

Time, Habit, and Agency in English Puritanism

Steven Engler

Dept. of Humanities, Mount Royal College, 4825 Mount Royal Gate SW,
Calgary, AB, T3E 6K6, Canada;

Visiting Research Professor (2005-2007), Programa de Estudos Pós-Graduados em
Ciências da Religião, Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo

E-mail: sjengler@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper attempts to fill in a dimension of discussions of religious relations between memory and the body, time and agency, habituation and social control. Analyzing the works of seventeenth-century divine Richard Rogers, I distinguish two ways of attending to time: amount of time spent well, and continuity of attention. For Rogers, lapses in memory and moment of idleness are gaps through which Satan snares the unwary; the godly must foster correct habits “at all times.” The case of English Puritanism underlines the central role that time plays in the formation of correctly habituated human activity. It points to a key site at which religious ideas and practices gain leverage over human agency. It suggests further that modernity is distinguished by the more effective means of habituation fostered by highly motivated and consistent attentiveness to time. This distinction goes beyond Weber and other work on the Protestant ethic thesis and could inform further empirical work in the area.

Keywords

agency, habituation, temporality, modernity, Puritanism, Weber, Protestant ethic, poor relief, early modern England

There is an important distinction at the heart of “the Protestant work-ethic” that Weber, and others since, did not make clear, a distinction between two senses of using time wisely: the quantity issue of how much time one spends on task; and the quality issue of consistent and constant attentiveness. I argue that the latter was a distinctive contribution of English Puritanism.¹ This paper

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented in the History of Christianity Section of the American Academy of Religion at the annual meeting in Atlanta in 2003. It is a revision of elements of my unpublished doctoral dissertation: *The Devil's Poor and the Invisible City: Religion, Agency, and Order in Early Modern England* (Concordia University, 1999; supervised by Michel Despland).

uses historical evidence to underline an important conceptual distinction, one that is lacking in relevant work in the area, from Weber's *Protestant Ethic* to the present.

The proposed distinction helps clarify discussions of religious relations between memory and the body, time and agency, habituation and social control. Stephen Turner's critique of the concept of "practices" highlights the difficulty of accounting for their transmission or reproduction (1994). His critique of Pierre Bourdieu, for example, notes that the concept of *habitus* is not helpful without a fuller account of how embodied dispositions are passed on. Paul Connerton argues that memory is a cultural rather than individual faculty and is transmitted through embodied practices, above all ritual (1989). Connerton's account, though fuller than Bourdieu's, is still too sketchy on this key issue: what lies at the heart of processes of habituation?

What is missing is an account of time as a dimension of habituation. The concepts of repetition, rehearsal, restitution, reproduction, and transmission all presuppose temporality. As Bourdieu notes, we find different temporalities in different social and cultural contexts (2000: 224). In this light, I argue that English Puritanism developed a distinctly modern form of habituation. Temporal beliefs and norms resulted in the development of practices intended to inculcate a specific sense of using time well. If we define "agency" in general terms as the nature, capacity, preconditions and limitations of intentional human activity, then this early modern religious development reframed agency, making human activity more amenable at first to internal, and later external, control.

Weber famously noted that a key characteristic of the "Protestant ethic" was the importance placed on spending time wisely "Waste of time is . . . the first and in principle the deadliest of sins. . . . [Time] is infinitely valuable because every hour lost is lost to labour for the glory of God" (1958: 157-58). On this view, the proper use of time was a central element of Puritanism's contribution to modernity. However, this fails to distinguish two ways of attending to time, both of which are discernable in early modern religious writings. The first emphasized the *amount* of time spent well (i.e., "what proportion of each day was spent in godly tasks?"). The second emphasized *continuity* of attention (i.e., "were there any lapses of diligence in the godly use of time?").

