial to creating the environment within which a revivified institution might flourish. There is an opportunity for the Church to harness, broker and form better relationships with public services and local authorities by building on what it already does'* (Noyes & Blond, 2013, p.35). Consequently by resisting

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secularist rhetoric of decline often associated with the Church *Holistic Mission* advocates the potential for faith based organisations to become future lead providers of social welfare services in recognising that '*local churches are distinctive in their geographic spread across the country, their commitment to social service and their ability to catalyse a local network of volunteers. Churches therefore provide a critical platform for deep social transformation and could generate even greater social impact with bolder vision, resourcing and leadership'*.

Nevertheless, in my view, *Holistic Mission* is also characterised by a lack of reference to the historic resistance demonstrated by the Church to being co-opted into neoliberal directives. For example, the comprehensive *Faith in the City* (1985) commissioned by the Church of England acknowledged the persistence of poverty as attributable to government policy whilst in collaboration with BASW also identified under resourced social care provision as implicated in low morale within the social work profession. Correlatively BASW emphasised the particular role of the Church in addressing social welfare concerns within both a preventative and lobbying capacity. Resultantly *Faith in the City* advocated for participatory community work programmes which led to the establishment of the Church Urban Fund as well as social responsibility roles within the Church to address the effects of poverty. Furthermore *Faithful Cities* (2005) as the sequel to *Faith in the City* outlined a range of ecumenical initiatives in recognising the Church as resourceful in social capital with proven traditions in public service. Nevertheless *Faithful Cities* also concluded that '*the toleration of religious faith in publicly funded initiatives has increased in recent years which is in part due to successful lobbying by faith based initiatives as well as the changing attitudes of public officials towards faith. However, in our view, this does not entirely remove the difficulties and risks involved with taking public funds. Even where faith based organisations are given greater freedom in principle to operate their own values in practice this can become unwittingly compromised as the powerful culture and demands of statutory bodies seep into previously independent institutions. A further danger is that the dominance of the market model in the provision of welfare services and the demand for competitive tendering for government contracts frames relations between local faith groups in terms of rivalry rather than co-operation'*. Consequently the contract culture of the commissioning State is acknowledged as counter-intuitive to faith based social action (Davies et al, 2008) whilst, within the context of welfare retrenchment and abrogation of State responsibility, ambivalence towards the prospect of becoming complicit with neoliberal governance remains of significant concern to faith based organisations (Cloke et al, 2012).

Nevertheless the paradox of neoliberalism in providing both opportunities for and barriers to faith

based social action within an entangled political economy dominated by neoliberalism is also recognised by Cloke at al (2012) as a potential threshold for postsecular rapprochement practices. Accordingly the perceived hegemony of neoliberalism is contested as variegated, contingent and co-constituted whilst new opportunities for rapprochement between previously disparate religious and secular groups is emphasised in the interests of common goals within a mixed economy of social welfare provision. For example, faith based organisations as intentional communities are observed to be committed to neighbourly charity with this emphasis upon neighbourliness thereby resisting neoliberal and consumerist technologies which constrain service delivery (Bickley, 2014), (Wier, 2014). Moreover faith based organisations are acknowledged by Williams (2012) as potential sites of resistance and subversion to the political economy of neoliberalism whilst *ecumenical consciousness* is considered by Pathak & McGhee (2014) as typically informing the practical nature of faith based social action. The distinctiveness of faith based social action in subverting neoliberal paradigms is therefore demonstrated by a diverse range of social welfare projects which include a) interdenominational street pastor schemes which manage civic spaces by appealing to secular and faith values alike (Johns & Barton, 2009) b) missionary approaches to homeless provision characterised by restorative acceptance and universal accessibility whereby receptive generosity and *agape* is a common ethos (Bowpitt et al, 2013), (Lancione, 2014) c) the Trussell Trust Foodbank network which as a Christian social action charity provides emergency relief from the symptoms of food poverty whilst in collaboration with corporate business also lobbies for wider governmental commitment to food poverty alleviation (Lambie-Mumford, 2013), (Kelloggs, 2013) d) localised credit unions as advocated by the Archbishop of Canterbury which provide ethical alternatives to high cost pay-day loan monopolies (Timms, 2014) e) counter-hegemonic social activism as demonstrated by Christians Against Poverty whereby neo-Marxist prophetic radicalism remains characteristic of social welfare provision (Cloke et al, 2012) f) collaborative ecumenical projects such as *The Lies We Tell Ourselves: Ending Comfortable Myths About Poverty* which recognise that '*the systematic misrepresentation of the poorest in society is a matter of injustice which all Christians have a responsibility to challenge'* (2014, p.4). In pursuing alternative philosophies of care in meeting the needs of those ineligible for State support, the performance requirements and technologies indicative of neoliberalism as well as the cultures of responsibility associated with secular humanism are therefore modified by faith based counter-narratives which resist the pernicious notions of the *undeserving poor* that characterise governmental welfare retrenchment (Cloke et al, 2012). Resultantly faith based social action is acknowledged as reaching beyond the limits of neoliberal welfare reforms by resisting the utilitarian underpinnings of mainstream social policy in privileging ethical perspectives (Jawed, 2012).

