

Deprivatizing Religion in Our Secular Age: Ignatian Pedagogy as a Critique of *Laïcité*

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Abstract

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Is there room for religion in the public square? This simple, yet heavy question has been constant and evolving since the Enlightenment period. Prior to this period in the context of Latin Christendom, the answer was an obvious ‘yes’. The innovative idea that the answer might be ‘no’ has had an immense impact on Church-State relations in various Western contexts in the past 250 years. The experiments in secularity within the past few hundred years wrestling with this question are explored in brief detail. One of the social imaginaries that emerged in France is the concept of *laïcité*. It is important to address the historical roots of the ideology of *laïcité* within the broader context of emerging Western secularities. Grievances present within this ideology are also addressed, culminating with a deconstruction of its totalizing features that seek to marginalize other burgeoning ideas of secularity. Ignatian Pedagogy will be illustrated as one of the many examples that illustrate the deprivatization of religion in the public sphere. Furthermore, it will be discussed in terms of its applicability to all students in hopes of both greater human flourishing, and an accomplishment of the possibility for religious freedom and peace among differences, meeting a central goal of the *Peace of Westphalia*.

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Dedication

To all those whose beliefs have been unfairly marginalized from the public sphere

Introduction - Autoethnography

From what I've been told, I have always been fascinated with religion. My parents took me to Catholic Mass before I can remember. According to them, I began to wander on to the altar and just hang out with the priest while he said Mass for the congregants. Perhaps I felt being in the pews was too far away. I wanted to be right there where all the action was happening! After all, the Mass is a kind of drama in which the priest, theologically speaking, becomes *In Persona Christi*¹ during the liturgy of the Eucharist and sacrifices himself for the sake of humanity's salvation by giving true food and true drink, through His² own body and blood. It is a story and ritual drama that has been repeated for two-thousand years.

Naturally, during those moments in the mid-late 90s as a toddler prior to attending my first catechism classes, I had no real idea of what was going on. However, a seed must have been planted somewhere in those years. Some people might say it was at my baptism when I was a mere seven weeks-old. Something must have piqued my curiosity during those early years. I suppose I'd have to give credit to this priest for just letting me be there on the altar. If he was super rigid and told my parents repeatedly to get me back into the pews, it could have shut me off from a deeper openness to faith later on.

This is autoethnography. It is a term seldom used beyond academic circles. Most people are more familiar with the term autobiography in which one provides a story about their life. In this introduction as well as throughout the thesis, my specific lived experience is focused "on the functions of stories and storytelling in creating and managing identity; the expressive forms for making sense of lived experience and communicating it to others."³ This naturally parallels a method that has been used in ancient religious traditions for thousands of years, emphasizing "the utility of narratives and vocabularies rather than the objectivity of laws and theories."⁴ In recognizing the importance of objectivity and rigorous theory throughout my thesis, particularly in my first chapter that weaves through a brief history of secularism, through the methodological lens of a history of ideas. The postmodern shift to a deeper emphasis on the subjective allows my story to be viewed not only as an objective form of research, but as a form of storytelling.⁵

My own lived experience is not merely about sharing how I felt during the more transformative periods of my life. Rather, I am aiming to compare and contrast my lived experience with the knowledge of various disciplines mentioned above, and with collective shared experiences felt by various majority/minority groups. This is best accomplished by

¹ This is the Latin translation for "In the person of Christ".

² This is in reference to Jesus, understood as God in the second person of the Trinity. God is understood as male in the Christian tradition, but only as an allegory to recognizing the love of God mirroring the love of a parent, culminating with ultimate authority and leadership.

³ Arthur P. Bochner, "On First-Person Narrative Scholarship," *Narrative Inquiry* 22, no. 1 (2012): 155.

⁴ Ibid, 157.

⁵ Ibid, 157.

“breaking away from the conventional separation of researcher and subject.”⁶ This allows me to further “see and feel the struggles and emotions of the research participants.”⁷ Without this engagement, “we deprive [the researcher] of an opportunity to care about the particular people whose struggles nourish the researcher’s hunger for truth.”⁸ Within this search for truth, autoethnography’s unique sense of inquiry further allows for a deeper understanding of meaning beyond facts.⁹

In particular, I contrast my lived experience with the collective lived experiences of Quebecers who accept the central tenets of *laïcité*. Autoethnography is a part of my dual methodology along with a history of ideas that is more objective in nature. What I have expressed below is also a constant working out of what my experience has meant and the flaws that may have been present in how I initially perceived religion in the public square within my own restricted outlook.

I grew up in a home where self-development was always deeply fostered. This was primarily lived out by my parents’ intense prioritization of health and religion. A deep focus on health was largely due to my mother being diagnosed borderline diabetic when I was about a year old. My father bought into a radical shift in diet and lifestyle that has manifested concretely in all of our lives since then. Religion was more of my father’s initiative, having grown up in a strong Irish Catholic family where Mass was the most important part of Sunday. Both my father and uncle were altar boys for over a decade, and had a very strong example in their parish priest who, from what I’ve been told, was both an excellent spiritual leader and intellectually astute. My father’s education beyond elementary school was authentically Jesuit, at Loyola High School in Montreal, and later St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia. While he never pursued theology or religion in any formal degree, he often spoke highly of those courses he took. Some classes were taught by priests themselves, adding some intellectual rigor to his faith. These conversations with my dad about theology in my adolescent years would provide some kind of entry point into my own intellectual pursuits that have culminated in this thesis among others. I distinctly remember him talking about one of his university courses that looked at a 600 page book on both the Apostles’ and Nicene Creed. That blew my 14 year-old mind - 600 pages? What I later realized is how much catechism for kids and young teenagers is simplified for the purpose of trying to reach as many people as possible. This is a noble approach. But I wanted more. This would be yet another entry point into my thirst for knowledge and also humble recognition that the world’s religious and spiritual traditions have much to offer and will probably take a lifetime or more to understand. I became aware that religion could never be properly understood fully in a simple catchphrase.

My mother, on the other hand, grew up in the Greek Orthodox tradition in Lebanon, though never had any particular allegiance to the specific practices or rituals. Therefore, when she moved to Canada in her adolescence, the family gravitated to the closest Church in the area, which happened to be the same Catholic Church that my father attended growing up. My father prioritized the outward expression of faith, which also forced my mother to reckon with her own

⁶ Bochner, “On First-Person Narrative Scholarship,” 158.

⁷ Ibid, 160.

⁸ Ibid, 160.

⁹ Ibid, 161.

religious identity. Aside from weekly Mass, she developed a daily, rigorous spiritual practice over the years and would often share that with my sister and I in a few different ways, often in dinner conversation. Together, they provided a holistic approach in which an outward, public expression of religion provided real entry points for my sister and I to reckon with during our adolescence. Within any family culture, outward public expressions of faith are necessary to pass on faith to the next generation. This is especially true of our secular age that grapples with the idea of marginalizing religion from the public square.

