Authentic Spirituality in A Secular Age

Ridge Shukrun

A Thesis
In
The Department
Of
Theological Studies

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts (Theological Studies) at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
July 2024

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Ridge Shukrun

Entitled: Authentic Spirituality in A Secular Age

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (Theological Studies)

Complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the final examining committee:

_____ Chair
Dr. Lucian Turcescu

_____ Examiner
Dr. André Gangé

_____ Examiner
Dr. Marie-France Dion

_____ Thesis Supervisor
Dr. Christine Jamieson

September 3rd, 2024

_____
Dr. Lucian Turcescu, Graduate Program Director

_____
Dr. Pascale Sicotte, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science

Abstract

Authentic Spirituality in A Secular Age

Ridge Shukrun

This thesis explores authentic spirituality in the secular age by defining three key terms. It defines the secular age as one in which for the first time in human history, a purely self-sufficient humanism is possible. By using the work of philosopher Charles Taylor, it tells the story of the numerous developments and central anthropocentric shifts which had to occur in order for the secular to emerge. This thesis explores the development of the meaning of the term religion in the work of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, who argues that in modernity, a religion refers to a system of belief, by the generic religion refers to the sum total of these systems of belief. This thesis goes on to define spirituality as understood by romantic liberal modernity as a personal quest of self-actualization. The ten main tenets of romantic liberal modernity are outlined using the work of Galen Watts. An example of one such spirituality called wellness culture is explored through the work of Tara Isabella Burton. Finally, this thesis proposes an alternate definition of spirituality using the work of Keiji Nishitani and Bernard Lonergan, for whom spirituality is an orientation towards or relationship with reality. This definition of spirituality stresses the notion of authenticity, which for Bernard Lonergan is grounded in self-transcendence. Self-transcendence is achieved through intellectual conversion, moral conversion, and religious conversion.

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by thanking the department of Theological Studies and every member of its faculty for encouraging and supporting my questioning, even when I did not know what my question was. I would like to thank my supervisor, Christine Jamieson, for many years of guidance and for advising me to clarify my question. I would like to thank Sara Terreault for igniting my passion for theological studies and teaching, for treating me like more of a partner than an assistant, and for giving me the space to experiment and make mistakes. Finally, I would like to thank my partner Jessika Cecchini, without whose love and support I would not have been able to complete this project. Thank you for always being a willingly insightful second set of eyes and ears on whatever I am working on.

I have to acknowledge that my inner processes are the source of the modern world and are also headed to transcendence, to the same transcendence as are religious traditions profoundly different from my own, traditions which the modern world is likewise throwing into a crisis of self-appropriation, while at the same time it is throwing us together through a common technology.

—Vernon Gregson, *Lonergan, Spirituality, and the Meeting of Religions*, ix

Table of Contents

Introduction

What is spirituality? Or, put another way, how should spirituality be understood today? Philip Sheldrake points out that the difficulty in defining the term is in part due to the growing distinction between spirituality and the religious traditions.[1] For example, in an American study conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2023, 22% of adults reported that they consider themselves spiritual but not religious (SBNR).[2] 48% of adults reported that they consider themselves both religious *and* spiritual, and interestingly, 10% of adults reported that they consider themselves religious but *not* spiritual.[3] Considering that the term spirituality has its roots in the New Testament and was well known in Latin Christendom,[4] its contemporary distinction from religion indicates a shift in how people understand these terms, making them more difficult to define. There is also the problem of considering spirituality in the context of traditions in which the term did not originate but which have still adopted it, such as Buddhism and Hinduism.[5] The matter of defining spirituality is further complicated when considering its academic study as well; Sheldrake implies that the term seems to have replaced "older terms such as ascetical theology or mystical theology."[6]

Even if one has settled on their own understanding of the term, what sources should be counted as authoritative? If one calls themselves a Christian, then surely the Bible will be considered among the most important sources, but are they limited only to their sacred scriptures? And if one considers themselves spiritual but not religious, are their most reliable sources the more than 160,000 results under the *faith and spirituality* category on the bookstore chain Indigo's website?[7] And within this category, how is one to choose critically between books on religion and science, modern witchcraft and Harry Potter?[8]

As the number of options on Indigo's website indicates, even though the meaning of the term spirituality seems to vary greatly, there is no doubt that its use has grown in popularity among North Americans and Western Europeans, particularly since the 1960s, a phenomenon which scholars have referred to as the *spiritual turn*.[9] Galen Watts saliently points out the coincidence between this rise in the popularity of spirituality and the reported secularization of the West. While it is clear that these two occurrences are somehow related, their relationship is not straightforward

---

[1] Philip Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality*, 1st edition (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), 1.
[2] Becka A. Alper et al., "5. Who Are 'Spiritual but Not Religious' Americans?," *Pew Research Center* (blog), December 7, 2023, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/12/07/who-are-spiritual-but-not-religious-americans/., accessed July 10, 2024.
[3] Alper et al., "5. Who Are 'Spiritual but Not Religious' Americans?", accessed July 10, 2024.
[4] Bernard McGinn, John Meyendorf, and Jean Leclercq, eds., *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, Illustrated edition, vol. 1 (Herder & Herder, 1987), xv. "Although 'spirit (*pneuma*) and 'spiritual' (pneumatikos) are key terms in the New Testament and the words *spiritualis* and even *spiritualitas* were well known in Latin Christianity, 'spirituality' does not necessarily have a self-evident meaning for all Christians today.
[5] Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality*, 2.
[6] Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality*, 3.
[7] "Buy Faith and Spirituality Books Online | Indigo," Indigo, 2024, https://www.indigo.ca/en-ca/books/religion/., accessed July 10th, 2024.
[8] Books on these three topics and more are all found under the *faith and spirituality* category on the Indigo website.
[9] Galen Watts, *The Spiritual Turn: The Religion of the Heart and the Making of Romantic Liberal Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 3.

as once it seemed; the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor is particularly critical of the oversimplified theory that as the West becomes more secular, it naturally becomes less religious.[10]

Finally, if the matter were not complicated enough, one might also consider how to evaluate their spirituality. Against what norms should it be tested? Are these norms merely subjective, or is there a sense in which one can approach spirituality objectively? Do these norms differ depending on whether one considers themselves religious or SBNR? Are there some forms of spirituality which are more genuine than others? In order to address the above considerations, this thesis will attempt to answer the following question: what is an authentic secular spirituality? To answer this question, I will break it down into three further questions.

The first chapter will be concerned with answering the following question: what is the secular? To do so, I will draw on the work of Charles Taylor in his exceptionally detailed and thorough book, *A Secular Age*. I will begin by giving a nuanced definition of the secular which accounts for the complicated religious and spiritual landscape of today. For Taylor, the secular age is one in which, for the first time in Western history, a position which does not acknowledge a transcendent being is viable; crucially, this position exists among and even in competition with other positions which do acknowledge a transcendent being. Taylor calls this position an exclusive humanism and characterizes it as one which (1) places the sources of benevolence solely within the human and (2) does not consider any ends beyond human flourishing. Next, it will give an account of how the secular emerged in the modern West.[11]

I will begin with an exploration of the pre-modern world, including how people understood themselves, their relation to their communities and their relation to God and the 'supernatural'.[12] I will then detail what Taylor calls the spirit of Reform and how it shaped not only the Christian Reformation, but also the subsequent partial disenchantment of the world. The Reform Project, as Taylor calls it, will culminate in the rise of the disciplinary society and its insistence on the notion of civility. Modern philosophies such as the neo-stoicism of Justus Lipsius and the disengaged agency of René Descartes will be used to exemplify a new understanding of the human subject as naturally savage and whose ultimate goal is to discipline themselves according to the norms of civility. John Locke's notion of natural law will further show how human subjects relate to each other, particularly in society.

Next, I will briefly explore Taylor's notion of the Modern Social Imaginary and its implications for the emerging secular age. In the final section of this chapter, I will describe the interim stage between the pre-modern era and the secular which Taylor calls Providential Deism. From this period onwards, several anthropocentric shifts occur which allow for the secular age to emerge: the eclipse of purpose beyond human flourishing, the eclipse of Grace, the eclipse of the sense of mystery and the eclipse of theiosis.

---

[10] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Gifford Lectures 1999 (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 10–11.

[11] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 24. Taylor's use of the West ranges from the societies who have their roots in Latin Christendom to "North Atlantic" civilizations. In my view, Taylor understands the West to include North America and Western Europe, a definition which I will adopt for my research.

[12] Supernatural is here used to refer to God, demons, spirits, and other entities which were 'present' in the pre-modern era.

The second chapter will define the terms religion and spirituality. I will begin with an exploration of the use of the term religion in Saint-Augustine (late 4th century) to the 19th century and onward. This first section of the chapter will largely be supported by the work of Henry Cantwell Smith in his book *The Meaning and End of Religion*. In it, Smith argues that Saint-Augustine employs the term *religio* to refer to "the worship of the one true God" and "a personal relation to that Transcendent God […]."[13] Augustine's *De Vera Religione*, often translated as 'On True Religion' should instead be read as 'On Proper Piety' or 'On Genuine Worship'.[14] It is only much later in the 17th century when 'a religion' begins to be referred to as a set of propositions, or a system of belief which one either accepts or rejects, and 'religion' as the sum of all these systems of beliefs.

It is this modern definition of religion which I argue contemporary spirituality distinguishes itself from. In his book *The Spiritual Turn,* Galen Watts defines spirituality as having "shed or rejected the shackles of 'religion'."[15] He describes the spiritual turn which occurs in the 1960s and onward as a marriage between romantic values and rationalist liberal ideals. He terms this spirituality 'the religion of the heart' and details 10 of its main tenets: (1) experiential epistemology, (2) immanence of God or the superempirical, (3) benevolent God or universe, (4) redemptive self as theodicy, (5) self-realization as teleology, (6) self-ethic (voice from within), (7) virtue is natural, (8) sacralization of individual liberty, (9) mind-body-spirit connection, and (10) methodological individualism.

In the final section of this chapter, I draw on the work of Tara Isabella Burton in her book *Strange Rites: New Religions for A Godless World* to explore one of these contemporary spiritualities which she calls 'intuitional religions'. The group she surveys, which she calls the Remixed, is remarkably similar to Watts' understanding of adherents of the religion of heart. While she explores several, the particular intuitional religion which I focus on here as an example is Wellness Culture.

In the third chapter, I take a different approach to religion and spirituality than the one explored in the previous chapter. Rather than focus on religion or spirituality as a system of belief or set of propositions which we can either accept or reject by virtue of its utility, Keiji Nishitani proposes that we approach religion as a fundamental orientation towards what is *real*. I draw on the work of Bernard Lonergan to argue that humans are characterized by a pure and unrestricted desire to know, a desire which manifests through the operations of knowing in consciousness. Knowing is the compound of experiencing, understanding and judging, and it is through these operations that humans come into relationship with what is real and what is good. Still, humans are subject to limitations in their knowing (what Lonergan calls horizons) and various kinds of bias. Overcoming our biases and expanding our horizons is a matter of self-transcendence, which for Lonergan is rooted in what he calls conversion: intellectual conversion, moral conversion, and religious conversion. This threefold conversion is the basis for what he calls authenticity. Thus, an authentic secular spirituality is one's orientation towards or relationship with reality which is based in conversion, and which is lived in the secular age.

---

[13] Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1962), 31. From *De Vera Religione,* Burleigh trans., p. 283. Latin text, Migne ed, col. 172.
[14] Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, 31.
[15] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 3.

Methodology and Limitations

At its core, the methodology of this thesis is based in defining terms. In the first chapter, I take a historical approach to defining the term secular and to giving an account of its emergence, even though Charles Taylor himself resists the notion that a 'complete' account is possible at all. In the second chapter, I first take a historical approach by following the work of Henry Cantwell Smith and Galen Watts to define the terms religion and spirituality. I then draw on the work of Tara Isabella Burton who takes an anthropological approach to the task of defining contemporary spirituality. Finally, in the third chapter I approach defining spirituality using the philosophy and theology of Keiji Nishitani and Bernard Lonergan.

The guiding principle for this research's method is Lonergan's functional speciality of foundations. In *Method in Theology*, he says of the speciality of foundations that "it deliberately selects the frame-work, in which doctrines have their meaning, in which systematics reconciles, in which communications are effective."[16] Following this, it has been my goal in this thesis to elaborate the framework within which religion and spirituality today either draw on or reject doctrine, work out or avoid systematics and interpret communications. I have chosen the secular age as this framework because of the nuanced yet encompassing understanding which Charles Taylor has brought to it. According to Taylor, it is this framework which can shed light on the "conditions of belief"[17] for us today.

One limitation of this thesis which I would like to address is the reliance on primarily one source for the first chapter. Generally, when inquiring into a question as large and as complicated as defining the secular and giving an account of its emergence, one would draw upon multiple sources. However, Charles Taylor is world-renowned and an award-winning figure. In his book, *A Secular Age*, he brings together many more sources that I would have been able to, considering the time and space afforded. As such, it seemed both necessary and preferable to rely on Taylor's wealth of knowledge in this domain.

[16] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 2nd Revised ed. edition (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 1990), 268.
[17] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 22.

Chapter 1: The Secular Age

In chapter one, I will attempt to answer the first main question of my thesis; that is, how should "secular" be defined? There are in fact many ways in which different people use the term secular, and not all are equally useful in my estimation. If the definition is too broad, it risks losing all relevant meaning. If it is too simple, however, it risks missing the roots and patterns which only a more nuanced take can afford. I believe that the work of Charles Taylor in his seminal book, *A Secular Age*, strikes a balance in providing a broad yet nuanced understanding of the secular in the West and the story of its creation.

To begin, we might ask the obvious question: what is meant by 'secular' in contemporary Western society? To some, it refers to (1) the privatization of religion and the removal of any reference to God from 'the public sphere'. To others, it denotes (2) a decline in religious belief and practice. In both cases, the emergence of the secular is often explained as a sort of liberation from the shackles of pre-modern religion and its dogmatic confinements; the idea that finally, we can move past our previous naiveté and build a society which is based on "features of human nature which were there all along, but had been impeded by what is now set aside."[18]

Yet it is not so clear that (1) there has been a removal of any God reference from the public sphere or (2) that a decline in religious belief and practice is occurring. For one, neither of these understandings of secularism seem to hold true. With regards to the first, as Kristen Kobes Du Mez points out in her book, *Jesus and John Wayne*, in 2016 Donald Trump ran a distinctly 'Christian' campaign before his election as president of the United States: "He claimed that Christianity was 'under siege' and urged Christians to band together and assert their power."[19] Capturing the Christian Evangelical vote—a reported 81% of them—proved crucial to his campaign and victory.[20] Clearly, religion has not been eradicated from the public sphere. As for the second, Tara Isabella Burton notes that indeed, the religiously unaffiliated, sometimes called the religious Nones, are the fastest growing demographic in America; 29% of the population in 2021 proclaim to be either an atheist (4%), agnostic (5%), or 'nothing in particular' (20%).[21] Of the religious Nones, however, 72% "believe in a higher power of some kind, even if not in God as described in the Bible."[22] So, if these two understandings of the secular are not accurate, how are we to define it in a way that accounts for the emergence of this contemporary kind of belief?

Charles Taylor is dissatisfied with these understandings of how we came to live in a secular age and what that means; they are what he calls "subtraction stories."[23] For Taylor, the secular is not simply the residue of a bygone era stripped of its pre-modern assumptions and beliefs. What

[18] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 9; 26–27.
[19] Kristin Kobes Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation*, First edition (New York, NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2020), 6.
[20] Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne*, 7.
[21] Travis Mitchell, "About Three-in-Ten U.S. Adults Are Now Religiously Unaffiliated," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), December 14, 2021, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/12/14/about-three-in-ten-u-s-adults-are-now-religiously-unaffiliated/.
[22] "When Americans Say They Believe in God, What Do They Mean?," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), April 25, 2018, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2018/04/25/when-americans-say-they-believe-in-god-what-do-they-mean/.
[23] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 31.

marks our age as a secular one is a shift in 'the conditions of belief' to allow, for the first, time "a purely self-sufficient humanism" with "no final goals beyond human flourishing, nor any allegiance to anything beyond this flourishing."[24] Belief in or orientation towards a Transcendent reality, in such a society, becomes one among a variety of options. How did this happen? According to Taylor, the construction of the secular was only possible after several shifts in the conditions of belief. I will attempt to aggregate and summarize the story of these shifts which Taylor tells.

The first shift is related to our pre-modern conception of the world and our place in it. The second consists of two major shifts—the partial disenchantment of the world and a new drive to re-order society—which emerge during the Reformation. The third shift is, in a sense, a later continuation of the drive to re-order society which Taylor calls the rise of the disciplinary society. The fourth section is dedicated to Taylor's notion of the 'social imaginary' and what it looks like in the modern world. The fifth and final section explains what for Taylor is the middle ground between the pre-modern belief in God and the emergence of an exclusive humanism. He calls this stage "Providential Deism."