Transformation Cornwall: A Case Study

With regard to the significance of faith based social action within the context of local civil economy, the following case study therefore considers social welfare projects undertaken within the Diocese of Truro where I have lived and worked since 2010. I first had the opportunity of working with Diocesan colleagues when I was formerly employed within local government social care services. This initial contact, which spanned approximately two years, therefore provided the opportunity to initiate an exploratory approach to fieldwork whilst the focus of this case study was assisted by feedback from the diocesan Social Responsibility Officer as well as the *Transformation Cornwall* Development Co-ordinator and Project Worker who operate within an ecumenical context and are supported by the Church Urban Fund. In particular *Transformation Cornwall* consists of a collaborative project between Anglicans, Methodists and the Church Urban Fund with the collective purpose of *tackling poverty together in Cornwall*. As such *Transformation Cornwall* provides a consultative service within the Diocese of Truro in response to poverty, deprivation and social exclusion by supporting faith groups to a) identify community need b) develop skills and expertise within existing organisations in order to build capacity c) cultivate sustainable financial and social enterprise d) build on local networks and partnerships. The social value of *Transformation Cornwall* therefore incorporates a co-ordinating role in facilitating faith based social action across Cornwall and accordingly the focus of this study centres upon an analysis of the *Cornwall Survey of Faith Groups 2014* (Wild, 2014) which was authored by the *Transformation Cornwall* Project Worker and launched at local government premises in Truro in January 2014. With regard to methodology, the following case study involved my attendance as a participant-observer at the launch of this report followed by an analysis of the key findings of the survey within the wider context of published research. In addition a semi-structured interview was conducted with the *Transformation Cornwall* Development Co-ordinator and Project Worker in April 2015. Appreciative inquiry methodologies which are congruent with postsecular research, as outlined in the previous chapter, were therefore deployed with the purpose of complimenting the evaluative base of *Transformation Cornwall.* In summary the *Cornwall Survey of Faith Groups 2014* was conducted by *Transformation Cornwall* in order to identify the extent and types of social welfare services provided by faith communities across the county and as an outcome of the survey it is estimated that faith based social action in Cornwall accounts for over £20 million of the volunteer hours contributed by the community sector within the region per annum.

