The Sociologist from Marienbad:
Werner Stark between Catholicism and Social Science

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Abstract: This paper examines the life and career of the prominent sociologist Werner Stark (1909–1985), born and raised in Marienbad, Bohemia, and after 1918 in the multi-ethnic state of Czechoslovakia. As a prolific and wide-ranging scholar whose many works failed to find an enduring place in American sociology, Stark is a prime example of academic marginalisation. The authors analyse Stark's major contributions from the standpoint of the sociology of knowledge. They argue that his ideas regarding human nature, the need for social discipline, and the desirability of community were rooted in a pervasive biographical marginality that found resolution in his conversion to Catholicism. In turn, these ideas reinforced the marginality from which they emerged. The reception of Stark's work in the United States was governed by a perceived incompatibility of his outlook with the assumptions and goals of his American audience. In particular, Stark offered an explicitly value-directed sociology, one which asserted the importance of social order, individual discipline, and universal community, at a time (the 1960s and 1970s) when the field sought to maintain its credibility as an objective scientific discipline in the face of growing challenges from sociologists and non-sociologists alike. Stark's American colleagues focused on aspects of his work that were incompatible with their own cultural and disciplinary orientations and this obscured the full range of his achievements, especially his analyses which anticipated contemporary sociological work.
Keywords: Werner Stark, marginalisation, religion, culture, social bond, values, sociology of knowledge, Catholicism
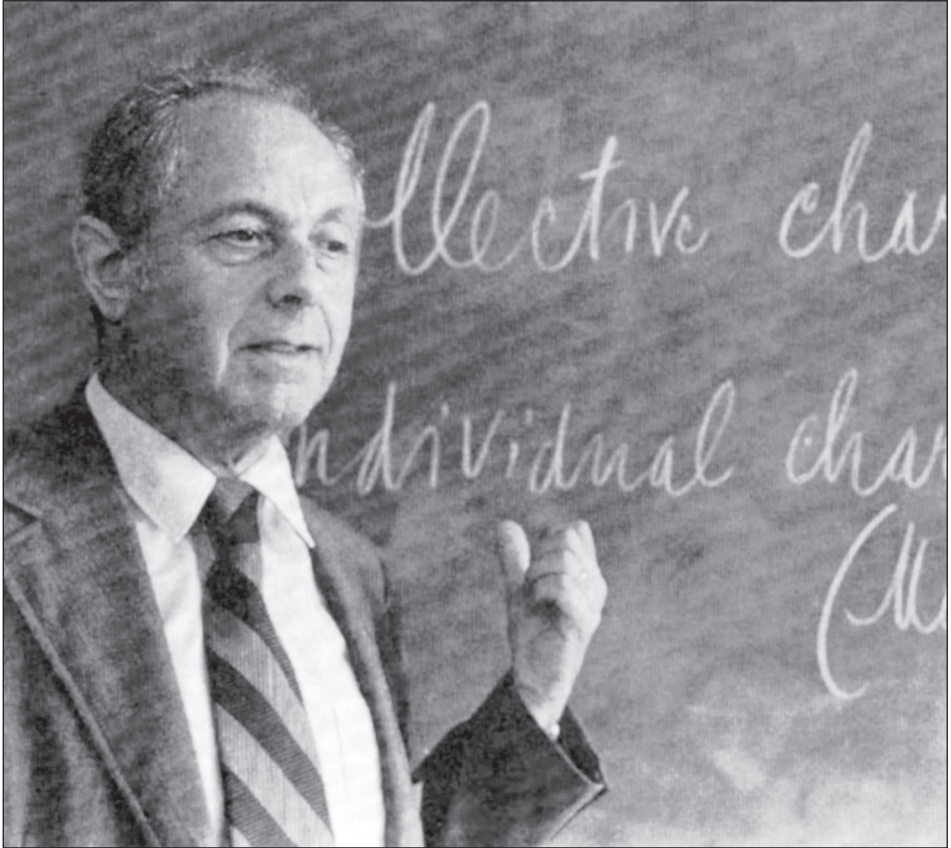
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Introduction

The sociologist Werner Stark (1909–1985), born and raised in Marienbad, Bohemia, and after 1918 in the multi-ethnic state of Czechoslovakia, was one of the most prolific and wide-ranging scholars that the field has ever known. In his fifty-year career, Stark contributed to the areas of economics, sociology of knowledge, sociology of religion, sociological theory, and cultural sociology, and published more than twenty monographs, some of which were translated into several languages, many edited works, and seventy-five articles in scientific journals and collected editions. His works have been described as 'breathtaking' in their historical scope alone; added to that is a command of philosophy, theology, law, economics, art, literature, and music rarely found among contemporary scholars [Leonard, Strasser and Westhues 1993: 2–3]. He was, as the Germans would say, one of the last *Gelehrten*, scholars, of academia whose areas of concentration went far beyond sociology.

Stark's achievements were many. In his important contribution to the sociology of knowledge, originally published in 1958, Stark [1991] made a strong case for the reorientation of the field away from the unmasking of ideologies and toward the analysis of the social genesis of ideas. He also noted the affinities between the sociology of knowledge and pragmatist philosophy, thus drawing together European and American intellectual traditions [McCarthy 1991]. In his five-volume study of Christendom, Stark departed from the dichotomous, 'church-sect' conceptualisation of Ernst Troeltsch and Max Weber by introducing the concept of the universal church, one that has the ability to renew itself by absorbing any revolutionary tendencies that develop within it [Stark 1966: 4; 1967b; 1975: 12]. His concept of 'collective charisma' and his treatment of socially structured emotional release spurred further development by sociologists [cf. Gresham 2003; McCarthy and Engel 1989]. Finally, Stark's studies, especially *The Sociology of Religion*, but also *The Sociology of Knowledge* and *The Social Bond*, may be regarded as forerunners of the current 'cultural' emphasis in sociology, where culture is seen less as a separate domain of values and their accompanying norms and symbols than as pervasive structures of meaning that, as Geertz [2000: 312] argues, give shape to experience.

At the time of his death in 1985, Stark was working on the sixth volume of his most ambitious project, *The Social Bond: An Investigation into the Bases of Lawabidingness* [Stark 1976b–1987b], in an attempt to address the central issue that had also preoccupied the founders of sociology: 'Behind the problems of society, large and small, there looms, after all, *the* problem of society—the question why and how it is that societies cohere and continue even though they are but multiplicities of men, and indeed of men into whom nature has laid a goodly measure of self-regard.' [Stark 1976b: vii] To his dismay, the work attracted relatively little notice from his American colleagues. Compared to the first three volumes of *The Social Bond*, the comparable volumes of his earlier treatise, *The Sociology of Religion* [1966–1972], had garnered three times as many book reviews. Stark found

Werner Stark at Fordham in the 1970s. © Fordham University

himself in the unaccustomed and uncomfortable position of having to request reviews from academic journals and newspapers. Though he knew that his work would not promote the kind of social changes that he believed would strengthen the social bond, Stark was convinced that the study was timely and important. However, its reception demonstrated just how marginal he had become, a disappointing conclusion to his long and distinguished career.