I followed in my father's footsteps in attending Loyola High School, the only anglophone Catholic school in Quebec at the time. Like my father growing up, we were not a wealthy family and could barely afford attending a semi-private school. We benefited from the wonderful Loyola Bursary Program, which raises money every year for people who can't afford tuition, either fully or in part. One of the core values of the school has always been inclusivity in that financial sense, which also aided in the diversity of the school. You couldn't assume that the kid sitting next to you was well-off. There was an equality embedded in the structure of the school, which has always been a core Christian value and ever-present in the Catholic Church's legacy within the education system. My parents wanted an education for me that fostered their own religious values. This has been one of the many important rights discussed in political discourse, intersecting well with religious freedom.

At some point during the 2007-2008 school year, I distinctly remember my religion teacher at the time giving each student a paper, and asking us to bring it in the next day signed by our parents. It had something to do with acknowledging that our parents wanted us to continue learning religion from a Catholic perspective. This was ultimately done in response to a new course, Ethics and Religious Culture, that had been created by the Ministry of Education and was put forth as a mandated class for all schools that receive some sort of government funding.¹⁰ This went directly against Loyola's Jesuit, Catholic mission to form students in the Catholic tradition, regardless of their own background. After all, nobody forces parents to send their child to Loyola. It is not a zoned public school. Loyola would fight the government, in what would be known as *Loyola High School v. Quebec (Attorney General)* court case that lasted seven years until the final ruling came down in 2015. I will elaborate more on some of these details in chapter two along with the history of the secularizing process of education in Quebec.

The Quebec government was instrumental in my growing identity as a Catholic Christian despite their intentions. This is a staunch truth of my lived experience. As our school began to fight in court, I grew further interested in my religion courses that varied from year to year. Stories in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, a deeper understanding of the Catholic Sacraments, Catholic Ethics, Church History, World Religions and Catholic Social Teaching. A lot of good stuff was present in these courses that can provide their own entry points into various elements of the Catholic Tradition as well as other religions and more secular ethical theories. As I absorbed this material, I began to further wonder why the government wanted to take this away from us. I did learn about the Quiet Revolution and the history of the Catholic Church in Quebec,

¹⁰ Loyola High School in Montreal is part of the Quebec Association of Independent Schools (QAIS) and receives partial funding from the Quebec government. In response, Loyola is expected to adhere to all the curriculum guidelines laid out by the Ministry of Education.

so that provided some brief but still insufficient rationale. I needed to further explore the concept of *laïcité*, which is the focus of my second chapter.

To end off my high school experience, I took part in a three-day retreat that really put my (and many others) high school experience in perspective. It was religiously invigorating for me, deeply spiritual for others, and for some, a great way to bond with our brotherhood¹¹ as we prepared to graduate. Everybody loved it, and something like that just doesn't happen in schools without religious affiliation. I began to see the world in a different way. Everybody needs to literally 'retreat' from their comfortable surroundings, even if not through a traditional religious lens. This was in 2011, at a time where many began to recognize what the constant presence of smartphones could do to the way we interact with each other, and often prevent us from merely being alone with our own thoughts. There were so many public, outward expressions of religion that were both honest and not forceful. Generally, students get out of it what they want, or whatever grace may provide. This further led me to ponder; why are people trying to stop this from happening? Why do people want religion out of education completely?

I knew that most people were not religious in a Mass every Sunday kind of way, or it being the center of their lives when I left high school. However, taking humanities classes in CEGEP definitely opened my eyes to a world I never knew existed. Not only did I meet more people raised in other faiths, but a lot more openly atheists and others raised with no religion whatsoever. I took a world religions class during my first semester, but it felt different from the one I had taken in high school. Approaching everything from an 'etic' or outsider perspective, we essentially learned only about the social practices of these traditions and not much of any inward wisdom that a particular tradition may contribute to the world. I didn't have an issue with it per se, but it definitely led me to a certain skepticism about people's perception of religion only coming from outward social practices. This is partially what I realized was one of the weaknesses of the Ethics and Religious Culture program. The problem is in the title. Religion is really only present in terms of cultural heritage as far as learning about it is concerned. This is also what consequently leads to certain approaches aiming to completely separate religion from the public square. We all may have our own cultural background and practices, but when it comes to moral issues that affect everybody? Check your religion at the door. This is deeply problematic on a variety of levels that will be addressed in this thesis.

On a more global scale, the Church was reeling in realities brought about by the sexual abuse crisis, particularly in the early 2000s during my childhood. Like many people, I had been aware of this reality on some level, but my development of faith, as explained in these previous paragraphs, was rigorous and as foundational as it could be. This was a faith that relied on the presentation of a strong tradition of powerful stories that inculcated truths about ultimate reality. Furthermore, this faith formation leads to growth in self-discipline and an exercise of deep virtue. As a Catholic, the role of the priest is imperative in the structure of faith, as their presence is a requirement to partake in the sacramental life of the Church. I was 18 years-old when the local deacon at my church was arrested for possession of child pornography. I was definitely taken aback that first day when I heard the news, but ultimately the news didn't phase me. You

¹¹ Loyola High School was an all-male high school until the introduction of co-education in Fall 2023.

could say this was evidence that an impressionable 18 year-old had a much deeper faith that was not falsely reliant on the scandalous actions of some authority figures.

This is my lived experience that is not especially unique but rather shared among so many people encapsulated in a cultural moment that constantly seeks to validate diverse lived experiences. One might say that underneath my arguments that will be presented in the coming pages lies a desire for my experience to be recognized among the various possibilities. I hardly suggest that my story presents an objective reality of religion which all people should necessarily accept upon grappling with the arguments. Such an exercise is futile. I will argue that much of the marginalization of religion from the public square ultimately rejects my lived experience and puts forth a way of living that would prevent me, and many others sharing elements of my lived experience from becoming the best version of ourselves in the world.

The marginalization of religion from the public square arose from a collectively shared lived experience, such as those seeking to loosen the social grip of the Catholic Church on Quebec society. I do not seek in any way over the course of this thesis to eliminate this collectively shared experience from the public square. Rather, I aim to further contextualize the current relationship between religion and the public square, both in the Quebec context, and on a more global scale. The harmony and tension that exists between church and state is the culmination of diverse experiences and the only way to recognize this variety is to let religion take a seat at the public table. However, this metaphorical seat ought to not impose itself on the lives of citizens, but it has a right to express itself, because religious values are fundamentally embedded in the identities attached to so many people that its beliefs must be shared in the public arena, or risk marginalizing certain groups of people. For too many decades, many believers and non-believers alike have bought into this false promise that by removing religion from the public square, all people of goodwill can get along. Rather, we live in a much more polarized society now than decades ago when I was running around the altar as a toddler on Sundays. Such marginalization has created various negative consequences among citizens as well that will be discussed in the upcoming chapters.

I was a teaching assistant some years ago for a course titled, “Religious Pluralism in a Secular Culture” and was given the opportunity to lecture on the Loyola Court Case. I presented many of the key details and opened this up for discussion. I was rather confused by multiple comments from students who couldn't grasp the concept that teaching religion from a ‘non-neutral’ perspective could be something beneficial to students. I had tried to provide an entry point to this kind of knowledge, but felt like I had failed. Perhaps many other students got the point and agreed. After all, most students don't say anything in a university seminar regardless. Perhaps, this had created a necessary vocational shift for myself, as it was during this time that I redirected my path into education. I will briefly touch on this in my third chapter, centering on Ignatian Pedagogy.