For example, in order to illustrate faith based social action within Cornwall, during the launch of the survey a case study was presented by the Bude street pastors scheme which typifies similar projects operating across the county. Street pastors deploy interdenominational Christian volunteers in providing on-street social welfare services to the public usually, although not exclusively, during the night time. The first street pastor schemes were established in London by the Ascension Trust in 2003 however projects now operate in over 250 urban locations across the UK ranging from large cities to market towns (Middleton & Yarwood, 2013). Street pastor schemes are enrolled into local networks by Church commissioning services and representatives from the Ascension Trust as well as public services. Street pastors have therefore established a respected social and political visibility within their communities through tripartite partnerships between local councils and the police. Indeed with reference to Cornish communities *'street pastors in Camborne go out at night but we also have an afternoon shift, a bit like school pastors, but in our case we operate in the town square. There is a lot of street drinking and we meet many homeless people and those suffering from mental health issues'* (Issac & Davies, 2009, p.59). The social capital which street pastors represent therefore constitutes the cultivation of soft skills in mediating between socially vulnerable people and their communities. In particular the pastoral and shepherding role of street pastors acts as a buffer, bridge and intermediary service for vulnerable people in need of support whereby street pastors have a calming influence in diffusing tense or conflictual situations. For example, volunteers assist revellers in the provision of flip flops and blankets whilst in some areas street pastors receive illegal substances and weapons from those who wish to surrender them thereby offering alternative forms of assistance beyond the remit of emergency services. Whilst the role of street pastors is not to enforce the law they are therefore often propelled into visible civic spaces by patrolling areas in issued uniforms whilst providing practical help to those at risk of involvement in anti-social behaviour, thereby serving as conduits between the authorities and the people whom they assist (Middleton & Yarwood, 2013). Significantly however whilst street pastors demonstrate secular values, such as encouraging personal responsibility, volunteers also maintain a distinctive Christian identity which motivates members to undertake outreach work in the imitation of the Good Samaritan parable (Issac & Davies, 2009). Moreover prayer as spiritual support is used by street pastors to assist with their work although direct proselytizing is prohibited. Resultantly street pastors are observed *'to embody a certain postsecular ethic; they are trained by both secular and religious groups; view the city as a spiritual landscape and yet are attuned to its material rhythms and needs; and work with a range of secular partners in the contexts of their own varied Christian*

faith...the work of Street Pastors illustrates the kind of secular/faith rapprochement that is valued by some commentators for providing spaces of hope and care in the city' (Middleton & Yarwood, 2013, p.13). Consequently nationwide ecumenical street pastor schemes have rediscovered the relevance of the Church within postsecular society by providing social welfare services within local communities which involve effective collaboration between public, civil and faith based organisations.

Food banks

However the most frequent activity undertaken by faith communities as identified in the *Cornwall Survey of Faith Groups 2014* relates to the facilitation of food banks whereby forty-eight percent of faith groups within the county implement food banks within their respective parishes. In total 15 Trussell Trust food bank centres, 6 independent food banks and 14 independent organisations, which distribute a combination of food parcels and meals, currently operate within Cornwall (Forsey, 2016). Significantly this frequency of food bank provision corresponds with national research which indicates a substantial rise in the use and visibility of food banks within the UK over the past three past years (O'Dowd, 2013), (Trussell Trust, 2015). As such the increased use in food banks has attracted considerable critique given 4.7 million people are estimated to be living in food poverty in the UK whilst over 1 million people are receiving emergency food from food banks (Garthwaite et al, 2015), (Trussell Trust, 2016)[23]. Concurrently the number of malnutrition cases treated by the NHS has almost doubled in the last three years with the burden of hunger prevailing mainly within rural areas and more significantly within Cornwall (Garthwaite et al, 2015), (Kirby, 2015). Food poverty is therefore recognised as an inability to acquire or consume quality or sufficient food in socially acceptable ways and is often implicated within a complex web of social exclusion and destitution (Lambie-Mumford, 2012). The assertion that *every town should have one* has therefore become synonymous with the new visibility and momentum of food banks in the UK (Lambie-Mumford, 2013). Indeed, since their establishment in 2004, the Trussell Trust food bank network as a Christian charitable foundation has launched over 420 food banks in partnership with local Churches although this accounts for less than half of the food banks operating within the UK (Forsey, 2016). Operationally food banks involve a collaborative response to food poverty whereby food bank recipients are referred by front-line professionals such as GP's and social workers. In

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23 Garthwaite et al (2015) recognise food poverty as household income expenditure on food being higher than 10%. The Trussell Trust (2016) reports that 1,109,309 emergency food parcels, including 415,866 for children, were distributed by Trussell Trust network food banks in 2015-16 compared with 913,138 in the 2013/14 financial year. Correlating figures published in *Destitution in the UK* (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2016) additionally report that approximately 1,252, 000 people, including 312, 000 children, were destitute at some point in 2015.