Today, Werner Stark's work remains little known and rarely cited. The secondary literature on Stark is limited, with only a few articles in English-language publications. Most of these are included in the special issue of the Fordham University journal *Thought* devoted to his final work, *The Social Bond* [cf. also McCarthy 1989]. The other major source of secondary material is the commemorative volume *In Search of Community: Essays in Memory of Werner Stark, 1909–1985*

[Leonard, Strasser and Westhues 1993]. Leading textbooks in sociological theory and the sociology of religion—those written by Coser [1977], Martindale [1981], Alexander [1982, 1983], Ritzer [2000], Christiano, Swatos and Kivisto [2002], Kunin [2003], among others—either do not mention Stark at all, or do so only in passing. Within the sociology of knowledge, a field to which he contributed an important monograph and many essays [Stark 1991, 1950, 1959b, 1960a, 1969], Stark's work is also more likely to be referenced [Remmling 1967; McCarthy 1996] or briefly described [e.g. Berger and Luckmann 1967] than focused upon in any systematic way. Even though four editions and many translations of *The Sociology of Knowledge* were published, and prominent sociologists such as Talcott Parsons identified themselves with Stark's position in the sociology of knowledge, the silence about Stark is indicative of his observable, though undeserved, marginality.

Given the extent and diversity of Stark's scholarly work, and his many noteworthy achievements, the trajectory of his career is surprising. But the great lesson of the sociology of knowledge, Stark's central field of interest, is not only that ideas are the products of a time and a place, reflecting and articulating historically and culturally specific perspectives and concerns, but also that they endure or perish due to a host of contextual factors. Seen in this light, Stark's work was largely neglected not because it had little connection to dominant and emerging trends in sociology—his forward-looking contributions to cultural sociology were also overlooked—but because it was at odds with the cultural and disciplinary perspectives of the audience to whom it was addressed. What's more, the aspects of Stark's social thought that sparked the most criticism were precisely those that flowed from his own experience of a pervasive marginality and his response to it [Das 2008].

So, thirty years after Werner Stark's death, it is appropriate to revisit his work, to consider the ways in which his life experience shaped his intellectual interests, and, finally, to examine how those interests, and the assumptions and values embedded in them, contributed to his academic marginalisation.

Werner Stark—a marginal sociologist?

To answer the question of why Stark's sociology failed to engage the sustained interest of his colleagues in the field, especially in Great Britain and later in the United States, we must locate his work and its underlying assumptions and ideas in their historical and biographical context. If social marginality is defined as a life lived in between different social or cultural worlds, where belonging is partial and tentative, it is clear that Werner Stark was marginal long before his *academic* marginalisation in the United States. Born to German-speaking atheists of Jewish heritage in Bohemia during the final years of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, raised during the tumultuous period of the First World War and the transition to the First Czechoslovak Republic, and forced to leave his homeland along with

many other intellectuals on the eve of the Second World War, Stark experienced the cultural and political contentiousness of the interwar period. As a Jew, albeit non-professing, he stood between Czechs and Germans in a period of continuing struggle over language, culture, political power, and national identity [cf. Sayer 2000: 15–16; Spector 2000: 32].[1] Living at a time when the values of German liberalism—rationality, progress, civil libertarianism, economic individualism, universalism, and secularism [Spector 2000: 38; Cohen 1977: 35, 45–46]—seemed naively optimistic and incapable of realisation, Stark could neither identify with liberalism nor commit himself to any of the major alternatives: socialism, Zionism, and various nationalisms. In the early 20th century, many Bohemians felt themselves to be in between what Spector [2000: x] calls 'ideological identities'. This fragmentation was mirrored in Stark's own family: his father had embraced an ethical, intellectual socialism [O'Connell 1989: 95], while his older brother eventually emigrated to Israel.[2]

There is no evidence that Stark ever had any interest in Jewish nationalism. On the contrary, Stark was opposed to such assertions of national distinctiveness as a limiting and ultimately destructive form of 'community': 'Ethnocentrism produces an ethos which brings us closer to our nearer neighbors, but which creates at the same time a distance toward those who dwell beyond the city gate, and it is manifestly the root from which the major troubles of history have sprung, rivalry, imperialism, and war.' [Stark 1983: 130] The internationalism of socialism was more appealing; in fact, his father was not only a physician at the miners' guild and convinced social democrat but also a close friend of Karl Renner, a leading member of the social democratic party and first chancellor of *Deutsch-Österreich* founded immediately after World War I. Stark also joined the socialist movement, but his association with it ended while he was still in his twenties [Kate Stark, letter to E. Doyle McCarthy, 13 April 1989, Stark Papers].

Bohemia, his homeland, also became a central issue of his dissertation at the University of Hamburg in which he dealt with feudal capitalism. In this study he showed that capitalism had already conquered Bohemia between 1648 and 1848 while the social bonds were still feudalistic. For him, feudal capitalism was an extremely inefficient social system in which feudal administrators practically

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[1] The title of a well-known essay on the history of the Czech lands during this time, 'The Jews between Czechs and Germans in the Historic Lands, 1848–1918' [Kestenberg-Gladstein 1968], sums up the unique and tenuous position occupied by those of Jewish background. The Jews' identification with German culture and interests separated them from the Czech majority [Kieval 2000: 125; Kohn 1968: 16–18; Iggers 1992: 21, 25]. However, many Germans in Bohemia—particularly in the border areas where they were concentrated, less so in Prague—differentiated between themselves and the Jews, a distinction heightened by the emergence of racial definitions of national identity in the second half of the 19th century [Cohen 1977: 46–47; Kohn 1968: 18; Sayer 2000: 115–116; Kieval 2000: 214].
[2] Richard Franck, e-mail to R. Das, 22 September 2004; Justin Stagl, e-mail to R. Das, 17 September 2004.

erased capitalistic incentives while exploiting the farmers [Stark 1934]. The progressive decline of the Weimar Republic in Germany made an academic career in Germany more and more unlikely. Hence, he started as a journalist at the *Prager Tagblatt* and later took on an administrative job at a bank. In this context he wrote a book on social policy [Stark 1936], which opened the door to a teaching position at the Prague School of Political Science. After leaving his homeland, his first intellectual adventure, in Cambridge, England, was devoted to Jeremy Bentham, which in turn caught the attention of no one less than John Maynard Keynes, who consequently promoted Stark. His early excursions into Bentham's intellectual treasury led later to a three-volume edition of *Jeremy Bentham's Economic Writings* [Stark 1952–1954]. Nevertheless, as a migrant intellectual who fled from his homeland to Great Britain in August 1939, Stark believed that full acceptance in his new country would never be forthcoming: 'Englishmen find it hard to concede, and at least as hard to conceive, that a foreigner can ever become English, so far as essentials are concerned.' And, in a footnote, he added: 'The present writer says this after nearly a quarter of a century's residence in Britain, eighteen years of which were spent in England, and nearly two in the British army. This should be enough "participant observation" for anybody.' [Stark 1966: 90] In many ways and throughout his life Stark was a stranger, a cultural hybrid, a marginal man.

