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**The Devil's Poor and the Invisible City
Charity, Order and Agency in Early Modern England**

Steven Engler

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Religion

**Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada**

April 1998



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ABSTRACT

The Devil's Poor and the Invisible City: Charity, Order and Agency in Early Modern England

Steven Engler, Ph.D.
Concordia University, 1998

This dissertation examines the discourses and practices of charity and poor relief in early modern England in order to characterize changing views of the relation between the individual and the basis of social order. The first part proposes a genealogy of idleness, drawing on Weber's analysis of Protestant worldly asceticism, which posits the rationalization of the conduct of life, and on Foucault's analysis of governmentality, which posits the converging governance of populations and individual conduct in the emerging early modern state. The second part considers charity as a set of transactional relations and examines changing views of the link between social boundaries and order. It then examines the increasing use of 'idleness' as a criterion distinguishing deserving and undeserving poor and traces the obverse of this process: a new emphasis on the formation of industrious habits as a means of fostering the prosperity and order of the nation. The third part argues first that puritan views of the use of time brought the invisible city into the world: a methodical conduct of life marked inclusion among the godly, linking individual agency to God's transcendent order. It then argues that this rationalization of activity through constant attention to time converged with attempts to

reform and govern conduct in poor relief practices of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The ethical and temporal antecedence of the heavenly city was replaced by the antecedence of the state, whose efforts to reform the character of the poor constituted a new governance of conduct. Emerging processes of governmentality were premised on this consonance of self-interested individual activity and the maintenance of social order.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is the fruit of an extraordinary apprenticeship in the Department of Religion at Concordia University. The many opportunities for informal conversation, the sharing of expertise, the monthly colloquia, and the spirit of collegiality in this department have taught me more about scholarship than my many hours of research and writing. The germination, growth and pruning of this dissertation owe much to the diligent and constant guidance of four faculty members whose research suggestions, critical comments, and openness to questions have been invaluable. The following list only begins to show how formative their help has been: Michel Despland oriented my study of early modern Christianity and emphasized the importance of the theme of time; Frederick Bird recommended the topic of charity and led me to Weber; Rosemary Hale drew my attention to the late medieval period and to *Piers Plowman*; Leslie Orr guided my study of gifting relations in south Asian religions, a comparative project that has oriented my work in many ways. I am indebted to many others for discussion, comments and guidance. Among these are John Johansen, Blake Leyerle, Kieran Bonner, Ross Emmett, and Jean Rémy. I am also indebted to the many librarians and archivists who have helped me at Concordia University, McGill University, l'Université de Montréal, UQAM, the University of Alberta, Augustana University College, and Harvard University.

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Introduction

Charity, Order and Agency in Early Modern England

This dissertation examines a shift in conceptions of self and society in late medieval and early modern Europe and argues that this shift is characteristic of modernity. The argument proceeds by analyzing idleness, a form of faulty agency, as the determinate other of rightly oriented activity. The context of this argument is an aspect of early modern England in which perceived relations between idleness and disorder were clearly reflected: charity and poor relief. In the medieval period social order was conceived in terms of Augustine's two cities. In early modern England, order became dependent on a correct orientation of individual agency in and through time. Disciplinary mechanisms of poor relief sought to foster order by shaping those at the margins. The ethical and temporal antecedence of the heavenly city was replaced by institutional mechanisms of education and habituation.

Concerns with idleness and industry, order and disorder, were manifested most clearly in the distinction between deserving and undeserving poor. This distinction was framed in legislation, charity sermons, poor relief proposals, didactic tracts, and institutional publications. We will draw, from these primary and from secondary sources, an account of how the institutional embedding of disciplinary practices was oriented by this problematization of the idleness of the undeserving poor. This will allow us to characterize the extent to which the proper orientation of individual activity in and through time came to be seen as essential to the maintenance of social order in early

modern England.

The history of the discourses and practices of charity and poor relief incorporates several themes. 'Charity' links issues of social stratification and exchange relations. 'Idleness,' especially as applied to the "undeserving poor," links issues of agency and social boundaries. The temporal bounds of this study, 1500 to 1800, frame important developments: from the rise of municipal charitable institutions to the period of intense debate following the development of the Speenhamland system in 1795; from the erosion of charitable practices based in the economy of the individual household to the declining emphasis on the necessity of containing the fruits of labour and the circulation of goods within the boundaries of the nation, a development marked by the Anglo-French Trade Treaty of 1786.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Western Europe, economic and demographic changes resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of urban poor. Several factors contributed to the uprooting of rural agricultural labourers and the underemployment of urban artisans: population increases, changes in landholding patterns, and periods of inflation and scarcity occasioned by increasing production and trade. During the Middle Ages, beggars had been seen as Christlike, echoing Franciscan models and exhortations. However, beginning in the late fifteenth century, the poor flooded the streets of the cities begging, wandering aimlessly, and, in the eyes of some, threatening disorder and violence. Beggars were feared because they were 'masterless,' escaping the orderly role of labourer.

During this period, new forms of charitable institutions were developed. The

sixteenth century witnessed the elaboration of the Poor Laws that would shape practices of charity and poor relief into the nineteenth century. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor was elaborated in terms of the ability to labour. Attempts to provide labour for or impose labour on the latter were given an institutional form linked to the parish system. In the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the number and forms of institutions grew dramatically. Labour was imposed on the poor to reform their character by inculcating industrious habits.

This dissertation argues that the changing discourses and practices of charity and poor relief reveal a new conception of agency correlated with techniques of governing individual conduct. This development, as read in the history of charity, reflected an ethical shift in the perceived relation between a rationalized conduct of life and the sources of social order. A key aspect of this new sense of agency was a qualitatively distinct temporal orientation of activity. We will trace, with reference to Weber, a process of individualization correlated with what Foucault calls processes of governmentality. We will do this by clarifying one aspect of these social, ethical and temporal shifts. The discourses and practices of "the idle poor" in early modern England linked the formation of individual character to a conception of social order framed in terms of national interest, and they did so by attempting to foster industrious habits.

Studying developments in England is justifiable given the paradigmatic tensions between Puritans and Anglicans over these issues. Weber argued that developments in England were important for the rise of certain aspects of modernity. The analyses he provided have maintained their cogency despite many misleading lines of argument in the

secondary literature. Chapters two and nine discuss Puritan and Anglican attitudes to agency and idleness, framing our discussion of the relation between charity and order.

Weber, Sombart and Tawney emphasized conceptions of 'labour' among the social strata where methodical economic activity became established in pre-industrial Europe. They underlined the prominent view that labour stands to idleness as godly to ungodly (Weber 1958a, 161-63; Sombart 1967, 257-58; Tawney 1963, 221). Connections between attitudes toward idleness and other contemporary developments are important (cf. Weber 1958a, 157-59). The poor were not the carrier strata for these developments. However, judgements made of the poor and practices intended to contain, eradicate or reform their idleness raise two questions: 'What specific form of agency was held to be lacking in the idle poor?' and 'In the views of religious and secular authorities, what sort of danger did this faulty form of agency threaten?'

The first of these questions has a methodological significance. We will read conceptions of agency in discourses that address faulty agency. Claims that idleness undermines order were prominent for centuries. However, the formulation and practical influence of this view varied. We will trace the trajectory of this view, noting changes in each of its elements ('idleness,' 'poor,' 'order') and examining relations to practices. We will find that the poor both defined the margin of society and threatened its order in ways that reflected the mutual constitution of self and society through more dynamic and complex power relations. The disorderly poor were increasingly seen as a threat to status boundaries. Beyond prompt but ineffective imposition of repressive measures, this threat was addressed indirectly. As elites saw themselves forming a national society, discourses

and practices oriented toward the poor played a role in constituting the boundaries of the nation. The industry of the poor was held to contribute to national well-being and their idleness to undermine it. Idleness changed from sin to habit. Labour changed from a marker of hierarchy to an essential element in the national circulation of wealth. Agency became framed by the Puritan emphasis on constancy and diligence of effort. We will draw these points from the discourses and practices of the eighteenth-century workhouse, where the poor were given "the gifts of character reformation" (Thompson 1967, 94).

A genealogical analysis of the changing discourses and practices of the idle poor will reveal changing views of agency. This approach goes beyond a conflict theoretical perspective: the techniques of discipline and control to be examined did not involve simply a relation between dominant and dominated. Rich and poor played an axial role in shaping and reflecting social order in a more fundamental way. The creative tension between discourses, practices, and social effects transcends the class-interests of any of the players. We will make this case initially by looking at charity and poor relief as exchange relations.

This is a study, then, of the history of forms of rationality. It examines what Weber considered the rationalization process most characteristic of modernity, the development of a methodical conduct of life. It does so by examining conceptions of and practices oriented to the *faulty* conduct of life. In early modern England, changing views of the threat posed by idleness shadowed shifting conceptions of agency. We will trace the silhouette of this transition on an intervening membrane, the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor.

The argument will take a Foucaultian approach, yet it can be situated broadly within a Weberian perspective. Parallels and convergences of Weber and Foucault have been noted by and developed by a number of scholars (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983, 133, 166; Pasquino 1984; Gordon 1986; O'Neill 1986). We will consider early modern changes in practices of charity and poor relief as processes of rationalization. The first part of the dissertation, chapters one and two, will present relevant aspects of Foucault's work and make a case that Weber's approach is commensurate with and complemented by Foucault's. This will clarify the problematic, theoretical perspective, and methodology of the dissertation. The remainder of the dissertation will argue the case sketched out by these first two chapters by looking at the discourses and practises of the idle poor.

Synopsis

The dissertation is divided into three parts. The first part clarifies theory and methodology, and it elaborates the thesis that a new conception of agency is characteristic of modernity. It draws on Weber, Foucault, and Richard K. Fenn to argue that Puritan views of the godly use of time are the historical source of this development. This claim will be further supported in chapters eight and nine by a contrasting reading of late medieval and Puritan views of agency.

The second part of the dissertation looks at changing practices of charity and poor relief as transactional relations. This leads to a recognition that the changing shape of charity in early modern England reflected an increasing emphasis on the correct

orientation of individual activity as essential to fostering social order. As charitable relations became secularized and centralized, invoking the interests of the nation rather than God's command, the nature of its contribution to order shifted. Charity and poor relief were subsumed under a more general end, that of governing individual conduct in a manner calculated to foster and maintain order.

The third part of the dissertation develops the issues of time and agency as set out in the first two chapters. It explores the temporal rationalization of human agency by contrasting Puritan views to late medieval views and by examining the institutionalization of this development in eighteenth-century poor relief. These final three chapters frame changing views of agency in terms of the link between charity, order, and agency that emerges from the second part of the dissertation. A more detailed synopsis follows.

The first chapter sets out the basic theoretical framework of the dissertation. It discusses Foucault's work on governmentality and argues that changing conceptions of agency were integral to the new techniques of governing the conduct of individuals and populations that emerged beginning in the eighteenth century. The habituation of the poor to industry reflected a more fundamental reconstitution of the modern subject. This chapter also argues that Weber's views of rationalization and the conduct of life are commensurate with this Foucaultian approach. In the light of this theoretical frame, this dissertation argues that early modern charity came to emphasize the rationalization of the conduct of individuals. This reconstitution of agency shaped a human subject commensurate with the rationalized social structures and forms of bureaucratic

domination that are often held to be characteristic of modernity.

The second chapter clarifies the role of Puritan worldly asceticism in forming a new conception of individual agency. Drawing on Weber, Foucault and Richard K. Fenn, we will find both an emphasis on the correct temporal orientation of individual agency and an explicit relation between social boundaries and this conception. Weber's idea of the formation of a methodical conduct of life and Foucault's idea of self-formation through asceticism both clarify aspects of the temporal orientation of agency in Puritan worldly asceticism. Fenn's work will allow us to combine insights into the temporal character of Puritan worldly asceticism with an attentiveness to forms of social mediation.

These first two chapters present the argument of this dissertation in general and largely theoretical terms. The remainder of the dissertation will cover much the same ground but with a greater attentiveness to the specific social and religious context. Our preliminary approach will be to engage academic work relevant to a consideration of charity as a transactional relation. This will frame the dissertation's contribution by drawing out the themes to be considered.

The third chapter begins by contrasting two proposed relations between money and the poor in early modern England. A seventeenth-century fear that beggars' money would transgress social boundaries, thus threatening the social order, is contrasted with an eighteenth-century optimism that money would motivate the poor to industriousness, thus contributing to the order of society. These two short passages invoke a series of oppositions that frame the issues addressed in this dissertation: deserving and

undeserving poor, gift and market, industry and idleness, order and disorder. We will ask what is at stake in the shift from the former view to the latter. In the earlier passage, the relation between money and status boundaries is central. We will place this concern in its historical context by examining the erosion of the traditional link between charitable relations and household hospitality. This chapter draws our attention to the interrelated themes of charity, social relations and order.

The fourth chapter examines the claim that shifting practices of charity and poor relief are usefully viewed as a shift from gift to market. With 'the decay of hospitality,' traditional charitable relations were, in part, replaced by more formalized relations between donors and recipients as institutional poor relief began to be elaborated at parish, municipal and national levels. We will consider the claim that monetarization was a key factor in this development, leading to increasingly impersonal and quantifiable relations between donors and recipients. A reconsideration of the medieval background will reframe these issues, pointing out the perceived relation between money, as a circulating medium, and social boundaries. Our general conclusion will be that these developments of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries reflected shifting relations between charitable practices and conceptions of social order. The criteria used to make the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor stand in a complex relation to poor relief practices and views of order.

The fifth chapter explores a religious aspect of charitable relations in order to clarify the relation between order and the social boundary between donors and recipients. Again we consider charity as a transactional relation, here to emphasize the role of time in

legitimizing social boundaries. An important aspect of charitable relations between donors and recipients in late medieval England was the exchange of alms for prayers. The indefinite deferral of the completion of this transaction served to legitimate the status boundaries on which it was premised. Hence, the invisible city played a prominent role in this transactional relation between donors and recipients, serving as the antecedent foundation of social order. This does not suggest a causal relation between exchange relations and social boundaries but points to a programmatic relation between three factors: charitable practices, social boundaries and the basis of social order. During the early modern period, new views of the basis of social order were elaborated. We will find that, as the sphere of charitable transaction shifted to the nation, a greater emphasis was placed on the moral character of the agents involved in this transaction.

The erosion of the exchange of alms for prayers in the seventeenth century raises an important question: what, if any, relation did changing discourses and practices of charity bear to new conceptions of social order? This question is not a functionalist one that searches for mechanisms maintaining structural continuity. It points to the discursive and practical moments taken up by new strategic relations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Foucault prompts us to examine the tension between, discourses, practices and actuality. The emergence of early modern poor relief took shape around the perceived failure of indiscriminate almsgiving to address the problem of the disorderly poor. This emerging problematization of the relation between the poor, charitable practices and social order involved the reformulation of each of these three elements. The distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor was at the heart of this new

problematization of the relation between charity and order.

The sixth chapter examines the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor and the practices oriented to and shaped by this distinction. After considering two attempts to identify the historical emergence of this distinction, we will trace it back to the medieval period and beyond. This will lead us to ask not it how emerged but how it was articulated with newly institutionalized practices of governance. Specifically, the idleness of the poor became a central concern of an emerging poor relief apparatus. Viewed as a transaction, charity was beginning to elicit a certain character from the poor, because the idle, those whose faulty agency threatened disorder, were labelled as undeserving.

The seventh chapter looks at changing conceptions of idleness in the late medieval and early modern periods. We will first frame the historical trajectory of idleness as a process of secularization. Then we will examine its integration, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with normative and legislative discourses and with practices aimed at curbing the idleness of the poor. We will point to the development of a greater purchase on the conduct of the idle poor and to a correlated emphasis on the valuable contribution that their labour was to make to the nation.

To this point the dissertation will have traced the elaboration of a set of discursive and practical relations centred on the idleness of the undeserving poor. The following three chapters will explore the processes of rationalization by which these relations were implicated in the emergence of a new conception of agency. This involves looking more closely at the link between idleness, as the determinate other of changing conceptions of

agency, and disorder, as a negation of specific conceptions of order. We will first contrast a late medieval text with the writings of a representative Puritan, in order to place early modern developments in counterpoint to earlier views.

The eighth chapter looks at a fourteenth-century text, *Piers Plowman*, for an earlier formulation of these issues. *Piers Plowman* explicitly problematizes the relation between individual action, framed in terms of idleness and labour, and the basis of social order. It suggests that a correct temporal orientation of agency, mediated through relations of exchange, will foster order. The importance of making proper use of one's time has been emphasized since the High Middle Ages, and we find this in *Piers Plowman*. Beyond this, however, we find a more individualistic conception of the relation between individual activity and the maintenance of social order. The poem emphasizes correct temporal orientation of agency as an external criterion for fostering order. In the following chapters we will trace the internalization of this temporal orientation of agency among the Puritans and in the early modern discourses and practices of 'the idle poor.' Here 'internalization' refers to the formation of a methodical conduct of life, in Weber's sense, and to the moment of self-formation that Foucault called "asceticism."

After a discussion of the nature and contribution of Puritanism more generally, the ninth chapter analyzes the works of a representative Puritan divine, Richard Rogers. It argues that the Puritan emphasis on continual and diligent attention to one's activities represented a new conception of agency. This conception was distinct not only because of the radical emphasis on temporal continuity but because this quality of individual

conduct was explicitly linked to the basis of worldly order, God's command.

The tenth and final chapter argues that the eighteenth-century institutionalization of poor relief, with its discursive and practical emphasis on fostering industrious habits, incorporated this temporal orientation of agency. This was a different sort of discipline of individual orientation to time than that of the Puritans: the centrality of God's command and of sectarian boundaries were elided. However, this new mode of governing the self was also explicitly linked to conceptions of the basis of worldly order: first, to mercantilist views of the role of labour within a sharply demarcated national economy; and, later, to emerging economic views of the place of 'interest' in motivating the exchange and labour relations that constituted and maintained the social order. This self-government became implicated with a governance of populations as eighteenth-century poor relief institutions sought to inculcate habits of industriousness among the idle and disorderly poor.

The conclusion develops the theme of order in greater depth by suggesting that this link between agency and order rearticulates the medieval view that worldly order depends on the transcendent order of the heavenly city. In the history of early modern charity and poor relief we see changing conceptions of the basis of order: from the transcendent axis of the two cities, grounding order in the structural characteristics of transactional relations between heaven and earth, to the secularized axis of governmentality, grounding order in the governance of conduct. The marginalization of the Devil's poor manifested a new immanentization of order, as criteria for ordering the boundaries of the social whole converged with the temporal asceticism by which each

individual was to govern their conduct.

To sum up, this dissertation attempts to make a case that a certain conception of agency emerged during the early modern period as an integral element of new modes of governing conduct: if correctly oriented with respect to time, individual agency could not only be trusted to maintain but was held to be constitutive of social order. This development is especially visible in the discourses and practices of 'the idle poor.' Charity and poor relief in early modern England explicitly linked issues of idleness and industry to the preservation of social order. The distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor reflects and shapes the margins of society in different ways in different historical circumstances. In early modern England, changing criteria used to characterize the threat to order posed by the undeserving, especially idleness, linked the correct formation of individual agency to the maintenance of social order. This process reflected the conceptualization and constitution of individual agency and order as mutually implicated in new modes of governing conduct.

Part 1

Problematic, Methodology, Theory

Chapter 1

Toward a Genealogy of Idleness

This dissertation examines the discourses and practices of "the idle poor" as an indicator of broader shifts in conceptions of self and society. It is not a historical account of the undeserving poor or of the social effects of their growing presence in early modern cities. Louis Chevalier's influential study, *Classes laborieuses et classes dangereuses à Paris pendant la première moitié du XIXe siècle*, provides a point of contrast (1973 [1958]). Chevalier made a Durkheimian argument that patterns of migration and urbanization resulted in anomie and social disorder among the new urban poor.

Two problems with Chavalier's account present a useful contrast to the approach of this dissertation. Both can be seen in Chevalier's tendency to consider social disorder using general categories such as "crime." First, these categories cover many disparate and variable elements that need to be considered separately. Second, they tell us more of dominant attitudes than they do of the deviance of the poor (Ratcliffe 1991, 566). With respect to the first of these points, the present study will explore a specific category of deviance, idleness, in order to gain a firmer purchase on the historical evidence. Regarding the second point, it situates attitudes to the deserving and undeserving poor in a broader historical context and remains aware of the nature of the texts considered, elite pronouncements intended largely for elite consumption. This dissertation does not examine the nature of poverty or the conditions of the poor. It examines the significance of what was said and done about the poor:

Not only do expressions of fears about the danger to established order posed by migrants, vagabonds, street-folk, and the able-bodied poor have a long history through the Middle Ages and the early modern period, but discourse on marginality and deviance is at least as instructive about the center and its norms, about social distance, as it is about those who are supposed to be marginal and deviant. It helps the center define itself, creates fear, and thus becomes an instrument of regulation and control. (Ratcliffe 1991, 569)

We will approach the discourses and practices that we consider from these two perspectives. However, we will follow Michel Foucault in analyzing more diffuse relations of power than this passage suggests. As a result, our treatment of social stratification will not appeal to class interests but to the ways that status boundaries were implicated in changing views of order.

Effective history

This project is intended as a contribution to what Foucault, following Nietzsche, has called effective history, and it applies Foucault's method of genealogy (Foucault 1984b; Dean 1994, 18ff.). Foucault explores systems of interrelations between discourses and practices that manifest a certain historical solidity as "grids of intelligibility" (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983, 121). These are "a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, and philanthropic propositions" (Foucault 1980, 194).

Foucault's approach avoids positing an ahistorical human subject that serves as the agent of historical developments: "genealogy . . . [is] a form of history which can account

for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects etc., without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history” (Foucault 1980, 117).

This approach also avoids positing a general social-historical process, such as rationalization or class interests. As a result, it avoids presenting a unitary or teleological history: “The genealogist . . . is opposed to a suprahistorical perspective that seeks to totalize history, to trace its internal development, to recognize ourselves in a comfortable way in the past, to offer the reassurance of an end toward which history moves” (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983, 110).

Instead of positing an essentially rational or self-interested human subject, we will explore the possibility that the human is itself historically constituted. Instead of positing an ahistorical and transcultural conception of rationalization that gives a unitary shape to history, we will consider rationalization processes as historically and socially contingent. In both these ways we will not refer to deep historical constants. We will examine contingent relations of discourses, practices, and social effects. This rules out our appealing to a universal historical process or *telos* as a mechanism or basis of social change. It opens the door to a more nuanced account of the interrelations among discourses, practices, and social effects. Specifically, we will trace a genealogy of perceived relations between individual agency and social structures. That is, we will problematize the distinctively modern view, paradigmatically formulated in political economy, that the self-interested action of many individual agents constitutes, or at least maintains, social structures. We will argue that this view is part of a constellation of

discursive and practical relations that framed the mutual constitution of self and society in ways inseparable from modern modes of governmentality.

Agency and structure

This section discusses recent work in social theory to contextualize this dissertation's approach. The contrast between agency and structure is an important one in sociological theory. Foucault began his academic career at a time in France when the humanities and social sciences were polarized. Views that attributed a radical priority to agency, especially phenomenology and existentialism, opposed those that attributed a radical priority to structure, especially Marxism and structuralism. Foucault's work can be read as an attempt to transcend this dichotomy (Hoy 1986, 128; cf. Gordon 1980, 234-35). Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu have both developed sociological theories that attempt to transcend the distinction between structure and agency by emphasizing social practices (Giddens 1979; 1984; 1987a; Bourdieu 1977; 1990a; 1990b). A brief sketch of their views will clarify Foucault's approach.

Giddens argues that the subject matter of sociology is "a duality--the duality of structure" (1984, xxi). His central claim is that human actors construct the social practices and institutions that in turn constrain their actions. He defines structure as the "rules and resources recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems," and he analyzes "the structuring properties . . . which make it possible for discernably similar social practices to exist across varying spans of time and space and which lend them

'systemic' form" (1979, 64; 1984, 17).

Bourdieu extends the Marxist themes of class and capital. He argues that multiple forms of non-economic capital--for example, artistic taste and one's manner of speaking--are convertible into economic capital. This collapses Weber's distinction between class and status group, given that status evaluations are now framed as misperceptions of the distribution of economic capital (Weber 1978; Berger 1986; Postone *et al.* 1993). The process of misrecognition which allows relations of class and economic capital to be perceived as relations of status and social or cultural capital allows for the reproduction of social stratification: all parties are acculturated to perceive these relations as natural, and this takes place through a formation of the individual *habitus*. The *habitus* consists of "systems of durable, transposable dispositions, . . . principles which generate and organize practices and representations" (1990a, 53). It is rooted in the body and so persists even when these conditions that formed it have changed. Moreover, it is formed by and has an effect on social practices. Like Giddens' concept of structuration, Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* inserts a moment of human creativity-in-action into the heart of the processes by which social structures reproduce themselves: "The *habitus*, a product of history, produces individual and collective practices--more history--in accordance with the schemes generated by history" (Bourdieu 1990a, 54).

Giddens and Bourdieu transcend a neat distinction between micro and macrosociology. The tension between these approaches provides a useful way to characterize their relation to Foucault and this dissertation's contribution to his project. Giddens elaborates the factors responsible for the reproduction of social practices and

institutions by drawing on insights from microsociological analysis, especially the work of Goffman. The themes of trust and risk, for example, have become especially important in his recent work (Giddens 1990; Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994). Bourdieu's approach draws to a greater extent on macrosociology, emphasizing social stratification more than the characteristics of individual interaction.

Foucault explores the relation between the micro and the macro (Gordon 1980, 254). He takes a step farther from functionalism than either Giddens or Bourdieu because he reframes the problem of order, the issue that Parsons considered the main concern of sociology (cf. Giddens 1990a, 14). Giddens and Bourdieu both suggest explanations for how social systems reproduce themselves: Giddens in terms of the "binding" of time and space, and Bourdieu in terms of the occluded transmission and conversion of forms of capital. Foucault's focus is rather "the *problematizations* through which being offers itself to be, necessarily, thought and the *practices* on the basis of which these problematizations are formed" (Foucault 1990b, 11). For Foucault, the relation between micro and the macro is not a methodological stance. It is an aspect of modernity that presents itself as a candidate for genealogical analysis. It is a *point d'appui* at which relations of power inform the mutual constitution of self and society. The order of social systems is not an explanandum for Foucault. He interrogates the discourses and practices correlated with historically contingent conceptions of order. He asks not 'how is order produced and maintained?' but 'what leads to and follows from the fact that order is conceived of in just this way?' This is the question we ask of the discourses and practises of the idle poor in early modern England.

Governmentality and power

Foucault's linkage of micro and macrosociological themes is clearest in his concept of "governmentality." For Foucault, modernity is characterized by processes of governmentality that act on both individuals and populations:

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a form of power comes into being that begins to exercise itself through social production and social service. It becomes a matter of obtaining productive service from individuals in their concrete lives. And in consequence, a real and effective 'incorporation' of power was necessary, in the sense that power had to be able to gain access to the bodies of individuals, to their acts, attitudes and modes of everyday behaviour. . . . But at the same time, these new techniques of power needed to grapple with the phenomena of population, in short to undertake the administration, control and direction of the accumulation of men. . . . (Foucault 1980, 125)

From this perspective, this dissertation considers agency and structure as historically contingent vectors mapped onto changing problematizations of the relation between social order and the interested actions of individuals. The basis of order changed from transactional characteristics to the character of agents, and this manifested itself in the emergence of new forms of governmentality.

Governmentality consists of three things: first, the ensemble of discourses, practices, and institutions that through which power acts on populations; second, the tendency, predominant in the West, for power to take the form "government" as an intersection of concerns of sovereignty and discipline; third, the process of "governmentalization" through which the medieval judicial State became the modern administrative State (Foucault 1994, 3:655).¹ This involves a complex relation between

¹ See *Ideology and Consciousness* 6, pp. 5-21, for an English translation of "La

two general types of power: political power and pastoral power.

Pastoral power emerged from the context of Christian confessional practices. It acts to ensure individual salvation in the next world, and its exercise is based in the elaboration of techniques for the direction of conscience. Foucault holds that a new form of pastoral power became linked to political power during the eighteenth century: "we can see the state as a modern matrix of individualization, or a new form of pastoral power" (Foucault 1983a, 215). Three aspects of this new pastoral power were central. It was oriented to this-worldly rather than otherworldly salvation. It was increasingly institutionalized and bureaucratized. In conjunction with these two shifts, it shaped the development of knowledge of human beings around two axes, "one, globalizing and quantitative, concerning the population; the other, analytical, concerning the individual" (*Ibid.*).

Foucault examines the way that interrelations between discourses and practices have formed the modern individual as both subject and object. 'Governmentality' problematizes the role that the governance of conduct plays within this area of concern. The control and discipline of individuals in modernity are inseparable from their discursive and social constitution as citizens and selves. Governmentality involves both these dimensions: c'est "la rencontre entre les techniques de domination exercées sur les

gouvernementalité" (Foucault 1994, 3: 635-57), a key lecture from Foucault's 1977-78 series at the Collège de France. Although not worked into a polished version for publication, Foucault's courses for this and the following year are having a formative influence on recent social and political theory (cf. Gordon 1987; Dean 1991; 1992).

autres et les techniques de soi" (Foucault 1994, 4:785).

Foucault's focus, then, is not on the top-down relations of State power to its subjects: "The idea that the State must, as the source or point of confluence of power, be invoked to account for all the apparatuses in which power is organized, does not seem to me very fruitful for history, or one might rather say that its fruitfulness has been exhausted" (Foucault 1980, 188). He argues that the modern subject was constituted with the emergence of a new 'economy of power.' This took place in institutions such as prisons, hospitals and schools and, as a corollary, throughout society. It involved the development of new techniques for surveillance, for the detailed control of the body and its actions, and for the collection and organization of the knowledge requisite for this unprecedented degree of purchase on the individual. A new conception of the individual emerged through these developments: the individual is constituted "as effect and object of power, as effect and object of knowledge" (Foucault 1979, 192).

Foucault's genealogical analyses unfold around a unique conception of power. He argues that developments in early modern Europe manifested changes in the manner that power circulates in society. In the Middle Ages power was vested in monarchical institutions, and its mechanisms fit a juridico-political model. In the early modern period, power became more diffuse, echoing not law but discourse:

Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. And 'Power,' insofar as it is permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing, is simply the over-all effect that emerges from all these mobilities, the concatenation that rests on each of them and seeks in turn to arrest their movement. . . . [I]t is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society. (Foucault 1990a, 93)

Foucault's approach is sharply in contrast to a functionalism that makes assumptions of normative equilibrium. For Foucault power relations are historically contingent and strategic. They function on a local scale in a given historical and social context. Power is local in the sense that it is never global, never characterized by a transcendent unity of agency or will, never rooted in a structure or process conceptually prior to its manifestations. However, power is not local in the sense of being localized, of being a property or attribute of specific classes or institutions (Deleuze 1988, 26-7). Power's relation to economic interests is not, then, a simple one of class-based domination: "les relations de pouvoir « servent » en effet, mais non point parce qu'elles sont « au service » d'un intérêt économique donné comme primitif, mais parce qu'elles peuvent être utilisées dans des stratégies . . ." (Foucault 1994, 3:425). Power is not an essence but a relation, not linked solely to centre or periphery but diffuse.

With this conception of power Foucault reframes rather than ignores issues of social stratification. As Deleuze notes, Foucault's

new functionalism or functional analysis certainly does not deny the existence of class and class-struggle but illustrates it in a totally different way. . . . We are shown 'innumerable points of confrontation, focuses of instability, each of which has its own risks of conflict, of struggles, of an at least temporary inversion of the power relations.' Instead of analogy, homology or univocality, we have a new kind of possible continuity. In brief, power is not homogeneous but can be defined only by the particular points through which it passes. (Deleuze 1988, 25)

Social stratification is an important theme in this dissertation, given its focus on the governmental function of the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor. We will consider class and status boundaries not as basic sites of conflicting interests but as place-markers of strategic positions, elements in a mutually constitutive interplay

among discourses, practices, and effects. Social relations are only one element of an analysis of power: Foucault looks at systems of differentiations (traditions of status, economic differences), means of control, objectives, forms of institutionalization, and degrees of rationalization (Foucault 1983a, 223).

Foucault's conception of power is useful for exploring issues of agency because it is defined in terms of action rather than interests: "what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead it acts upon their actions" (Foucault 1983a, 220). For Foucault, governmentality is based in this relation between power and agency.

The early modern concept of "police" reflected this relation: "la « police » désignait un programme de rationalité gouvernementale. On peut le définir comme le projet de créer un système de réglementation de la conduite générale des individus . . ." (Foucault 1994, 4:272). The idea of police, referring to the governing of conduct, was commonly applied to poor relief. One of the many late eighteenth-century philanthropic societies, for example, stated that its "great object [was] . . . to unite the purposes of *charity* with those of *industry and police*" (*Account* 1797, 3, emphasis in original).

Government, power, and conduct are intimately related for Foucault, and each is closely linked to agency. The relevance of these issues for the argument of this dissertation is clear in the following passage:

Perhaps the equivocal nature of the term *conduct* [*conduire: se conduire*] is one of the best aids for coming to terms with the specificity of power relations. For to "conduct" is at the same time to "lead" others (according to mechanisms of coercion which are, to varying degrees, strict) and a way of behaving within a more or less open field of possibilities. The exercise of power consists in guiding

the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome. Basically power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to the other than a question of government. This word must be allowed the very broad meaning which it had in the sixteenth century. "Government" did not refer only to political structures or to the management of states; rather it designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed: the government of children, of souls, of communities, of families, of the sick. It did not only cover the legitimately constituted forms of political or economic subjection, but also modes of action, more or less considered and calculated, which were destined to act upon the possibilities of action of other people. To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others. (Foucault 1983a, 220-21, emphasis in original; cf. 1994 3:635ff., 819)

Techniques for governing conduct were developed as agency became more important to conceptions of order.

These ideas are of special relevance to a consideration of early modern charity.

The poor were an object of government, in this broader sense. In this conduct of the conduct of the poor, we find a clear example of power's role in the mutual constitution of new conceptions of self and society. Foucault explores power relations by looking at sites of resistance. We will look at idleness as the characteristic of the undeserving poor most explicitly addressed by both philanthropic and governmental institutions of poor relief. The discourses and practices of the idle poor involved an attempt to discipline the poor and reflected broader processes of the constitution of individuals as amenable to such control. Changing conceptions of agency involved both views of the effects of individual actions on social structures and a point of purchase for disciplinary strategies to act upon the actions of individuals. Our thesis is that governing the conduct of the poor was not just a project of shaping paupers. It reflected and played a role in shaping a broader conception of the self as an agent whose orientation to activity was essential to

the maintenance of social order.

Weber: rationalization and conduct of life

The work of Max Weber has influenced the study of these issues. Weber's work provides important resources for two reasons. First, he situates 'labour' in an analysis of relations between rationalization processes and forms of social action. This analysis has shaped subsequent discussions of agency and modernity. Second, reading Weber's work in the light of recent commentaries, we are led to complement it by addressing the discourse of idleness in a more rigorous manner. We will follow Foucault's genealogical method, but Weber's insights will serve as important guides.

Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1958a) argued that the worldly asceticism of Puritans, and other Protestant groups, contributed to the emergence of a rationalized way of life. This methodical conduct of life, formed through a process of substantive rationalization, was an important factor contributing to the emergence of modern capitalism. More significant sociologically is Weber's claim that this inner-worldly asceticism was transformed as processes of rationalization became institutionalized. The erosion of traditional personal forms of social affiliation undermined the value-rational basis on which the ethical demands of such relations depended. The resulting dominance of formal rationality left no space for the ethical and religious idea of the calling.

Two clarifications of Weber's work will allow us to develop a parallel with

Foucault. First, Weber did not hold a view of rationalization as a uniform and universal historical phenomenon. He emphasized the variety and contingency of rationalities (Gordon 1987, 293-94). As Weber noted, "We have to remind ourselves in advance that 'rationalism' may mean very different things"; "In fact, one may . . . rationalize life from fundamentally different basic points of view and in very different directions. Rationalism is a historical concept which covers a whole world of different things" (Weber 1958b, 293; 1958a, 77-8).

On the one hand, this points to Weber's typology of rationalities. Weber is primarily concerned with analyzing the conditions that lead to the institutionalization of values such that, under certain conditions, methodical ways of life are promoted. Rational developments are only preserved in the long term if they are connected in certain ways to action. Weber analyzes this connection using different ideas of both rationality and social action. On the other hand, this points to Weber's view that the historical unfolding of rationalization processes is highly variable and must be studied from the perspective of specific historical and social circumstances (Gordon 1987, 312).

We should not place too much emphasis on the historical discontinuity of rationalization processes. For example, Wilhelm Hennis has been criticized for suggesting that Weber "embraced the postulate of a general world-historical threshold separating a (traditional) universe of the ethical from a (modern) life without ethics or ethical meaning"; Colin Gordon suggests that Weber's most prominent theme was more general, namely "the relation between the ethically meaningful and non-meaningful components of social action" (Gordon 1987, 312).

Regardless of Weber's position, positing a sharp discontinuity of this sort is problematic for historical reasons. Hennis' emphasizes a transition from traditional personal forms of social affiliation to more impersonal ones:

Weber repeatedly expresses the idea . . . that ethical demands can be made of every *personal* relationship. . . . But it is . . . the "cosmos of the rational state machine (*Staatsanstalt*) which no longer has the character, in any form" of an order to which one can make ethical demands. (Hennis 1987, 67, citing Weber 1978, 600)

Perceptions of the early modern period as a time of increasing depersonalization of social relations have been tempered by recent work that suggests that these processes must be considered over a larger time frame. The issue is important but must be placed in context of a more specific analysis of social relations. For example, Susan Reynolds argues that the ideas of 'fief' and 'vassal' have been distorted by modern historiography, overemphasizing the importance of interpersonal relations and obscuring the processes of bureaucratization that emerged from the eleventh century (1994). At the modern end of the historical spectrum, Ulrich Beck argues that analyses of modernity have failed to recognize industrial society's integral reliance on and maintenance of traditional social forms, especially gender and family roles (1992).

This prompts us to look even more closely at processes of depersonalization, at the shift from gift to market, to go beyond generalizations and to engage these phenomena in a specific historical and social context. We will do this below, where we analyze specific characteristics of exchange relations.

Foucault's genealogical method is very helpful here because it avoids essentialist or teleological generalizations and closely engages historical discourses and practices on

their own terms. This applies to the concept of rationalization: "I think that we must limit the sense of the word 'rationalisation' to an instrumental and relative use . . . and to see how forms of rationalisation become embodied in practices, or systems of practices" (cited in Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983, 133). Regarding a parallel between Weber and Foucault, these points underline a central premise: their analyses can be read as commensurate only if we treat rationalization as a local and discontinuous process. This justifies and orients our analysis of changing views of agency and order in the specific context of early modern discourses and practices of charity and poor relief.

The second clarification of Weber is regarding the place of the theme of "conduct of life" in his work. By arguing that his theme is central, we will further enlist Weber in our analysis of emerging techniques of governing conduct.

The theme of rationality is, of course, very important for Weber (Kalberg 1980; Habermas 1984; Schluchter 1981; 1987). However, Wilhelm Hennis argues that, notwithstanding the importance of rationality, Weber's central interest is "the establishment of the genesis of modern men . . . via a historical-differential investigation" (1983, 156). To this end, Hennis argues, Weber explored the relation between personality and life-orders, finding that "it is the conditions for the way and conduct of life *prior* to interests and ideals that direct human conduct": as a result, "*the* central concept in Weberian sociology is that of conduct of life" (Hennis 1987, 60, 59). Of course, Hennis' reading of Weber is as single-minded in its emphasis on a key concept as is, for example, Schluchter. Hennis champions 'conduct of life' instead of 'rationalization.' However, he has done a valuable service by emphasizing the theme of methodical self-formation in

Weber's work.

Hennis' reading draws out a marked resonance between Weber's views and those of Michel Foucault (Gordon 1987, 295). Foucault's analyses of the relations between discursive regimes and disciplinary technologies and his later work on the ethical self-formation of the subject both show similarities to Weber's analyses of the effects of legal-rational domination on the formation of a methodical conduct of life.

We can clarify this parallel through looking more closely at Hennis' argument. His emphasis of the anthropological dimension of Weber's project points out a potential conflict between the views of Weber and Foucault, one that centres on the nature of the subject. Hennis argues that "Weber's 'central' interest is in the development of *Menschenheit* and is . . . directed towards *anthropological* knowledge. . . . What--'spiritually,' 'qualitatively'--will Man become?" (Hennis 1983, 158). This raises the possibility that Weber holds an essentialist view of human nature, a view of a universal, ahistorical, acultural human subject that serves as the substrate of social action and, ultimately, of rationalization processes. Mitchell Dean argues that Weber did hold this sort of essentialist view and that, as a result, any parallel between Weber and Foucault founders: "At a methodological and metahistorical level their plans are . . . fundamentally incommensurate" (1994, 60).

However, Weber's analyses are arguably open to a non-essentialist view of the subject, thus removing this objection. Hennis seems to lean this way in the emphasis he places on the apparently contingent relation between the human subject and social relations in Weber's work. Weber says that "Without exception every order of social

relations . . . [is] ultimately to be examined in terms of the human type to which it, by way of external or internal (motivational) selection, provides the optimal chances of becoming the dominant type" (cited in Hennis 1983, 169).

The relativization of disenchantment is also implied by this reading of Weber. Gordon argues, contrary to Hennis, that, for Weber, disenchantment marks a transition that takes on different forms in different historical, cultural, and social contexts. More generally, "Weber's whole approach assumes . . . the continuing temporal and regional variability of sociological problems" (Gordon 1987, 313). Once we accept that rationalities are multiple and must be examined in specific historical and correlate contexts, we can let go of the postulate that an ahistorical subject serves as the substrate of rationality and social action. Granted, that is, that rationalization processes work themselves out differently in different social and historical circumstances, we are led to consider the possibility that social relations and the subject are similarly contingent and mutually constituting.

This is where Foucault is especially useful. Foucault's strength is his sustained exploration of the variability of important sociological problems that are often seen as invariant. He analyzes the discursive and social constitution of the subject. Moreover, he emphasizes the importance of disciplinary practices brought to bear on the poor of early modern England. As far as we accept the historical and cross-cultural contingency of both rationalization processes and the social constitution of the human subject, Weber's and Foucault's approaches seem commensurate.

Conclusion

Weber's sociology is sufficiently complex, with its subtle balance of materialist and idealist elements, to provide resources for a Foucaultian approach. This not the only way to read Weber, but many of his analyses, concepts and insights are especially fruitful in dialogue with Foucault. We are justified, then, in drawing from both approaches.

In this work, we proceed not by denying the essentialist subject, but by withholding our assent to it as an initial premise. As Judith Butler notes, "Sociological discussions have conventionally sought to understand the notion of the person in terms of an agency that claims ontological priority to the various roles and functions through which it assumes social viability and meaning" (Butler 1990, 16). We will not presuppose this sort of conception of agency because it leads to a theoretical bind between agency and structure. To deny that agency is historically and cross-culturally contingent is, at the very least, to risk providing a limited account.

We will begin by taking 'agency' as an open place-marker for the relation between individual activity and order. The second part of the dissertation will emphasize changing conceptions of order. The third part will show how agency came to be central to new conceptions of order. In the eighth chapter we will orient our analysis of time and agency by looking closely at a late medieval text, *Piers Plowman*. This fourteenth-century text will be contrasted, in the ninth chapter, with the writings of a representative Puritan, Richard Rogers. The analysis of these two texts will frame the contrast between conceptions of time and agency.

To, sum up, Weber's typologies of rationality and social action link his themes of overt domination by a legal-rational order and self-domination through worldly asceticism. This link needs one of two things to work. On the one hand, in following Weber, we might postulate a view of a universal ahistorical subject that can serve as the substrate for rationality and social action. However, this alternative forecloses on important avenues of exploration and is incommensurate with Foucault. On the other hand, we might work with a view of the subject as socially and discursively constituted. This suggests the need to complement Weber by discussing, as Foucault does, the multifarious local points of purchase by which the rationalization of social institutions shapes and is shaped by the rationalization of the conduct of life. It is here that we will look for the significance of early modern discourses and practices of "the idle poor."

The door is open for an analysis of the discourse and practices oriented to the idle poor. Specifically, a genealogy of idleness will suggest that changes in conceptions of agency were inseparable from the threshold of disenchantment and the advent of modernity in the west. Again, the second part of this dissertation will examine the erosion of an older view of order that emphasized transactional relations within an ordered matrix of social positions. The third part will explore the place of agency in a new conception of order, one in which processes of governmentality played a central role.

Chapter 2

Asceticism and Time

Drawing on Weber, Foucault and Richard K. Fenn, this chapter clarifies the theoretical frame for our analysis of the role of Puritan worldly asceticism in forming a new conception of individual agency. We will return to a close reading of Puritan views in the ninth chapter, at which point we will be able to situate them in the context of changing views of charity, social relations and order.

With the Puritans we find both an emphasis on the correct temporal orientation of individual activity and an explicit relation between social boundaries and this orientation of agency. The first chapter argued that Weber's analysis of rationalization processes in modernity is commensurate with a Foucaultian genealogy of the modern subject. In this chapter we consider several issues in order to clarify a key moment in these historical developments, the Puritan orientation of agency. The issues we will consider are the following: the claim that modernity can be characterized by a specific conception of time; the role of Puritan worldly asceticism in fostering this attitude to time; the importance of social boundaries to this development; and parallels between Weber's emphasis on the formation of methodical conduct and Foucault's idea of self-formation through asceticism. Foucault points us to the diffusion of power relations through processes of governmentality that govern the conduct of individuals and populations. We have examined the discourses of the idle poor to support this sort of account. This chapter, along with the ninth, will clarify the sense of agency involved in the Puritan emphasis on

“diligance and constancie” in conduct (Rogers 1603, 156). The tenth chapter will argue that this reformation of agency in and through time was institutionalized in the mechanisms of eighteenth-century poor relief.

Time and modernity

These developments are linked to changing conceptions of time. The reformation of faulty agency was conducted in and through time. Cultural anthropology has begun to clarify the wide variety of ways in which time can be conceptualized, reckoned, and linked to the strategies of actors or the structures of order and power (Munn 1992). Modernity has been characterized in terms of changing conceptions of time. Theorists point to quantifiable 'abstract time: "the reification of time . . . the political core of which is the elite use of mechanical clock-time in the interest of domination" (Reid 1973, 202; cf. DeGrazia 1962; Gurvitch 1964); "the spatialization of thought and experience" associated with "the conversion of time factors to numbers" (Gross 1981-82, 59, 65; cf. 1982); "The commodification of time . . . [that] holds the key to the deepest transformations of day-to-day social life that are brought about by the emergence of capitalism" (Giddens¹ cited in Postone 1993, 215).