My family emphasized the importance of religion because they felt this would impact my own development, to become the best version of myself. Forcing individuals to ultimately remove a core part of who they are when deliberating on moral issues in the public square is not only nonsensical, but a missed opportunity to recognize how religious ideas can help our democracies flourish. Many staunch free speech advocates say that the best way to fight hate

speech is to combat it with better speech. This can be mirrored when it comes to religion. The best way to fight any combination of incompetent, foolish and/or authoritarian religion, is to fight it with better ideas that can manifest into better practice, for a more unified and less polarized society.

State of the Question and Methodology

My introduction through autoethnography helps to situate my work that foundationally began through my own lived experience. The first two chapters will use the lens of the history of ideas to further ground my own lived experience as well as the lived experiences of those around me, particularly of those living in societies that have grown out of Latin Christendom. This two-fold methodology rightly perceives the religious and the secular in a constant cultural battle, particularly in the stream of *laïcité* that dominates much of Quebec's provincial politics. Within this lived experience, I began to recognize in my high school years that a collective trauma exists between Quebecers and the ruptured connection to their Catholic heritage. Throughout my studies, this perception has been confirmed and understood more clearly. In our postmodern context, who is to impose whether or not my beliefs should stem from religious convictions?

There is a fear present within the collective Quebecois consciousness of going backwards, returning to an authoritarian, ultramontanist religious past, akin to the *Grande Noirceur* period in which Maurice Duplessis ruled Quebec from the 1930s until the late 1950s. From that stems a fear that anything religious that can manifest in public could trigger a return to such a past. Recognizing the importance of education, many provincial political parties endorse the concept of *laïcité*. This ideology desires a type of neutrality surrounding the education of the world's religions that prevents one from dominating another in order to avoid any possible return to the traumatic past. Hence, it is impossible to argue using a methodology void of lived experience. Creating dialogue between my own lived experience and the collective lived experience of many Quebecers both living today and those who came before me is extremely important. This dialogue furthers one of the goals to contextualize the state of the question regarding the space of religion in the public square that often makes the headlines. Our current postmodern emphasis is also where my two methodologies meet. It is this ideological lens that dominates much discourse today. Looking back through history, the goal of this two-fold methodology is to bridge the objective and the subjective.

Within the current polarized political climate, it is also my desire to open up the definition of religion, and thus the possibility of the individual/collective to reconsider religion as part of a shared lived history and experience. Religion has become a caricature in our secular culture. What is it that *animates* religion? The secular Quebecer and a religious person will have a different answer to this question. To answer this question, one is not bound by a particular set of convictions, and so there should be some consensus on answering the question of what animates religion. Constant repetition of empty buzzwords and hopeless platitudes has assaulted the importance of truth and has turned religious discourse into a caricature. A deeper understanding of religion is missing. The inner core has been ignored and lost. I hope that my lived experience can point to this inner core.

Charles Taylor begins *A Secular Age* with three different understandings of secularity. This will be explained early in my first chapter, but it is the third definition that will be elaborated upon in greatest detail. That is, secularity as an expanding set of different beliefs from which to choose. My thesis does not probe in detail which set of beliefs are best, or most in accordance with reality. Rather, I aim to demonstrate how religion has contributed to the formation of these various beliefs, and thus bridge the perceived gap between the religious and the secular. Certain arguments may be perceived as antagonistic towards secularism, but it is rather the specific secular ideologies that are either ignorant of the historic role that religious values and beliefs have played in shaping modern ideas, or a tyrannical rejection of such religious ideas that imposes this rejection on all people. Certain strands of secularism are the consequence of “uncritical and unreflexive ideologies insofar as they disregard, indeed mask, the particular and contingent historicity of the process, projecting it onto the level of universal development.”¹²

One of these ideologies is illustrated through *laïcité*, which “aims to emancipate all secular spheres from clerical-ecclesiastical control, and in this respect, it is marked by a laic/clerical antagonism.”¹³ Consequently, “the boundaries between the religious and the secular are rigidly maintained, but those boundaries are pushed into the margins, aiming to contain, privatize, and marginalize everything religious, while excluding it from any visible presence in the secular public sphere.”¹⁴ Furthermore, “modern secularization entails a certain profanation of religion through its privatization and individualization and a certain sacralization of the secular spheres of politics (sacred nation, sacred citizenship, sacred constitution), science (temples of knowledge), and economics (through commodity fetishism).”¹⁵ In the case of *laïcité*, this sacralization occurs through particular interpretations of *égalité*, *liberté*, and *fraternité*.¹⁶

Given that my three chapters could become a master’s thesis each on their own, it is important to note that my work does not address secularism on a global scale beyond Latin Christendom. Furthermore, it does not thoroughly entertain counter-arguments in favour of *laïcité*. Lastly, my chapter on Ignatian Pedagogy is a brief example of how religion in the public square can manifest adequately in our secular age. It is far more reliant on my own lived experience than expansive pedagogical theory given the limits of this thesis and the decision to include the broad themes of each chapter.

Within my exploration since my teenage years on various understandings of secularism and its intersection with religious citizens in a democratic state, it has become clear to me that many who aim for greater restriction on religion in the public square are often limited in their

¹² José Casanova. “The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms,” in *Rethinking Secularism*, ed. Craig Calhoun, John Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 55.

¹³ Ibid, 57.

¹⁴ Ibid, 57.

¹⁵ José Casanova. “The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms,” in *Rethinking Secularism*, ed. Craig Calhoun, John Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 55.

¹⁶ These are the secular values enshrined as the core tenets of the French Revolution.

understanding of religion as a comprehensive set of ideas that is not restricted to platitude-like grand narratives to control public policy. For instance, the idea that the Catholic Church should be completely absent as an institution in the realm of healthcare and education is an immensely oversimplified answer to the ideological question regarding greater State involvement that replaces the Church. Philosopher Arthur Lovejoy takes a longer-range approach to the history of ideas that parallels my first chapter. While not being a strict philosopher or theologian, he recognizes the connection of various concerns surrounding ideas in history, especially logic and psychology.¹⁷ Much like a religious tradition itself, he recognized that the “chain of Being could be envisaged as a record of an evolutionary process that unfolded over a very long period.”¹⁸ I do not wish to say that all philosophical worldviews that reject religious truth do so without considering a longer range of the history of ideas.¹⁹ Rather, implementing a one-size-fits all philosophical view into the field of religion & politics has been a consistent temptation for secularists throughout the past few centuries.