While it may appear that marginal situations of the type Stark experienced are likely to lead to negative consequences, such as 'inner turmoil', 'spiritual instability', and 'ambivalence' [Park 1950a: 355–356; Stonequist 1937: 146–150], sociologists have also linked social marginality to objectivity [Simmel 1950: 404–405], a detached and rational viewpoint [Park 1950b: 376], a critical attitude, and reflectiveness [Stonequist 1937: 155]. Moreover, the ambiguities inherent in a marginal situation—existing in between different social or cultural worlds while belonging fully to neither, or simply existing at the fringe of a group—may be in a *creative* tension with one another, a process which refers to negotiation among opposing elements, a synthesising mode of thought which aims at transcending contradictions.

This emphasis on synthesis is in fact the distinguishing feature of Stark's life and his sociology: he always attempted to negotiate the oppositions which confronted him and to create a more comprehensive vision of them. As he once said: '[T]he individual has not only a choice between competing world-views, but also the opportunity to transcend them both and achieve a new and wider mental integration; but to make a new and wider mental synthesis out of the initially given materials is eminently an act of creativeness, indeed, the only kind of creativeness open to the human race.' [Stark 1991: 145–146]

In terms of his biography, Stark's desire for a 'more comprehensive vision' can be seen in his conversion to Roman Catholicism. Stark had known separateness, division, and conflict—the many borderlines and boundaries that criss-cross the human landscape, impede close relationships, and prevent the full realisation

of sociality. In light of this, his conversion is understandable, for Catholicism is the religion which he presented in his later writings as the very embodiment of community, one which affords, therefore, the antithesis of a marginal existence.

His conversion took place in 1941 while he was living in exile in Great Britain[3] during the Second World War. It is known from conversations Stark had with friends and colleagues that the tragedy of the Holocaust—the loss of his father and other family members—led to a deep concern with the problem of evil [Fitzpatrick 1993: 154–155; O'Connell 1989: 95–96]. For some, the experience of events such as war and genocide will bring about a questioning, weakening or complete loss of religious belief; for others, it will confirm a pre-existing irreligious attitude; for still others, it will mean a strengthening or awakening of faith. In Stark's case, the outcome of his reflections was neither the continued assertion of atheism, nor the embrace of his Jewish heritage, but a turn to Roman Catholicism.

Still, the sources of his interest in Catholicism lie farther back in his experience. One must take into account the impression left on the young Stark by the piety of his Catholic nurse, and his childhood friendship with a local priest in Marienbad,[4] as well as his exposure to the contrasting opinions of his canon law professors at the University of Prague, Heinrich Singer and Ludwig Wahrmund, of which he would later write: 'A positive and a negative attitude, awe and criticism, are notoriously difficult to reconcile, but it is good for a young man to have them both impinge on him and struggle for his soul.' [Stark 1966: vii] Kate Stark recalled the circumstances of her husband's conversion in a letter to E. Doyle McCarthy [13 April 1989, Stark Papers]:

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[3] Stark was one of thousands of Europeans who were forced to flee from the continent in the years preceding and during the Second World War. He originally intended to emigrate to the United States after the military occupation of Czechoslovakia (1939), having been invited by the economist Eduard Heimann (previously of the University of Hamburg) to join the Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science at the New School for Social Research in New York. Instead, however, he went to England, with assistance from the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning, to 'continue [his] work in [that] hospitable island' [Stark 1976a: vii-viii]. He arrived there in August, 1939 [Stark 1944: viii]. Stark served in the British Army Intelligence Corps, and was naturalised as a British subject in 1947 [Stark Papers]. He became an American citizen in 1969, several years after joining the faculty of Fordham University.

[4] In a letter to E. Doyle McCarthy [13 April 1989, Stark Papers], Kate Stark shared the following anecdote: 'He grew up of course in a Catholic country and a Catholic small town of 8,000 inhabitants…. The primary school in Marienbad was next to the church and Werner had to climb a hill to get to it. As it happened the priest just left the church after Mass when Werner met him, and took a great liking to the little boy of six but he was an old man and walked very slowly and that meant that Werner came to school very late very often and was of course reprimanded by the teacher. But he assured me that he never even opened his mouth to say that he should be excused because he had accompanied the deacon. He always thought with great affection of the old man.'

> Not only did he start straight away when we were in Cambridge, England, to write about the history of economics and economic thought, but he also began to read Cardinal Newman—I think all his works—later on he wrote an article on him in his collection of essays, *Social Theory and Christian Thought* … and, I think, he was so impressed, not only by the beautiful style of the Cardinal and all he had to say and accepted and found out how much he could teach about sociology or he, Werner, could learn or learned about it. He then began to go to church every Sunday and in about one year later he was baptized.

John Henry Newman (1801-1890) was himself a convert to Roman Catholicism, and he has been called 'Rome's great converter in England' [Gilley 1997: 5]. Sheridan Gilley [1997: 18] offers some insight into Newman's influence on the convert mind:

> No one is converted either to Catholicism or to Christianity by the literary Newman, [or] by the spiritual beauties of Newman … but by the moral Newman, the Augustinian Newman, the Evangelical Newman; it is in his stern unbending call to sincerity and seriousness that Newman is the master of the convert mind.

The 'Augustinian Newman' undoubtedly struck a chord with Werner Stark—the man and the sociologist. In an early, unpublished lecture,[5] Stark wrote that Christianity understood that the root of all evil 'lies in the depth of the human heart'; human egoism may be tamed but never eradicated. 'It is because it knows this fact—this *most* fundamental of *all* facts—' that Christianity is a sound social philosophy, superior to later idea systems such as liberalism and Marxism. 'A true critique of society must lead us back to a true critique of man, and that means, in my opinion, to the old and unjustly despised doctrine of original sin which alone lays bare the root of all the suffering with which our fallen race is plagued and will continue to be plagued until it shall learn and comprehend that there is only *one* liberation that can really make us free—the conquest of the power of darkness in our own soul.' [Stark, 'Karl Marx and the Critique of Society', n.d., 6, Stark Papers]

There is another aspect of Newman's influence that is especially relevant to the theme of marginality. Gilley [1997: 18] calls Newman the master of the convert mind 'in his desire for inclusiveness and continuity'. Stark, in his own writings, drew on Newman's analysis of the catholicity of the Church as it has avoided identification with any particular nation or class.