Lewis Mumford argued that the development of mechanisms for keeping regular time in the medieval period led to the development of abstract time and to its sway over

¹ Giddens, Anthony. 1981. *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*. London and Basingstoke. p. 90.

human activity: "the monasteries helped to give human enterprise the regular collective beat and rhythm of the machine; for the clock is not merely a means of keeping track of the hours, but of synchronizing the actions of men" (1934, 13-14; cf. Landes 1983). St. Bernard and St. Anthony held that nothing was more precious than time; Alberti recommended the wise use of time for utilitarian reasons (Delumeau 1983, 42-43). In the early modern period, attention to time shaped the emerging bourgeois ethic: "To become 'as regular as clockwork' was the bourgeois ideal" (Mumford 1934, 16). Emerging industrialization and capitalism fostered a time that uniformly measured activity rather than being a result of it (Thompson 1967).

Moishe Postone has developed this theme in a Marxist context, arguing that the emergence of abstract time did not simply result from technological innovation but was inseparable from changes in social relations. He argues that, in early modern Europe, concrete time, measured by natural cycles and the task at hand, was replaced by abstract time, measured by timepieces, independent of natural cycles, and closely implicated with new forms of social relations: "time expenditure is transformed from a result *of* activity into a normative measure *for* activity" (Postone 1993, 211, emphasis in original; cf. Postone and Brick 1993). These points prompt us to turn our attention to the general relation between individual activity, social order and time.

The transition in charitable practices to be discussed in the fifth chapter, from an exchange of prayers for alms to institutionalized poor relief, involved a shift in this sort of relation. Arthur Lovejoy noted that time and transcendent order are incommensurate:

From the eternal logical necessity belonging to an essence there is, in truth, *no*

valid argument to any conclusion about existence in time. For time itself is alien to that necessity; it is an alogical character of nature. . . . Becoming and change, as such, simply do not fit into an eternal rational order. (1957, 154)

Despite the force of Lovejoy's point in logical terms, the practical elaboration and interrelation of distinct spheres of temporality has great bearing on the relation between action, social structures and the perceived foundation of order. Durkheim noted that time can be used to encode the distinction between sacred and profane (Zerubavel 1981, 103). Edmund Leach argued that ritual serves to frame certain times as sacred by bracketing them within liminal suspensions of everyday activities (1961). The fifth chapter will argue that the indefinitely deferred consumation of the exchange of prayers for alms linked worldly time and order to the heavenly city.

With the Puritans, God's transcendent order was brought into the world through a sanctification rooted in the correct temporal orientation of agency. Worldly and godly time were not separated by the gulf between this life and the afterlife. They had become two different paths for guiding activity within the world. The Puritans blurred another important distinction as well, that between temporal norms and temporal experience (cf. Maltz 1968, 91). The temporal orientation of agency fostered by the Puritans explicitly linked the two: a certain form of temporal experience was in accord with and embodied God's command.

Time and agency

We are suggesting here that Puritan attitudes to the godly use of time were a form

of governing conduct that fit well with emerging techniques of governmentality. To become so, they had to go through a process of secularization. The tenth chapter will argue that this process manifested itself in eighteenth-century practices of poor relief.

This section of the chapter addresses a criticism of Foucault in order to clear the ground for an analysis of agency. Foucault has been criticized for emptying the notion of the subject to such an extent that he is unable to provide an account of human agency. In this section we will clarify and counter this critique by engaging Foucault's ethics. This will involve exploring the issue of time. This section argues that his account of asceticism, the self-formation of the subject, is open to and, in fact, presupposes an attentiveness to temporality.

Giddens follows Lévi-Strauss in distinguishing between the reversible time of repetition, temporality as reproduction, and the linear time of history, temporality as social change (1987a, 144; cf. 1987b, 212). Time is not an environment within which social events occur; "it is constitutive of forms of social activity" (1987a, 144). Modernity is, in part, characterized by the radical separation of time and history. Historicity comes to the fore as a mode of knowledge and action. Objects and relations, perceived as having emerged historically, are acted upon in order to bring about social effects that are themselves perceived as inherently historical. According to Giddens, social institutions take shape through this process:

the ubiquity of organizations is bound up with the significance of historicity within the culture of modernity. Historicity means using history to make history. The social world is not taken as given, but as intrinsically malleable in respect of the accumulation of knowledge about that world. When this outlook is regularized as a discursively available foundation of system reproduction, we have

the core of an 'organizational culture.' (Giddens 1987a, 155)

For Giddens, historicity frames processes of structuration in modernity.

Foucault also emphasizes the unique significance of historicity to western modernity (Foucault 1984c; 1986; Gordon 1986). However, according to Giddens, Foucault's effective history separates time from history in a way that is unable to provide an account of human agency:

To have separated time from history, to have shown that there are properties of signification systems that exist outside of time-space, and to have connected these with a re-examination of the nature of the human subject--these are major achievements of structuralism and post-structuralism. But the results are not completely satisfying. . . . No real unification is achieved between the diagnosis of epistemes as existing 'out of time' and the generative processes involved in historical organization and change. Having decentred the subject, Foucault is no more able to develop a cogent account of human agency than are other writers in structuralist and post-structuralist traditions. That 'history has no subject' can readily be accepted. But Foucault's history tends to have no active subjects at all. (Giddens 1987b, 214)

On this account, Foucault leaves the subject too much the pawn of anonymous relations of power/knowledge to be characterized in terms of agency. According to this critique, the historicity of modernity is a mode of subjectification through which the unfolding of history itself is coopted by the disciplinary techniques that characterize the present. The trajectory of 'having become what one is' becomes another element of a series that constitutes human beings as subject and object.

However, this critique misreads Foucault. It fails to consider the full spectrum of his writings. In addition, it misses the ambiguity of the discursively constituted subject: "There are two meanings of the word *subject*: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both

meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to" (Foucault 1983a, 212). The latter meaning points to the role of the self in the very process of self-formation that enables these relations of power. The emergence of processes of governmentality involved a new constitution of the subject. A closer consideration of the themes of time and agency in Foucault's works will clarify this.

In his later works, Foucault offers a general analysis of the formation and care of the self (1983b; 1990, 26ff.). He distinguishes between moral code, ethical action and the processes of self-formation that orient individuals to these. Foucault emphasizes the latter. He provides four axes for ethical analysis: first, the "ethical substance," that aspect of the individual that is worked on by ethics (desire, intentions, feelings etc.); second, the "mode of subjection," that which is used to internalize these concerns (Scripture, reason, conviction, etc.); third, "self-forming activity" or "asceticism," that which is done to eradicate desire, moderate acts, etc.; and fourth, the "telos" (purity, autonomy salvation, etc.). We are interested here in the third of these dimensions of governing the conduct of the self. This concept of asceticism resonates with Weber's emphasis on the formation of a methodical conduct of life, and it will allow us to examine the temporal orientation of agency.

A potential criticism appears here. Foucault's emphasis on self-formation is premised on a radical freedom of the self that seems incommensurate with the analyses of power, discipline and domination in his works of the 1970s (Pasewark 1993, 35ff.). Any claim that Foucault pays explicit attention to agency runs counter to what has been called Foucault's "spatialization of language" (Flynn 1991). In many of his works, Foucault

relies on spatial metaphors and on the analysis of institutional spaces where disciplinary practices take place. He explicitly turned away from temporal transitions to an analysis of space in *Naissance de la clinique* (Foucault 1975, ix; cf. Pasewark 1993, 46n168).

Foucault's spatialization of language is intimately connected to the archaeological and genealogical methodologies that he developed in the late sixties and the seventies. His use of terms like 'displacement,' 'transposition,' 'field,' and 'domain' allowed him to analyze synchronic relations of power and knowledge.

Foucault's prioritization of space over time was a strategic decision: spatial metaphors provide a methodological focus on discontinuities between discursive regimes; and the analysis of institutional spaces allows him to centre his studies on the body rather than on *mentalités*. Spatial metaphors served an important purpose in allowing him to shake free from certain limiting presuppositions. In doing this Foucault was in the vanguard of what has become an increasingly prominent trend in sociological theory.²

² A recent review points to "the increasing, and largely unacknowledged, currency of spatial metaphors in contemporary sociological theory as a feature that distinguishes the latter from earlier, classical and mid-twentieth century, forms of theory. . ." (Friedrich Silber 1995). The use of spatial metaphors in general seems positively correlated with three tendencies: first, the attempting to claim a scientific status for sociological theory; second, relational theories; and third, attempts to break out of theoretical tendencies perceived as obsolete and limiting (*Ibid.*). Foucault's usage fits the third of these cases especially well, although there is no reference to his work in this otherwise excellent article.

Foucault's use of spatial metaphors serves primarily to orient his concerns with historical discontinuities in the relations between power and knowledge: "Endeavouring . . . to decipher discourse through the use of spatial, strategic metaphors enables one to grasp at precisely the points at which discourses are transformed in, through and on the basis of relations of power" (Foucault 1980, 70).

We can accept some advantages of Foucault's use of spatial metaphors without committing ourselves to its more limiting aspects. His spatialization of language informs a method that might be fruitfully applied to the analysis of time as well as space. Metaphors such as 'displacement' and 'transposition' are especially useful for Foucault's move away from diachronic analysis; so, this aspect of Foucault's method is not relevant for our present purposes. However, metaphors such as 'continuity,' 'discontinuity,' and 'spaces of action' can be used to good effect in considering issues of temporality. Specifically they have value given that Foucault's ethical work is necessarily committed to a temporal dimension of analysis. This opens the door to a genealogy of idleness.

Weber and Foucault: Asceticism and governing conduct

As a sociological concept, 'asceticism' points to a general type of social action encompassing this Puritan view of agency. This chapter looks at views of asceticism in the works of Weber, Foucault, and Richard K. Fenn in order to contrast activity oriented by an antecedent transcendent order with activity oriented toward a future worldly semblance of this order. Fenn's work will clarify the centrality of changing views of

social relations to the developments we are considering.

Weber makes a categorical distinction between asceticism and mysticism (Weber 1978, 7-9, 541-50). These two types of religious experience stand in different relations to ethical action, to types of rationalization, and to the world. Ascetics see themselves as instruments of God, mystics as vessels of God's grace. Asceticism is an active quality of conduct, whether inner-worldly or world rejecting, and it is oriented to activity within the world; mysticism is a subjective condition, contemplative, and involves flight from the world. For the ascetic, action is seen as a responsibility and a means to certify sanctification; for the mystic, action is a temptation and the state of grace is maintained against the pressure of the world and the activities that it entails. Weber's typology was elaborated in a series of comparative studies of rationalization processes in the world religions. Inner worldly asceticism, which for Weber is manifested above all by the Puritans and other Calvinist sects, is especially effective in fostering a methodical rational conduct of life. Only substantive rationality can lever conduct free from allegiance to tradition or interests. The Puritans, by placing a transcendent premium on worldly activity, sought to act out the heavenly city here on Earth and to do so, as John Downname wrote, "daily, continually and constantly" (1616, 43).

Foucault's analysis of the care and formation of the self also appeals to the idea of asceticism. "Self-forming activity" or "asceticism" is that which is done to eradicate desire or moderate acts. It is the manner of working on the self. Foucault attempts to sketch a history of "techniques" and "technologies" of the self. This is one side of governmentality: "Just as it is necessary to study and compare the different techniques of

the production of objects and the direction of men by men through government, one must also question techniques of the self" (Foucault 1983b, 250). However, the two aspects of governmentality are mutually implicated: "For example, if we take educational institutions, we realize that one is managing others and teaching them to manage themselves" (*Ibid.*). In this way, eighteenth-century practices of charity and poor relief sought to inculcate in the poor specific techniques of governing their conduct. We will elaborate on this point in the final chapter.

Weber's idea of the formation of a methodical conduct of life and Foucault's idea of self-formation through asceticism both emphasize the governing of individual conduct. To clarify the case for their similarity, however, we must address two differences between these views. First, Foucault's term is much broader, referring to any "means by which we can change ourselves in order to become ethical subjects" (Foucault 1983b, 239). The point at which this more general concept of asceticism connects with Weber's is with respect to specific characteristics of techniques of the self. Foucault points to a Christian hermeneutic of the self:

Il y a trois grands types d'examen de soi: premièrement, l'examen par lequel on évalue la correspondance entre les pensées et la réalité (Descartes); deuxièmement, l'examen par lequel on estime la correspondance entre les pensées et les règles (Sénèque); troisièmement, l'examen par lequel on apprécie le rapport entre une pensée cachée et une impureté de l'âme. C'est avec le troisième type d'examen que commence l'herméneutique de soi chrétienne et son déchiffrement des pensées intimes. (1994, 4: 810)³

³ Foucault's analyses of the importance of Christian practices of confession bears some resemblance to Benjamin Nelson's study of the medieval elaboration of casuistry, conscience, and the cure of souls as the central locus of the development of cultural

This Christian technique for examining the self became, with the Puritans, an especially effective technique for governing the self: constant and diligent attention to the godly use of time gave Puritan worldly asceticism a temporal dimension that provided a purchase for emerging processes of governmentality.

The second dimension of difference between Foucault and Weber's concepts of asceticism relates to a basic divergence in problematics. Foucault suggests that their two perspectives differ regarding the ways that knowledge and renunciation intersect in processes of rationalization:

Max Weber a posé cette question: si l'on veut adopter un comportement rationnel et régler son action en fonction de principes vrais, à quelle part de soi doit-on renoncer? De quel ascétisme se paie la raison? À quel type d'ascétisme doit-on soumettre? J'ai, pour ma part, posé la question inverse: comment certains types de savoir sur soi sont-ils devenus le prix à payer pour certaines formes d'interdits? Que doit-on connaître de soi afin d'accepter le renoncement? (Foucault 1994, 4:784)

On the one hand, Foucault draws this distinction too sharply. For Weber, rationality is not the aim of asceticism but a characteristic of correlated forms of social action. Nor is Foucault's own approach as unidirectional as this passage suggests. Asceticism is not the aim of self-knowledge but a characteristic of correlated forms of governing one's conduct. On the other hand, Foucault draws attention to an important point here. His work more clearly engages the extent to which techniques of self-formation manifest a historically contingent constitution of the subject that is implicated in the emergence of modern disciplinary mechanisms.

With the case of worldly asceticism, the convergence of Weber and Foucault's

systems (Nelson 1981, 43ff.).

approaches is more evident than their disparity. Foucault points to a relevant aspect of Christianity's influence on the modern self: "Nous avons hérité de la morale chrétienne, qui fait renoncement de soi la condition du salut. Paradoxalement, se connaître soi-même a constitué un moyen universel de renoncer à soi" (Foucault 1994, 4:788). By emphasizing the temporal continuity of this self-examination, Puritans linked knowledge to agency in a way that provides a point of convergence for Foucault's and Weber's analyses of asceticism.

Foucault's idea of governmentality, by linking the ascetic formation of individuals to the disciplinary mechanisms that function throughout society, addresses an important moment of Weber's argument in *The Protestant Ethic*. For Weber, the value-rational conduct of life that emerged among the Puritans was generalized in the wake of their success in worldly endeavours, a secondary effect of a consistent attentiveness to sanctification framed by sectarian status boundaries. The development of a methodical conduct of life in this one sphere provided the impetus for the rationalization of social institutions, a process that converged with increasing bureaucratization and the legal-rational legitimation of authority. Foucault's study of governmentality addresses this merging of concerns with individual conduct and rational bureaucratic techniques of discipline.

Weber often describes the manner in which the Protestant ethic was generalized in sketchy terms: it "favoured the development of," "paved the way for," "deliver[ed]," and "put a halo around" the spirit of capitalism (Weber 1958a, 174; 1958b, 321-22). More concretely, Weber proposes two important mechanisms. On the one hand, the methodical

rational conduct of life developed within some religious groups "had the psychological effect of freeing the acquisition of goods from the inhibitions of traditionalistic ethics" (1958a, 171). On the other hand, the Protestant sects, and "similarly exclusive associations and clubs," provided social leverage for the emergence of this new ethic: "They served to diffuse and to maintain the bourgeois capitalist ethos among the broad strata of the middle classes . . ." (Weber 1958b, 308-9).

This second point, often not sufficiently emphasized, for example by Habermas, is crucial. Sectarian forms of social affiliation define status boundaries in normative terms. With the Puritans, the 'household of faith' was delimited by normative adherence to a methodical rational way of life. This rationalization of social institutions, first in the religious sects and later in secular associations, was central to the spread of this conduct of life. As Stephen Berger argues, "the social organization of the sect is the crucial link between Protestant theology and its vicissitudes, on the one hand, and the rise of the capitalist spirit, on the other" (1971).

We will consider two separate processes here. First, the Puritan value-rational conduct of life became generalized beyond the limited sphere of the sects. Second, it became increasingly subsumed under the formal rational authority and means-end ethical reasoning characteristic of modernity. Foucault's concept of governmentality makes a useful contribution to the examination of these developments by clarifying the relation between, on the one hand, the increasing prominence of practical-rational at the expense of value-rational social action and, on the other hand, the subsumption of this shift under the formal rationalization of social institutions. That is, the elision of religious

motivations for methodical conduct at the individual level and the institutional framing of this development at the level of populations both involved the governance of conduct. This issue will receive fuller treatment in the final chapter.

Asceticism and modern temporal experience

Richard K. Fenn argues that Puritan conceptions of time were an important moment in a general process of secularization that is characteristic of modernity (1995). He makes an important contribution to the issues we have been considering by linking changing perceptions of time to changes in social relations. We will draw out and add to this aspect of his work.

Fenn argues that the development of the medieval doctrine of purgatory is ultimately responsible for a central characteristic of modernity, "an overburdened awareness of time" (Fenn 1995, 4; cf. LeGoff 1984). Fenn's thesis is that the doctrine of purgatory became slowly secularized, so that the "process of proving, testing, probing, and purging is now the task of the living" (*Ibid.*, 78).

Fenn places important emphasis on the Puritans, using Weber's discussion of asceticism and mysticism. He emphasizes the extent to which, for the Puritans, the sacralization of the world was correlated with a distancing of God. They lived in the world of work, consumption, and marriage, but they attempted to be attentive to a God who was elsewhere: "everyday life is itself to be lived as though in the sight of--and for the sake of--a God who is distantly affectionate. . . . The distance provides a reminder of

God's absence even in a world in which God is reputed to be present" (Fenn 1995, 82). According to Fenn, this process of re-enchanting the world is a key moment in the secularization of purgatory. The Puritans "disenchanted the spiritual world of the medieval church"; at the same time, they gave activity within the world a spiritual quality, because it provided an opportunity to testify to one's sanctification through a process of spiritual testing: "divines like Baxter reenchanted this world with the residues of heaven" (*Ibid.*, 81).

For this reason, Fenn appeals to Weber's analysis of charismatic authority, in which he finds a precedent for "processes of enchantment continu[ing] unrecognized and unabated" (Fenn 1995, 34). In another subtle permutation of his central theme, Fenn characterizes the Puritan rechantment of the world as a tension between spiritual presence and absence. In this tension, where Charles Taylor sees the origins of the "punctual" and "radically reflexive" self, Fenn finds changing attitudes to time (Taylor 1989; cf. Fenn 1995, 83).

Fenn's argument must be complemented with a more careful analysis of the link between asceticism and social relations. For Fenn, "sheer duration" characterizes the medieval purgatorial experience of temporality (Fenn 1995, 52). Yet, he says the same of much later developments: "Time for Locke had become sheer duration" (*Ibid.*, 17). We need a more nuanced account of shifts over the intervening centuries. A contrast between *Piers Plowman*, in the eighth chapter, and the writings of a representative Puritan divine, in the ninth, will provide a basis for this.

The disembedding of individuals from traditional forms of social affiliation, as for

example with the voluntary associations of the Puritans, was correlated with a rationalized orientation of the self to time. Fenn's discussion of the Puritans underlines this point. He holds that "In the Reformation the West gained its own distinctive approach to time" (*Ibid.*, 81). In addition, the erosion of a transcendent component in exchange relations relativized the position of individuals with respect to time. This claim looks forward to the fifth chapter's analysis of temporal aspects of the exchange of alms for prayers.

Fenn's argument hinges here on his definition of 'religion.' However, the definition and the argument are ambivalent. He defines religion as "the social institution which adjudicates the tension between the presence and the absence of the self and of others . . ." (1995, 39, cf. 10, 34, 42). This conception of religion must appeal to some notion of transcendence. Otherwise, it fails to distinguish religious from other social institutions. Giddens, for example, sees all social systems as addressing a similar formulation of the problem of order, that is, "the conditions under which time and space are organised so as to connect presence and absence" (Giddens 1990, 14; cf. 18). We need a clearer account from Fenn of the specificity of religious presence and absence.

Fenn provides this by arguing that "the modern self emerged as Westerners began to lose their sense of being in spiritual conversation with unseen spirits and with departed souls" (Fenn 1995, 30). This is the moment of transcendence in Fenn's conception of religion. The relation between this emerging self and this loss of others was a complex one rooted in "the secularization of purgatory" (*Ibid.*, 16). The formation of a self implies its differentiation from others. Fenn's originality lies in his linking three claims. First,

these others were above all departed souls and spirits, that is, others who were not entirely of this world. It follows, second, that the doctrine of purgatory was a key conceptual development influencing this formation of the modern self. Third, this self-formation was characterized especially by new attitudes to time: it was the "constant awareness of the presence of unseen forces that made time itself so loaded with significance and fraught with consequence" (*Ibid.*, 76).

At the heart of Fenn's analysis of the secularization of purgatory is a proposed axis along which temporal experience varies historically and cross-culturally. Fenn posits a "continuum of religious experience" whose one extreme is represented by the case where the divine is totally present, available for immediate access. Here "time becomes merged with eternity" (Fenn 1995, 34). The other extreme of the continuum is represented by the total disappearance, not just the absence, of the sacred. The primary factor resulting in movement along this continuum is the mediating presence of religion:

When the presence of the supernatural or the divine is felt more keenly in its absence, time begins to enter into the calculations of religion and into religious experience. Periods of concentrated presence, e.g., during the conduct of religious rituals, are experienced as relatively 'full' or timeless, whereas periods in which the absence of the divine is felt far more keenly than its presence are relatively 'empty'; then time drags. As rituals become more closely associated with everyday life in politics, work, education, and the family, time becomes intensified; one might use the word 'sacralized' to convey the awareness of activity *sub specie aeternitatis*. When activities are carried out under the auspices of religion but without strong ritualization, those activities remain serious, and the actors involved are exhorted to be conscientious, but the presence of the divine is felt more keenly in its absence than in its presence. When the presence of invisible powers is experienced in the absence of outward and visible signs of their activity, of course, their presence is felt as uncanny. There is a continuum of religious experience, then, that runs from the presumably total immersion of time in eternity, through the sacred, the serious, the uncanny, and, finally, the empty. Each of these forms of religious experience is associated with a distinctive, if not

wholly unique, awareness of time. (Fenn 1995, 35)

Given Fenn's definition of religion, this spectrum links changing religious and temporal experience: the more present the divine, the more full time will be, from sacred through serious to uncanny.

However, this spectrum is problematic on two accounts. First, it is more idealized than descriptive. Neither of the endpoints of the spectrum ("total immersion of time in eternity" and "the empty") reflect human experience. On the one hand, the divine is not totally accessible in this world even to mystics. The sacred necessarily stands over against the profane. In descriptive terms, this end of Fenn's spectrum shifts to the case where religion fills time on occasion through ritual or other religious experience. On the other hand, empty time, the other end of his spectrum, is also illusory. Fenn does not give any clear characterization it. He merely discusses "relatively 'empty'" time as that when ritual is not taking place. Moreover, Fenn's thesis is that the time of modernity is not as empty as we think: the secularization of purgatory has left a sacralized heartbeat that orients our daily activity. The endpoints of Fenn's spectrum are not absolutely full and empty but relatively so. The relevant variable is the density of religious experience, that is, the degree of presence of the divine. A clearer look at religious practices is needed to fill out this idealized account.

This brings us to a second difficulty with Fenn's spectrum of religio-temporal experience: it does not distinguish clearly between the presence of the divine and that of invisible others. Having analyzed the significance of the doctrine of purgatory in terms of the latter and having pinned his analysis of changing temporal experience on the former,

Fenn would seem to owe us a more complex account of how the worldly-transcendent axis interacts with social boundaries both present and absent. The degree of presence or absence of the divine is not necessarily correlated with that of invisible others, and the relation between these two spiritual axes needs to be clarified. The relation between religious experience and social boundaries needs to be filled out.

This gap in Fenn's argument manifests itself in his appeal to Weber's concept of asceticism. He calls his book "a sociological investigation into the phenomenology of time" and attempts to link the subjective inner consciousness of time with social structures and historical context more generally (*Ibid.*, 15). Not surprisingly, we find him making a central appeal to the thought of Max Weber. Most significantly, he appeals to Weber's

studies of asceticism and mysticism . . . [which] suggested that, at least in the West, religion is both a cure for the individual's uncertainty about the state of his or her soul and yet also a source of chronic self-doubt about the salvation of the soul. . . . Certainty of heaven is necessary if one is to have joy at the prospect, but only doubt can drive the soul hard enough to get there. It is the combination of mystical and ascetic strivings that adds up to this vicious circle. (*Ibid.*, 31, 79)⁴

For Fenn, the key characteristic of asceticism is its being "a continuous purification through spiritual trials"; the key characteristic of mysticism is "indifference to the mundane" (*Ibid.*, 35, 78).

⁴ Fenn links this claim to Weber's analysis of charismatic authority, noting Weber's assertion that charismatic leaders must engage in a continual process of self-testing to assure themselves and their followers of the genuine nature of their charismatic gift (1995, 31-32; cf. Weber 1978, 1114-15).

However, Fenn's discussion of this indifference to the mundane is ambiguous. In this it reflects the above noted conflation of the presence or absence of the divine with that of invisible others. On the one hand, mysticism is characterized by "delight in the presence of divine love" and, on the other, by "spiritual communion with ancestors and saints who had gone before" (Fenn 1995, 131, 35). This ambivalence of the contrast between asceticism and mysticism allows Fenn to claim that the unique character of temporal experience in modernity is due to a merging of the two: "the popular belief in the doctrine of purgatory intensified the meaning and experience of time by mixing asceticism with mysticism . . ." (*Ibid.*, 35). Fenn's ambivalent conception of these types of religious experience allows him to collapse the two in a manner that conflicts with Weber's typology. A clarification of the spiritual economy implicated in Fenn's analysis of the secularization of purgatory will underline the value of his analysis despite this ambiguity.

Time, debt, and social mediation

Fenn adds to his analysis of relations to invisible others with the idea of debt. He argues that, with the doctrine of purgatory, "time becomes of the essence of the soul's liberation from debts of various kinds" (Fenn 1995, 43). Urbanization resulted in more fluid social relations that involved individuals in a new sort of debt: "when individuals separated themselves out from their families and communities, withdrawing some of the social and emotional credit that they had previously invested in such institutions, there is

a new psychological and a moral debt to be paid" (*Ibid.*, 47). This new sort of debt provided a function and a demand for the doctrine of purgatory: "If the urban context was conducive to a new sense of personhood, purgatory was also an ideal way for persons to pay what they owed for their first steps toward individuality and selfhood" (*Ibid.*, 47).

Debts to the living and debts to the dead were important factors shaping people's lives in late medieval Europe. Fenn suggests that, in the wake of the Black Death in the fourteenth century, survivor guilt may have contributed to a sense of an increased obligation to the dead (*Ibid.*, 50). Again, purgatory eased the tensions caused by this debt: the "rites and myths of purgatory formed a massive bond of spiritual obligation that unified a world that longed for--and was scared by--the freedom of any soul from social bondage" (*Ibid.*, 51). The modern self emerged in the late medieval period as purgatory came to mediate "the social and spiritual tension between those who are present and those who are absent" (*Ibid.*, 34).

We have seen that Fenn develops a schema of temporal and religious experience in terms of varying degrees of divine presence and that he roots this schema in the doctrine of purgatory by conflating the divine with invisible others, a confusion that also affects his appeal to Weber's concepts of asceticism and mysticism. To clarify this ambivalent appeal to the transcendent while still retaining the core of Fenn's analysis of the emergence of modern temporal experience, it is necessary to examine more closely the temporal aspects of these debts to invisible others.

Fenn holds that purgatory held out the promise of redemption from these debts through structuring in and over time a process of self-purification inseparable from the

process of self-formation. Considered as a subset of possible exchange relations, debts that linked the living and the departed invoked time in order to express social relations. We will enlarge on this point in the fifth chapter in discussing the exchange of alms for prayers; this exchange, by linking charitable relations to eschatological time, rooted worldly social order in eternal order. As labour and industriousness became increasingly linked with the well-being of the commonwealth, the worldly time of the market mediated between individual agency and the maintenance of social order. What is at stake here, then, is a change in the way in which temporality plays a role in social mediation. By conflating 'the divine' with 'invisible others' Fenn is unable to develop this aspect of his argument.

Many writers have linked the development of abstract time to increasing objectification of social relations. Giddens notes that, "The selling of labour as abstract units of time undoubtedly is one of the elements likely to promote feelings of alienation . . ." (1987a, 152). Postone argues that the spread of abstract time led to the commodification of labour under capitalism and to labour's coming to play a constitutive role as a form of social mediation in modern society; abstract time and individual activity, as labour, merged in a unique form of social mediation (1993). The genealogy of idleness suggests that changing experiences of temporality were central to early modern views of the positive relation between individual agency and social order.

Our question, then, is this: how can we complement Fenn's insights into the temporal character of Puritan worldly asceticism with an attentiveness to forms of social mediation? The answer proposed here has two elements. First, we need to take account

of the unique character of Puritan attitudes to time: an emphasis on constancy and diligence in conduct involves a qualitatively different temporal experience than making efficient use of time. Efficiency can be measured as average work per unit of time, but the Puritans, to use a mathematical metaphor, emphasized the derivative, with respect to time, of this function: not a use of time measurable in sum at the end of a given period but one gauged at each point of time; not distance covered over a given time but the constancy of motion along this path.

Second, we need to link this temporal norm and experience to our genealogy of idleness, which reads a new conception of agency in the shadow of its absence. In early modern England, idleness became the penumbra of an industriousness measured by a new temporality, and the idle poor defined the penumbra of orderly society in terms of this same process. An early work by Foucault provides a parallel to Fenn's analysis that clarifies the shifts in religious practises, temporality and order that frame the new orientation of agency.

Idleness and agency in l'Histoire de la folie

Foucault's early work, *l'Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, contains an insightful account of the link between conceptions of idleness, agency and order (1972). This book has been neglected by Anglo-American scholars largely because only an abridged version has been translated into English (1965).⁵

⁵For criticisms and defences of *l'Histoire de la folie* see Derrida 1978, Gordon 1992,

Idleness is an important subject in *l'Histoire de la folie*. According to Foucault, idleness, conceived of as a sinful source of disorder, was the main criterion motivating the "Great Confinement" of the seventeenth century in western Europe (Foucault 1972, 56ff.). Foucault traces the emergent differentiation of madness and the mad within this initially homogeneous mass of internees. Less prominently, *l'Histoire de la folie* also gives an account of shifting conceptions of idleness that shadow changing conceptions of agency (1972, 56ff., 92ff., 373ff., 401ff.).

For Foucault, the moral marginalization of the idle and the unreasonable was foundational for the later development of the 'scientific' study of different types of disorders and people that came to be distinguished among the initially homogeneous mass of internees: the mentally ill were first perceived as such within the walls of the workhouses (Foucault 1972, 121, 406-407, 418). Behind this story of the emergence of a new relation between madness and reason is a story of the emergence of a new relation between idleness and labour. At one level, Foucault presents an almost Marxist analysis of the "Great Confinement": the labour of the idle poor comes to be seen as having economic value; a moral and social line of exclusion is drawn at the limits of the emerging bourgeois work ethic; "morality permitted itself to be administered like trade or the economy" (Foucault 1972, 82ff., 422-38, quotation at 87). Catharina Lis and Hugo Soly have developed this analysis of early modern western European poor relief at

Scull 1992, Pugh 1992. The reading I propose relies on significant untranslated portions of the text and on nuances lost in translation. Translations are mine where Foucault 1965 is not cited. Alterations to that translation are noted.

persuasive length (1979; 1984). Foucault himself later called this approach "inadequate" (1980, 119).

There is also a more subtle ethical side to Foucault's analysis. Idleness, in the medieval period, was a sinful transgression against a transcendently warranted order, an echo of the Fall. In the early modern period, idleness came to be seen as the transgression of a social and moral boundary whose ultimate warrant was the order of society itself. Idleness remained in a certain negative relation to order even as conceptions of order changed: "l'oisiveté est révolte--la pire de toutes . . ." (Foucault 1972, 84).

Foucault argues that the early modern confinement of the poor was motivated by both moral and ethical concerns that centred on the alleged idleness of those interned. This marked a transition from medieval views and practices. This dissertation argues that the marginalization of the idle and disorderly in institutions where they were set to labour was justified as contributing economically to the nation and as preserving the moral order of society; it marked the social boundaries of an emerging bourgeois ethic by establishing processes of social and moral exclusion of the idle and of re-inclusion for those who reformed: this different sort of work ethic marked not the boundary of a sect but of orderly society as a whole. The otherness of the idle and disorderly poor was mitigated by their engagement in a labour that was structured according to a certain conception of order.

Labour came increasingly to define the margins of society as it became more central to definitions of the deserving and undeserving poor. The relation between labour, order, and social boundaries is clear in a statute of 1554 that banished "certain

outlandish people calling themselves *Egyptians*," and gave them fifteen days to leave England. An exception was made, however, for those who "shall leave that naughty, idle and ungodly life and company, and be placed in the service of some honest and able inhabitant or inhabitants within this realm, or that shall honestly exercise himself in some lawful work or occupation. . . ." (1 and 2 Philip and Mary c.5, emphasis in original). The otherness of the gypsies would be mitigated by their accepting the constraints of labour. Labour was the criterion for inclusion within the social order.

In the seventeenth century, the exclusion of the sinfully other behind the walls of charitable institutions (and behind the exclusionary practices of the Poor Law and the Settlement Act) began to emphasize individual punishment and the reformation of character. The function of confinement became that of "leading to truth by means of moral constraint" (Foucault 1972, 113). In the light of Foucault's later work, this process can be seen as the elaboration of a new truth regarding the human subject. This early modern development led to very different views of moral agency than had been predominant during the Middle Ages, a different conception of where faulty agency is situated: "Wrongdoing is no longer seen in some destiny of the world; it is reflected in the transparent law of a logic of intentions" (Foucault 1972, 99). This was the point of purchase for the elaboration of eighteenth-century techniques for habituating the poor to industry.

The moral shift that Foucault points to here is fundamentally linked to changing conceptions of time. This can be seen in a contrast that Foucault develops between 'idleness' and 'leisure.' He notes that, at the beginning of the early modern period,

idleness was more than a sin among others; it was a form of rebellion, the great source of disorder in society (Foucault 1972, 84-85). As a result, "Labor in the houses of confinement . . . assumed its ethical meaning: since idleness [*paresse*] had become the absolute form of rebellion, the idle would be forced to work, in the indefinite leisure of a labor without utility or profit" (Foucault 1972, 84; cf. 1965, 57, translation altered). This characterization of forced labour as an 'indefinite leisure' seems paradoxical.

Understanding this odd use of the term 'leisure' will serve as a benchmark for our understanding the link between idleness and agency in *l'Histoire de la folie*.

The moral shift that Foucault points to here is linked to an important religious transition. In a two-page section of *l'Histoire de la folie*, sub-titled "Madness, Religion and Time," Foucault describes a major shift in early modern European Christianity.⁶ This section is one of three which briefly explore aspects of society, religion, and civilization shaping individuals and social formations at the end of the early modern period (Foucault 1972, 384-85). This is a key passage for understanding the tension between 'leisure' and 'idleness' in *l'Histoire de la folie*.

Foucault describes a historical shift in the function that religion performed in early modern Europe. His account of the transition explores the changing relation between

⁶ The English translation occludes important aspects of the text that I draw on here (Foucault 1972, 388-89; 1965, 216-17). Foucault uses a key series of four terms: *désœuvrement*, *loisir*, *oisiveté*, and again, *loisir*. Howard translates these as "idleness," "leisure," "idleness," and "idleness" respectively, thus losing the tension between the terms.

time and perceptions of order:

. . . religion is the mediation between man and transgression, between man and punishment: in the form of an authoritarian synthesis, it suppresses the transgression by imposing the punishment; if, on the contrary, religion loosens its hold but maintains the ideal forms of remorse of conscience, of spiritual mortification, it leads directly to madness; only the consistency of the religious milieu can permit man to escape alienation in the excessive delirium of transgressions. By accomplishing its rites and its requirements, man avoids both the useless idleness of his passions before the transgression, and the vain repetition of his remorse once the transgression is committed; religion organizes all human life around fulfillment of the moment. That old religion of happier times was the perpetual celebration of the present. But once it was idealized in the modern age, religion cast a temporal halo around the present, an empty milieu—that of leisure and remorse, in which the heart of man is abandoned to its own anxiety, in which the passions surrender time to unconcern or to repetition in which, finally, madness can function freely. (Foucault 1972, 389; 1965, 217, translation altered)

The theme of mediation, obscured in Fenn's schema is here brought to the fore.

Foucault cites religion as one of three examples of *milieux*, the others being liberty and civilization. The concept of *milieu* is a crucial one for Foucault, serving to explain a radical shift in historical conceptions of madness: away from associations with sinfulness and animality. '*Milieu*' marks a greater conceptual openness within which madness was framed:

In the second half of the eighteenth century, madness was no longer recognized in what brings man closer to an immemorial fall or an indefinitely present animality; it was, on the contrary, situated in those distances man takes in regard to himself, to his world, to all that is offered by the immediacy of nature; madness becomes possible in that *milieu* where man's relations with his feelings, with time, with others, are altered; madness was possible because of everything which, in man's life and development, is a break with the immediate. (Foucault 1972, 391; 1965, 220, emphasis in original but not translation)

Foucault points, then, to a transition in early modern Christianity that consists of the internalization of moral norms, a shift in emphasis from public penitential rites to the

individual tribunal of the conscience. He characterizes this as a move from a ritually framed immediacy to a multiplication of mediations. The "empty milieu" created by religion when it became "idealized in the modern age" is an openness around the individual in which relations to self, others and time escape measure. The "break with the immediate" that Foucault points to was not a break with an absolute immediacy but with the relatively direct, uniform and shared mediation that religion offered between humanity and sanctification. It is, to use Fenn's terms, an erosion of the presence of the divine as mediated by religious ritual.

Foucault's analysis of this religious development is consistent with scholarship in the field. John Bossy has argued that the social function of confession underwent a marked shift at the beginning of the early modern period (Bossy 1975, 33-35; 1988; cf. Martin 1983; Delumeau 1992). Symbolized, and to some extent caused, by Borromeo's development of the confessional and its subsequent diffusion throughout much of Europe, confession shifted from the social to the personal. In the Middle Ages confession was a regulatory system for collective behaviour, focusing on sins against neighbours and emphasizing reconciliation and restitution. In the sixteenth century, confession became an instrument for the interiorized discipline of individuals. The sacrament became increasingly psychologized as sin came to be seen as something that occurred in the mind. It became increasingly individual as the confessional isolated the penitent and prevented the traditional ritual of *impositio manus*. It became increasingly internalized as the isolated penitent was led to focus less on the social sins of aversion and more on sins against God.

Foucault's discussion of the religious *milieu* is complemented by his discussion of madness and freedom.⁷ Market relations, and the freedom from traditional forms of social affiliation that they entail, result in a parallel break with immediacy:

So much liberty does not permit one to master time. . . . The liberty of the market appears thus as that element in which . . . time escapes mastery and the certitude of the seasons, where man is dispossessed of his desires by the laws of interest. In brief, liberty, far from leaving man in possession of himself, separates him more from his essence and from his world; it draws him into the absolute exteriority of others and money, in the irreversible interiority of incomplete desire and passion. (Foucault 1972, 386-87; 1965, 213-14.)

For Foucault, then, certain religious, moral, economic and civic transitions share a common characteristic: a shift from immediacy to a multiplication of mediations. His reference to money points to the analysis in the fourth chapter below of increasing impersonalization and quantification of charitable relations in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. At the level of ethics, Foucault characterizes the key transition as one from an agency oriented to order to an agency oriented to 'the laws of interest.'

There is a striking parallel between this account and Fenn's continuum of religio-temporal experience. According to Foucault, prior to the shift he describes, religion filled time: it provided a series of ritually sanctioned activities, such as confession, pilgrimages, and works of charity, that addressed the guilt caused by religious and moral transgression

⁷ In fact, the connection can be argued to be closer than Foucault himself suggests. He notes that melancholy was especially associated with the English, but discusses this only in the context of civil liberties and market relations (Foucault 1972, 385). In fact, religion, especially Puritanism, was closely associated with melancholy in popular belief (Sena 1973; Tipson 1984).

in two ways. First, the mind was kept occupied. Second, rituals provided reassurance that people could be absolved of their sins. According to Foucault,

time was . . . assigned to an organized happiness, which left no *leisure* for empty passions, for disgust with life, for boredom. . . . In the plenitude of its rites and exigences, religion removed from man the useless *idleness* of his passions in the face of transgression. . . . But once it was idealized in the modern age, religion cast a temporal halo around the present, an empty milieu--that of *leisure* . . . in which the passions surrender time to unconcern or to repetition. . . . (Foucault 1972, 388-89; 1965, 216-17, translation altered, emphasis added)

'Idleness' and 'leisure' are far from synonymous here. In *l'Histoire de la folie*, the terms work at different levels: leisure is a 'temporal halo' within which idleness takes place.

Idle passions are empty passions, empty of resolution and, hence, unable to hold onto the present given the lack of effective rituals. Leisure is an empty milieu, precondition and context for the idleness of the passions.

Leisure, then, is not a matter of having time on one's hands. This is the key point for understanding how Foucault can hold forced labour to be leisure. The concept of leisure is inseparable from that of *milieu*. Leisure constitutes a break with immediacy and an opening for new possibilities of alienation. Foucault's use of the term leisure points to a moment of hiatus or transition, where an older view of agency has been eroded and a newer one is achieving prominence.

Changing views of time measure a moment where relations between the individual and traditional forms of ritual and of social affiliation are dissolved in a multiplicity of mediations. The individual becomes an agent whose contribution to order is based in interested activity. Foucault's analysis is especially effective because, by focusing on the idle and disorderly poor whose marginalization marks the limits of

correctly ordered agency, he isolates a sphere where this moral shift can be read in discourses and practices oriented to establishing economic and social boundaries. That is, a reading of early modern attempts to reform the characters of the idle so as to reintegrate them in orderly society reveals conceptions of both valued and devalued agency, industry and idleness. We find in *l'Histoire de la folie*, then, a sketch of the genealogy of idleness that this dissertation elaborates.

Foucault characterizes the forced labour of the idle and disorderly poor in the workhouses and *hospitaux généraux* as "the indefinite leisure of a labor without utility or profit," a labour that does not engage interest (Foucault 1972, 84). Leisure is generally defined in terms of 'freedom,' 'opportunity,' or 'free time.' However, in *l'Histoire de la folie*, the freedom of leisure is a relative one of multiplying mediations. The moment of leisure of the idle poor is a moment between two conceptions of idleness, no longer the sinful other of godly action oriented to sustaining a transcendently warranted hierarchical order. It had become the irrational other of productive action oriented to an economically warranted self-interest.

Conclusion

The Puritan sacralization of the world was inseparable from a sacralization of the present moment: diligence and constancy brought God's eternal order into the world by infusing each moment with the eschatological time of sanctification. For the Puritans present time was full.

In modernity, however, time is empty. Georges Poulet suggests that, from the seventeenth century, "human consciousness finds itself reduced to existence without duration. It is always of the present moment" (1956, 13). Adorno argues that bourgeois rationality is rooted in "essentially timeless activity" (1961, 41). Beck argues that, through processes of individualization, "*history shrinks to the eternal present*" (1992, 135, emphasis in original). This transition from full time to empty represents a shift from the substantive-rationality of the methodical conduct of life of the Puritans to the instrumental-rational framing of this same conduct in modernity.

Fenn and Foucault suggest an approach to making sense of this transition. Fenn suggests that "periods in which the absence of the divine is felt far more keenly than its presence are relatively 'empty'" (1995, 35). Foucault suggests that "once it was idealized in the modern age, religion cast a temporal halo around the present, an empty milieu--that of leisure. . ." (Foucault 1972, 389; 1965, 217). In forming a temporally rationalized conception of agency, the Puritans expressed an optimism that individual agency, given God's grace, could bring the order of the invisible city into the world. They held that worldly activity could span a time filled with the grace of God.

This dissertation argues that the discourses and practices of eighteenth-century poor relief reframed this optimism in more worldly terms. Habituation to industry was held to be the means by which the idle poor could be reformed. The resulting constancy of effort was trusted to keep individual activity oriented to the maintenance of social and national order. The grace of God and future beatitude were replaced, as condition and end of individual agency, by the interest of the nation.

Part 2

Idleness and Order

Chapter 3

Hospitality, Beggars, and Social Boundaries

In 1613, in a book advising young men from the country of the dangers of London, Richard Johnson warned of an especially unsavoury character, the "pernitious . . . broker for money" (1966 [1613], 11). Johnson wrote, ". . . truely, these brokers . . . deserve worse than Jewes, for they be like unto strumpets, for they receive all men's money, as well the beggar's as the gentleman's . . ." (*Ibid.*, 23).

This harsh judgement of money brokers raises two related questions: 'Why were beggars especially threatening?' and 'Why was money seen as a path by which their threat could be transmitted?' Beggars were associated then as now with criminality and violence. Above all, they were marginal, having either no clear status role or a feigned one. The blind beggar, for example, was a stock character in Punch and Judy shows; he was beaten off the stage after his requests for alms were refused (Cornford 1968, 127, 258n31).

This chapter argues that the threat posed by beggars was related to changing conceptions of order. This development was correlated with changes in status boundaries that were occurring in an increasingly urban society. Money mediated this threat because it was not easily contained within traditional social boundaries. Johnson was not alone in recognizing the dangers of money's tendency to circulate with a momentum determined more by motives of profit than status.

Changing attitudes to the poor in early modern England both reflected and shaped

changing views of the basis of order. Order continued to ground transactions between members of the body politic whose social roles and locations were clearly established. However, social, economic, and religious changes affected the structural characteristics of these social boundaries and of the transactions framed by them. This chapter will show that transactional relations, as framed by specific social boundaries, were crucial to conceptions of order at the beginning of the early modern period. Specifically, it will underline the centrality of attitudes to the poor and practises of charity to changing conceptions of order.

“All men’s money”

To develop an initial hypothesis, we will focus on four aspects of Johnson's comment. First, money brokers were not usurers, lending their own money at interest. The broker was a middleman linking lender and borrower. By serving as a nodal point in a network of circulation, the broker was in a position to mediate between parties who would not normally interact.