Part of the Renaissance legacy was belief in a “continuum, the unbroken chain of Western culture since the Greeks whose links...could establish with such remarkable facility.”²⁰ The counterpoint to this was poignantly captured by Foucault who rather “ruptured the traditional continuities of the history of thought in order to discover...large structured segments with marked thresholds that represent revolutionary fractures.”²¹ As far as this interpretation of cultural ideas, I do not want to further Lovejoy’s claim about continuity. I recognize some merit in each of these broader narratives. My central argument about religion in the public square does not rest on one of these two interpretations. Rather, it is clear that on the Foucault side, certain revolutionary fractures within this supposed continuum have unfairly marginalized the public expression of religion, often due to religious association with power in the midst of such revolutionary fracture, as well as further interpretation of religious phenomena and its place in a growing conception of particular progressive utopias. Looking specifically towards the end of the eighteenth century:

The new ideas of the 1780s and 1790s . . . profoundly altered the habitual preconceptions, valuations, and ruling catchwords of an increasingly large part of the educated classes in Europe, so that there came into vogue in the course of the nineteenth century and in our own a whole series of intellectual fashions—from styles in poetry and styles in metaphysics to styles in government—which [had no parallels in the preceding period].²²

¹⁷ Nico Mouton, "An Apologia for Arthur Lovejoy's Long-Range Approach to the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 62 (2023): 276-277, <https://doi.org/10.1111/hith.12298>.

¹⁸ Ibid, 278.

¹⁹ The *Great Chain of Being* is certainly more of a medieval concept. However, my first chapter will critically look at a hierarchical structure of all matter and life that undergird any and every worldview.

²⁰ Ibid, 279.

²¹ Ibid, 279.

²² Ibid, 280.

To buy into the belief that religion should be marginalized from the public square, is to buy into a radical rupture that was completely foreign to previous eras. Furthermore, if we look at the specific marginalization of religion during the French revolutionary period, history shows that it is merely one response among many, in one specific country, with a new set of ideas & viewpoints that were not and never have been shared by everyone in that country. Taylor's grasp of the evolution of various modern social imaginaries (conceptions of how society should function), helps to illustrate this point. The empirical data does not reveal precisely how religion should function within the public square. It does point to the fact that there is a diversity of viewpoints on how to recognize religious freedom while ensuring that religion is not imposed on its citizens.

The idea of *laïcité*, for instance, rests first and foremost with the goal to empower the citizens who are *laïque*, that is, not a part of the religious clergy. There is a transfer of power from the clergy to the people. Within the French context, a republic is born that aims to remove religious values and replace them with the secular values of equality, liberty and fraternity. Taylor explains that it is in this developing social imaginary that the idea of an exclusive humanism is born. That is, a focus on the importance of the human person that is exclusively natural and without reference to the supposed tyrannical religious dimensions imposed through the need of the supernatural in previous social imaginaries. Contrary to what is often thought today, this is an innovative idea, not an obvious conclusion of the evidence that reality provides. Nominalism is the idea that "God relates to things as freely to be disposed of according to his autonomous purposes."²³ This shifts the God-human discourse further away from the 'intrinsic' to the 'extrinsic' and is a fundamentally transformational understanding of being. Though it may not have necessarily been seen as such at the time, this was not as much of a continuity of idea as much as a rupture in which "the ordered whole is no longer normative, a system of normative patterns on which we should model ourselves but rather, a vast field of mutually affecting parts, designed to work in certain ways, to produce certain results."²⁴

The multitude of reasons within the collective Franco-Catholic consciousness to empower its people through the values all too well-known as *égalité*, *liberté*, and *fraternité*, begs the question; what does it mean to be religious? Taylor states that part of the question can be as simple as; "[does] the best life involve our seeking, or acknowledging, or serving a good which is beyond, in the sense of independent of human flourishing?"²⁵ It is about pushing the 'why' question further beyond human flourishing. Absolutizing the value of human flourishing can be defended in the case of the exclusive humanist, but it is hardly the only option. I would argue it is certainly one option among many, and not the only intelligible viewpoint. In a general sense, Taylor argues here that anything beyond human flourishing and thus independent of it, obtains a religious quality. Thus, the tyrannical element of imposing *égalité*, *liberté*, and *fraternité* from a purely exclusive, secular humanist perspective is exposed. It is a complete denial of the religious nature that is foundational to the beliefs and values of so many individuals. In that sense, there is no *égalité* of beliefs because some beliefs are deemed better than others. There is no real *liberté* to choose how to conduct oneself in the public square of ideas. Consequently, *fraternité* is

²³ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 98.

²⁴ Ibid, 98.

²⁵ Ibid, 16.

weakened due to the unnecessary division caused by marginalizing people's beliefs from the public square. The epistemic foundation for these supposed secular, exclusively humanist values is human flourishing. However, there is no one single answer to the question of how humans ought best to flourish. Taylor recognizes that the standard of values cannot be kept while eliminating all ontological components.²⁶

Education has always been in the business of forming individuals and the way they ought to orient themselves. Different educational models have fostered different levels of freedom, but have always been interested in forming the person's values to become good citizens in the world. The Church has always been in the business of education dating back to the medieval period. Catholic Education preaches "a unity of soul and body that is dynamically realized through its opening to a relation with others."²⁷ The 'why' to a relation with others is not purely for human flourishing (though certainly that is one of the consequences) but it is primarily about imitating the life of Jesus Christ.

Catholic Education brings a fresh perspective to the telos of reason, of which many modern philosophies believe it can flourish on its own: "an encounter opening up new horizons extending beyond the sphere of reason. But it is also a purifying force for reason itself. From God's standpoint, faith liberates reason from its blind spots and therefore helps it to be ever more fully itself."²⁸ Removing the possibility for the citizens of our democracies to be formed by this type of education reduces the richness of myth and favours demythologization which, has led to new myths such as "science, technicism, consumerism, democracy, and so forth that undergird and inform the contemporary paradigms for determining truth."²⁹ It has become clear to me that only through these many different models can we best equip tomorrow's leaders to deal with the ethical and existential realities that are both present today and that tomorrow will bring. Many will argue that the advent of secularism and religious freedom occurs with the *Peace of Westphalia*. I hope to provide a pathway to peace in our secular age.

²⁶ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 256.

²⁷ Congregation for Catholic Education. *Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission Between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful*. Vatican City: Vatican Press, September 8, 2007, 44, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20070908_educare-insieme_en.html.

²⁸ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005, 28.

²⁹ Jason Lief, "Challenging the Objectivist Paradigm: Teaching Biblical Theology with J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and Guillermo Del Toro," *Teaching Theology & Religion* 12, no. 4 (2009): 324.

Chapter One: A Secular Age- From 1500 to today- How did we get here?

Introduction

In this chapter, I will primarily explore Charles Taylor's monumental text *A Secular Age*, which helps to situate secularism in a broader context that aids in understanding some of the grievances and ideological reasons for the secularist temptation to eradicate or at the very least marginalize religion from the public square. I will begin in the medieval period that shares certain unquestionable axioms such as God's existence and that the world of the supernatural cosmos was inseparable from the earthly, material world. This is what Taylor calls an enchanted world. The secularist desire to remove religion from the public square can only be done through a disenchanted worldview. This is a worldview in which the supernatural cosmos is removed, or 'disenchanted' from a necessary conception of one's understanding of reality and ultimate truth. Key periods in the history of western secularity are glossed over, such as the Protestant Reformation and the fracture of religious authority. This rupture leads to various other ideological innovations such as an understanding of God as a Providential Deist. It is within this Enlightenment Era that the citizens of Europe are also working to transform their political situations by revolting against many of their own absolute monarchs in order to gain power through various democratic experiments. Freedom as a core value during this time would come to be understood solely within the humanist context, exclusive to any transcendent being. This is part of a burgeoning modern moral order that further emphasizes individual rights over collective rights. This not only moves these European societies away from a monolithic moral order and consensus that would eventually plant the seeds for a fractured democracy, but also create various buffered identities and cross-pressures. By this I mean that human beings have a variety of moral convictions that are in some way clashing and contradicting each other. It is only after the Second World War that these realities spill over to the Western mass population, creating what Taylor calls a supernova effect. It is within this effect that different European countries deal with re-integrating religion back into the public square at a time where a greater chunk of their societal populations are irreligious and seek to marginalize religion from the public square.