1. The Pre-Modern World

1.1 The Enchanted World and Social Embeddedness

Taylor goes to lengths to paint a picture of the enchanted world in which our ancestors lived even 500 years ago. This world was one in which both benevolent and maleficent forces exerted their powers over us and could affect our physical, emotional or spiritual state.[25] It is important to note that this applied to Christian and non-Christian societies alike; Taylor mentions "countless pagan societies" in Western Europe. What they held in common then was not necessarily the explicit belief in the God of Abraham, but the fact that they inhabited "a world of spirits, demons, and moral forces."[26] Our vulnerability to these forces is what Taylor describes as the 'porous' self. Furthermore, these forces did not simply affect the individual, such as in possession, but also the society as whole; in such a world, people are inextricably bound together in appeasing or fending them off through collective ritual action; not doing this put the society at serious risk. As such, the necessity of social bonds was directly tied to the sacred.[27]

For Taylor, this link between the social and the sacred defines what he calls the 'embeddedness' of pre-modern societies. Appeasing or fending off otherworldly forces was their most important action and might involve collectively "invoking, praying to, sacrificing to, [...] propitiating Gods or spirits[...], getting healing, protection from them, divining under their guidance, etc."[28] God's power was often seen as operating through particular "locations of sacred power" or "sacramentals."[29] Taylor goes as far as to say that in "early religion" our relationship with God is primarily a societal one. These acts of collective ritual were so important that a person's identity would necessarily be bound up with their social context, within the order of their

[24] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 26–27.
[25] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 45–49.
[26] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 34.
[27] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 50–52.
[28] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 161.
[29] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 89.

society; thus, the individual was embedded in the society. The modern understanding of the individual, by contrast, is very far from this inability to conceive of the self as separate from one's social context. As we shall see in the next section, it is not just the individual who was embedded in the society, but the society which was embedded in the cosmos.

1.2 Created Order and the Doctrine of Participation in Aquinas

Taylor explains our pre-modern understanding of the cosmos as containing "the sense of ordered whole." For Aristotle, the center of this cosmos was God. For Plato, the order of the cosmos was one which we were called to discern and to apply to ourselves and to society.[30] Furthermore, this order was also a hierarchy of being, from lower levels to higher levels. In Medieval Europe, the societal hierarchy was seen as a reflection of a higher order. Crucially, there was a sense of "hierarchical complementarity between vocations at different 'speeds'."[31] For example, the same moral demands were not placed on the laity as on the clergy or those who lived a life of renunciation: "in the Latin Church a (in theory) celibate clergy prays and fulfills priestly and pastoral functions for a married laity, which in turn supports the clergy. On a broader scale, monks pray for all, mendicant orders preach; others provide alms, hospitals, etc."[32] Similarly, natural disasters and "years of exceptional fertility and flourishing" alike were testaments to God's divine plan.[33] Thus, God is actively implicated in the world and is never far from his creation. A fully developed metaphysical account of this worldview can be found in the work of Thomas Aquinas, whose doctrine of participation is founded on such an understanding of creation and its relationship to God.[34]

For Aquinas, participation is directly based on *creatio ex nihilo*: God brings creation into being out of nothing as an act of ultimate freedom; creation is not a "necessary emanation" but both the expression and result of God's love and goodness.[35] Thus, the existence of finite being (*esse*) is fundamentally and *continuously* reliant on the Being of God (*ipsum esse subsistens*) as "the first cause of everything."[36] God alone sustains finite being out of love, and without him being could not sustain itself. As such, there is an essentially *qualitative* difference between finite being and the Being of God: while the essence of finite being is derived from the existence of God, God is the source of existence itself. So, the difference between lower and higher levels in the hierarchy of being is not a matter of quantity, size, or any numerical value. For Aquinas, finite being relates to God's Being *analogically*; for example, the way in which finite beings are good is categorically different from the way in which God is good. Similarly, when he says of a finite being that they 'exist', he does not mean that they exist in the same way that God Exists.[37]

---

[30] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 69.
[31] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 91.
[32] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 53.
[33] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 33.
[34] Rudi A. te Velde, "Participation: Aquinas and His Neoplatonic Sources," in *Christian Platonism: A History*, ed. Alexander J. B. Hampton and John Peter Kenney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 123.
[35] te Velde, "Participation," 137–38.
[36] te Velde, "Participation," 135.
[37] John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford, United Kingdom; Malden, Massachusetts: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), 305.

1.3 Eternal Time and Secular Time

A final aspect of the pre-modern worldview which Taylor describes is the understanding of time. There was indeed ordinary or 'secular' time, similar as to how we experience it today: "people who are in the saeculum, are embedded in ordinary time, they are living the life of ordinary time [...]."[38] This is contrasted with higher time, which in some cases is closer to something like 'eternity'. Taylor mentions two models of eternity in the Middle Ages: the first is Plato's eternity, and by it is not meant an infinite amount of secular time, but a time which is "fixed and unwavering."[39] The distinction here, like that between God's Being and our being in Aquinas, is qualitative. Eternity represents the really real, while ordinary time is but an image of eternity and is of little consequence.

The second model of eternity which Taylor describes is found in Augustine's *Confessions XI*. For Augustine, the past, present and future are on a continuum and are inseparable from each other. The past exists in the present as it shapes the actions which become the future. There is a coherence between the past, present and future such that they are gathered into an instant of action which cannot be disassembled: "this is the kind of coherence we find in a melody or poem [...]. there is a kind of simultaneity of the first note with the last, because all have to sound in the presence of the others in order for the melody to be heard."[40] Eternity, then, is God's instant, in which entirety of time is gathered in unity.

Finally, there is one more form of higher time which Taylor calls a 'Great Time' or 'Time of Origins'. This period often refers to an origin "in a remote past" during which heroes and gods roamed the earth.[41] While this time is in the past, it is also one which can be approached through ritual. In this way, holidays such as Good Friday in 2023 can be considered as closer to the Crucifixion than an ordinary day in 2020 because Good Friday and the Crucifixion are closer in relation to real time.

1.4 The Autonomization of Nature

Before moving on to the Reformation, there is one more aspect of the pre-modern worldview that needs to be briefly described, one which emerges in the late Middle Ages, and which reaches its fullest expression in the work of Aquinas. Alongside his understanding of the cosmos as an ordered whole is the Aristotelian view which sees created things and beings as having "their own natures, the forms which they strive to embody, and hence their own kind of perfection."[42] Taylor calls this 'the autonomization of nature', or the understanding that the created world has its own ends which are oriented towards the good and its own kind of perfection. Importantly, for Aquinas, the inherent perfection found in nature is a testament to God's own perfection, power and goodness; Taylor here quotes him in *The Summa Contra Gentiles*:

[38] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 64.
[39] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 65.
[40] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 66.
[41] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 67.
[42] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 102.

"consequently to detract from the creature's perfection is to detract from the perfection of the divine power."[43]

And so, there is a growing interest in nature for its own sake, and although this could be understood as the first step towards the later "negation of all super-nature", Taylor notes that no one in the Middle Ages would have considered it as such; this focus on nature necessarily had its foundation in God.[44] We can look at Hugh of St. Victor, for example, for whom "the entire sense-perceptible world is like a sort of book written by the finger of God."[45] Finally, alongside this interest in nature also comes the realism in the art of the late Middle Ages. There is a shift from the universal depiction of Christ, the Virgin and Child and other subjects to one which includes characteristics of real, live, human people. James Keenan explains that the twelfth century gives rise to a fascination with:

> the human person as *imago Dei* [...] through Abelard's insistence on the conscience, Bernard of Clairvaux's location of the image of God in human freedom, Hildegard of Bingen's knowledge of the way of the Lord and appreciation of the goodness of the human body and the delight of the passions, and Richard of St. Victor's understanding of the interpersonal human subject as an image of the three-personed God [...].[46]

Again, rather than explain this shift as one with non-religious motives, Taylor links it to a yearning for "the human Christ, the suffering Christ", one which reflects "the aspiration to bring Christ to the people."[47] He mentions as examples of this aspiration Peter Waldo, who preached the value of poverty to the laity, and St. Francis and St. Dominic, who founded their own religious orders.[48] Later, the Reformation would take this aspiration of reform to a new level.

2. The Reform Project

2.1 The Spirit of Reform

While the Reformation is most often associated with Luther and his contemporaries, Taylor notes that it was driven by a spirit of Reform[49], the roots of which begin much earlier, and which, in this earlier period, is driven by two main shifts: a bigger focus on personal devotion, and a rejection of the sacramentals and "magic". He gives a potential starting point of 1215, the year in which the Fourth Lateran Council made confession universal. This change is indicative of a sense in which the notions of judgment and salvation starts to become more individual than global; a

[43] The English Dominican Fathers, trans., *The Summa Contra Gentiles* (london: Burns Oates & Washbourne ltd., 1928). "Detrahere ergo perfectioni creaturarum est detrahere perfectioni divinae virtutis."
[44] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 102.
[45] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 104.
[46] James F. Keenan, *A History of Catholic Theological Ethics* (Paulist Press, 2022), 93–94.
[47] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 104–5.
[48] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 104. Interestingly, Taylor notes that "both Waldo and Francis were children of artisans."
[49] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 72–73. On Taylor's meaning of Reform: "What I'm calling 'Reform', with a capital 'R', is to be distinguished from attempts by more dedicated people to spread their forms of practice and devotion, by preaching, encouragement, example. These reform movements (with a small 'r') may even be organized or sponsored by the official hierarchy, without this amounting to 'Reform'. Proselytizing and renewal movements have cropped up periodically in all the higher civilizations. What distinguishes them from Reform is that they do not try to delegitimate less dedicated forms, but only to convert more people from these to the higher 'speeds'."

reform which is "attempting to raise general standards, not satisfied with a world in which only a few integrally fulfill the gospel, but trying to make certain pious practices absolutely general."[50] He gives as examples the Mendicant orders who preached in urban areas and among the laity. Taylor mentions that this new focus on the individual can also be partly attributed to the sense in which various social groups became less and less embedded in their social communities: "peasants who left the village to live in towns, new socially mobile groups who staffed the institutions of commerce, or the law, or administration; condotteri who lived by arms and their wits, new self-made rulers in Renaissance Italy [...]."[51] Within the mediaeval church, the image of purgatory also becomes more prevalent; in a sense, the anxiety towards death and personal salvation drives this preoccupation with reform.

Conversely, there is also a growing "fear of magic and the fear of hierarchical power" such as in the Albigensian crusade.[52] The rejection of the 'magic' of the sacraments was not a simple thing in the enchanted world, and so a kind of substitution was necessary. Taylor explains that the fear of 'dark magic' was replaced with the fear of God, whose power was greater than all other magic. But this is more just a replacement, because the fear of God is "something higher, something which exalts us, where the fear of magic seems to lower us."[53]

With the stage set, Luther is in some sense tapping into the central issue of the times when he comes along and declares salvation by faith alone, marking the third major shift in the Reform project. He connects with the rejection of church authority and church 'magic' by announcing that "we are all sinners, and deserve punishment. [...] Only in facing our full sinfulness can we throw ourselves on the mercy of God, by which alone we are justified."[54] This brings all Christians on the same level and charges them with the same duty, not just those with specific vocations such as the clergy. In brief, the Reformation, according to Taylor, had two main drives: the first was the drive to disenchant the world and the second was the drive to re-order society.

2.2 Partial Disenchantment in the Reformation

Taylor begins with Calvin, who wished for a radical break from the religious practice at the time. As depraved sinners with no claim to righteousness, our salvation is wholly dependent on God's mercy and desire for satisfaction through the sacrifice of Christ.[55] Additionally, only the select few are actually saved from damnation. Because our only recourse is to have faith, our salvation cannot be validated except by measuring our faith. If we are not confident in our faith, it is because we are likely damned; if we are among the elect, it is shown through inner transformation and the strength of our faith.

This way of thinking works alongside the fear of 'magic' to change our relationship with God's power. It can no longer operate through the sacraments or special sacred locations because this would blasphemously give us some agency in our salvation: "this means that the sacred is

[50] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 92–93.
[51] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 78.
[52] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 78; 85.
[53] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 83;84.
[54] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 85.
[55] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 88.

suddenly broadened: for the saved, God is sanctifying us everywhere, hence also in ordinary life, our work, in marriage, and so on."[56] Similarly, the sacred need not be associated with a higher time because God's power permeates all time—including secular time. Finally, whereas before there was a distinction between 'white' and 'black' magic, these can now be gathered under the devil's banner. Taylor notes that while this in part makes the Salem witch trials and the like possible, over time it leads to the disenchantment of the world by rejecting all external 'magic'.

2.3 The Re-ordering of Society

The second consequence of the Reformation, according to Taylor, is an evolution of the earlier drive to raise the standards placed on the individual lives of the laity. In ridding the world of the sacred, "we are not deterred by the older tabus, or supposedly sacred orderings."[57] Additionally, we reject a society which recognizes the complementarity of the different vocational levels of society. No longer does "the clergy pray for all, the lords defend all, the peasants labour for all [...];"[58] each member of society is called to recognize their helplessness facing sin and to throw themselves onto the mercy of God. There is a shift of focus towards the individual, perhaps even the society as made up of individuals, and the early stages of the breakdown of the sense in which we are socially embedded in our society.

There is an interesting and important tension which emerges between the understanding of our powerlessness, our total reliance on God's grace for our salvation, and having the confidence that we are saved. Indeed, anxiety and doubt about one's salvation was often interpreted as a sign that one was condemned, and so "the sanctified necessarily had a sense that they were saved by God [...]."[59] The cultivation of the individual's correct "inner stance" becomes crucial, one of confidence that one is wholly devoted to a cause which is "beyond human flourishing"[60], and even that those whose character is disciplined and well-ordered can extend this order to the rest of society. "Of course, we go on holding the express belief that only God's power makes this possible, but in fact the confidence has grown that we, people like us, successful, well-behaved people, in our well-ordered society/stratum, are beneficiaries of God's grace—as against those depraved, disordered classes, marginal groups [...]."[61] In short, this necessary confidence in a partially disenchanted world gives us a new freedom and urge to re-order society.

3. The Rise of the Disciplinary Society

3.1 Nominalism and the Mechanistic Worldview

This section is largely a continuation of the previous one in that it tells the story of the modern culmination of the Reform Project. But first, Taylor explains a major shift which he believes contributed considerably to the disenchantment of the world: William of Ockham's nominalism. Ockham rejects the Thomist view of nature as autonomous. For Aquinas, Aristotelian

[56] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 89.
[57] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 90–91.
[58] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 54.
[59] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 93.
[60] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 93.
[61] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 94–95.

nature prescribes each created thing its own good and perfection according to its essence. Once created, a thing's perfection "would be independent of God's will, except that he it is who has created the thing thus."[62] The idea of God 'pressing play' on creation and then no longer being able to further determine a thing's natural good—whether it corresponds to an appropriate reading of Aquinas or not—is precisely what Ockham disagrees with. Because this understanding seems to "limit God's sovereignty"[63], he proposes that God must be free to determine the good according to His will rather than according to the patterns which are internal to things.

Taylor notes that in this new understanding, human agents are no longer called to identify with a normative pattern revealed in creation through various signs and symbols, but rather with "the autonomous super-purposes of our creator."[64] If this is true, then how can we determine God's purpose for things? The answer becomes instrumental reason, with which we can discover the way the world was designed to work by producing effective results. This is what Taylor calls the mechanistic worldview, which sees the world as "a silent but beneficent machine." Like what we see in the Reformation, there is a growing confidence in the human agent's ability to construct and shape themselves and their world; Taylor here cites Marsilio Ficino as an example of this in science:

> Since man has observed the order of the heavens, when they move whither they proceed and with what measures, and what they produce, who could deny that man possesses as it were almost the same genius as the Author of the heavens? And who could deny that man could somehow also make the heavens, could he only obtain the instruments and the heavenly material, since even now he makes them, though of a different material, but with a very similar order.[65]

Next, we will look at Taylor's description of how this worldview emerges more and more in the domain of ethics and, consequently, in the re-ordering of society.

3.2 The Rise of Civility

The notion of 'civility', according to Taylor, grew during the Renaissance alongside Protestant notions of piety. Civility was understood as the fruits of the struggle for discipline and training and manifested both on the individual level—as "the development of rational moral self control [...], taste, manners, refinement [...]"—and on the societal level as "ordered government and domestic peace [...]."[66] By contrast, the uncultured, undisciplined "raw matter" of our nature was savage and needed to be "controlled, reshaped, and in certain cases eliminated"[67] or risk the descent into societal disorder.

---

[62] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 108.
[63] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 109.
[64] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 109–10.
[65] Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*.; quoted in Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 110.
[66] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 112.
[67] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 124.