Second, Johnson is concerned with a specific social boundary, that between 'beggars' and 'gentlemen.' This points to criteria by which the margins of polite and godly society were drawn in a time of changing values and shifting forms of social affiliation. Johnson points to more than a simple fear of turbulence in the streets. The problem he saw was not disorder caused by beggars demanding money. He feared disorder caused by beggars who already had money and who threatened to breach the economic sphere of

gentlemen.

Beggars did sometimes have money to spare. In the early seventeenth century a licensed beggar could earn a living comparable to that of most wage-earners (Beier 1985, 27). In 1566, one Yorkshire beggar was found to be carrying £10; others had from 21s. to £5 (*Ibid.*, 11). A certain Mother Arden, apprehended in Norwich in 1562, was carrying more than £44; the court kept most of the money, returning 6s. 8p. to her (Pound 1971, 100). For a beggar to have sufficient money to invest with a broker was unacceptable.

Third, Johnson's comparison of the brokers to prostitutes, women who also receive 'all men's money,' further underlines the issue of boundaries. His comment suggests that money brokers were seen as fostering an activity that escaped proper social containment. St. John Chrysostom had compared the businessmen in the marketplace of ancient Antioch to prostitutes because "for the sake of gold . . . [they] associate with anyone shamelessly" (cited in Leyerle 1994, 36). An analogy with prostitutes had been used to characterize usurers since at least the thirteenth century (Nelson 1947, 108).

Fourth, the claim that brokers are "worse than Jewes" is again significant in terms of the relation between money and social boundaries. Jews had been closely associated with usury for centuries, and their perceived status as other to Christian society was essential to this association (Nelson 1969; Little 1978, 42ff.). Deuteronomy 23 orders that "Thou shalt not lend to a brother money at usury . . . but to the stranger." Benjamin Nelson has made a case that changing interpretations of this biblical passage reflect a shift from a sharp ancient line between brother and other, through the medieval period when Jews, as others, were allowed to lend at usury to Christians, to the modern period

where all are equally both brother and other (Nelson 1969).¹

By the early seventeenth century, when Richard Johnson was writing, the term 'usury' had come to signify excessive interest, a development which reflected both a greater sensitivity to economic complexities and an increasing tendency to view money as a commodity (Jonsen and Toulmin 1988, 193). Calvin, for example, had broken new ground in defining usury as an offence against equity rather than justice, emphasizing the consideration of specific circumstances of individual transactions (Tawney 1963, 74, 154, 193, 199; Nelson 1969, 78).

However despite changing views of usury, and despite the absence of Jews in England at that time,² the line between brother and other remained very distinct in

¹ J.T. Noonan has criticized Nelson's thesis (1957, 400-401). Noonan claims that Nelson failed to distinguish usury from interest, with the result that a large class of exceptions to the prohibition of earning profit from credit transactions is neglected. This critique was overly harsh. The distinction is not as crucial to Nelson's argument as Noonan implies. Moreover, Nelson had made the distinction clearly in an earlier article (1947). Nelson's harsh review of Noonan's book contributed little to the debate (Nelson 1959). More helpfully, Nelson clarified his position considerably in the second edition of his book (1969).

²All Jews were expelled from England in 1290. Their reinclusion as legal residents was marked by the first establishment of an open synagogue in London in 1656. In the early seventeenth century, when Johnson was writing, the only Jews in England were the few marranos, nominally Spanish and secretly Jewish, who lived in London (Patinkin

Johnson's mind. Immediately prior to his criticism of money brokers, he claimed that the Jews first brought usury to England and that five hundred had been slain one night because one had taken a penny in usury. In the light of this statement, his suggestion that money brokers "deserve worse than the Jewes" was a vehement one. Jews were distinctly other, and their otherness both reflected and reinforced the social circumscription of Christian society. The money brokers' recourse to all men's money was worse; it blurred even the line between brother and other.

It seems plausible, then, to suggest that Johnson saw money brokers as a sort of breach in social boundaries, a rupture where exchanges between acceptable members of society became contaminated by outsiders who were somehow impure. By characterizing this threat in terms of 'the beggar' and 'the gentleman,' Johnson highlighted two social groups that were going through profound changes in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. The means by which the English nobility and gentry maintained their status through transactions with the poor were changing, and attitudes toward beggars as a subset of the poor offer an especially useful indicator of these shifts. These shifts in turn reflect changing conceptions of order.

In clarifying these developments, we will see that attitudes toward the poor offer an important index to changing conceptions of society in early modern England. Specifically, the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor, as framed by parish and municipal poor relief institutions, came to play an important role in the

1981a). For an overview of recent research into English attitudes toward Jews in the period leading up to the expulsion in 1290 see Hyams 1996.

legitimation of social stratification. Central to this development, as the seventh chapter will show, was the use of 'idleness' as a criterion linking the boundary between deserving and undeserving poor to the well-being of the nation. 'Idleness' and 'industry' drew a line through the poor, conjuring disorder and imposing order in one motion, framing a national society with charitable gifts that demanded a return of labour. As the structural characteristics of the social transactions that legitimated conceptions of order changed, increasing emphasis was placed on assuring that the agents involved in these transactions met certain criteria.

Hospitality and social boundaries

Johnson's fear of money brokers points to a new problematization of the relation between charitable practices and the social boundary between donors and recipients. Significant changes in the social context of almsgiving formed the background for these concerns. These changes were perceived by contemporaries as 'the decay of hospitality.'

In late medieval England the concepts and the practices of charity and hospitality were closely interwoven. The household was the centre of almsgiving and remained so into the early modern period (Heal 1990, 6-16, 23ff., 392ff.). The language of hospitality was used for the alms given by townsman and countryman, noble and husbandman, monk and bishop. Hospitality was extended to one's peers and, especially among the nobles and gentry, it involved an honour code that bound the household to show largess to a circle of inferiors. At the edge of this circle were the poor.

Hospitality was not the only forum within which charitable gifts to the poor took place in late medieval and early modern England. Informal almsgiving in the streets, home visits to the sick and aged, gifts of dowries for poor girls, the redemption of debtors and captives, and funeral doles and feasts were among the many acts encouraged by sermons and practiced by those who sought to be 'in charity' with their fellows. Two points, however, warrant our paying special attention to the theme of hospitality. First, the language of hospitality, with its focus on the household as the locus of charity, was a dominant paradigm for charity more generally. Second, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, charity and hospitality became increasingly distinguished from each other. This divergence provides a useful point at which to interrogate changing views of the poor.

Household hospitality reflected and constituted social boundaries through commensality. The relation of hospitality to the social boundaries of the households of nobility and gentry is clear in the physical layout of the households themselves, especially as regards commensality (Heal 1990, 28ff.). The head of the household, his family, and his closest peers sat on a raised dais in the hall. Other guests occupied the rest of the hall. Only royal households had a separate inner chamber until the late fifteenth century, when the immediate family and guests began increasingly to withdraw into a separate chamber to eat. The significance of this social geography of hospitality is underlined by the fact that a number of ordinances were passed in an attempt to curb this tendency to isolate the core members of the household from the general commensality of the hall (*Ibid.*, 43). The poor were ritually represented in the hall by the household almoner, usually a cleric,

who carried the alms dish as part of the procession of household servants (*Ibid.*, 33-34). Sometimes a local poor person could become the almsman or almswoman, often wearing the dress of a servant: "just as the majority of a lord's entourage personated his qualities as a man of honour, so the deserving poor wearing his livery personated his virtues as a man of charity" (*Ibid.*, 69). This symbolic presence of the poor within the household served to underline their proper place outside. The poor gathered and were fed their portion from the table at the household gates.

Framed in terms of hospitality, charity to the poor at the beginning of the early modern period in England was inseparable from spatial and temporal strategies by which the nobility and gentry sought to gain and maintain their status. The raised dais on which the lord and his immediate commensals sat was an index of a social boundary. It marked a limit to interaction, enabling its symbolic transgression. Occasionally the lord would come down from the dais to greet his seated guests, "breaching the carefully constructed barriers of the household in order to affirm *communitas*" (Heal 1990, 76). The practice of hospitality structured and was structured by social boundaries, and these boundaries framed strategic transactions that aimed to increase the social capital of participants.

Relations with the poor also reflected and reaffirmed a social boundary whose spatial manifestations were occasionally elided for status reasons. At feast times (and only then) part of the local poor might be invited to dine in the hall; occasional even poor strangers from London dined in the halls of the rural elite (Heal 1990, 77). Household ordinances often stated that doors were to be shut during times of meals and prayer. The poor received their leftovers only when the gates were reopened after the meal was done.

Even reformist proposals to bring back 'true' hospitality took it for granted that the poor would remain at the gates of the household (*Ibid.*, 35). They were symbolic strangers bearing witness to a household living 'in charity,' the other whose physical exclusion and ritual inclusion demonstrated the moral status of the household and marked its limit as an economic entity.

The social structure of almsgiving under the model of hospitality was not primarily that of a face to face meeting in the street. The lord of the house, whether noble or humble, supervised a nexus of distribution with its centre marked by his inner chamber and the hospitality of his head table, and with its periphery demarcated by his gate or door and the alms given there. Gate or door was a boundary that distinguished between strangers and guests (Heal 1990, 8). Alms given at this periphery linked the household to and distinguished it from the larger community (*cf. Ibid.*, 8-9, 12, 16-20, 33-35, 76).

The decay of hospitality

The sixteenth century saw an erosion of traditional beliefs and practices of charity. As hospitality and charity began to diverge, an intense debate took place in English society regarding the destructive effects of the "decay of hospitality." This theme entered English sermons in the late fifteenth century (Blench 1964, 245). The peak of worries was between 1580 and the 1630s, a time of increasing attention to and fear of the poor. This was a period during which Poor Laws were passed that were to shape attitudes and policies well into the nineteenth century. Beier concludes that the years from 1560-1640

"probably represent the peak of state activity against vagabonds between 1400 and 1700" (1985, ix).

Worries over the decay of hospitality were linked to increased perceptions that the poor were a threat to order and to changing views of the steps that should be taken to curb this threat. The decline of hospitality was in part a response to the increasing numbers of the poor. In the fifteenth century and sixteenth centuries in Western Europe, economic and demographic changes resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of urban poor. Population increases, changes in landholding patterns, and the gaining momentum of an urban economy based on production and trade, with its accompanying shocks of inflation and scarcity, all contributed to both the uprooting of rural agricultural labourers and the underemployment of urban artisans. The population of London grew, by immigration alone, from about 60 000 in 1500 to about 225 000 in 1600 (Lockyer 1985, 120). The number of paupers doubled in the period from 1560 to 1640 (Beier 1985, 16). It is estimated that 80-90% of the poor in this period were able-bodied and 30-40% were between 30 and 60 years of age (*Ibid.*, 19). Records suggest that about 7% of late sixteenth-century London householders were dependent on relief and a further 18% in occasional need of help (Archer 1988, 201). The increasing visibility of poverty found expression in the city's geography, as alleys proliferated in the later sixteenth century (*Ibid.*, 70). Vagrancy increased dramatically in the late fifteenth century (Beier 1978, 204). Vagrants were mostly young, unmarried, underemployed men (Beier 1974, 5ff.; 1978, 209; 1985, 18; Slack 1974, 363). However, in harsh economic conditions, as in Kent during the early seventeenth century, whole families were forced to wander in

search of work or charity (Kent 1981). In short, the poor became more numerous and visible at the beginning of the early modern period.

This had a negative effects on traditional forms of social affiliation. Increased immigration to the cities eroded urban identity, community consciousness, and kinship, and it posed problems for public order, housing and food supplies (Clark 1972). Vagrants often migrated long distances, far from their communities and families, through migration became more localized after the Restoration (Clark 1972; 1979; Slack 1974). In late medieval and early modern England, charity and reciprocal aid were often provided through ties of community and kinship (Laslett 1988; Walter 1989, 110; Jütte 1994, 83ff.). The erosion of these social bonds was one element of the decline of hospitality.

Contemporaries had a clear sense that the changes in charitable practices were significant. Centralization of poor relief, with a concomitant erosion of traditional practices of almsgiving, was in part an attempt to deal with the unprecedented scale of suffering and with the potential threat to order occasioned by the increasing numbers of poor. We will find that changing practices of poor relief shaped and reflected changing social relations between rich and poor and an emerging sense of the modern subject.

The perceived decline of hospitality prompted an outcry in sermons and popular writings. A series of Royal Proclamations addressed the issue. For example, a proclamation of 1615 lamented "the decay of Hospitalitie," calling it "a disorder and inconvenience," and requiring "all Noblemen and Gentlemen" to return to their country estates and "to live in the steps and examples of their worthy Ancestours, by keeping and entertaining Hospitalitie, and charitable relieving of the poor according to their estate and

means" (Larkin and Hughes 1973, 357).

Felicity Heal argues that the value to the elites of hospitality declined as new values and new patterns of social relations arose. Heal suggests that these worries "reflect deep unease at an observable change in late sixteenth-century society, the increasing interest of the gentry in a national culture" (1984, 82). As the nobility and gentry spent more and more time in London, with a generally reduced city household, hospitality to the poor at the gates of the household became less important as a means of achieving or maintaining status. Household charity did not stop altogether as the gentry moved to London in greater numbers, but Thomas Cromwell, for example, was rare in his continued generous hospitality to the poor even in the capital (Walter 1989, 115; Heal 1990, 85). The urban oligarchy and the rural gentry, previously separate, began to intermingle in the polite society of the urban season (Heal 1990, 350; Bendix 1978, 208, 232). In the denser sphere of elite social interactions provided by the capital, a new set of values became the preferred currency of status: "In alliance with the functionalist challenge that civic humanism did offer to older norms, classicism and civility were eventually to offer the English élite a new way of perceiving social relationships" (Heal 1990, 99; cf. 1984, 88).

In addition, a humanist emphasis on discriminate giving began to erode the traditional feudal value of largess (Heal 1990, 25-27; cf. Anderson 1933, 32; Fideler 1974).³ The ideal of hospitality had linked status with conspicuous expenditure, but the

³The greater concentration of households in urban areas may also have exacerbated what sociologists call 'the bystander effect,' a tendency for people's helping responses to

new ideal of gentility prompted less spending on servants and symbolic feasting and a greater investment in the latest signs of refinement. The connection between status and visible expenditure became more tenuous.⁴

The shift from rural hospitality to urban gentility as a venue for status strategies resulted in the gradual abandonment of an entire field of social relations. The rural gentry physically withdrew from their traditional social relations with a broader spectrum of status groups. Signs of honour and reputation remained central to the distinction between the gentry and those perceived as beneath them (Fletcher 1985). However, the move from country manor to urban salon could only be successful as a strategy for gaining status if sufficient time and effort were invested in acquiring a new sort of cultural capital: polite conversation, correct attire, and proper *décor* took on greater importance, replacing ostentatious expenditure on hospitality as a measure of status.⁵

decrease where they are more conscious of the presence of others who might help (cf. Piliavin and Charng 1990, 35).

⁴Another factor that played a role in drawing aristocratic families to London was the increasing reliance on litigation rather than violence as a means of carrying on disputes: the number of bills lodged with the Star Chamber and the Court of Requests increased by a factor of ten during Elizabeth's reign (Bendix 1978, 214).

⁵This recalls Pierre Bourdieu's analysis in *Distinction* (1984). To draw out this parallel, we would need to examine in detail the taste of the times and to pay close attention to social stratification among the nobility and gentry (cf. Berger 1986, 1450). Our emphasis on charity and the poor leads us along another path.

This development reflected broader social changes that eroded traditional relations of hospitality and commensality:

Community did not disappear, but came to be articulated in different ways as the reality of social stratification began to shape more aspects of social relations. The expression of horizontal ties within the community in the form of shared activities like feasting and recreations weakened as the vertical relationships strengthened. (Archer 1988, 84)

A new positioning of rich and poor changed the shape of charity. Beyond this, these developments reflected changing conceptions of order.

This can be seen in changing attitudes to beggars, reflecting their perceived marginality to changing social relations. As Beier notes, "Vagrancy is perhaps the classic crime of status, the social crime *par excellence*. Offenders were arrested not because of their actions, but because of their position in society. Their status was a criminal one, because it was at odds with the established order" (1985, xxii). As conceptions of the established order changed, so did the status of the poor as marginal to it.

The threat of beggars' money

Beggars threatened the increasingly hierarchical social boundaries that were emerging in early modern England. A masterless beggar with money had increased mobility at a time when the Poor Laws were attempting to contain the poor within their home parishes, a tendency fully formalized in the Settlement Act of 1662. Beyond a general fear of disorder, Johnson's comment expressed unease that the masterless could invest their money in the same sphere of circulation as the gentry but without the

safeguards provided by status concerns.⁶ The 'shamefaced poor,' respectable citizens fallen on hard times, were in a separate category than the shameless beggars who had no reputations to ruin.

The marketplace seemed especially vulnerable to infiltration by the disorderly poor. With the more fluid social boundaries of a society that was increasingly urbanized and shaped by profit-oriented transactions, these unruly elements, threatening enough when marginalized as outsiders, could become insiders. In 1618, for example, a system of licences was proposed to distinguish "the industrious honest Pedler or Pettie-Chapman" from the "many Rogues and Idle wandering persons, . . . [who] under colour of using the said Trade . . . so misbehave themselves, as they are indeed no other but Sturdy Beggars . . ." (Larkin and Hughes 1973, 393). A society shaped increasingly by market transactions needed attentive policing of its boundaries, and the process of policing these boundaries helped reinforce and legitimize them.

The threat of an incursion by the disorderly poor was not limited to the social sphere of pedlars. Contemporaneous with Johnson, the Lord Chancellor Baron Ellesmere warned his peers against "all vagrants strong to labour, yet idle and gentleman like in approach, yet without means" (Harrison 1958, 33). The idleness of a beggar, unlike the leisure of a gentleman, was a negation of order; the distinguishing characteristic of the gentleman was not simply dress and manners but "means." The gentry were spending more time in London in the polite society of their peers, and the sorts of status symbols

⁶ I am indebted here to Blake Leyerle for her comments on a paper based on portions of this chapter.

that structured their relations in this social sphere-- the symbolic capital of fashionable dress and genteel manners--were not as clearly linked to wealth as had previously been the case. It was possible for a person without means to appropriate these new status symbols where this would have been impossible with regard to the provision of household hospitality. It is not surprising to find that, in the late sixteenth century, Parliament became increasingly concerned with regulating the poor and less with ordering the social elites themselves as a means of preserving social order: there was a marked shift after 1581 from proclamations on appropriate styles of dress to proclamations concerning vagrants (Slack 1984, 225). Johnson's disparagement of beggars' money echoes this apprehension concerning the permeability of status boundaries.

Johnson's comment points to the role of money in fostering social disorder. Two contrasting examples will clarify this. Contemporaries recognized that, because of its impersonal nature, the path of circulation of charity was open to misdirection. In the same year that Johnson warned of money brokers, Robert Anton warned of "collectors for the poor [who did not] distribute the moneys gathered to charitable uses, but were glad to put it up in their own purses and employ it to their own uses . . ." (1963 [1613], 73). Johnson's comment reflects a different fear, not that money given as alms would fail to reach the deserving poor but that it would find its way back to an elite sphere of worldly economic circulation via the undeserving poor. Money threatened status boundaries because it was not easily contained by them.

We find a more straightforward view of the relation between money and hierarchical social boundaries in a discussion of the causes of poverty by Henry

Arthington (1597, sig. C1v-2r). Arthington wrote that sin is the fundamental cause of poverty, though it is often held to proceed from such things as poor harvests due to bad weather: even "windes and ill weather procede directly from the iustice of God," for "the sinnes of all people do prouoke Gods iustice, to plague us sundrie wayes." He listed a number of sins: "Partly proceeding from the poore themselues. But more especially from the poore makers." The sins of the poor include impatience at their poverty, lack of spiritual diligence, cursing and complaining but, above all, "their misspending of former times in idlenesse, when they might haue wrought" and "their wilfull wasting of their goods when they had them, in bibbing and belly-cheare." The poor cause their own poverty because they fail to earn and wisely use money.

Arthington labels the sins of the Poore makers "the breeders of the poore." These sins include "the want of execution of good lawes and statutes" and "the discharging of seruants and apprentises." Above all, however, "the breeders of the poore" are presented as a series of economic distortions: usury, extortionate landlords and corn-mongers, litigiousness, wasting of food, and gambling. The first item on his list is especially revealing: "all proude persons, that kepe no moderation in their apparell, neither in cost nor change, and commonly (farre aboue their calling): must not their maintenance urge great sums of money?" He points to neither rich nor poor, but to those of the middling sort who base untenable claims to status on credit and on their ability "to racke their tenants by fines," and who ultimately fall into poverty themselves through living above their means. For Arthington, then, there is a direct correlation between money and status boundaries: proper status is determined and maintained by appropriate expenditure.

Johnson, however, seems to have recognized that monetary circulation is not necessarily correlated with status boundaries (cf. Weber 1978, 638). Given the nature of money, status boundaries could not neatly contain economic transactions: all men's money circulated in a wider sphere than polite society.

A final example will underline the relation between charity and ambivalent attitudes to monetary transactions with the poor. Ipswich curate Samuel Bird stated as a simple fact that "In a market or faire, if a poor man will buy anything, his money shall be as well esteemed of as the money of the rich: . . . his coyne is as good silver as an other mans" (1598, 18). Yet Bird also praised those who set their poor to work, and he held that "If relief be bestowed upon rogues and vagabonds, god can have no . . . honour by it . . ." (*Ibid.*, 62). A poor person's money was as good as anyone's, but beggars, rogues and vagabonds were a problematic sort of poor, unworthy of a place in the transactional relations of charity. By circumscribing the sphere in which charitable money should circulate, Bird effectively defined one subset of the poor to be unacceptable as economic agents. This illustrates again the ambivalence regarding the status of the poor that we have considered in this chapter. This ambivalence reflected fears of disorder and framed attempts to preserve order in early modern England

Johnson's fear of beggars' money reflected a deeper fear of social disorder. In part, this speaks of familiarity with the growing numbers of rootless poor thronging the streets of London. More fundamentally, however, transactional relations with the poor were changing, and this reflected changing conceptions of order.

Conclusion

This chapter has made several contributions. It has underlined the importance of transactions framed by specific social boundaries to the maintenance of order and to the threat of disorder in early modern England. In light of this, it has established that the discourses and practices of charity and the poor are a useful index to changing views of social order. More specifically, it has drawn our attention to the characteristics of transactions with the poor and to the related distinction between deserving and undeserving as key indicators of these changes. In the following chapter we will clarify the themes of monetarization and the depersonalization of relations between donors and recipients of charity. In the fifth chapter we will explore a process of secularization that changed the link between charity and social order.

Chapter 4

Exchange Relations and the Decay of Hospitality

In this chapter we consider Felicity Heal's account of changing charitable practices in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England from the perspective of exchange relations. This will involve a critical analysis of the concepts of 'gift' and 'market' and an examination of the specific exchange characteristics involved in charitable transactions. We will critique a claim that monetarization played a central role in linking changes in exchange relations to changes in social relations. The chapter ends by underlining the need to look at links between transactional characteristics and social boundaries.

Behind changes in elite values and the increasing centralization of poor relief, Felicity Heal sees a more fundamental process at work: a shift from gift to market. By clarifying this claim and by extending it in certain respects, we will problematize the status of the poor as participants in the cycle of gift-exchange at the heart of late medieval charity. That is, we will examine the nature of religious charity before it was largely replaced by institutional poor-relief. This will allow us to see how governing the conduct of the poor became central to early modern English poor relief.

Heal argues that English society, from the late medieval period, had a "recessive" tendency, especially among the "middling sort in country and town," toward market-exchange and away from gift-exchange (Heal 1990, 401; cf. 16-19, 124, 392-403).

Charity shifted from "gift-giving," embodying "altruism and the pursuit of reputation," to a "market-orientation," embodying an impersonal tendency to quantify the utility of exchanges (*Ibid.*, 401, 403). This found expression in the growing tendency to distinguish between hospitality to peers and alms to the poor.

A transition from gift to market can be framed conceptually in terms of shifts along a number of different axes. Heal's account isolates three dimensions of change, each associated with increasing monetarization. The first shift was an impersonalization of relations between donors and recipients of charity. Heal holds that monetary alms were a "distancing device" that emphasized the 'otherness' of the poor (Heal 1990, 16-17). The second shift was a quantification of the charitable transaction: hospitality was a form of "exchange in which reciprocities were not assigned a monetary value," as later came to be the case (*Ibid.*, 19). The third shift involves a change in the motivation of donors from "gift-giving," embodying "altruism and the pursuit of reputation," to a "market-orientation," which emphasized the utility of exchanges (*Ibid.*, 401, 403). By the mid-seventeenth century market values had infused English society to the point that "transactional relationships within the community were perceived primarily in commercial, commodity-based terms . . ." (*Ibid.*, 386). The values of hospitality were opposed to the greed of the cash nexus, and the rise of the latter eroded the former.

This is a useful and suggestive account of the mechanism behind changing practices of early modern charity. We will add to it in two ways. First, we will clarify the relation between monetarization and social relations. Second, we will distinguish between gifting as an ongoing cycle of exchange, in which interest plays a part however

misperceived, and the gift as an ideal transfer of goods with no expectation of return. By way of a prelude, we will briefly consider some aspects of the theoretical contrast between 'the gift' and 'the market' in order to argue the value of considering characteristics of exchange relations in specific social and historical contexts rather than applying the distinction broadly. This will allow us to show in later chapters how the centralization and institutionalization of poor relief reflected the individual agent's increased responsibility in a new economy of order.

Gift and market

It is often argued that the modern West can be characterized by its unique development of a market economy. The *prima facie* strength of this claim should not prevent us from attempting to clarify it; in fact, its apparent self-evidence should prompt us to greater caution. 'Gift' is frequently contrasted with 'market,' and the West's transition from the former to the latter has been framed both as a slow process of change and as a historical discontinuity.

Herbert Spencer held an evolutionary view: "Among examples of evolution which societies furnish, perhaps none is more striking than this gradual advance from the giving and receiving of presents by savages, to the daily balancing of a nation's myriads of business transactions by a few clerks in Lombard Street" (1900, 403). Spencer equated the division of labour with exchange in his evolutionary view of the development of industrial societies.

A number of influential anthropological studies emphasized the historical continuity between gift and market. In *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, Malinowski argued that the varied exchange relations that he studied could best be understood in terms of "gift" and "counter-gift" (1961,176ff.). He went so far as to claim that "every ceremony, every legal and customary act is done to the accompaniment of material gift and counter gift" (*Ibid.*, 167). Mauss argued that the sort of reciprocal exchange that Malinowski had observed could be placed in a historical continuum:

[The] *principle of the exchange-gift must have been that of societies that have gone beyond the phase of 'total services' (from clan to clan, and from family to family) but have not yet reached that of purely individual contract, of the market where money circulates, of sale proper, and above all of the notion of price reckoned in coinage weighed and stamped with its value.* (Mauss 1990, 46, emphasis in original)

The work of Malinowski and Mauss began a long debate over the motivations behind reciprocal exchange, and this debate presupposed that such exchanges were material, reciprocal, and qualitatively distinct from commercial transactions

Economic anthropologist Karl Polanyi, on the other hand, argued for a radical historical discontinuity. He presented an especially influential version of the claim that the modern West can be characterized by its market economy (1957). He held that the emergence of the market came about as a result of gradual historical development, that the development of the self-regulating market is unique to the modern West, and that the moment of its mature development marked a radical discontinuity in economic and social relations: "Instead of economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are

embedded in the economic system" (*Ibid.*, 57).¹

According to Polanyi, non-market systems of exchange are of two types: reciprocity and redistribution (1957, 47-53). Reciprocity embodies an institutional pattern of symmetry, "a frequent feature of social organization among nonliterate peoples," in which individual relations tend to occur as one-to-one transactions. Redistribution, on the other hand, embodies centrality, where goods and services are delivered to one person or institution and are redistributed according to status or other criteria (*Ibid.*, 48-49). In these cases, "The economic system is, in effect, a mere function

¹ Critical Theory exemplifies a similar move away from gradualism. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, while proposing what might be considered a devolutionary view from the perspective of rationality, pointed to a discontinuity signalled by the maturation of the market. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, they placed the market at the heart of their analysis of the corrupt form of western rationality: "The unleashed market economy was both the actual form of reason and the power which destroyed reason" (1987, 90). "The exchange principle' was central to Horkheimer and Adorno's interpretation of Marx (Jay 1973, 259, 347 n.6). Moishe Postone and Barbara Brick suggest that this is a misreading of Marx, one which led to an impasse in the work of both Horkheimer and Pollock. They argue that emphasizing Marx's analysis of labour, rather than his analysis of exchange, leads to a more fruitful critique of modernity (1993; cf. Postone 1993 and Dean 1994, 98f.). This thread of critique, although considerations of economy preclude my developing it at length, is especially relevant to this dissertation's linkage of the themes of labour and idleness to that of time.

of social organization" (*Ibid.*, 49). Polanyi also includes the economy of the *oikos* as a basic pre-market type. His central claim is that

all economic systems known to us up to the end of feudalism in Western Europe were organized either on the principles of reciprocity or redistribution, or householding, or some combination of the three . . . [U]p to the end of the Middle Ages, markets played no important part in the economic system. (*Ibid.*, 54-55)

Polanyi holds that, from the sixteenth century onward, the development of markets became significant in Western Europe. Historically, local markets developed at points of contact between regional economic spheres; this led to the rise of towns and urban civilization; the emergence of national markets brought the national territory to the fore as the instrument of further development; finally, the Industrial Revolution prompted the emergence of the self-regulating market in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (1957, 56ff.). This development constituted the unprecedented separation of economic and social relations that characterizes the modern West. The commodification of land, money, and, especially labour, tended "[t]o allow the market mechanism to be sole director of the fate of human beings and their natural environment" (*Ibid.*, 73). Polanyi holds that "society unconsciously resisted any attempt at making it a mere appendage of the market" (*Ibid.*, 77).² However, this "self-protection of society" is not the aspect of Polanyi's thought most relevant here (*Ibid.*, 83).

Examining two critiques of Polanyi will allow us to further clarify the characteristics of exchange relations appropriate to an analysis of economic, social, and

² Gregory Baum has recently clarified the ethical basis of Polanyi's idea of this 'double movement,' arguing that it has great contemporary relevance (1996).

religious changes in early modern England. These two critiques focus on Polanyi's claim that the market economy is unique to the modern West and on his characterization of non-market exchange relations.

A number of economic historians take issue with Polanyi's claim that the self-regulating market is unique to the modern West. Morris Silver, for example, draws on detailed evidence to criticize fourteen specific claims made by Polanyi regarding the alleged lack of markets in the Ancient Near East; he concludes that "It cannot be doubted that Near Eastern antiquity knew true markets" (1983, 828). Behind Silver's specific arguments lies a more general criticism of Polanyi: although Polanyi criticized "stage theories" with their "predilection for continuity," he is himself guilty of a similar overgeneralization for the sake of tidy theorizing; he downplays differences and discontinuities on the "non-market" side of his historical account in order to make a more impressive case for the uniqueness of the modern West and its market economy (*Ibid.*, 795, 827). Mayhew *et al.* criticize both Silver's evidence and his use of it (1985). However, Silver's defence of his own position seems adequate to leave his fundamental criticism of Polanyi standing, if not all the details (1985). That is, it seems fair to say that Polanyi portrays pre-market exchange too much as a monolithic other to market exchange. A corollary of Polanyi's overly rigid distinction between market and non-market systems is the weakness of his model for examining social change: "Polanyi provides us with an account of reciprocity and redistributive systems which is inherently changeless. There is nothing in his framework that explains changes in the mix of the system over time "(North 1977, 715).

Paul Veyne extends the claim that Polanyi overemphasizes market-relations as a fundamental category (1976, 67-74). He argues that Polanyi is able to draw a sharp line of discontinuity around the modern West because he lumps an immense variety of non-market, pre-modern and non-western types of exchange under the catch all heading of 'redistribution':

On comprend pourquoi la redistribution est partout: c'est une notion surtout négative; elle embrasse tant de choses qu'elle n'embrasse plus rien. Il y a redistribution là où il n'y a pas marché. . . . Sociologiquement, sous le concept de redistribution se mêlent des trocs intéressés, des cadeaux symboliques, des déguisements idéologiques. (*Ibid.*, 69-70).

Veyne distinguishes three senses of the term 'economic' ("matériel," "intéressé," and "rationnel") and holds that Polanyi fails to adequately distinguish them (1976, 72-73). He concludes his critique by calling for a 'sociologie du don,' that is, for a closer consideration of the characteristics and social roles of different types of exchange relations. As a contribution to this project, Veyne distinguishes four types of *don*:

l'échange, où les agents visent la satisfaction matérielle du bien; le *cadeau*, où je sacrifie quelque satisfaction matérielle égoïste à la satisfaction que me procure une relation avec le bénéficiaire; l'*hommage*, où je fais case sacrifice pour symboliser l'existence de ladite relation; enfin la *prestation*, où je me vois obligé par la violence ou l'autorité de transférer des biens à autrui sans retirer de cette redistribû la moindre satisfaction personnelle ni, évidemment, matérielle. . . . (1976, 75, emphasis added)

Veyne's typology reflects the specific historical context of his analysis, classical Rome.³ This is appropriate for his study of *évergétisme*, but it suggests that a broader 'sociologie du don' would yield more general typology. Veyne begins, for example, with

³ "Échange, cadeau, hommage, prestation : un latiniste reconnaît ici les quatre sens du mot *munus* . . ." (Veyne 1976, 75).

a premise that limits his analysis from the start: "Le don comprend en effet deux composantes, la chose donnée et l'acte de donner" (1976, 74).⁴ This classification is an unfortunate place to begin a sociology of the gift because it leaves out other possibly important factors, especially the indefinite specification of a time of reciprocation.⁵

Polanyi fails to distinguish adequately between types of non-market exchange, and Veyne presents an overly limited alternative typology. From their example we glean one important point: 'gift' and 'market' must be used cautiously as categories for historical

⁴ It is interesting to contrast Veyne's initial premise here with South Asian classifications of the constituent elements of *dāna*. *Dāna* is religious gifting, a limited subcategory of non-market transactions, and this has led to extensive discussions of its nature. The Hindu *dharmasāstras* state that that *dāna* properly demands attention to six elements: donor, recipient, attitude, object given, time, and place (Kane 1962-75, 2:843). Jain and Buddhist views of *dāna* are framed by similar classifications. At the very least, this comparison again prompts us to be attentive to the fundamental characteristics of non-market exchange relations.

⁵It is possible to critique Veyne's characterization of the gift on other grounds. In positing "la chose donnée" as starkly distinct from the donor, Veyne sidesteps an important debate in anthropological studies of exchange relations, namely whether pre-modern exchange relations can be characterized by a certain identity of the giver and the object given. This latter idea was put forward by Mauss in his influential *Essai sur le Don*--a text which has come under serious reconsideration since Veyne's citation of it (Mauss 1990; Veyne 1976, 67; Parry 1986).

study, with an eye to the specific characteristics of exchange relations that are prominent in any given context. We will find that time is important for characterizing the shifts in early modern exchange relations that we are considering. With this in mind, we are better prepared to consider Heal's claim that early modern English charity shifted from gift to market.

Charity and monetarization

The first point at which we will qualify Heal's analysis of the decline of hospitality is regarding her views of the social effects of money. She seems to suggest that the monetarization of charitable transactions played a causal role both in distancing the gentry from the poor and in prompting the centralization of poor relief. Heal's views on this issue--brief interpretive comments in the introduction and conclusion of a solid historical work--are insightful but too starkly drawn. Although she is careful to limit her claims to the sphere of hospitality, her overly generalized conception of monetarization leaves its connection to social relations unclear.

The historical evidence does not warrant any appeal to any general and abrupt discontinuity in processes of monetarization in late medieval or early modern England. As Marc Bloch noted, "money was never wholly absent from business transactions in feudal Europe, even among the peasant classes, and it never ceased to be employed as a standard of exchange" (1961, 66). Cash rents paid by English peasants are recorded from as early as the year 900, a development that became increasingly prominent over the

following centuries (Dyer 1996, 304ff.). Monetization of the English economy did progress from the early thirteenth century in many spheres of activity (Coleman 1988, 610). Moreover, money began to play an important role in almsgiving from that time, a development which marked "a new stage not only in the economic development of charity but also in its moral and social aspects" (Mollat 1986, 155-56). However, such claims about the changing forms of exchange relations must be situated in well-defined social contexts. In general, we should not place too much emphasis on the monetization of the medieval economy given the caution of medievalists on this point:

The assumption that during the medieval period there was a steady progression from an economy based on labour services to one dominated by the use of money and the payment of wages does not command much acceptance from present-day historians of the English medieval economy. (Prestwich 1996, 129)

The relevant issue is not when transactions became monetarized but when specific exchange characteristics became dominant in specific social contexts. Heal is careful to limit her claims to the context of a specific sort of transaction, but a more nuanced consideration of the precise relationship between money and social change is useful even for this delimited sphere.

Heal links monetarization and impersonal social relations too neatly. She points to late medieval feudal relations for a model of more "transactional" non-monetary social relations (1990, 74-75). Even granted discontinuous monetarization in charitable giving at this time, this is misleading because it equates two issues that are conceptually distinct. Both historical and cross-cultural studies make it clear that the distinction between monetary and pre-monetary transactions is not necessarily tied to that between impersonal

and personal social relations nor to that between 'traditional' and 'modern' societies (Parry and Bloch 1989). It is misleading to project an overly sharp distinction of this sort onto the late medieval period. For example, Simmel's influential contrast between "the modern era and the Middle Ages," which emphasizes the role of money in changing relations between persons and property, is too stark. He makes an important point that "money slipped like an insulating layer between the objective totality of the association and the subjective totality of the personality," but he provides examples from the tenth to the nineteenth century without paying sufficient attention to the specific interactions between monetarization and social boundaries at different points along this historical continuum (Simmel 1991, 17-19). We might at least distinguish between early and late feudal periods, where the latter witnessed increasing social stratification in conjunction with traditional patrimonial forms of authority (Bloch 1961).

Most importantly we should not simply assume that money brings with it certain effects on social relations. We need to examine social changes independently before considering their relation to economic shifts. This is not to deny the importance of monetarization but to call for a closer consideration of the changes in exchange relations that occurred in specific social and historical contexts. If increasing monetarization bears a causal relation to the erosion of traditional forms of social affiliation this is due not to any intrinsic quality of money itself but to the role that money plays within a broader context: the interplay between exchange relations and social relations. Although our purpose here is not to make a historical case for causal relationships, this clarification is necessary in order to justify our attention to this broader context.

An example is in order. Pepys' journal provides a relevant illustration of attitudes to centralized relief on the part of the poor. On one occasion he tried to give alms directly to several paupers at Christ's Hospital, Abingdon, but they would not take the money from him, insisting instead that he put it in the collecting box (Slack 1988, 107). It is not money alone that resulted in this relationship with the poor so different from that of traditional almsgiving. A specific social and institutional framing of the circulation of charitable goods altered exchange relations between donors and recipients.

Monetary transactions and precisely calculated impersonal obligations are not equatable. Even in the medieval gift-economy, precisely calculated obligations were common. Feudal customs stated that workmen were entitled to their traditional Christmas meal at the local lord's home only if they brought the required number of loaves or fowl; court rolls preserve cases where a tenant's animals were pronounced forfeit if found on the commons because the tenant failed to work the number of harvest days required to earn the right of that pasturage; tenant services due and the lord's contribution were described in minute detail, specifying the number of oxen to be used in plowing and whose horse would be used to fetch the seed to be sown (Homans 1942, 357, 260, 272).

Increasing use of money greatly facilitated but did not initiate precise calculation of obligations. Lester Little makes the point that, in the medieval period, money allowed for the precise calculation of values exchanged, thus undermining reciprocity (Little 1978, 3-18, 29-34). Little emphasizes the impersonal nature and primarily urban context of monetary relations. Jonathan Parry makes this point clearer by suggesting that money

was seen as dangerous in medieval Europe because its association with the urban economy situated it as a direct threat to the 'closed estate economy' of the feudal periods (1989, 85).

Money was perceived as dangerous not because it quantified value but because it had no respect for traditional social boundaries. Exchanges of services and kind were much more easily contained within a household, an estate, or a village. The quantification of value that money offered was not that of the customs, determined by long tradition and local use; it was a new and more universal kind of quantification anchored outside traditional social structures. Loaves and fowl bought you Christmas dinner at the local lord's, but money was good anywhere.

The point, then, is not that money appeared suddenly on the scene with corrosive effects but rather that, over a period of centuries, changes occurred in the characteristics of exchanges at many levels of Western society.⁶ Monetary circulation broached different social spheres at different points, chronologically and geographically. Its advent was accompanied by different effects in different circumstances, and it's increasing

⁶ Weber reinforces the medieval baseline of this shift and emphasizes that money played a significant role within traditional social relations. Following Rodbertus he notes that the ancient *oikos* economy of the large household was maintained into the Middle Ages, with a characteristic role for money and a sharp sense of social boundaries:

It is true that exchange with the outside was generally not entirely lacking, but it tended to have the character of budgetary exchange. Obligations to money payment have also not been uncommon, but have generally played a subsidiary part in the main provision for needs and have tended to be traditionally fixed. (Weber 1978, 124).

prominence provoked widely varying often defensive reactions. In general, the characteristics of money, and of economic capital more generally (quantification, portability, accumulability, convertability, anonymity) come into play in different ways in different historical and cultural contexts. In our analysis of changing practices of charity and poor relief, then, we need to reach this level of specificity.

The pure gift

We turn now to the second point at which we will extend Heal's account of relations between social boundaries and charity's transition from gift to market. Specifically, we must clarify two senses of 'gift': the deferred exchange of goods, which seems ultimately interested, and the pure gift, which is by definition disinterested. By explicitly linking "altruism" and "status," Heal already problematizes the idea of a purely disinterested gift. Our claim here is that the categories of 'gift' and 'market' are limited in their usefulness because they are elements of a modern western economic discourse. We will clarify this claim with reference to medieval transactional relations because these are often presented as the baseline over against which modern exchange relations developed. Analyses of exchange relations in medieval Europe founder if an inappropriate conceptual apparatus is used. In addition, however, we cannot understand the emergence of modernity unless we problematize the categories constituted through that emergence.

Here we develop a crucial premise: the often-invoked contrast between gift and

market is historically and culturally determined. As Marilyn Strathern notes, “the terms form a single cultural pair within Western political-economy discourse, though they can be used to typify differences between economies that are not party to the discourse”

(1988, 18).⁷ Jonathan Parry and Maurice Bloch make the point even more forcefully:

The radical opposition which so many anthropologists have discovered between the principles on which gift and commodity exchange are founded derives in part, we believe, from the fact that *our* ideology of the gift has been constructed in antithesis to market exchange. The idea of the purely altruistic gift is the other side of the coin from the idea of the purely interested utilitarian exchange . . .” (Parry and Bloch 1989, 9, emphasis in original).

Again, we are led to consider specific characteristics of exchange relations.

As Parry notes, the tendency to characterize the gift as disinterested, altruistic, moral and emotional and the market as interested, profit-oriented, amoral (or immoral) and rational is conditioned by this conceptual opposition to the market, and that this opposition tends to emerge in certain sorts of societies (1986).⁸ He argues, on the basis of historical and cross-cultural comparison, that

an elaborated ideology of the 'pure' gift is most likely to develop in state societies with an advanced division of labour and a significant commercial sector. But what is also in my view essential to its articulation is a specific type of belief system, as is suggested by the fact that in all of the major world religions great stress is laid on the merit of gifts and alms, ideally given in secrecy and without expectation of any worldly return. (*Ibid.*, 467)

In this context, alms come to embody the precept of selfless giving, yet this

⁷Strathern speaks specifically of ‘gift’ and ‘commodity.’

⁸In the light of this socially relativized distinction between interested gift-exchange and the pure gift, the aporia that Derrida finds in the gift seems to be problematic in a different way than he suggests (1992).

circumscription of a domain of altruistic exchange has an important obverse:

a *universalistic* ethic of disinterested giving can surely only encourage the creation of a separate sphere which is immune from the requirements of such a demanding precept. The ideology of the pure gift may thus itself promote and entrench the ideological elaboration of a domain in which self-interest rules supreme. (*Ibid.*, 468-69, emphasis in original)

As the other of the market, then, the pure gift defines its boundaries.

Heal suggests that charity came to be seen less in terms of altruism and status and more in terms of calculated self-interest. This is insightful as far as it goes, but Parry and Bloch's work renders problematic this conceptual opposition between altruism and self-interest as characteristics of exchange relations. The ideology of the pure gift is an aspect of both feudal and modern societies. If anything, altruism is more characteristic of the latter. Charity sermons continued to preach the value of selfless giving throughout the period of the decline of hospitality, as they do to this day. Moreover, the conception of 'interest' that frames Heal's comment itself emerged clearly only in the eighteenth century (Dumont 1977; Hirschman 1977). Describing changes in early modern charity as a shift from gift to market, especially with reference to increasing monetarization, is too simple. These points should caution us to look beyond positing a straightforward shift from altruistic gift to interested market with regard to late medieval and early modern charity.

We have problematized these paired contrasting terms (gift:personal social relations::money:impersonal) by examining monetarization processes, and finding less discontinuity than Heal's argument suggests. It is possible to do the same by considering the proposed discontinuity in social relations. Accounts of medieval social relations have

also been overly generalized as the other of modern social relations. The concept of feudalism, for example, has come under revisionist critique. Susan Reynolds argues that the characteristics often subsumed under 'feudalism' did not form "a coherent bundle of institutions or of concepts that was structurally separate from other institutions and concepts of the time" (1994, 11). Historical discussion of the Middle Ages has been distorted by centuries of scholarship that has viewed this period "through the feudal spectacles that were manufactured in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (*Ibid.*, 322). She finds that the social, economic and political relations generally lumped together under the terms 'fief' and 'vassal' varied greatly from region to region. More significantly, she finds that they did not emerge from earlier traditional forms of social affiliation but from an increasingly bureaucratized and professionalized legal and political context, from "an early and notable part of what is called the twelfth-century renaissance" (*Ibid.*, 257).

We can learn two things from this critique of 'feudalism.' First, using a conceptual apparatus that has emerged more recently than the historical period under study can introduce distortions. This is the case with 'fief' and 'vassal' as it is with 'gift' and 'reciprocity.' Concentrating on overly generalized and historically recent concepts obscures a whole range of important social, economic, and political relations (Reynolds 1994, 481). Given the limitations of many key concepts, Reynolds recommends an approach commensurate with our attempt here to let a concept of agency fill itself out through a genealogical analysis of 'idleness' and 'industry':

Starting our investigation of phenomena by focusing on particular words is a

sixteenth-century habit that needs to be dropped. . . . [I]t may be more rewarding not to attempt definitions until after one has looked at usage and thought hard about what is being discussed (the phenomena) and about what may be implied about the notions of the time. (*Ibid.*, 13).

