This chapter marks a transition in the structure of my study, moving from historical explanations to promising forays, from a relatively tight sequential argument to extensive reconnaissance missions into new territory. To recap, and thereby situate the shift: in the first part of this book, I charted a route from the preliminary concerns of atheism and theology and then through a sustained argument concerning myth, political ambivalence and economic history itself. However, in this second part, I broach three topics that may be seen as extensive forays into promising territory for the difficult love affair between Marxism and theology: time, ethics and fetishism.

I begin with time, or rather kairós, a term full of possibilities in the intersection between Marxism and theology and arguably one of the great organising categories for a spate of recent and not so recent efforts to rethink revolution. The narrative of this chapter has a number of twists, so let me outline it briefly before sinking into the detail. I begin with the agreed definition of kairós as the right or critical time, the opportune moment that must be seized. Under this meaning, with its heavy debt to the New Testament, I gather the efforts by a motley collection of Marxists to reshape our understanding of revolution. This is only the first (and not so spectacular) step, for kairós has much more to tell us. Yet, before I call kairós back

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1. 1 Corinthians 15:8.
to the interrogation room for a few more questions, I seize the moment to lay to rest a few (quite erroneous) assumptions about the relationship between Marxism and Jewish and/or Christian eschatology. Marx and Engels make an appearance here, as do biblical genres and the figure of Ernst Bloch.

From this point, I open the investigation to wider usage and move back before the New Testament to ancient Greece, where it becomes clear that kairós refers not merely to time but also to space, with bodily and social senses. Now kairós becomes that which is in the right and proper place and time. Most importantly, the opposite of kairós in these texts is not ch/kronos, the ordered march of time, but ákairos, what is in the wrong time and place. In this light, it becomes clear that the efforts by the New Testament writers to appropriate kairós for their own agenda bear the traces of these earlier meanings. Thereby, subsequent efforts to develop a kairological politics by these Western Marxists also contain elements of this sense of kairós as the proper place and time for revolution. In response, I propose that a better term is ákairos, the untimely and out-of-place. Now Antonio Negri reappears on the scene, not so much for his uninspiring comments on kairós (they are quite run of the mill), but for an uncanny and unwitting insight into kairós and ákairos. I mean, here, his working distinction of measure and immeasure, which I read in terms of the biblical themes of created order and chaos.

By this time, I have thrown my lot in with ákairos, immeasure and chaos. In that company, I turn in the conclusion to reconsider the connection between the theological doctrine of grace and revolution. Here, Alain Badiou joins the discussion, especially his effort to ‘laicise’ the Pauline doctrine of grace as a version of his own event, which in its turn is a thorough attempt to provide a solid philosophical theory of revolution. In my perpetual effort to relativise theology, I understand grace not as a doctrine that needs to be laicised or ‘secularised’, but as one (passing) shape that revolution may take.

At the crossroads of time

I begin with a basic exercise in examining the semantic cluster surrounding the word kairós. In our current usage, kairós refers almost exclusively to time, designating both a point in time as well as a period of time. On this score, the New Testament bears heavy responsibility. In that collection of texts, kairós may mean the period when fruit becomes ripe and the harvest is ready (Mark 11:13; 12:2; Luke 20:10), a season such as autumn or spring (Galatians 4:10), the present (Luke 12:56; 18:30; Romans 3:26; 8:18; 2 Corinthians 8:14), a designated period

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