In order to substantiate my claim that attentiveness to the quality, not quantity, of spending time well was a characteristic of Puritan attitudes toward agency, I analyze the printed works and private journal of seventeenth-century divine Richard Rogers. After making brief comparisons and contrasts with contemporary religious writers, both Puritan and Anglican, I will conclude that this constituted the distinctive contribution of Puritan modes of habitu-

ation. In order to suggest the historical trajectory of this mode of habituation, its shift from internal to external norm, I will point briefly to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century practices of forming industrious habits in the poor. Poor relief practices institutionalized this same relation between temporality and habituation. Direct institutional impact of Puritans is clear in many cases. The emphasis on constancy of habituation, on forming industrious habits, on laying a foundation of correctly oriented agency in the memories of poor children, becomes prominent only after this period. This formation of self-governance in and over time, became an important site at which institutional mechanisms, secular and religious, were able to gain leverage over individual human agency.

Puritans, Anglicans and the Idle Poor

Any discussion of Weber that takes the term “Protestant” in a generic sense is a non-starter (Bouma 1973, 152). The term “Puritan” points to the relevant sub-group in early-modern England, but it is problematic. In this section I review problems with the conceptual opposition between “Puritans” and “Anglicans” in order to propose, in the following section, that attitudes to agency can serve as a distinguishing characteristic.

Over the past forty years, historians such as Patrick Collinson and Peter Lake have made it clear that Puritanism cannot be defined simply in terms of opposition to a conformist mainstream (Collinson 1967, 1982, 1987, 1988; 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 in fact use these and other terms to distinguish zealous from more lukewarm Protestants, with varying characterizations on both sides. This does not provide an entirely tidy division, given that not all zealous Puritans were nonconformists and that “conformity” was itself a somewhat fluid concept at the time, yet the approach yields useful leverage,

granted 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 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.

Discussions and practices of poor relief are a valuable forum for attempting to characterize early modern attitudes toward agency and habituation.² Weber set the tone in non-specialist circles. On the one hand, he noted that, in general terms, Puritans held similar attitudes to the poor as other English Christians. He notes that "even the Anglican social ethic" was harsh toward begging and 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" (Weber 1958: 177-178). On the other hand, Weber suggested that the Puritans were especially harsh on the poor and especially concerned to correct their errant ways, above all by combating their sinful tendency to idleness. Other scholars followed his lead on this point (Tawney 1963: 210ff.; Hill 1952; Wrightson and Levine 1979).

The first point is solid, but the second 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: for the most part, Anglicans and Puritans agreed on how to address the problem of the poor (Todd 1987: 247ff.; Slack 1988: 26; Tronrud 1985; Spufford 1985). 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. 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 (Todd 1987). 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 (Todd 1987; 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

² In the next paragraphs, I will refer to "Puritans" and "Anglicans" in a manner that reflect the secondary sources under discussion, before proceeding, in the following section, to focus on a clear criterion of distinction, one central to this paper's argument.

benefits of industry to the commonwealth (Todd 1987: 120ff.). Humanist reformers placed discipline and the reform of idleness at the heart of their schemes of poor relief.

Hence, the claim that the Puritans had a unique attitude toward the importance of correctly oriented worldly activity (i.e., agency purged of idleness) 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, for example, in the late medieval uses of the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor.³ In addition, 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.). It is necessary to look elsewhere for a significant characteristic differentiating Puritans and Anglican views of views of time, work, idleness, and agency. After clarifying a distinctly Puritan attitude toward the use of time, I will conclude below by suggesting that Weber and others were not wrong to point to poor relief as a key marker of the diffusion of the Protestant work-ethic, just insufficiently precise.

Puritans and Anglicans were distinguished by their views of agency—of the extent to which action constitutes obedience to God’s order. Many of their most ardent debates centred on the scope of *adiaphora*, of “things indifferent,” that is, of minor issues on which Christians might disagree (ritual form was a frequent example) as opposed to core issues where no compromise was possible (above all justification by faith).