Second, Reynolds undermines the view that late-medieval social relations can be considered as emerging continuously from earlier 'traditional,' 'personal,' 'reciprocal,' relations. This was not as true as is generally thought even with respect to the period before the twelfth-century: "early medieval society was held together by more than interpersonal bonds. . . . Interpersonal bonds were not the whole story nor even most of the story" (1994, 476). From the twelfth century on, institutions meeting Weber's criteria of bureaucracy played a much more important role in shaping social relations than is generally granted.

Describing changes in early modern charity as a shift from personal to impersonal social relations is also too simple. The discontinuity that seems to stand behind Heal's account of the decay of hospitality seems questionable on two grounds then: neither monetarization nor the advent of impersonal social relations shaped by bureaucratic institutions were new to early modern England. There were important developments in both these areas, but the situation is more complex than a sharp historical discontinuity along these two axes. To understand the significance of changing practices of charity and poor relief in early modern England, we must look at the relations between these factors, money and social boundaries, and fundamental conceptions of order.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to clarify the relation between conceptions of order and transactions framed by specific social boundaries in late medieval and early modern England. This has involved both substantive and methodological clarifications.

Felicity Heal considers two dimensions of shifts in social boundaries associated with 'the decay of hospitalitie'. On the one hand, the nobility and gentry closed ranks and, given the decreasing status value of household hospitality, increased their social isolation from the poor. The boundary between rich and poor became sharper as its symbolic elision in acts of charitable giving became less important as a means of maintaining status. On the other hand, as Heal notes and as we will consider in detail in the sixth and seventh chapters, governments stepped into the breach, taking over responsibility for the poor. This changed the nature of charitable gifts from alms that operated symbolically within status relations of commensality to a dole administered by municipal and parish officials and funded by local taxation. Increasing monetarization was certainly central to both these shifts. Given as alms, money was more impersonal than the traditional gift of food, which symbolized commensality. Given by means of the parish poor rate, it was even more so. These are important points, but they must be situated more firmly in their historical and social context. Specifically, we must draw out the relations between charity, social relations and order.

We must examine the specific characteristics of transactions across specific social boundaries, and our investigation must proceed with an awareness that customary categories of analysis have severe limitations. Heal points to the right issues here, but a closer analysis reveals not a shift in conceptions of charity along a spectrum from gift to

market, but an increasingly fine-grained distinction between these two categories and a correlated increase in their purchase on social boundaries. It is misleading to measure historical perceptions of exchange relations along a spectrum framed in modern categories. If altruism is the other of self-interested exchange and if 'interest' emerges during the period we are studying, then we cannot simply use these categories. We must examine their emergence as characteristics of exchange in the context of changing patterns of social relations.

The discursive placement of charity along an emerging spectrum framed by the altruism of the gift and the self-interest of the market reflected not a change in attitude but a shift in the way that exchange relations shaped and were shaped by social boundaries. It represented not a progressive movement along an ahistorical continuum of types of exchange but rather a discursive and practical elaboration of this typology in dialogue with shifting social relations.

In the light of our discussion so far, three areas of concern merit further examination. First, we need to clarify the specific characteristics of charitable relations that provided an effective purchase on the social boundary between donors and recipients. To this end, we will examine, in the following chapter, a religious aspect of late medieval charity, the exchange of alms for prayers, because the erosion of this practice was closely associated with the decay of hospitality. Second, we must examine the criteria by which certain poverty-stricken members of late medieval and early modern English society were excluded from standard interactions between donors and recipients, almsgiving and poor relief. Shifts in these criteria point to changing perceptions both of the threat that the

undeserving poor posed to social order and the usefulness of the deserving poor for the maintainance of order. Third, we must consider the discourses, practices and social effects of the processes of centralization and institutionalization manifested by the early modern poor relief. We will find that the decline of reciprocity in charitable relations was correlated with changing perceptions in the relations between social boundaries and order and, as a corollary, with the perceived need for institutional mechanisms of preventing social contamination. Richard Johnson saw in the uncontained circulation of “all men’s money” a threat of disorder that reflected a new conception of order, one illustrated by the threat of beggars’ money.

The result of these developments, this dissertation as a whole suggests, was an increasing emphasis on the role of rightly-oriented individual agency in fostering social order. The change we are examining went beyond finding a new solution to the functionalist ‘problem of order.’ It involved new interrelation between discourses, practices and social effects that reconstituted both the idea of order and the nature of the human subject. In early modern England, the structural characteristics of charitable relations changed. Emphasis began to shift from the form and content of transactions to the qualities of the agents involved. The increasing extent to which the poor were expected to make a worldly rather than transcendent return reflected a belief not only that labour was crucial to preserving order but that the industriousness of individuals served this same function.

Chapter 5

The Exchange of Alms for Prayers

Sixteenth-century changes in practices of charitable giving undermined the traditional source of beggars' status, their value as intercessors with Christ in heaven. The intervention of municipal and parish poor relief institutions between charitable donors and recipients did not only replace traditionally reciprocal exchange relations with more impersonal and calculable relations; it disrupted a transactional link between the earthly and heavenly cities. Henry Bedel went beyond most of even strict Protestant authors when he urged householders to "feede not your equales, nor the like his like, franke not your selves to fatte to feede the woormes" (1572, sig. C1v. cf. Heal 1984, 77-78). Bedel held that the wealthy should give goods not within their own social sphere but to the deserving poor. He made clear the return due such a gift: "What shall we have for helping the poore; Surely blessings in this world, honor and deliverance from trouble . . . and retribution in the life to come" (1572, sig. E1r). With his extreme distinction of hospitality to peers and charity to the poor, Bedel points to the central issue. The newly perceived tension between hospitality and charity reflected a tension between worldly and religious concerns: the status concerns engaged by reciprocal hospitality and the soteriological concerns engaged by charity were coming to be perceived as distinct. Charitable transactions with the deserving poor marked the boundaries of society in telling terms. By examining the discourses framing this transcendent relation between donors and recipients at a time when the practices themselves were in decline, we can

attempt to bring to light the strategic function of this transaction in late-medieval society.

“GOD payeth interest”

Well into the early modern period, economic metaphors were frequently used to present charity as a transaction between donors, recipients and God. Following Max Weber, Bryan S. Turner argues that "the forms of exchange which are constituent of economic life in human societies provide the metaphors by which human actors conceptualise their relationship with the gods" (1991, 104). To this important point we will add that such metaphors also play a role in legitimizing social boundaries as far as these are in part constituted through exchange relations.

To understand changing attitudes to hospitality and charity, then, we can ask what return donors received for their charitable gifts: what counter-gift had the poor to offer? On the one hand, given the perceived worthiness of charity in Christian terms, donors accrued moral status through giving. Preachers and pamphleteers did not shrink from appealing to self-interested motives for putatively selfless acts. On the other hand, some perceived charity as a sort of bribe that would ensure that the potentially disruptive poor kept their place, though the distinction between deserving and undeserving explicitly channeled charity away from precisely those who might pose such a threat. These attitudes manifest important aspects of contemporary views pertaining to the divergence between hospitality and charity: changing social relations among the elites resulted in less mutual recognition being given to rural hospitality to the poor; and keeping the growing

numbers of poor in their place demanded more efficient and institutionalized mechanisms of poor relief. However, a different conception of the poor's role in charity was prominent.

Throughout late medieval and early modern Europe, arguments for almsgiving were closely connected with a belief that the prayers of the poor, given in return for alms, were especially beneficial. Robert Brinton, a fourteenth-century Bishop of Rochester, preached that "the rich pay and the poor pray" (Moisa 1982, 165). Thomas More said of the poor, "they be also our proctours and beg in our name" (1529, sig. A4r). Over a century and a half later, the seventeenth edition of Jeremy Taylor's influential *Rule and Exercise of Holy Living* still taught that "the bowels of the poor bless us, and they pray for us" (1695, 254).

This attitude reflected the Christian value of charity to all one's fellows:

Every man is to his neighbour a debtor not only of that which himself borroweth, but of whatsoever his neighbour needeth, a debtor not only to pay that he oweth, but also to lend that he hath and may conveniently spare: to lend I say according to the rule of Christ, *Lend, looking for nothing thereby*. (Sandys 1585, sig. L8v)

The poor were recipients especially favoured by God: "By communicating of our riches to the poor, we shall make them *our friends*, both to give evidence for us of the truth of our *faith*, and *charity*, and to beg a plentiful return upon us . . ." (Gouge 1676, 60). God paid close attention to charitable gifts to the poor: "The Angels of these little Ones, who always behold the face of God while they give an account of their Charge will do so of your Charity too . . ." (Lucas 1692, 22).

We might expect this belief in the efficacy of the prayers of the poor to have died

out with the Reformation, yet it did not. Upon his death in 1561, for example, William Turner wanted a dole to be given to the poor, "to pray for me and my father and mother and my two wives, Thomasine and Joan, and all Christian souls" (Whiting 1983, 84). In 1598, Puritan minister Samuel Bird made the nature of the transaction explicit: "the poor being such as God hath promised to give the hearing unto, it is therefore a greater benefit than we take it to be, to have them pray for us. . . . [T]he Lord hath put a blessing into the hands of distressed persons, to bestow upon such as do relieve them . . ." (Bird 1598, 98, 95).

Sixteenth-century shifts in practises of giving to the poor at funerals show that these beliefs were not confined to sermons. Bequests for masses dropped off sharply after the Reformation, as belief in the power of priestly prayers to hasten departed souls through the 'bitter pains of Purgatory' waned; this practise was beginning to decay even in the decades before the Reformation (Whiting 1983). However, bequests for the poor increased; in some areas they entirely replaced more traditional stipulations by the beginning of Mary's reign, falling off only slightly at that point (Mayhew 1983, 55; Greaves 1981, 576-579, 717-722; cf. Whiting 1983, 82, 84). The opulence of funerals declined after 1580; doles to the poor declined somewhat at the end of Elizabeth's reign but continued to the Civil War (Stone 1965, 577-79).¹

¹Changing attitudes to opulent funerals and the poor are evident in the 1608 will of Robert, 2nd Earl of Dorset, who wished to be buried:

without any blackes or greate solemnitie of funerall but in a Christian manner as other persons are of a meaner sort, because the usuall solemnities of funeralls such as heraldes sett doone for noble men are only good for the heraldes and drapers

Some mid-sixteenth-century wills were sensitive to Protestant views of works: Edward ffyson said, "I do not suppose that my merit be by the good bestowing of [my goods] but my merit is in the faith of Jesus Christ only"; in 1551 John Maior left 20s. to the poor "not to th'intent to pray for made but to be thankful unto God and to pray for the king" (Brigden 1984, 106). In the 1590s, the godly ministers of Chester complained that certain popish practises survived in the diocese, among them the fact that the poor were still "made partakers of the dead man's dole or Banquet of Charity"; the practise of feeding the poor became more important than that of arranging funeral dinners for friends (Heal 1990, 372).

People clearly found it much easier to give up popish priests and monks than to stop extending a hospitable hand to the poor upon their death, but this charity was framed by more hierarchical social relations. Bequests to the poor became more selective in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Wills bequeathing funeral dinners for rich and poor alike became rarer, and an explicit insistence on lack of discrimination in those wills that continued to do so underlines the erosion of neighbourly hospitality (Archer 1988, 88). Bequests to institutions increased, and church wardens played an increasing role in distributing private charity (*Ibid.*, 224). We will return to the issue of centralization and its effect on charitable relations in the following chapter.

An interesting measure of the times is provided by a certain type of argument urging charitable donations. Late sixteenth-century sermons and religious writings

and very prejudiciall to the children, servantes, and friendes of the deceased and to the poore which inhabit there about, towards all which the deceased might otherwise be much more liberall. (cited in Stone 1965, 577)

referred frequently to Proverbs 19:17: "He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed." Sermons echoing this verse were common: "He that giveth to the poore lendeth to the Lorde, a sure discharger of his debts to the uttermost" (Sandys 1585, sig. N4v).

More significantly, sermons went beyond the literal reading that God would 'repay' almsgivers, adding that he would repay with interest. Puritan divine Henry 'Silver-tongued' Smith wrote: "God saith, who so giveth to the poore, lendeth unto the Lord, and shall be sure to find it againe, and receive for the same an hundredfold" (Smith 1592, 20-21). Popular writer Thomas Lupton went farther, writing in 1583:

Whatever is given to the poor is lent to the Lord, and he will repay that truly in the kingdom of heaven, with no small advantage. But whatsoever we spend in vain on ourselves, and on the rich, it is lent to the Devil, and he will repay us again in hell with endless pains and torments. (1583, sig. B8^v)

Another influential puritan divine, John Downname, wrote "if thou bee a wise userer, chuse God himselfe for thy debtor, who is the surest pay master" (1634, 185, mistakenly paginated as 205).

These exhortations continued during the seventeenth century, resorting to even more commercial language. At mid-century we find Richard Baxter writing to solicit support for poor students:

. . . come while the market lasts. . . Christ is contented to be your Debtour, at the usury of a hundred for one, in this world, and in the world to come. . . Is God to be trusted with the sustentation of the whole Creation, and the government of all the world, . . . and yet is he not to be trusted with your money? (Baxter 1648, sig. A2^v)

At the end of the century, even more explicitly commercial metaphors were being used:

charitable donors were told that "Alms is a sort of Merchandice that we barter with Heaven. . . . To cast our *Bread* (or *Charity*) upon *Solomon's Waters*, is the safest and speediest way to Merchandize and Trade with Heaven . . ." (Waring 1693, 20, 4). Nor was an explicit appeal to self-interest inappropriate even given the transcendent aspect of the transaction: "the good Christian aiming hereafter at Heaven is like a Merchant pursuing his best interests here on Earth" (Gostwyke 1696, 3). At the end of the seventeenth century we can still find a clear statement of the link between this belief and that of divine usury:

Shorten not your Hand of Relief, because GOD payeth Interest for the whole time of your forbearance. . . . By feeding the Mouths of the Hungry, thou dost engage the Tongues of the needy Beads-man, to make Prayers and Intercessions for thee at the Throne of Mercy . . . and calling down Blessings upon thee and thy Family. (Waring 1693, 84, 29)

We cannot simply label this view as superstitious given Waring's eagerness to disparage "old *Popish* stories" and his advice to those who hesitate to engage in this transcendental economy of almsgiving: "Let us no more pretend to *Science* and *Reformation*, until we cease to be Barbarous, and have learn'd humanity" (*Ibid.*, 89, 22, emphasis in original).

The exhortation that "GOD payeth interest" was a reflection of generally greater attention to economic matters. However, an adequate explanation for the prevalence of this argument for charitable giving needs to go beyond noting mercantilist parallels. A contrast with usury proper was explicit. Generations of students at Peterhouse College, Cambridge, read a two-line poem in Latin painted on the wall of that building's Stone Parlour: "Usury and the foul viper give birth in the same fashion / He who succours the

afflicted lends at interest to God" (Valdstejna 1981 [1602], 94n150).² The ostensible purpose of the claim that 'God payeth interest' seems to have been to engage self-interest as a motivation for charitable giving. Of course, blatant self-interest was discouraged: ". . . he has no reason to expect the rewards of Charity, if what he does is only to be seen of Men, or to trade and truck with God" (Burnet 1698, 5-6).

Yet, although belief in the efficacy of the exchange of prayers for alms continued to be expressed in sermons, the practise was changing. The poor seem to have stopped praying in such a formal exchange for alms long before many of these sermons were preached. The practise lingered into the mid-seventeenth century (Heal 1990, 217). Antiquarian Anthony Wood noted in his journal for December 6, 1670 the passing of the last beadsmen of Oxford:

Note that beggars used to pray at folk's doors for alms, in imitation of old time when they prayed for their souls for victuals. But in the broken times the fanaticks would not suffer them to say prayers at their doors. So that being decayed when the King was restored, they quite left it off and Jack Saturday *alias* Williams and Meg Swiffin a madwoman were the last; and now none at all. (Wood 1961, 190-191)

Oxford seems to have been one of the last bastions of this practice (Heal 1990, 321).

Of course, one important reason for this change was a general decline in the belief in the power of prayer in late-seventeenth century England as enlightenment values

² Baron Waldstein encountered these lines during his tour of England in the first years of the seventeenth-century. The poem disappeared sometime during the eighteenth-century.

spread (Thomas 1973, 769-770).³ Despite a greater similarity to Anglicans than is generally acknowledged, Puritans especially held that indiscriminate almsgiving offered no purchase for the godly goal of reforming character (Todd 1987, 168). Puritan emphasis on 'the household of faith' led to more restricted charitable giving (Heal 1990, 133ff.).

We are left with two questions. What strategic objective was met by the medieval exchange of prayers for alms in its social and historical context?; What form of continuity or discontinuity occurred as these late-medieval discourses and practices of charity were replaced by very different ones in early modern England?

Gift, time, and social boundaries

The work of Pierre Bourdieu is relevant to an analysis of these developments. Without adopting his entire conceptual apparatus, we can profit from his analysis of the contrast between gift- and market-exchange, both for its strengths and its limitations. To address changing practices of charitable giving, we will consider changes in specific characteristics of exchange relations in their social and historical context. In attempting

³ Belief in the power of curses, for which the poor were especially known, lingered into the nineteenth century (Thomas 1973, 603-611; cf. Beier 1985, 121; Walter 1989, 111). As Keith Thomas notes, it was easier to turn beggars away from one's door than to deal with the guilt that lingered afterwards, easier to deny the efficacy of a superstitious blessing than that of an ill-willed curse (1973, 673).

to do this, we can extend Bourdieu's analysis of the relation between the gift and time. Our purpose here is twofold. This section appeals to Bourdieu for his analysis of one issue: the relation between ritualized giving, time, and social order. The following section argues that Bourdieu's analysis, with its overly sharp distinction between traditional and modern societies, must be modified slightly to account for the late medieval exchange of alms for prayers. Some brief theoretical comments on exchange relations will be useful as a prelude.

Exchange relations play an important role in forming and maintaining social relations. G.C. Homans, a pioneer of social exchange theory, argued that "Social behavior is an exchange of goods, material goods but also non-material ones, such as the symbols of approval or prestige" (1958, 606; cf. 1961). Lévi-Strauss placed these concerns in a more nuanced consideration of social relations:

Goods are not only economic commodities, but vehicles and instruments for realities of another order, such as power, influence, sympathy, status and emotion; and the skilful game of exchange . . . consists in a complex totality of conscious or unconscious manoeuvres in order to gain security and to guard oneself against risks brought about by alliances and by rivalries. (1969, 54)

These views present two important considerations. First, gifting relations can be seen as playing an important role in constituting social relations; issues of power, differential status, protection and security play an important role here. Second, intangibles like influence, prestige and merit must be considered part of social exchanges, including the giving of gifts.

Alvin Gouldner has argued that exchange behaviour is governed by "the norm of reciprocity" (1973a). Gouldner recognized that functionalist views of the social

usefulness of reciprocity failed to take into account the extent to which agents often give more than they receive in such exchanges. He argued that reciprocal exchange gives solidity to social structures and that the desirability of this solidity leads people to act reciprocally from a perceived sense of duty or in deference to the opinions of their peers: reciprocity makes altruism possible through egoism (cf. Schumaker 1992, 31). Gouldner's contribution here was to have tied individual motivation to the role that gifting plays in constituting social relations.

Following Gouldner, Sahlins distinguished between 'indefinite,' 'balanced,' and 'negative' reciprocity (1972).⁴ In indefinite reciprocity, goods and assistance are given freely without regard for any return. Reciprocation generally does occur, but often over a long period and in a manner not easily weighed against the original act of giving. In balanced reciprocity the value of the goods exchanged are reckoned closely and equivalent goods are exchanged with little delay. Balanced reciprocity is closer to economic exchange than is indefinite reciprocity. In negative reciprocity, on the one hand, each party attempts to get something for nothing (cf. Gouldner 1973b). Examples of negative reciprocity range from haggling to theft.

Exchange relations vary, then, in precision regarding the time of return. The contrast here is that between indefinite and balanced reciprocity, in Sahlins' terms, but it is temporal. Contracts specify times of return, terms of interest, and precise penalties for

⁴ Given the importance of Lévi-Strauss' very different concept of 'generalized exchange' it is best to refer to Sahlins' concept of 'generalized reciprocity' by an alternative he suggested: 'indefinite reciprocity' (1972).

temporal default; mutual favours, informal gifts between friends, and *rendre service* demand a return whose quantity or time of return is not precisely calculated (Schumaker 1992, 21ff.). The social functions of informal understandings like "you scratch my back; I'll scratch yours" are premised on a state of affairs where neither the degree nor timing of needs is known.

Noting the centrality of the 'term' to Mauss' analysis, Jacques Derrida draws out the temporal implications of the gift:

The gift is not a gift, the gift only gives to the extent it *gives time*. The difference between a gift and every other operation of pure and simple exchange is that the gift gives time. *There where there is gift, there is time*. What it gives, the gift, is time, but this gift of time is also a demand of time. The thing must not be restituted *immediately and right away*. There must be time, it must last, there must be waiting--without forgetting. It demands time, the thing, but it demands a delimited time, neither an instant nor an infinite time, but a time determined by a term, in other words, a rhythm, a cadence. (1992, 41, emphasis in original)

Pierre Bourdieu argues two important and related points (1990a, 98ff.). First, it is important to clearly separate two points of view, that of actors within the cycle of reciprocity and that of outside observers such as the social scientist. Second, the indefinite temporal determination of counter-gifts, as seen by actors internal to the cycle of reciprocity, is an "individual and collective misrecognition of the truth of the objective 'mechanism' of the exchange" (*Ibid.*, 105). That is, the social function of the gift demands that the gift's demand of a return be disguised as an altruistic act. Moreover, it is the time of the gift that allows this to occur:

The interval between gift and counter-gift is what allows a relation of exchange that is always liable to appear as irreversible, that is, both forced and self-interested, to be seen as reversible. . . . [T]he lapse of time that separates the gift from the counter-gift is what allows the deliberate oversight, the collectively

maintained and approved self-deception, without which the exchange could not function. Gift exchange is one of the social games that cannot be played unless the players refuse to acknowledge the objective truth of the game. . . . (*Ibid.*)

Time mediates the social function of the gift. This is the insight that we will apply to our topic. Changes in early modern charity and poor relief shifted emphasis from transactional characteristics to the character of agents, and time mediated the changing relation of these factors to conceptions of order.

Time, prayers, and hierarchy

Bourdieu points out the gift's role in underlining the asymmetrical time of action. Time manifests itself in gift-exchange as uncertainty (Taylor 1993, 56-7). That which for the anthropologist is analyzable as a cycle of gift and counter-gift is for participants a suspenseful and uncertain waiting game: will a return gift be proffered or has one given something valuable in vain? The players in this game of exchanges are committed to living with this uncertainty; their status positions, and to that extent their identities, depend upon it. By living this way in the future, each

excludes the supremely real and quite theoretical possibility of sudden reduction to the present, that is, to the past, the abrupt severing of the commitments and attachments to the future which, like death, casts the anticipations if interrupted practice into the absurdity of the unfinished. (Bourdieu 1990a, 82)

Here, with absurdity and death in the implicit shadow of market relations, we find a crucial connection between time, the gift, and social boundaries. In feudal societies, the indeterminate time of the gift is more clearly implicated in social stratification. Honour

and status in traditional societies accrue not only to individuals but to social groups, and gifts cross, express and in part constitute these boundaries. Gifting aims at

transmuting the inevitable and inevitably interested relations imposed by kinship, neighbourhood or work, into elective relations of reciprocity, through the sincere fiction of a disinterested exchange, and, more profoundly, at transforming arbitrary relations of exploitation (of woman by man, younger brother by elder brother, the young by the elders) into durable relations, grounded in nature. (Bourdieu 1990a, 112)

In one of few passages where he comments explicitly on modernization, Bourdieu points to two considerations that are very relevant here:

Urbanization, which brings together groups with different traditions and weakens the reciprocal controls (and even before urbanization, the generalization of monetary exchanges and the introduction of wage labour), results in the collapse of the collectively maintained and therefore entirely real fiction of the religion of honour. (1990a, 110)

Urbanization and monetarization were without doubt crucial factors motivating new conceptions and practices of charity in late medieval and early modern Europe. We must ask, however, to what extent these comments made by Bourdieu are applicable to our attempt to understand social change in a feudal society. The context, after all, is an analysis of gifting relations in a traditional society. Bourdieu seems to suggest that gift-exchange, bound as it is to “the religion of honour,” is dissolved even before urbanization as the corrosive medium of money begins to seep into the traditional sphere of status transactions. Moreover, traditional forms of social affiliation, like gift exchange, collapse almost immediately under the pressure of monetarization. This is the sharp contrast between gift and market that also informs Heal’s discussion.

Bourdieu’s characterization of gift-exchange is useful. However, it emerges from

a contrast between traditional and modern societies. The specific characteristics of medieval European societies must be addressed. A key difference between traditional and feudal societies is that the latter are relatively differentiated. Feudal societies are, in this and other senses, intermediate between traditional and modern societies, and Bloch's distinction between two phases of feudalism serves to underline this point (1961; cf. Bendix 1978, 201). We cannot take for granted that late medieval conceptions of gift-exchange were equivalent to those of traditional societies. Bourdieu's contrast between the perceived disinterestedness of gift-exchange and the explicit interestedness of market-exchange does not work as a characterization of the contrast between medieval and modern society. We must look closer at this contrast between types of exchange relations.

In his discussion of gift-exchange, Bourdieu contrasts traditional and modern but does not consider feudal societies. We can add to Bourdieu's analysis by noting the specific nature of medieval European feudal society where complex social stratification and gift-exchange, both rooted in honour-bound relations of status, coexisted with processes of urbanization and monetarization. Money was feared, and traditional forms of social affiliation dissolved in urban centres, lending value to the more contingent *communitas* of the guild or fraternity. The point to note, however, is that, despite money and the cities, gift-exchange and feudal forms of social relations persisted; they did not fade away like ghosts with the coming of money, for, as we have seen, monetarization was prominent throughout the Middle Ages. Even if we see feudal forms of social relations as succumbing in the end to urbanization and monetarization, their persistence

points to a greater degree of resistance, or at least inertia, than Bourdieu seems to allow for. For the moment, we will let this issue rest. The point underlined is that we would do well to shift our attention from monetarization to more specific characteristics of exchange relations.

The example of feudal hospitality illustrates a different role played by time and the gift: the maintenance of social boundaries. In traditional societies transactions with strangers take on characteristics of 'economic' transactions, with more attention to fixed terms given the low degree of mutual trust. Transactions with kin and neighbours, on the other hand, are often gift-exchanges with greater flexibility in time of return and, so, with a higher degree of uncertainty (Bourdieu 1990a, 115). In traditional societies, then, the temporal flexibility of the gift, with its concomitant uncertainty, is inversely proportional to social distance: gifts with a great degree of uncertainty stay close to home.

Charitable transactions between rich and poor in late medieval England explicitly involved the transcendent realm in an exchange situated at a worldly social boundary. The exchange of alms for prayers was a transaction that crossed a wide social gulf. In addition, it was a transaction that passed through the hands of Christ. The return was a return of favour in heaven redeemable only conditionally and at some indefinite future time. In the traditional almsgiving relation, the appeal to God as guarantor shifted potential returns for the rich from the worldly sphere, where contracts measured time precisely, to treasures laid up in heaven, redeemable in a less definite but infinitely more profitable future (cf. Derrida 1995, 97ff.). Almsgiving was perceived as the first phase of a transaction, and the counter-gift remained pending indefinitely, stamped with a divine

‘IOU.’

The gift of alms more than other gifts held time and uncertainty in its hand. God payeth interest in eschatological time, only, that is, after all worldly social relations with the poor had been transcended. Transacting across or transgressing a given social boundary involves the recognition of that boundary. To the extent that social practises and discourses are oriented to and by a given social boundary (whether in terms of gender, race, class, or status), that boundary is legitimated and reinforced even if explicitly called into question.

The temporally indefinite and divinely sanctioned transaction initiated by the gift of alms was a means of investing social hierarchy with the cachet of eternal order. The relative class and status positions of rich and poor were legitimated through this transcendent deferral. According to Bourdieu’s perspective, the exchange of prayers for alms was a form of gift-exchange that transformed “arbitrary relations of exploitation . . . into durable relations” through an institutionally legitimized misrecognition (Bourdieu 1990a, 112). Yet, these relations were not traditional ones of kin and neighbour but fundamental manifestations of feudal social stratification.

From charity transcendent to national poor relief

The erosion of the practise, and later the discourse, of the exchange of prayers for alms meant the end of this way of legitimizing social boundaries between rich and poor. This development was correlated with a fundamental shift in conceptions of social order

and in the transactions that fostered it. Social, economic and religious change undermined the conditions under which almsgiving gained a symbolic purchase on social relations. Changes in elite social relations and increasing centralization of poor relief changed the relative positioning of rich and poor. The poor were no longer a symbolic penumbra defining the margins of household commensality in terms at once both local and transcendent. They were an anonymous mass thronging the streets. With an increasing consciousness among the wealthy that they formed a national society, the poor were increasingly seen as a different sort of shadow to this larger social sphere.

As household hospitality declined during the sixteenth century, and as both rich and poor flocked to London in greater numbers, the parish replaced the household in marking the primary boundary within which charity was contained. Poor rates and bequests to parishes made resources available for relief of the resident poor. This introduced a split between the poor of the parish and outsiders. Parish authorities instituted new posts, such as staff bearers (from the 1550s) and salaried wardens for vagrant persons (from the 1570s), in order to enforce parish boundaries by excluding those poor deemed to be outsiders (Archer 1988, 76). In this context, the distinction between deserving and undeserving poor was more often voiced, and it gained a greater purchase on practises of charity and poor relief during this time, a development that will be examined more closely in the following chapter.

In the face of these social changes, the worldly aspects of charity came to the fore, and the exchange characteristics of almsgiving changed profoundly:

Une sorte d'encadrement mental et institutionnel, bien caractéristique de la fin du

Moyen âge tendait, cependant, à freiner la spontanéité du don. La casuistique de l'aumône donne la réplique à la casuistique de l'usure. L'intervention des pouvoirs publics canalise et régleme la bienfaisance. L'aumône évolue du cadeau à l'entraide. Peu à peu, vers la fin du XIV^e siècle, naît l'idée que le prêt (sans intérêt, bien entendu) est moralement supérieur à l'aumône, parce qu'il encourage et stimule le travail. . . . (Mollat 1966, 19)⁵

The questions that will guide us through the remainder of this and the following two chapters are the following. What role did charity and poor relief play with respect to social boundaries under these changing conditions? How did the relation between rich and poor translate from the language of almsgiving inscribed at the boundaries of the household to the language of poor relief inscribed at the boundaries of the parish and the nation? And how did these shifts reflect and shape different conceptions of order? We can clarify these issues by returning to our consideration of transactional metaphors in sermons and writings on the topic of charity.

New economic metaphors began to appear in charity sermons in the late seventeenth century. Although the praise of almsgiving was still occasionally described as lending to God at interest, gifts to charitable institutions were now lauded as contributions to the nation. The "Stream of Beneficence" was held to circulate throughout the nation to the benefit of all (Atterbury 1709, 11). Richard Haines, arguing that one of his workhouse schemes would result in charity that not only began at home

⁵An interesting example of charity in the form of loans is the fund established by Thomas Arneway on his death in 1603. As of the 1980s, the fund was still supplying loans and mortgages, at low or no interest, to poor residents of the south of England (Draper 1986).

but stayed there, wrote, "Money being kept at home within the Body of the Nation, is . . . like the Blood in its Circulation in the Body of Man . . ." (Haines 1677, 4). Richard Lucas, prebendary of Westminster, in a sermon before the Lord Mayor of London and the governors of that city's charitable hospitals, preached that "Charity, like the great River of *Paradice* divides it self into various Streams and leaves no part of our *Eden* perfectly barren and miserable" (1692, 23).

These metaphors reflected mercantilist economic views. As early as More's *Utopia*, English writers emphasized the importance to the nation of keeping money in circulation, and this view became prominent throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Monroe 1965, 277ff.). Harvey's work on the human circulatory system was one factor that made the analogy appealing (Patinkin 1981b, 58). An anonymous writer in 1700, for example, wrote that "The money in a kingdom or commonwealth is . . . the blood that circulates through the veins and arteries of the body and communicates life and vigour to every part, without which the members would become dead and incapable to assist or comfort one another" (cited in Furniss 1957, 65).

Metaphors of flowing streams were not new in charity sermons. However, earlier uses appealed to the transcendent realm rather than to the nation. Laurence Chaderton, a Catholic, held that the stream of charity, in which love of God and fellow are indistinguishable, originated in God:

The office of the pastour, and Doctor, and Elder, the Deacon, the attender vpon the poore and impotent, together with this of the Apostle, are all streames, flowing from one spring or head, by the which the manyfolde graces of God, and waters of eternal lyfe are conuayed into his Church. . . . (1584, 7)

John Downname, a Puritan, held that the stream ran from donors to the poor, incurring a transcendent return: "they, the streames of whose bountie doe runne another way [than to the poor] . . . cannot thereby increase their future hopes . . ." (1616, 36, mispaginated as 40).

Metaphors that extended the flowing stream of charity to encompass all the nation and that included the labour of the poor in this process of circulation emerged only in the late seventeenth century. This is not to suggest that the former sort of metaphor died out. It merely became less prominent. In 1693, for example, Henry Waring wrote that "*Christ is . . . a Fountain of living Waters: The Poor stream from Him; and by them, our Charity shall suddenly be return'd into Christ's Bosom . . .*" (44, emphasis in original).

The earlier claim that "GOD payeth Interest" underlined a key element of the traditional exchange of prayers for alms. The radical asymmetry of this conversion of worldly into transcendent goods marked a social boundary between rich and poor while it signified the placement of the latter at the social margins of Christian society. The exchange of prayers for money was a form of barter with Heaven, an exchange involving radically different types of goods and a significant temporal asymmetry. Social order was maintained and legitimated by a transcendent transaction.

With the decline of the exchange of prayers for alms, the transcendent element of exchange relations with the poor was eroded. According to later views marked by metaphors of circulation, charity initiated a cycle of transaction that remained entirely within the worldly sphere, where it was contained by appropriate institutions.

Seventeenth-century poor relief proposals held that, "[T]he Labours of the Poor, are . . .

the Springs of Wealth to every Nation, whence flow Power at home, and (the effect of that) Reputation abroad . . ." (Philo-Anglicus 1678, 3). Charitable donors were "*sweet Springs*, to them, that have not water enough to keep their Mills going" (Burgess 1697, 116, emphasis in original).

The labours of the poor were valuable, but, like a pump, they needed to be primed. Increasingly, the undeserving poor were simply those who refused to work. As we will explore in greater detail in the following chapters, Christian charity was becoming national poor relief, mediated by institutions that sought to guarantee a more immediate return of labour from the able-bodied poor. The role of time in this exchange of labour for sustenance was becoming that of market time, with a clear expectation of specified return within a specified period. The poor were expected to make a more clearly quantifiable return for the charity given them. Philanthropist Thomas Firmin was among the first of many who argued, from the mid-seventeenth century on, that the poor, if properly managed, could practically support themselves: "I my self have at this time many poor Children, not above five or six years old, that can earn two pence a day . . . by spinning Flax which will go very far towards the maintenance of any poor Child" (1681, 2).

Conclusion

As the numbers of the poor in the cities grew, charitable relations underwent processes of centralization, institutionalization, and monetarization that could not be

characterized in terms of a transcendent cycle of exchange. Christ's withdrawal from the charitable transaction left status boundaries exposed and vulnerable in an unprecedented manner. Beggars' money was no longer buffered by the indefinite deferral of the exchange of alms for prayers. The sphere of transaction between elites and those defining the margins of society shifted to the nation, leaving Christ and the time of the heavenly city aside. This placed an increasing emphasis on the value of worldly activity. An important part of this story cannot be told in the terms of actors framed by medieval hierarchical social relations. As we will see in the following two chapters, the erosion of hierarchical status boundaries signalled by fourteenth-century legislation against vagrants evoked a new conception of agency, one which appeared in the interstices of feudal conceptions of order.

The new relations of power that addressed this problem in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were more than an attempt on the part of an emerging bourgeoisie to control and exploit an unruly underclass. We find, in the early modern discussion and treatment of the idle poor, the emergence of a recognizably modern subject. We will find not simply that elites acted upon the poor but that changing interrelations of discourses, practices and effects created the conditions of possibility for a human subject capable of anchoring both poles of this action upon action. This emergence of a new sense of agency was rooted deeper than the class-situated intentions of specific historical agents. The dominant did not simply take up hegemonic arms against the dominated. The mutual constitution of these roles reflected a broader set of discursive and practical relations. The basis of social order began to shift from hierarchical social boundaries framing

transactional relations to the formation of agency through the governance of conduct. Governmentality was emerging as the guarantor of order.

The final chapters of this dissertation will clarify the role that time played in shaping the return to be made by the poor. Again, order was maintained and legitimated by a specific sort of transaction. As the second part of this dissertation will argue, however, this development was a prelude to a more fundamental shift. In the eighteenth century, the onus for fostering order shifted from the structural characteristics of transaction to the proper formation of agents. With the decline of the exchange of prayers for alms, the poor were expected to give a more immediate worldly return both directly in the form of their labour and indirectly through the resulting reformation of their disorderly characters. The invisible city became manifest not in the promise of an infinitely valuable and always indefinite return but in a constant diligence and attentiveness to time. This attentiveness of time signified first sanctification, for the Puritans, and, later, the industriousness of individual agents that was held to be essential to maintaining the order of society. In order to establish this claim we will clarify how new practises of poor relief were framed by and contributed to the legitimation of the social circumscription of the poor.

Chapter 6

The Devil's Poor

The growing plight of the urban poor in the early sixteenth century provoked charitable responses of a new sort. Almsgiving, the traditional means of charity, was no longer adequate to meet the pressing needs of the masses of poor (Jütte 1994, 102; cf. Lindberg 1977, 318; Davis 1966, 228). Early modern charity was a pure gift manifesting love of God and one's fellows. However, charity was also an exchange, entailing heavenly and worldly returns, and, for this reason, prudence recommended discriminating between worthy and unworthy recipients.

Almsgiving was problematic because it raised both these issues. On the one hand, giving to the poor was a means of repaying a debt to God: "We are bound to relieve our Brother as there is due from us a Tribute of Thankfulness to God for his mercies . . ."; "he that is in poverty and need, must be relieved by him that is in plenty; and he is bound to it, not only in charity, but even in justice" (Kidder 1676, 7; Allestree 1692, 273). On the other hand, sermons frequently invoked a distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor: "if relief be bestowed where the gospel is, then god shall not lose his honours. . . . If relief be bestowed upon rogues and vagabonds, god can have no such honour by it . . ." (Bird 1598, 86). Thomas Tenison's *Sermon Concerning Discretion in Giving Alms* recommended that charitable donors make "due oeconomic of their Alms," not giving to those "who turn the Alms of the day, into the revels of the night" (1681, 7, 28).

This conceptual and practical distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor gives a point of purchase for an analysis of shifting connections between social boundaries and exchange relations. The question that will guide us through this and the following chapter is 'how did the relation between rich and poor translate from the language of almsgiving inscribed at the boundaries of the household to the language of poor relief inscribed at the boundaries of the nation?'

Deserving and undeserving

The distinction between deserving and undeserving poor was an important one in late medieval and early modern Europe. During the Middle Ages, beggars were often seen as Christ-like, echoing Franciscan models and exhortations. Throughout the early modern period, the poor remained 'members of Christ.' In sixteenth-century England charitable donors were exhorted to consider "the true image of Christ, which is upon the poore, the syck, the blynd, the lame, the presoner, etc." (Brinkelow 1542, sig. B2v).¹

¹Examples abound: "Though beholdest the poor that are sick or lame: thou seest poor fatherless children that pine, and are ready to famish: these, for ought which thou knowest, may be the true members of Jesus Christ. If then though dost neglect and despise them, though dost neglect and despise Christ (Gifford 1598, 29). According to Nicolas Caussin, good Christians are those who "daily fed some poore creature, in whom they acknowledged the Person of *Jesus Christ*" (1634, 181, emphasis in original). Giving alms is "to put [one's money] into *Christ's hands* by *relieving his poor members* here on

Charity was a central value in late medieval and early modern Christian society. It referred to love of God and fellows, and the penalties for being 'out of charity' were presented in striking terms:

who *thought* yn charyte doth byde or dwell
dwellyth in god & god wrote hym be wyll
and who *thought* charyte forsakythe dothe not well
but may be comparyd to the devyll of hell.

(Brigden 1984, 73)

Giving to the poor expressed the charity that held Christian society together: "the bonde of frendshippe which Christe our maister and redemer lefte amonge us Surely if we be not frendes: we beare the name of Christe and bee called christians in vayne" (Crowley 1548, sig. A4v). Puritan minister Samuel Bird said, "When any one of the poore members of Christ are offered unto us, Christ himself presents himself then unto us . . ." (1598, 57).

Charity was inseparable from issues of social boundaries and the idea of debt. With regard to social boundaries, on the one hand, charity was owed to all others and, on the other hand, it was especially due those close to one. Early modern sermons exhorted their listeners "to do good to all, but give . . . specialiye to the houshold of faith" (Bedel 1572, sig. C4r). Over a century later, Henry Waring wrote, "*Do good to All*, but to some more eminently . . . : You must look upon the *Houshold of Faith* as your own Family, that calls for your Paternal Care and Conduct, as the Neighbourhood does for your Kindness" (1693, 48). With regard to the idea of debt, being 'in charity' meant clearing up all outstanding debts to one's fellows, and being in charity was a necessary prerequisite to

earth" (Cradock 1665, 435, emphasis in original).

partaking in the eucharist. In *Piers Plowman*, we find a clear statement of this:

'How?' quod al the comune. Thow conseillest us to yelde
Al that we owen any wight erosion we go to housel?'

'That is my conseil,' quod Conscience. . . .

(B.19.394-96; cf. C.21.391-93)

This view remained common into the early modern period, declining with the Reformation: an early sixteenth-century text admonished priests to warn those attending mass "that none of you come thus to goddes borde but yf ye be in perfyte loue and charite" (Brigden 1984, 73; cf. Bossy 1983). The undeserving poor were members of the Christian community, joined to it through charity, bringing to it the blessing of prayers made potent by their status as members of Christ.

The undeserving poor were a different story. In sixteenth-century England, the sheer numbers of the poor flooding the streets of London and other cities, a result of economic shifts and temporary crises, led potential charitable donors to two conclusions: almsgiving was too piecemeal and inefficient a method of charitable giving to address such needs; and the poor were not just needy but a threat to order. As their numbers increased during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the poor haunted city streets begging, wandering aimlessly, and, in the eyes of those more well off, threatening disorder and violence (Beier 1985, 4-6; Slack 1984, 225-26; cf. Sharpe 1977, 100). Beggars were feared because they were 'masterless,' escaping the orderly role of labourer. As we have seen with Richard Johnson's fear of money brokers, the uncontained status of the disorderly poor was doubly threatening when money provided even greater mobility. The distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor was the site of an intense

convergence of popular anxiety, strident rhetoric, legislative action, and institutional innovation. It was used to an unprecedented extent beginning in the sixteenth century in an attempt to isolate and deal with those considered threatening.

Popular revolts, with the poor playing a prominent role, had been a feature of Western Europe since the thirteenth century. A growing self-consciousness among rural peasants in the face of government attempts to maintain a stable supply of labour following the Black Death in the fourteenth century led to revolts in northern France, Languedoc, southern England, the Rhineland, Spain, Bohemia, and Scandinavia (Lis and Soly 1979, 14, 52). In England, "Captain Poverty" and "Lord Poverty" were leaders of the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536; Ket's and the Western Rebellion, both of 1549, the Rising in the North of 1569, and the Midland Rising of 1607 were all seen as caused, to some extent, by the disorderly poor (Anderson 1933, 379; Slack 1988, 100-101, 123, 134 n39). Such events were not confined solely to England. In Lyons in 1529, mobs of the poor looted the municipal granary, the Franciscan monastery, and the homes of several rich Lyonnais. Posters appeared on the walls of the city signed "*Le Povre.*" The consulate's promise to restore order focused not on reducing the high price of bread but on whipping and hanging those most responsible among the rioters (Davis 1966, 229-230; Jütte 1994, 187).

Violence by the poor directed against the authorities and the rich was rare, but it set a frightening precedent. The presence of increasing numbers of the poor in late fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century England provoked intense anxiety (Slack 1988, 25ff.). The deserving poor, the sick, crippled, insane, widowed, elderly and very young,

were considered eligible to receive alms or more formal assistance; sturdy beggars and the wilfully idle were not:

the Citizens vniuersally desire, that beggers, especially valiaunt and able of body, maye bee brought in order: and that the true pouertie, that is, such as are deseased by age, sicknes or other casualtie may be provided for and fynally that some certaine way maye be prescribed for the right expending and disposing of the common almes. (Gerardus [Hyperius] 1572, sig. C2v)

The disorderly poor's place outside the social and economic order was seen as implying their standing outside the religious and moral order. Even those who expressed sympathy with the poor tended to equate the unbounded status of the beggar with moral and religious dissolution. During the time when worries over the decay of hospitality were at their peak, Samuel Gardiner, chaplain to Archbishop Abbott, wrote

What a rabble of beggers and hunger-starved people runne vp and down the Cities, Countreyes, and Villages round about, gasping for comfort, as a thirsty land? The more they are, the more shame it is to the inhabitants where they dwell, that doo not maintaine them according to the godly laws of the Realme. . . . Moreouer, the peruerse and impatient mindes of a number of sturdie beggers, which very extremitie of need inforceth, are oftentimes dangerous vnto a publike state. . . . The best of them, while they make a trade and occupation of begging, by little and little, grow verie disorderlie, shaking off the yoke of discipline from their shoulders, and growe senselesse in Religion, and without feeling of God, and godlinesse. (1597, 128-29)

The undeserving poor were perceived as a threat to religious, social and civic order.

The trajectory of a distinction

The distinction between deserving and undeserving poor had been used in the Middle Ages; it rose to greater prominence during the labour shortages caused by the

Black Death in the late fourteenth century; however, it took on an unprecedented importance in early modern Europe (Lis and Soly 1979, 51; Beier 1985, 109; Todd 1987, 135; Slack 1988, 9). This section first addresses the views of scholars who claim that the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor was not a medieval but an early modern or even a modern development. This will lead us to clarify the criteria used to make the distinction and to situate them within specific social and institutional contexts.