3.2.1 Poor Laws

Like the Reformation, the re-ordering of society with regards to civility included not just the elite but all members of the population and took on an increasingly active transformational agenda.[68] For example, there is a sharp reversal in attitude towards the poor. In the Middle Ages, the poor were of two kinds: the voluntarily poor, who embodied the "path to holiness", and the involuntarily poor, who were nevertheless "an occasion of sanctification" for those who would help them. Following the fifteenth century, however—with a growing population, unsuccessful harvests and "a consequent flow of the destitute towards the towns"—the poor too were held to a higher standard; do they truly deserve charity, or can they work for themselves?[69] Taylor mentions relief offered "in highly controlled conditions"—such as seventeenth-century English work-houses which produced "what the economy needs" while helping people "pay their keep", and rehabilitation—such as teaching the children of beggars a trade to make them useful to society, or the Amsterdam Rasphuis which sought to rehabilitate both criminals and beggars alike.[70] For Puritans such as William Perkins, the view was even more extreme: the beggars "are as rotten legs and arms, that drop from the body."[71]

3.2.2 Condemnation of Popular Culture

Another consequence of the rise of civility is the condemnation of popular cultural practices such as "carnival, feasts of 'misrule', [and] dancing in the church", whereas beforehand, they were seen as a normal part of society.[72] Taylor explains how Carnival in particular was previously seen as a time of 'anti-structure', or even a 'safety valve' for society so that they could temporarily indulge in their "cravings of the flesh […] [which] could not be totally done away with [...]."[73] In the age of civility, however, these practices of anti-structure had no place in an ordered society, and by 1800, "the clergy, the nobility, the merchants, the professional men—and their wives—had abandoned popular culture to the lower classes."[74] One final example which Taylor gives is Maximilian of Bavaria, who in the early seventeenth century prohibited "magic, masquerades, short dresses, mixed bathing, fortune-telling, excessive eating and drinking, and 'shameful' language at weddings."[75]

3.3 Neo-Stoicism in Justus Lipsius

Above I have given some examples of attempts to re-order society according to the norms of civility. Taylor adds another important figure to the tale, whose philosophy attempts a modernized Christian-Stoic (but more so Stoic) synthesis in the Sixteenth century: Justus Lipsius, a philosopher from the Netherlands who proves to be highly influential. For Lipsius, one must be

---

[68] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 119.
[69] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 120.
[70] Thorsten Sellin, *Pioneering in Penology: The Amsterdam Houses of Correction in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944), 9.
[71] William Perkins, *Works* (London, 1616), 755.; quoted in Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 121.
[72] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 121.
[73] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 136.
[74] Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: New York University Press, 1978), 270.; quoted in Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 122.
[75] Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 221.; quoted in Taylor, *A Secular Age,* 122.

free of attachment to impermanent things such as "the compassion of feeling", and instead rely on reason which has its origin in God. A person with the proper disposition and who follows reason will exhibit constancy and is not deterred by "chaos, disorder, violence, [and] suffering."[76] Taylor sees two developments in Lipsius' philosophy which constitute significant steps towards our secular age: the first is this detachment from compassion which minimizes the importance of agape. The second development is the absence of any mention of our need for grace, other than that it is God who is the source of reason. God is still very important, but as Taylor points out, the cultivation of reason and constancy seem to make any other form of worship unnecessary; all we must do "is to become an excellent human being, and nothing further."[77]

Importantly, Lipsius' work not only advocated for the individual cultivation of constancy and discipline, but also that the political authority should engage in active intervention through ordinance to cultivate these in its population; this was a matter of "waging active struggle for the good."[78] In *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae, libri sex* (1589), he gives "detailed prescriptions for army reform" intended to develop discipline and bring about moral change through self-control, moderation and abstinence.[79] The Dutch military reforms of the 1590s implemented his recommendations, and other European armies followed suit. In a more general sense, Lipsius' emphasis on the development of self-discipline through active state intervention became "the basis of a far-reaching remaking of institutional and social life, through the discipline and training of the subordinate population [...]."[80]

Finally, Taylor notes that one of the main reasons for which neo-stoicism became popular was because it offered something greatly desired by those in a position to re-order society: "in the midst of bitter and violent inter-confessional strife", neo-stoicism offered "a basis for rational agreement on the foundations of political life, beyond and in spite of confessional differences."[81] Later, figures like John Locke continue striving for this common political ground with natural law theory.

3.4 Disengaged Agency in Descartes

While Descartes is in some ways in line with the neo-stoicism of Lipsius, there are some crucial differences in his thought as well. Like neo-stoicism, Descartes believes in the cultivation of detachment and reason, but emphasizes free will as that which affirms our intrinsic worth and even makes us "in a certain manner equal to God by making us our own masters [...]."[82] For Descartes, the virtue which we must cultivate is that of generosity, "which causes a man to esteem himself as highly as he legitimately can [...]."[83] This self-estimation is on the basis of our dignified

[76] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 127–28.
[77] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 130.
[78] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 128.
[79] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 130.
[80] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 131.
[81] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 139.
[82] René Descartes, *Les Passions de l'âme* (Paris, 1649), art. 152. « Car il n'y a que les seules actions qui dépendent de ce libre arbitre pour lesquelles nous puissons avec raison être loués ou blâmés, et il nous rend en quelque façon semblables à Dieu en nous faisons maîtres de nous-mêmes […]. »
[83] Descartes, *Les Passions de l'âme*, art. 153. « Ainsi je crois que la vraie générosité, qui fait qu'un homme s'estime au plus haut point qu'il se peut légitimement estimer […]. »

station as free and rational agents. Generosity, for Descartes, is "the key to all other virtues and a remedy against all the deregulations of the passions."[84] Finally, unlike neo-stoicism, which seeks to get rid of the passions, Descartes believes that for the virtuous, the passions can be subjected to reason, and perhaps even "useful precisely to the degree that they tend to excess."[85]

3.5 Modern Natural Law

To briefly preface this section, I would like to re-state the shift that has been occurring in the notion of nature. Before, such as in the Thomist worldview, the natural order manifests through forms which are at work in reality, "striving for realization."[86] There is also a sense of the built-in "complementarity of order and chaos" to reality; even the poor had their 'function'—or at the very least, it would not have occurred to anyone at this time to attempt to eliminate poverty—and the chaos of Carnival was a necessary time of anti-structure.[87] But there is a very different nature in the neo-stoicism of Lipsius', or in Calvinism. Nature is savage and must be tamed through discipline to cultivate civility. Order must be imposed from outside onto nature through reason and according to the way in which God has designed things to work. What is particularly astonishing for Taylor is the unprecedented degree to which we come to believe that we can eradicate chaos on a societal level.

For Locke, natural law is founded on "a race of equal individuals designed to enter with each other into a society of mutual benefit."[88] As rational beings capable of reconstructing ourselves and society, we are called to maintain order among individuals with potentially opposing goals by embracing an ethic of mutual respect and self-improvement. This calling is, of course, Providential, and the fruits of effective and rational adherence are stability, peace, growth and prosperity.

3.6 The Buffered Self & The Modern Moral Order

Here I would like to summarize two crucial shifts which have taken place vis-à-vis the pre-modern understanding of the self and the society. As mentioned in section 1, the pre-modern self could be described as 'porous', meaning that they are vulnerable to supernatural forces, demons, spirits, etc. By contrast, the modern self is what Taylor calls 'buffered'. By this, he means that there is a border between the inner self and the outer world: "one just has to take once and for all the right stance, that of instrumental, rational control, and this world of feeling goes expressively dead; which is just to say that it shows up in its true, disenchanted nature."[89]

We can also say of the pre-modern world that it is understood as a cosmos which expresses an eternal order through signs and symbols. This cosmic order is hierarchical and is reflected in the society's hierarchy which gives it legitimacy to the degree that the different strata fulfill their respective stations. By contrast, the modern universe is mechanistic; it has been designed to

[84] Descartes, *Les Passions de l'âme*, art. 161. « […] la vertue de générosité, laquelle étant comme la clef de toutes autres vertus et un remède général contre tous les dérèglements des passions […]. »
[85] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 144.
[86] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 138.
[87] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 135–36.
[88] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 141.
[89] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 149.

produce certain results but does not reflect a higher order. Hierarchy is not built-in to nature and is only legitimated in society to the degree in which it promotes the mutual benefit of individuals. This order of mutual benefit is predicated on a natural order and should strive to provide "the means to life" and freedom "to all participants equally."[90]

4. The Modern Social Imaginary

At this point, most (but not all) of the important pieces are in place for the modern secular age to be able to emerge. There are crucial shifts which have occurred in what Taylor calls the 'social imaginary'. He defines social imaginary as the following: "the way in which people 'imagine their social surroundings [...], shared by large groups of people, if not the whole society [...]" and "which makes possible common practices, and a widely shared sense of legitimacy."[91] The social imaginary both influences our sense of self and gives context and legitimacy to our actions. He distinguishes this from social theories because while they are more explicit and can no doubt slip into the social imaginary, they tend to be held by a small group of people before they do. By contrast, the social imaginary is a sort of 'background' or "unstructured and inarticulate understanding of our whole situation [...]" which can never be fully expressed due to its "unlimited and indefinite nature."[92]

One example which Taylor gives is the organization of a demonstration. This act is both known to us and makes sense to us:

> [...] part of what makes sense of it is some picture of ourselves as speaking to others, to which we are related in a certain way—say, compatriots, or the human race. [...] The mode of address says something about the footing we stand on with our addressees. [...] It figures the addressee as one who can be, must be reasoned with. [...] getting the message to the government and our fellow citizens [...] makes sense in a wider context, in which we see ourselves as standing in a continuing relation with others, in which it is appropriate to address them in this manner, and not say, by humble supplication, or by threats of armed insurrection. We can gesture quickly at all this by saying that this kind of demonstration has its normal place in a stable, ordered, democratic society. [...] We can see here how the understanding of what we're doing right now (without which we couldn't be doing *this* action) makes the sense it does, because of our grasp on the wider predicament [...]. This in turn opens out wider perspectives on where we stand in space and time [...]. This sense of standing internationally and in history [...]. This background which makes sense of any given act is thus wide and deep. It doesn't include everything in the world, but the relevant sense-giving features can't be circumscribed [...].[93]

While it would not be possible to give a complete description of the modern social imaginary, I will explore in this section two of its main features according to Taylor: the economy and the public

[90] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 185–86.
[91] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 186.
[92] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 187.
[93] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 188–89.

sphere. These two features indicate the extent to which the modern moral order has made it into the social imaginary.

4.1 The Economy

The modern notion of the economy is based on the Lockean notion of the social order of mutual benefit. Society is made up of individuals with their own goals and motivations, and they all have the right to life and freedom. Still, human individuals are designed with the ability to produce mutual benefit if they act efficiently in exercising their freedom; this could be with the explicit intention of producing benefits for others in mind, but there was also a sense in which "our own individual prosperity redounds to the general welfare. [...] Otherwise put, humans are engaged in an exchange of services. The fundamental model seems to be what we have come to call an economy."[94]

Thus, an organized society strives to procure security and economic prosperity for its population. Even Louis XIV bases his rule on the principle of equivalent exchange: "All these different conditions that compose the world are united to each other only by an exchange of reciprocal obligations. The deference and respect that we receive from our subjects are not a free gift from them but payment for the justice and protection they expect to receive from us."[95] In this sense, while an individual might be oriented towards their own gain (such as merchants), good policy could curb this act towards the benefit of the society. Finally, the society is seen more and more as an economy, and commerce more and more as "the path to peace and orderly existence."[96]

4.2 The Public Sphere

Taylor defines the public sphere as "a kind of common space [...] in which people who never meet understand themselves to be engaged in discussion, and capable of reaching a common mind."[97] It is made up of various forms of media which could include "print, electronic, and also face-to-face-encounters"[98], and all of which relate to and refer to each other to make up one big debate. Taylor distinguishes the public sphere from any common space where people assemble for a common purpose. The public sphere "knits together the plurality of such spaces into one larger space of non-assembly. The same discussion is deemed to pass through our debate today, and someone else's earnest conversation tomorrow, and the newspaper interview Thursday, and so on."[99]

While this 'meta-topical space', as Taylor calls it, is not a new phenomenon, it is conceived of in a new way with regards to the modern idea of order: "in the Grotius-Locke idealization, political society is seen as an instrument for something pre-political; there is a place to stand, mentally, outside of the polity, as it were, from which to judge its performance."[100] Similarly, the public sphere is seen as a part of social life which is independent of the political. This becomes

---

[94] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 192.
[95] *Mémoires*, p. 63, cited in Nanerl Keohane, *Philosophy and the state in France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 248.
[96] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 194.
[97] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 202.
[98] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 200.
[99] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 202.
[100] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 203.

important because what comes out of this great exchange of ideas in the public space is 'public opinion', not in the sense of just a collection of opinions, but "a reflective view, emerging from critical debate" which had "a normative status."[101] Public opinion was the consensus of the reasonable population and external to political power, and the government had (in theory) a moral obligation to follow it.

In a sense, the public sphere transcends the boundaries of the state to include all those who were 'enlightened'; a society "which is constituted by nothing outside of the common action we carry out in it: coming to a common mind, where possible, through the exchange of ideas."[102] Taylor argues that this new kind of 'society' is a major indicator of modern secularity: in the pre-modern understanding, the common agency of a society's constituents is grounded in a metaphysical reality such that even if they were to perish, the prior framework would still Exist. In this modern understanding, the public sphere becomes a society whose common agency is constituted by "nothing other than such common action"[103] and exists solely in profane time.

4.3 Historical Consciousness

The notion which Lonergan calls 'historical mindedness' is something which Taylor mentions only briefly, but which he emphasizes is a crucial part of the modern identity. Lonergan distinguishes historical mindedness from the 'classicist' worldview, which views human nature as unchanging, and which is congruent with Taylor's understanding of the premodern worldview. Lonergan puts it thusly: "Modern man is fully aware that he has made his modern world. [...] In every case modernity means the desertion, if not the repudiation, of the old models and methods, and the exercise of freedom, initiative, creativity."[104]

Michael J. Himes, in a chapter on the same topic, expands on this idea with his own thought. He adds that historical consciousness simultaneously made the past more distant to us and the future open to us. There is a sense in which "the significantly and radically *new* appeared in the western experience."[105] In short, historical consciousness takes into account human intentionality, their experience, their coming to understand, their judgments, and their deliberate actions, which are ultimately informed by meaning.[106] We will return to the significance of this in the final chapter.

5. Providential Deism

This final section of chapter 1 is, in a sense, a broad summary of the previous four sections. This chapter has attempted to describe the way in which an exclusive humanism became possible, or the way in which a secular worldview became possible—primarily as stated by Taylor. This

[101] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 203.
[102] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 208.
[103] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 209.
[104] Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "The Transition from A Classicist World-View To Historical Mindedness," in *A Second Collection; [Papers]*, ed. Bernard Tyrrell and William F. J. Ryan (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 5.
[105] Michael J. Himes, "The Human Person in Contemporary Theology: From Human Nature to Authentic Subjectivity," in *Introduction to Christian Ethics*, ed. Ronald P. Hamel and Kenneth R. Himes, 1989, 50.
[106] Himes, "The Human Person in Contemporary Theology," 55.

section will attempt to (1) highlight the anthropocentric shifts which made such an exclusive humanism possible and (2) explain which factors led to these shifts.

Taylor emphasizes throughout *A Secular Age* that it was not a straight path from the pre-modern belief in God to the possibility of an exclusive humanism. The interim stage between these is what Taylor calls Providential Deism. In this stage, God is still the creator of the universe and the order of mutual benefit which can be known through our reason. This order, however, becomes one which is set forth at the beginning of time, and afterwards the God of Providential Deism does not intervene further. According to Taylor, there were four shifts which made such a conception of the Transcendent and their role possible—and later, an exclusive humanism.

5.1 The Eclipse of Purpose Beyond Human Flourishing

The first anthropocentric shift is the eclipse of the sense of a further purpose: God's purpose is reduced from something beyond human flourishing to our enacting the order of mutual benefit. Human flourishing becomes the ultimate goal. Taylor gives the example of Matthew Tindal's *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, in which he explains that "God's purposes for us are confined to the encompassing of 'the common Interest, and mutual Happiness of his rational Creatures.'"[107] While this view was considered extreme and not accepted by many at the time, Taylor notes how it is indicative of the "humanizing trend" which influenced "even people who held to orthodox beliefs", such as the Abbé de Saint-Pierre who "adopted the position that the practice of virtue was the only form of cult worthy of God."[108]

This trend can also be connected to Taylor's notion of Reform. It begins with the attempt to raise the standards imposed on the lay people, such as the establishing of yearly confession, absolution and communion in the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. Over several hundred years, the church cycles between periods of laxity and further attempts to raise standards, none of which were more potent and persistent than the Reformation. "The idea begins to slowly arise [...] of a world here and now in which no compromises need to be made with any alternative principle."[109] Over time, the idea of an ordered hierarchical cosmos in which both structure and antistructure have their respective places fades.

What was once a purely religious drive to reform begins to generalize into attempts to civilize society near the beginning of the 16th century. This is seen as compatible with the religious view because for the reformers, "the undeniable fruit of Godliness would be ordered, disciplined lives."[110] In the long run, however, an ordered, disciplined life and society becomes the end in itself: "this immense effort seems itself to have obscured the essentials of faith, and to have led to a substitution of something secondary for the primary goal of centring everything on God."[111]

[107] Matthew Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation* (London, 1730), 14. Quoted in *A Secular Age*, 239.
[108] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 239.
[109] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 261.
[110] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 262.
[111] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 262.

5.2 The Eclipse of Grace

The second anthropocentric shift was the eclipse of grace. In the stage of Providential Deism, God does not intervene particularly in the events of the world; he has imbued us with reason so that we can discern and bring about order in the universe. He also will be there at the end of time as judge. Again, this shift did not happen overnight. Even for Calvin, the idea that we could be saved or bring order to our lives or the world without God's grace was inconceivable. As Taylor puts it, there was no chance of experiencing "moral fullness [...] within the range of purely intra-human powers."[112]

And so, the moral sources of an exclusive humanism had to be constructed, such as in neo-stoicism or the modern order of mutual benefit. Instrumental reason enables us (and even compels us) to impose order onto both human nature and human society. More than this, we are motivated to discipline individuals and re-order society for the good of others. Crucially, in premodernity this benevolent inclination is reliant on God and grace: "this is the historical trace, as it were, of agape."[113] Additionally, the good, in premodernity, is pursued in community. But the emerging exclusive humanism places this altruistic power in human nature; we are naturally inclined to act independently for the good of others. Taylor supposes that such a transition could not have been made on any other basis; the retention of a universal beneficence (previously agape) allowed for the transition in a way that a subtraction story does not account for; something like "once the old religious and metaphysical beliefs withered away, room was finally made for the existing, purely human moral motivation."[114]

Of course, the gradual disenchantment of the world also contributed to the possibility of this shift by first emphasizing the necessity of God's active grace, and subsequently—over a long period time—placing the power to re-order our lives and society *in ourselves* through "disengaged instrumental reason whose dispassionate impersonality was taken as sufficient for universal beneficence."[115] Furthermore, this is not the only example of the modern immanentization of moral power, as Taylor puts it; he cites Kant, for whom "the very power to act by universal law is an object of wonder and infinite respect [...] which lifts and inspires us to rise to the full demands of justice and benevolence"[116], and Rousseau, for whom it is our sense of *pitié* which, if it is not suppressed by the "false and denaturing conditions of society", prompts us "to act on universal principles."[117]

Finally, for Taylor, it is important to acknowledge just how impressive an achievement the immanentization of moral sources is:

> [...] it is after all one of the great realizations in the history of human development, whatever our ultimate views about its scope or limitations. It is an achievement, because getting to the point where we can be inspired and empowered to beneficence

[112] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 262.
[113] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 265.
[114] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 263.
[115] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 269.
[116] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 269.
[117] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 270.