addition a total of 40,000 volunteers also contributed their time to the implementation of Trussell Trust food banks in 2015/16 whilst ninety percent of the food provided by food banks is donated from the public. As an interim service, food banks provide three days worth of non-perishable emergency food and also signpost recipients to longer-term welfare services with the reasons for food poverty requiring the need of food banks including; changes and delays in benefits including benefit sanctions, low income, rising living costs, static incomes, refused crisis loans, accumulation of debt, under-employment and unemployment, absence of free school meals during school holidays, unexpected bills and redundancy (Trussell Trust, 2015), (Cooper & Dumpleton, 2013). In addition people accessing food banks are more likely to have experienced chronic health problems, bereavement, relationship breakdown, substantial caring responsibilities and job loss (Garthwaite et al, 2015). Significantly in Cornwall, however, the highest percentage of recipients receiving emergency food from the Truro food bank are from working households on low incomes (Ashcroft, 2014). Consequently the new visibility of food banks is implicated within a complex dynamic of social exclusion and poor health as well food and wage poverty.

In response, the Trussell Trust identifies solutions to food poverty at national and structural levels in asserting that local food banks should neither become substitutes for effective statutory welfare systems nor *'the new normal'* (Trussell Trust, 2016). In retaining both critical autonomy and a lobbying role, the Trussell Trust is therefore resistant to becoming involved with any contractual obligations with government organisations (Trussell Trust, 2013). Nevertheless in countries such as Canada and the US, food banks have become established over the past four decades as secondary extensions of weakened social security nets whereby neoliberal welfare reforms have integrated food banks into second tiers of welfare systems with this commodification of social assistance having undermined State obligations to address food poverty and nutritional health upon a sustainable basis (Riches, 2002), (Webb, 2013). For example, in Canada rather than a temporary response to the effects of recession, food banks have become institutionalised with those seeking assistance repeatedly doing so which has created food aid dependency (Riches, 2002). Food bank usage in Canada is therefore recognised as indicating wider food insecurity within the country (Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2015). Moreover in the US an estimated twelve percent of all households which is over thirty seven million people are provided with emergency food upon an annual basis (Webb, 2013). The problem of unmet food need therefore persists whilst food banks remain insufficient to fully meet the needs of those who seek assistance given that fluctuating resources, donor fatigue and generic supply problems require the frequent rationing of food (Wie & Giebler, 2013), (Tarasuk & Eatkin, 2003). The poor nutritional quality of emergency food is also a concern

given the reluctance of food banks to reject particular foods in a climate of decreasing donations (Webb, 2013). In addition to the shame, embarrassment and humiliation experienced by food bank recipients, unmet food needs are therefore obfuscated by food bank practices which are additionally implicated in a low impetus from governments to seek alternative solutions (Tarasuk & Eatkin, 2003). Food poverty denial is also evident in the pathologising of emergency food need which is considered as an outcome of poor decision-making by individuals and families (Chorley, 2014). Nevertheless evidence suggests that demand for food aid is driving supply rather than vice versa whilst households turning to food aid do so only as a last resort after all other coping strategies have been exhausted (Lambie-Mumford et al, 2014). Resultantly although food banks are considered by Popielarski & Cotugna (2010) as social enterprises in addressing social welfare challenges, concerns regarding the co-option of food banks into alleviating the effects of governmental welfare retrenchment remain prevalent (Cooper & Dumpleton, 2013), (Trussell Trust, 2013).

Accordingly in the UK the new visibility of food banks represents a compelling social welfare imperative whereby the ecumenical Church in leading an *End Hunger Fast* campaign, in my view, maintains a distinctive moral and lobbying role which differs from social enterprise rhetoric. As such rather than merely complying with neoliberal directives, I suggest that the demonstrable ethics of Christian socialism remain discernible within the ecumenical Church in addressing food poverty as illustrated by the following open letter written to the Prime Minister by Anglican Bishops and Methodist Chairs of District in February 2014 which read *'Sir, Britain is the world's seventh largest economy and yet people are going hungry. Half a million people have visited food banks in the UK since last Easter and 5,500 people were admitted to hospital in the UK for malnutrition last year. One in five mothers report regularly skipping meals to better feed their children and even more families are just one unexpected bill away from waking up with empty cupboards. We often hear about hard choices. Surely few can be harder than that faced by the tens of thousands of older people who must 'heat or eat' each winter, harder than those faced by families whose wages have stayed flat while food prices have gone up 30% in just five years. Yet beyond even this we must as a society face up to the fact that over half of people using food banks have been put in that situation by cut backs to and failures in the benefit system whether it be payment delays or punitive sanctions...there is an acute moral imperative to act. Hundreds of thousands of people are doing so already as they set up and support food banks across the UK. But this is a national crisis and one we must rise to. We call on government to do its part: acting to investigate food markets that are failing, to make sure that work pays and to ensure that the welfare system provides a robust last line of defence against hunger'.* Indeed in the previous year the General Synod of the Church of England