Michael Katz, author of an important history of American poor relief, holds that the distinction between deserving and undeserving poor arose in the nineteenth century along with increasing industrialization and political changes. The rise of this distinction, Katz argues, introduced a moral evaluation of poverty: with the advent of the category of 'undeserving poor,' poverty became a disgraceful condition for the first time. He suggests that, before this time, recipients of relief were categorized according to two *non-moral* distinctions: first, neighbours vs. strangers and, second, the genuinely needy vs. rogues, vagabonds and sturdy beggars. Citing Michael Walzer, he suggests that the redefinition of poverty as a moral condition has served as a basis for the exclusion of the poor from full citizenship (Katz 1989, 11-14, 179).²

² For Katz, poor relief has become a matter of class control, and the distinction between deserving and undeserving poor is "a convenient but destructive fiction" that only serves to obscure the real social causes of poverty (Katz 1986, 291). David Beito has argued, against Katz, that this view of class conflict fails to hold up under closer scrutiny (1993). Looking at the records of early twentieth-century fraternal societies, he found that these groups of poor themselves applied similar moral criteria to distinguish

Katz shows that social boundaries are shaped by the moral exclusion of a subset of the poor, and his emphasis on the importance of increasing industrialization is important. However, his argument for discontinuity is overstated. It is misleading to hold that a morally grounded distinction between deserving and undeserving poor arose only in the nineteenth century. There does not seem to have been a sharp historical discontinuity at the end of the early modern period. There was a difference of degree.

Katz points to an early distinction between the genuinely needy and the sturdy beggar. However, this distinction had important moral aspects, as did related distinctions between gainful and idle, pious and irreligious, chaste and lewd, sober and drunken, respectful and disorderly, studious and ignorant, ashamed and shameless, and that between members of the household of faith and nonmembers. In addition, several other distinctions, more easily labelled 'nonmoral,' were important. Katz mentions the

between deserving and undeserving recipients of aid. The distinction was not used within an adversarial class relationship. He suggests that these same moral criteria as used by bureaucrats and institutions stand out and seem pernicious to the historian because they are the labels of outsiders. On the other hand, "the aid restrictions of fraternal societies rested on an ethic of solidarity. By limiting benefits to those deemed deserving of this solidarity, they were not unlike labor unions" (Beito 1993, 430). For Beito, the distinction between deserving and undeserving poor is qualitatively different in the two contexts of "paternalistic charity" and reciprocal fraternal "entitlements" (Beito 1993, 429). Recent work on self-help among the early modern poor is opening a forum for looking at the earlier roots of this issue (cf. Jütte 1994, 83-99).

distinction between neighbours and strangers. Others included family/non-family, fraternity or guild members/nonmembers, parish/nonparish, national/foreign, ill/healthy, infant/adult, elderly/younger, crippled/able-bodied, insane/sane, licensed/unlicensed, and, finally, soldiers, sailors, scholars and students vs. common beggars. The situation is more complex than Katz suggests.

Christopher Hill has argued that the moral and religious stigmatization of the undeserving poor arose in the sixteenth century as growing commercial elites sought means to control their sources of labour (1952). Weber, Tawney and others also held that attitudes to beggars changed at the beginning of the early modern period in Western Europe.³ The deserving poor were distinguished from the undeserving and the latter were seen as 'masterless men' threatening the social order (Beier 1985). Thomas Becon, chaplain to Thomas Cranmer, expressed a common sentiment when he recommended bestowing alms "not upon the lubbers and sturdy queanes but upon the halt, the lame, the blind, the sick, and suche other as be comfortless" (1561, 146). Puritan divine Henry Smith was much less representative in suggesting that almsgivers relieve even the idle poor "and let their bad deeds fall on their own necks" (1592, 12; cf. Brigden 1984, 106). Even Smith, however, drew the line at relieving the demanding "sawsie beggar": the poor

³ For overly sharp examples of this claim, each of which emphasizes the role of the Reformation, see Tuckett 1971 [1846], 76ff.; Weber 1958a [1904-05], 163, 177-78, 268; Tawney 1963 [1927], 98, 101, 216-18, 220. Margot Todd (1987, 118ff., 242ff.) discusses Hill and others, finding the case for a sharp discontinuity between Puritan and Anglican social thought and its predecessors to be weak.

were to "take up their crosse" and be patient (1592, 11).

This development was not a sharp discontinuity, however, but a change of emphasis. It would be more plausible to look back to the Middle Ages for relevant developments. During the twelfth century, not long before the Franciscan sanctification of poverty, there was a significant change in the makeup of the group of people held to be lepers in western Europe: "New wealth combined with centralization threw up masses of poor. After 1170 vagabonds, beggars and heretics were the category charged with leprosy, while the rich and powerful seem to have suddenly become practically immune" (Douglas 1991, 732). Recent work has emphasized that the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor, drawing on biblical roots, became a common one, in theory and practice, from the twelfth century (Coleman 1988, 627ff.; Dyer 1989, 237-39). Medieval canonists cited Augustine, arguing that "The Church ought not to provide for a man who is able to work, . . . for strong men, sure of their food without work, often do neglect justice" (Tierney 1959, 58; cf. 150n39, 61-2, 118; 1958-59). The account-book of a thirteenth-century Cistercian monastery in Hampshire states that alms were to be given only to those incapable of work; almsgiving to women suspected of being prostitutes was also restricted; fourteenth-century sermons expressed similar views (Dyer 1989, 237-38). In 1380 two London beggars were pilloried for feigning dumbness in order to solicit alms "to the defrauding of other poor and infirm persons, and in manifest deceit of the whole people" (cited in Anderson 1933, 113). In 1349, the Ordinance of Labourers intervened in the traditional religious sphere of almsgiving by explicitly forbidding any gift to

beggars able to labour.⁴ However, serious legislative attempts in England to distinguish the able-bodied from the sick, aged and incapacitated began only in the 1530s (Elton 1953; Heinze 1976, 81).

By the late Middle Ages, then, it was commonly held that the deserving poor were to receive charity and the undeserving refused it, and this distinction was often made on moral grounds.⁵ Although Hill also overemphasizes discontinuity, attitudes did change with the rising numbers of rootless poor that began flooding European cities in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Slack 1988, 9, 23). The distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor became important in sixteenth-century England not because it was stated for the first time but because it became institutionalized, a development that gave it a greater purchase on social boundaries.

⁴ “[N]one upon the said pain of imprisonment shall, under the colour of pity or alms, give any thing to such, which may labour, or presume to favour them towards their desires, so that thereby they may be compelled to labour for their necessary living” (23 Edw. III st.1 c.7). This ordinance was soon known throughout England at all levels of society, and serious attempts were made to enforce it (Palmer 1993, 19ff.). Bertha Putnam, however, suggests that the prohibition of almsgiving may not have been enforced: “except for the prohibition of almsgiving to the able-bodied, the justices were taking cognizance of every clause of both ordinance and statute; and it is probable that just at this crisis employers were not very likely to be guilty of almsgiving” (1970, 77).

⁵See Gransden 1991 for a revealing look at one particular member of the deserving poor in the mid-fifteenth century.

The historiographic lesson here is to avoid reading the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor as a straightforward mechanism of domination brought to bear during a certain period of time. We will do better to focus not on determining when the distinction arose but on describing the changing uses made of it. We must examine not chronology but the interrelation of this distinction with broader social and institutional developments. The evidence provides an incomplete picture. Archival sources are patchy and difficult to interpret. It is difficult to determine precisely who were the undeserving poor. This is made difficult, for example, by the legal rule which prevented attributing an illegal occupation like vagrancy to a suspect (Cockburn 1977, 63). In addition, historical texts that speak of the undeserving poor tell us more of elites than they do of the poor (Chartier 1974, 378). The terms 'deserving poor' and 'undeserving poor' frame changing practices and shifting problematizations of social boundaries (Gans 1994). With these points in mind, we ask 'how did the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor lend itself to a new positioning of the poor as labourers at the margins of a national society?'

The marginalization of the Devil's poor

In the sixteenth century, the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor was used to justify harsh statutory punishments of the undeserving. Vagrants were perceived as a threat to the order of the nation, and Tudor legislation sought to deal with them by oppressive measures including refusal of alms, whipping, stocking,

imprisonment, branding, earboring, impressment in the military, deportation and hanging (Leonard 1900, Ch. 4 and 6; Beier 1974; 1978; 1985). 22 Henry VIII c.12 specified that "vacabounde & ydell persons" were to be "tyed to the end of a carte naked and be beten wyth Whyppes throughout the same Market Towne or other place tyll his Body be bloody by reason of suche whyppyng."⁶ The courts were quick to sentence vagrants, in part due to a lack of character witnesses who could vouch for the less settled poor (Beattie 1977, 173-74). Where the label 'disorderly' had previously been

Private citizens also used the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor to justify using violence on the poor. Kentish justice of the peace Thomas Harman, writing in 1566, casually described the torture of an allegedly mute beggar, an action that he portrays as both punished the undeserving and rewarded the deserving:

⁶ Comparable examples abound. 11 Henry VII c. 2 specified that "vagaboundes idell and suspecte persons lyvyng suspiciosly" were to be put in the stock for three days and nights and to be fed only bread and water. A Proclamation of 1530 specified that "vagabonds and beggars . . . be stripped naked, from the privy parts of their bodies upward (men and women of great age or sick, and women with child only except) and being so naked, to be bound and sharply beaten and scourged" (Hughes and Larkin 1964, 192). 1 Edward VI c. 3 ordered that vagabonds "be marked with an whott Iron in the brest the mark of V" and allowed the idle to be made slaves for two years. This statute was apparently never enforced (Davies 1966). Municipal records abound with entries like the following from London on 22 April, 1539: "Item, Wyllam Wykes, broderer, John Bolyller, cooke, valiant beggars shalbe whypped" (cited in Anderson 1933, 46).

[We] tied a halter about the wrists of his hands, and hoisted him up over a beam, and there did let him hang a good while. At the length, for very pain he required for God's sake to let him down. So he that was both deaf and dumb could in short time both hear and speak. Then I took that money I could find in his purse, and distributed the same to the poor people dwelling there, which was fifteen pence halfpenny, being all that we could find. (Harman 1972 [1566], 119).

Of course, harsh treatment of the unworthy poor was often itself a cause of disorder; both the poor and their more well-off fellows were known to react to repressive measures. (cf. Chill 1962, 416; Gutton 1974, 136ff.).

Even the deserving poor were not above suspicion of being potential causes of disorder. The rich often saw the contingency of their good fortune and thought the poor quite capable of perceiving it as well. Nicholas Haward saw such envy at the root of the "Vice of Ingratitude" and held that, "although we see the poore outwardely make a face and shewe of goodwill towarde the Riche, yet inwardly they hate them in theyr hartes to the death. And that altogether for their fortune" (1569, sig. 21v). Eighteenth-century sermons still regularly listed upholding the claims of property, promoting social stability, and preventing envy as among the benefits of charity (Andrew 1992).

Disbanded soldiers formed a particularly worrisome element of the disorderly poor. A letter from the mayor and aldermen of London to the privy council, dated 25 September 1550, purported to lay bare the nature of this threat:

we are partely enformed by suche as harde somme of theym speake that their reporte is this that they cannot worke ne wyll not work, and yf they cannot opteyne a lyvinge at the kynges handes . . . then they wyll appoynte theymselves in saverall companyes . . . & therevpun sett vpon the cytezens & their houses & take there suche botyes and spoyle as they can ley hand vpon. . . . (cited in Anderson 1933, 455)

However, the undeserving poor were more than suspect; they constituted a gray

area at the margins of society. The distinction between the deserving and undeserving was an attempt to define the limits of godly society. Throughout early modern Europe this was often done with a distinction between God or Christ's poor and the Devil's poor.⁷ The Devil's poor were seen as a threat to themselves and others. They were held to be sources of disease, disorder, crime, lewdness and blasphemy. Above all they were idle. In 1676, renowned philanthropist Thomas Gouge wrote,

Be careful on whom though bestowest thine Alms; for by giving to such common Beggars who are able to work, and yet are so lazy that they will not . . . by relieving such, we shall . . . maintain them in their idle and wicked life. . . . [T]owards God's poor [be] full of compassion, but for the Devil's Poor. . . . Surely the Whip is more their due, than food; Bridewell to entertain them, than an Almshouse. (Gouge 1676, 59-60, emphasis in original)

Richard Johnson's warning about money brokers manifested a specific fear of beggars' money, not that of the poor in general. Beggars were the Devil's poor because they were mobile and because they were idle. From the fourteenth century, greater emphasis had been placed on putting the able-bodied poor to work (Moisa 1982). Yet, others among the poor were considered worthy objects of charity.

Although the Devil's poor were members of neither Christ nor community, worthy of neither alms nor pity, they were not simply ignored. To an increasing extent, they were seen as a material and moral threat to be taken note of and taken care of, though in a less charitable manner than their more deserving peers. They were excluded from the transactional sphere of charity. However, in a sort of shadow economy of marginalization,

⁷ For examples see Pullan 1976, 25; Fairchilds 1976, 34; Todd 1987, 163; Slack 1988, 25.

they received the whip, the brand, the stock, and incarceration, often from the same 'Overseers of the Poor' who administered parish poor relief. The undeserving poor deserved what they got because they were a source of disorder, through both their lawlessness and their refusal to contribute their labour to the good of the commonwealth.

At stake was a sphere within which a certain sort of circulation was to be limited. Just as the money broker threatened to allow the beggar access to a gentlemanly sphere of economic circulation, the indiscriminate almsgiver threatened to allow the Devil's poor access to a religiously mediated sphere of charitable circulation. These boundaries were being drawn more sharply in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and increased worries regarding their permeability both manifested and contributed to this process.

We find here again an echo of the much lamented "decline of hospitality." The forms of circulation that had traditionally linked the gentry and the poor came into competition with new ones. Social interactions between rich and poor were mediated through institutions oriented to a national economy rather than through the traditional economy of manor and household. That is, one way to contain the threat of the disorderly poor was by shifting the responsibility for distinguishing between deserving and undeserving from individuals to parish and municipal institutions. Local governments in the early sixteenth century and the national government later in the century established legislation and institutional structures that challenged traditional charitable practices. This process was resisted sometimes, but centralization of poor relief remained a dominant trend throughout the early modern period.

The advent of institutionalized poor relief

The fifteenth century saw the rise of poor relief institutions in England. In the early sixteenth century the number of institutions rose dramatically across Western Europe. Juan Luis Vives, one of the leading humanist voices calling for charitable treatment of the poor, recognized the new extent of poverty in the early sixteenth century and called for government intervention:

Whithersoever you turn you encounter poverty and distress and those who are compelled to hold out their hands for alms. . . . Some of the poor live in those institutions commonly called hospitals. . . ; others beg publicly; still others bear their hardships as best they can, each one in his own home. I call 'hospitals' those places where the sick are fed and cared for, where a certain number of paupers is supported, where boys and girls are reared, where abandoned infants are nourished, where the insane are confined, and where the blind dwell. Let the governors of the state realize that all these institutions are a part of their responsibility. . . . (Vives 1953 [1526], 348-349)

These hospitals had arisen in medieval times and, along with lay fraternities such as the Scuoli Grande of Venice, they had served to supplement almsgiving through the late middle ages (Pullan 1971; 1988). The hospitals aided only a few of the poor, primarily those unable to work (Pullan 1988, 187ff.). Lay confraternities, for the most part, restricted charity to their members. A selected group of the poor were expected to perform certain religious duties in return for charity (Pullan 1971, 84ff.). Guilds and friendly societies were an important feature of mutual aid among the poor throughout the late medieval and early modern periods (Jütte 1994, 97).

There were several significant institutional developments in the early and mid-sixteenth century in England: initiatives sponsored by Cardinal Wolsey between 1517 and

1527, addressed problems of plague, dearth and vagrants; legislation concerning the poor in the 1530s, tightened up settlement restrictions, introduced local licensing of those allowed to beg, and set a precedent, one only followed up late in the century, by ordering vagrants to be set to work; and the foundation or reorganization of London's five hospitals, used private philanthropic funding in an attempt to enclose different categories of poor within their walls (Slack 1988, 114-122). The late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries saw a number of further developments: corn stocks were centralized to prepare for shocks of scarcity, with printed policy manuals enforcing uniformity of practice; hospitals and medical care began to be provided for the poor in some places; lists of the local poor began to be prepared, the centralization of poor relief funds under parish authority became more universal (*Ibid.*, 148-52). Faced with the rising tide of urban poor and the inadequacy of almsgiving and traditional charitable institutions, municipal governments and philanthropists responded in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries by founding thousands of new charitable institutions across Western Europe (Jordan 1959, 259ff.; Fairchilds 1976, 18ff.; Pullan 1988, 193ff.; Slack 1988, 162ff.; Jütte 1994, 100ff.).

Parallel to the increasing differentiation of charity and hospitality and the urbanization of the gentry, centralized authorities began to take increasing responsibility for the poor. Traditional social interactions between the wealthy and the poor were eroded by changes on both sides: the gentry increasingly kept to themselves in a new urban status economy of gentility among peers, and the poor began to be contained within new charitable institutions. The much lamented decline of hospitality as a model for

almsgiving was accompanied by a shift from food alms to monetary alms, which, in turn, were increasingly centralized under poor relief programs (Heal 1990, 16-18). A similar shift occurred in sixteenth-century funeral practices, as monetary doles largely replaced the customary feeding of the attending poor (Mayhew 1983, 56; Heal 1990, 375-376). Legislation, at both the national and local levels, attempted to eradicate or at least restrict indiscriminate almsgiving (Thomas 1973, 673; Slack 1988, 115-19). Poor boxes began to be mentioned frequently in wills (Mayhew 1983, 55-56); this marked a move away from the traditional dole to the poor at funerals and shifted charitable funds to institutional streams. In 1572, compulsory poor rates were introduced by an Act of Parliament, though local poor taxes had been imposed as early as the 1540s (Slack 1984, 223). This development and the increasing emphasis on returning the poor to their home parishes "detached the process of giving from the household and its head and placed it firmly with public officials" (Heal 1990, 3).

Centralization marked a transition from medieval Christian charity to modern poor relief. The importance of this is shown by two contemporary developments: a large volume of heated debate; and resistance to institutional changes. This resistance was often an explicit attempt to preserve the autonomy of traditional charitable practices. Parliament was forced to tone down an initial draft of the 1536 poor law in part because it went too far in forbidding almsgiving: a 40s. fine was liable for giving "in money, mete, drynke, or clothyng" to any able-bodied beggar, as distinguished from the sick and aged (Elton 1953, 61). When finally passed as amended, the bill allowed donors to give alms indiscriminately within their own parishes (27 Hen VIII c.25 sect. 21; cf. Elton 1953, 64;

1973, 122-125). Despite this concession to the autonomy of parish almsgiving, the 1536 Act took a large stride toward centralization of poor relief. It called for parish poor boxes and for centralized collection and distribution of the meat scraps that were traditionally distributed to the poor by individual households. It forbade giving "any redye money in almes" outside one's own parish, upon pain of being fined ten times the amount given (cf. Heal 1990, 97-98). This erosion of symbolic commensality with the poor both reflected and reinforced a shift away from the social interactions between rich and poor that were characteristic of late medieval society. This centralized distribution of leftovers from the tables of parish households underlines the direct conflict between traditional and institutionalized charitable practices, between hospitality and the emerging public system of poor relief. The 1536 legislation was the first serious attempt to end indiscriminate almsgiving and to deal with poverty through the centralized administration of the parishes. This legislation "contained the basic principles which determined the future course of English poor law policy" (Kunze 1971, 12).

Conclusion

The deserving poor were members of Christ and the Christian community, a symbolic reminder of the charity that held society together. The Devil's poor were a threat to order. The rise of poor relief institutions was in large part an attempt by centralized authorities to take responsibility for the maintenance of order in the face of this threat. The distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor, with the related

debate over the virtues and dangers of indiscriminate almsgiving, framed conceptions of and responses to poverty throughout Europe (Jütte 1994). Fear of the disorderly poor supported centralization. As Paul Slack notes, "the *quid pro quo* for public taxation and outdoor relief . . . was a sustained but unsuccessful campaign against vagrants and beggars" (1984, 222).

As beggars came to be seen as causes of disorder, the centralization of poor relief was undermining traditional charitable practices in the name of order. The means by which institutionalized poor relief sought to maintain order began to centre on the idleness of the Devil's poor.

Chapter 7

Idleness and the Commonwealth

Early modern concerns with policing the poor reflected not only a fear of chaos in the streets but also an increasing emphasis on the value of the labour of the poor. Over the early modern period, idleness and industry became increasingly prominent as criteria for distinguishing between deserving and undeserving and for orienting practices intended to contain or reclaim the disorderly. The line drawn by Paul in 2 Thess. 3:10, "if anyone will not work, neither let him eat," was echoed constantly throughout the late-medieval and early modern periods. The deserving poor were the aged and children, the sick and the crippled, and the ubiquitous metonymous category, "widows and orphans."¹ Only in

¹In future work I hope to provide a gender critique of the new conception of agency analyzed in this dissertation. Women formed the majority of the resident poor and a large proportion of the migrant poor in early modern England (Beier 1974, 7). However, the beggars, rogues and vagabonds threatening to undermine the order of English society were almost invariably portrayed as male. Changing conceptions of 'idleness' and 'industry' reflected a new perception that rightly oriented individual agency was essential to the maintenance of social order. However, this view of agency was framed in gendered terms that are currently being examined. Recent feminist work, for example, has problematized the historiographic claim that eighteenth-century charity was seen by contemporaries in terms of a gendered contrast between public and private activities, revealing an important dimension of the discursive construction of modern agency in

the eighteenth century did the "labouring poor" begin to emerge as a category deserving of charitable attention. Throughout the early modern period, the impotent poor were contrasted above all with the idle poor.

The twin themes of lawlessness and idleness framed changing conceptions of the boundaries of godly society. Mary Douglas has noted that concerns with social boundaries are correlated with attempts to control the physical body (Douglas 1970). William C. Carroll has recently fleshed out this claim with respect to the ambivalent figure of the English beggar: "the early modern discourse of poverty inscribed the beggar's body both as a potentially valuable commodity and as a site of lawlessness and subversion" (Carroll 1996, 8). In this chapter we will explore the historical trajectory and institutionalization of this concern.

In the fifth chapter we noted that changing metaphors in early modern charity sermons underline a shift in early modern English attitudes to the poor: the poor were expected to make a return for charity given them in worldly not transcendent terms. The beadsmen were conscripted to labour for the good of the nation. This chapter looks at the institutionalization of this concern with the labour of the poor. It argues that changing conceptions of idleness in late medieval and early modern England reflected changing views of the contribution that human labour made to the preservation of society. Specifically, the early modern period saw an increasing emphasis on labour as a productive activity, one held to have important ramifications for the commonwealth as a

gendered terms (Martin 1995). Other work has pointed out the gendered nature of 'interest' as a concept in political economy (Folbre and Hartmann 1988).

whole.² We will proceed first by clarifying the method of this analysis, second by considering the historical background of early modern conceptions of idleness, third by considering relevant attitudes to the idle rich, and fourth by looking at the way fifteenth- and sixteenth-century poor relief institutions incorporated contemporary conceptions of idleness into their treatment of the poor.

Methodological prelude

Our basic methodological premise is that changing definitions and conceptions 'idleness' reflect contemporary definitions and conceptions of 'labour.' Consistent with its etymology, the primary sense of 'idle' is "empty, vacant, void" (Oxford English Dictionary).³ The question 'empty of what?' points to conceptions of 'labour,' 'work,' or

² A parallel shift can be seen in France. Ruzena Ostra (1974) argues that the French verb *travailler* was shifting from its medieval to its modern sense in the early sixteenth century, that is, from *ouvrer* or *labourer*, emphasizing the painful character of activity in our fallen state, to *moyen d'existence*. Jean-Louis Roch suggests that there was an analogous transition in the rationalization for imposing 'labour' on the poor, from making them feel the pain and fatigue appropriate to their fallen natures to making them engage in productive activity (1986, 101).

³ To be more specific, the word 'idel' had three main dimensions of usage in Old and Middle English: (1) "of no effect or significance, futile, vain, worthless; also false, sinful" (attested since the twelfth century); (2) of a person's soul or a material object,

'activity.'

The decline of hospitality discussed above was linked to this shift in conceptions of idleness and labour. Richard Curtey, in a surviving example of a sermon from a preaching campaign instigated by Elizabeth, complained that

. . . nowadays there are many, that are so farre off from this liberalitie, that they will shut up their gates, even in this great time of scarcitie. . . . Againe, other some of great reuenues, because they will not keepe hospitalitie, nor relieue the poore at home, they give up house, and either sojourne and table with some friends, or els take a chamber in some Citie or Towne, where they will keepe no house at all, but with a man and a boy, . . . [yet] whose parents and auncestors kept twentie or fortie men (I allow not of Idlennesse, but I commend maintaining them) in a Liuerie, maintained great hospitalitie, to the great reliefe of al the poore Country about them. (Curtey 1600, sig. F7r)

Curtey's aside regarding the value of a large retinue of servants, "I allow not of Idlennesse, but I commend maintaining them," underlines changing conceptions of idleness. On the one hand, new values of civility and measured generosity decreased the advantage for reputation of maintaining a large household staff. The activities in which such a large body of servants would occupy themselves were activities oriented to ostentatious display and abundant hospitality. On the other hand, his statement reflects a subtle corollary to this shift in values. He recommends maintaining a large staff, but not in idleness.

"empty" (attested since the thirteenth century and fourteenth century century respectively); (3) of persons, "engaged in nothing, idle; without work, unemployed; also, lazy, sluggish; also, not engaged in official business" (Middle English Dictionary).

Yet, 'idleness,' if it refers to anything beyond death or paralysis, is the absence not of any and all activity but of a certain valued type of activity. The very presence in livery of a large number of servants had formerly been of great value in securing for the gentry a reputation as masters of an ostentatiously hospitable household. Servants were far from idle even if they spent much of the day standing silently by at the beck and call of householders and guests. In 1485, the mayor of London ordered from the city "all maner vagabundes and idell people which have no maisters to waite vppon" (cited in Anderson 1933, 134). Orientation to a master, not the nature of the service engaged in, was the defence against idleness.

This attitude changed, however. Curtey's vision of the large yet industrious household staff was already untenable when he wrote, given that the shift in elite values that Heal describes necessarily implied new expectations and evaluations of the labour of servants. A servant engaged in one and the same activity might be considered well-occupied or idle depending on the perceived usefulness of the activity. In 1550, for example, Robert Crowley lumped together the "Idlenes of abayes," "Idlenes of priestes," and "Idlenes of servauntis in London" (1550, sigs. D2r-v). As the Reformation had undermined the value of the activity of priests, the decline of hospitality had undermined the value of servants. A half-century later, Separatist minister Isaac Barrow criticized the gentry and nobility for keeping "troups of idle servingmen and followers. . . . [T]hey and their whole household spend al their life time in fleshly and vain sportes and gaming, so that numbers of men have no other trade, and be wholly employed to the keeping of hawkes and doggs to serve the lust of these men . . ." (cited in Greaves 1981, 390).

William Perkins held that there were four classes of unproductive people: beggars, monks, idle rentiers, and their dependent servants (Hill 1962, 235).

Interrelations between changing views of labour and idleness are important in attempting to make sense of shifting social boundaries in early modern England. Discussions of idleness point to a specific sort of emptiness, a lack of certain valued types of activity. By interrogating discussions of the idleness of the poor and practices set in place to contain and correct that idleness, we can characterize early modern views of how individual agency was held to contribute to the maintenance of a rightly ordered society.

Medieval background

Early modern English conceptions of idleness were rooted both in the vernacular usages noted above and in the medieval concept of *acedia*. An examination of the latter is warranted given its more explicit connections both to religious evaluations and to views of the divine ordained constitution of society.

The term *acedia* first came to prominence among early Christian ascetics who found a set of interrelated mental states to be an obstacle to their spiritual practices. Evagrius (346-399 C.E.), who first analyzed the concept in detail held *acedia* to be a temptation to carelessness in ascetic practices, one of the eight chief vices, involving both a disposition in human nature and a demon who preyed on such 'evil thoughts.' *Acedia* was "the noonday demon," an association which remained well known to the end of the medieval period (Wenzel 1967, 14-17). In the Christian East, this conception of *acedia*

remained relatively unchanged, but in the West, John Cassian (*fl.* 425) marked an important transition by establishing the progeny of *acedia*: idleness, somnolence, rudeness, restlessness, wandering about, instability of mind and body, chattering, and inquisitiveness. The desert fathers found idleness to be one element of this complex temptation; in general usage, they preferred '*acedia*' to the proper term for idleness, '*argia*' (*Ibid.*, 12). However, Cassian firmly established idleness as a species of *acedia* (*Ibid.*, 21).

Cassian also brought to the fore a theme which marked an important shift in the dominant western conception of *acedia*: the idea that manual labour was the best weapon against this vice (Wenzel 1967, 19). As a corollary, the balance among the elements making up *acedia* shifted away from dejection and boredom toward *otiositas*, idleness (*Ibid.*, 22). Early penitentials emphasized three sub-vices of *acedia*: idleness, somnolence and instability (*Ibid.*, 70). The seventh-century *Penitential of Cummean* provides a clear example of the extent to which labour was seen as a correction for *acedia*: "1. The idler shall be taxed with an extraordinary work, and the slothful (*somnolentus*) with a lengthened [?] vigil; that is, he shall be occupied with three or [seven?] psalms. 2. Any wandering and unstable man shall be healed by permanent residence in one place and by application to work" (*Ibid.*, 71).

Yet the idleness involved here is far from a secularized conception of nonproductive inactivity. It is the empty other of activity oriented to a different end. Throughout the Middle Ages, *acedia* remained a theological concept, encompassing worldly faults only rarely: it was the neglect of spiritual duties, sloth in God's service,

activity of soul and body oriented away from God (Wenzel 1967, 92-96; cf. Workman 1962, 326ff.; Bloomfield 1952, 96, 169, 210, 426n17, 435n159; Delumeau 1990, 230).

In the late medieval period, however, *acedia* and idleness began a slow parting of the ways. Several factors influenced this development. First, beginning in the eleventh century, penitentials bear witness to an important shift in the role of the priest in the sacrament of penance (Wenzel 1967, 71; cf. Jonsen and Toulmin 1989, 117ff.). The priest became increasingly responsible for determining appropriate penances on a case by case basis. In the resulting casuistical literature, analyses of the sub-vices and faults occasioned by *acedia* grew in detail (Wenzel 1967, 83). More significantly, under the influence of a greater pastoral attention to the neglect of religious duties, the popular image of *acedia* shifted from a 'vice of the spirit' to a 'vice of the flesh,' from a state of mind to a characteristic of external behaviour: *ydelness in servitio Dei* (*Ibid.*, 88, 165). Here we begin to see 'idleness' beginning to take its own worldly path independent of *acedia*.

Another factor contributing to the divergence of *acedia* and idleness was a debate over the role of manual labour in the monastic tradition. Wenzel concludes that

The most distinctive feature of *acedia*'s history between 400 and 1400 is . . . not the gradual loss of its spiritual meaning or its deterioration, but rather a continuing process of de-monasticization or secularization in the sense that the concept was carried from the monastery to the *saeculum*, the world outside the cloister. (Wenzel 1967, 179)

Wenzel does not go far in suggesting an explanation for this shift. For this we can turn to George Ovitt's study of medieval attitudes to labour and technology, *The Restoration of Perfection* (1987). Where Wenzel finds that *acedia* remained a theological

concept despite a limited "conceptual secularization," Ovitt finds a definite "secularization of labour" (Wenzel 1967, 182; Ovitt 1987, 137ff.). Given our methodological premise that idleness can be read as defined in opposition to changing conceptions of valued agency, Ovitt's analysis is particularly relevant.

Working generally within the history of technology, Ovitt frames his argument in terms of the analyses of Lynn White, Jr., elder statesman of that field. White has argued that several aspects of Christianity led to a positive valuation of the worldly products of labour and, hence, to technological advance: most significantly, "the spiritual value of hard work . . . was integral to the Christian ascetic tradition" (1978a, 182-183; cf. 1978b, 245ff.).⁴

Ovitt qualifies these claims, pointing out White's assumption that a positive evaluation of labour would necessarily imply a positive evaluation of the worldly aspects of labour, its methods and products. Medieval monastic attitudes emphasized labour's role in the attempt to perfect God's Creation (Ovitt 1987, 88ff.). Beginning in the twelfth century, theologians and monastic writers "secularized" labour. Labour came to be conceived in conjunction with the orders of society as hierarchically arranged:

By recognizing the appropriateness of particular forms of social and spiritual action to various groups within society, the church provided a rationale for the detachment of manual labor from monasticism and from spiritual life in general.

⁴ White's work is stimulating yet reductionistic. He suggests, for example, a straightforward causal relation between charity and the development of technology: "an element of Christian compassion motivated the development of power machinery and labor-saving devices" (1978b, 237).

. . . Work remained a part of an individual monk's or nun's calling insofar as it helped to undermine the temptations of *accidia*, but the ideal of self-contained monastic communities . . . was surrendered. . . . The church came to recognize manual labor, craftsmanship, and technology as the proper sphere of the order of society called to them--the *laborantes*--and in so doing the church modified its millenium-old ideal of spiritualized, communal, and inner-directed labor. . . . [L]abor and its products were secularized, and the restoration of perfection was left to the mostly unknown men and women who were called to life in the world. (*Ibid.*, 163)

To sum up, manual labour, once the chief weapon against *acedia*, became increasingly divorced from monastic life and identified with those who worked in the world. *Acedia* itself, shadowing this conceptual and practical divorce, became more narrowly defined as a neglect of spiritual duties, with less and less reference to a neglect of manual labour. In vernacular English writings, the concept of sloth was largely limited, in parallel with *acedia*, to neglect of spiritual duties, and 'idleness' came to the fore as the determinate other of manual labour. By the beginning of the early modern period, as historian Stanley Jackson notes, idleness, traditionally an aspect of *acedia*, "seemed to have acquired a history of its own" (Jackson 1981, 184; cf. Delumeau 1983).

Idleness and the commonwealth

'Idleness' in common usage had long meant 'engaged in nothing, without work, unemployed,' and theological usage converged with this in the thought of the Renaissance humanists. The Friars were an important influence on humanist views. Lester Little (1978) argues that they reframed the terms in which the pressing urban issues of wealth and poverty were conceived. As Hans Baron (1938) has outlined, this new framework for

conceiving these issues also shaped humanist discussion of the issues into the sixteenth century.

Erasmus, Vives, More and others went beyond medieval thought in combining a concern for the poor with the view that the goods of labour and the evils of idleness were measured in terms of their effects on the commonwealth (Lis and Soly 1984, 167):⁵

Christian humanists diverged sharply from much, although not all . . . medieval opinion. . . . The works of Erasmus and More exemplify [a] transitional state between medieval and modern attitudes toward work and idleness. . . . [A]s Renaissance advocates of social change, they went further, evaluating the social implications of idleness and offering an alternative model of discipline and industry for emulation by clerics, nobles and commoners alike. They clearly saw idleness as more than an individual failing: it is rather an offense against the commonwealth. . . . (Todd 1987, 122-23)

The humanist link between the worldly labour of the poor and the maintenance of the commonwealth was made clear by Sir John Cheke, Secretary of State, tutor to Edward VI, and one of the principal restorers of Greek learning to England: “Woulde ye have all a lyke riche: that is the overthrowe of laboure, and utter decaye of worke in this realme. . . . This is the bringing in of idlenes; which destroieth the commen welth and not the amendement of laboure, that maynteyneth the commen welthes . . .” (1641 [1547?], sig. A8r-8v).

⁵ Vives, Calvin, and Loyola all shared a view of society as a Christian body. Vives, for example, described the city as an organism whose governor must not ignore the poor; for like the hands and feet they are far from the heart, but their neglect can cause disorder (Alves 1989, 7). All three distinguished between the deserving and undeserving poor (*Ibid.*, 14ff.).

This view was also reflected in legislation of the period. For example, in the preamble to the Act of 1530-31 (22 Hen. VIII c.12), "Beggars & Vacabundes" were held, by virtue of "ydernes, mother & rote of all vyces," to be a disorderly presence "to the high displeasure of God the inquyetacion & damage of the Kynges People & to the marvalous disturbance of the Comon Weale of this Realme." This link between idleness and order led to other offences, such as seduction, drunkenness and slander, being subsumed under the heading of 'idleness' (Beier 1985, 11; cf. Thomas 1973, 552-56).

The notion of 'commonweal' was linked to that of 'covenant' in appeals for sympathetic treatment of the poor. The traditional Christian virtue of charity began to be seen in almost contractual terms: "Alle though we [rich] are helpe of other men as various nedeth all / yet we paye theym for theyr trauaylle and for theyr good / and therefore it is noo beggerye / but a couenaunte makynge / payeng / byeng / and sellynge" (Parker 1496. sig. A5r).

The idea of a covenant, linked to that of labour, served to distinguish the deserving from the undeserving poor. The following example makes this point in terms of a lingering anticlericalism: "The worlde is full of vagabondes, and readye folkes, who neyther wyl labour, ne abide with eany man, ne yet be bounde in eany couenaunte, and what do they then: Forsoth they begge almes, and entendinge to lyve in ydelness uncontrolled, they become skolars . . ." (Cousin 1543, sig. C4v-5r). Rhetoric appealing to this notion of the 'commonweal' was especially prominent in times of dearth, when appeals to "Christian charity" and "deeds of mercy" sought to dampen "the tumult of the poor" and to appease "the common poor people . . . being ready to rise in tumultuous

manner" (cited in Slack 1988, 145). These conceptions of labour, exchange relations and order did not only reflect sixteenth-century attitudes but were also used by those in power to shape that order.

The continental theologian Andreas Hyperius, in England from 1537-41, wrote an influential work on poor relief that shows the link between labour and order. It was translated into English in 1572 (with the author identified as A. Gerardus). Hyperius said, "Idleness hath taughte us all wickednesse," and he held that "beggars, which are found sound in body" should be made to work at "some handy labour" (1572, sig. F5v). The link between disorder and the idleness of the poor was clear, and idleness was very much the absence of worldly labour:

Nowe many complaints of honest Citizens are euery where dayly heard, tending to the same effect; Some complayne that they are molested at their dores wyth the importunate and shamelesse petitions, and perpetuall clamors of many beggers. It gretly greueth others that dayly whethersoeuer they go or turne themselues, they meet with innmerable [*sic*] valiaunt beggers, feeding themselues plesantly and in filthie idlenesse by other mens sweat. Other report, that in the whole Cittie they cannot easily fynde them that wil be hyred to worke wythe them for money and competent meat and drinke when they haue neede: yea some men doubt, that it will shortly fall out that handy crafts shalbe utterly lefte and neglected, when such as should and are able to learne & exercise them, will fall rather to an idle beggin, than to worke and labour. (Gerardus 1572, sig. C1v-C2r)

The "Epistle Dedicatorie" to Hyperius' tract, written by the translator, Henry Tripp, sets the context for these views and underlines another dimension of the relation between labour and the commonwealth. Expanding on the notion of covenant, Tripp holds that society is constituted, in part at least, through reciprocal exchange relations:

man was made for mannes cause, that they among themselues might profite one an other. . . . [W]e must followe nature as a guide, and bring to light that which may serue for the weale publique, by enterchangeable duties, by giuing and

receiuing, and bothe by our artes, trauail & faculties, to knit the felowship of menne one with an other. (Gerardus 1572, sig. A3r)

As excerpted in this manner, this passage might seem to express a view that this dissertation argues emerged only later, that individual agency is held to be constitutive of the social order. However, a closer look at Tripp's text shows a clear statement of the traditional view of order that was eroded over the early modern period.

Tripp is explicit that labour contributes to order not through the correctly habituated orientation of individual voluntaristic action, as comes to be the case in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. On the contrary, the link between heavenly and earthly cities remains very clear for him. God serves as basis for the order of the commonwealth in two capacities, as foundation and *telos*. The above cited passage is presented as a favourable paraphrase of Plato, and Tripp adds (where the ellipses stand above), "O that he had added here also, that all shoulde ioyntlye seeke Gods glorie. . . ." Below he adds that the labour which is to "serue for the weale publique" does so when members of the commonwealth "endeuour to imploye what so euer giftes, or blessingys, . . . GOD hath endued them with, to the benefite of Gods churche, their countrey, and brethren" (*Ibid.*, sig. A3r). The order of the commonwealth is framed by God's originary gift that enables agency and by the promise of salvation that orients it.

This relation between God's order and the order that results from human agency is made clearer still by Tripp's use of the organic metaphor:

But I would to God we did so consider and vew our own bodies, that we might lern ther by, & the better conceiue what belongeth to the common wealth or the churche of God: wherof . . . [these are] compared to a bodie, wherein (as in eache of our bodies) . . . due proportion and right placing of eche member, in respect of

the whole bodie . . . must be preserved. (Gerardus 1572, sig. A2v)

To look forward to later chapters of this dissertation, humanist views of the relation between idleness, labour and the order of the commonwealth were like modern views in their acceptance that the earthly city had an order and a good proper to the worldly sphere and constituted by mutual relations among human actors. Yet they did not manifest two characteristics of modernity: a confidence that self-interested action was commensurate with order and, correlated with this, a belief that action was properly oriented not by 'following nature' but through the formation over time of a proper character or proper habits.

The idle rich

During the same period that the idleness of the poor became an increasingly important issue, cries were raised about the idleness of the rich. In conjunction with the lament for the decline of hospitality, the landed aristocracy were widely condemned as 'idle drones,' especially by puritans and separatists (Heal 1990, 95; Greaves, 1981, 390). Henry Barrow expressed a common sentiment when he complained that "they and their whole household spend al their life time in fleshly and vaine sportes and gaming" (cited in Greaves 1981, 390). Puritan divine Richard Rogers expressed a special concern for the idleness of the gentry: "they ought by all meanes to studie how to prepare themselues to turne the many houres and dayes, which the most of that estate spend in games and pastimes, to other more profitable and necessarie vses" (1603, 359). For many, the rich

and the poor were alike in their idleness.

However, the elites of England had status and rhetorical resources to draw on in their attempt to defined their 'leisure' as distinct from the 'idleness' of the poor. The nobility and gentry were steeped in a classically based humanist system of education that promoted the *vita activa* and, with it, the avoidance of idleness. Yet, the Renaissance tradition to which the elite were heirs was not entirely averse to idleness. The key term '*otium*' also referred to leisure, and *otium honestum*, "a leisure which yielded 'fruits' in works of literature, poetry, philosophy or history," was acceptable, a view with venerable classical roots (Vickers 1990, 153). The rich were largely distinguished by the leisure afforded by their wealth (Laslett 1971, 30).

The aristocracy continued their sporting ways, with courtely treatises arguing endlessly the fine distinction between honest and dishonest recreation (Wagner 1985, 51). Honest idleness was becoming a prerogative of the elite, reflecting a widespread change in moral attitudes rather than a change in aristocratic lifestyles. As we have noted, idleness is the determinate other of specific valued forms of activity. For a Puritan like Ricahrd Rogers, sports were idleness. For the gentry, they were a sign of status.

Another marker of the distinction between the leisure of the rich and the idleness of the poor was the fear that, in the wrong hands, the former would degenerate to the latter. Sir Robert Dallington, writing at the turn of the seventeenth-century, noted that the tendency of the French to let "every poore Citizen, and Artificer" play tennis was "more hurtful then our Ale-houses in England" (1604, 740). In the mid-eighteenth-century, a popular tract argued that,

The nobility and gentry have taken all imaginable Precautions to secure their Rural Sports to themselves; but it would be much more for the Benefit of their Inferiors, if they were pleas'd to exclude them from many of the Diversions of the Town, particularly from Gaming-Tables, and Operas, which create an Expence of Time and Money. . . . (*Remarks* 1735, 36)

The nobility and gentry were increasingly distinguished by the ability to afford the "Expence of Time and Money" incurred by idleness. Those lower on the social scale were excluded from this leisure. The poor were vilified for their idleness.

Insofar as the gentry took up an active role in the structures of worldly authority, their attentiveness to duty was expected: Arthur Dent held that idleness was "most odious" in magistrates and ministers (cited in Collinson 1982, 178). The emerging class of well-to-do artisans, merchants, and professionals were less comfortable with idleness in both others and themselves, though self-reproach came easier to Puritans than Anglicans (Greaves 1981, 387). This social stratum, where industry and idleness were seen in more practical and worldly terms, is where the most significant changes occurred and where the tension between Puritan and Anglican views becomes especially relevant.

The same standards of industriousness, the same call to to make wise use of one's time applied to the very rich as to the very poor. Two factors warrant our paying greater attention to the treatment of the poor. First, their marginal status in terms of access to economic and other forms of capital made them more susceptible to attempts to reform their idleness. As a result, this attempt to inculcate new values is more open to our historical gaze. Second, for the same reasons of access to power and status, the elites were largely successful in distinguishing leisure from idleness. Idleness is in the eye of the beholder, and what the elites saw mattered more. When the Lord Chancellor Baron

Ellesmere's warned his peers against "all vagrants strong to labour, yet idle and gentleman like in approach, yet without means," he implied that the idleness of a gentleman was a sign of status and the idleness of the poor a threat to social order (Harrison 1958, 33). Ellesmere's reasoning may seem circular, but his contemporaries, especially those who could afford to remain at leisure, were all too ready to agree.

The coming of the workhouse

The most significant change regarding attitudes to the idleness of the poor in early modern England was their reflection in increasingly institutionalized poor relief practices. Attempts were made in this period to employ the able-bodied poor and to train children in useful occupations (Leonard 1900, 223-29). This was done in the context of new sorts of institutions: the workhouse and the House of Correction. The poor law of 1576 was an important factor prompting the development of charitable institutions embodying these ideas. It ordered that houses of correction, with "stocke, stores and implements" for work, be established in each county in order to control vagrants and

Also to the Intente Yowthe maye be accustomed and brought up in Laboure and Worke, and then not lyke to growe to bee ydle Roge, and to the Entente also that suche as bee alreddie growen up in ydelnes and so Roges at this present, maye not have any juste Excuse in sayeng that they cannot get any Service or Worcke. . . . (18 Eliz. c.3)

A few parish or municipal poor relief projects were established in the wake of this legislation, though they could only act as meagre stopgaps in the face of rising numbers of poor. The Exeter workhouse, for example, was founded in 1579, and reformed several

times over the subsequent decades as it fell repeatedly into decay (Slack 1988, 153).

The seventeenth century saw an increasing number of institutions founded to provide labour for the poor. Yet, the early enthusiasm for incarcerating the vagrant poor that had been prominent in the Elizabethan era waned in the seventeenth-century: the workhouse proper that attempted to enclose all vagrants and reorient them to a life of industry by means of enforced hard labour did not appear until the economic depression of the 1690s (Rogers 1991, 139-40).