> by an impartial view of things, or a sense of buried sympathy within, requires training, or inculcated insight, and frequently much work on ourselves. It is in this respect like being moved by other great moral sources in our tradition, be they the Idea of the Good, or God's agape, or the Tao, or human-heartedness. These things are not just given to us by birth, as is our fear of the dark, or of falling, or our responses to a parent's smile. Making the new sources available was thus a step in an unprecedented direction, something not to be dismissed lightly.[118]

5.3 The Eclipse of the Sense of Mystery

The third anthropocentric shift is the fading of the sense of mystery. In Providential Deism, the universe is designed such that our application of reason can discern its laws and lead us to act according to God's plan. Neither is this plan mysterious to us, since it is motivated by "our-self-interest well understood or in our feelings of benevolence."[119] Taylor quotes Francis Hutcheson who argues against "Particular providences" because they "[...] would immediately supersede all contrivance and forethought of men, and all prudent action [...]."[120] Calvin contributed to this by rejecting the mystery of the sacraments, and later, John Toland in rejecting mystery in general in *Christianity not Mysterious*.

Furthermore, ultimate goals and motivations are now defined in purely human terms. Additionally, "we seem to have come into greatly increased cognitive powers, thanks to the methods of the new sciences."[121] Gradually, our apprehension of mystery becomes distant, even inexistent.

5.4 The Eclipse of Theiosis

The fourth anthropocentric shift is the eclipse of theiosis as part of human destiny. This shift relates to the eclipse of a purpose beyond human flourishing through "the idea that God was planning a transformation of human beings, which would take them beyond the limitations which inhere in their present condition."[122] In the modern world, however, human transformation is conceived of either as the development of one's own disengaged reason, discipline (self-imposed or imposed by society), or else they discover their potential for universal benevolence by peeling back the layers which historical agents have imposed. In either case, transformation is strictly immanent. Eventually, even the idea of the after-life—the last bastion of a sense of transformation external to humans—fades.

5.5 The Rise of Exclusive Humanism and the Secular

The above sections surely point to the eventual decline in religion—and in some cases even a hostility towards it. I would like to briefly point out some of the ways in which this was the case, according to Taylor. There was, in the Enlightenment, those who condemned religion "for its

[118] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 273.
[119] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 240.
[120] Francis Hutcheson, *A System of Moral Philosophy* (Hildesheim: George Olms, 1969), 184.
[121] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 280.
[122] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 241.

obscurantism and irrationality [...] because it served to justify oppression and the imposition of suffering. The proposing of goals beyond human flourishing were seen as denials of the right to happiness."[123]

In particular, the doctrines (1) that only the few were saved and (2) of predestination were seen as offensive. The authority with which the Churches made such claims were more and more unbelievable in the light of modern rationalism. Spiritual practices previously seen as valuable, such as are found in the monastic life, were "condemned under the names of 'fanaticism' or 'enthusiasm'"[124] for contributing nothing to human welfare.

Another distinction which can be made is the rise of the secular, in the sense which is distinct from the 'spiritual'. In the Middle Ages, there is a clear distinction between secular affairs, which are temporal, of this world, and 'spiritual' affairs, which are distinct from this world, which are related to higher time, to eternity, or "what Augustine spoke of as the 'City of God'."[125] Throughout the long process of Reform, this distinction collapses.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to give a nuanced account of the emergence of our secular world, in which an exclusive humanism is for the first time possible. In this world, belief in God or an orientation beyond human flourishing is an option among many.

To conclude this chapter, I will reiterate one of the points that Taylor makes incessantly: "We can set the stage as well as we can; we can never fully explain the rise of exclusive humanism; certainly not, if explanation means: showing its inevitability, given certain conditions. Like all striking human achievements, there is something in it which resists reduction to these enabling conditions."[126] While it can never be fully explicated, our shift to a secular world has its roots in our past, roots which still affect our condition today. Such a world did not come about as a result of the subtraction of metaphysical beliefs to finally reveal a universal humanist core. This world had to be constructed in a plausible way which was (for a time) in continuity with what came before.

[123] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 281.
[124] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 282.
[125] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 284.
[126] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 277.

Chapter 2: What is Spirituality?

We now have a more nuanced definition of what it means to live in a secular age and an account of how such a period was able to emerge when even 500 years ago, it was inconceivable. To live in a secular age is to live in a world where the conditions of belief have changed, and an orientation towards the Transcendent is merely one among a variety of viable options for one's life direction. Some of these options adopt the position of an exclusive humanism which excludes any source of flourishing, fullness, or morality beyond humans. It should be specified that we are not necessarily talking about a particular brand of explicit religious belief here, but rather the orientation of our lives, or *where the power to reach fullness is identified* (I will return to this sense of fullness in the final chapter). Taylor suggests that we look at belief and unbelief as conditions of lived experience: belief as a lived condition (in the Christian understanding) places us in relationship with a Being outside of us, on whom we are dependent for our sense of fullness, for our capacity to be transformed. Unbelief as a (modern) lived condition, by contrast, places the power to reach fullness within us, often through our rational capacities[127], or perhaps through the authentic expression of our feelings. Taylor's focus on this sense of fullness which orients our lives is important because it brings our attention not simply to the particularity of our explicit belief but, more importantly, the condition of our lived experience.

Still, spirituality as it is commonly understood today often carries with it the implication of being opposed to or at least distinct from traditional religion. In this chapter, I will begin by looking at how the use of the term religion has changed from the 4th century to the modern day. I believe that doing so will give us a clearer understanding of what those who consider themselves spiritual but not religious are opposing, as well as the source of this opposition. Next, with this understanding of religion, I will look at contemporary spirituality today—named by Galen Watts *the religion of the heart*[128]—and the historical roots which shaped our understanding of it in the West. Finally, I will explore wellness culture as a distinctly American example of such a spirituality, one of which Burton calls the intuitional religions.[129]

1. The Meaning and End of Religion

In this section, I will draw upon Wilfred Cantwell Smith's etymological study of 'religion' in his book *The Meaning and End of Religion*. He begins in the 1st century B.C. with the Latin *religio* and ends with his contemporary day (the book was published in 1962).

1.1 Augustine and De Vera Religione

While the word 'religion' has been used in different ways over the centuries, we can make a few observations: to begin, the word tends to be used in relation to cultic practice, or the attitude of the worshipper or the *way* of worshipping. For example, St. Augustine's *De Vera Religione,* written in the late 4th century, is sometimes translated as 'On True Religion'; however, this is misleading for our modern ears. Smith notes that a more adequate rendering would be "On Proper

[127] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 19–21.
[128] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 11.
[129] Tara Isabella Burton, *Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World*, Reprint edition (PublicAffairs, 2022), 33.

Piety" or "On Genuine Worship", which for Augustine, is "the worship of the one true God [...]", "a personal relation to that Transcendent God 'from whom, through whom, and in whom are all things.'"[130] Finally, Smith notes that *De Vera Religione* hardly mentioned 'Christianity'. For Augustine, *religio* "is the bond that unites us [...] to the Creator Himself. [...] it 'existed of old and was never absent from the beginning of the human race until Christ came into flesh. Then true religion which already existed began to be called Christian."[131]

1.2 The Middle Ages and Thomas Aquinas

We may look at some later examples in the Middle Ages, during which Smith notes that the word is used surprisingly little; more often the term 'faith' is used. In the fifth century, *religio* is used to refer to the monastic life, and the 'religious' as distinct from the lay people. Later, in Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* (13th century), Smith identifies three uses of the term: "the outward expression of faith; the inner motivation towards worshipping God, and that worship itself; and the bond that unites the soul with God" (this third one is similar to St. Augustine). Again, we can see here that religion is used very differently here than in our modern context: for Aquinas, *religio* is "an activity of the soul: it is the man of faith's prompting the due worship of God."[132]

1.3 Marsilio Ficino and De Christiana Religione

The meaning of the term begins to shift significantly in the modern era. In the 15th century, Marsilio Ficino produces his work entitled *De Christiana Religione*. While it might be enticing to view this title as proclaiming the Christian religion as distinct from other *religions* in the sense that the word is used today, Smith cautions against this leap. Indeed, Ficino is distinguishing between a Christian 'religion' and other 'religions', but by *religio* he means that which is "universal to man; it is the divinely provided instinct that makes man man, by which he perceives and worships God."[133] If this is the case, then what is particular about *De Christiania Religione*? According to Smith, it is in "degrees of genuineness" that Ficino distinguishes different forms of *religio*: "those worship Him best who sedulously revere Him in act, in goodness, in truthfulness of speech, in clarity of mind, in love. Such men [...] are worshipping God in the way that Christ has exemplified and taught."[134] The adjective 'Christian' should be understood as 'pertaining to Christ', rather than the more modern understanding of 'pertaining to the religion of Christianity'. In a similar vein, his earlier work *Theologia Platonica* describes *religio* as "a universal instinct in mankind to seek the good."[135] Ficino identifies the good with the divine.

1.4 The Reformation

Although the use of the term, religion, does change slightly during the Reformation, Smith argues that it is still far from our modern understanding. First, there is Luther, for whom 'faith' is

---

[130] Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, 31. From *De Vera Religione,* Burleigh trans., p. 283. Latin text, Migne ed, col. 172.
[131] Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, 31. From *De Vera Religione*, chap, xx, section 38, Migne ed., col. 138.
[132] Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, 33. The phrasing here is Smith's own, pertaining to *Summa Theologica*, 11.2.81, article 1 and II.2.82, article 2. (Ottawa ed. cit., vol. 3, pp. 1829-1831, 1837-1838.)
[133] Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, 34.
[134] Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, 35.
[135] Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, 35.

the central concern. None of his works carry the term 'religion' in their title, and Smith gives an example of Luther using the term in a Latin commentary on Isaiah 44:18, where *vera religio* is used to denote "something a person does," rather than what a person believes.[136]

Zwingli, however, makes more pronounced use of the term, such as in *De Vera et Falsa Religione Commentarius*, published in 1525. In typical reformer fashion, false *religio* for Zwingli is "false piety or superstition [...] when anything is trusted as God other than He."[137] True *religio*, then, is the proper relationship between man and God, a relationship which does not place organization or institution above the divine itself. Smith translates the title of Zwingli's work as 'An essay on genuine and spurious piety'.

Finally, Smith speculates that it is perhaps in no small part due to Calvin's theology—particularly in *Christianae Religionis Institutio* (first published in 1536) and its subsequent revisions, reissues and translations (the final one in 1559)—that the term *religio* and the phrase *Christiana religio* become common by 1600. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the focus at this time is one's inner stance, and this is certainly the case for Calvin regarding *religio*. His book does not refer to "an overt, institutional phenomenon, nor an abstract system"[138], but rather the instruction of proper piety. Smith suggests reading the title as 'Grounding in Christian piety'.

But as time goes on, religion means something very different. More and more, we see the word used as the generic 'religion' "to designate as an external entity the total system or sum of systems of belief, or simply the generalization that they are there."[139] Another use, 'a religion' or plural 'religions', refers to a "systematic religious entity, conceptually identifiable and characterising a distinct community"[140]; from this kind of usage we get distinct 'religions' such as Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, etc. Smith sees this use of religion as inadequate at best and at worst damaging to the complex reality of religious life.

1.5 The 17th Century Onward

Roughly a century after Calvin's influential attempt to instruct people on how to cultivate the proper inner orientation towards God through "a pattern of doctrines, Church practices, interpretations of Scripture and of the Lord's Supper, etc."[141], people are using the term *religio* to refer to the system of beliefs, ideas and practices itself. Smith gives as an example *De Veritate Religionis Christianae* (published in 1627) in which Grotius argues for the truth of the Christian religion, or system of ideas. Smith also finds in the work of Lord Herbert of Cherbury—who was very influential among the Deists—the "presumption that the truth or otherwise of a religion is the truth or otherwise of its doctrines."[142]

Increasingly, this becomes the norm in the Enlightenment: religion is a set of propositions to be either accepted or rejected. Even in so-called apologetics this becomes the case, such as Joseph Butler's *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed to the Constitution and Course of*

[136] Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, 207.
[137] Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, 36.
[138] Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, 37.
[139] Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, 42.
[140] Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, 109.
[141] Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, 39.
[142] Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, 40.

Nature in which he writes "Christianity is a scheme."[143] Following this sense, we get the plural 'religions'—various abstract, external, depersonalized systems whose validity one can contemplate. We also get the "generic 'religion' to designate as an external entity the total system or sum of all systems of beliefs, or simply the generalization that they are there."[144] The latter is most often used, according to Smith, in the phrase 'controversy about religion'.

In Schleiermacher, we have an explicit rejection of this use of the term religion: "I ask, therefore, that you turn from everything usually reckoned religion, and fix your regard on the inward emotions and dispositions." Schleiermacher is cautioning people not to mistake the 'infinite religion' for its externalized—and therefore inadequate—manifestations in the 'positive religions'. In Feuerbach's *The Essence of Religion* (1851), we see the dissemination of the idea that religion has an 'essence', a nature, a "definite and fixed form, if only one could find it."[145] At the same time, there is a treatment of religion as a historical manifestation of this essence, the study of which becomes the task of the sociologist.

Conclusion

Smith summarizes this "long-range development" of the term religion as a "diversion of interest from man's personal sense of the holy to what we might call the observable product or historical deposit of its outworking."[146] As a result, we have inherited in our modern world four uses of the term religion. It can describe the intensity of one's piety, as in the degree to which one is 'religious'. It can refer to an ideal system, such as 'true Christianity', or to the historical or sociological manifestation of human behavior: from these two we get the plural 'religions' and their differences. Finally, there is the generic 'religion' as distinct from other aspects of human life such as art or politics. The meaning of this final sense is uncountably varied and relies in part on a person's understanding of the previous senses.

And so, in the contemporary world, religion is often understood as something objectified and external; either an externalized system of doctrines and beliefs, *a religion*, or a generic entity which represents the sum of all these systems, *religion*. It is this understanding of religion, in my view, which contemporary spirituality distinguishes itself from, even to the point of spirituality being defined by its opposition to something akin to a religion. In the next section, this contemporary notion of spirituality will be explored.

2. The Spiritual Turn

As noted in the previous section, the 19th century brought with it the idea that religion has a fixed essence. We might say that spirituality as it is commonly used from the 'spiritual turn' of the 1960s onward can be partly understood as the next evolution of the search for the 'essence of religion':

[143] Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, 41.
[144] Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, 43.
[145] Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, 46. 10 years later, Feuerbach wrote *The Essence of Christianity*.
[146] Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, 39.

> [...] for a large majority, to be 'spiritual' is to have shed or rejected the shackles of 'religion'—that is, those aspects of religion which are institutional, or bind one to tradition—in lieu of a unique quest of one's own. It is to have taken the road less traveled as a means of realizing one's true self, unencumbered by societal norms, cultural expectations, or religious conventions.[147]

So, the contemporary notion of spirituality understands itself as opposed to the institutions, traditions, and conventions of 'religion'. But there is more to it than this: In this section, I will look at Galen Watts' *The Spiritual Turn* in which he looks at the historical roots of what he calls the religion of the heart and its main tenets. To do this, he draws upon sociological sources, popular spiritual literature and data which he has collected first-hand from members of the NLF (New Life Fellowship), an Alcoholics Anonymous group in downtown Toronto, C3T (C3 Church Toronto) and TL (Tomorrow's Leaders), a public-speaking group hosted by Toastmasters International in downtown Toronto. Indeed, the religion of the heart is not just influential on spirituality today but is inextricably bound up with the larger cultural tradition of romantic liberal modernity: "the religion of the heart both belongs to a long-standing tradition and simultaneously reflects a novel constellation of beliefs, tropes, and ideals which have been significantly influenced by recent societal developments."[148]

2.1 Historical Roots of 'The Religion of The Heart'

Watts follows Ted Campbell who clusters several 17th and 18th century movements such as "Jansenism, Quietism, English puritanism, Quaker spirituality, Pietism and early Methodism" together under the banner of "religion of the heart movements."[149] Campbell argues that what these movements have in common is their "insistence that 'the heart,' the human will and the affections, was the crucial link between divinity and humanity, that the way to God was the way of heartfelt devotion."[150]

Watts also sees the religion of the heart as partly rooted in "spiritual and mystic religion", which according to Ernst Troeltsch, focuses on "subjective religious experience and 'inwardness', in concentration upon the purely interior and emotional side of religious experience."[151] Significantly, this tradition "sees itself as the real universal heart of all religion, of which the various myth-forms are merely the outer garment."[152]

Furthermore, Watts places the religion of the heart in line with traditions which opt for "epistemologies of [...] feeling/intuition" over those of "reason, doctrine."[153] He refers to Wouter Hanegraaf, who distinguishes three traditional approaches to truth in the West: "*reason* (represented by the Ancient Greeks and Enlightenment rationalists), *faith* (represented by

---

[147] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 3.
[148] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 38.
[149] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 39.
[150] Ted Campbell, *The Religion of the Heart: A Study of European Religious Life in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 177.
[151] Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, trans. Olive Wyon, Halley Stewart Publications (London: Allen & Unwin ;, 1931), 731.
[152] Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, 745.
[153] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 40.

traditional Christianity), and *gnosis* (represented by occultist and esoteric movements)."[154] While Watts questions whether the religion of the heart should be properly understood as a 'gnostic' tradition, he notes that what is important for the religion of the heart is its rejection of "rationalistic and scientific reductionism" and its criticism of "dogmatic traditionalism."[155]

According to Watts, one of the main sources of the religion of the heart post-Enlightenment is the romantic movement. He refers to Bertrand Russell, who explains the movement as "in its essence, aimed at liberating human personality from the fetters of social convention and social morality."[156] For the romantics, society is seen as "corrupting, or as the source of vice."[157] Finally, for the romantics, "self-expression, self-realization is the goal of man, as of everything in the universe."[158] Although romanticism was a response to "modern rationalism, bureaucratization, and mechanization,"[159] it did not become a widespread movement until the 1960s, during which it became allied with certain liberal ideals.