debated the effects of reforms introduced by the Department of Work and Pensions after the impetus to do so originated from clergy who had raised concerns rarely heard since the the publication of *Faith in the City* in the 1980's that the vicarage doorstep was becoming the last resort for people on the verge of destitution. In collaboration with the Christian think tank *Theos* which operates within a postsecular context the Church therefore continues to critically engage with social welfare concerns (Brown, 2014), (Spencer, 2014). As such the incumbent Archbishop of Canterbury is observed to have *'reaffirmed the Church of England's status as a defender of the most vulnerable'* (New Statesman, 2013)[24]. For example, with regard to wage and food poverty, Church leaders led a rebellion against proposed tax credit reforms in 2015 which were described by the Archbishop of York as *'economics devoid of morals and ethics'* (Swinford et al, 2015). Resultantly the *End Hunger Fast* campaign is acknowledged to demonstrate *'postsecular rapprochements across the religious/secular divide in having been active in mobilising public concern around counter-hegemonic rationalities of poverty, translating religious-secular discourses in ways which equip broad-based coalitions with a willingness to focus on ethical sympathies and actions'* (Williams, 2014, p.194). Consequently in response to criticism regarding the *End Hunger Fast* campaign rigorous defence by Church leaders of Christian involvement with politics is asserted in that *'as a Bishop I believe it is the duty of religion to challenge political power when it fails in it's responsibilities to the most vulnerable in society...meeting immediate and visible need is faith's most common starting point...faith based organisations have a proper role in spotting gaps in society's safety net and responding'* (Walker, 2014).

Furthermore concurrent critique of the effects of neoliberalism on social vulnerability is demonstrated, in my view, by the Bishop of Truro who as co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger and Food Poverty and co-author of *Feeding Britain: A Strategy for Zero Hunger in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland* (2014) recognises that *'the rise in the use of food banks does indicate a deeper problem in our society; the glue that used to be there is no longer there in many instances. It can be described as the commodification process with people seen as commodities and the transactions between them are regarded simply as the exchanging of products rather than relationships between people...we live at a time when many of the givens by way of*

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24 In a 2014 New Year leader the New Statesman recognised the Pope's vision concerning the Church *'of the poor, for the poor'* and also acknowledged that Archbishop Welby *'has condemned the coalition government's cap on benefit increases for making children and families pay the price for high inflation rather than the government, denounced the usurious lending of payday loan companies and criticised the banks for asking what is legal and never what is right. Like Pope Francis he has demonstrated his Church's values though deeds as well as words. One need not share their faith - and the New Statesman is a resolutely secular magazine - to respect the moral clarity that both Pope Francis and Archbishop Welby have brought to issues of economic justice'* (31/12/2013).

family life, social networks, friendship groups and self-help infrastructure are simply not there. This means that the issues people are facing relating to hunger and food poverty are exacerbated and heightened because there are hardly any of the ways and means that once did exist for people to support each other. We believe that the rise in the use of food banks is a sign of the breakdown of this core value in our society. We see it as evidence that many people are living isolated lives and that the natural and vital relationships between people do not exist as once they did. To use shorthand the glue that once held us together and gave life to our communities has gone' (Thornton, 2014, p.5-6)[25]. As such *Feeding Britain* identifies that *'our objective is to reduce demand for food bank provision as we believe the current trends and supplies of food could quite easily become unsustainable. But food banks and other providers have shown they can use food as a gateway to help solve more deep seated problems facing people in persistent food poverty. We do not believe food banks should take the place of statutory welfare provision in this country but our evidence suggests there is a strong desire for longer term interaction between food banks and vulnerable households and an eagerness for those relationships to become embedded within local communities so they can help people overcome the deep seated causes of hunger. One of the fundamental reasons why we support the continuation of food banks in one form or another is that they have a proven ability to use food to reach the hardest to reach groups and engage them in a longer term process of overcoming hunger and in so doing offer them a fellowship that bureaucracy cannot'* (Thorton et al, 2014 p.20). Resultantly *Feeding Britain* advocates for *food bank plus* service models in order to effectively tackle the causes and symptoms of hunger by providing advice, skills and advocacy services as well as food and fellowship under one roof. For example, the *More Than Food* approach already adopted by the Trussell Trust includes the provision of legal advice, clothes and fuel banks, housing support, cooking courses as well as the co-location of welfare benefits and debt advice. In addition other non-statutory civil responses to community need which enhance *food bank plus* models include social supermarkets and voluntary FareShare networks which redistribute surplus food from commercial sources. Consequently as outlined in the sequel report *A Route Map To Ending Hunger As We Know It In The United Kingdom: Feeding Britain in 2015-16* (Forsey & Mason, 2015) the effectiveness of locally organised *food bank plus* models, especially with regard to welfare benefits advice, is credited for having stabilised food bank need across the UK.