> To Newman, Christianity was essentially a 'social religion'. This is why he found it impossible to remain in a religious body which, in its very idea, comprises only

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[5] The typed copy of the lecture, 'Karl Marx and the Critique of Society', bears no date, but it was most likely delivered in 1941 or 1942 at the University of Cambridge.

a fragment of humanity. Still less could he bear the division of the faithful into hostile sects according to their social standing. This, however, seemed to him the distinguishing trait of Protestantism, as compared with the all-comprehensive fold of Rome. 'In this country, especially,' he said, 'there is nothing broader than class religions; the established form itself is but the religion of a class'…. But the [Catholic Church] 'includes specimens of every class among her children. She is the solace of the forlorn' no less than 'the chastener of the prosperous'… [Stark 1959a: 133].

Stark, too, came to believe that the Catholic Church, more than any other institution, embodied an essential universalism in its continuing efforts to achieve an ever-widening embrace of humankind coupled with a detachment from worldly interests. 'The Catholic Church,' he would later write, 'has always been a stranger to the world: she is, and must be, doubly a stranger in a fratricidal world, a world where societies are organized against each other' [Stark 1967b: 363]. 'Joining the Church …', he concludes, 'is of necessity a revolutionary act, a contracting-out of the world' [Stark 1970: 151].

Marginal experience and Stark's social thought

The idea of the original sin as the 'condition humaine' and of Catholicism as a communal, unity-creating form of life never left him. In both of his major works, *The Sociology of Religion* and *The Social Bond*, Stark erected a memorial in honour of this idea [Strasser 1986: 141–142]. In other words, his desire to find community in his life—a search which culminated in his conversion to Catholicism—found expression in his sociology. Throughout his work, from its theoretical concerns to its underlying assumptions, we see the recurring themes of division and reconciliation, diversity and unity. There is, for example, his interest in the *oppositions* that appear in forms of social organisation (community and association), the realm of values (liberty and equality, freedom and discipline, emotionalism and rationalism), social theories (organicism and mechanicism), and theorists (Mannheim and Scheler, Cooley and Sumner). A major concern is whether such oppositions are forever separate, divided, and in tension, or whether and to what extent they may be bridged. Many, if not most, of Stark's distinctions are presented with the aim of revealing an essential, though often hidden connection between them, an underlying unity.

Accordingly, the organicist (collectivistic) and mechanistic (individualistic) models of social coherence are best seen, not as mutually exclusive alternatives, but rather as ideal-typical ends of a continuum along which every society can be located [Stark 1963: 12, 265]. And such endpoints, though different, are still part of a continuum, 'and meaningful only in their connection with each other' [Stark 1972b: 89]. Similarly, the contrast between the founder of a religious movement and his or her successor, seen by Max Weber as an instance of charisma and its inevitable routinisation and attenuation, is properly viewed, Stark insists, as a

division of function—creation and conservation—within one stream of life: The personal charisma of the Founder continues within the collective charisma of the religious institution [Stark 1970: 76–80, 173–175]. The Founder may be seen to incorporate the principle of love, the Second the principle of law, but there is no real opposition between them: '[B]oth may well be evidence of the same spirit and the same life.' [Stark 1970: 86, 145–147]

Consistent with his Catholicism, Stark's social thought was clearly oriented toward the integrative and the universal, but these concerns meant that his sociology developed in a direction that separated him from the main trends in 20th-century sociology, especially American sociology. For example, in their treatment of culture, both *The Sociology of Knowledge* and *The Social Bond* incorporated unsociological perspectives, the former in its aims, the latter in its premises, even as both works developed ideas that were consistent with the sociology of Stark's day, and often went beyond it to anticipate late 20th-century and contemporary approaches. So, while Stark *mirrored* mid-20th-century American sociology in his view that culture—as institutionalised and internalised values and norms—is crucial for the shaping of human behaviour and for social integration, and *transcended* it by his sustained defence of the pervasiveness and force of the symbolic dimension of human existence, he also *diverged* from it in exploring the possibility of a 'suprahistorical doctrine of man' in *The Sociology of Knowledge* and in asserting a universal human nature in *The Social Bond*. An examination of these ideas will demonstrate the ways in which Stark's philosophical perspective and religious values shaped his intellectual work and contributed to his academic marginalisation.

In *The Sociology of Knowledge*, Stark maintains that the existence of socially determined knowledge systems is not incompatible with the concept of truth; relativism can be overcome by isolating, from the empirical study of all societies, the universal, 'generically human' element that *manifests* itself in diverse cultures and in history [Stark 1991: 196–210].[6] However, this solution of the problem of relativism not only entails the questionable assumption that it is legitimate to speak of human life abstracted from society, culture, and history. It also alters the very meaning of the concept of culture. For all his attention to diversity, to what is grown, spontaneous, and local in social life, Stark looks *beyond* cultures in their concrete particularity, seeing them not only as differentiated collectivities but also as those which reflect or approach something universal and enduring—

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[6] This reflects the tension between his commitment to the sociology of knowledge as a contextual, relativising approach to thought, and his own value position, which impelled him to seek out the universal and the unifying in social life. The latter retained the upper hand even as he distanced himself to some extent from the explicit philosophical argument, acknowledging near the conclusion of the book the 'altogether metaphysical' nature of the neo-Platonic theory of knowledge, and recommending it and its idea of 'Man-in-himself' as merely the source of a workable method for overcoming seemingly irreconcilable world views [Stark 1991: 339–340, 342].

something that lends unity to social multiplicity and to the fleeting historical moment. And this view of culture is decidedly different from that embraced by sociologists, both at the time Stark was writing and today.

Stark's ideas on human nature and the function of culture inform all his sociological writings to some degree, but they are most fully developed in *The Social Bond*. His sociology is founded upon a dualistic view of human nature: To be human is to be a divided creature, 'torn between sociality and selfishness' [Stark 1963: 265]. Individuals belong 'to two separate orders of being': *nature*, understood as physical environment and physical inheritance, the realm of necessity, and *culture*, the humanly constructed, meaningful order, the 'abode of freedom' [Stark 1978: 1; 1963: 219].

At birth, therefore, the human organism is but a *potential* human being; through social interaction, he or she will internalise the values and norms that make possible the 'transformation from an animalic organism into a cultural personality' [Stark 1978: 157].[7] But this transformation from self-preference to sociality is not smooth, nor is it likely to be total: Human nature retains an essential, resistant 'core'. It is in social life that humankind 'realizes its cultural and spiritual possibilities, but it can do so only at the price of a constant combat with its own actualities, which are animalic, self-preferring, non-moral, and, therefore, all too often antisocial' [Stark 1978: 70]. These 'actualities', then, are the source of that 'power of darkness in our own soul' that Stark identifies as original sin ['Karl Marx and the Critique of Society', n.d., 6, Stark Papers].