Earlier in the seventeenth century, private philanthropy was an important factor in schemes to provide labour for the poor.⁶ Thomas Firmin (1632-1697) provides an exemplary case. Entering the trade of girdler and mercer in London with a capital of £100, Firmin prospered and kept a household well known for its hospitality. Whitchcote, Worthington, and Tillotson were among his table guests. Two men especially influenced Firmin: the Unitarian John Biddle shaped his religious tolerance and heterodox ideas on the Trinity; and the older nonconformist divine and philanthropist Thomas Gouge modelled a distrust of indiscriminate almsgiving and a more positive approach to poor

⁶ Contrary to the results of W.K. Jordan's well-known study emphasizing the importance of private philanthropy, public rate-based funding for poor relief seems to have been a significant factor in founding and maintaining new institutions over the course of the seventeenth century (Jordan 1959; Slack 1988, 169ff.). Reviewing the available evidence, which is admittedly difficult to evaluate, Paul Slack suggests that England had developed "a machine of social welfare which was well established by the later seventeenth-century and which was still expanding . . ." (Slack 1988, 182).

relief through employing the poor in flax and hemp spinning. Gouge addressed the issue of almsgiving with a very sharp deserving and undeserving poor:

*Be careful on whom though bestowest thine Alms; for by giving to such common Beggars who are able to work, and yet are so lazy that they will not work, but would live by the sweat of other men's brows: I say by relieving such, we shall both maintain them in their idle and wicked life; and they who are truly poor . . . will be neglected. . . . I am not against the relieving of all Beggars, some of them I know are blind, others lame, aged, and past their work; these *impotent* poor, in regard of their present condition, are Objects of Charity; but not the *impudent* Poor, who have strength enough to work, and will not. . . .* (1676, 59-60)

Thomas Firmin's first poor relief project was an experiment in hiring the unemployed to make clothing in 1665, during the trade disorganization of the plague year. In 1670 he set up a warehouse for coal and corn to be sold cheaply to the poor during hard times. In 1676 he opened a workhouse in which the poor were employed to manufacture linen. He gave bonuses to good workers and emphasized the training of children. He was an original member of the Society for the Reformation of Manners, founded in 1691.

Like Gouge, Firmin had harsh views of unruly beggars, "a People that one would think came from the Suburbs of Hell" (1681, 20). He held that the able-bodied poor should be set to labour, willingly or not:

If any shall think that I am very uncharitable, because I would have all lusty Beggars made to work, or soundly whipt, and such as relieve them, punished as the Laws require, I am very confident that they do not consider upon what good Ground such Laws were made, nor the great Evil such Relief doth both to the persons themselves, as well as to the Nation. . . . (1681, 21)

Firmin had very different views of the deserving poor: "neither would I have these poor people go under so dishonourable a name as Beggars, but to be lookt upon as invited Guests" (1681, 33). He recommended that leftover food be given not to "common

Beggars" but to "two or three poor families" (*Ibid.*, 35). This evocation of the virtue of hospitality, a virtue that had experienced its much lamented decline almost a century before, underlines an important transition in the criteria by which the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor was determined. The poor stood now not at the boundary of the household, but at a broader social and moral boundary.

As Mitchell Dean notes, the early modern Discourse of the Poor made a threefold distinction, first, between those among the poor who were unable to work and those who were and, second, among the latter, between those willing and those unwilling to work (1991; 1992). Dean is concerned with developments in the eighteenth century, by which time the shift that this dissertation seeks to analyze was largely complete. The second of the categories that Dean emphasizes, those able and willing to work, was enshrined by the poor laws of 1598 and 1601, which to a large extent defined English poor relief policy into the nineteenth century. Echoing earlier legislation, but with a more solid framework of implementation, the Act of 1598 proscribed punishment for 'rogues' and ordered the establishment of institutions which were to provide

a convenyent Stocke of flaxe Hempe Wooll Threed Iron & other necessary Ware & Stuffe to sett the Poore on worke, & allso competent summes of Money for and towards the necessary Releife of the lame ympotent olde blynde and such other amonge them beinge poore & not able to worke, and allso for the puttinge owte of such Children to be Apprentices. . . . (39 Eliz. c.3)⁷

By drawing the line between deserving and undeserving poor in terms of a

⁷ The Statute of 1601 (43 Eliz. c.2) repeated the essential elements of that of 1598. By the later part of the century, flax and hemp, linen thread, canvas and sackcloth had become standard materials for providing the poor with labour (Slack 1988, 153).

willingness to work, seventeenth century policy took an important step toward what this dissertation argues to be an important characteristic of modernity: a confidence that self-interested action supports the order of society. It did so by linking a social boundary determined the margins of society to the wills of individual agents. The distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor distinguished those 'in charity' in terms of their willingness to labour.

The importance of this labour to the well-being of the nation can be seen in two aspects of early modern thought discussed so far: the increasing use of mercantilist metaphors of circulation in charity sermons, and the humanist emphasis on the importance of the labour of the poor to the godly commonwealth. Seventeenth-century poor relief proposals were even more explicit regarding the contribution of the poor's labour to the nation. Mercantilism retained medieval views that all, except the idle rich, must work; labour, like necessities, should not be held back from circulation (Heckscher 1955, 1:228). This led to an abhorrence of idleness as the mother of all evil (*Ibid.*, 1:130, 154-55, 211, 288).

Schemes for poor relief projects abounded in the late seventeenth century. Those of Richard Haines provide a good example. Haines (1633-1685) was a Baptist farmer and pamphleteer. He was excommunicated by the General Baptist Assembly for several years for unchristian activities: his sideline as a patentee got him in trouble. Interestingly, these were the years in which most of his poor relief proposals were published. For Haines, the labour of the poor was essential to the prosperity of England:

And how dishonourable is it to this Kingdom, that so fruitful a Soil as *England*,

which by the Industry of its most unuseful Inhabitants, might so easily become the Garden of Europe, should, by their sloth and obstinacy, lie unimproved? How many Hundred Thousand Beggars, Vagrants, Drones, Nurses of Debauchery, &c. who are not only a Dishonour, but a great Disadvantage to the Nation, living in continual sinful Practices against the Laws of God and good Government, depriving themselves of all means of Religious and Civil Education, to the great danger of their own Souls. . . . (1677, 16)

Haines was willing to put a monetary figure on the labour of the poor: he estimated that his poor relief plan would result in "more than Ten hundred thousand pounds *per Annum* saved to the Nation" (1678, 2). Nor was he alone. Firmin emphasized that poor relief projects utilizing the labour of the poor were potentially self-supporting: "I my self have at this time many poor Children, not above five or six years old, that can earn two pence a day . . . by spinning Flax which will go very far towards the maintenance of any poor Child" (Firmin 1681, 2).

Haines also introduces an important theme that became more prominent in the eighteenth century, the view that the poor can be trained to live industrious lives and that this training is the primary role of the workhouse:

by this means all the Nation will suddenly be bred up to such an excellent profitable way of Industry, that no Nation in the world can exceed us. . . . [I]nstead of bringing them up in Industry to earn their Livings at five or six years old, and to be instructed in good manners both toward God and man, they now generally at four or five years old learn of their Parent to curse, swear, lye, beg and steal, until they be fourteen or fifteen years of age; and so addicted to vice, that they are not fit for a good man to take into his house. And thus from Generation to Generation have they been, and are brought up to live and dye most miserably. (Haines 1678, 7)

Poor relief institutions were intended in part to orient the poor to industrious labour.

Conclusion

Conceptions of idleness became increasingly secularized during the late medieval period. Even as Christian humanists, following this tendency, emphasized the contribution to the commonwealth of the labour of the poor, legislative and institutional developments attempted to guarantee the productive labour of both deserving and undeserving poor. Over the course of the seventeenth century, the importance of this labour to the national economy was increasingly stressed. However, as we will see, two important developments were yet to come: a more radical enclosure of the poor in the eighteenth-century workhouse; and a further development of the idea that the poor could be trained to be industrious by a consistent organization of individual agency in time.

Where the value of prayers had given status to late-medieval beadsmen, a visible absence of labour gave a very different sort of status to the early modern beggar. Their alleged idleness signified their standing as other to godly society, their escape from the containment of traditional social, economic, moral, and religious roles. The beggar's empty outstretched hand was no longer an opportunity to merchandize and trade with Heaven but a sink disrupting the orderly flow of charity and labour throughout the nation. The divine usury of almsgiving had linked relations between rich and poor, the axis of the earthly city, to the celestial economy and the future promise of the heavenly city. As charity became poor relief, the line between deserving and undeserving poor came to circumscribe a godly society solely in the worldly terms and the measured time of a national economy.

Part 3

The Rationalization of Agency

Chapter 8

Time, Order, and Agency in *Piers Plowman*¹

This chapter looks to a fourteenth-century text, *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, for an early exploration of the themes that we will be considering. It frames relevant developments in the terms we are interested in: exchange, order, time and agency. Our consideration of this late medieval text will be contrasted with an analysis of the writings of a representative early seventeenth-century Puritan, Richard Rogers, in the following chapter.

Piers Plowman is a rich document from a century that witnessed a significant intensification and generalization of developments whose early modern institutionalization in English society and internalization in the self are discussed in this dissertation. Several fourteenth-century developments are significant. The Black Death led to labour shortages which prompted the Statute of Labourers, the first national legislation to address the undeserving poor as a threat to economic and social order, and

¹ I am indebted to John Johansen of Augustana University College for helping to guide my readings in the secondary literature on *Piers Plowman*. References to the B text are to the edition by A.V.C. Schmidt (1987). Those to the C text are to the edition by Derek Pearsall (1978). Modern English translations from the B text are from Donaldson's version (1990). Translations from the C text, unless otherwise noted, are from the appendix to Donaldson 1990 (for citations from C.5) and from Adams 1988 (for citations from C.3). Some shorter passages have been retained in the original.

which led to similar criticisms of the poor being expressed in sermons. Increasing urbanization and monetarization contributed to the erosion of feudal and manorial economies and, hence, of traditional forms of social affiliation. Differentiation of social structures and sources of authority made individual self-definition more problematic. Sloth and idleness were becoming increasingly secularized. *Piers Plowman* addresses all these issues, providing a baseline against which to consider early modern developments. It lends credence to the claim that issues of exchange and social order, time and agency are worth looking at in the context of early modern England, and it provides an initial direction for us to follow in doing so.

Piers Plowman highlights the issues addressed in this dissertation. The poem was written at a time when hierarchical conceptions of society were being eroded, when the plague, peasants' uprisings, wide-reaching repressive legislation, social and demographic change, including literacy and Lollardy, had all contributed to a weakening of dominant conceptions of an axis of order between worldly and transcendent realms. The poem presents a search for a source of order that might rightly orient individuals to the authority of God and King. To address this problem, it links individual agency to the preservation of social order by means of two themes central to this dissertation: an attentiveness to the temporality of activity, and a characterization of order in terms of individual agency's being rightly oriented to the transcendent through the medium of exchange relations. We will analyze two aspects of the text: Langland's typology of exchange relations and the role of time in his characterization of agency in the C text.

The C text of *Piers Plowman* suggests that a correct temporal orientation of

individual agency is essential to the maintenance of social order. The present chapter clarifies this development. The rest of this dissertation will argue two points. First, Puritan worldly asceticism represents a further rationalization of this temporal orientation. Second, this new conception of agency became implicated in emerging processes of governmentality, a development that can be seen in eighteenth-century poor relief institutions.

Piers Plowman as historical source

In the last decades scholars of late medieval literature have attempted to situate literary works in the context of social, religious, political, and intellectual developments of the period (cf. Medcalf 1981). Conversely, these literary texts have increasingly come to be considered useful primary sources for historical studies of the period, although we are rightly warned of "too facile a use of literary evidence" (Hilton 1975, 20).

The fourteenth century may be considered a benchmark for many of the changes in which we are interested. *Piers Plowman* (first version c. 1370) is perhaps the greatest of Middle English alliterative poems, and it is a rich source of attitudes to the social, religious, and economic changes of the times. It is a long poem consisting of a series of dream visions alternating with short waking episodes. Using the metaphor of pilgrimage, it follows the development of an individual and of Christian society toward religious virtue and the Holy church. A parade of characters embody virtues, vices, and various human attitudes toward the world and toward Christianity. The poem is attributed on

internal evidence to William Langland, but there appears to be no independent historical evidence concerning his identity (Donaldson 1986; Clopper 1992, 111-115). Just as twentieth century models of exchange relations, poverty and agency reflect the changes that are taking place in this century, *Piers Plowman* attempts to make sense of fourteenth-century changes in terms appropriate to that time. It provides a detailed discussion of fourteenth-century developments that allows us to look forward, complementing the usual look back from the vantage point of a capitalist market society.

Any attempt to encapsulate this rich literary work will omit much. However, a central theme is the pursuit of salvation: the poem examines several conceptions of right action in the world as it grapples with the question, 'How should one live a true Christian life?' Langland's discussion of Christian life and conduct is framed in terms of relations with God and fellows. *Piers Plowman* is an extended analysis of the relation between economic and religious well-being (Stokes 1984, 242-43). In addressing these issues, Langland problematized the connection between exchange relations and social change, and he sought a resolution by exploring a distinctive conception of responsible human agency.

The enduring interest of *Piers Plowman* is in part due to the fact that Langland was exploring these issues at a time when social changes had undermined traditional schemas. The erosion of the feudal system, shortages of labour, increasing social mobility, and the growing presence of market characteristics in exchange relations were all calling into question traditional views on right worldly action. Langland, in the at least three versions of *Piers Plowman* that he produced over the course of his life, made a

profound attempt to make sense of a changing world.

Piers Plowman is an important text in terms of these issues. Langland demonstrates a firm grasp of both theological and legal issues (Baker 1980; Coleman 1981, 245ff.; Kirk 1933). He is attentive to the changing shape of both worldly and transcendent economies:

One who wandered in the world of fourteenth-century England, that time of plague, famine, and depopulation, would have been bound to think about economic questions, and a man of theological inclinations would see those questions in terms of human need and human avarice, labor and sloth. (Howard 1966, 166)

According to Janet Coleman, "Langland's subject matter is centred on man's spiritual disorientation amidst social crisis," and she classes the poem with what she calls "the literature of complaint" of the late fourteenth century (Coleman 1981, 295n12, 60-61). The poem was not unique in addressing these issues, but it did so with unprecedented depth and creativity.

Nor was *Piers Plowman* marginal in terms of its audience. It was widely read in its time. Judging by the relative number of surviving manuscripts, it "must have possessed the popularity of ballad literature" (Mathew 1948, 361). The audience of most alliterative verse of the time was confined to the West Midlands and North of England, where the style originated. However, *Piers Plowman* achieved a national audience within a generation of its composition: it was copied in Worcestershire and London; it was owned by a canon of York, a hedge priest in the Home Counties, and, apparently, a monk in Oxford (Burrow 1984). It appealed to both "the old audience of clerks, and the new one of prosperous, literate laymen" (*Ibid.*, 113). *Piers Plowman* explored themes of

agency and salvation in the context of changing times, and it was read by the people for whom these issues mattered most.

Order and exchange

Piers Plowman asks the question 'What should a Christian do in these troubled times?' Although Langland offers no final answer to this question, he seeks one by attempting to distinguish between proper and improper relations to others and to God. The poem holds that properly oriented relations with God and other people are essential both to individual salvation and to the maintenance of the social order. As Langland explored these themes in different versions of his poem, he reformulated the relation between self and society. He defended feudal hierarchical relations from the corrosive effects of the profit economy, reframing allegiance to lord and community in terms of a more individualistic orientation of human action to God.

A contrast between proper and improper exchange relations lies at the heart of passus 2-4 of both B and C texts. On the one hand, Langland reasserts the desirability of traditional feudal relations in the face of the threat to authority posed by market relations. In making this appeal for the preservation of order Langland disparages the 'masterless men' whose presence would be seen as a threat to society for centuries to come: the "valiant beggars . . . giving themselves to idleness and vice" of the 1349 Statute of Labourers (23 Edw. II c.7); the "vagabonds and feitors" ordered imprisoned in 1383 (7 Richard I c.5); the "beggars . . . able to serve or labour" of the 1388 revision of the Statute

of Labourers which is echoed in Langland's own text (12 Richard I c.7).² By association, however, Langland problematized his own status as an itinerant author: "Through the statute, the lords told those like Langland to cease their wandering . . ." (Justice 1994, 247).

Yet, on the other hand, even as *Piers Plowman* voiced support for the traditional medieval social order, it did so in what we might call more modern terms. Langland's reassertion of feudal relations is decidedly non-traditional both in its emphasis on the centrality of rightly oriented individual agency to the preservation of social order and in its explicit concern to situate authorial agency within this schema of individual responsibility. *Piers Plowman* exemplifies a tendency in fourteenth-century literature characterized by Janet Coleman as an "increasing emphasis on private responsibility to bring the practice of Christian ethics more in line with ideals [which] is also reflected in the increasing emphasis placed on authorial responsibility" (1981, 16).

This claim that Langland reformulated the individual's relation to traditional medieval conceptions of social order seems to contradict claims that he was an apologist for traditional views. W.O. Evans holds that Langland "does not seriously visualize anything other than the medieval hierarchical structure" (1969, 264). David Aers suggests that, although Langland imaginatively recognizes the force of new social and economic tendencies, he sought ultimately to "dissolve the imaginative insights in favour of the coherence, stability and certainties offered in the traditional model of social order" (1980, 24; cf. Simpson 1987, 84). *Piers Plowman* accepts much of the traditional model

² For Langland's use of the 1388 Statute in C.5 see Clopper 1992.

of social order, but it confronts the social and religious disruptions of its time by proposing a different orientation of the individual to the sources of that order.

Labour, livelihood and justice

A central theme of *Piers Plowman* is the relation between grace and works, between God's mercy and justice. This was an important theological issue of the time, and Langland situates it firmly in the context of contemporary social and economic developments. As one of its facets, the poem asks, 'where does an itinerant poet like the author himself fit into a society whose traditional hierarchical structure has broken down?' If all were as it should be, he would know his place;

But since bondmen's boies have been made bishops,
And bastard's boies have been archdeacons,
And shoemakers and their sons have through silver become knights,
And lords' sons their laborers whose lands are mortgaged to them. . . .
Life-holiness and love have gone a long way hence,
And will be so till this is all worn out or otherwise changed.
(C.5.69-73, 79-80)

Piers Plowman explores a number of different answers to the question 'what is the true Christian life?'³ The poem is generally considered as divided into two parts: the *Visio*, consisting of the Prologue and Passus B.1-7 (C.1-9), and the *Vita*, Passus B.9-20 (C.10-22). The *Visio*'s consideration of the theme of grace and works culminates in Passus 6 and 7 with the plowing of the half-acre (which seems to propose rightly framed worldly labour as the Christian path) and the tearing of the pardon (in which Piers

³ In this section, I am particularly indebted to Myra Stokes discussion (1984).

abandons labour for pilgrimage). In the former, Piers orients his fellow pilgrims to labour for their livelihood: "Ech man in his manere made hymself to doone [to labour]," each having first repented of self-interested profit-seeking, (B.3.110; cf. C.8.117). The poem seems to suggest here that honest labour for livelihood is the truest path to salvation:

At high prime Piers let the plow stand
To oversee them himself; whoever worked best
Should be hired afterward, when harvest-time came.
(B.4.112-14)

As we will see below, this emphasis on works informs Langland's ultimate response to the question of how to live one's life in an orderly manner. He returns to this theme in the C text and adds an important element: the temporal orientation of activity.

Yet the picture is clouded by the presence of many who refuse to work unless driven by hunger and who beg falsely on the pretence of being unable to work. Passus B.6 holds clearly that the undeserving poor should be forced to work. However, the following section expresses some doubts:

For whoever asks for alms, unless he has need,
Is as false as the Fiend and defrauds the needy. . . .
But Gregory was a good man and bade us give to every one
That asks us for his love that gives us everything. . . .
For you never know who is worthy, but God knows who has need.
The treachery is in him that takes, if betrayal is involved.
(B.7.67-79)

These issues reveal a tension between God's justice and mercy that shapes much of the rest of the poem. The difficulties of forcing the unwilling to labour, the futility of attempting to make them change their ways, and the hubris of distinguishing between the deserving and undeserving poor prompt a profound question: does God intend us to

impose his law on others or simply to follow it ourselves? This is a crucial question. Myra Stokes suggests that the key insight of this section of *Piers Plowman* is that the New Law of the Gospel is framed for the individual conscience not for the social reformer; God prompts us to shape ourselves not others (1984, 209). We will follow up on this insight by noting how Langland's mature view of exchange relations in the C text provides him with the resources to justify his own marginal position as an itinerant poet. He develops a view of a proper temporal orientation of agency that allows the individual conscience to situate itself in relation to God's order.

To grasp the novelty of Langland's thought, it is necessary to look more closely at his analysis of exchange relations. We distinguish here between his earlier views in the B text and his more mature views in the C text. In the third Passus of the B text, he distinguishes between proper and improper exchanges, and this distinction is central to his view of the relation between the individual and the social order. A contrast between meed and other types of exchange relations is central. The King's justice and, with it, the social order of society is held to have been eroded by "the universal solvent of meed" (Yunck 1963, 318). In general, 'mede' is situated semantically in the area of 'wages,' 'hire,' 'recompense,' and 'reward.' Langland associates his personification of Mede with such disreputable characters as Falsehood, Guile, and Simony, elaborating "a conceptual term that generalizes particular experiences of money's power to intercept policing and justice" (Justice 1994, 133). Much of Langland's audience would have been familiar with the late medieval tradition of venality satire which dealt with these themes (Yunck 1963). They would have recognized Lady Mede "not only as a personification of corrupt reward,

but as a lifelike example of the kind of person who used such reward in order to sustain and protect an unscrupulous retinue, and so increase her own power" (Baldwin 1981, 27).

Langland was very concerned with the social and economic changes of his time. Simpson characterizes the change as one from feudal relations to a profit economy, where traditional values are undermined by meed's tendency to foster temporary relations, based on expediency rather than loyalty (1987). However, Meed poses a deeper threat. Exchange relations based on meed do not just threaten to undermine traditional values; they pose an alternative model of social order. In a speech where Lady Meed extolls her virtues, the reader is presented with a guileless yet powerful defence of the profit motive, one which emphasizes "the power and persuasiveness of profit as the most efficient form of social cohesion" (*Ibid.*, 87). Lady Meed argues that all members of society, from king and pope to beggars and apprentices, "demand their meed":

Meed and merchandise must go together;
No life, as I believe, can last without meed.
(B.3.220, 226-27; cf. C.3.264-82)

Conscience, in reply, develops a distinction between two types of meed, the gift of God's grace and worldly gifts which are akin to bribery (B.3.231-33, 240-47, 250-53). Meed, of both these types, is contrasted with exchanges where the reward is proportionate to the contribution of the recipient:

What laborers and lowly folk unlearned get from their masters,
It is in no manner meed but a measurable hire.
There is no meed in merchandise, I may well assert it:
It is a plain permutacion, one pennyworth for another.
(B.3.255-58)

The B text sets out four types of exchange relations. There are two types of meed,

one proper and one improper, both measureless: spiritual meed (God's undeserved gift of grace) and worldly meed (undeserved worldly 'wages' for works of justice and piety).

There are two types of non-meed: 'measurable hire' (wage relations) and 'merchandise' (monetarized commercial exchange). This typology can be ordered by either of two axes: meed vs. non-meed; proper vs. improper exchange relations.

This typology is incomplete, however. In his discussions of proper meed, in both A and B texts, Langland mentions types of gift or exchange that do not fit into this typology: lords' gifts of favour to loyal subjects and charitable giving to the poor and righteous. What is missing here is a criterion by which to distinguish proper meed from improper, God's meed from worldly. Fairness serves to distinguish proper wages and commerce from improper, but fairness is external to meed, which is disproportionate by definition. Myra Stokes argues that justice is the criterion for distinguishing the two types of meed: "Meed applies only to the works of justice and piety, for which 'hire' in this life is forbidden. Their payment is termed 'meed'--false if taken here, just if taken in the hereafter--as the equivalent of the wages other kinds of 'work' claim" (Stokes 1984, 128-29, cf. 274-78). Stokes' interpretation makes sense and fits well with the B text. However, it is not entirely satisfactory.

Invoking justice as the criterion for distinguishing between God's meed and worldly meed draws too sharp a line between the world and the transcendent realm. It severs the link between God's order and the order of medieval society. That is, Stokes limits the sphere of proper meed to transactions whose return is in the hereafter, but this omits an important class of exchange relations. King and Church also have a role to play

in promoting justice, and their mede is proper and fosters order though it be a worldly gift. Their prerogative to grant rewards preserves a dimension of contingency analogous to that of God. To a large extent, the power to reward when and if one wills constitutes ultimate hierarchical authority. To limit the propriety of this contingent transaction to the transcendent realm, as Stokes does, occludes the fundamental structural analogy between divine and worldly authority. The C text makes clear this point that worldly order also depends on a form of proper mede:

God gives nothing without an *if* in the margin
And rightly so in truth may king and pope
Both give and grant where their grace wills. . . .
(C.3.328-30)⁴

The B text's typology of exchange relations, then, is ultimately unsatisfactory. It provides no clear criterion by which to distinguish proper mede from improper. Moreover, as Stokes' discussion of justice indicates, Langland places great importance on giving special place to God's originary gift of grace. What we would like to find is an account of exchange relations that achieves both these ends.

We find this in the C text. The C text replaces the B text's discussion of "two manere of medes" with a long passage introducing a new criterion for distinguishing between proper and improper exchange relations (C.3.290-405). It is in this new typology of exchange relations that we will find a clearer criterion for distinguishing proper from improper exchange relations. In addition, we will find in Langland's

⁴ "So god gyueth nothyng that *si* ne is the glose"; Skeat's reading of this "si" as "Yes" misses the dimensions of contingency and temporality (Langland 1961).

conception of temporally oriented agency a criterion by which God's grace can be distinguished as the originary gift, distinct from other types of proper meed.

Temporal relations and the foundation of agency in the C text

In the C text Langland proposes a distinction between 'mede' and 'mercede.'⁵ The passage includes an extensively developed analogy between "rect and indirect" exchange relations, on the one hand, and types of grammatical relations on the other. Time lies at the heart of this discussion: proper exchange relations consist of reward following deed, and improper relations upset this temporal ordering.

Improper exchange relations are characterized by parties demanding their reward before performing the deeds for which the reward is due:

But there is not only meed; there is also merced, and men see both
As a reward for doing something, either secretly or otherwise.
Many times men give meed before the deed.
And it is neither reasonable nor right nor allowed by any realm's law
That anyone would take such a reward unless he deserved it. . . .
I consider him presumptuous or else dishonest
Who either asks for or is paid his reward in advance.
Scoundrels and whores and also quack doctors
Demand their wages before they have deserved them,
And deceivers pay in advance but good men at the end,
When the deed is done and the day concluded.
And that isn't meed but merced, a kind of due debt.

(C.3.290-294, 298-304)

⁵ For analyses of this difficult passage see the following: Amassian and Sadowsky 1971; Coleman 1981, 252-61; Alford 1982, 754-59; Overstreet 1984; Adams 1988; Smith 1994.

perceived to be reprehensible on the part of one party and an act of sovereign will on the part of the other, authority is constituted through this exchange relation. In Langland's terms both King and commons have claims upon the other, but the King's status as authority and source of order hinges on his antecedence:

But direct relation is a proper custom,
As when a king requires the commons at his command
To follow him and provide for him, and offer him advice,
So that their love may accord with his law throughout the land.
Similarly, the commons requires of a king three sorts of things,
Law, love and faithfulness, and that he act as lord antecedent. . . .
(C.3.373-78)

D. Vance Smith has situated Langland's concern with antecedence in the context of late medieval views: Langland's "reliance on general theories of relation current in the fourteenth century gives a theoretical underpinning to his argument that human society and individual piety must refer to a foundation to be meaningful" (1994, 146). Langland saw his time as a time of disorder, and his analysis of social relations posits the necessity of a return to a proper orientation to the antecedence of divine and worldly authority as the means of restoring order. Langland uses a telling term, 'recordatio,' to describe properly oriented social relations:

Direct relation is a record of truth,
Quia ante late rei recordativum est,
Pursuing and seeking out the foundation of a strength,
And stoutly standing to support that foundation. . . .
(C.3.343-44)

Smith notes that this use of the grammatical term *recordatio* echoes contemporary discussions which ground the order of social relations in "contemplative habits of mind, which begin with the recollection of saints and models of ethical living" (1994, 142).

Again, a temporal orientation to a foundation is proposed as the essential component of order.

The key point for our purposes is that parallel usages of this same term in contemporary texts emphasize the individual nature of this temporal orientation:

The true alignment of society depends upon individual negotiations. Even if treatises on grammatical relation sometimes betray an incipient interest in social relation, in the imaginative formation of a community composed of exemplary lives, they describe *recordatio* as an individual, solitary act. (Smith 1994, 142)

Smith notes further that this orientation relates Langland's concerns with social order to issues of agency: "The act of *recordatio* or belief is not one of the consequences of 'relacoun rect'; it is the means by which true relation is created. The labourer must induce in himself the proper ethical disposition, and must align himself in accord with the source of truth" (Smith 1994, 143).

To sum up, in the C text Langland provides an explicit criterion for distinguishing proper from improper exchange relations, namely a orientation to antecedent authority, divine or worldly. The language he uses to make this point suggests that this correct temporal orientation is primarily an individual matter. However, this involvement of the individual is more general than an allegiance to proper status roles in a hierarchical social order. By characterizing the propriety of individual agency in terms of exchange relations, Langland relativizes the individual: the individual conscience's relation to order comes to be mediated by the temporal orientation of agency. Order is based not on each agent assuming their assigned place but on each maintaining a correct orientation. This is defined by the temporal antecedence that constitutes proper meed.

Idleness and the agency of the author

For Langland, the New Law of the Gospel is framed for the individual conscience not for the social reformer (Stokes 1984, 209). We will proceed now to examine the peculiar status of the author himself in order to further clarify the relation between time, labour, idleness, and agency in *Piers Plowman*. Here we will find that agency is correctly oriented in time to an originary gift of the potential for productive activity.

Over his lifetime, Langland wrote three versions of his lengthy poetic work. Writing was a considerable part of his life's labour. Given fourteenth-century attitudes to the idle and vagrant poor, Langland's choice of activity placed him in a problematic situation. These points are dealt with explicitly in the poem. As a result, we can situate our general question 'what is the relation between individual agency and social order in the poem?' in the more specific context of authorial agency.

In a difficult passage in the B text, Will, the personified authorial figure within the poem itself, makes it clear that his writing is a form of labour, one that would ideally be given up for a life of prayer: "his 'makynge' are not recreations that ease the burden of prayer, but 'werk' that marks time until prayer becomes possible" (Justice 1994, 114; cf. B.12.16-28).

Throughout *Piers Plowman*, Langland is consistently an advocate of labour and an enemy of idleness. In the Prologue he praises the labourers who "putten hem to the plough, pleidenful selde, / In settynge and sowynge swonkenful harde" (B.prol.20-21). Discussing the able-bodied poor, he insists that "the myghte travaille as Truthe wolde and

take mete and hyre" (B.6.139). John Bowers concludes that,

Considering the poet's willing commitment in favor of work *per se*, without total concern for the visible fruits of this labor, we can detect an elusive brotherhood between Langland the writer and Piers the humble plowman, based not on the outward dignity of labor according to social status but on their shared devotion to *doing*. . . . Like Piers' plowing, the poet's 'making' became a form of pilgrimage and an act of penance, but without ever losing its fundamental meaning as an assertion of the will in the service of God. (1986, 214-15; emphasis in original)

Justice echoes this point, stressing that "Langland insists that one *do* . . . but does not say *what* one is to do" (1994, 114, emphasis in original). The propriety of labour is not defined in terms of status roots in a hierarchical social order, but in terms of a characteristic of individual agency itself. In the fourteenth century, "the emergent work-ethic had become linked with the duties a man performed as part of his estate within society" (Bowers 1986, 66). However, Langland's analysis of meed and mercede provides a more fluid conception of how human action is to be oriented.

For Langland, the antecedent foundation of worldly activity is not a hierarchy of status groups but the originary gift of a calling:

"Therefore," said Grace, "before I go I'll give you treasure,
And a weapon to fight with when Antichrist attacks you."
And he gave each man a grace to guide himself with
So that I would not overcome him, nor envy or pride. . . .
And certain ones he gave wisdom which their words would show,
. . . to live lawfully by labor of their tongue. . . .
And some learned from him to labor on land and on water,
And by that labor live a lawful life and true. . . .
And some learned from him to live in longing to be hence,
In poverty and in patience, praying for all Christians,
And he taught them all to live by law and each craft to love the other
". . .you see well," said Grace,
"That competence in every craft comes from my gift"
(B.19.225-54)

God's gift of potential agency is prior to all relations within which activity takes place.

We can see the extent to which Langland's view of temporally oriented agency offers a resolution of the problematic status of the author himself in the section of the C text called 'the autobiography.' Stephen Justice has called this passage of Langland's "a late attempt to justify his vocation" (1994, 246). In it the poet is interrogated by Reason and Conscience. Will replies that he is a wanderer who lives by praying "for here soules of suche as me helpeth" (C.5.48). Insofar as his writing is a preparation for prayer, the poem itself begins to enter into the exchange of prayers for alms examined in the fifth chapter. The two figures attempt, point by point, to see if Will, the poet, fits any of the categories of deserving poor listed in the Ordinance of Labourers (Clopper 1992). This recently promulgated legislation set out various acceptable status groups, but Langland's position is framed in more general terms:

Everyone must perform some kind of labor for the common good. . . . Langland's general principle . . . initiates a series of questions that can only be determined by the individual conscience: What is your calling? What are the obligations of that calling? What are the grounds for accepting the support of others? (*Ibid.*, 125)

Langland's analysis of exchange relations in the C text, with its emphasis on correct temporal orientation, seems to provide an answer to these questions. The poet seeks to justify his salvation not in terms of his having kept his allotted place in the social order but in terms of his having made good use of time:

'. . . I admit
That at times I've lost time and at times misspent it;
And yet I hope, like him who has often bargained
And always lost and lost, and at the last it happened
He bought such a bargain he was the better ever,
That all his loss looked paltry in the long run,

Such a winning was his through what grace decreed. . . .
So I hope to have of him that is almighty
A gobbet of his grace, and begin a time
That all times of my time shall turn into profit.'
(C.V.92-101)

Though the wandering poet might not fit into the traditional hierarchical structure of society, he is justified through using his time properly, by remaining correctly oriented to the antecedent foundation of the calling that was given him through grace. God's ordinary gift calls for a return that acknowledges its antecedence in and through a series of works in time. This individual activity must also be oriented to the common good. Will is a poet, linked to an audience through his work, and a beggar, linked to those who give him alms by the prayers he offers.

In a radical break from traditional conceptions of feudal relations, individual agency is seen as structured by a temporal orientation that is inseparable from the exchange relations that constitute the social order: "His address is not a place but a community, where his position is defined by relations of reciprocity. . . . He is in effect the villein of those from whom he begs, the community of patrons who 'welcome' him and collectively hold the place of his seigneur. . ." (Justice 1994, 249). Langland's interrogation of the status of vagrants and the undeserving poor

forced him to imagine and justify his authorship in terms of a historical self, and to imagine and justify that self in terms of its economic and social relationships, of the community among whom and the lord under whom he lived. . . . [H]e imagines his audience as at once his community and his lord. . . . (*Ibid.*, 250)

For Langland, then, social order is fostered through proper exchange relations, and the temporal orientation of individual activity, making return for meed granted by antecedent

authority, guarantees the propriety of exchange. Human action is seen as fostering order not through its correct situation in a set of hierarchal social relations but through its correct temporal orientation to the antecedent agency that is the source of that hierarchy. God's gift of a calling calls for and orients a counter-gift that takes place in and over time. The labour of 'all tymes of my tyme' fosters order through its orientation to both God's antecedence and to the subordinate antecedence of King, Church and community.

Conclusion

In *Piers Plowman* we find individual agency linked to a distinction between those who contribute to order and those who do not. Fraudulent beggars and idle rogues are "fals with the feend," and labour is the path to a worthy existence (B.7.67). However, given the tense aftermath of the Ordinance of Labourers, the status of one such as Langland himself was problematic even on these terms. In the C text, he proposed a criterion distinguishing orderly from disorderly labour: correct temporal orientation of individual agency, using all times of ones time in accordance with antecedent claims of God, king and community. This orientation of effort and activity would contribute to order by allowing each person to enter into relations of exchange advantageous to both individual and social order.

We find here the themes of this dissertation: a distinction between deserving and undeserving poor that is framed in terms of industry and idleness; an attentiveness to the contributions of labour to the networks of exchange that constitute social relations; and a

further elaboration of both these themes through the temporal orientation of individual agency, a conception of agency that relativizes the individual's relation to the basis of social order. In the following chapter we will contrast this view with Puritan attitudes to the temporal orientation of agency. With the Puritans we find a new development: an attentiveness not only to the wise use of time over one's life but to its consistent and constant use at each moment.

Chapter 9

Puritan Views of Time and Agency

This chapter examines Puritan attitudes to time and agency, first in general terms and then through a close reading of the works of early seventeenth-century divine Richard Rogers. We will find a sense of ‘using time well’ that differs from that we have noted in the C text of *Piers Plowman*. In this fourteenth-century work, emphasis was placed on “all tymes of my tyme,” on maximizing the use made of the originary gift of a livelihood or talent. The measure of time well spent was the quantity of works produced. The authorial voice of the C text autobiography distinguishes himself from idle beggars by pointing to the poem itself. The Puritans emphasized a more radical temporal orientation of agency, oriented not to works but to work itself, not to a summative use of time but to a constant and diligent attentiveness. Forming this self-governance in and over time became, as we will see in the final chapter, a primary goal of eighteenth-century poor relief.

Puritans and Anglicans

The term ‘Puritan’ is problematic. Over the past thirty years, historians such as Patrick Collinson and Peter Lake have made it clear that Puritanism can no longer be defined simply in terms of opposition to a conformist mainstream (Collinson 1967; 1982;

Lake 1982; 1988). Earlier views of Puritanism were reassuringly tidy: “Calvinist, presbyterian or presbyterianizing, word-centred and austere in its attitude to the role of ceremony and liturgy in the life of the church, it represented an entirely distinct religious tradition from the anglicanism it opposed” (Lake 1988, 5). However, as these supposedly Puritan characteristics have been found to be well represented at the heart of the 'Anglican' establishment, the neat dichotomy has dissolved and has little currency in recent scholarship.

The historiographic fate of 'Puritanism' and 'Anglicanism' are closely linked. Some have attempted to limit the scope of the former term to nonconformists and Presbyterians. Others, Collinson and Lake among them, begin by noting that contemporaries did use these and other terms to distinguish zealous from more lukewarm Protestants, with varying characterizations of selves and others among both groups. This does not provide an entirely tidy division, given that not all Puritans of this stripe were nonconformists and that 'conformity' was itself a somewhat fluid concept at the time, yet the approach yields useful leverage, as long as we remain aware of the complexity of the full spectrum of views (Lake 1988, 5-6). It is misleading to suppose that 'Puritan' refers simply to a clearly demarcated social group. 'Puritanism' was manifest both in rigidly sectarian groups and within the broader body of English Protestants; the characteristics of worldly asceticism and temporal orientation of agency that we will focus on are best seen as one end of a continuum of religious experience that manifested an affinity with sectarian social structures but which was expressed more generally.

The claim that Puritan and Anglican practices of poor relief differed sharply, like

the similar claim that Protestant practices differed sharply from Catholic, has generally been overstated. Several authors have argued that Protestant charity, in contrast to Catholic, became rationalized and secularized over the early modern period (Troeltsch 1931, 1:133-136; Tawney 1954, 210-223; Weber 1958a, 177-178, 268n45; Jordan 1959, 151). According to this view, Catholic charity is motivated by individual concerns for salvation, and institutional control rests in clerical hands; Protestant charity, rejecting the efficacy of works, is held to promote the good of society through disciplining the ungodly poor. Protestant poor relief is held to have become more rationalized and secular, with institutional control resting increasingly in the hands of the state. However, this view of the distinction between Catholic and Protestant charity is overgeneralized (Pullan 1971, 11-12, 197-198, 637-638; Jütte 1981, 26). The claim that Catholic poor relief was the charity of the Church and Protestant relief more secularized does not hold up (Davis 1966; Pullan 1971, 33-193; 1976, 20; cf. Alves 1989, 18); nor does the claim that Catholics, with their concern for individual salvation, were more accepting of beggars and vagrants where Protestants saw them as a threat to the social order (Slack 1988, 10; Pullan 1976, 17; Chill 1962; cf. Weber 1958a, 177-178).

English Puritan reformers, though they did not speak as Catholics did of a pious concern for the souls of the poor, manifested a similar concern with leading these unfortunates to a higher manifestation of spiritual ideals and a greater enjoyment of spiritual benefits (Slack 1988, 10). Catholic and Protestant countries showed remarkable uniformity in the institutions they developed to deal with the problems of poverty. Paul Slack concludes that, "we can point to few clear-cut or lasting distinctions

between Catholic and Protestant approaches to social welfare" (1988, 10). Drawing this discussion closer to issues at hand, the value of the prayers of the recipients of alms remained an open question long after the Reformation even where the efficacy of works was denied. Presbyterian theologian and poor-relief reformer Thomas Cartwright, at the end of a lengthy critique of Catholic views of works, admitted that, "it may have some truth . . . that by the prayers of the poor the Lord delivereth the rich from many dangers for his promise sake, and not for the merit either of the alms of the giver or prayer of the taker" (Cartwright 1618, 190). To sum up, then, the difference in theological stances seems to have had relatively little practical effect.¹

Puritan and Anglican views of the poor were also much closer than was held to be the case for much of the twentieth century. Weber's work can give the impression that Anglicans and Puritans held sharply opposed views regarding charity and poor relief.

¹ Brian Pullan suggests that there are, perhaps, two differences that do stand: Catholics appear to have been more concerned with self-sanctification through ministering to the souls of the poor, and lay fraternities appear to have played a greater role in Catholic areas (1976, 29-30). These are important differences, but they provide little purchase for the specific issues dealt with here. As Jordan himself notes, English Protestants maintained the importance of works at least implicitly:

Puritan divines strayed far indeed into those indefinable verges which delimit the doctrine of the necessity of good works. They were, it is true, carefully orthodox in their view that good works were the inevitable and demonstrable concomitant of a state of grace, but so insistent were they on the high necessity of charity that the lay auditor must have been more persuaded by the argument of works than the more intangible and subtle complexities of grace. (1959, 170)

Weber credited the Puritans with making early modern poor-relief practices harsher and more concerned with reforming the poor: "It remained for Puritan Asceticism to take part in the severe English Poor Relief Legislation . . ." (1958a, 178). He held that the Puritans coopted the poor into a sphere of labour whose end was their salvation and whose methodical conduct of life was preserved even as its value orientation was eroded: in this way, the poor "were brought into the service of the development of the spirit of capitalism" (*Ibid.*, 282 n107). This led to the poor's role as a source of labour in a modern capitalism divorced from its religious roots in worldly asceticism.

It would be wrong to accuse Weber of simply holding a one-sided account. He does grant that the Puritans were not alone in their attitudes to the poor. He notes that "even the Anglican social ethic" was harsh toward begging (Weber 1958a, 177). He also notes that "all denominations [held] that faithful labour, even at low wages, on the part of those whom life offers no other opportunities, is highly pleasing to God" (*Ibid.*, 178). These points show an awareness of similarities between Anglicans and Puritans. However, Weber does point to a special role for the Puritans, a claim which must be clarified.

Weber is not alone in suggesting that the Puritans were especially harsh on the poor and especially concerned to correct their errant ways (Tawney 1963, 210ff.; Hill 1952; Wrightson and Levine 1979). However, more recent work suggests that, for the most part, Anglicans and Puritans agreed on how the problem of the poor should be dealt with (Todd 1987, 247ff.; Slack 1988, 26; cf. Tronrud 1985; Spufford 1985). Studies of local poor relief initiatives during the Interregnum show that Puritans made very

significant contributions (Beier 1966; Slack 1972; Herlan 1976; 1977). Nonconformists operated their own systems in the late 1600s (Harris 1987, 211). Baptist charity, though generally limited to those of the household of faith, provided for the poor better than the parish system did (McGregor 1988, 44). In addition, Weber overstates the extent to which the imposition of habits of industry and an aversion to idleness on the poor was a Puritan development. Anglicans were just as eager to see the poor remedy their idle ways.

An important reason that Puritan and Anglican attitudes to the poor were so similar--with each other and with Catholicism--was the influence of Humanism. Margo Todd has argued that Puritan attitudes toward poverty, wealth, and work owed as much or more to the influences of Christian humanists as to the influence of Calvin and the Protestant theologians: "The protestant Reformers were certainly active in the restructuring of poor relief; however, their sources of inspiration in this area of their social theory . . . were the Catholic humanists" (1987, 136).

Todd argues that the Christian humanists' views toward work and idleness marked a transition between medieval and modern attitudes, a transition manifested in both Puritan and Anglican views (1987; cf. Fideler 1974). Erasmus, More, Vives and others followed the medieval moralists' rejection of sloth, but they introduced a new concern with the social implications of idleness and called attention to the benefits of industry to the commonwealth (Todd 1987, 120ff.). We have already noted this important link between changing attitudes to idleness and industry and new views that social order was inseparable from the commonwealth or nation.

Several dimensions of humanist efforts manifested qualities often held to be distinctly Puritan:

The poor relief schemes developed by Christian humanists are characterized by discriminating, rationalized and secular administration; innovative methods of attacking the causes of poverty; the enforcement of discipline and industry on the poor; and faith in the corrective power of education. (Todd 1987, 137)

Humanist reformers placed discipline and the reform of idleness at the heart of their schemes of poor relief. This chapter picks up on the argument of the second chapter to argue that this emphasis on the reformation of character gained an effective purchase on the individual subject as the relation between agency and time became more intimate, a process which not only characterized but constituted the modern subject.

The claim that the Puritans had a unique attitude toward the importance of worldly activity in and of itself is untenable. Many characteristics often subsumed under the label 'the Protestant work-ethic' were prominent long before the Reformation. This is reflected in the late medieval uses of the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor discussed above. Continental Catholicism, contemporary with English Puritanism, provides examples of worldly ascetics who kept track of their individual labour and proper use of time in journals and who attempted to reshape their society after this godly model (Châtellier 1989). Most significantly, it is not at all clear that Anglicans were any less emphatic than Puritans in their attitudes toward a 'work-ethic' (Breen 1966; Sommerville 1981; Todd 1987, 118ff.). We need to look elsewhere for a significant characteristic differentiating Puritans and Anglican views of the poor. We find this in views of time, idleness, agency, and order.

Adiaphora and the control of time

For Puritans, activity in one's calling was not valued for its effects but because the exercise of agency itself constituted one's obedience to God. A tension with Anglican views emerges here, with the moral and religious evaluation of human action. The Anglican theologian Whitgift asserted that private wills are subject to authority 'in things indifferent.' Puritans agreed, but with an important qualification

According to the Puritan scheme, voluntary and consensual action in the Church and business are most certainly *not* things indifferent. For Whitgift, on the other hand, *all action as such is* external and indifferent and therefore subject to royal regulation. For him it is invisible inwardness that constitutes the realm of true religion. (Little 1969, 144).