1.1: Beginnings of Secularities

The mere question of whether religion ought to manifest itself in the public square illustrates a shift to the *saeculum*, or finite time in which we exist. Charles Taylor's monumental work *A Secular Age* helps us to understand how humanity, within the bounds of Western Latin Christendom, evolved from an axiomatic belief in God as well as sole adherence to the medieval Catholic Church, to the diversity of religious and secular views that dominate our pluralistic environment in the 21st century. Taylor helps us to understand the consciousness of a people whose lives were structured in a Christendom where religion shaped every aspect of people's lives. The political realm was very much embedded in the cosmos.

Before delving into the history of a burgeoning secular age, it is important to clarify the different conceptions of secularity in order to make clear what Taylor is arguing, and consequently what I am further aiming to explore in this first chapter:

We function within various spheres of activity (economic, political, cultural, educational, professional, recreational, etc.,) the considerations we act on are internal to the ‘rationality’ of each sphere (such as maximum gain to economy, greatest benefit to greatest number in politics). This contrasts a prior reality when Christianity laid down authoritative prescriptions to ‘tame’ each field, and recognize the limits of each domain.³⁰

This first meaning of secularity inhabits a worldview that can only happen through the philosophical development of nominalism, which will be discussed below. Recognizing the limits of each domain, or rather, recognizing the moral importance of putting limits on different domains speaks to Christianity’s recognition of the transcendent dimension that is in dialogue with human reason, rationality and the sciences. Casanova refers to the secular as increasingly encompassing “the whole of reality, in a sense replacing the religious. Consequently, the secular has come to be increasingly perceived as a natural reality devoid of religion.”³¹

The second meaning of secularity refers to the “falling off of beliefs and practices.”³² The third meaning refers to the conditions of belief. “That is, belief in God is one of the many options and not a given, unchallenged reality like in prior societies.”³³ This is true of the many Western societies that exist, but would not necessarily be the case in certain Islamic countries.

Taylor’s goal is to “examine our society as secular in the third sense, to define and trace that which takes us from a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which it is one human possibility amongst others.”³⁴ Furthermore, this will allow for deeper understanding of both belief and unbelief as practical lived experiences rather than abstract “theories or sets of beliefs subscribed to.”³⁵ The Christian-pagan roots of Western Civilization and the naivete that existed in these pre-modern worldviews blossomed into a variety of options.

We all learn to navigate between two standpoints: an ‘engaged’ one in which we live as best we can the reality our standpoint opens us to; and a ‘disengaged’ one in which we are able to see ourselves as occupying one standpoint among a range of possible ones, with which we have in various ways to coexist.³⁶

Learning this navigation is one of the key features of the modern period and is partially responsible for the advent of democracy where freedom of choice is embedded in this structure of reality as a primary value. “Only by identifying the change as one of lived experience can we begin to put the right questions properly, and avoid the naivetes on all sides.”³⁷ This ethos is

³⁰ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 2.

³¹ Casanova. “The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms,” 55.

³² Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 3.

³³ Ibid, 3.

³⁴ Ibid, 3.

³⁵ Ibid, 8.

³⁶ Ibid, 12.

³⁷ Ibid, 14.

central to my own judgments on the history of secularity, in trying to avoid narrow, shallow myths about secularism and also grounding much of these foundations through lived experience, be it my own background or the collective experiences of various groups from 1500 (and a bit before) to the present day. One of these myths is that secularity can be “explained in terms of perennial features of human life.”³⁸ This goes against the idea that secularization naturally occurred by simply subtracting the supernatural as scientific knowledge grew. While in certain lived experiences, this might be true, it fails as a more expansive explanation for why religion has declined in much of western civilization.

1.2: Shifts to Nominalism & Humanism

Taylor’s work begins with looking at the late medieval/early modern period that shares a growing desire for reform, and to live by the higher ideals that the Church has set out for the people in its teachings. He states that this energy is a kind of “rage [that] has been crucial to the destruction of the old enchanted cosmos.”³⁹ The ideological innovations that came with many of these reforms helped pave the way for secularity, “the creation of a viable alternative in exclusive humanism.”⁴⁰ A more Christian humanism itself was at the heart of the renaissance during this time as well, whereas exclusive humanism is one that excludes divinity from the need for human flourishing.

However, this is not enough. The possibility for an ideological innovation away from an enchanted cosmos was made possible by the philosophical shift towards nominalism, in what Taylor describes as “the super-agent who is God relates to things as freely to be disposed of according to his autonomous purposes.”⁴¹ This iteration is to be understood as the consequence that this ideological revolution would have on the transformation of philosophy and secularization that would be made possible because of nominalism. Fundamentally, nominalism is “the rejection of *universals*. In another, more modern but equally entrenched sense, it implies the rejection of *abstract objects*...[that are] neither spatial nor temporal.”⁴² Ultimately, it starts with the rejection of universals, which eventually allows for the rejection of abstract objects in later strands of nominalist thought that would become “motivated by empiricist or naturalist views.”⁴³ A universal is only possible “if it can be instantiated.”⁴⁴ For example, “If *whiteness* is a universal then every white thing is an instance of it. But the things that are white, e.g. Socrates, cannot have any instances.”⁴⁵ Thus, it becomes plausible for universals to exist beyond time and space.⁴⁶ The popular philosophical principle

³⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 22.

³⁹ Ibid, 63.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 63.

⁴¹ Ibid, 98.

⁴² Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra, "Nominalism in Metaphysics," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2019 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/nominalism-metaphysics/>.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Ockham's razor purports that "if one can show that certain concrete objects can perform the theoretical roles usually associated with abstract objects, one should refrain from postulating abstract objects."⁴⁷ It is easy to see that a preference for the concrete over the abstract begins to take route during this time period, opening the door to the widening of the immanent frame that rejects the transcendent.