Stark's dualistic theory of human nature was integral to his idea of culture and its importance. His books on *The Fundamental Forms of Social Thought* and *The Social Bond* are noteworthy for their insistence on culture's power: the power to humanise individuals, to free them from obedience to antisocial, bodily drives, and to maintain a (relatively) pacified social world. The contrast between nature and culture serves not only to put the achievement of the collective forces into high relief, but also as a reminder of the precarious nature of the social bond. The 'invisible, intangible threads' that form the fabric of social life are always in need of reinforcement. This involves the renunciation of certain impulses and desires; it involves the imposition and acceptance of discipline (custom, law, societal ethos, religious values); it is, to some degree, painful. But such efforts are, and must be, Stark insists, 'characteristic of all human coexistence' [Stark 1963: 12].[8]

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[7] Stark [1976b: 174] defines 'self-preference' as 'automatic obedience to body-based urges'.
[8] It would be unfair to Stark to assume that he devalues personal freedom. As he observes, socialisation 'must do its work without destroying a last refuge of selfhood and liberty …' [Stark 1978: 90–91]. His point is that social discipline, far from being oppressive, makes possible many freedoms, such as the freedom to know, the freedom to bend nature to human purposes, and the freedom to create and to appreciate the higher values [Stark 1978: 147].

Given this framework, Stark is interested in the extent to which concrete cultural systems further the values of social integration and community. Hence, his object is to present them as ongoing projects in humanisation and moralisation. A given mode of social life is the expression and the realisation of a set of values; from its inception and in its very nature, it reflects a vision of what human association 'ought' to be like. And just as any individual life can be conceived as a transition from 'animalic organism' to 'cultural personality', from a condition of self-centredness to one in which the capacity for sympathy is fully developed, societies, too, can be seen as capable of moving from a state in which self-interest dominates to one in which individual and communal purposes fuse [Stark 1983: 137]. For Stark, a society's value system can grant primacy to personal or public goals; it can elevate self-regard or sociality.

This view had many theoretical implications for Stark's thinking, two of which seem to be of central importance: First, that there is a place for value judgments within sociology, and second, that Stark's understanding of society turned out to be clearly order oriented. His students at Fordham University therefore saw him as a follower of Parsonian functionalism and this encouraged them to represent the position of conflict theorists, which resulted in many discussion wars [Strasser 2014: 453]. Their figure of authority was not so much Karl Marx; it was to some extent Ralf Dahrendorf and Alvin W. Gouldner, but mostly the man with the double C: Coser and conflict. Incidentally, Lewis A. Coser (1913–2003), born as Ludwig Alfred Cohen in Berlin, his father a Jewish banker and his mother a Protestant, also had to leave Germany for political reasons, and moved first to Paris and then to the United States. Although 'a stranger within more than one gate', as Christian Fleck [2013] described him, Coser not only made it into academic networks and intellectual circles but also became well-known for his work as a conflict theorist. Or did he only pose the right questions at the right time?[9]

Stark's theoretical concerns led him to bring sociology into dialogue with moral philosophy and to identify a universal standard against which to evaluate societies. To this end, he proposed Max Scheler's conception of a hierarchical order of values, consisting of pleasure values at the lowest level, welfare and culture values at intermediate levels, and, finally, sacred values at the top [cf. Stark 1954: xiv–xvii; 1983: 178–192]. For Stark, Scheler's order of values appears as a movement toward *social unity*. The lowest values centre on individual gratification; they tend to generate competition and conflict. The higher one moves up the

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[9] Even a sociologist such as Ulrich Beck, who died at the beginning of 2015, and is currently the best known sociologist in Germany and in many European countries, is not much known in the United States, despite having published many monographs, starting with *The Risk Society* [1986], which have been translated into many languages. This ignorance of his work is probably due to his global approach and his critique of 'methodological nationalism', which confines the sociological discipline within a 'national container' and should instead be replaced by a 'methodological cosmopolitanism'.

scale, the more deeply satisfying, enriching, and shareable the values become, culminating in sacred values, which have no material aspect that could erect even a slight barrier between individuals, but are, rather, infinitely shareable without any diminution of their power or their value. The higher values are experienced through the mind and the emotions, not the body; they evoke that capacity for sympathy which unites rather than divides. Stark [1983: 188–189] describes the importance of Scheler's work as follows:

> If we decide to avert our eyes from the metaphysical problem which may, after all, be beyond the possibility of solution, we soon see that the order of values, the system of preferences, the chain of ethical imperatives, built up by Scheler corresponds closely to the ethic implied in any and every societal ethos. For every societal ethos demands, and must demand, that the members of society minimize, in their strivings, the pursuit of ends which lead to strife and the threat of dissolution, and follow by preference the values which are shareable and thus strengthen the social bond. Scheler's value pyramid reflects this structure built deeply into every socialized man. It is inspired by a knowledge of reality—perhaps not the suprasensual reality with which he operates, but certainly the tangible reality of social existence which must ever attempt to mute the physical, unavoidably self-preferring greeds and promote unity-preserving and unity-enhancing tendencies at work in life, culture, and religion.

A more ethically advanced way of life is one which does not remain content with the pursuit of the more basic individual and material satisfactions, but aims higher towards the realisation of social, cultural, and spiritual values. Accordingly, modern Western culture appears impoverished, when compared to many other cultures and especially to its own past. In the final volume of *The Sociology of Religion*, Stark [1972b: 1–4] describes the 'revaluation of values' that accompanied the transition from the 'community' of mediaeval Europe to the 'association' of the early modern era, as a change from a 'we' society to an 'I-and-it' society, that is, from one conceived as a close-knit, organic unity, to one regarded as a multiplicity of individuals, in which the overwhelming interest is people's relationship to the material world. With the development of modern, associational society, the individual person was placed above the social whole, independence was ranked higher than social coherence, and the domination of nature and the pursuit of material abundance, rather than the perfection of sociality, became supreme values [Stark 1972b: 223, 230, 309, 312, 365–366]—a mode of preferring that for Stark, as for Scheler, is fundamentally flawed.

Stark [1983: 2, 191] therefore argues that it is permissible, indeed necessary, for the sociologist to engage in social and cultural criticism on the basis of Scheler's value hierarchy, for this ethic identifies the basic requisites of social coherence. 'Society coheres if, and to the extent that, its members prefer the values of social welfare, of culture, and of holiness to the values of pleasure and pain, the hedonic values' [Stark 1983: 191]. Sociology and moral philosophy thus find their

common ground.[10] And, in a pointed criticism of American sociology's value-free stance,[11] Stark [1983: 191] asserts:

> Some such ethic as Max Scheler's is binding on the sociologist. There has been a long and rather useless discussion of the question as to whether the science of sociology should be or could be value free. If by this is meant that the sociologist should not subserve private interests, that he should not propagate political prejudice, that he should not preach, well and good. All reasonable men will agree. But the sociologist cannot possibly be as value free as the natural scientist, for he must know that social coherence, and that means the continued existence of social life, is ever in jeopardy. Every step in the direction of disintegration must give him pause. He, surely, cannot deny that the social condition is a supreme value.