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25 In the introduction to *Feeding Britain* Thorton (2014) cites Temple (1942) in advocating for a renewal of the welfare State. As a former Archbishop of Canterbury, Temple (1942) provides an emphatic endorsement of Christian involvement with politics which includes reference to the Christian Socialist Movement.

Collaborative Solidarity Between Faith Based Organisations and Social Workers

In conceptualising the new visibility of postsecular social work, collaborative solidarity between faith based organisations and social workers is therefore advocated particularly in response to social welfare initiatives demonstrated by faith communities, such as grass root responses to food poverty, which I suggest illustrates the continued relevance of Christian socialism to addressing contemporary social welfare concerns. For example, the Christian identity of food banks is described in *Feeding Britain* as *'while food banks are run by volunteers of good will and while some of these volunteers are highly ethical individuals who would not wish to be seen as Christians, most volunteers from what we could tell are drawn from local Christian churches. It has been an immensely important experience for the Inquiry team to meet this group of people but also to observe that in a country where the Church is seen as being in long tern decline, it is the churches through their membership who have brought forward this most extraordinary voluntary welfare development'* (2014, p.19). Moreover within the context of postsecular society, left inspired localism which characterises Christian socialism is illustrated by the observation that *'food banks represent clear examples of the kinds of emerging postsecular spaces of secular/religious partnership that have significant progressive potential, for example in; the recognition and response to local need social need as an unacceptable feature of contemporary life; the release of a capacity to set aside moral divisions in order to respond ethically to this social need, thus embodying a politics of overcoming difference in the combating of injustice; the refusal to accept the seeming inevitability of austerity, leading to a sometimes radical provision of caring for others outside State mechanisms; and the potential for progression from caring activities to a more politicised engagement and advocacy on behalf of particular socially excluded groups...holding government to account, challenging dominant imaginaries of neoliberal welfare as well as galvanising collective expressions of tolerance and justice'* (Williams et al, 2014, p.2806).

In summary rather than acquiescing to *austerity localism* by *'ceding the terrain of localism to the political right'* (Featherstone et al, 2012, p.179) through championing civil markets, I therefore suggest that the new visibility of postsecular social work instead concurs with *civil society socialism* and *progressive localism* the latter which *'reconfigures existing communities around emergent agendas for social justice, participation and tolerance...forms of place-based organising can shape localism in contested and solidaristic ways'* (ibid). Indeed with regard to non-commodified ethics of care *progressive localism* cultivates co-produced social welfare services within devolved community contexts (Hall & McGarrol, 2013). Accordingly the Christian socialism

implicit within postsecular social work subverts neoliberal governance, characterised by market convergence with the bureaucratic centralised State, by responding to immediate social need given that faith based social action typically embodies neighbourliness and altruistic association within local communities. As such faith based social action, through civic participation and lobbying, incorporates significant challenge to welfare retrenchment and is also indicative of the intermediate role occupied by faith based organisations within local civic contexts. Indeed with regard to postsecular reflexivity and social work education, faith based organisations represent *'critical non-State players in the social welfare arena'* (Pandya, 2016, p.13). Resultantly in relation to the *complex space* which characterises Christian engagement with local and national politics, faith based organisations as *intermediate associations* by differing from both State and market orientated services remain pivotal to addressing social welfare concerns. Consequently the social value represented by faith based organisations, in my view, invites collaboration and solidarity from the social work profession whereby reconfigured Christian socialism and left inspired localism are especially relevant to the new visibility of postsecular social work.