This leads to a new understanding of being that also has massive implications on the moral sphere. An ordered natural law that supposed the intrinsic now opens up space for the extrinsic to dominate. "A radical shift has taken place. The ordered whole is no longer normative, a system of normative patterns on which we should model ourselves but rather, a vast field of mutually affecting parts, designed to work in certain ways, to produce certain results."⁴⁸ Essentially, a nominalist understanding of God begins the path towards the possibility of exclusive humanism.⁴⁹ It also historically situates the first usage of the term 'secular' which "meant to 'make worldly,' to convert religious persons or things into secular ones, as when a religious person abandoned the monastic rule to live in the saeculum or when monastic property was secularized following the Protestant Reformation."⁵⁰

The continuing shift from nominalism to humanism occurs in the Enlightenment period. Grotius twists natural law to suit "a being who is both rational and sociable. A rational being means one who proceeds by rules, laws, principles; a rational being who is also sociable would have to have laws which made living together possible."⁵¹ One might even ask why natural law was not simply left behind as a dominant idea at this time. Functionally, Enlightenment philosophers still "needed a firm underpinning for an agreed public order."⁵²

This shift all happened through a presumed anthropocentric worldview in which humanity could flourish, in which "the conditions were created at last in which a live option of exclusive humanism could emerge from the womb of history."⁵³ This is part of a revolutionary period both in the natural sciences and then consequently, a philosophical revolution in the Enlightenment, leading to "a new self-understanding of our social existence, one which gave an unprecedented primacy to the individual."⁵⁴ This primacy of the individual one might say has always been deeply rooted in Christianity, even prior to the Protestant Reformation, given the emphasis on individual salvation and universality that has always preached the gospel to people of all nations, creating rupture in various collective groups. This shift to the primacy of the

⁴⁷ Rodriguez-Pereyra, "Nominalism in Metaphysics."

⁴⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 98.

⁴⁹ This shift of being cannot be overstated. This also parallels a deep shift in an understanding of reality, and a shift toward the eventual possibility of rejecting ultimate reality. The *telos*, (greek word used by Aristotle meaning 'final cause') can have a temporal end with no reference to the cosmos because many things are freely disposed according to their own autonomous purposes. One might argue this is the beginning of a critique on the interconnectedness of our world.

⁵⁰ Casanova. "The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms," 55.

⁵¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 126.

⁵² Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 127.

⁵³ Ibid, 130.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 146.

individual naturally led to “a profound change in our moral world, as is always the case with identity shifts.”⁵⁵

1.3: Modern Moral Order - Democracy and Individual Rights

This shift also led to a desire within western Europe to reorient the political order from a medieval, feudal Christendom towards democracy and individual rights. The purpose of society exists “for the mutual benefit of individuals, and the defense of their rights, takes on more and more importance.”⁵⁶ This is the social imaginary that begins to gain steam and legitimacy among various European populations, often first through the overthrowing of local monarchies.⁵⁷ It doesn’t happen overnight, but this moral conception gradually grows over time.⁵⁸

A burgeoning modern moral order reveals practical reasons for not only the acceptance of many new and innovative ideas surrounding democracy and individualism but also the rejection of older ideas that push back against “our freedom to determine our own lives and build our own societies.”⁵⁹ The primacy of the individual leads to a variety of different conceptions of the notion of freedom, towards an unfettered autonomy, and away from a classical conception of freedom tied up in an Aristotelian understanding of the good.⁶⁰

This transformative shift within the social imaginary of a large sum of individuals begins to reject the need for a foundation “taken out of the mythical early time”⁶¹ and begins to believe that certain foundations do not need some kind of prehistory akin to what is discussed in Genesis, but rather can be imminent and in the present moment. This is part of understanding one of the notions of secularity, in which:

... a purely secular time-understanding allows us to imagine society 'horizontally', unrelated to any high points, where the ordinary sequence of events touches higher time, and therefore without recognizing any privileged persons or agencies-such as kings or priests- who stand and mediate at such alleged points.⁶²

It is easy to see how the Protestant rejection of the dominance of clergy in everyday Christian life eventually led to a shift of the *saeculum*. Depending who you ask, this was the logical development of a truly Christian understanding of equality, a dominant moral value in both the modern and postmodern social imaginary that has persisted into the current time.

⁵⁵ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 157.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 160.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 172.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 175.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 184.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 184.

⁶¹ Ibid, 197.

⁶² Ibid, 209.

1.4: Providential Deism & the Subjective Shift

As of now, one anthropocentric shift has been discussed in the form of renaissance humanism, within the environment of a desire for reform in the Christian Church and medieval society through the philosophical dominance of nominalism. “The second anthropocentric shift was the eclipse of grace. The order God designed was there for reason to see.”⁶³ As new Christian denominations begin to splinter, so do different Christian conceptions of understanding God, often drifting away from classical theism. A dominant shift on the importance of reason among Enlightenment philosophers begins to take root. While reason was far from absent in the classics, its ascendance in the hierarchy of ‘Enlightened’ values would quickly lead to the third shift, the fading of mystery:

If God’s purposes for us encompass only our own good, and this can be read from the design of our nature, then no further mystery can hide here...that other great niche of mystery, God’s providence, has also been emptied. His Providence consists simply in his plan for us, which we understand.⁶⁴

This providential deist viewpoint arises still within a dominant natural law framework that still views God as very much linked to the intelligent design of nature. Nonetheless, this is still an ideological innovation that has catastrophic effects on the traditional Christian faith, since revealed religion is greatly restricted to the natural laws of the universe and the immanent world, away from the enchanted cosmos. It also paves the way to reject much of the Scriptures that reveal something about the divine that might create conflict with how the individual understands the natural world, or themselves. As Taylor states: “It was perhaps more than understandable that, after the terrible struggles around deep theological issues to do with grace, free will, and predestination, many people should hunger for a less theologically elaborate faith which would guide them towards holy living.”⁶⁵ Understanding the ideological shifts in the West towards the secular are also to some extent part of the unraveling of the Christian story. After all, until this point, these shifts have all occurred through the Christian churches. It is these many conceptions of who God is, that would eventually lead to a rejection of the divine altogether. Because of this shift towards humanism,

The early modern period was rich in the development of devotional practices...the ‘devout’ humanism of early 17th century France, which has been so well described by Henri Bremond, explored the ways of achieving a ‘theocentrism’ of one’s life. It supposes, and at the same time intensifies, a high degree of reflectiveness about one’s own orientation, a consciousness of the distraction and self-absorption that currently dominates, and proposes ways to nourish a dedication to and love of God which will take us beyond these.⁶⁶

⁶³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 222.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 223.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 225.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 227.

This is a devout Christian version of humanism, whose focus on the subjective self opens the door towards exclusive humanism in which the subject discovers truth without any objective divine reference point.⁶⁷ “Because this inward turn is also evident in religious life; indeed, the whole turn was largely driven by religious motives.”⁶⁸ This new trend of thought recognized “that the power to create this order resides in all of us; and since the order is constituted in part by agape or benevolence, then this power must reside in us.”⁶⁹ This is also somewhat consistent with a classical Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit. One might understand this renewal as a more inclusive humanism that revitalizes a classical theist understanding of God with a strong emphasis on the human person and scientific knowledge of the natural world.

Despite this renewal of Christian devotional piety that emphasizes subjectivity, Taylor argues that the dominant moral theory of this age is more objective: “the truly moral agent should be able to abstract from his own situation, and adopt the standpoint of impartial spectator.”⁷⁰ This moral objectivity that may or may not include a specific divine reference point is part of what motivates emphasis on moral and religious neutrality in Europe. It is trying to find the ‘truth’ with so many different options now available due to this ideological revolution. Part of the grievance is also responding to the tribalism that had continuously defined medieval European society. It has also defined human nature in general since the dawn of time. Specifically at this time, there was a rise of new nation-state formation, culminating with ethnic identities being defined. Furthermore, the division between Protestants and Catholics throughout much of Europe was causing a lot of bloodshed, most notably through the Thirty Years War (1618-1648).