Ultimately, Stark's work upholds what he calls the 'great social aspiration' of human history: universal community. This ideal finds its purest expression and its greatest force, not in any system of ethics (though Scheler's comes close), but in dynamic religious faith,[12] a faith that stands apart from and above the established structures of society, demanding their elevation through the transforming power of love. It urges the dissolution of the boundaries that divide individuals, groups, and nations; it aims at reconciliation and the enlargement of community. Although 'the vision of a community of an unclouded, all-pervading love' seems beyond human reach, owing to 'human self-preference', 'it has introduced a leaven which has always worked and is working still and has given a better taste to the bread of life' [Stark 1983: 272, 4].

In the end, however, the sociologist must consider only the more practical aspect of the social ideal of dynamic religion: the ranking of communal values above personal interests. Stark [1983: 272, 278–279] finds it expressed with su-

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[10] And Stark [1983: 191] goes on to say: 'The only difference between ethos and ethic, or between the sociologist's field of observation and the ethicist's endeavor, is this: the ethos incorporates and secures the society-building preferences which are in fact accepted and adhered to, while an ethic is a guide to further advances which might be possible of achievement.'

[11] Actually, this perspective regarding the role of values in social science accompanied Stark from the very beginning of his intellectual career, as demonstrated by *The History of Economics in Its Relation to Social Development* which was published in 1944, appeared in several editions and was translated into many languages: In this study he contrasted the traditional history of economic ideas with an exploratory approach by understanding economic and social thinking as an intellectual response to a life-world problem situation [Stark 1944].

[12] Stark counts religion as the 'crowning type of social pressure'. He follows the French philosopher Henri Bergson in distinguishing between 'static' and 'dynamic' religion. In contrast to legalistic, static religion, which is deeply involved in the world and its institutions, the spirit of dynamic religiosity is 'not of this world, but of a higher dispensation, in which law is subordinated to love and not love to law' [Stark 1983: 3–4, 192, 196–197].

preme clarity in the Gospel where Christ urges 'a sound order of values. We should put first things first, and the sublimest goal we can pursue is a right relationship to our fellow-men.' 'Christianity … pleads for a change of the heart, of the innermost core of the inner man…. The real enemy of the brotherhood of man is man's inborn animality and self-preference. A socially ideal condition of the human race cannot be reached unless and until this characteristic is overcome. Christ overcame it when, in an act of supreme selflessness, He laid down His life for His fellows, and therefore the Cross is a guiding post for humanity even in its quest for a good society.'

A sociologist between Catholicism and social science

If the distinctive features of Stark's work—the direction of his sociology towards the universal and the integrative—are the expression of his marginal life experience and its resolution in Catholicism, as we suggest, it is also true that his sociology, in turn, reinforced the very marginality from which it emerged, at least in relation to his career in the United States. Stark's major arguments on the subjects of culture and human nature shaped the critical reception of his work, obscuring the fact that there were other important ideas that were not only consistent with American sociology's main concerns during his most productive years, but also contributed to an alternative understanding of them. Stark analysed the social construction of meaning and its effects, highlighted the importance of symbolism as 'one of the main avenues along which human thinking and feeling can move' [Stark 1991: 202], insisted upon the inseparability of the social and the cultural, explored non-modern, non-Western worldviews, and defended the legitimacy of interpretive methods—all of which define the current work in the field of cultural sociology.

For example, in the first volume of *The Sociology of Religion*, Stark [1966] analyses the 'religious' dimension of secular institutions and processes: the persistent and pervasive tendency to attribute sanctity to rulers, particular groups and entire societies, their territory, the workings of their government, and their destiny; and how this contributes to national unity and the classification of allies and enemies. Stark shows how ideas such as sacred rulership and religious ethnocentrism draw their strength from the spiritual yearnings of humankind—for sanctity, wholeness, deliverance, and peace, though often promising the realisation of those values through the use of military force. Moreover, the religious exaltation of a people and the conception of that people's unique, redemptive mission in the world, far from being mere rationalisations of imperialism and the political and economic values to be gained by a ruling class, have served throughout history as powerful means of collective self-understanding. In this connection, it is worth noting that Stark [1966: 186–197] offers an analysis of America's religiously conceived self-interpretation that parallels (and has been obscured by) Bellah's classic 1967 essay on American civil religion, although it was published a year

earlier and represents the continuation of a line of research that Stark began in the 1940s.[13] Early commentators on Stark, however, did not identify or appreciate his attention to the structures of meaning which shaped the thoughts and actions of members of the various groups he studied—the worldviews, attitudes, and symbols which he attempted to capture. In sum, his early attempt to move culture to the forefront of sociological theory was ignored, apart from the fact that the 'cultural turn' had not yet arrived at the centre of the sociological discipline [cf. Jameson 1998].

Instead, the American sociological community saw in Stark's work an orientation that was philosophical and religious rather than social scientific. His underlying assumptions and key ideas influenced his conception of the scope and purpose of sociology, especially his insistence that the field is not, and cannot be, value-free, and that it must, in fact, incorporate a social ethic. But these conceptions were opposed to the discipline's understanding of itself as a social science; they, and the philosophical presuppositions from which they emerged, overshadowed the totality of Stark's sociological contributions and became the defining features of his sociology in the eyes of many of his contemporaries and successors. An examination of reviews of Stark's work that appeared in major journals of the time—*American Sociological Review*, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *Contemporary Sociology*—reveals the extent of the divergence between what Stark offered to sociology, particularly to American sociology, and what its practitioners expected. Concerns about his interest in philosophical issues appeared early on. Franz Adler[14] [1959: 506], for example, pointed out that 'Dr. Stark believes in eternal principles and essences, and he wants us to proceed—even those of us who consider these as purely metaphysical matters—*as if* all we may find empirically "were reflections and incarnations of transcendental absolutes" … Obviously this cannot be done by other than mystical and metaphysical devices.'

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[13] Bellah [1976: 168] states that his essay 'Civil Religion in America' 'was written for a *Daedalus* conference on American religion in May 1966 and first published in the winter 1967 issue of *Daedalus*. Stark's discussion appeared in the first volume of *The Sociology of Religion* [1966], which was completed in November 1965. Stark's earlier examination of the American collective consciousness may be found in his 1947 study, *America: Ideal and Reality* (1974a). To date, Stark's work on this topic remains neglected, while Bellah's essay is frequently cited. A leading commentator on Bellah, Matteo Bortolini [2012: 192], notes that the idea of an American civil religion had been proposed by other sociologists, including Lipset and Parsons, prior to Bellah's work. However, he does not mention Stark's contribution to this area.