For Watts, the fundamental value of liberalism is to guard "the political conditions that are necessary for the exercise of personal freedom."[160] This understanding of liberalism is a direct result of the context in which it was founded; at a time when tension between Protestants and Catholics was dangerously high, early liberals sought "to identify political principles upon which to co-exist peacefully."[161] Accordingly, humans are conceived of as being born equal and as having the right to individual autonomy. A society founded on these principles will naturally become morally and socially diverse, "[…] whereby the form of pluralism is characterized by incommensurable worldviews."[162]

The form of liberalism which Watts calls rational liberalism is in line with such Enlightenment ideals: personal freedom is achieved through self-mastery and discipline, and a civilized modern society is committed to "impersonal government, impartial rule of law, public reason, and rational calculation."[163] While rational liberalism often provoked a counter response from romanticism,[164] figures like John Stuart Mill preferred a middle ground between the two: "Mill is a romantic-expressive liberal. The focus of Mill's attention is upon the relation of reason to self-realization, and the idea […] that the best life is distinctive and authentic, something every

---

[154] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 40.
[155] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 40.
[156] Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy and Its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1946), 658.
[157] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 41.
[158] Isaiah Berlin, *Political Ideas in the Romantic Age: Their Rise and Influence on Modern Thought*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 246.
[159] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 63–64.
[160] Judith Shklar, "The Liberalism of Fear," in *Liberalism and the Moral Life*, ed. Nancy L. Rosenblum (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 21.
[161] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 64.
[162] John Gray, "Liberalism," University of Minnesota Press, 1995, 85.
[163] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 65–66.
[164] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 63. "Although they bore the imprints of Enlightenment thought, the Romantics simultaneously railed against the culture of rationalism and the materialist outlooks championed by the *philosophes*. They detested the 'ugliness' and the 'spiritual emptiness' of the budding modern world, and the utilitarian individualism of the marketplace. And they especially railed against what they say as the repressive, routinizing, and instrumentalizing aspects of modern public life […]."

individual can discover for himself."[165] Later, in the 1960s, romantic liberalism captures the social imaginary of the masses.

2.2 The 1960s Counterculture: The Rise of Romantic Liberal Modernity

Watts argues that the widespread adoption of romantic expressivism is what marks the 1960s as "a rupture as profound as that brought about by the Reformation."[166] The counterculture of the 1960s railed against repressive institutions that were seen as symbols of a disenchanted society which suppressed individual freedom, autonomy and creativity. The goals were to break away from traditional norms and structures "in favour of finding and expressing one's individuality,"[167] as well as to re-define the boundaries between public and private. Crucially, Watts notes that this counterculture was not throwing away old ideals but re-interpreting them: "youth activists shared 'a deep respect for individual dignity, autonomy, and self-determination.' The counter-culture combined this liberal reverence for individual freedom with a romantic critique of modernity."[168]

For example, one of the most prominent targets of the 1960s counterculture was what Robert Bellah and others refer to as 'traditional biblical religion'. In the West, this attack was primarily aimed at Christianity for its conception of 'original sin' and for "the Calvinist notion of a distant and wholly transcendent God."[169] The new age spirituality movement, one of the most popular religious expressions of the period, rejected these doctrines for a more humanist position which places the source of benevolence within humans and which immanentizes the divine, often by equating it with 'Nature'. Texts such as Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae* which denounced the use of birth control strengthened the counterculture's association between "being religious" and being "part of the establishment."[170]

Furthermore, although scholars often note a decline in Christianity from this period onward, some of its branches grew in popularity: Watts notes how the neo-Pentecostal and Charismatic movements saw a revival in the 1970s and 1980s due to their emphasis on experiencing God personally, placing them in line with the emerging romantic ideals. These movements were able to incorporate some of the ideals, attitudes and expressivist language of the counterculture while remaining politically conservative.[171] This is not to suggest that members of these movements in the 1970s and 1980s were de facto politically conservative; what this illustrates, however, is the depth to which romantic ideals had taken root in the modern social imaginary, regardless of political affiliation.

---

[165] Robert Devigne, *Reforming Liberalism: J.S. Mill's Use of Ancient, Religious, Liberal, and Romantic Moralities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 76.
[166] Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1.
[167] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 69.
[168] Colin Campbell, *Easternization of the West: A Thematic Account of Cultural Change in the Modern Era* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 224; Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 69.
[169] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 70.
[170] Callum G. Brown, "What Was the Religious Crisis of the 1960s?," *Journal of Religious History* 34, no. 4 (2010): 475.
[171] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 71.

But there were other revolutions during this period, all of which were deeply indebted to the romantic expressivist social imaginary (understood in Taylor's sense which I have explained in Chapter 1, Section 4). For example, there was the environmental movement, often cast in terms of "the spiritual value of nature"[172] and "the need for humans to reconnect with nature in order to realize their true selves."[173] There was "a revolution in legal culture"[174] which challenged laws that infringed on individual autonomy within one's private life: things like obscenity, censorship, blasphemy, attempted suicide, homosexuality, divorce, gambling, drinking, abortion and more were either decriminalized or had their restrictions reduced.[175] Similarly, the liberal feminist movement of the 1960s challenged the traditional place of women in the private sphere and "sought to topple systemic barriers that prevented women from achieving equal concern and respect in the public sphere."[176] The goal was to eliminate the obstacles which "prevented the modern woman from 'realizing her true nature'."[177] The sexual revolution of the 1960s "challenged the acceptance in the late 1950's that the state had the right to supervise, if not regulate, sexual behaviour",[178] making it an equally romantic liberal movement. Finally, the equality revolution sought "equal recognition by previously disenfranchised identity groups" for not conforming to "narrow cultural ideals of the period."[179]

2.3 10 Main Tenets of the Religion of the Heart

Although the various historical movements described above share some common ground, they are not homogenous, nor are they necessarily identical to the religion of the heart as it is expressed today. In this section, I will present the 10 main tenets of the religion of the heart in North America in the 21st century according to Watts. Together, these "form a coherent *cultural structure* upon which distinct *discourses* are erected, organized, and made meaningful."[180] In his book, Watts supplies examples for these from both his interviewees and from popular spiritual literature. For the sake of brevity, I will not repeat these here.

2.3.1 Experiential Epistemology

In the religion of the heart, the primary source for people's spirituality is direct personal experience. For SBNRs, or the 'spiritual but not religious', this is true whether it be "moments of quiet contemplation or unexpected bliss […] while in meditation, climbing a mountain, or dancing at a rave […]; the more intense, ecstatic, and effervescent the experience, the more authoritative."[181] Similarly, Charismatic Christians seek God's presence in the moments of worship

[172] Mark Stoll, *Inherit the Holy Mountain: Religion and the Rise of American Environmentalism*, Illustrated edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 197.
[173] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 72.
[174] Lawrence M. Friedman, *The Republic of Choice: Law, Authority, and Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 178.
[175] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 73–74.
[176] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 75.
[177] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: WW Norton, 1963), 303; Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 75.
[178] Callum G. Brown, "Sex, Religion, and the Single Woman c.1950–75: The Importance of a 'Short' Sexual Revolution to the English Religious Crisis of the Sixties," *Twentieth Century British History* 22, no. 2 (June 1, 2011): 191.
[179] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 77–78.
[180] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 48.
[181] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 49.

when they can let go of their inhibitions. For both groups, these experiences are taken as proof of a 'superempirical order', as Watts puts it.

2.3.2 Immanence of God or the Superempirical

Watts argues that the religion of the heart today proposes a God which is simultaneously immanent and personal "insofar as one can access God or the divine *through the self*" but also transcendent "insofar as the superempirical permeates the universe."[182] For SBNRs, this might take the form of an energy which permeates everything in existence. While Charismatic Christians would be less likely to use this language, they still assume a "continuity of the self with [an] ever-present divine reality."[183]

2.3.3 Benevolent God or Universe

The God of the religion of the heart, whether labelled as God, Nature, or the Universe, is also undoubtedly good. Not only does God will the "subjective well-being and inner peace" of all, but this is "the natural state of things."[184]

2.3.4 Redemptive Self as Theodicy

For adherents of the religion of the heart, our experiences have both personal and cosmic meaning. In particular, we find lessons and meaning in our experiences of suffering through which we are redeemed. Crucially, "[…] this is not an otherworldly redemption […]. Rather, the religion of the heart presupposes redemption in *this* life."[185]

2.3.5 Self-Realization as Teleology

The goal of enduring suffering, and indeed our lives, is to "actualize one's potential and realize one's true self."[186] This true self is pre-social and takes constant self-work and personal growth to uncover. For both SBNRs and Charismatic Christians alike, personal growth is the path to salvation.

2.3.6 Self-Ethic (Voice from Within)

Who guides us on this journey of self-actualization? It is the voice within, the voice of our true self (or the voice of God, or of Nature). Since we can access the divine through ourselves, external influences can often hinder if not outright pose a danger to self-actualization: one must pave one's own way and be who one truly is, *in spite* of established social norms and conventions.

---

[182] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 50.
[183] Robert C. Fuller, *Spiritual, but Not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 85.
[184] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 50.
[185] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 51.
[186] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 52.

"[…] *societal norms and institutions are believed to stifle the true self by hemming it in, manipulating it, or repressing it.*"[187]

2.3.7 Virtue is Natural

A side-effect of living according to one's true self is that one will naturally act virtuously. Evil is the result of following our false self, that lower self which is conditioned by society. "The idea is that in realizing one's true self, one simultaneously becomes moral and achieves subjective well-being—the religion of the heart promises *a perfect harmony between personal authenticity, virtue, and inner peace.*"[188]

2.3.8 Sacralization of Individual Liberty

For the religion of the heart, the most important, even sacred value is the "*freedom* to realize one's true self."[189] This means freedom *for* self-expression and "*freedom from* external obstructions and constraints."[190]

2.3.9 Mind-Body-Spirit Connection

Although interpreted in various ways, Watts argues that the different forms of the religion of the heart all "presuppose some version of the idea that *thought shapes reality.*"[191] He gives several examples of this from modern spiritual literature: Deepak Chopra writes, "thought has the power to transform;"[192] Tony Robbins says that "beliefs have the power to create and the power to destroy;"[193] and Esther and Jerry Hicks assert that "you *do* create your own reality."[194] One of Watts' interviewees even says that for them, they've "always believed some element of 'perception is reality'."[195] Whether in an explicitly religious context or a distinctly secular one, there is an emphasis in the religion of the heart to identify one's thoughts or one's experience with reality.

2.3.10 Methodological Individualism

This final tenet of the religion of the heart is described by Watts as the responsibility of each individual: "this cultural structure prescribes mass self-transformation, or mass self-realization, to combat the ills of the world."[196] The most important thing you can do for the world is self-actualize.

---

[187] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 53.
[188] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 54.
[189] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 55.
[190] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 54.
[191] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 55.
[192] Deepak Chopra, *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success: A Practical Guide to the Fulfillment of Your Dreams*, First Edition (Amber-Allen Publ., New World Library, 1994), 31.
[193] Tony Robbins, *Awaken the Giant Within: How to Take Immediate Control of Your Mental, Emotional, Physical and Financial*, Reprint edition (Simon & Schuster, 1991), 75.
[194] Esther Hicks and Jerry Hicks, *Ask and It Is Given: Learning to Manifest Your Desires* (Carlsbad, Calif: Hay House LLC, 2004), 18.
[195] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 55.
[196] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 56.

2.4 Conclusion

So, what is the religion of the heart? According to Watts, "the religion of the heart should be thought of as the spirit of romantic liberal modernity, or the preferred religious option among romantic liberals."[197] It draws heavily on the romantic liberal social imaginary which has historical roots from at least the 17th century, but made its way into popular imagination in the 1960s. For example, it owes to the romantic liberal social imaginary its understanding of freedom as individual autonomy and the self as pre-social, the importance it places on expressive individualism, its stark separation between the public and the private, its immanentization of the source of benevolence, and more. The rise of the religion of the heart marks 'the spiritual turn', or the shift from religion to spirituality. Watts clarifies that of course, not all who occupy romantic liberal modernity are 'spiritual', meaning that they do not necessarily adhere to the religion of the heart. Regardless, studying the religion of the heart in this way elucidates some of the social conditions as well as the conditions of belief which affect all who dwell in romantic liberal modernity.

3. Strange Rites: New Religions for A Godless World

Now that 'religion' and 'spirituality' are properly defined, we can explore one brand of 'secular spirituality' which satisfy many of the tenets of the religion of the heart and some other characteristics of romantic liberal modernity. In her book, *Strange Rites*: *New Religions for A Godless World*, Tara Isabella Burton surveys several brands of contemporary spirituality, and in doing so she picks up on some common themes among them. In this section, I will begin by describing what Burton calls intuitional religions, a particular category of spirituality practiced by a group she names 'the Remixed'. Afterwards, I will look at one of these intuitional religions more closely: wellness culture. Throughout this section, I will indicate features of the religion of the heart and romantic liberal modernity exhibited by intuitional religions.

3.1 The Intuitional Religions of the Remixed

Burton focuses on a portion of the American population which she refers to as 'The Remixed'. Here are some of their characteristics: (1) they are religiously unaffiliated, but they generally consider themselves spiritual (SBNR); (2) they "reject authority, institution, creed, and moral universalism"[198]; (3) they value intuition, personal feeling, experiences—typical of the religion of the heart—, self-improvement, and *authenticity*, which is used here to denote "the idea that one's actions are in harmony with one's emotions";[199] (4) "they want [...] the freedom to mix and match, to create their own daily rituals and practices and belief systems."[200]

So, what do the 'new religions' of the Remixed consist of, according to Burton? Well, she argues that what they are seeking is what they are no longer getting from organized religion and traditional faiths: (1) *meaning*, which is here referred to as "a bigger-picture sense of why the world

[197] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 216.
[198] Burton, *Strange Rites*, 10.
[199] Burton, *Strange Rites*, 32–34.
[200] Burton, *Strange Rites*, 10.

is the way it is [...], the shape of reality [...] and the location of evil"[201], (2) *purpose*, which here means "an account of what role each individual adherent plays [...] that allows believers to shape their life in accordance with that meaning"[202], (3) *community*, and (4) *ritual*. Crucially, the Remixed are willing to get different components from different sources. Together, these make up what Burton is calling intuitional religions. Of course, there are those who still seek these main components of religion within the context of a religious institution; but for the Remixed, the tendency is to pick-and-choose them from different sources to create a perfectly personal spiritual solution. In the next section, I will look briefly at two factors which encourage this kind of religious collage according to Burton.

3.2 The Internet and Capitalism

Burton notes that one of the most important factors that distinguishes today's intuitional religions from those that have come before—and there are many that came before—is the internet: (1) it allows "communities to develop outside the traditional bonds of organized community and the dwelling places of traditional institutions"; (2) it encourages us "as consumers with a cornucopia of options, to seek out, even *demand*, a creative role in designing our own experiences, including spiritual ones" by providing "highly specialized alternative communities, allowing people to find friends or partners who aren't merely like-minded, but almost identically minded"; (3) it has "made us hungrier for individualization: for products, information, and groups that reflect more exactly our personal sense of self."[203] Typical of the religion of the heart, the importance of individual liberty and its role in realizing one's true self cannot be overstated for the Remixed.

Another equally important factor is consumer capitalism:

> In a society where we no longer fear securing the basic necessities of life, we gradually adopt a different value system, one dedicated to seeking out self-expression and fulfilling personal experiences. [...] Consumer-capitalist culture offers us not merely necessities but identities. Meaning, purpose, community, and ritual can all—separately or together—be purchased on Amazon Prime.[204]

The most successful of these 'intuitional religions' are the ones who have harnessed the power of capitalism to turn "everyday activities [...]", especially purchasing, "into rituals."[205] They've also "figured out how to take Twitter, or Instagram, or consumer cultures, and enchant it."[206]

3.3 Wellness Culture

One such intuitional religion is 'wellness culture', According to Burton, wellness culture is not "simply a marketing scheme", but "a cohesive philosophy of life" and includes its own implicit theology that provides meaning to its adherents:

---

[201] Burton, *Strange Rites*, 29.
[202] Burton, *Strange Rites*, 30.
[203] Burton, *Strange Rites*, 60–62.
[204] Burton, *Strange Rites*, 58–60.
[205] Burton, *Strange Rites*, 32–34.
[206] Burton, *Strange Rites*, 32–34.

> We are born good, but we are tricked, by Big Pharma, by processed food, by civilization itself, into living something that falls short of our best life. Our sins, if they exist at all, lie in insufficient self-attention or self-care: false modesty, undeserved humilities, refusing to shine bright.[207]

Our purpose then, as dictated by wellness culture, is to "live our best life" by practicing self-care, self-love and self-discipline "in the form of fitness classes, intense meditation apps, mindfulness courses, or ten-step skin-care routines [...]."[208] Practicing self-care carries with it moral weight; we are not only capable of but responsible for promoting wellness in ourselves. Similar to the religion of the heart and romantic liberal modernity more broadly, wellness culture posits a pre-social self which—if properly listened to without interference—is naturally virtuous and guides us towards self-realization, our ultimate goal. We can see a direct connection here to a Lockean natural law: in this version, however, the nature of the individual is not savage before entering into a society of mutual benefit; rather, the individual is made savage *by* society.