1.5: Continuity & Rupture through Disenchantment

Part of the deist ethos that deeply engaged nominalism recognized “the disengaged grasp of the whole, which has put behind it the sense that the higher levels may not be fully scrutable.”⁷¹ Here, Taylor is referring to an understanding of God beyond the tangible, earthly realm. There is an agnosticism towards the enchanted cosmos, and whatever we can know about God is through a disengaged, scientific, humanist knowledge that strongly emphasizes reason. A recognition of this philosophical framework illustrates a clearer understanding of how the west secularized, while simultaneously refuting false ideas around secularity. It has much more to do with the innovation of “new human potentialities, to live in these modes of moral life in which the sources are radically immanentized”⁷² rather than simply being able to freely think and believe whatever we wanted once “the infamous ancien regime church was crushed.”⁷³ The *ancien regime*, of course referring to the French monarchy prior to the French revolution, is often painted as a struggle between old ideas and new ideas. A dominant religious fabric that existed in France for the longest time was not simply discarded because of a change of power, but new

⁶⁷ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 228.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 258.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 247-248.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 232.

⁷¹ Ibid, 232.

⁷² Ibid, 255.

⁷³ Ibid, 255.

ideological possibilities did certainly scrutinize older ideas (held by the ancien regime) that were connected to a powerful establishment in the Roman Catholic Church. The shifting of power is only part of the story that is increased secularity in the west. It is far more nuanced than that.

One of Taylor's central arguments is to show that the subtraction story as a theory for secularity is insufficient and only a fraction of the complex story that is secularity in western society. Taylor explains the subtraction story definition as "the idea that once religious and metaphysical beliefs fall away, we are left with ordinary human desires, and these are the basis of our modern humanism."⁷⁴ Given the various humanisms that existed at the time and the multiplicity of humanisms that exist today, it is clear that this is not that simple. Grappling with ordinary human desires and what to do with them, and what they mean (even if they possibly mean nothing at all) will inevitably result in a variety of different conclusions. This is one of the clear conclusions of our secular age.

Nonetheless, these immanentized modern humanisms are definitely best understood as both an evolution of nominalist thought and a rupture from the continuity of understanding the reality of the transcendent. These revolutions, focusing on the primacy of the individual human flourishing have altered the dominant classical Christian conception of the divine and humanity's relation to the transcendent:

It disembeds us from the social sacred; and posits a new relation to God, as designer. This new relation will in fact turn out to be dispensable, because the Design underlying the moral order can be seen as directed to ordinary human flourishing. This, the transcendent aspect of the Axial revolution is partly rolled back, or can be, given a neat separation of this-worldly from other-worldly good. But only partly, because notions of flourishing remain under surveillance in our modern moral view: they have to fit with the demands of the moral order itself, of justice, equality, non-domination, if they are to escape condemnation. Our notions of flourishing can thus always be revised. This belongs to our post-Axial condition.⁷⁵

Justice, equality and non-domination are clear tenets of modern liberal thought in the past few centuries. However, in observing the various ideological shifts today, it is clear that Taylor's point about these demands always being open to revision rings true. The current postmodern shift has proven this. In refuting the myth that the rejection of traditional religion liberates the natural human, Taylor states that "re-invention, innovation exist on both sides, and continuing mutual influence links them."⁷⁶ This is true of the modern liberal order discussed above as well as traditional religion grappling with the reality of the changing world and the humans that embody it, innovating within the parameters of its own tradition. Part of the rationale for Taylor's rejection of the old religion myth is that we "can't account for all the malaise that we have experienced around purely immanent humanism. If it really were triumphantly achieved truth,

⁷⁴ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 253.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 157-158.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 258.

dispelling error, it should be more self-stabilizing, more all-convincing.”⁷⁷ Taylor is ultimately reflecting on an evident truth that exists in our world today. The smartest minds of our world share a plurality of existential, and moral viewpoints. This is the reality we can grasp more clearly in the 21st century because of how various worldviews have developed in the past few hundred years. Many Enlightenment thinkers such as Thomas Jefferson thought differently. “The claim that ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident’ reveals the doctrine of human rights for what it is: a castle in the air, a defiant existential assertion of values.”⁷⁸ Truth is only self-evident for those who buy into the same moral framework. Full stop. Consequently, we live in a more polarized world partly because many of us cling to this idea of a universal order (be it leaning more traditionally religious or liberal modern) that we can hopefully agree on and live in a harmonious, democratic environment.⁷⁹ Another truth is that this desire is far from simple.

If we look at the early modern period prior to the functioning of some of these democracies, we see that “Freedom, in particular freedom of belief, is beginning to become a value in itself, (especially in the 16th-17th century), a crucial feature of any acceptable political order.”⁸⁰ There is a clear historical reason for this stance, which has to do with the perceived lack of freedom from the era of medieval Christendom and prior. This belief is not neutral in the sense that it develops out of thin air, and “reflected a deep-seated moral distaste for the old religion that sees God as an agent in history”⁸¹ which is not a rejection of God per se, but a rejection of a certain revealed God that is both personal and has a stake in all of our decisions. This is why the impersonal deist God becomes the dominant viewpoint of the modern liberal elite at this point. Taylor elaborates on this in greater detail here:

Orthodox Christianity sees our highest mode of being as arising in a relation, moreover one which is not equal, but on which we draw to know and be ourselves. Modernity, as the era of freedom, can be seen to be congruent with our relating ourselves to an impersonal law, not to the goals which arise out of a personal relation. All these forms of impersonal order: the natural, political and the ethical can be made to speak together against Orthodox Christianity, and its understanding of God as personal agent.⁸²

The relation that Taylor discusses above is two-fold. First, the early Church developed its understanding of the Christian God as one, but three distinct persons in the revealed mystery understood as the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the revealed God of the Bible is one that is always in relation to the individual or group. There is a growing emphasis in the Christian testament on a God being founded in love and desiring this relation of love with His creation. Therefore, this shift to an impersonal, deist order is a very clear rupture within the Judeo-Christian tradition of journeying with the divine. This impersonal order that immanentized every element of existence is what paves the way for a possible rejection of this impersonal god in the Enlightenment period as part of the shift towards exclusive humanism.

⁷⁷ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 258-259.

⁷⁸ Alec Ryrie. “The End of the Age of Hitler.” *First Things*. October 22, 2024.

⁷⁹ I mentioned democracy above due to the fact that western societies have largely aimed at different democratic experiments in the past three hundred years.

⁸⁰ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 260.

⁸¹ Ibid, 274.

⁸² Ibid, 282-283.