[14] Although he, like Stark, was an émigré scholar, Franz Adler (1908–1983) came to the United States in 1938, became a US citizen in 1944, received his graduate degrees in sociology at American universities, lived and worked in the United States for 45 years, and was very active in American professional sociological organisations [Loether 1984]. Other sociologists voiced similar reservations about Stark's work, but Adler's comments were especially critical.

Käthe und Werner Stark in Bolzano, Italy, with Gudrun Strasser, August 1974. © Hermann Strasser

While rarely mentioned in early reviews, the issue of Stark's objectivity became a major theme with the appearance of *The Sociology of Religion*. Robert Bellah [1967: 229] advised his readers of the 'strongly evaluative implication' of Stark's typology of established religion, sectarian religion, and the universal church, 'in spite of his protestations of objectivity'. Bellah was far more critical in his review of the third volume, *The Universal Church*, the next year: 'This synthesis volume turns out to be an undisguised panegyric to the Catholic Church. Everything else, including, I am afraid, sociological analysis, falls by the wayside.' [Bellah 1968: 160] This criticism was frequently voiced by reviewers. Allan Eister [1971: 734] could have been speaking for them all when he wrote: 'Here, as elsewhere in this and in the preceding volumes, the thin but critically important line between *explication* of a religious system (admittedly essential for a *verstehende* interpretation of it) and *advocacy* for a preferred pattern appears to break down …'

Richard Fenn [1973: 322] saw the final volume of *The Sociology of Religion* as a 'sacred history' that reconstructs 'the past through the eyes of religious faith', and is intended 'to delineate the rise and fall of human nature in history': from the dominance of cooperation, solidarity, and community, to 'humanity's decline in impersonal relationships of the associational type'. He described Stark's view of history as 'essentially tragic' and contrasted it to Parsons' perspective on the effects of differentiation in modern society [Fenn 1973: 323].

The association of Stark's work with metaphysics, the criticisms of his methods and his objectivity, all located him on the margin of American sociology. And,

from the initial distancing of Werner Stark in the late 1950s, there was a progressive redefinition of his work and a corresponding solidification of his marginality as more of his studies were read and reviewed by American sociologists. By the early 1970s, after *The Sociology of Religion* had appeared in its entirety, Stark's reputation had been reconstructed. No longer was he a 'European scholar' with strong philosophical leanings; he was now identified as a 'conservative, partisan Roman Catholic scholar', whose work was less 'sociology' than religious apologetics, and polemics 'in a confessional cause' [Hickman 1973: 1870; Flint 1972: 110; Besanceney 1971; Eister 1968, 1971; Fenn 1973].

With the publication of *The Social Bond*, critical attention was focused on Stark's understanding of human nature and the 'disciplining' and 'moralising' functions of culture. E. Doyle McCarthy wrote in her introduction to the special issue of *Thought* on *The Social Bond*: 'While his idea of natural self-preference easily—all too easily—evokes in some contemporary minds the bogies of Augustine, Hobbes, or Freud, Stark's actual thinking on the matter of our animal nature does not lead him to either a pessimistic or consistently conservative social or political ethic. Nor do we come away from his works with a dark and dismal portrait of humankind' [McCarthy 1989: 10–11]. She acknowledged, however, that this is how his work is generally read. Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, SJ [1989; 1993: 165], his colleague at Fordham, for example, while generally approving of Stark's aims, saw a pessimistic streak in him, as well as a certain rigidity in his insistence on community as the appropriate institutionalisation of religious values. The reading of Stark as 'pessimistic' was shared by the philosopher Charles Kelbley [1979: 72–73], who argued that Stark elaborated a 'negative view of human nature' that 'does not allow for any intrinsic human goodness'. Kelbley [1979: 73] urged his readers to consider the policy implications of Stark's work: There 'can be little doubt about their harsh and repressive nature'.

Eileen B. Leonard pointed to the complexity of Stark's views in *The Social Bond*, and, while appreciative of his concerns, she could not agree with his view of human nature or his emphasis on social control. 'While I am not willing to argue that human beings are altruistic by nature, Stark's view is antithetical to what I believe is possible: a self-conscious and radical change in material and ideological conditions that improves people, emancipates them, rather than simply controls them more efficiently.' [Leonard 1989: 35] James R. Kelly was sympathetic to Stark's desire to address the foundational issues of sociology and observed that to 'do justice to Stark's intentions, we should understand "social control" in a nonpejorative conservative sense—as an ally against the ever present centrifugal forces of greed and lust—and not in any crude Marxist sense of manipulation of the masses…. While Stark nowhere says that human beings and society do not need justice, for him their primary need is ultimate meaning. Again, Stark's root intuitions are quite different from the most prestigious contemporary sociologists', even from those who wish to restore ethics to sociological analysis.' [Kelly 1989: 70–71]

Assessments such as these reflected real differences in approach and in underlying worldview between Werner Stark and the audience of American sociologists to whom his work was presented. They must be understood in the context of both the disciplinary concerns of American sociology at the time Stark was writing, and the American cultural setting itself. During Stark's tenure in the United States (1963–1975), sociology was in transition from its 'Golden Era', a time in which confidence in its social relevance and technical expertise translated into an abundance of material resources, prestige, and students, to a period of 'crisis', which stemmed from its failure to effectively address the massive social changes and political issues of the 1960s [Rhoades 1981; Turner 1989]. Throughout the 1960s, however, funding for research was still increasing, and the substantial material and institutional rewards at stake lent urgency to the demonstration of sociology's scientific nature. To approve Stark's historical, philosophical, explicitly value-laden work *as sociology* would be to compromise the defining feature of its self-image and its public face—and to do so at a time when its utility was already being called into question. While there was, in fact, a fierce debate about the possibility of value-free sociology going on at this very time, Stark was not taken up by critics of 'pure science', for they could not accept his emphasis on order and social control, even as they echoed his criticism of positivism.

This points to the real divergence between Stark and his counterparts in the United States. It was not simply Stark's assertion of a value-directed sociology that worked against him in the American setting; it was the particular values that he asserted. Given the individualistic, egalitarian, and liberal ethos of their society, American sociologists found Stark's dualism and his preference for organicism, hierarchy, and discipline uncongenial. Stark insisted that cultures be judged according to an absolute moral standard, one which ranks social coherence above individual goals. Accordingly, he singled out the modern West for special criticism, as its ethos elevates individualism, competitiveness, materialism and it unleashes and justifies the pursuit of self-interest as the motive force of its economic and technological dynamism. *The Social Bond*, he stressed, was written *against* this type of society and its order of values [Stark 1978: 149]. And many of his arguments, looking back from today, sound very much like the critical views of post-industrial, individualistic 'multi-option society' [Gross 2005; Nollmann and Strasser 2004] and the current call for more community and deceleration. As with other Catholic intellectuals of the 20th century [cf. McCarraher 2000], he offered mediaeval Christendom as a model of community, with its hierarchical structure of human relationships and mutual obligations, its economic justice in the form of the 'just price' and prohibition of interest as well as its social discipline [Stark 1972a, 1972b].