A key aspect of the English debates was the issue of how much of human activity was “indifferent.” For Anglicans, this sphere was very broad and subject to regulation by worldly authorities. 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*

³ This distinction, drawing on biblical roots, became a common one, in theory and practice, from the twelfth century (Coleman 1988, 627ff.; Dyer 1989, 237-39). Its importance grew during the labour shortages caused by the Black Death in the late fourteenth century, and, it took on an unprecedented importance in early modern Europe (Lis and Soly 1979, 51; Beier 1985, 109; Todd 1987, 135; Slack 1988, 9).

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).

The issue of *adiaphora* “was where the geological fault-line between Anglicanism and Nonconformity, Church and Chapel, began” (Collinson 1987: 16).⁴ This tension with Anglican views reflected a characteristic distinction regarding the moral and religious evaluation of human action. In overly stark terms, all human action was “indifferent” to Anglicans and none to Puritans; for Anglicans, agency was ordered by worldly authority, and, for Puritans, agency was a fundamental index of one’s obedience to God’s order.

The debate over *adiaphora* points to Puritan concerns with social control—especially 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 (e.g., 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 instrument of social control and self-advancement” (1988: 56).⁵ 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 confrontation of “startlingly different moral economies,” in which 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. . . . But if this was a kind of secularisation, it paradoxically involved

⁴ On the debate between Whitgift and Cartwright see Lake 1988.

⁵ As Margaret Spufford has argued, we must be cautious with the concept of social control here: “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).

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... (Collinson 1988: 143, 54-55; 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. I will argue this claim by examining the writings of a representative Puritan.

The Frame of a Godly Life: Richard Rogers' *Seven Treatises*

An attentiveness to time as the measure of godly activity is clear in the works of the Puritan minister 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 1630.⁶ 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 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 gathering 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 . . . (Rogers 1603: 314, 316).

⁶ The full title of the book characterizes it 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 every day.*

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 subtler link between time and human activity, one that influenced the temporal orientation of agency characteristic of modernity and one that is prominent specifically in the work of Puritans.

According to Rogers, Christians must pay constant attention to their actions and their time. *Seven Treatises* frequently exhorts the godly to 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. This is clear 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 the 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[tion], and to loath that detestable bayt which so much snareth” (1966: 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" (1966: 83). On August 30, he wrote: "The first of these two weekes, being abroad and so unsetled at my book, . . . the time was not filled with frutes of christian[ity] . . ." (1966: 85). Time spent unsettled and unable to write weighed heavily on Rogers' mind.

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 . . ." (1603: 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 look 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: sig. B3r; 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 beleeuer, 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 every 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.

Rogers' concern that Christians practice diligence "alwaies and every 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" (1966: 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 selves this way..." (1966: 66; cf. 71, 90). Idleness is an especially threatening cause of wasted time. In this context, Rogers contrasts present time (the focus of the sinful) and future time (the godly end of the sanctified):

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.

This contrast between present and future time is correlated with that between discontinuous and continuous action. Rogers, in the above passage, 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 beleueer is a continuall proceeding in the departing from euill, and endeououring after duties... : and a setled course in repentance, and a constant walking with God, and not an idle, or vncertaine stumbling vpon some good actions..." (1603: 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 every part of this whole time; and consequently every day, and throughout the day... (1603: 298, citing 1 Peter 1:17). Chris-*

tian duty is to be carried out “from time to time,” a phrase that meant for Rogers not “on occasion” but “constantly” (1603: 157, 159, 383). This underlines a concern not with times of godly orientation but with linking 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 bring 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 fruitfully” (1966: 69). 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 unsettle me” (1966: 69). 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” (1603: 89).

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 . . .)” (1603: 89). 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. 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 God’s children with “deadly wounds” and “fierie darts” (1603: 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 Downname 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).

Rogers uses a striking metaphor, reflecting his concern with time, to describe the effect of sinful wandering. Rogers’ use of this metaphor of the “frame,” indicates 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, 1587.⁷ This entry gives us a clear impression of the purpose he saw in keeping his journal:

And here in these 2 months I have more particu[larly] set downe things—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 things 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).