Often, wellness culture is also characterized by a romantic drive to re-enchant the world through its use of a mix between religious and seemingly scientific language. Books like *The Secret* and "certified soul coaches" who write articles for "goop"— Gwyneth Paltrow's lifestyle brand— provide examples of this language:

> Everything is made of energy and has its own unique vibration, including you. Everything is in a constant state of receiving and radiating energy. The frequency of this energy falls on a spectrum from light to dark. Light energy is infinite, effortless, rooted in love. Dark or shadow energy is dense and rooted in fear. As an electromagnetic being, you attract experiences and relationships that match your frequency.[209]
>
> If you're feeling good, then you're creating a future that's on track with your desires. If you're feeling bad, you're creating a future that's off track with your desires. As you go about your day, the law of attraction is working in every second. Everything we think and feel is creating our future. If you're worried or in fear, then you're bringing more of that into your life throughout the day. […] You are the most powerful magnet in the Universe! You contain a magnetic power within you that is more powerful than anything in this world and this unfathomable magnetic power is emitted through your thoughts.[210]

The supernatural force known simply as 'energy' permeates the whole universe as well as the self, typical of the immanent God or superempirical described in the religion of the heart. Furthermore, thinking and feeling good directly shapes our reality for the better.

---

[207] Burton, *Strange Rites*, 94.
[208] Burton, *Strange Rites*, 94.
[209] Jakki Smith-Leonardini, "Energy Clearing - How To Clear Out Old Energy," goop, January 6, 2019, https://goop.com/ca-en/wellness/spirituality/clearing-out-old-energy/., accessed March 20th, 2024.
[210] Rhonda Byrne, *The Secret*, Illustrated edition (New York : Hillsboro, Or: Atria Books/Beyond Words, 2006), 28,64.

3.3.1 SoulCycle

One example which Burton gives of where wellness culture can be practiced is at 'SoulCycle', which she describes as "a functional weight-loss business with a veneer of spiritual legitimacy."[211] It is essentially a 45-minute spin class combined with intentionally chosen music, and besides being valued a 900$ million and spanning across 90 locations in the US (in 2020), it offers to its members a place to feel a sense of purpose,[212] to foster community[213] and to practice ritual; specifically, a ritual which imbues our suffering with meaning and offers us immanent redemption by pushing us to our limits.[214] Above all, it is a place to practice self-care.

Cody Musselman describes SoulCycle as a religious fitness program. In his 2023 article, he notes that the inside of a cycling studio will often make use of religious aesthetics. Similarly, "instructors may talk about the cosmic energy radiating from the class or guide riders through opening their spiritual centers, or chakras."[215] Finally, he describes a key element of the SoulCycle experience: the soulful moment. Towards the end of a session, the curated playlist will shift to more intense music. At this point, "instructors praise strong efforts by presenting selected riders a candle to blow out," an experience which Musselman says is "designed to deliver a breakthrough moment of spiritual or personal revelation and catharsis by combining the natural high of physical intensity with spiritualized self-help messaging."[216]

In her 2019 article, Amy Lane describes her experience with SoulCycle. In a studio which she describes as intimate, no camera phones were allowed, and candles filled the air with the scent of grapefruit, setting the scene for the coming ritual. She writes:

> I found myself 32 minutes into a 45-minute class having a "soulful moment", to use brand lingo. […] One minute I'd been focusing on turning my legs over in time to Beyoncé's Homecoming album, the next, salty tears dripped from my cheeks and onto the handlebars. They were the type of tears that normally happen when someone gives you a reassuring hug and tells you everything is going to be OK. I didn't understand it.[217]

---

[211] Burton, *Strange Rites*, 93.
[212] "First Time Here? Welcome to SoulCycle. You're exactly where you should be," https://www.soul-cycle.com/new-to-soul/, accessed September 9th, 2023.
[213] "Soul Cycle is a sanctuary for everyone who walks through our doors. [...] the opportunity to make genuine connections is all around you. You are welcome here," https://www.soul-cycle.com/new-to-soul/, accessed September 9th, 2023.
[214] "What Speaks to Your Soul? We're here to challenge you. To push your expectations of what a full-body workout can be. To open your mind to bigger, broader goals. And to expand what it means to connect. Because you're already strong. We just want to make you stronger," https://www.soul-cycle.com/new-to-soul/, accessed September 9th, 2023.
[215] Cody Musselman, "Making Sweat Feel Spiritual Didn't Start With SoulCycle," Religion Unplugged, January 18, 2023, https://religionunplugged.com/news/2023/1/13/making-sweat-feel-spiritual-didnt-start-with-soulcycle-a-religion-scholar-explains., accessed March 20th, 2024.
[216] Cody Musselman, "Making Sweat Feel Spiritual Didn't Start With SoulCycle."
[217] Amy Lane, "I Hate Spinning - Here's My Honest Review of SoulCycle," Women's Health, June 25, 2019, https://www.womenshealthmag.com/uk/fitness/a28168601/soulcycle-review/., accessed March 20th, 2024.

Lane later interviewed Melanie Whelan, the CEO of SoulCycle, who helped contextualized her experience: "We're in the business of personal transformations."[218] For Lane, this transformative experience put her in touch with her true self; indeed, she says about her experience that "there was no competition, friendly or otherwise, and the only person I connected with was myself."[219]

3.3.2 Headspace

Another way of practicing self-care, according to Burton, is through meditation. The biggest player in this domain is most certainly Headspace, a meditation app company valued at $3 billion dollars in 2021.[220] Their marketing and communications have completely re-packaged the (supposedly) Buddhist form of meditation to better conform to the language of self-care.

According to Headspace, meditation is meant to be an act of kindness to yourself, one that will help us feel better. "When we aren't taking good care of ourselves, we don't feel our best or interact with others our best."[221] Feeling good, then, is a moral imperative. Perhaps even more important than meditation's proposed self-care aspects are its scientific justifications: part of the way Headspace markets meditation is through its mental health, physical and emotional benefits—particularly in reducing depression and anxiety.[222]

Conclusion

This goal of this chapter has been to give the reader a clear example of a secular spirituality. A secular spirituality is, simply put, one which is practiced in the secular age; that is, a spirituality which finds itself among a variety of options, some of which may find the source of fullness in something Transcendent, and others in something purely immanent, perhaps even purely humanistic. With the help of Watts, I explored a particular brand of spirituality of the secular age, the religion of the heart, which draws upon and is supported by romantic liberal modernity. Using the work of Smith, I was able to define the particular understanding of religion which this kind of spirituality distinguishes itself from. Finally, using the work of Burton, I zoomed in on a distinctly American version of the religion of the heart, which she calls intuitional religions, and which are practiced by a group called the Remixed. Although she gives several examples in her book, I chose to focus on wellness culture.

Until this point, my thesis has largely been concerned with description. Specifically, I have attempted to define the secular, religion, and spirituality. I have also attempted to paint a picture of what spirituality looks like in the secular age. In the final chapter, however, I will shift my goal from description to evaluation.

---

[218] Amy Lane, "I Hate Spinning - Here's My Honest Review of SoulCycle."
[219] Amy Lane, "I Hate Spinning - Here's My Honest Review of SoulCycle."
[220] "Headspace Revenue and Usage Statistics (2023)," Business of Apps, accessed October 18, 2023, https://www.businessofapps.com/data/headspace-statistics/.
[221] "Self-Care Ideas That Stick, Even When You're Busy - Headspace," accessed October 18, 2023, https://www.headspace.com/mindfulness/self-care-ideas?origin=navigation.
[222] "The Many Benefits of Meditation," Headspace, accessed October 18, 2023, https://www.headspace.com/meditation/benefits.

Chapter 3: Authenticity and Conversion

In this chapter, I want to explore the topic of authenticity. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, authenticity is of great importance to Burton's Remixed as well as to Watts' adherents of the religion of the heart (hereafter, I will refer to them as those who self-identify as 'spiritual'). In true romantic fashion, authenticity for these groups means to act according to how one feels. It is concerned with the following questions: *have I expressed myself? Have I repressed myself? Am I being true to myself?* The self in question here is the *true* self; the pre-social, intuitive and naturally moral self which can be discovered by acquiring the meaning, purpose, community and rituals that suit us best. From this perspective, the function of the society, then, is to allow for the utmost autonomy of the individual in pursuing these.

Now, in my view, the rise of the romantic liberal social imaginary has indeed brought with it progress through all of its consequent revolutions.[223] Of particular relevance to this thesis, the religious revolution which occurred—often called the spiritual turn—reflects an earnest attempt to get at the truth of religion and spirituality in the secular age; or, as the romantics might put it, the "essence of religion." As Lonergan states, it is the question of God "that will be manifested differently in the different stages of man's historical development and in the many varieties of his culture."[224] However, there are, I believe, some problems with the romantic liberal understanding of notions such as authenticity, spirituality, and religion. In this chapter, I will propose a different understanding of these terms primarily through the work of Bernard Lonergan. I will introduce a different approach to religion through the thought of Keiji Nishitani. I will then expand on this approach using the work of both Lonergan and others who specialize in his thought. After clarifying this approach, I will be able to propose a definition of spirituality and, subsequently, how one may achieve authenticity in the religious/spiritual pursuit. Finally, please note that it is not my aim to discredit these secular forms of spirituality, but rather to evaluate them critically. I believe that their impact on individuals, groups and societies cannot be overstated as they significantly contribute to their overall orientation.

1. Religion

1.1 What is Religion?

What is religion? This is the question which Keiji Nishitani poses at the very beginning of his book, *Religion and Nothingness*.[225] Nishitani was a Japanese philosopher from the Kyoto school, a movement in the early and mid-20th century which sought to integrate Western philosophy with Eastern philosophy. He rephrases the question as it is commonly posed today: "what is the purpose of religion for us? Why do we need it?"[226] In this formulation of the question, there is already a problem present, he says, because it considers religion solely from the viewpoint of its utility:

[223] See section 2.2, Chapter 2 for the relevant revolutions.
[224] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 103.
[225] The original title of the book was *What is Religion*, before it's translation into English.
[226] Keiji Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, trans. Jan Van Bragt (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1982), 1.

> Religion has to do with life itself. […] to say that we need religion for example, for the sake of social order, or human welfare, or public morals is a mistake, or at least a confusion of priorities. […] A religion concerned primarily with its own utility bears witness to its own degradation. One can ask about the utility of things like eating for the natural life, or of things like learning and the arts for culture. In fact, in such matters the question of utility should be of a constant concern. Our ordinary mode of being is restricted to these levels of natural or cultural life. But it is in breaking through that ordinary mode of being and overturning it from the ground up, in pressing us back to the elemental source of life where life is itself seen as useless, that religion becomes something we need—a *must* for human life.[227]

Although the Zen Buddhist notion mentioned above—that life itself is seen as useless from the perspective of the elemental source of life—deserves further unpacking, it is beyond the scope of this thesis. The problem which Nishitani is pointing out here regarding religion, however, is one which reveals the issue with the modern conception of religion that Smith arrives at, and which I argue romantic liberal modernity often adopts. As Smith argues, 'a religion' in modernity becomes understood as an abstract, external, depersonalized system which one can choose to either accept or reject on the basis of its utility; and the generic 'religion' becomes "an external entity the total system or sum of all systems of beliefs […]."[228] Similarly, Watts finds that for romantic liberal modernity, religion is primarily associated with institutions, "societal norms, cultural expectations or religious conventions."[229]

I am not arguing here that systems of belief referred to as 'religions' do not exist in some sense; however, inherent in this formulation is the assumption that religion is a proposition or set of propositions which can either be accepted or rejected; or that religion is an institution which one can decide to be a part of or apart from. This perspective proceeds from what Nishitani calls "the self-centered (or man-centered) mode of being, which always asks what use things have for us (or for man)."[230] He proposes rather that we "approach religion […] as the self-awareness of reality, or, more correctly, the *real* self-awareness of reality."[231] This shift in perspective marks a "fundamental conversion in life"[232] in which "the question 'what is religion?' really becomes our own."[233]

Already, we have a striking contrast with the approach to religion presented in the previous chapter. We have a formulation of religion or the religious quest which is not simply the acceptance or rejection of a set of propositions, but rather some essential or fundamental expression of a particular mode of being oriented towards what is *real* rather than what is *useful*. The next step, then, will be to unpack this understanding of religion. Specifically, what are we pursuing when we say that we are pursuing what is real? Furthermore, how does one go about this pursuit? Finally,

---

[227] Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 2.
[228] Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, 43.
[229] Watts, *The Spiritual Turn*, 3.
[230] Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 4.
[231] Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 5. Nishitani adds the following clarification: "By 'the self-awareness of reality' I mean both our becoming aware of reality and, at the same time, the reality realizing itself in our awareness."
[232] Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 4.
[233] Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 5.

how should we understand this 'fundamental conversion in life' which re-orients us towards the real?

1.2 What is the Real?

Nishitani characterizes the religious quest as "man's search for true reality in a *real* way […]."[234] He notes a few different ways of approaching what is real: we might think of "all the things and events *without* us […]," or "the world *within* us […]."[235] Alternatively, a natural scientist might regard reality as "the atoms, or the energy that makes them up, or the scientific laws that regulate that energy."[236] A social scientist might define reality in terms of a particular discipline like economics. Finally, a metaphysician might posit that reality lies in the Ideas underlying the world of phenomena.

The problem with these kinds of approach to reality, however, is their lack of unity and their tendency to contradict one another. To look at the real through these perspectives is, according to Nishitani, "to look at things *without* from a field *within* the self."[237] What is missing is the reality of things *in their own mode of being*. A poignant example which Nishitani proposes is the reality of the self:

> We also think of our own selves, and of our 'inner' thoughts, feelings, and desires as real. But here, too, it is doubtful whether we properly get in touch with ourselves, whether our feelings and desires and so forth are in the proper sense really present to us as they are, and whether those feelings should be said to be present on their own home-ground and in their own mode of being. Precisely because we face things on a field separated from things, and to the extent that we do so, we are forever separated from ourselves. […]. In fact, however, the self that is self-centered in its relation to the *without* is a self that is separated from things and closed up *within* itself alone.[238]

What is more, if this 'self-centeredness' lies on one end of a spectrum, at the other end is what he refers to as a "preconscious life and sympathy" which denotes "a contact prior to and more immediate than consciousness […] meant to point to the field of the most immediate encounter between man and man, at the ground of the instincts and drives that underlie all thought, feeling, and desire."[239] This preconscious life is often called the soul, and can even extend to all living things. This approach to reality is problematic for Nishitani because it tends towards a dichotomy between the body and the soul and introduces the problem of determining how they are related. Furthermore, he argues that "it is impossible to get deeply in touch with reality"[240] on solely the

[234] Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 6.
[235] Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 6. Reality as the world without us: "the mountains and streams, the flowers and forests, and the entire visible universe all about us. We think, too, of other people, other societies, and nations, and of the whole skein of human activities and historical events that envelope them." Reality as the world within us: "our thoughts, our feelings, and our desires."
[236] Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 6.
[237] Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 9.
[238] Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 9–10.
[239] Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 11–13.
[240] Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 13.

basis of a preconscious level. Thus, the real according to Nishitani cannot be properly apprehended without 'breaking through' "the field of separation between *within* and *without*."[241]

There is some agreement between Lonergan and Nishitani regarding the real. For Lonergan, the real is not that which is 'already out there now': "Lonergan repudiates the notion of a pre-existent ego standing over reality 'out there'."[242] For Lonergan, the real is equated with the true. Following this, the question becomes: how does one go about apprehending the real/the true? To answer this question adequately with respect to Lonergan's work, we must first have an account of his cognitional theory; this will tell us about the subject who is doing the apprehending and what is happening when they are doing so. This will be the concern of the next section.

2. Lonergan's Cognitional Theory

2.1 Human Consciousness

In *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Lonergan characterizes humans first and foremost by a pure, unrestricted, and "primordial drive"[243] to know. Before the expression of any questions, doubts, or apprehensions, this drive is present within us: "it is not the verbal utterance of questions. It is not the conceptual formulation of questions. It is not any insight or thought. It is not any reflective grasp or judgment. […]. It is the prior and enveloping drive."[244] Tad Dunne writes in *Lonergan and Spirituality: Towards a Spiritual Integration* that this is the drive of the soul, or rather that this drive *is* the soul: "indeed, the soul first experiences interior inclinations, feelings, questions, wonderment; and, on account of these actions already going on within, it turns to the exterior world with its attention already channelled in specific directions."[245] Consciousness, for Lonergan, is the dynamic structure animated by the drive to know which results in human knowing. He divides the structure of consciousness into four levels: (1) the *empirical* level, (2) the *intellectual* level, (3) the *rational* level and (4) the *responsible* level.[246] On each level, there are different operations which spontaneously prompt the next level.

On the empirical level, we collect the data of experience by sensing, perceiving, feeling, imagining, and more. On the intellectual level, we ask questions of our experience: 'what happened to me? What's going on? Why did this happen? How did it happen?' Through our questioning, we gain insight and understanding of our experience. Dunne says that in the act of understanding, our consciousness "grasps an intelligibility which is immanent in the data […] by distinguishing experiences (and so naming them) and then by getting an insight into the order that seems to keep one set of data in a specific relation to another set."[247]

---

[241] Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 10. Nishitani largely attributes this dichotomy to the Cartesian worldview.
[242] Joseph Fitzpatrick, "Lonergan and Hume II Epistemology," *New Blackfriars* 63, no. 743 (1982): 222.
[243] Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, ed. Robert M. Doran and Frederick E. Crowe, 5th ed., Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, v. 5 (Toronto Ont.: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 34.
[244] Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 372.
[245] Tad Dunne, *Lonergan and Spirituality: Towards a Spiritual Integration*, First Edition (Chicago: Loyola Pr, 1985), 13.
[246] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 9.
[247] Dunne, *Lonergan and Spirituality*, 15.