CONCLUSION

'Political thinkers of the postsecular era need to be visionary, prophetic, upbeat insofar as they are passionately committed to writing the prehistory of the future, to introduce change into the present as to affect multiple modes of belonging through complex heterogeneous relations' Braidotti (2009, p.60).

In conceptualising the new visibility of postsecular social work I began this thesis by outlining how religion, as a protected characteristic under equality law, invites the profession to critically engage with religious citizenship. In particular I examined how the recent postsecular turn in the latter work of Habermas enables a theoretical basis for the new visibility of postsecular social work which includes public religion within democratic practices that promote social welfare. However despite upholding liberal commitments towards religious freedom, I have also developed a post-liberal and post-neoliberal premise for a *new politics of social work* which affirms religious responsibilities rather than rights in addressing social welfare concerns. As such I suggest that liberalism, although tolerant of spirituality within the context of identity politics, nevertheless defends default secularism within a presumed neutral public sphere which negates religious resistance to both State and market authoritarianism. In response, by seeking to preserve the profession from both the alienating effects of a centralised bureaucratic State and rapacious free market, the new visibility of postsecular social work recognises correlation and convergence between political liberalism, secular Statism and neoliberal economics. In addition by adopting a post-liberal and post-neoliberal approach to social welfare, the new visibility of postsecular social work revives religious narratives shared by both conservative and socialist traditions alike which have historically resisted political and economic liberalism. Moreover faith based organisations as intermediate associations, which are similarly differentiated from the State and market, are recognised as sharing with social work a commitment to social welfare, social justice and respect for human dignity. Resultantly the new visibility of postsecular social work is conceptualised as incorporating religious responses to social vulnerability whereby solidarity between faith based organisations and social workers is enhanced by postsecular reflexivity which socialises political economy and affirms social work vocation.

Within the context of this new visibility of postsecular social work and by developing a characteristically post-liberal and post-neoliberal *new politics of social work* the social suffering necessitating a postsecular social work response is therefore illustrated, in my view, by the papal observation that *'How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of*

exposure but it is news when the stock market loses two points? This is a case of exclusion. Can we continue to stand by when food is thrown away while people are starving? This is a case of inequality. Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest where the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalised, without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape...Human beings are themselves considered as consumer goods to be used and then discarded...The excluded are not the exploited but the outcast, the leftovers...In this context some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth encouraged by a free market will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion which has never been confirmed by the facts expresses a crude and naïve trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralised workings of the prevailing economic system. Meanwhile the excluded are still waiting. To sustain a lifestyle which excludes others or to sustain enthusiasm for that selfish ideal a globalisation of indifference has developed. Almost without being aware of it we end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people's pain and feeling a need to help them as though all this were someone else's responsibility and not our own' (Francis I, 2013, 52-54)[26]. Catholic populism, characterised by a critique of capitalism, having emerged as a definitive feature of the papacy under Francis I (Glasman, 2015b). The concurrent resurgence of socialism within contemporary politics also validating, in my view, the new visibility of postsecular social work which I suggest is called upon to respond to the inhumanity wrought by neoliberalism.

Accordingly by demonstrating postsecular reflexivity, Chapter Four outlined how feminist ethics of care is especially relevant to the post-liberal and post-neoliberal sympathies of postsecular social work. As such, in conclusion, I suggest that further feminist engagement with the political concept of natality, as the human condition of being born, is particularly relevant to the *new politics of postsecular social work*. Indeed, in my view, the politics of natality concur with the new visibility of postsecular social work by reconciling feminist ethics of care with public religion. For example, feminist theorists such as Jantzen (1998) explore the moral imaginary of natality as developed by Arendt for utopian inspiration and transformative practices which are capable of critiquing and ultimately redeeming the present. In particular with reference to the Augustine proclamation *that a beginning be made man was created* Arendt observes that *'the decisive fact determining man as a*