Rogers calls memory into play in the task of directing the readers of his *Seven Treatises* as well. He advises them to first “reade the contents of it briefly set

⁷ 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. Perhaps this initial reference to his book project was written at the same time that he wrote this first entry where he uses the concept of the “frame.”

downe in the table before the booke, to helpe his memorie . . ." (1603: sig. B3r). 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 midst 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 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.

The Legacy of Constancy

It is one thing to offer historical evidence for a distinct attitude toward the relation between time and agency in the writings of Puritan divines. It is something else to support the claim that this had any long-lasting impact. Early in this paper, I noted that Weber overstated the uniqueness of Puritan critiques of the idleness of the poor, but that a different aspect poor relief remains a key marker of the diffusion of the Protestant ethic. Specifically, poor relief went through a dramatic transition from charity, the gift of alms, to the formation

of industrious habits, what E.P. Thompson called “the gifts of character-reformation” (1967: 94). As embodied in the workhouses and Houses of Industry, new attitudes to time and labour, fostered in part by industrialization, were intended to help the poor by forming the habit of constant, industrious agency. This was intended to help them help themselves, thus contributing to the preservation of order and the prosperity of the nation.

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 (Laqueur 1976: 227). Throughout the eighteenth century, attitudes to the importance of continual diligence to time echoed 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). 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 that cast labour and industry in secondary or even antagonistic roles. Labour and industry were not seen as valuable in themselves; rather, they 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... (Scott 1673: 2).

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).

The Puritian emphasis on continuity of agency, on avoiding moments of idleness, provided leverage for the temporal formation of character. The reformation of faulty agency was conducted in and through time, and the elaboration of this development, its embodiment in the institutional apparatus of poor relief, for example, was closely linked to changing conceptions of time more generally. Cultural anthropology and social theory have 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; Adam 1990).

The historical trajectory of changing conceptions of time did not begin with the industrial evolution, of course. 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 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 was a crucial moment in fostering a sense of time that uniformly measured activity rather than being a result of it (Thompson 1967). The trajectory of increasing external regularization of time formed an essential backdrop to the convergence between Puritan concerns to spend time wisely

(i.e., with continuity of agency) and institutional mechanisms for the temporal control of human activity. Modernity has been characterized in terms of various temporal characteristics that reflect this external regularization: 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" (Giddens 1981: 90; cf. Postone 1993, 215). In this light, the distinction we find in the work of Richard Rogers and other Puritan writers—between the quantity of time spent engaged in worthwhile activities and the quality of continuous time on task—adds an important dimension to "the 'marriage of convenience' between puritanism and capitalism and their concomitant socialisations towards time-thrift and time-discipline" (Adams 1990: 113).

Whether the distinction between quantitative and qualitative attitudes to the relation between time and agency has had a significant impact remains an open empirical question. But the distinction is significant in conceptual terms and, if the writings of Puritan divines like Richard Rogers are to be trusted, in psychological terms as well. At the very least, this distinction raises the possibility of a more nuanced account of how an emphasis on using time well results in certain characteristics of economic behaviour. For example, the conclusion that continuity of activity is an element of "the Protestant ethic" is often drawn without this distinction being taken into account. To give one instance, a sociological study of "The Changing Protestant Ethic" in twentieth-century America summarizes Weber as holding that: "A man was ascetic in his use of time... The early Protestant made "waste of time" one of the deadliest of sins... Continuous, systematic-rational, in short-economic behavior thus became a by-product of this orientation" (Goldstein and Eichhorn 1961: 558).