This concern with the extent to which action becomes an issue of direct obedience to God's order frames the central tension between Puritans and Anglicans. According to Patrick Collinson, the issue of *adiaphora* "was where the geological fault-line between Anglicanism and Nonconformity, Church and Chapel, began" (1987, 16).²

The debate over *adiaphora* points to Puritan concerns with social control: their belief that worldly activity was not indifferent led to attempts to control its excesses. Several studies emphasize the role of the godly among the magistracy of some areas in enforcing godly behaviour on members of the community (see especially Wrightson and Levine 1979). Collinson argues that "the middle age of the Reformation was often accompanied by the tightening grip of oligarchies which used religion as a prime

² For an excellent account of the debate between Whitgift and Cartwright see Lake 1988.

instrument of social control and self-advancement" (1988, 56).³ One important aspect of Puritan attempts to form a godly commonwealth here on earth was a battle over the cycles of time that defined the community: the new order was a temporal order. This involved more than a critique of ungodly pastimes and a promotion of the Sabbath. The traditional rhythms of work and pastime, the cycle of seasonal rituals, festivals and mysteries, were important factors giving order and structure to the community. The Reformation brought a competing view:

with their rival motto 'godly discipline' the religious virtuosi, as the heart and sinews of the contrasted godly community, promoted nothing less than an antithetical doctrine of what it was to be a human being, and certainly of what was involved in taking one's place in a Christian society. (Collinson 1988, 142)

In this confrontation of "startlingly different moral economies," the more godly proponents of the Reformation directly attacked traditional means of structuring time:

These seasonal rituals were almost all contained in that half of the year which runs from Christmas to Midsummer, and which can be considered a distinctive and extended festive season, set against the relatively industrious second half of the year with its uninterrupted work discipline. Calendarwise the Reformation amounted to the intrusion of the working season into the months traditionally associated with a kind of holy play. . . . (Collinson 1988, 143, 54)

Collinson notes the ambiguity of this attack on the traditional religious calendar in a passage that emphasizes the Puritan sacralization of everyday life:

³ As Margaret Spufford has argued, we must be cautious with this concept of social control:

it is very necessary to separate puritan beliefs . . . from their moral application to everyday living. . . . To regard puritanism as exclusively to do with social control is to do it a gross injustice and to underestimate it. Further, to think or to imply that such social control was new shows a certain shortness of historical perspective on the part of the historians concerned. (1985, 57)

But if this was a kind of secularisation, it paradoxically involved the *sacralisation* of the town, which now became self-consciously a godly commonwealth, its symbolic and mimetic codes replaced by a literally articulated, didactic religious discipline. In place of the seasonal complexities of the old calendar, the secular and festive half-years, there was now a new rhythm of working days and sabbaths. . . . (1988, 55, emphasis in original)

This sacralization of the everyday was not only a matter of contesting the significance of the calendar and other external markers of time. It involved an internal rationalization of the temporal characteristics of activity. This will be demonstrated by an examination of the writings of a representative Puritan.

Richard Rogers' Seven Treatises

An attentiveness to time as the measure of godly activity is particularly apparent in the works of Richard Rogers. Rogers was appointed lecturer in the village of Wethersfield, Essex, in about 1577. Apart from brief suspensions due to his presbyterian and nonconformist views, he preached at Wethersfield until his death in 1618. His most significant work was *Seven Treatises*, first published in 1603, with a fifth edition in 1630.⁴ It appeared in an often reprinted abridged version that was first published in the year of his death. Selections from *Seven Treatises*, along with works by other Puritan

⁴ The full title of the book conveys its essence well:

SEVEN TREATISES, CONTAINING SVCH DIRECTION AS IS GATHERED OVT OF THE HOLIE SCRIPTVRES, leading and guiding to true happiness, both in this life, and in the life to come: and may be called the practise of Christianitie. PROFITABLE FOR ALL SVCH AS HEARTILY DESIRE THE SAME: IN THE WHICH, more particularly true Christians may learne how to leade a godly and comfortable life euery day.

divines including William Perkins and Richard Greenham, were included in the popular manual for godly living, *A Garden of Spiritual Flowers*, reprinted as late as 1687.

Seven Treatises is a practical guide to living a godly life, a manual for the formation of the Christian self:

This daily direction then of a Christian, is a gethering together of certaine rules out of Gods word, by whiche we may be enabled euery day to liue according to the will of God, with sound peace. . . . [T]his is the battell, which he must feele and have with his lusts, and which euery true beleever must be exercised with daily: and yet this resistance and rebellion against God's grace, which he feeleth by this curruption and sinne daily, is a most fit whetstone to sharpen him the more to imbrace and follow these rules in this direction set down. . . . (1603, 314, 316)

On the one hand, this is fairly standard Puritan fare. Readers of Haller, Tawney or Walzer will recognize the anxious concern with the sanctification of the 'true believer,' the martial metaphors used to describe the dire struggle with concupiscence, and the emphasis on both not wasting time and on following God's law 'daily.' On the other hand, behind these familiar aspects of the godly life is a more subtle link between time and human activity, one that influenced the temporal orientation of agency characteristic of modernity.

Directing the use of time

According to Rogers, Christians must pay constant attention to their actions and their time. Over and over throughout *Seven Treatises* we find an exhortation that the godly must practice "diligance and constancie" "early and late, all times of the day"; the godly are "to finde fault with themselues throughout euery day"; "they must euery day

looke to their waies and liues, and settle themselues constantly therein"; duty is required "not at some one time in the day . . . [but] throughout the day: because there is no part of our life in the day, but it is either exercised with some crosse or with likelihood and feare of it"; "no time should be free from some part" of this duty (1603, 156, 301, 295-6, 385, 296).

Rogers was not alone among Puritans in his emphasis on continuity. John Downname recommended "constancie, and assiduitie in doing good," held that "wee must make it to bee our daily exercise," and advised the godly to carry out their duties "daily, continually, and constantly" (1616, 20, 21, 43). Laurence Chaderton held that "continual & careful watchfulnes" was a gift from God, adding that it was not given to Catholics (1580, sig. D7v, E5v).

Time was a crucial issue for Rogers. We can see this in the journal he kept over the period during which he began working on his *Seven Treatises* (1966). He used almost six hundred large quarto pages to offer his directions for Christian life. Given his intense concern with the godly use of time, it seems pertinent to ask what he may have thought both of the time he spent writing this tome and of the time spent by others in reading it. He comments explicitly on both these points. In his journal, he frequently mentions time spent writing. In an entry made in December of 1587, near the time he decided to begin work on his book, Rogers wrote "I continue my riseinge in morn about 5, and ether in my study, or about myne hart, and the betteringe of my life in writinge this [journal], and such like thin[gs], I thanck god, my tyme is bestowed" (1966, 69). On August 13, 1588, he wrote, "I meane both to set lesse by the world, to have lesse dealinge in it, to spende

more time in study, to prepare better for afflic[ti]on], and to loath that detestable bayt which so much snareth" (*Ibid.*, 80). On April 11, 1589, his writing was clearly weighing on his mind: "I litle looked to have stuffed my booke with such matters as now to my great grief I see I must. . . . I have not been settled since our first removeinge, though not so much desirous to take upp my time or occupie mine head in worldly matters" (*Ibid.*, 83). On August 30, he wrote, "The first of these two weekes, being abroad and so unsettled at my book, . . . the time was not filled with frutes of christian[ity] . . ." (*Ibid.*,85). Time spent unsettled and unable to write weighed heavily on Rogers' mind.

Like the authorial voice in the C-text autobiography of *Piers Plowman*, Rogers sees spending time in godly writing as one of the most spiritually worthy of activities. Where the late fourteenth-century poem points to a concern with maximizing time spent rightly, the writings of this early seventeenth-century puritan illustrate a more radical view.

We can begin to see what is distinctive in Rogers' attitude to time in the expectations he has of his readers. Regarding his writing, he expresses concern "les any should thinke my labour vaine," and he pins the fruitfulness of his work "to daily use of the same book" on the part of its readers (1603, sig. A5r). In his preface, Rogers explicitly addresses the proper use of the readers' time: "Now it remaineth to direct the reader how to bestow his time profitably herein, and how he may reade it to his benefit. For I doubt nothing, but he that shall be conuersant in it, desiring to be directed in his course, shall thinke his time well spent . . ." (*Ibid.*, sig. B3r).

Readers are not to read only for an understanding of doctrinal points but are to use

the book as a practical guide and spur to reforming their character. They are instructed

to looke for, and to see those things worke vpon them. If this be attained, . . . they cannot but affect, loue, imbrace, and delight in the doctrine of sanctification, and *repentance from dead workes*, I meane they shall desire to practise the godly and christian life when they see that it is the commaundement of him who loueth them most dearly. . . . (1603, emphasis in original).

Rogers recommends a temporal rationalization of activity in obedience to and as a manifestation of God's will.

Rogers "chiefe purpose" in *Seven Treatises* is to lead his readers to live their lives in constant watchfulness and constancy given "our corrupt nature . . . and Sathans subtiltie many waies beguiling vs" (1603, 1). This pessimism concerning the use of time given corrupt human nature was not unique to Rogers, of course. Thomas Cartwright, for example, held that 'decay' was the root of the Hebrew word for time, reflecting the tendency of all human institutions to become corrupt over time (Lake 1988, 44). Rogers offers a prescription for a godly life lived in full recognition of this tendency. Constant attentiveness to time is difficult, but it is rewarding in this life as well as the next: Rogers proposes

to direct the true Christian, who is already a beleuer, how to walke daily through the course of this life, in such wise as he may finde a very sweete and effectuall taste of eternall happines, euen here So, labour thou in thy spirituall worke and seruing of God, to finde that gaine, and thriuing therein, that thou maiest make thy soule as ioyfull euery day, and at as great peace with God, as sometime thou scarcely haddest obtained once in the weeke or month" (1603, 1, sig. B4v).

Both the task and the reward of Christians in this life are framed in terms of time. 'Continual' is the watchword of the godly. For Rogers it is as if the invisible city were always already here among us, only a moment away, but this an indefinitely extended

moment of diligence and constancy.

Idleness, inconstancy, and the devil

Rogers' concern that Christians practice diligence "alwaies and euey day" leads him also to worry about those who "trifle out their precious time" (1603, 323, 355; cf. 357). In his journal, he shows the same concern regarding his own conduct: "it shameth me that I should be trifling out my time . . ." (1966, 79). At other points he expresses "great likeing of . . . my manner of passing the time" or notes that he is "passing the time well" (*Ibid.*, 96, 98). Upon joining in prayer and scriptural study with a godly friend, he wrote, "we saw that our time and mindes and travaile coulde no better way be bestowed then to exercize our selues this way . . ." (*Ibid.*, 66; cf. 71, 90).

Idleness is an especially threatening cause of wasted time:

The godly are to shun idlenes and vnprofitablenes, that so they may bring foorth much fruite redeeming the time wisely, while they may: and that with a thousand times more gaine then others doe: and not as slouthful, and vnthriftie persons, passe it ouer idly and vnprofitable, for the pleasing and satisfying of their foolish appetite, for the present time." (1603, 156; cf. 177)

Idleness was the negation of the godly conduct commanded by God.

Rogers contrasts present and future time, and this contrast is correlated with one between discontinuous and continuous action. The inset quotation above opposes heavenly "gaine" to "appetite, for the present time." This "redeeming the time from idlenes and vnprofitablenes" is achieved through maintaining a state of activity in which "the end of one worke is the beginning of another" (1603, 159): "the life of the beleuer is

a continuall proceeding in the departing from euill, and endeououring after duties . . . : and a settled course in repentance, and a constant walking with God, and not an idle, or vncertaine stumbling vpon some good actions . . ." (*Ibid.*, 158).

Godly action, then, is continuous and uninterrupted. It is to occupy the Christian "*the whole time of our dwelling here, vnto our end . . . [and] we are commaunded to doe this euery part of this whole time; and consequently euery day, and throughout the day . . .*" (1603, 298, citing 1 Peter 1:17). Christian duty is to be carried out "from time to time," a phrase that meant for Rogers not 'on occasion' but 'constantly' (*Ibid.*, 157, 159, 383). We found in *Piers Plowman* a concern with times of godly orientation, but here we find a concern to link them together seamlessly.

The themes of sinfulness and time intersect in Rogers' writing. In his journal, he retrospectively described a gathering of ministers in December of 1587 at which "we determined to bringe into writing a direction for our lives, which might be both for ourselves and others" (1966, 69; cf. 71). He describes here the origin of *Seven Treatises*. Yet here, in the moment well spent which was the source of his *magnum opus*, he finds reason to reproach himself. On the one hand, this fateful day unfolded profitably: "till we ended all the time passed frutfully" (*Ibid.*). On the other hand, sin intruded even here: "But when we shoulde ende with praier . . . I wandred, nether did mine hart goe with the [least?] part of it, which at such a time was no small sin and occasion to unsetle me" (*Ibid.*). The words "such a time" in this passage mark both a period of time used in a godly manner and a proportionate increase in the sinfulness of 'wandering.' The sinfulness of such wandering is a central concern in Rogers' journal. Again and again he

laments his "discontinueing of diligenc," and his finding "that much decay of care, zeale, and watchfullnes is growen uppon me" (1966, 56). On the occasion when he commits his time to writing, he finds a lapse in his diligence and continuity of conduct.

This passage suggests that the very moments when time is being watched and used most profitably are somehow problematic. There is an unease here that is rooted in a distinction between sanctification and its signs, between "the first fruite of the spirit" and the resultant "increase of the same for continuance: which . . . is an infallible marke of Gods election" (1603, 89). Sanctification is no guarantee of perfection, but it leads to a "continuance" of its fruits: "although this new change be not such, as that it is able to beare down all the old corruption . . . yet it is a mightie alteration" (*Ibid.*). This change bears an important relation to time. Rogers asks hypothetically whether "any will demaunde, what becometh of this grace in time," and he responds that "God doth strengthen and continue this grace of holines and sanctification. . . . [It] shall not ordinarilie faile vs . . . for any long time, (except in time of temptation. . .)" (*Ibid.*). The continuance of grace in time accompanies sanctification. Diligence and continuity of conduct are its signs. This belief prompted Rogers' anxious attention to his use of time. This is more than a simple relation between the increasing utility of having something and the increasing disutility of losing it. For Rogers' concern is not that which we found in *Piers Plowman*, a concern to maximize the times of one's time spent in a godly manner. Rogers is concerned not with quantity of time passed but with a certain quality of its passing, its continuity.

For Rogers, the contrast between continuity and discontinuity, between an

unbroken extension of godly watchfulness and a moment of temptation, is closely connected to that between sanctification and sinfulness: "hee, who will let loose his heart any day or time of the day to any intemperance, or vnlawfull libertie, doth fall into some of *Sathans snares* . . . [he must] *watch in all things* . . . at all times: so that there shal be no time wherein he may cast off feare of euill . . ." (1603, 307, emphasis in original, citing 2 Tim. 4:5).

The value of this continuity is reflected clearly in its contrary, the moments of discontinuity that Rogers calls "time of temptation" (1603, 89). For Rogers, the devil works in the breaches of our diligence, the gaps in our watchfulness, that result from our corrupt nature. In contrast to the temporal continuity of godly diligence, Satan is an irruptive threat present at discrete moments of temptation and weakness. He takes advantage of "occasions offered" to afflict Gods children with "deadly wounds" and "fierie darts" (*Ibid.*, 415). Discontinuity is the devil's milieu: "the Diuell proceedeth by degrees" (Cartwright 1611, 38). And moments of idleness provided just the sort of discontinuity favoured by the devil: "idleness yeeldes occasion and matter for sinne & Sathan to surprise vs" (Greenham 1600, 34).

As an agent of evil, the devil manifests a shadow continuity of his own. Discrete moments of temptation inevitably threaten the loss of godly continuity and entrapment in the devil's. The godly Christian must match "Sathans malice and vigilancie" with their own diligence and constancy, avoiding the occasions, moments and times that breach the continuity of godly conduct (1603, 400). John Downame gives us a clear statement of this point: "when Sathans temptations in a short time often change, and that from one

contrarie to another, it is a signe that God's Spirit being strong in vs, doth resist Sathan and putteth him to these shifts, whereas he would hold on a constant course if hee prevailed against vs" (1634, 43).

The life in frame

Rogers uses a striking metaphor, linked again to a concern with time, to describe the effect of sinful wandering. By looking closely at Rogers' use of this metaphor of the 'frame,' we will see that, despite his pessimism regarding the corruption of human nature, he places implicit emphasis on a process of habituation. He attempts to shape himself and the readers of his book, through a process of self-formation that orients agency in and through time.

For Rogers a life "in frame" was a life lived according to God's will. Finding a godly example in John Knewstubs, the visiting Puritan rector of Cockfield, Suffolk, Rogers wrote in his journal, "This glass I desire to sett before mine eies dayly, that I may not be caryed unsetledly by diverse and daily occasions and so unframed, which thingue to me is no smalle grief . . . (1966, 96). The link between time and the 'frame' is made clear in his journal entry for December 22, 1587.⁵ This entry gives is a clear impression

⁵ The entry in which Rogers describes the origin of the project of writing the *Seven Treatises*, though referring to events on the sixth, is also dated Dec. 22, 1587 and appears to have been inserted into its earlier position among the pages of his journal. This raises the possibility that he framed this originary reference to his book at the same time that he

of the purpose he saw in keeping his journal:

And here in these 2 months I have more particu[larly] set downe thinges--not to observe the same course throughout, for that were infinit--but where any part of my life hereafter shall agree with any of this, which I have here set downe, that I may mak relation of it to some of this and not allwaies sett downe the same thinges againe. And if any quest should be, why doe I make account of mine estate to be better now then many yeares hence, I say, if I may hold out in this my covenaut keepinge that I may so observe mine hart that I may see my life in frame from time to time, I should then be oftner and with more certaintie be doeing of good to my selfe and to others in my study, in med[itations], in my whole life, I should be free from many falles, temptacions, daungers, and walk continu[ally] with sweet comfort, etc.--whereas though I inoied all these before, yet it was at times onely, not from time to time, for some times falles should be, myne hart beinge deceived, and such unquietnes arise, that in 2 or 3 houres, yea daies, I should not be in good estat againe, etc.--much more dullnes, unprofit, earthlymind, wandr[ing] after foly, unaptnes to study, feare of breaking of my course. (1966, 71-2)

To live one's "life in frame" is to remain diligant not "at times onely" but "from time to time." This passage makes it clear, moreover, that the means by which one attains to this level of constancy involves looking back over one's past actions to compare and pass judgement. Governing one's conduct involves past, present and future.

Rogers enlists memory as the cornerstone of his direction for a Christian life. He points to an instrumental use of time by advising his readers to end each day by reviewing their actions:

go through all the actions of the day, looke backe before thy lying downe how thou hast passed it, how farfoorth thou hast walked with God in it as thou art directed and taught; and wherein (as thou art able to remember) thou hast offended, whether thou hast remitted thy care and watch, and how thou hast wandred thereby. . . . (1603, 399)⁶

wrote this first entry where he uses the concept of the 'frame.'

⁶ Rogers calls memory into play in the task of directing the readers of his *Seven*

Memory keeps one's life in frame, protecting against the devil:

And because I am occupied about many things in the day, and therefore am more readie (through the Diuels malice and vigilancie, who seeketh all occasions against me) to be vnsetled and brought out of frame, graunt (most louing Father) that I may at such times remember, how I ought to haue a stayed mind and constant, euer counting one thing to be necessarie in the middest of all my businesse, dealings and varietie of actions: and that is, that I may highly prize thy word. . . . And yet, if I should be ouertaken with any forgetfulnesse, and vnawares be preuented by Sathan . . . and this my course of holy walking be broken off; yet (good Lord) leaue me not ouer-long in that danger: graunt me to espie my fall. . . . (1603, 409)

John Downname also makes explicit this link between memory and the godly life of diligence: "we are continually to haue in memorie the commaundement of our chiefe captaine Christ Iesus, whereby hee inciteth vs to a continuall fight without fainting or yielding" (1634, 47).

To sum up, constancy, holding fast, watchfulness, and remembering all appeal to an image of time as continuous and transcendent, in the sense that it is properly God's time, beyond the temptations, sins, the "occasions," of the world. On the other hand, idleness provides an opening for forgetfulness, an empty moment in which the Devil can work his evil. Discrete moments are, for Rogers, inherently and necessarily fraught with the danger of temptation. Yet, the implicit aspiration to live God's time, to live "from time to time," is impossible, given the corrupt nature of humanity. Rogers' repeated insistence that the godly life is to be practiced "every day, and throughout the day," has the practical effect of forming habits of paying attention to time: this is the cornerstone of

Treatises as well. He advises them to first "reade the contents of it briefly set downe in the table before the booke, to helpe his memorie. . ." (1603, sig. B3r).

his attempt "to helpe to bring the Christian life into practice," (1603, 295). Time has become not only the measure but the matter of the godly life.

Conclusion

In the writings of Richard Rogers we can see a new attitude to time. As a corollary of the Puritan sanctification of everyday life, time becomes sanctified in an important way. Rogers idealizes an unattainable transcendent constancy of rightly oriented activity. The authorial voice in the C-text autobiography of *Piers Plowman* hoped that all the times of his time will be turned to profit. His concern was to waste as little time as possible, so that the sum of pluses and minuses in God's tabulation of his activity will come out in his favour. For Rogers, any straying from the constant daily watchfulness that is to last the rest of his earthly life is an opening for the devil's intervention. Rogers strives for a perfect use of time and he advises his readers to do the same. Both his writing of the *Seven Treatises* and his audience's reading of it were intended to aid in governing the conduct of individuals thus bringing the invisible church into the world.

Rogers advocates the reformation of character, but he does not have a confidence in human nature that would allow him to trust in the power of good habits to keep people from straying. The emergence of this optimism, and its institutionalized application to the poor, will be the subject of the final chapter. This more optimistic view of human abilities to rightly orient agency through an attentiveness to time has its roots with the

Puritans. They placed infinite emphasis on the correct orientation of activity but had no trust in human abilities to maintain that state without God's grace. Constant vigilance was both condition and sign of this state. Rogers envisions a reformation of character that is once and for all, but which must continue being so at each and every moment, "not onely this day, but euerie day hereafter . . . from time to time . . . to my liues end" (1603, 410, 383, 406). This fundamental reframing of time and agency shifted emphasis from works to work, from the accumulation of godly actions to the willful intentness from which action proceeds. For the Puritans, this interminable and never intermittent application of the individual Christian will was a criterion of citizenship in the invisible city. In the eighteenth century it became a key factor contributing to the order and maintenance of the earthly city.

Drawing on aspects of Foucault's ethical work, Tom Webster analyzes the self-examination-through-writing of Richard Rogers and other Puritan diarists as a technology of the self: "diary-keeping produces a material site for the self which, in the case of the past self, is perhaps the only site" (1996, 40). Journals like Rogers' contain a dialogue "between past and present" and "between two present selves, subject and object, established in separate sites, diary and heart" (1996, 48, 50). As we have noted, they also carry on a dialogue with memory. Our objective has been to extend these insights into Puritan self-construction by emphasizing the temporal dimension of this diligent examination of the self.

As we saw in the second chapter, modernity can be characterized by the increasing prominence of abstract time, a development correlated with new forms of

social mediation. The Puritans marked an important moment in the rationalization of conduct in terms of this view of time. Puritan worldly asceticism freed individuals not only from traditional forms of social affiliation but from an externalized link between agency and order: *Piers Plowman* held a sum total of works to be the mark of individual activity's commensurability with God's antecedent order. The Puritan sacralization of the world was inseparable from a sacralization of the present moment: diligence and constancy brought God's eternal order into the world by infusing each moment with the eschatological time of sanctification. For Richard Rogers, a worldly concern with "present time" was sinful, a distraction from future heavenly "gaine" (1603, 156). This was more than a further distancing of the invisible others that haunt Fenn's account of the legacy of purgatory. It was a new conception of order, framed in terms of an agency governed and oriented by time.

Chapter 10

The Gifts of Character-Reformation

In the eighteenth century, poverty continued to be perceived in terms of industry and idleness. In Fielding's *Tom Jones*, for example, expressions of altruistic charity run alongside the view that the poor were "those who had rather beg than work" (1985 [1749], 38). This chapter argues that the institutional treatment of the poor in the eighteenth century sought to inculcate a correct temporal orientation of agency. This was intended to curb idleness and foster industry as a means of maintaining the order of the nation.

The Puritan emphasis on reforming character, specifically their continual diligence and attention to time, became central to the governance of the poor. The convergence of means and state of salvation in the Puritan conception of order reflected their belief that the godly battle with concupiscence was fought on two inseparable fronts, in each individual soul and in the world at large. This view, leading as it did to a greater emphasis on the formation of the disordered self as a means of fostering order, played a central role in shaping a significant and defining characteristic of modernity: governing the conduct of individuals as well as populations in order to foster order. This was not simply an exterior imposition of normative standards but the elaboration of a new individuality. The self was constituted as inherently interested and with a proper temporally mediated orientation, habit, as the vector of those interests. This mode of governmentality arose in conjunction with the eighteenth-century optimism that

individual self-interested agency is not only consistent with but promotes the general social order. Poor relief practices sought to engage the interest of the poor. The best form of charity was held to be the reformation of character. Almsgiving did not truly help the poor: Catherine Philips wrote, in 1792, that “*giving to the poor is an abuse of charity*” (cited in Andrews 1977, 206, emphasis in original).

The eighteenth century witnessed a proliferation of poor relief institutions. Early attempts to reform the poor through religious, moral and vocational education, like the London workhouse established by Samuel Hartlib during the Interregnum or the flax spinning workshops of philanthropist Thomas Firmin, were succeeded by a growing network of parish hospitals, bridewells, workhouses and charity schools. There were at least 600 workhouses in England by the mid-eighteenth century; almost thirty thousand people, between one half and one percent of the nation's population laboured in these institutions (Hitchcock 1992, 160). Poor relief institutions of the eighteenth century were often involved in the tensions of party politics (Shoemaker 1992), of parish control of resources (Macfarlane 1986), of local resistance to Royal interference (Tronrud 1985), or of Anglican attempts to neutralize sectarian influences (Rose 1989; 1991). We are concerned here with the manner in which institutionalized charitable practices were perceived as reforming the characters of the poor.

There was a tension in the objectives of these institutions between reformation and discipline, education and punishment. This tension was a longstanding one. Where early seventeenth-century Puritans followed the Christian humanists in holding that moral reformation and vocational training would lead the poor out of poverty, Anglicans,

especially in the wake of the Laudian reforms, tended to accept the inevitability of poverty and to suggest that the poor be confined and disciplined (Todd 1987, 252-253). Under the increasing influence of conservative Anglican views, poor relief institutions became quasi-penal institutions. Emphasis shifted from aiding the poor to protecting society:

Post-Restoration institutions for the poor reflect the triumph of the conformist position in their de-emphasis on education and in the increasingly punitive approach to the poor which gave late seventeenth-century workhouses the reputation which survives in popular literature. The conformists' suppression of some of the more innovative attempts to train and reform the poor can be interpreted as concomitant with their assumption that a change in behavior and mode of life is neither possible nor the proper concern of the authorities. (Todd 1987, 253)

This tension continued to frame the discourses and practices of poor relief throughout the eighteenth century. However, despite disagreement over whether to kindly educate or harshly correct the poor, there was agreement over a more fundamental issue: the idleness of the poor was a cause of disorder that had to be addressed. This diagnosis was the same whether kindness or fear was emphasized. The discourses and practices of the idle poor sought to shape or curtail the disorder caused by lack of industry through processes of discipline and habituation in and over time. However, eighteenth century philanthropists went beyond earlier views that charity would 'cover over sins' or make England more prosperous through the motivation of labour; the new charity sought to reform the characters of the poor as a necessary prelude to fostering national order (Andrew 1977, 290 and *passim*).

In eighteenth-century poor relief institutions, time became a key *point d'appui* for

the governance of conduct. Foucault points to

a new technique for taking charge of the time of individual existences; for regulating the relations of time, bodies and forces; for assuring an accumulation of duration; and for turning to ever-increased profit or use the movement of passing time. How can one capitalize the time of individuals, accumulate it in each of them, in their bodies, in their forces or in their abilities, in a way that is susceptible of use and control? (1979, 157)

These disciplinary techniques imposed "a whole micro-penalty of time (lateness, absences, interruptions of tasks)" as a corollary of a 'normalizing gaze' oriented to disciplining bodies (Foucault 1979, 178; cf. Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983, 156ff.). The control of time was important to each of the various objectives of eighteenth-century poor relief: "to the employment of the industrious, and those who are able to work; to the correction and punishment of the idle, refractory, and profligate; to the education of the infant poor in the habits of industry and religion" (Wood 1791, 10).

Habit became a way to orient individual agency to the general good. If poor relief did its job properly, even the disorderly poor could be brought to contribute to the order of society. A constant call to change the habits of the poor was rooted in a belief that self-interested human agency, properly formed over and oriented to time, was essential to the maintenance of social order.

The nature of the threat posed by the idle poor to religious, moral, social, political and economic order was reconceived in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A new emphasis on character reformation was correlated with new practices of poor relief, with ruptured social relations between donors and recipients, and with a new conception of the relations between self-interested action and society.

The shadow of charity

Early modern England witnessed the emergence of a new sort of dual economy of charity: the process of shaping the deserving poor so as to include them within society was shadowed by processes of criminalization and marginalization. From initial legislation in the sixteenth century, through the private make-work schemes of the mid-seventeenth century to the workhouses of the late seventeenth century, the undeserving poor were not simply ignored as if they did not exist. Money, time and energy was expended in taking care of them, in the less charitable sense of that phrase. The economy of charity--where necessities of life were supplied in return for obedience to imposed behavioural norms--was shadowed by an economy of marginalization--where, in return for their marking the boundaries of accepted norms, the undeserving were whipped and branded, jailed and embarked for the colonies.

Most of the poor were less clearly other than Jews, Gypsies and the Irish. These people had a defined status, that of other. The case was very different with the sturdy beggars and idle rogues who swarmed the streets. As a national society was taking shape over the early modern period, the presence of the poor presented it with a problem of self-definition. Traditional boundaries were framed in terms of strict local residency. These came to be framed in terms of rights contingent upon national citizenship. Redrawing these lines involved diffuse strategies and disciplinary techniques that redefined the place of the poor. They were seen increasingly as a large and disturbingly amorphous shadow at the margins of household, village, parish, town, and city.

Conceptions of the nature of society had to face the task of drawing a line somewhere in that disorderly penumbra. The location and nature of that line reflected new conceptions of self and society. Paupers, given their marginal status, experienced the treatment due to both sides of the line drawn between deserving and undeserving. In the early part of our period, a beggar out of his or her home parish was whipped and sent back to where they were eligible for relief. The same parish officials, the Overseers of the Poor, had the duties of administering both the parish economy of charity and the shadow economy of marginalization. The same hand offered relief and gripped the whip.

Early modern England witnessed a change in the social significance of the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor. Traditionally, this distinction had structured an exchange relation between charitable donors and worthy recipients, an exchange itself constitutive of the status of both types of actor. In early modern England, the distinction had come to structure a relation internal to an institutionalized poor relief apparatus. The unworthy beggar had been given no alms; the recalcitrant pauper was forced to labour. The former was excluded. The latter was included, but in a different way than the impotent poor. Government institutions encompassed and managed the distinction between the deserving and undeserving. Traditionally this distinction had marked the margins of society in clear terms of exclusion vs. inclusion, but in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it came to demarcate two sorts of inclusion.

This might be read as a change in the relation between centre and periphery. The margins of society became less a distant boundary where transactional relations with

fellows blurred into those with others as government institutions were increasingly present at the margins of society, managing and defining the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor. This chapter argues that the institutionalization of the distinction between deserving and undeserving reflected a change in the discursive and practical relation between agency and social order. In the new poor relief institutions of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, all the poor were to work: the objective of poor relief was to "make the Poor, willing, or not, industrious" (LeBrocq 1784, 21). Francis Atturbury, later Bishop of Rochester, exhorted the Lord Mayor of London and the Governors of the city's hospitals to "reform the Stubborn by Correction, and the Idle by hard Labour . . ." (1709, 14). By framing the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor in terms of motivation, eighteenth-century English society defined its boundaries, and so itself, in terms of a certain conception of agency.

This brief overview provides us with a hypothesis that will orient the remainder of the chapter. Given our basic methodological principle, we can examine the shadow cast by this new conception of agency in contemporary discussions of the idleness of the poor. We will look for evidence of a changing relation between individual self-interested agency and social order by seeking for warnings of the dire consequences to social order when this sort of agency was found lacking among the poor. We will also consider practices oriented to reforming this faulty agency.

Labour, habituation and time

E.P. Thompson has called the new attitudes to time and labour fostered by industrialization "the gifts of character-reformation" (1967, 94). As embodied in the workhouses and Houses of Industry, these gifts were intended to help the poor by forming industrious habits. This would help them help themselves allow them to contribute to the preservation of order and the prosperity of the nation. Some advocates of this form of charity even saw the newly reformed poor as the vanguard of a new order: "The poor houses will produce a new model citizenry, and thus lay claim to be the nuclei of a new model society" (cited in Andrew 1977, 239n80).

This perception of the impact of poor relief reflected a view that self-interested agency and order were mediated by the inculcation, in and over time, of habits of industry. Habituation guaranteed the proper orientation of individual activity: "Most *Habits*, whether good, or bad, or indifferent, begin in Youth, and will, as we find by daily Experience, grow by Years. . . . Custom is called a *Second Nature*" (Denne 1736, 16-17).

Eighteenth-century poor relief sought to inculcate "a habit of labour": "The greatest act of kindness that can be done to the greatest body of the poor is to remove the props by which their idleness is encouraged and supported" (Wood 1791, 8, 16). Edward Stillingfleet, bishop of Worcester, advised from the pulpit that "he that reduceth a dissolute and wandring Beggar to the taking pains for himself and Family cures an ill habit of his Mind; puts him into the way of Vertue and Sobriety; gives him a lasting stock for himself and Family (for diligence and industry is so) . . ." (1681, 13-14).

Throughout the eighteenth century we find attitudes to the importance of continual diligence to time that echo Puritan views: "Industry fixes the Mind, and keeps it clear and free from all loose Thoughts and wandring Desires; and guards us every way against the Attacks of our spiritual Enemy"; "People of piety should be more particularly on their guard against a spirit of idleness, and a slovenly habitual wasting of time" (Gastrell 1707, 9; More 1799, 1:120).

We can point to two common emphases in perceived functions of eighteenth-century institutions of poor relief. First, whether influenced by Anglicans or Dissenters, these institutions placed a fundamental emphasis on assuring the salvation of the poor. Second, however, beginning in the late seventeenth century, this soteriological concern began to be outweighed by an emphasis on the moral reformation of the poor as vital to national order and prosperity (Fissell 1992). The pivot for this transition was the belief, central to the role that the SPCK played in coordinating the nationwide spread of workhouses, that one could not be both devout and idle (Hitchcock 1992).

An important related development was the increasing impersonalization of social relations brought about by shifts in poor relief practice. As noted above, the paradigm of charity changed from face-to-face almsgiving to either internment, in the parish workhouse or House of Industry, or an appearance before the parish committee which administered outrelief funds. This bureaucratic interposition changed relations between donors and recipients and among the poor themselves.

Isolation from bad influences was held to be essential to fostering industrious habits. Thomas Cooke, rector of St. Nicholas, Worcestorshire, echoed many sermons and

tracts when he preached at Westminster that one idler undermined the effects of charity given to an entire family: the idle ones were to be sent to the workhouse; and in the workhouse the able-bodied and idle were to be kept separate from the impotent and aged (1702, 23-25). Yet, though many sought to preserve a practical distinction between deserving and undeserving, there was a tendency for such humanitarian elements to be "first diluted then subverted . . . [as] repressive aspects loomed ever larger . . ." (Hitchcock 1987, xix). The deserving and undeserving poor were frequently placed side by side in the same institutions, receiving the same treatment despite a nominal difference in moral responsibility for their impoverished condition. This practice was criticized due to its exposing the deserving poor to the unwholesome influences of the undeserving:

in a parish workhouse . . . it is of the utmost importance, not merely to the poor persons who are driven thither by the tempest of fortune, but to the very well being of the country itself, that there should be a decisive boundary--a line of separation--drawn between the *industrious* and *honest* poor, who are suffering under a calamity from which neither you nor we can presume to be exempt, and those *vicious* and *abandoned* characters, which are the pests of society, and the objects of punishment. (*Society* 1799, 45)

These discussions underline the extent to which the reformation of character, especially the formation of industrious habits, had become central to the relief of the poor.

Shifts in treatment of the poor were reflected in the changing terminology of poverty. The earlier distinction between Christ's poor and the devil's had tended to reflect a distinction between those unable to work and those who chose not to do so. In the eighteenth century the 'labouring' poor were increasingly opposed to both the impotent and wilfully idle who were placed in the workhouse. The labouring poor themselves were faced with a certain normalizing gaze as they were forced to appear in person before

a parish committee in order to appeal for temporary relief when times were hard. These committees placed great emphasis on the external appearance and family reputation of the supplicants, and being consigned to the workhouse remained a very real threat (Sharpe forthcoming).

The writings of Jonas Hanway illustrate the link between self-interest and order as mediated by the formation of industrious habits. Hanway was a central figure of the new activist philanthropy of the eighteenth century and a key figure in arguing for the reformation of the poor. Along with others including Thomas Gilbert, Hannah More, Joseph Massie, John Scott, and James Nield, Hanway worked to address and improve the state of the poor through legislative and institutional reform. A brief consideration of his views will bring out each of the main points we will make in this chapter.

For Hanway, suppressing idleness by habituating the poor to labour was the keystone of their moral reformation. He held that "The great objective is *humanity towards the paupers*; in which I include a proper regard to their instruction in the duties of religion and industry" (1775, vii). For Hanway, "*Idleness* is confessedly the parent of wickedness," "the key of beggary . . . ,the child of vice, and the parent of misery" (1775, 251; 1777, 106). He recommended the "separation of the unfortunate and genuine pauper, from the *idle* and *profligate*" in order that the former not become improperly habituated through their exposure to the latter (1775, viii). The greatest gift to be given the poor was "to render their children more industrious, and more obedient to God and man," and this was to be achieved through "proper *instruction* and habit," through orienting schools to forming "a habit of industry" (1786, ii; 1766, 94, 97; cf. 1775, xii).

Industrious habits are formed and do their work through constant application over time:

"The true end of living is to employ time well and usefully, as intended by God. . . .

Idleness is the root of all evil: it is right to have something *good* to do, at all times; and when we cannot employ our *hands*, we may employ our *hearts*" (1788, 22, 11; cf. 21).

This attitude to temporal aspects of agency would not have been strange to Richard Rogers. However, Hanway illustrates an aspect of eighteenth-century thought that would have struck that Puritan divine as hubristic: a confidence that rightly formed and oriented agency could foster order on the basis of self-interest. Industriousness, consisting of a proper habituation to labour, brought self-interest in line with the maintenance of the general order:

the first lesson of the oeconomy of life is *let INDUSTRY be your care*. . . . It hath so peculiar a merit in promoting the *good* of mankind, that whilst we do our duty to ourselves, and promote our own fortune, we are performing acts of kindness and charity to the rest of the world; and accordingly we find, the industrious are treated with respect as *friends*, whilst the idle are considered with contempt as enemies. (Hanway 1777, 106)

Individual self-interested agency and the maintenance of social order were now linked in and through habituation: the mutual constitution of self and society was mediated by time.

Even those less charitably disposed to the poor saw the control of time and the harnessing of self-interest as a central element of the disciplinary processes needed to curb disorder. Sir William Blizard, in *Desultory Reflections on Police* . . ., noted criticisms that Hanway wished to make internment in disciplinary institutions "a time of reflection, of instruction, and amendment" (Blizard 1785, 5).

On the one hand, human nature was held to be intractable: indolence is natural in all species making it hard to alter "the general character and habits of people" (Crumpe 1795, 10, 19). However, even in the face of such pessimism, proper habituation of the poor was recommended: poor relief should foster "an undeviating attention to such small, constant, right habits as are hostile to our nature indolence" (More 1788, 36). Moreover, self-interest remains explicitly linked to the maintenance of order: "the vanity, taste, and ambition of man, become the springs of labour and industry, and the source of useful employment" (*Ibid.*, 23).

On the other hand, attempts to alter the characters of the poor were held by some to increase rather than decrease disorder: "the education of the poor only serves to make them idle, profligate, and disobedient, and is a detriment rather than a benefit to the state" (Lloyd 1797, 25). Yet here again, the self-interest of the poor was invoked as a means of orienting them to order. The point at issue was whether the existing institutions of poor relief were the most effective means of doing so: "A *Workhouse*, or *House of Industry*, in the very expression involves an absurdity; since he who can work in one of these parish receptacles, for the emolument of the farmer of the Poor; would labour to a much better purpose for his own maintenance and profit, did the system of policy afford him opportunity" (*Observations* 1765, 43). The poor should be "driven into constant industry," but the form of poor relief provided by the workhouse was "just enough to enable Them . . . to consume a Part of their Time in Idleness and Debauchery" (*Letter* 1752, 29).

Criticisms of the institutions of poor relief held that idleness would result from either harsh or lenient treatment of the poor: "*Imprisonment* is the *Bane* of all *Industry*, and only

makes People *idle*"; yet, too liberal treatment of a poor man would "encourage, or confirm him in a habit of idleness" (Dyke 1709, 129; Gilbert 1786, 35).

The importance of constancy in the governance of the poor was emphasized even in the case of outrelief: "the personal comfort of the Poor, the instructions and morals of the younger part of them, their attention to labour, and the oeconomical management of the House, depend much upon a constant and vigilant inspection into its interior concerns" (Wood 1791, 83). The disciplinary technologies of a new mode of governing conduct were encircling of poor on all sides, reflecting the constitution of a more general relation between self and society.

The control of time was a central pillar of these new technologies of governance. Thomas Laqueur argues, for example, that the structure of authority and the "rigid discipline of time and place" of late eighteenth-century Sunday schools "acted to encourage inner drives and outward behavior appropriate to an industrial society" (1976, 222, 219). Controlling one's time and limiting leisure activities to what were called "rational pastimes" were central objectives of these institutions (*Ibid.*, 227).

The importance of time in fostering habits of industriousness is clear in the rules for the Shrewsbury House of Industry, which gave a concise temporal frame to the labour expected of inmates:

The POOR in his HOUSE, Are to observe the following RULES. . . . THAT they be diligent at their work. . . . THAT they work from six o'clock in the morning till six at night, in summer; and from seven in the morning till such hours in the evening, as the Directors shall appoint, in the winter. . . . THAT they do not pretend sickness, or other excuses, to avoid their work. . . . THAT they regularly attend divine service on Sundays, and prayers before breakfast and supper, every day. . . . THAT they go to [meals] . . . when summoned by Ring of Bell. . . .

THAT they be allowed half an hour for breakfast, and an hour at dinner. . . . THAT they never go out during working hours, nor at any other time, without leave. . . . THAT when permitted to go out, they do not stay longer than the hour appointed. . . . (Wood 1791, 87-9)

These views reflected a continuing emphasis on a proper orientation to God which cast labour and industry in secondary or even antagonistic roles. John Scott, for example, preached that labour and industry were not valuable in themselves but, in fact, tended to distract people from bestowing their time more wisely:

the poor Labourer that sweateth, and toileth all day for his Body, thinketh much at night to bestow upon his Soul a Prayer of a quarter of an hour long: The Tradesman that thinketh no Industry too much to make a fair and ample provision for his Body, grudgeth to expend a few good thoughts and endeavours in the purchase of an eternal Inheritance for his Soul. . . . (1673, 2)¹

On the one hand, admission to the workhouse was promoted as a means to reform the poor for their good and that of society: "by this means, they will be accustomed to Labour, and Industry; and the Habits of Idlenes, and Debauchery (wherewith the Youth among the Poorer Sort, are Miserably Infected) will be prevented; and they may hereby become useful instruments of a society . . ." (Waterman 1699, 11).

On the other hand, this concern for society was inseparable from religious conceptions of the relation between industry and order:

¹ This is because sin "overthroweth the Order and Oeconomy of their natures" (1673, 4). This point is linked to the tension between body and soul that structures the above quotation. Scott's graphic view of the body is fascinating: "our Bodies they are but clods of earth steeped in phlegme, and kneaded into Humane shapes, and do derive their Pedegree from the same Principles with Flies and Scare-bees . . ." (*Ibid.*, 1).

It is one of the most useful Undertakings you can possibly at this Time be concerned in. And you may depend upon it, that the less popular you are amongst these, and such like wicked People; the more strict and severe you appear in correcting their Vices, and in endeavouring, by forcing them to be industrious, to work some Amendment amongst them; the more you will certainly promote the Glory of God, the more you will shew your selves to be our Saviour's true Disciples. (Lynford 1712, 23)

The workhouse would provide a place "where all the *Poor and Labouring People* that want Work . . . may at any time Resort and be Employed in such Work as each of them is most Capable of . . ." (Malkin 1697, 3). Others recommended that the idle undeserving poor be sent to the House of Correction, an institution provided for in Elizabethan legislation and not always easy to distinguish from the workhouse: "if we are Concerned with those that Can, and will not Labour, we shall do a *Good Work*, in Denying them Relief, and commanding them to the House of Correction" (Waterman 1699, 11).

The habituation of children

During the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, idleness began increasingly to be described and addressed as a habit, formed and reformable in and over time. This can be seen especially clearly in attitudes and practices oriented to the reformation of poor children.

Poor relief directly addressed the agency of the poor, seeking

to preserve them from idleness, and to restrain their passions; lest contracting habits of sloth, they be tempted to mean and unlawful methods to gratify themselves . . . : and to accustom them to industry and diligence; not so as to

make it a toil and burden; but with proper encouragements; and so as to dispose and inure them with ease and chearfulness, to engage in the necessary occupations of future life. (Pickard 1760, 9)

Education, especially of poor children was an especially valuable goal of poor relief: the poor were

not only relieved for the present, . . . but put also into a Condition of supporting themselves afterwards, by being taught and exercised in all sorts of honest Labour. By which means they are preserved from the greatest Danger incident to humane Nature, that of Idleness. (Gastrell 1707, 8)

Preventing idleness by instilling proper habits among the young was a proactive measure oriented to fostering order:

Some may please themselves in redressing the Mischiefs occasion'd by the Wicked Poor; others, in preventing those Mischiefs, by securing the Innocence of Children and by imparting to them the invaluable Blessing of a Virtuous and Pious Education (Atterbury 1709, 13).