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26 Previously Pope Benedict XVI reiterated that *'Christians fight poverty out of a recognition of the supreme dignity of every human being, created in God's image and destined for eternal life. They work for more equitable sharing of the earth's resources out of a belief that as stewards of God's creation we have a duty to care for the weakest and most vulnerable...The belief in the transcendent destiny of every human being gives urgency to the task of promoting peace and justice for all'* (2012).

conscious remembering being is birth or natality; that is the fact that we have entered the world through birth' (Scott & Stark, 1996 p.132)[27]. By acknowledging the new beginning inherent in birth the capacity of beginning anew is therefore affirmed in that initiative as an element of action is recognised as innate within natality and therefore inherent in all human activity. As such Arendt establishes natality, rather than mortality, as pivotal to humanity in resistance to both nihilism and totalitarian authoritarianism by observing that *'the lifespan of man running towards death would inevitably carry everything human to ruin and destruction were it not for the faculty which is inherent in action like an ever present reminder that men although they must die are born not to die but to begin'* (ibid). Natality is therefore affirmed as central to political life in recognising the hopeful capacity for humans to begin again and in this respect Arendt cultivates a materialist Christianity with an emphasis upon the Incarnation and *amour mundi* as the greatest expression of natality (Dolan, 2007), (Tatman, 2013). Moreover feminist cultivation of natality affirms the embodied, engendered, maternal and relational continuum of political economy whilst defining birth as a political act correlates with the Thomist notion of social flourishing and associated moral acknowledgement that *unto us a child is born* (Jantzen, 1998), (Stone, 2007). Resultantly I suggest that recognition of natality is especially relevant to the new visibility of postsecular social work which is concerned not only with the alleviation of poverty but also collaborative practices that cultivate caring relationships in which families may thrive. In addition recognition of natality is significant to recovery models in mental health and adult social care which orientate practice towards new beginnings. Indeed Hurlock (2008) recognises the dialectic between liminality and natality as similar to the dynamic between disillusionment and illumination in that emergence from melancholy enables regeneration within wider society. Consequently by conceptualising the new visibility of postsecular social work and with particular reference to feminist ethics of care, postsecular reflexivity enables an appreciation of natality as integral to a more hopeful and egalitarian postsecular political economy wherein no one is left behind.

Furthermore this socialised postsecular political economy within the new visibility of postsecular social work concurs with the etymology and meaning of community which as political philosopher Esposito (2010) acknowledges derives from the latin word *communitas* whereby *cum* and *munus* translate as *each other* and the *transitive act of giving* respectively. What predominates in *munus* is therefore not common property or territory to be defined and defended but rather a reciprocity or mutuality in giving which characterises *communitas* as unified by association, donation and mutual indebtedness. For example, Christian *communitas* is revealed through Grace as '*this first munus*

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27 Arendt's doctoral exploration of Augustine is examined by Scott & Stark (1996).

from on high that puts men in the position of having something in common with each other' (Esposito, 2010, p.10) whilst from an anthropological perspective *'communitas is a very simple thing but an enormously important part of social life. It does not often find its way into the social sciences because scholars do not know what to do with it. I now see it as unconditional love, outside any differentiated respect for rank, moral status and social structures. It flourishes best in those precious in between times when stress about status is low and nobody bothers about rank'* (Turner, 2005, p.93). In cultivating an egalitarian political economy beyond secular alienation the new visibility of postsecular social work therefore recognises that *'commuitas breaks in through the interstices of structure, in liminality; at the edge of structure, in marginality; and from beneath structure, in inferiority. It is almost everywhere held to be sacred or holy possibly because it transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured and institutionalised relationships and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency'* (Turner, 2008, p.128). Resultantly whilst *'there is a democracy and humility about communitas; no one can claim it as their own'* (Turner, 2012, p.219) I suggest that the Church, as a community of communities, is pivotal to affirming *homo communitas* as counter-cultural to the *homo economicus* models prevalent within neoliberal governance and in this respect enables an appreciation of religious citizenship as reconciling the estranged interests of an once secularised profession with a revived social work vocation. Consequently the new visibility of postsecular social work is conceptualised as counter-cultural to former secular, liberal and neoliberal hegemonies within the profession by not only affirming religious citizenship as congruent with social work vocation but also by preserving professional integrity from the authoritarian influence of market convergence with the secular State through the reconfiguration of Christian socialism or *Socialism by Grace*.

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