Further specifying the range of attitudes toward time could contribute to several areas of research. It would help clarify this aspect of the alleged historical roots of modern western attitudes to time and agency, as well as a range of current social phenomena, e.g., the nature of the "obligation norm" in relations between work and leisure (Harpaz and Snir 2002) and the "feelings of time squeeze, harried leisure... and a constant attachment to work" that characterize the "externalization of work" today (Foley and McGillivray 2000: 178). It would also be a valuable variable to include in cross-cultural studies of leisure, where this sort of temporal attitude to agency has not been taken into

account (e.g., Chick 1998a). The distinction between quantitative and qualitative attitudes to the relation between time and agency would contribute to a recent research focus that is emerging in the anthropology of leisure: “to look at how free time is used, against a backdrop of cultural complexity, rather than just how much of it is available” (Chick 1998b, 235).

More specifically, a closer attention to the relation between time and agency would allow for more nuanced studies of religious beliefs, attitudes and motivations regarding work and leisure. Neither of the two most influential attempts to operationalize the Weber thesis addresses the distinction I have put forward in this paper. Blood’s Protestant Ethic Scale (1969) includes one more general question regarding the use of time: “Wasting time is as bad as wasting money.” Mirels and Garrett’s Protestant Ethic Scale (1971) includes three more general questions: “Most people spend too much time in unprofitable amusements”; “Our society would have fewer problems if people had less leisure time”; and “Life would be more meaningful if we had more leisure time.”⁸ The vagueness of these questions with respect to relations between time and agency reflects Weber accurately in its failure to capture the distinction I have argued for here. However, one of the implications of this distinction is the possibility of fine-tuning empirical studies of “the Protestant work-ethic,” of operationalizing distinct temporal attitudes to agency.

Work in the area has not taken the difference between these two attitudes to time into account. Sociological studies of the “Protestant work ethic” or “PWE” use terms that are not specific enough to capture these attitudes: “The PWE is a value system that stresses the moral value of work, self-discipline, and individual responsibility in forming a way to improve one’s economic well-being” (Cokley et al. 2007: 76). The ethic is characterized by “a strong belief in hard work, a high motivation to succeed economically and a willingness to forego immediate pleasures to attain long-term goals” (Isonio and Garza 1987: 414). Paying closer attention to attitudes to time and agency could potentially add significant variable to the mixed results of empirical studies of the Protestant ethic thesis (e.g., Chusmir and Koberg 1988), especially in the light of work that characterizes the places of religion in the world today in terms of differing senses of temporality (Engler 2003).

⁸ For examples and literature reviews of the use of Blood’s scale, see Mudrack 1992; for Mirels and Garrett’s see Cokley et al. 2007.

Conclusion

The writings of Richard Rogers express a new attitude to time. As a corollary of the Puritan sanctification of everyday life, time became sanctified in a specific way. Rogers idealizes an unattainable transcendent constancy of rightly oriented activity. His concern was more than that pointed to by Weber and others (i.e., to waste as little time as possible, so that the sum of pluses and minuses in God's tabulation of his activity would come out in his favour). For Rogers, any straying from the constant daily watchfulness that was to last the rest of his earthly life was an opening for the devil's intervention. He was concerned with quality not quantity, and the specific quality is that of continuity. Rogers strove for a perfect use of time, and he advised his readers to do the same. Both his writing of the *Seven Treatises* and his audience's reading of it were intended to help govern the conduct of individuals, to habituate agency, and thus to strengthen the invisible church into the world.

Rogers advocated the reformation of character, but he did not have a confidence in human nature that would allow him to trust in the power of good habits to keep people from straying. This more optimistic view of human abilities to rightly orient agency through an attentiveness to time has its roots, but only 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. The flowering of these roots of constancy came with the institutionalization of these relations between time and agency, for example in the poor relief programs of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Tom Webster has analyzed 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" (Webster 1996: 48, 50).

They also carry on a dialogue with memory. Extending these insights into Puritan self-construction involves emphasizing the temporal dimension of this diligent examination of the self.

As many historians have noted, 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. 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). It was a new conception of agency, governed and oriented by time, both reflecting and helping to reify God's order in the world. The distinction proposed in this paper helps to clarify the nature of this sixteenth-century contribution to modernity, and it offers a potential tool for further empirical studies that draw on Weber's classic thesis.

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