On the rational level, we judge whether we have properly understood our experience, whether we have considered all relevant evidence and questions, to determine what is true. Of the rational level, Dunne says that "it is only when we check the data again to see whether our understanding leaves no relevant data unexplained that we can say whether or not we understand the reality in question correctly."[248] On the final level, the responsible level, we put our apprehension of the true into motion. We elaborate goals, evaluate possible courses of action and make decisions; it is on this level that we decide who we are and how we are to be in the world. Thus, for Lonergan, knowing is not simply perceiving what is 'already out there now' but the result of our experiencing, understanding and judging. Together, these levels, along with deciding, make up what he calls transcendental method.[249]

While these operations are always intentional and conscious, we do not always observe the unfolding of transcendental method within us; the further step of becoming aware of and appropriating one's consciousness is what Lonergan calls self-consciousness. For Lonergan, this heightening of consciousness is the intentional application of transcendental method to oneself: it is (1) observing one's own experience, understanding, judging and deciding; (2) understanding the relationship between one's experience, understanding, judging and deciding; (3) judging the truth of one's experience, understanding, judging and deciding; and (4) deciding to act according to "the norms immanent in the spontaneous relatedness of"[250] one's experience, understanding, judging and deciding.

This heightened awareness reveals more than just the object, which is intended by the operations, but the intending subject, its interests, preferences, patterns and blind spots (of which there are many). Indeed, the restrictions on one's knowing are proportional to the boundaries of one's horizon and the extent of one's bias.

2.2 Horizons and Bias

When we ask questions, they always occur within what Lonergan refers to as a horizon. In the same way that our vision is limited by a horizon, or by what can be seen, our knowledge and the range of our questioning is similarly limited. Our horizon is in part the result of "the period in which one lives, one's social background and milieu, one's education and one's personal development."[251] What lies beyond one's horizon is that which is beyond one's interest or knowledge. Crucially, our horizons also constitute the bounds of what can be imagined as possible, true and real. Brian J. Braman equates Lonergan's notion of horizons to Heidegger's *sorge*, or concern. He says that they "determine the range of our attention, our consideration, our valuations, our conduct."[252]

In addition to our horizons, Lonergan talks about the different kinds of bias which can impede one's authentic attentiveness, intelligence, rationality and responsibility. (1) There is

[248] Dunne, *Lonergan and Spirituality*, 16.
[249] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 14.
[250] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 15.
[251] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 236.
[252] Brian J. Braman, *Meaning and Authenticity: Bernard Lonergan and Charles Taylor on the Drama of Authentic Human Existence*, Lonergan Studies (Toronto Ont.: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 50.

neurotic bias which avoids insight; (2) there is individual bias which restricts us to the insights which serve only our personal goals; (3) there is group bias which holds us back from realizing that the group no longer serves its once useful function but instead "is merely clinging to power by all the manoeuvres that in one way or another block development and impede progress;"[253] (4) finally, there is general bias which relies on 'common sense' instead of authentic rational inquiry.

This is not a condemnation of one's horizon because of its limits. One's horizon is the position from which one can take perspectives, ask questions, make judgments and deliberate; without it, this would not be possible. The goal is rather to become aware of the limits to one's scope. Given one's horizon and the tendency towards bias, Lonergan prescribes the transcendental precepts: be attentive, be intelligent, be rational, be responsible.

2.3 Do We Know the Really Real?

I have so far discussed the operations of human knowing which make up human consciousness, the object of human knowing, which is knowledge of reality, and the context and stumbling blocks to human knowing, that are horizons and bias. When we are talking about what is real, however, an important consideration remains: does our understanding and judging of truth and reality *really* correspond to reality? Or, in Dunne's words, if the intelligible is the object of our intelligence, that is, what we grasp when we ask intelligent questions, "is intelligibility a property of reality?"[254]

In anticipation of this question, Lonergan writes that the validity of the transcendental method rests on one's intentional, attentive, intelligent, rational and responsible application of the operations to one's own consciousness. As Dunne puts it, "there is one judgment that we can make with absolute certitude—the fact that we can make judgments."[255]

Firstly, can we attend to our own experience? That is, if we observe, do we find within ourselves "the conscious occurrence, seeing, whenever an object is seen, the conscious occurrence, hearing, whenever an object is heard, and so forth[?]"[256]Do we experience ourselves as intelligent beings who seek understanding and encounter insights? Do we experience ourselves as rational beings who critically reflect on what is and could be? Finally, do we experience ourselves as responsible beings who deliberate and decide on courses of action?

Secondly, we can ask the question: is the dynamic structure of consciousness that Lonergan has described intelligible? Do these operations occur in the way that he has described? Are these operations related such that one spontaneously calls forth the next? More specifically, does our experiencing prompt our questioning and insight? Does our arrival at insight prompt us to reflect on and verify the truth and reality of our claims? Do we deliberate and make decisions based on these claims?

[253] Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *A Third Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 105.
[254] Dunne, *Lonergan and Spirituality*, 33.
[255] Dunne, *Lonergan and Spirituality*, 34.
[256] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 15.

Thirdly, is Lonergan's articulation of transcendental method simply a hypothesis, or can it be verified? Here, Lonergan makes a distinction between the pattern of our conscious and intentional operations themselves and their formulation into theories and propositions. While their formulation can be revised for better accuracy, clarity, etc., the operations themselves cannot. This becomes clear when one realizes the following (as Dunne puts it):

> There is a core set of insights that no scientific revolution will ever overturn—the insight that explains how experience, understanding, and judgments are related to one another. The reason we will never overturn this insight is that it has to do with the very method by which any insight is generated and tested, revised, or overturned, corrected or affirmed.[257]

In addition to this, we can now see how transcendental method is the basis for any and all methods for verifying insights to arrive at what is true and real, whether it be in the realm of the natural sciences, art, history, politics, and more.

Lonergan in *Insight* urges the reader to verify the truth or falsity of his claims for themselves. He stresses that doing so will give provide the reader with not only the essential context for his work—that is, the self as knower, and knowledge as the compound of experiencing, understanding and judging—but also the context for understanding, judging and evaluating all methods.[258] So, we arrive at what is true and what is real through our experiencing, understanding and judgment, and our attentive, intelligent, rational and responsible application of these operations.

Even so, as explained above, humans tend towards all kinds of bias and are subject to the real limits of their horizons. One can be absolutely certain of the truth which one has arrived at, and yet still there are relevant questions which lay outside of one's scope. How then does one overcome their bias and expand or shift their horizon? This will be the subject of the following section, which will finally bring us back to spirituality.

2.4 Authenticity and Conversion

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Burton defines authenticity according to adherents of the intuitional religions as aligning one's actions with one's emotions; the relevant questions are: 'did I express myself?' 'Did I repress myself?' Lonergan, on the other hand, has quite a different understanding of authenticity which directly relates to the way in which we enter into relationship to reality by conforming to what true, what is real and what is good.

Consciousness for Lonergan, is a vehicle for human knowing. Appropriating consciousness through observance of the transcendental precepts (be attentive, be intelligent, be rational, be responsible) leads one to notions of what is true, what is real and what is good; naturally, one arrives at questions of whether one's actions and decisions are in accordance with what they claim to be. In making decisions and acting, the occasion for authenticity arises: 'am I what I claim to be?' On the other hand, one always comes to knowing within a horizon and is subject to bias, so

[257] Dunne, *Lonergan and Spirituality*, 34.
[258] Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 14,22.

there is always a further horizon of deeper and fuller experiencing, understanding, judging and acting. Thus, for Lonergan authenticity is both in one's concrete actions and one's overall wholistic orientation: (1) one's actions are in accordance with one's apprehension of the true, the real and the good, and (2) one acknowledges that one experiences, understands, judges and acts within a horizon, and so orients oneself towards the transformation of one's horizon. This is why Lonergan says that "man achieves authenticity in self-transcendence."[259] Finally, self-transcendence is rooted in what he calls conversion. This is not conversion from one belief system to another, but it is rather a transformation of one's being. Conversion is threefold: there is intellectual conversion, moral conversion and religious conversion.[260]

2.4.1 Intellectual Conversion

Intellectual conversion, for Lonergan, is first and foremost the affirmation of the self as knower. It is the rejection of the notion that knowing is akin to perceiving, and that what there is to know is out-there-now waiting for the individual ego to perceive it; rather, knowing is the dynamic structure of one's experiencing, understanding and judging. In affirming the self as knower, one affirms that one's knowing is ultimately oriented towards reality.

In other words, intellectual conversion is the recognition that knowing is the relationship between the human subject and reality: "one who is intellectually converted realizes that knowing is essentially a dynamic process oriented towards knowing being […]."[261] In intellectual conversion, one is re-oriented from what is true in the context of one's own concern towards what is truly reasonable in the context of being. This re-orientation brings with it a humility in recognizing that one's experiencing, understanding and judging are contingent. It requires a "radical self-honesty whereby we let the pure unrestricted desire to know unfold […]."[262]

Finally, it is not enough to simply be aware that one is the locus for knowing what is true and what is real; the intellectually converted subject's actions are in line with one's apprehension of the true and the real in the context of being in general, and not just the context of one's own being. One acts not according to one's own concern, but according to reality.

2.4.2 Moral Conversion

The morally converted subject, for Lonergan, is one who recognizes themselves as the originator of value. It is the acknowledgement that objective judgments of value are not abstract or the result of 'common sense', but the fruits of authentic subjectivity. Put another way, moral conversion is the realization that value is realized in the human subject. This realization brings with it the responsibility to orient oneself not towards mere satisfaction, but towards what is good; not what is apparently good, but what is truly good. Moral conversion provides humans with the possibility of "honest collaboration and true love, of swinging completely out of the habitat of an animal and of becoming a person in a human society."[263]

---

[259] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 104.
[260] Braman, *Meaning and Authenticity*, 59–72.
[261] Braman, *Meaning and Authenticity*, 62.
[262] Braman, *Meaning and Authenticity*, 63.
[263] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 104.

Moral conversion also leads one to act in accordance with what is truly good rather than what is apparently good: "in moral conversion […], we courageously raise questions concerning our character; this in turn leads us to move out of the darkness of self-deception and seek the truth behind our actions, in order to ensure that there is harmony between what we claim to be and what in fact we are."[264] One constitutes oneself authentically when one's actions proceeds from one's apprehension of what is truly good.

2.4.3 Religious Conversion

Religious conversion, for Lonergan, is nothing short of one's falling in love with God; it is a dynamic state of being-in-love which transforms one's whole being; it is this falling in love which enables our capacity for intellectual and moral conversion. In describing religious conversion, Lonergan frequently refers to St. Paul: "It is God's love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us (Rom. 5, 5)."[265]

Just as we are unrestricted in our capacity for questioning, so too is being in love with God an unrestricted being-in-love. Just as our unrestricted questioning is proportionate to our capacity for self-transcendence, our being in love is the fulfillment of that capacity for self-transcendence.[266]

Finally, religious conversion is not the result of our choices or our acquiring knowledge. Instead, "it dismantles and abolishes the horizon in which our knowing and choosing went on and it sets up a new horizon in which the love of God will transvalue our values and the eyes of that love will transform our knowing."[267]

2.5 Religious Experience and Fullness

Religious conversion as experienced is the experience of mystery, of awe, of fascination, of the holy. Lonergan compares it to Rudolf Otto's "*mysterium tremendum*,"[268] to what Paul Tillich calls "a state ultimate concern,"[269] and to St. Ignatius of Loyola's "consolation without preceding cause."[270] It is prior to religious knowledge, or to any expression, understanding or judgment of that experience. As Vernon Gregson puts it, "religious experience means personal consciousness of being drawn towards the ultimate."[271]

In *A Secular Age*, Taylor introduces a very similar notion to these: fullness. For him, fullness is something which we may apprehend in moments of deep contemplation; it might be in moments of radical emptiness where we apprehend its absence; and there are profound life-altering

---

[264] Braman, *Meaning and Authenticity*, 64.
[265] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 105.
[266] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 106.
[267] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 106.
[268] Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), 10.
[269] Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, Harper Torchbooks; 42; TB42 (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 1–4.
[270] Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. Elder Mullan (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2017), 122.
[271] Vernon Gregson, *Lonergan, Spirituality, and the Meeting of Religions*, College Theology Society Studies in Religion 2 (Lanham, MD.: University Press of America, 1985), 60.

moments in which we undergo what he calls a conversion, or a moment of "being surprised by love."[272] Taylor critiques the modern notion of 'experience' when referring to these moments because it tends towards an understanding of them as merely "something subjective, distinct from the object experienced; and as something to do with our feelings, distinct from changes in our being: dispositions, orientations, the bent of our lives, etc."[273] These conversions are a complete transformation of our being, and cannot be separated from the subject who experiences them. Furthermore, Taylor agrees that these conversions can bring us beyond our limits, or the "limits of the regnant versions of immanent order, either in terms of accepted theories, or of moral and political practice."[274]

But religious conversion as lived is a state of religious existence. It is "living at the stage of surrender to the Transcendent."[275] It occurs at the final level of consciousness, the level at which we deliberate, evaluate and act. It is the fulfillment of one's capacity for freedom by re-orienting one towards action that is not ego-centric, that is not restricted to one's satisfactions, but is instead carried out in relation to what is really true and what is really valuable. In other words, religious conversion (and subsequently, intellectual and moral conversion) brings us into deeper relationship with reality. This is what Lonergan calls authenticity.

3. Authentic Secular Spirituality

Finally, it is time to bring the conversation back to spirituality. In the previous chapter, we explored an understanding of spirituality which is popular among the adherents of religion of the heart and the intuitional religions, which I argue share more similarities than differences. For these groups, spirituality is 'the essence of religion' without the societal norms, cultural expectations, or religious conventions. It is concerned with one's self-actualization, perhaps through a self-care routine to improve one's physical and emotional state; this is usually the extent to which transformation can be achieved. It is also concerned with one's authenticity, understood as a harmony between one's feelings and one's actions.

This understanding of spirituality is above all concerned with the subject. It places the ability to apprehend what is true and what is good in the 'the true self', which one intuits through feeling and by quieting the voices of society, of culture and of institutions. One can act universally and in beneficence by acting according to this true self. Now, while Lonergan would in some sense agree with the turn to the subject, he would object to equating knowing and feeling. He might similarly find issue with the idea that all of society, culture and institutions are automatically opposite the self, rather than products of human action and thus subject to the forces of progress and decline. I would like to propose, instead, an understanding of spirituality which brings together the work of Lonergan (and his interpreters), Nishitani, Smith and Taylor.

To begin, what is the goal of spirituality? If we take what I have explained above, then the objective is, in short, self-actualization, or to 'realize the true self'. But already in this formulation of the question is a problem. Just as Nishitani points out that formulating religion in terms of what

[272] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 764.
[273] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 764.
[274] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 767.
[275] Gregson, *Lonergan, Spirituality, and the Meeting of Religions*, 62.

it is for is a trap, the same is true for spirituality. We might instead start from a simpler point: first, as Lonergan states, we are animated by the pure and unrestricted desire to know. For Lonergan, the objective of the pure desire to know is being.[276] It is not an objective which is intended by our consciousness prior to any experience, understanding, judgment or actions. If knowing, as I have argued, is our coming into relationship with reality, then the objective of knowing is coming into relationship with being.

So, we are characterized by a fundamental orientation towards being in relationship with reality. This relationship is perhaps best expressed in the way which Augustine uses the term *religio*: as one's fundamental orientation, one's personal relationship to God, and how one worships *genuinely*.[277] But how is one to worship *genuinely*? Or, in other words, how does one come into deeper relationship with reality? This is, for Lonergan, the process of becoming authentic which is achieved in self-transcendence through intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. One's being is transformed into a being-in-love; one affirms the self as knower and as originator of values; one is re-oriented towards what is real and what is good in the context of being, rather than what is apparently true and apparently good; and one aligns one's actions with these apprehensions of the real and the good. Nishitani expresses something similar to Lonergan's notion of conversion. He defines religion as "the *real* self-awareness of reality" to denote both "our becoming aware of reality" and a reality realizing itself in us.[278] His use of realization here is meant to convey "a real appropriation" which "provides our very mode of being with its essential determination."[279]

Following this, we can give another, more wholistic and nuanced definition of spirituality. Spirituality is one's fundamental orientation towards or relationship with reality. In this sense, both spirituality and religion are notionally the same. We might still speak of 'a religion', or perhaps even 'a spirituality', which more commonly denotes a particular belief system. Furthermore, an authentic spirituality is one which is oriented towards self-transcendence, that is, intellectual conversion, moral conversion and religious conversion. To add to this briefly, Gregson refers to spirituality as a radical state of openness; [280] thus, an authentic spirituality is one which is radically open to being as apprehended intellectually, morally, and religiously. Finally, an authentic secular spirituality is one which is lived out alongside (and perhaps even in competition with) a variety of belief systems, some of which for the first time in history are based on a purely self-sufficient humanism.[281]

How does this understanding of spirituality differ from the one explored in the previous chapter? To begin, it does not distinguish between religion and spirituality; it does not make the

[276] Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 372.
[277] Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, 31. This is based on Smith's translation of *De Vera Religione*, which he translates as "On Genuine Worship."
[278] Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 5.
[279] Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 6.
[280] Gregson, *Lonergan, Spirituality, and the Meeting of Religions*, 75.
[281] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 26–27. As discussed in the first chapter, a purely self-sufficient humanism, for Taylor, is a worldview which (1) does not have any goals beyond human flourishing and (2) which places the power to act benevolently in human nature rather than in a transcendent being. I am not here arguing that a purely self-sufficient humanism is possible or even desirable; only that it is a position which some adopt today in our secular age, and that this position would not have been conceivable even 500 years ago.

assumption that spirituality is the essence of 'a religion' bloated by oppressive institutions, norms and customs. Furthermore, it does not accept the definition of religion as simply a system of belief, or something that one either accepts or rejects. Rather, this understanding of spirituality which I have proposed applies to everyone, everywhere, regardless of their beliefs, culture, ethnicity, race, or any other differentiating factors.