The ideal institution for children would "have partly the Nature of a *Workhouse*, as well as of a *School*" (Watts 1728, 15). Poor children were to be "all bred up industriously under strict Discipline"; poor relief institutions sought to "inure them to labor in the days of their youth" (Haines 1677, 11; Knowles 1772, 8).

The turn of the eighteenth century saw the foundation of what soon became a group of over a hundred free schools for poor children in London. The Charity school movement was above all an Anglican endeavour and was inseparable from the pietistic revival of Augustan London (Rose 1989, 104ff.; 1991).² Preventing idleness and

² Gwladys Jones' influential book *The Charity School Movement* (1938), despite its value as a broad history of eighteenth-century developments in education, propagated the misleading claim that the charity schools were a manifestation of a moral 'puritanism.'

encouraging industry were central concerns in the Charity schools, inseparable from issues of piety:

the objects of these charities are unable to provide for themselves, by their own labour; and are therefore more exposed to sloth and idleness, and to a dissolute and vicious course of life, by being left in the hands of their parents, than they could be under the discipline of a school, where the principles of religion, and labour, are daily instilled into their minds, that they may learn to submit with cheerfulness to the common hardships of their low condition; without which, they would be very unprofitable members of that society, by whose favour and bounty they are so kindly supported. (Clarke 1741, 15)

The emphasis on the formation of correct habits was, at its most optimistic, based in a confidence that human nature was inherently malleable. Children were especially amenable to education because "their Understandings are as so many *Rasa Tabulae*" (Stainforth 1711, 5). Charity school children were the "purely innocent . . . whose Minds are, at present, mere Wax and . . . as well capable of receiving good Impressions; as those which are Bad" (Lynford 1712, 18).

Habituation, rather than sinfulness, had become the point of purchase for governing the conduct of the poor. William, bishop of Salisbury, made this point clear:

Reforming the Present Age . . . is not to be hoped for without beginning earlier, with a pious Institution of Children, seasoning them betimes with good Principles, and giving God an early Possession of them, before the Devil and evil Habits get hold of them. . . . a weaning them from the Beginning from Idleness; a training them up in Industry . . . must certainly arm them against the forementioned Practices, which are so offensive, and make them, with God's blessing, useful Members of the Community. . . . (1717, 24-5)

Locke's emphasis on habituation influenced the eighteenth-century developments we are considering. James Tully (1988) argues that Locke's combination of hedonism and voluntarism, specifically as reflected in his poor reform proposals, reinforced a

burgeoning tendency to place individuals under a coercive moral reformation. Explicitly echoing Foucault and Ignatieff, Tully argues that this tendency was central to the formation of the uniquely modern 'penalized self.'

Fenn makes a similar point, arguing that Locke represents a new tendency to link the themes of self-formation and the social order. With Locke "the social order itself became infused with a spiritual significance as the proving ground of the soul" (Fenn 1995, 90). He drew attention to the role of "mediating institutions "in the "process of mirroring the soul's scourging and purification on its way toward better things" (Fenn 1995, 91). Fenn points to organizations such as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) and the Society for the Reformation of Manners, organizations whose "mission was to reform the manners of the people: to purify them from the various practices that can assault and afflict the soul" (Fenn 1995, 91).

Three decades after the sermons cited above recommended inscribing an ode to labour on the blank slates of poor children's minds, Joseph Trapp found himself defending the Charity schools from a number of objections. Examining these will lead us to a clearer sense of these issues.

Some objectors to the Charity schools held that "to instill any Principles but those of knowledge in general, into the tender Minds of Children, is to instill so many *Prejudices*" (Trapp 1742, 21-22). Apart from calling such objectors "Infidels," Trapp had little to say in response and merely brushed this argument aside. Yet, it raised an important point: the gifts of character reformation can have little purchase if they remain at a conceptual level (cf. Laqueur 1976, 219).

More to the point was Trapp's response to the objection that a Charity school education fostered idleness. This objection had substance insofar as one considers mental labour to be no labour at all. This view is suggested by Henry Downes' insistence that time and leisure are required for poor to benefit from education (1697, 12). The distinction between leisure and idleness, usually reflecting class difference as a typology of inactivity, is applied here at just the point where the poor might rise above their lowly state. Faced with this accusation of idleness in the schools, Trapp reassured his listeners that the SPCK had "proposed that *more Labour* be introduced into the schools" (1742, 24). In the same year, the SPCK, with reference to its rules for the good order and governance of its schools, asserted that "Care should be taken, and all proper means used, to inure the Children of the Poor to Industry and Labour, so that they may become good Christians, loyal, and useful Subjects . . ." (SPCK 1742, 4). The proper formation of an industrious character, both sides agreed, demanded not just education but habituation, a continual and diligent application to labour.

To sum up, changing practices of charity and poor relief facilitated the inculcation of new norms of behaviour, reflecting new conceptions of idleness and of the value of labour. The widespread institutionalization of the poor was rationalized as a prerequisite to moral and vocational reformation, and children especially were to be removed from social situations that were held to foster idleness, "the Nurse of Vice" (Hay 1735, 19). Time and habit were to orient their activity to the order of the nation.

Labour and the nation

From the late seventeenth century we see an increasing concern with orienting the poor to industrious lives and away from sinful idleness. Idleness was an individual evil with national effects: "does *personal idleness* cloath a man with rags? when it is *national*, it has the like effect. . . . A slothful wretch, or a debauch'd sinner, any sort of abandon'd creature, is a slothful, or a debauched nation, in miniature" (Knight 1742, 14-15). The idleness of the poor had both moral and material effects. On the one hand, "If we examine into the various causes of the dissoluteness of our manners, we shall find our moral oeconomy deranged by not being sufficiently attentive to the instruction as well as the employment of the poor," and the solution was "to breed them to industry" (Hanway 1786, xiii, xv). On the other hand, "our Manufactures are lost and lower'd by and loss of so many hands that might improve them" (Harris 1701, 18).

Poor relief sought to address this problem by encouraging industry among the poor. It sought "by exciting a spirit of industry and ingenuity, to promote the public good" (*Rules* 1792, 4). The employment of the poor fostered "the publick Peace and Wealth of the Kingdom" (Hay 1735, 18). Interning the poor for the edifying purpose of setting them to labour was advantageous to all of society: "by this means a *Spirit of Ingenuity* spreads itself throughout a *whole Nation*" (Downes 1697, 7); "by this means all the Nation will suddenly be bred up to such an excellent profitable way of Industry, that no Nation in the world can exceed us . . ." (Haines 1678, 7).

This concern with the industriousness of the poor can be seen as representing the interests of England's elites. Economic growth after the Civil War made many more aware of the value of the labour of the poor: "Since an extensive supply of labour was

required, poor relief, that fount of idleness and cause of 'high' wages, had to be restricted at all costs. Labour, sobriety, and discipline were now deemed the preservers of the nation" (Lis and Soly 1979, 126).

A conflict theoretical perspective could be extended to the increasing emphasis on reforming the manners of the poor, for manners were inseparable from industry. The advent of the eighteenth-century workhouse was closely linked to the rise, in the economically depressed 1690s, of the Society for the Reformation of Manners and of other such associations (Rogers 1991). Locke wrote that "the cause of the multiplicity of the poor, and the increase of the taxes for their maintenance, can be nothing else but the relaxation of *discipline, and corruption of manners; virtue and industry* being as constant companions on the one side, as *vice and idleness* are on the other" (cited in Howlett 1788, 23-24). Peter Newcome, preaching before the influential Society for the Reformation of Manners, made clear that the specific manners which the lower classes lacked were those of their "Superiours in Honour, Authority and Wealth. . . . The Eminency of whose Station renders Their Examples perspicuous and powerful. . . . From whome the Generality derive their Fashions and make Choice of the Habits of their Minds, as well as of their Bodies" (1710, 2-3). If the habituation of the poor were directly linked to elite class interests, as this passage suggests, then an approach which considered power to be the property of dominant groups would be entirely adequate. However, if we learn anything from Foucault it is precisely that such an account of power and domination leaves too much unexplored. An example will make this clearer.

John O'Neill considers the early modern discourses and practices oriented to

reforming the poor from a perspective that combines insights from Weber and Foucault. O'Neill argues that their works converge on a single question: "*what are the techniques by which man has subjected himself to the rational discipline of the applied human sciences*" (1986, 42, emphasis in original).

O'Neill argues that early capitalism emerged along with a disciplinary society that entailed the domination of the poor both directly and indirectly:

In part, the segregation of forced labourers functioned to regulate the supply of free labour; but, in a broader way, it set the model for the discipline and surveillance of former peasants and artisans while they resisted their new freedom. Early capitalists needed not only to depress wages as far as possible; they also needed wage-labour disciplined to accept long hours and harsh conditions of work. They had also to destroy the popular culture and habits of pre-industrial labour, yet to avoid entirely destabilizing the social order. . . . The overall effect was to teach free labour the discipline of the factory outside and inside the factory. . . . (O'Neill 1986, 50-51)

O'Neill suggests that early modern developments had the effect of "replacing charity with forced labour in the workhouse" (*Ibid.*, 51). He presents a hierarchical account of power relations in which "early capitalists" stand as dominating agents over and against dominated "peasants and artisans."

Our exploration of changing conceptions of agency adds something to this account: the temporal aspects of a discipline oriented to wage-labour did not just erode the popular culture and habits of pre-industrial labour, reshaping the relation between dominant and dominated. The new conception of agency that O'Neill invokes here was an element of a broader set of discursive and practical relations that reshaped the entire social field. It was certainly the case that "a social category with an interest in order judges another that is dedicated to disorder," and that this interest worked itself out in part

through "the 'moralisation' of the poorer classes," a process which involved their "learning the elementary rules of property and thrift; training in docility at work, in stability of residence and of the family, etc." (Foucault 1979, 276, 285). However, other aspects of these developments must be noted.

A conflict theoretical perspective is inadequate for two reasons. First, only in the nineteenth century did bourgeois interests attain a position of dominance. Thomas Laqueur has argued that the creation of the Sunday school in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century was part of the birth of the working-class culture rather than simply a manifestation of a hegemonic imposition of bourgeois ideology:

Honesty, orderliness, punctuality, hard work and refinement of manners and morals may all have been congruent with industrial system and thus in the interest of the bourgeoisie but they were not therefore middle-class values. The great divisions in early nineteenth century society were not between the middle and the working classes but between the idle and the non-idle classes, between the rough and the respectable, between the religious and the non-religious. All of these divisions ran across class lines. The puritan ethic was therefore not the monopoly of the owners of capital; it was the ideology of those who worked as against those who did not. (Laqueur 1976, 239)

Issues of industry and idleness, agency and habituation, were more fundamental than the interests of class or status groups.

Second, although an account that emphasizes class interests does capture something important about relations across existing social boundaries, it misses the ways in which social stratification shifted its character in the face of a more general relation between the constitution of the individual and the basis of social order. Behind the changing evaluations of the idleness and labour of the poor we seek changing conceptions of agency which were shared by all of society. The shift that we have been examining

was not simply the imposition of a dominant ideology but a new link between individual agency and order that constituted the modern self as both subject and object of a newly complex and pervasive set of power relations. This shift involved not just the relation between dominant and dominated but the entire social field. The criteria used to conceptualize the relation between the boundaries of society and the source of social order were reframed in terms of this new conception of agency. More than a simple marker of domination, the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor, in the eighteenth century, had become a reflection of a new relation between individual agency and order. Social order was no longer premised on the transcendent axis linking the heavenly and earthly cities. It was based in a new governance of conduct that did not stand over against one class of individuals but reconstituted the very category of 'individual' itself. This will become clearer as we look more closely at the connection between agency and interest.

Power, interest and the constitution of the subject

"Interest" is an important concept in Foucault's analysis of conduct. This dissertation's main contribution has been to elaborate on the micro side of this relation where Foucault tends to emphasize the macro. Foucault links 'interest' clearly to the governance of populations, but he does not clarify to the same extent its relation to processes of individualization. We have been attempting to do so by exploring the theme of temporality.

Gertrude Himmelfarb argues that this period witnessed a change in emphasis from the individual to the state: by the nineteenth century “the locus of moral responsibility had shifted, the state having become symbolically at least, the repository of the national conscience” (1984, 5). We argue here that the shift was not a one-sided one from individual to state but a change in the nature of both poles of this axis. The development that Himmelfarb points to had its corollary in a new governance of individual conduct.

According to Foucault, emerging processes of governmentality gained their purchase on the population through the elaboration of the concept of interest:

La population va apparaître comme sujet de besoins, d'aspirations, mais aussi comme objet entre les mains du gouvernement, consciente en face du gouvernement de ce qu'elle veut et inconsciente, aussi, de ce qu'on lui fait faire. L'intérêt, comme conscience de chacun des individus constituant la population, et l'intérêt, comme intérêt de la population, quels que soient les intérêts et les aspirations individuels de ceux qui la composent, c'est cela qui va être la cible et l'instrument fondamental du gouvernement des populations. (Foucault 1994, 3:652)

For Foucault, interest does not serve as the basis of coercive power, just as the conception of 'will,' whether individual or collective, cannot capture all that is in play in processes of governmentality (Foucault 1980, 188). He does not posit a direct conflict between the interests of disparate social classes nor the ideological elaboration of a bourgeois interest, framed in terms of a work ethic, that mediates indirect forms of domination (Foucault 1980, 204-6). It is, of course, important to note, as Marx did, that "private interest "is tautological given that it refers to an interest that is always already socially constituted, framed by means and conditions established by social relations (Rojek 1985, 44). Foucault, in effect, takes this ambivalence of interest at face value, making interest

central to his account of governmentality, with its two-fold emphasis on the control of individuals and populations.

As target and instrument for the control of populations, interest framed a specific relation between self and society. Interests are always potential, realizable only in and over time. Any relation between self-interest and order, then, necessarily involves a temporalized account of agency, an account of how present circumstances can be acted on in order to bring about a different set of circumstances that are in the interests of a given party.

The concept of interest in the sense we are considering emerged in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. By the late seventeenth century, the interests were elaborated as standing in opposition to the passions. Self-interest was held to be capable of counter-vailing against the irrational passions with their tendency to disorder:

Interest was seen to partake in effect of the better nature of each, as the passion of self-love upgraded and contained by reason, and as reason given direction and force by that passion. The resulting hybrid form of human action was considered exempt from both the destructiveness of passion and the ineffectuality of reason. (Hirschman 1977, 43-44)

The advantages of a world governed by interest were, above all, its predictability and constancy (*Ibid.*, 48ff.). The threat of disorder was the motivating factor behind optimism that the interests could control the passions: “the diffusion of capitalist forms owed much to a . . . desperate search for a way of *avoiding society's ruin*, permanently threatening . . . because of precarious arrangements for internal and external order” (*Ibid.*, 130).

The ascendancy of this view, according to Hirschman, was central to the rise of modern western capitalism, although capitalism itself later came to undermine this view: “the idea

that men pursuing their interests would be forever harmless was decisively given up only when the reality of capitalist development was in full view" (*Ibid.*, 126).

In the eighteenth century, then, individual worldly motivations came to be trusted not to threaten the social and political order. Following Mandeville, private vices were seen to lead to public virtues. Following Locke, conscientious moral action was trusted to be moral even in the absence of absolute certainty. Following Adam Smith, self-love was guided by an Invisible Hand to prompt action supportive of the common good. Two separate notions were involved here: first, that individual interest was congruent with the general interest, second, that individual interests were mutually congruent, forming an "artificial harmony of interests" (Dumont 1977, 37-38, 78). Where Hutcheson held that the division of labour is the cause of exchange, Smith held that exchange arises from self-interest, and, hence, that self-interest is the cause of the division of labour. This interposition of exchange between self-interest and labour illustrated the 'natural harmony of interests' (*Ibid.*, 87). Joseph Townsend argued that

It is hope that must sweeten all our labours. Let a man have no pursuit, no exercise for his hopes and fears, and you may as well take the marrow from his bones, which was designed to supple all his joints. . . . To promote industry and economy, it is necessary that the relief which is given to the poor should be limited and precarious. . . . If by their industry they could procure . . . articles of luxury . . . their desire to obtain these things would be advantageous to the state. . . (1971 [1786] 54, 62)

Self-interest and order were converging.

With Smith, the sphere in which order and self-interested agency were related shifted from politics to economics (Hirschman 1977, 100). This, of course, is correlated with the emergence of economics as a distinct sphere of thought and activity (Dumont

1977). What we are exploring here in this chapter is an ethical aspect of this development, a new conception of agency. Human character, no longer perceived as irremediably corrupt and sinful, was held to be reformable. Good habits, once firmly established, could be trusted to keep the individual in line even in the absence of a transcendent guarantee of order.

Foucault distinguishes between interest and the perceived benefits of self-analysis:

il s'agit là de quelque chose de bien différent de ce qu'on appelle l'intérêt ou l'égoïsme. Il serait intéressant de voir comment, au XVIII^e et au XIX^e siècle, toute une morale de l' « intérêt » a été proposée et inculquée dans la classe bourgeoise -- par opposition sans doute à ces autres arts de soi-même qu'on pouvait trouver dans les milieux artistico-critiques. . . . (1994, 4:629)

Here we supplement Foucault, who examines interest as an element of the governance of populations. Our claim is that interest also played a role in the governance of individual conduct. As one of Foucault's sources notes, the moral reformation of the idle inmates of charitable institutions, the forced labour that sought to reform their character, had no other end than "to make them acknowledge their true interests . . ." (Foucault 1972, 450; my translation). In the eighteenth century, charitable relations with the poor opened a space where economic and moral pressures worked to reform those whose orientation to activity was faulty.

This emphasis on moral regulation was due primarily to the Evangelical philanthropy of the eighteenth century (Andrews 1977, 245ff.). Despite agreeing with the political economists on many issues, Evangelical philanthropists held that the desire for self-improvement, simple recognition of self-interest, was not enough to foster actual self-improvement. Moral regeneration was a necessary prerequisite for effective

reformation of character and, hence, for the improvement of society through linking interest and order:

The virtue and energy of the separate parts of the political body constitute the aggregate of the virtue and energy of the whole, and it is vain to expect, that while individuals are *depraved* and *ignorant*, the state should be *prosperous and enlightened* Let us endeavour to operate by individual kindness and encouragement, by the prospect of acquiring property, and by every other incitement to industry and prudence:--and we shall find that, when the component parts of the body politic become sound and perfect, the state itself will be healthy and thriving. (*The Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor*, cited in Andrews 1977, 247)

Our argument hinges on paying attention to the role of time in the relations between self-interest, exchange, labour and order. Time linked the self-interested activity of individuals to the maintenance of social order. 'Interest' manifested the ambivalence of governmentality, framing not only the governance of populations but that of individuals. Governing individual conduct was based in the correct temporal orientation of individual agency, and this was expressed in terms of habituation.

It is essential here to distinguish the temporal perspective of actors from that of external observers. The social scientist will tend to see the relation between self-interest and exchange as as modelled by an idealized transactional cycle. Given the premise that a rational agent recognizes that engaging in an act of exchange is in her or his interest, that agent will engage in the transaction. Where social relations establish the possibility of an ongoing cycle of such transactions, an ongoing transactional series will result which plays a role in the constitution of social relations. However, as Bourdieu notes, this perspective is incommensurate with the temporally located view of actors:

So long as one only considers practices which, like rituals, derive some of their

most important properties from the fact that they are 'detotalized' by their unfolding in succession, one is liable to neglect those properites of practice that detemporalizing scence has least chance of reconstituting, namely the properties it owes to the fact that it is constructed in time, that time gives it its form, as the order of a succession, and therefore its direction and meaning. This is true of all practices which, like gift exchange or the joust of honour, are defined, at least in the eyes of the agents, as irreversible oriented sequences of relatively unpredictable acts. . . . To reintroduce uncertainty is to reintroduce time, with its rhythm, its orientation and its irreversibility, substituting the dialectic of strategies for the mechanics of the model, but without falling over into the imaginary anthropology of 'rational actor' theories. (1990, 98-99)

The relation between self-interest and exchange, regardless of its potentially idealized character, is susceptible to the vagaries of human nature and worldly circumstances.

Hence, some external factor tending to further the continuation of the transactional series is necessary. As we have seen, the eighteenth-century confidence that self-interested action contributes to the general order of society rested on a belief in the powers of habituation.

Emphasis on habit was an explicit attempt to link self-interest and exchange in an ongoing series that would be constitutive of social order. Specifically, attempts to reform the characters of the idle poor explicitly sought to link industry to interest through the mediating inculcation of habit. In the early eighteenth century, Thomas Cooke argued that workhouses are the best form of charity, and he explicitly linked self-interest, exchange and social order as mediated by a sort of natural law:

each product of Nature seems industrious by a self conscious Law, and the labour of each Part is mutual from the expectation of a Reciprocal return; so that Nature seems to abhor *Idleness*, for the same reason that she fears a Dissolution, and the same natural Motive that perswades us to a self Preservation, will be sure to instruct our Heads to Project, and our Hands to execute the business of our several Callings, that there may be no Scism in the Body thro' any negligence of its Members, but each performing its proper Office, the whole may be supported after

the wise design of Nature. (1702, 7)

Cooke's faith that "a self conscious Law" would assure the relation between self-interest and order because less prominent during the eighteenth century. The concept of interest was an important part of attempts to find a source of order in a society where the effects of religion were neither uniform nor dependable (Hirschman 1977, 15, 129). Habit seemed to offer an effective replacment. Locke, for example, held that custom and repetition served to establish the habits which governed conduct:

Custom settles habits of thinking in the understanding, as well as determining in the will, and of motions in the Body; all of which seems to be but trains of motion in the animal spirits, which once set a going continue on in the same steps they have been used to, which by often treading are worn into a smooth path, and the motion in it becomes easy and as it were Natural. (*Essay* 2.33.6, cited in Tully 1988, 55)

Locke developed these ideas in a 1697 report on poor relief which addressed the habituation of the poor. It was republished in 1790 with a preface that made clear the link between forming industrious habits among the poor and fostering social order:

the object of republishing [Locke's report] is to explain, and, if possible, procure strength and permanency for a system of parochial occonomy, congenial to the sentiments of Mr. Locke, who appears from the whole tenor of his reasoning in that memorial, to be convinced that rewards and punishments, and the mixing habits of industry with principles of religious duties, were the best and surest means of effecting that reformation in the manners of the people, which in those days was judged essential to the strength and safety of the nation; and which in our time, from the great increase of profligacy and dissoluteness of the lower order of people, is become a more pressing object of national concern. (cited in Tully 1988, 68-69)

Habituating the disorderly poor, whether through an appeal to their self-interest or to their fear of punishment, linked agency and order through the mediation of time.

In the late medieval period, the virtue of keeping one's place in a hierarchical

social order had been contrasted to the vice of pursuing self-interest and private gain (Moisa 1982, 168). In the eighteenth century, industriousness based in interest was held to foster social order: "We are all in our several stations properly labourers, and connected together in interest" (*Populousness* 1759, 26).

Idleness threatened to undermine this purchase that interest gave to the reformation of character: "indigence . . . produces crowds of corrupt wretches, so unaccountably blind and stupid, as to forget even the love of self" (*A Letter* 1793, 9). As a result, the formation of proper habits became of central importance for poor relief: the charitable sought to help the poor by "teaching them regular habits, and the desire of profiting by their own industry" (*Society* 1799, 32).

The temporal dimension of these gifts of character reformation is illustrated by the use of money to motivate proper habituation. Hanway explicitly appealed to money's power to transcend all social boundaries by linking self-interested industriousness to the preservation of order:

Money is now become so much the idol of mankind, and particularly in this commercial nation, that it is hardly possible to carry any design into execution in which it has not some share. And with regard to the indigent part of mankind it must be provided in some shape or other. They have no chance of wealth but from industry; but if they can receive any emolument from industry, even in *religion*, the end in view may be happily answered, especially if it keeps up in children the piety they learnt at school, or is instrumental in teaching them what they were deficient in. (Hanway 1766, 112)

Hanway recommended paying the poor in workhouses with money earned from selling the produce of their labour in order to motivate them: "if they will not work, they will have only dinner" (1775, viii).

We have come a long way from Paul's injunction that those who do not work should receive no bread. For Hanway, bread is guaranteed, and money is contingent on labour. Money reaches into the heart of the workhouse where it serves to reform the characters of the poor, motivating the same industrious habits that sustain all endeavours in society by offering the same reward.

As we saw above, in the early seventeenth century Richard Johnson feared money brokers because they threatened the uncontained circulation of all men's. Money was a threat because it was not easily contained within the socially bounded exchange relations that expressed and supported order. The idleness of beggars and masterless men marked a rift between their present uncontained status and a proper place in the social order. Hanway presents us with a different view of money, one premised on a very different view of idleness. For Johnson, the disorderly poor were out of place and money was implicated in the transgression of social boundaries. For Hanway, the poor are out of step and money fuels the temporal process of habituation. The link between industriousness and order had come to be mediated by time and money.

For individual worldly action to have come to play this central role in maintaining the social and moral order, a great shift had occurred, not just from medieval views, but from the views of the Ranter Richard Coppin who held that any "kingdom of gain, hire and self-interest" was the kingdom of the Anti-Christ (Hill 1972, 119).

However, even where self-interest is disparaged, we find an increasing optimism regarding the possibility of self-governance. In 1691 the Baptist Thomas Collier warned of "Bedlam-self" and held that

Self do not only manage all Callings, from the highest to the lowest, but it makes men dishonest therein; self makes Men to Swear and Lye for advantage; Cozen and Cheat for advantage; self makes rich Men to oppress the poor for advantage; and self makes the poor to murmur and repine against, and to filch and steal from the rich. . . . (1691, 62, 36)

However, Collier betrayed a certain optimism despite himself, for he framed the path of self denial in terms of an ongoing activity of the self: "Be sure you acquaint yourselves with the knowledge of Self in all its working at home, endeavour to find it out in yourselves, everyone for himself. . . . [B]e not Cowards not Sluggards in this matter of great concern . . ." (*Ibid.*, 73-74).

Whether or not self-interest was trusted to remain commensurate with the imperatives of order, whether the self was to be given free rein or kept in check, individual agency was saddled with the task. Richard Rogers would have felt himself at home in reading Collier's words, and Jonas Hanway would have recognized the worthy seed of proper habits in this attentiveness, in and over time, to the formation of the self.

Conclusion

This chapter's analysis of the institutional reformation of the habits of the poor has attempted to show two things: that the labour of the industrious poor was held to contribute to social order; and that the reformation of character that guaranteed industriousness was carried out through a proper orientation of agency in and over time. Strongly correlated with these views of the relation between agency and order was a new optimism regarding self-interested activity.

The general conclusion of this dissertation, then, is that eighteenth-century attempts to reform the poor linked the Puritan rationalization of self-formation to the order of the nation. The argument proceeded by examining the discursive and practical elaboration of the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor in early modern England. Above all, changing perceptions of relations between industriousness, idleness, order and disorder framed new techniques of governing conduct.

For the Puritans, a methodical conduct of life marked inclusion among the godly, and this framing of social boundaries in terms of agency was a direct manifestation of God's transcendent order. The invisible city was brought into the world through a correct temporal orientation of agency. God's antecedent gift of agency and calling invoked a continual diligence that wrought the reflection of God's eternal order in the godly church that gathered at the heart of yet separate from the earthly city.

The discourses and practices of eighteenth-century poor relief framed the boundaries and the order of the nation in terms of this same temporally oriented agency. Emerging processes of governmentality made consonant the self-interested activity of individuals and the maintenance of social order. Habituation to industry became the mark of this alignment. New disciplinary mechanisms procured national order with the gifts of character reformation, shaping those at the margins on the basis of a new constitution of the subject. Changing relations of charity and order constituted the modern individual as the bearer of an agency that emerged from and responded to new techniques of governing conduct.

Conclusion

The Devil's Poor and the Invisible City

Characterizations of modernity vary greatly. Different accounts emphasize various characteristics: the increasing importance of individualism(s), secularization, sectorialization, the embedding of culture in the sphere of social domination, the increasing pervasiveness of market relations, shifting conceptions of labour and leisure, or the dominance of an increasingly abstract conception of time. This dissertation has attempted to make a case that a new conception of agency emerged during the early modern period as an integral element of new modes of governing conduct and that this view of agency is characteristic of modernity. In modernity, individual agency, when correctly oriented with respect to time, came to be trusted to foster and maintain social order.

We have found this development to be prominent in the discourses and practices of 'the idle poor.' Charity and poor relief in early modern England explicitly linked issues of idleness and industry to the preservation of social order. As the transcendent element of charitable relations became reoriented to the nation, emphasis shifted from structural characteristics of transactions with the poor to the reformation of their character. The distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor defined the margins of society according to criteria that changed over the early modern period. These changes tell us much. Fear of the threat to order posed by beggars' money and the idleness of the Devil's poor came to be balanced by an optimism that the correct formation of individual agency

would foster social order and that self-interest, exemplified by monetary rewards, could motivate this reformation of character. This process reflected the constitution of individual agency and order as mutually implicated in new modes of governing conduct.

This concluding section develops this claim by suggesting that the modern link between agency and order reformulates the medieval view that worldly order depends on the antecedent order of the heavenly city. This dissertation has argued that, in the trajectory of early modern charity and poor relief, we find changing conceptions of the basis of order: a shift from the transcendent axis of the two cities to the secularized axis of governmentality. This new axis explicitly linked the ordering of conduct to the order of the state. The marginalization of the Devil's poor manifested a new immanentization of order, as criteria for ordering the boundaries of the social whole converged with the temporal asceticism by which each individual was to govern their conduct.

A model of transactional orders

To orient this conclusion, we will draw on a model of exchange relations broad enough both to characterize the emergence of the market economy and to do justice to the importance of religious transactions. Anthropologists Jonathan Parry and Maurice Bloch point to a structural characteristic common to certain classes of exchange relations in societies around the world: an almost universal concern with "the relationship between a cycle of short-term exchange which is the legitimate domain of individual--often acquisitive--activity, and a cycle of long-term exchanges concerned with the reproduction

of the social and cosmic order" (Parry and Bloch 1989, 2). Field studies in Fiji and Malaysia, for example, provide cases where money, which is considered morally ambivalent due to its role in transactions with strangers, "is transformed by a simple symbolic operation into a positively beneficial resource which sustains the ideal order of an unchanging community" (*Ibid.*, 25). In all the cases considered, cultural recognition is given to a cycle of short-term exchanges involving characteristics such as individual gain, luxury items, wage labour and exchange with strangers. Goods from this transactional order are converted into goods proper to and constitutive of a long-term order conceived of as a sacred and enduring hierarchical order which is held to be the source or manifestation of social and cosmic order. This overall framework of exchange relations between two orders places the individual in tension with the source of order:

What we consistently find, then, is a series of procedures by which goods which derive from the short-term cycle are converted into the long-term transactional order. . . . [T]he two cycles are represented as organically essential to each other. This is because their relationship forms the basis for a symbolic resolution of the problem posed by the fact that transcendental social and symbolic structures must both depend on, and negate, the transient individual. (*Ibid.*, 25)¹

Parry and Bloch address this shift in general terms, noting that the one exception to their model appears to be modern western capitalist society. They suggest two possible reasons for this:

- (1) "[T]he values of the short-term order have become elaborated into a theory of long-term reproduction. What our culture (like others) had previously made room

¹ A similar concern also structures Parry and Bloch's earlier study of the relation between the transient individual and the unchanging cosmic order as expressed in funeral rituals (Bloch and Parry 1982; Bloch 1982).

for in a separate and subordinate domain has, in some quarters at least, been turned into a theory of the encompassing order. . . ." (1989, 29)

- (2) "[T]he conceptual shift has been rather less radical, and that what has really happened . . . is rather that Western ideology has so emphasized the distinctiveness of the two cycles that it is then unable to imagine the mechanisms by which they are linked." (*Ibid.*, 29-30)

This dissertation has argued, in effect, that an adequate account of shifting practices of charity in early modern England involves both claim (1) and claim (2). Staking out this middle-ground has involved making a case that the increasing emphasis on the reformation of the poor was a mirror for a reconceptualization of agency. That is, individual self-interested action was no longer relegated to the worldly city and opposed to the heavenly city. It was increasingly seen as essential to the constitution and maintenance of worldly society. In Parry and Bloch's terms, this development elaborated the values of the short-term order into a theory of long-term reproduction. A sharp conceptual distinction between gift and market, especially an isolation of self-interest as a motivation for exchange, is essential to this elaboration, their claim (2).

Parry and Bloch's model allows us to look at changing conceptions of the individual self as agent in relation to exchanges with a transcendent sphere. Changing charitable relations, changing attitudes to the poor, and changing views of idleness and labour in early modern England reflected changing conceptions of social order. Changing views of where and how to draw the line that defines the margins of society implicitly expressed a conception of how the social order is constructed and preserved. The exchange of prayers for alms embodied exchange relations between two transactional orders, heavenly and earthly. On the one hand, the centralization, institutionalization and

monetization of poor relief can be seen in terms of Parry and Bloch's claim (1) above. The gift of charity and the counter-gift of prayer linked worldly and transcendent spheres. This furthered the soteriological interests of the individual (through the intercession of the Christ-like poor) and it fostered the socially binding virtue of *caritas* (supporting and signifying the reciprocal relationship between members of Christ's social body). This legitimation of social boundaries by linking earthly and heavenly cities fits well with Parry and Bloch's model of two transactional orders.

Insofar as early modern charity underwent a process of secularization, however, Parry and Bloch's model seems less relevant. As the exchange of prayers for alms declined and as the poor were increasingly expected to make clearly quantifiable worldly returns of labour, "the values of the short-term order have become elaborated into a theory of long-term reproduction" Parry and Bloch 1989, 29). The money invested in poor relief was explicitly intended to foster worldly order not by engaging in transactional relations with the transcendent realm but by motivating orderly conduct.

This instantiation of Parry and Bloch's claim (1) captures something important about the secularization of early modern charity. However, it does not entirely do justice to the changing natures of the two transactional orders. This claim captures the extent to which money given as charity was increasingly expected to yield a short-term material return rather than one which involved Christ in the cycle of transaction. That is, the short-term sphere does seem to have eclipsed the traditional long-term one. Yet, this transition, involving the greater prominence of market at the expense of gift, was not simply a change in the relative importance of these two types of transaction. It involved a

shift in the nature of both, a shift in the way each mediates between individual agents and social structures. The issue is one of changing conceptualizations and social manifestations of the two transactional orders, not an eclipse of one by the other but a sharing of orbit by the two. At the heart of this transition were changing conceptions of agency and their relation to conceptions of time. We will recap these issues by clarifying the central theme of order.

Order and discontinuity

The processes of rationalization and individualization that we have considered worked themselves out in tension with changing views of the nature of order. *The Order of Things*, Foucault's archaeological analysis of the human sciences, provided a general framework for an analysis of epistemological shifts in conceptions of order. By exploring the theme of social order we have examined the relation between social stratification and the discursive and practical relations of power.

Foucault argued that three radically distinct *épistémès* or discursive formations have succeeded one another in European cultures since the late medieval period (1970). Each conceptual system presents distinct criteria for the forms that knowledge and truth take. Before the seventeenth century, resemblance was central to representation. During the Classical period, up to the end of the eighteenth century, a largely internal play of identity and difference replaced this relation to an external referent of order. Since the late eighteenth century, human recognition of finitude and of the limits of knowledge has

constituted 'man' as both subject and object of the human sciences.²

Foucault's characterization of the shift in conceptions of order in the early seventeenth century is echoed in the present work. Where the sixteenth century had seen order "as a complex, of kinships, resemblances, and affinities," seventeenth-century thought sought order in terms of identity and difference, "the possibility of establishing an ordered succession between things" (Foucault 1970, 54, 57). The late medieval system of resemblances, elaborated in terms of *convenientia, emulation, analogy, and sympathy*, postulated an order of the world that manifested itself in the signs or signatures: "signs . . . were constituted by resemblances which, in turn, necessitated further signs in order to be recognized" (*Ibid.*, 172). Thus the shape of plants revealed their medicinal uses, and marks on the body revealed one's emulation of Mars or Saturn (*Ibid.*, 17-28). These views underlie the fundamental role that the figure of the microcosm played in the sixteenth century (*Ibid.*, 30).

We have found that early modern discourses and practices concerning the undeserving poor reveal analogous developments, though with a less marked discontinuity. We considered shifts in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in the perceived relation between the disorderly poor and social order and in associated

²To the extent that Foucault implied that the play of rules he had found *determined* the discursive facts of their respective cultures, he ran into methodological difficulties (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983, 79ff.). However, if we follow Foucault's own methodological prescription and bracket questions of causality, his account is descriptively useful.

practices of charity and poor relief. We traced the emergence through the eighteenth century of a new sense of agency central to later developments. Foucault makes a better case for a radical discontinuity in the early seventeenth century than at the end of the eighteenth century: "Foucault's analysis of the Classical Age . . . reveals, in spite of his insistence on the cataclysmic break between the Age of Representation and the Age of Man, a deep continuity with the present" (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983, 99). This dissertation has made a parallel case that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are formative for modernity.

The role of Foucault's work in the present argument has not been that of providing substantive historical characterizations to serve as premises. Foucault's schema of three discursive formations, Renaissance, Classical, and Modern, along with the periodizations presented in his other works, provided orienting insights and added some plausibility to the present work through resonance with it. However, this dissertation offers independent evidence for broad shifts in conceptions of self and society.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault develops a social parallel to this epistemological discontinuity between principles of order. He elaborates a contrast between exclusion or exile, on the one hand, and regulation or discipline on the other. He illustrates this with a contrast between leprosy and the plague:

If it is true that the leper gave rise to rituals of exclusion, which to a certain extent provided the model for and general form of the great Confinement, then the plague gave rise to disciplinary projects. Rather than the massive, binary division between one set of people and another, it called for multiple separations, individualizing distributions, an organization in depth of surveillance and control, an intensification and a ramification and power. . . . The leper and his separation; the plague and its segmentations. The first is marked; the second analyzed and

distributed. (1979, 198)

Foucault argues that these two projects came together in the disciplinary institutions of the nineteenth century, in asylums, penitentiaries, schools and hospitals. The two were complementary modes of governing individuals and populations. We can look to Foucault's analysis here for an elaboration of the individualizing aspect of processes of governmentality:

all the authorities exercising individual control function according to a double mode; that of binary division (mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal); and that of coercive assignment, of differential distribution (who he is; where he must be; how he is to be characterized; how he is to be recognized; how a constant surveillance is to be exercised over him in an individual way, etc.). (1979, 199)

The developments we have explored in this dissertation can be considered as a merging of these two projects.

We have complemented Foucault's account in two ways. First, we found that a central point at which these new disciplinary techniques gained a purchase on individuals was the temporal orientation of agency. Moreover, the governance of conduct did not simply act on individual actions at this point but constituted individuals as amenable to this sort of control. The binary division we were concerned with is that between the deserving and undeserving poor. We explored the complex interrelations between the ways that agency functioned as the criterion of this exclusion and as the *point d'appui* for processes of analysis and distribution that manifested themselves in the discourses and practices of the idle poor. The undeserving poor were above all the idle poor, and curbing their idleness became a central objective of early modern poor relief. Guided by this recognition, we explored the issues of industry and idleness, reformation and

habituation. The theme of time has played a central role because time came to mediate the orientation and governance of conduct.

The second point at which we complemented Foucault's account is regarding the relation between social stratification and social order. We attempted to make a case that the historically contingent boundary between deserving and undeserving poor reflected problematizations of the fundamental basis of social order. With the greater vulnerability of status boundaries in the urban and national society of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, attempts to contain 'masterless men' and 'idle rogues' did not simply shore up existing social boundaries. They formed part of a series of relations that reconceived and reconstituted the margins of society in new terms. These new criteria informed a more general elaboration of self and society through new modes of governing conduct.

Modernity and the two cities

At the heart of this development was a new relation between interest and order. We can clarify this by considering the erosion of the medieval emphasis on the transcendent axis of social order and the emergence of state-centred views in the early modern period.

In the medieval period, and extending into the sixteenth century, social order bore the signature of its resemblance to a more fundamental order. This was framed in terms of Augustine's view of two cities, heavenly and earthly, godly and ungodly, visible and invisible. This conceptual framework had a profound effect on medieval society.

However, in early modern Europe, there was a shift away from a sharp separation of the two cities. In effect, the two merged or became superimposed.

According to Augustine's *City of God*, the earthly city is oriented to love of self and the heavenly city to love of God. Christians do not enter the heavenly city only after death: "the city of the saints is above, although here below it begets citizens . . . [each a] stranger to this world" (Augustine 1952, section 15.1). Nor can the earthly city be said to be entirely evil, for concord is possible. Despite its faulty orientation, the earthly city is not the contrary of the heavenly city: "even what is perverted must of necessity be in harmony with, and in dependence on, and in some part of the order of things, for otherwise it would have no existence at all" (*Ibid.*, 19.12).

The status of self-interested action in this schema is clear: the love of self is of the earthly city. Even virtues become vices if they are not oriented by a primary love of God. In a telling metaphor, Augustine compares the order of the earthly city to that of an embalmed body, bereft of life but with a "kind of peace" preventing decay (*Ibid.*, 19.12). The most that self-interested action can achieve is an earthly peace that is not true life but at most a delay of corruption. The rational soul's peace, on the other hand, is harmony of knowledge and action (*Ibid.*, 19.13). Self-interested action, dissonant with the knowledge of God, cannot lead to true peace or order.

Augustine's separation of the two cities underwent an important transition in the early Middle Ages as the Church began increasingly to claim secular power: as "the Church becomes more worldly, conversely the political realm is made to participate in absolute, universalist values" (Dumont 1985, 111). That is, although the two cities

remained clearly distinguished in conceptual terms, a structural parallel emerged. The Church, as heavenly city on earth, brought one facet of the transcendent to the worldly level, thus also taking a step toward sacralizing the earthly city. By institutionalizing a hierarchical order that paralleled secular institutions, the Church brought the two cities closer together.

During the thirteenth century, sparked to some extent by the translation of Aristotle's *Politics*, new views of political structure emerged, emphasizing not its reflection of a divine hierarchy but its natural derivation from the basic components of human community (Barber 1992, 433-34). Medieval formulations of the organic metaphor, in which society is portrayed as a body, played a role in this development. John of Salisbury, for example, writing in the twelfth century, held that a well organized political community resembles a healthy human body: the priesthood is the soul and guides; the king is head and rules; the senate is the heart and originates good and bad works; judges and governors are the sense organs; soldiers and officials are the hands; treasurers and record keepers are the stomach and intestines; and peasants, bound to the soil, are the feet (Nederman and Forhan 1993, 38-39).³ The use of the organic metaphor

³ Medieval thinkers used a number of terms, including *status*, *honor*, *ordo*, *gradus* and *dignitas*, to mark social boundaries (Black 1992, 16). In addition, a number of terms were commonly used for units of government including *universitas*, *corpus*, *civitas*, *dominium*, *provincia*, *ducatus*, and *commune*. The first three of these could be used for any state as well as for cities, monasteries, villages, guilds etc. (*Ibid.*, 14). *Corpus* was commonly used, but by the thirteenth century it implied no deliberate comparison between society

remained prominent into the early modern period: according to a clergyman in 1684, "The Poor are the Hands and Feet of the Body Politick . . ." (cited in Malcolmson 1981, 13). However, by this time, new practices had emerged which attempted to prompt these members to make a contribution to the social order. This development reflected a very different conception of order.

As is clear in John of Salisbury's views, medieval society was very concerned with distinguishing ranks and gradations within itself. The organic metaphor was a conservative one, reflecting and reinforcing this hierarchical structuring of society (cf. Tawney 1963, 28). However, it also emphasized the harmonious interrelations between the parts of the body politic: *fraternitas* and *caritas* were held to be essential to the proper functioning of society. The organic metaphor was especially fruitful because it framed these two central concerns of medieval political thought. 'Body' expressed a concern with both harmonious interrelations between members and hierarchy within a structured whole. Hence, the medieval use of the metaphor of the body politic points not just to a certain view of society but to a framework within which varying political views were formulated and discussed (cf. Nederman and Forhan 1993, 230). The full spectrum of views concerning the social manifestations of the fundamental order of God's creation was framed by this metaphor.

More specific to our concerns, the worldly city was coming to be seen as a source

and the human body (*Ibid.*, 15). The metaphor served to emphasize a number of important aspects of society, especially the relationship between component members and a whole that shared a common interest, purpose and will.

of order itself:

By the thirteenth century this idea meshed with the increasing interest in 'natural' man which can be seen in both philosophy and art. The way, therefore, had already been prepared for a justification for monarchical or city-states as forces for positive good rather than simply regrettable necessities, a changing concept of the earthly world which contrasts with the more static view of the Ptolemaic universe beyond. (Barber 1992, 434)

Still framed by the versatile organic metaphor, the earthly city was coming to be seen as possessing an earthly order, good in its own way and less directly reflecting the heavenly city.

Charity was integrally related to order in late medieval and early modern Europe. This dissertation has asked not 'how is order constituted and maintained?' but 'what leads to and follows from the fact that order is conceived of in just this way?' Religious aspects of charity were central to changing relations between social boundaries, order and agency in early modern England. If charity can be considered an exchange relation between donors and recipients, it would be misleading to apply modern materialistic models of exchange which ignore many religiously significant elements of such transitions.

This is not to suggest, however, that a temporal orientation of agency simply replaced the function of the transcendent transaction of charity as a source of order. This functionalist claim would presuppose that 'order' refers to something constant in society. This view would produce explanations of social phenomena in relation to ahistorical conceptions of order and disorder. This dissertation makes a case for a different sort of claim: its genealogy of idleness has shown that changing views of disorder reveal very different views of order. All the key concepts that have been considered shifted their

meanings and their relations to each other over the period studied. Late medieval and early modern conceptions of 'charity,' 'order,' 'idleness,' 'undeserving,' 'interest' and other terms were too fluid to serve as the basis of a functionalist or structuralist argument. Instead, we have examined the discourses, practices and social effects of charity in order to trace the historically contingent trajectory of their interrelations in early modern England.

The central claim of this dissertation has been that the relation between the individual and the basis of social order was reconceived in early modern England. Order came to be seen as rooted in the governance of individual conduct, in and through time, to an originary gift of agency. As this development became secularized, the ethical and temporal antecedence of the heavenly city was replaced by the antecedence of the state, whose efforts to reform the character of the poor exemplified this new governance of conduct. The idleness of the devil's poor was held to be a source of disorder throughout late medieval and early modern England. The nature of this threat to order was reconceived as the industriousness of the poor, a boon of the gifts of character reformation, came to be seen as a source of order. The margins of society and social order were drawn in terms of the character of human conduct. Godly diligence and constancy became oriented to the worldly coin of interest. The devil's poor bounded the immanentization of the invisible city. In Weber's terms, the Puritan rationalization of the conduct of life was secularized, universalized and routinized; in Foucault's terms, the governance of individual conduct converged with the early modern state's emerging emphasis on the control of populations.

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