Such a position found little favour with American sociologists. Except for the period during which functionalism was dominant, American sociologists have tended to portray the social whole in terms of individuals who interact, exchange, compete, and create [Hinkle and Hinkle 1954; Wolff 1970: 46–48]. While

the sociological enterprise, by its very nature, dictates a concern with the well-being of the community, American sociologists have typically viewed individualism with much less apprehension than Stark. It is not regarded as a manifestation of human animality and self-preference and not generally associated with social disintegration, but is instead seen as having liberative and constructive potential [Bramson 1961: 68; Strasser 1976: chapters 6 and 7]. Stark, in contrast, saw individualism as ruthless competitiveness, failing to note the ways that it can further communal goals. It is noteworthy that Bellah and his colleagues' 1985 study of *Habits of the Heart* was concerned with many of the same issues as Stark. They developed the problem of excessive individualism, the need to revitalise community, and the call for a committed, public sociology in a more even-handed way, and in a manner much more palatable to the American scientific community.

This was the cultural context of the audience to which Stark addressed his rich and varied sociology: his ideas on knowledge, culture, symbolism, *and* his insistence on human animality, the need for social discipline, the elevation of an organic type of community, the reality of a universally binding moral code, and the legitimacy of an evaluative sociology. The latter ideas overshadowed his work, for they struck a discordant note in a field dominated by political and social liberalism and empirical science [Lipset and Ladd 1972; Ladd 1979; Brint 1984]. Gouldner [1970: 29] has described the dynamic between theorist and audience that influences the social career of a theory and his remarks are especially applicable to Stark's situation:

> For, in some part, theories are accepted or rejected because of the background assumptions embedded in them. In particular, a social theory is more likely to be accepted by those who share the theory's background assumptions and find them agreeable. Over and above their stipulated connotations, social theories and their component concepts contain a charge of surplus meanings derived in part from their background assumptions, and these may congenially resonate the compatible background assumptions of their hearers or may generate a painful dissonance.

Much of Werner Stark's marginality to American sociology can, therefore, be explained by a perceived incompatibility of assumptions, values, and priorities between Stark and his contemporaries in the United States. He was a scholar, a *Gelehrter,* in a field that saw itself as a science. He produced trenchant cultural critiques and clear normative prescriptions, rooted in his understanding of the requirements of social order and in his own religious and philosophical commitments. The opposition between Stark's form of intellectualism and the dominant orientation of American sociologists of the mid-20th century shaped the trajectory of his career in the United States [cf. Hess and Fleck 2014: 152–153].

In Europe, especially in German-speaking countries like Germany and Austria, Stark was much more accepted, mainly because of his work on *Wissenssoziologie* [Stark 1960b] and the one-volume German edition of his sociology of reli-

Käthe (third from left) and Werner Stark (second from right) at the baptism of H. Strasser's son Mark at the Strasser home in Vienna, Austria, June 1974. © Hermann Strasser

gion [Stark 1974b]. In 1964, he was asked if he were interested in a professorship at the Faculty of Law and Political Science of *t*he University of Vienna which he declined because he had committed himself to stay at Fordham University for at least five years. In the 1970s he made many trips to Europe and gave a number of lectures in Austria and Germany. In 1974 when he visited Vienna and became the godfather of the second author's son, Mark H. Strasser, he asked Mark's father for advice with regard to where he should live after his upcoming retirement from Fordham since his homeland was not the Czechoslovakia that he wanted to go back to. Mark's father, coming from Salzburg, did not hesitate with his recommendation: 'Choose Salzburg which is close to the Czech border and equipped with an interesting history, superb architecture of churches and castles, a fascinating landscape, lots of cultural events, and a new university.' And it did not take long and Werner Stark was offered an honorary professorship in sociology from the Paris-Lodron-University of Salzburg [cf. Gabriel 1988]. In 1975, he and his wife moved to the 'Rome of the North', as Salzburg is sometimes called, and he started to write his five-volume work *The Social Bond*. He was about to begin the last, the sixth volume, when he died in 1985. He found his earthly rest at the communal cemetery, the *Kommunalfriedhof,* in Salzburg.

Conclusion

The career of Werner Stark is an important example of academic marginalisation. In exploring the reasons for the neglect of Stark's work, we have shown that his sociology bears a close relationship to a series of lived marginalities—as a German-speaking, atheist of Jewish background living in the Czech lands, as a European refugee and Catholic convert in Protestant cultures (first in the United Kingdom, later in the United States), and as a Catholic-oriented sociologist in a secularised, empirically oriented discipline. There was a clear vision in Stark's work, born of these experiences, which lent coherence to the many topics and problems he addressed. But that vision also dominated his work, and became the defining feature of his social thought in the eyes of his audience, to the exclusion of other, original ideas that would have secured his place in contemporary sociology.

As a result, two more forms of marginality came to characterise Werner Stark: He was a well-published, erudite scholar whose many works are seldom read and an academic sociologist who avoided whenever possible any involvement in the management of his university and in the business of sociological associations, including participating in national or international conferences. Nevertheless, there were other sides to Werner Stark's intellectual life: As long as he lived and wherever he lived, he was devoted to philosophy, literature, and art, as his edition of eighteen volumes of *Rare Masterpieces of Philosophy and Science*, extending from Niccolò Machiavelli to Max Scheler, his many journeys motivated by art history, and his 'Morgensterniaden', published under his pseudonym Ernst Krawer in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, demonstrated. His media were not commissions and meetings, but the book and the advanced seminar. There, as well as at his parties at home, his students and friends experienced him as a great story-teller. At these parties in the Starks' home on Upper Broadway and after 1967 on Mosholu Avenue in Riverdale, students always asked Kate Stark where her husband's library was because there were only a few books visible in a small bookshelf. She then answered: 'He has a few books of his own and of others only with a personal inscription. My husband does not need books at home. He needs only three things for his life: a public library, a church, and a museum.' [Strasser 2014: 455] For Werner Stark, one of the fundamental sociological insights was that humans in general are story-tellers because they need stories for orientation.

That insight and many others regarding our lives in society have yet to be fully explored. When all his writings are considered, however, Stark must be credited with presenting an insightful and eloquent case for culture, long before it became a main theme in contemporary sociology. And his social aspiration—a world in which the individual feels responsible for both personal and public choices, and where sociality overcomes self-absorption—demands consideration and discussion. In short, there is ample justification for a new reading of Werner Stark.

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