How does this notion of spirituality fair in the secular age? Does it find itself opposed to various 'religions' or 'spiritualities'? It decidedly does not. It does not ask whether you have chosen the correct religion, the correct metaphysical beliefs or the correct social cause. Rather, one's spirituality is judged on its authenticity. When one considers spirituality or religion from this perspective, one is more concerned with *how* to believe rather than *what* to believe. This is not to say that the particularities of one's belief are not of importance; however, it is not sufficient to say that you believe something. One must also consider how their belief orients them. Are they oriented towards an authentic exploration of their being and its relationship with reality? Does their spirituality foster an understanding of the self as knower and a transcendent notion of truth beyond their personal context? Does it affirm the self as the originator of value while orienting oneself to a transcendent notion of value? Finally, does it allow and even promote the occasion of religious experience?

Put another way, does one's spirituality give occasion for the analysis of one's own horizon? Does it encourage the unrestricted desire to know in its unfolding such that one is led to asking questions about (1) their own ability to experience, understand and judge; and (2) questions about the nature of the universe? Namely, if the universe is intelligible, could it be so without having an intelligent ground?[282] If all my knowing is contingent, does there exist a necessary being which is of a completely different order from that which is contingent? Finally, is one's ability to determine value arbitrary and does it lead only to individual subjective development? Or does the pursuit of value correspond to an ultimate or transcendent notion of value? In Lonergan's words, does the question of God arise in one's questioning?[283]

There is perhaps one more point I would like to make, one which Lonergan strove to correct: the notion of experiencing as knowing. In his cognitional theory, Lonergan wanted to show that knowing was the compound of experiencing, understanding, and judging. One's knowing is subject to the norms immanent in consciousness. My proposed notion of spirituality which draws heavily on Lonergan avoids the pitfall of placing the level of experience above the other levels of consciousness. This is not to say that experience is not important; for Lonergan, feelings "give intentional consciousness its mass, momentum, drive, power. Without these feelings our knowing and deciding would be paper thin."[284] Feelings intend value, but one's apprehension of the true and the good require the rest of the levels of consciousness.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to provide a definition of spirituality that is wholistic and nuanced. My goal was to provide an understanding of spirituality which is both consistent with the

[282] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 101.
[283] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 101.
[284] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 30–31.

traditional understanding of religious experience but also useful going forward by re-appropriating the notion of authenticity through the work of Lonergan and by setting the stage through the work of Taylor. While it was initially my intention to evaluate a modern take on spirituality (such as those which I have explored in my second chapter), I have decided instead to simply raise some possible questions for further investigation.

Conclusion

This thesis has largely been concerned with answering three questions: (1) 'what does it mean to live in a secular age?'; (2) 'what is spirituality?'; and (3) 'what is authenticity?'. In the first chapter, I attempted to convey what it means to live in a secular age in a way that moved past earlier secularization theories which assumed the slow but inevitable disappearance of religion in the public sphere and the decline in religious affiliation. According to Taylor, to live in a secular age is to live in a time when (1) many different religions and spiritualities exist alongside each other and (2) when for the first time, a purely self-sufficient humanism is possible. For the first time, people have the option *not* to believe in a transcendent being, when in the year 1500, this option did not exist.

Using Taylor's work, I showed how the secular was able to slowly emerge out of the pre-modern enchanted world. From the interest in nature for its own sake to the spirit of reform, there is a growing interest in lay spirituality as the enchantment of the world erodes and the confidence to re-order society increases. Instrumental reason becomes the tool through which we measure the purpose of things by producing effective results, and one's savage nature must be molded according to the norms of civility. Rather than a porous self who is vulnerable to supernatural forces and a society which reflects the eternal cosmic order, we have in modernity a buffered self who lives in a mechanistic universe designed to produce effective results.

The final shift which occurs between the one from the pre-modern worldview to the secular worldview is an in-between stage which Taylor calls providential deism: God still exists and is still the creator of the universe, but after the act of creation, God no longer intervenes. Human flourishing in the form of ordered and disciplined lives and an ordered society becomes an end in itself with nothing beyond being necessary. But more than this, the power to re-order our lives and society is immanentized; it is found in ourselves and no longer relies on God's grace. Finally, a world in which an exclusive humanism is possible emerges.

In the second chapter, I attempted to define the term spirituality. Today spirituality is understood in relation to religion, and so I began by looking at how the term religion has changed over the centuries. Through the work of Smith, I argued that while in the pre-modern world *religio* was often understood as one's personal relation to God or the orientation of one's being, in modernity 'a religion' slowly became used to refer to a system of belief, and 'religion' the sum of all these systems of beliefs. I argue that it is this understanding of religion to which modern spirituality is opposed, often (but not always) along with its institutions, conventions or traditions.

In the contemporary spiritual landscape, Watts argues that the resurgence of romantic values and its marriage with rational liberalism brings about what he calls the religion of the heart. Many of its adherents consider themselves SBNR, but others remain affiliated with religious institutions. The adherents to the religion of the heart have an experiential epistemology, and they understand God (or the universe) as imminent and benevolent. The redemption they seek is to be found in this life through the realization of one's true self, often an inner voice which—if not hindered by society's corruption—is naturally good and right. They generally believe in some form of the idea that 'thought shapes reality' and one of the most important values for them is individual liberty.

I argue that what Watts describes as the religion of the heart is similar to what Burton calls the intuitional religions. The practitioners of the intuitional religions are religiously unaffiliated, and are interested in getting their meaning, purpose, community and rituals from different sources to craft for themselves a personal spirituality which caters to them specifically. Of the utmost importance for these groups is authenticity, or the notion that their actions are in line with their emotions. Naturally, the adherents of the intuitional religions are very individualistic and value their individual liberty highly. They are heavily influenced by the internet and capitalism. One example which I review is wellness culture, an intuitional religion with its own philosophy of life and theology. Wellness practitioners can get their ritual from a meditation app, a self-care routine or a SoulCycle class, their meaning and purpose from an article by one of *goop*'s self-help gurus, and their community from the internet.

In my third chapter, I explore a re-framing of the question of religion through the work of Keiji Nishitani and a different understanding of authenticity in the work of Bernard Lonergan. For Nishitani, religious inquiry should not be led by questions regarding its utility or its purpose; rather, Nishitani argues that religion has to do with the fundamental orientation of one's being, and should be understood as the real self-awareness of reality.

For Lonergan, the way in which we come into relationship with reality is through knowing, which is the compound of our experiencing, understanding, and judging. Human knowing is the vehicle through which the pure, unrestricted desire to know unfolds. What's more, we are capable of self-awareness by analyzing our interiority and becoming intimately aware of our own knowing. However, we are also limited by our horizons—or, the limits of our concern dictated by various factors such as social background and milieu, education and personal development. We are also prone to bias which further obscures our capacity to come into relationship with reality.

The way in which we overcome our bias and expand our horizons is by striving for authenticity. For Lonergan, however, authenticity is not simply related to the expression of one's feelings. He argues that authenticity is achieved through self-transcendence which is rooted in conversion. There is intellectual conversion, in which the subject affirms themselves as knower, and knowing as the relationship between themselves and reality. In intellectual conversion, the subject also re-orients their notion of truth from the context of their own concern to the context of being, which brings the understanding that one's knowing is contingent. There is moral conversion, in which the subject recognizes themselves as the originator of value, and that objectivity is nothing but the fruit of authentic subjectivity. The morally converted subject orients themselves not towards satisfactions or the apparently good, but towards what is truly good. Finally, there is religious conversion, which Lonergan describes as a falling in love with God. It is the fulfillment of our capacity for self-transcendence through which our horizons are expanded. Furthermore, Gregson distinguishes between religious experience, or a single event, with spirituality, which is the state of openness that results from religious conversion. It is through conversion—religious, moral and intellectual—that we come into *real* relationship with reality.

Finally, I concluded by defining spirituality as one's orientation towards or relationship with reality. An authentic spirituality is one which is oriented towards conversion. An authentic

secular spirituality is one which is practiced in an age where, for the first time, a self-sufficient humanism is a viable option among many.

The definition of spirituality provided in this thesis serves as a foundation for further inquiry. For instance, because I have focused only on one example of secular spirituality, this framework could be extended to others, including some which are lived and practiced by those affiliated with a religious institution. Furthermore, a deeper comparative investigation into the work of Lonergan and Nishitani would no doubt prove fruitful; there is a surprising amount of overlap between their work, considering their distinct backgrounds. In particular, Nishitani's exploration of the Zen Buddhist notion of nothingness and its significance in relation to the religious pursuit could bring a lot of depth to Lonergan's Christian approach to authenticity, conversion and religious experience.

Additionally, the concrete way in which conversion is promoted (or avoided) in secular spirituality needs to be studied further. For example, do certain forms of secular spirituality (either explicitly religious and not) discourage questioning and intellectual inquiry? Furthermore, in what context is religious conversion understood? For example, if one takes part in a SoulCycle class and experiences a transformative experience, how is that experience interpreted or explained by those around them or their instructor?

Finally, another future avenue of inquiry is the place of God in the secular age. Of course, many still believe in some notion of Transcendence today. However, it seems that what it means to believe in a transcendent being varies greatly. How should one conceive of God today? Is there a way of conceiving God which is salient among various seemingly disparate groups? Perhaps the work of those focusing their efforts on Christian metaphysics, such as Andrew Davison,[285] could help give a robust and relevant notion of God today.

[285] See Davidson's book, *Participation in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics*, in which he advocates for a participatory understanding of our relationship to God and lays out in the implications of this understanding in detail.

Bibliography

Alper, Becka A., Michael Rotolo, Patricia Tevington, Justin Nortey, and Asta Kallo. "5. Who Are 'Spiritual but Not Religious' Americans?" *Pew Research Center* (blog), December 7, 2023. https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/12/07/who-are-spiritual-but-not-religious-americans/.

Amy Lane. "I Hate Spinning - Here's My Honest Review of SoulCycle." Women's Health, June 25, 2019. https://www.womenshealthmag.com/uk/fitness/a28168601/soulcycle-review/.

Berlin, Isaiah. *Political Ideas in the Romantic Age: Their Rise and Influence on Modern Thought*. Edited by Henry Hardy. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.

Betty Friedan. *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: WW Norton, 1963.

Braman, Brian J. *Meaning and Authenticity: Bernard Lonergan and Charles Taylor on the Drama of Authentic Human Existence*. 1 online resource (vii, 138 pages). vols. Lonergan Studies. Toronto Ont.: University of Toronto Press, 2008.

Brown, Callum G. "Sex, Religion, and the Single Woman c.1950–75: The Importance of a 'Short' Sexual Revolution to the English Religious Crisis of the Sixties." *Twentieth Century British History* 22, no. 2 (June 1, 2011): 189–215.

Brown, C.G. "What Was the Religious Crisis of the 1960s?" *Journal of Religious History* 34, no. 4 (2010): 468–79.

Burke, Peter. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. New York: New York University Press, 1978.

Burton, Tara Isabella. *Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World*. Reprint edition. PublicAffairs, 2022.

Business of Apps. "Headspace Revenue and Usage Statistics (2023)." Accessed October 18, 2023. https://www.businessofapps.com/data/headspace-statistics/.

Byrne, Rhonda. *The Secret*. Illustrated edition. New York : Hillsboro, Or: Atria Books/Beyond Words, 2006.

Campbell, Colin. *Easternization of the West: A Thematic Account of Cultural Change in the Modern Era*. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Campbell, Ted. *The Religion of the Heart: A Study of European Religious Life in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991.

Chopra, Deepak. *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success: A Practical Guide to the Fulfillment of Your Dreams*. First Edition. Amber-Allen Publ., New World Library, 1994.

Cody Musselman. "Making Sweat Feel Spiritual Didn't Start With SoulCycle." Religion Unplugged, January 18, 2023. https://religionunplugged.com/news/2023/1/13/making-sweat-feel-spiritual-didnt-start-with-soulcycle-a-religion-scholar-explains.

Descartes, René. *Les Passions de l'âme*. Paris, 1649.

Devigne, Robert. *Reforming Liberalism: J.S. Mill's Use of Ancient, Religious, Liberal, and Romantic Moralities*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

Du Mez, Kristin Kobes. *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation*. First edition. New York, NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2020.

Dunne, Tad. *Lonergan and Spirituality: Towards a Spiritual Integration*. First Edition. Chicago: Loyola Pr, 1985.

Ficino, Marsilio. *Platonic Theology*, n.d.

Fitzpatrick, Joseph. "Lonergan and Hume II Epistemology." *New Blackfriars* 63, no. 743 (1982): 219–28.

Friedman, Lawrence M. *The Republic of Choice: Law, Authority, and Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Fuller, Robert C. *Spiritual, but Not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Gray, John. "Liberalism." University of Minnesota Press, 1995.

Gregson, Vernon. *Lonergan, Spirituality, and the Meeting of Religions*. College Theology Society Studies in Religion 2. Lanham, MD.: University Press of America, 1985.

Headspace. "The Many Benefits of Meditation." Accessed October 18, 2023. https://www.headspace.com/meditation/benefits.

Hicks, Esther, and Jerry Hicks. *Ask and It Is Given: Learning to Manifest Your Desires*. Carlsbad, Calif: Hay House LLC, 2004.

Himes, Michael J. "The Human Person in Contemporary Theology: From Human Nature to Authentic Subjectivity." In *Introduction to Christian Ethics*, edited by Ronald P. Hamel and Kenneth R. Himes, 49–60, 1989.

Hutcheson, Francis. *A System of Moral Philosophy*. Hildesheim: George Olms, 1969.

Indigo. "Buy Faith and Spirituality Books Online | Indigo," 2024. https://www.indigo.ca/en-ca/books/religion/.

Keenan, James F. *A History of Catholic Theological Ethics*. Paulist Press, 2022.

Lonergan, Bernard. *Method in Theology*. 2nd Revised ed. edition. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 1990.
Lonergan, Bernard J. F. *A Third Collection*. Edited by Frederick E. Crowe. New York: Paulist Press, 1985.
Lonergan, Bernard. *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*. Edited by Robert M. Doran and Frederick E. Crowe. 5th ed. 1 online resource (xxvi, 875 p.) vols. Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, v. 5. Toronto Ont.: University of Toronto Press, 1992.
Lonergan, Bernard. "The Transition from A Classicist World-View To Historical Mindedness." In *A Second Collection; [Papers]*, edited by Bernard Tyrrell and William F. J. Ryan, 1–9. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975.
McGinn, Bernard, John Meyendorf, and Jean Leclercq, eds. *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*. Illustrated edition. Vol. 1. Herder & Herder, 1987.
McLeod, Hugh. *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
Milbank, John. *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*. Oxford, United Kingdom; Malden, Massachusetts: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006.
Mitchell, Travis. "About Three-in-Ten U.S. Adults Are Now Religiously Unaffiliated." *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), December 14, 2021. https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/12/14/about-three-in-ten-u-s-adults-are-now-religiously-unaffiliated/.
Nishitani, Keiji. *Religion and Nothingness*. Translated by Jan Van Bragt. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1982.
Otto, Rudolf. *The Idea of the Holy*. Translated by John W. Harvey. London: Oxford University Press, 1923.
Perkins, William. *Works*. London, 1616.
Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project. "When Americans Say They Believe in God, What Do They Mean?," April 25, 2018. https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2018/04/25/when-americans-say-they-believe-in-god-what-do-they-mean/.
Robbins, Tony. *Awaken the Giant Within: How to Take Immediate Control of Your Mental, Emotional, Physical and Financial*. Reprint edition. Simon & Schuster, 1991.
Russell, Bertrand. *History of Western Philosophy and Its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1946.
Saint Ignatius of Loyola. *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*. Translated by Elder Mullan. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2017.
"Self-Care Ideas That Stick, Even When You're Busy - Headspace." Accessed October 18, 2023. https://www.headspace.com/mindfulness/self-care-ideas?origin=navigation.
Sellin, Thorsten. *Pioneering in Penology: The Amsterdam Houses of Correction in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944.
Sheldrake, Philip. *A Brief History of Spirituality*. 1st edition. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007.
Shklar, Judith. "The Liberalism of Fear." In *Liberalism and the Moral Life*, edited by Nancy L. Rosenblum. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.
Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. *The Meaning and End of Religion*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1962.
Smith-Leonardini, Jakki. "Energy Clearing - How To Clear Out Old Energy." goop, January 6, 2019. https://goop.com/ca-en/wellness/spirituality/clearing-out-old-energy/.
Stoll, Mark. *Inherit the Holy Mountain: Religion and the Rise of American Environmentalism*. Illustrated edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Gifford Lectures 1999. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.
The English Dominican Fathers, trans. *The Summa Contra Gentiles*. london: Burns Oates & Washbourne ltd., 1928.
Tillich, Paul. *Dynamics of Faith*. Harper Torchbooks; 42; TB42. New York: Harper & Row, 1958.
Tindal, Matthew. *Christianity as Old as the Creation*. London, 1730.
Troeltsch, Ernst. *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*. Translated by Olive Wyon. Halley Stewart Publications. London: Allen & Unwin ;, 1931.
Velde, Rudi A. te. "Participation: Aquinas and His Neoplatonic Sources." In *Christian Platonism: A History*, edited by Alexander J. B. Hampton and John Peter Kenney, 122–40. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.
Watts, Galen. *The Spiritual Turn: The Religion of the Heart and the Making of Romantic Liberal Modernity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022.