This disengaged stance is “based on the successes of natural science, and the sense of moral superiority attaching to it, and leap (often implicitly and semi-consciously) to the conclusion that it is the correct stance for all modes of enquiry.”⁸³ This is part of why the Enlightenment period is referred to by that name. It is a combination of both legitimate success and arrogance that does not humbly reflect on present/future ideological shifts. An arrogant assertion that the success of the sciences means that this is the correct stance for different modes of enquiry is what Taylor calls an “illegitimate extension is one of the strongest trends in our culture, from the 17th century onwards...this risks distorting and missing the point when applied to the phenomena of psychology, politics, language, historical interpretation, and so on.”⁸⁴ Perhaps, there were good intentions in forecasting the ability of the sciences to discover the truth about everything.⁸⁵ Circling back, it is clear this was never the true intention in the medieval period. It was intended to discover truths about the natural world. The fact is that it had consequences in the moral/existential realm that were unforeseen. It is part of what Taylor calls a ‘spill-over effect from disengaged science [that if it] goes far enough, it threatens this crucial feature of the understanding of faith.’⁸⁶ Religious faith has always been a complex and multi-faceted reality as it is lived out in so many different ways. It is clear that a thorough understanding of the natural world was mistakenly presupposed in various religious traditions, but that is only one of the many elements of faith.⁸⁷

This rupture towards impersonal deism was quite popular among the American Founding Fathers. Nonetheless, various revival movements occurred in western societies, including the United States, throughout the past three hundred years. In the early nineteenth century, the United States underwent the Second Great Awakening “forming of an evangelical consensus, which somewhat marginalizes the Deistic outlook of so many of the founding Fathers of the Republic. Church membership begins its steady rise, which continues into the twentieth century.”⁸⁸ This also advances the theory that much thought advanced during the Enlightenment period stayed in the elite class, at least for quite some time while the middle-lower classes often responded to these ideas with some kind of rebellion. Even just within the American context, there have been three or four ‘Great Awakenings’⁸⁹ that once again proves the plurality of responses to secularism, and to the dominance of certain ideas within the modern moral order and their implicit values. The United States has always been dominated by Protestants, and so in this age of trying to grapple with new scientific understandings and scrutinizing what kind of truths the Bible actually communicates was delicate. The Protestant Reformation brought about

⁸³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 285.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 285.

⁸⁵ This is what non-believers legitimately contend when they reference the ‘God of the Gaps’ argument. This argument states that all reference to God as the answer to any truth claim is simply pointing to a gap in human knowledge that will eventually be discovered by science. The origins of the term come from Friedrich Nietzsche’s 1883 book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 287.

⁸⁷ The focus on the interior devotion that was spoken about above has also been a core feature of religious faith across many traditions.

⁸⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 322.

⁸⁹ There is no established consensus among historians regarding the number of Great Awakenings in the United States. It is debated between three and four.

new methods of determining religious truth, one of which was a deeper emphasis on Scripture as an ultimate authority, aiming to break away from the interpretational grip of the Catholic magisterium. Unfortunately, this “led to a suppression of the older many-levelled Biblical commentary, with its analogies, correspondences and relations of typicality.”⁹⁰ This provides us with some relevant insight to how religious views can develop that lack the intellectual rigour of much classical thought. This in turn creates a vacuum for people to uncritically accept many modern presuppositions that are based on an understanding of ‘bad religion’. One simple example is feeling forced to reject the Bible’s authority because you believe in evolution, and only consider a literalist interpretation of the book of Genesis. There are endless possibilities for belief or unbelief, as Taylor illustrates one of the most important consequences of our secular age: “The most important fact about (the modern cosmic imaginary) which is relevant to our enquiry here is that it has opened a space in which people can wander between and around all these options without having to land clearly and definitively in any one.”⁹¹

1.6: The Possibility of Unbelief and Modern Buffered Identities

Our secular age is not defined by the dominance of unbelief, but by the possibility of unbelief as well as many perspectives on morality and transcendence. This is why the French ethos of ‘laissez-faire’ becomes a requirement to live in a peaceful democracy because there is such a vast plurality of beliefs. To try and impose one belief system over another is a problem since personal freedom is seen as the highest value in this modern moral order as previously discussed. Then again, constructing a worldview where personal freedom is the highest value lends itself to possible tyranny in two especially important ways. First, this system inherently prioritizes the individual over the collective, and can essentially bully any attempt to prioritize something different within the hierarchy of values. Secondly, what happens when somebody’s personal freedom clashes with somebody else’s personal freedom? This has set the stage for what many have called the ‘rights revolution’ that really took off in many western societies in the 1960s.

Looking at many of these competing rights as well as a real marketplace of different ideas embodied by the citizenry, Taylor identifies this reality as the “modern buffered identity [that is] on the one hand drawn towards unbelief, while on the other, feeling the solicitations of the spiritual- be they in nature, in art, in some contact with religious faith, or in a sense of God which may break through the membrane.”⁹² Taylor describes this reality as a cross-pressure in humanity’s quest for meaning and flourishing. This leaves our secular age with the reality of pluralism, as well as recognizing the reality of religious faith that exists in the cross-pressure of the modern buffered identities. A purely materialist understanding of the world is not just a homogenous viewpoint, but one of the many ideas that are part of the modern buffered identity.

I would be remiss to paint modern liberalism as the only secular framework within the marketplace of ideas, as there are many secular, Enlightenment ideas that took root under a more ideologically conservative spectrum. In looking at some of the anti-humanist ideas that developed through many followers of Nietzsche, there were rebellions “against the unrelenting concern with life, the proscription of violence, the imposition of equality....it also rejects all

⁹⁰ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 330.

⁹¹ Ibid, 351.

⁹² Ibid, 360.

previous, ontically-grounded understandings of transcendence.”⁹³ Many recognize that this secularized form of thought was responsible for many of the godless genocides of the 20th century, especially the Holocaust. While the Nazis certainly formed key alliances with both Protestant and Catholic Churches in Germany as well as a coalition of fascism across Europe, it was not an ideology grounded in transcendence but rather conserving a very specific brand of humanity, (the Aryan race), with particular antipathy towards a variety of minority groups such as Jews, homosexuals, gypsies, etc.

If we took account of this, we might perhaps change our picture of modern culture. Instead of seeing it as the scene of a two-sided battle between tradition, especially religious tradition, and secular humanism, we might rather see it as a kind of free-for-all, the scene of a three-cornered- perhaps ultimately, a four-cornered-battle.⁹⁴

1.7: The Supernova Effect

While I previously discussed the innovation of various humanisms in the early modern period due to the scientific revolution and the philosophical dominance of nominalism, the culmination of the Protestant Reformation in these changes is what Taylor calls the ‘nova effect’ because of the gravity of such transformations. There is an even greater development of ideas in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries “because it is then that the alternatives open to unbelief are multiplied and enriched, prior to their diffusion to society as a whole in the process I’m calling ‘super-nova’, which mainly takes place after the Second World War.”⁹⁵ This is where most of the boomers and generation X without any prior knowledge on the nature of secularism can best relate because there is a concrete connection to many of their own lived experiences. Many countries experienced a decline (in different degrees) of Church attendance beginning in the 1960s. This “steadily widening gamut of new positions- some believing, some unbelieving, some hard to classify- which have become available options to us”⁹⁶ is also met with a greater degree of wealth that exploded in western countries after the Second World War. While a variety of secular humanist ideas were developed and available in the intellectual marketplace, they were primarily held among social and intellectual elites.⁹⁷ Poverty is often a driver towards the religious impulses of our nature, as it often forces an orientation of value away from monetary success. Taylor notes the particularity of this post-war period where even middle-class citizens were “encouraged more and more to express her taste, furnishing her space according to her own needs and affinities, as only the rich had been able to do in previous eras.”⁹⁸ Furthermore:

Major breakthroughs took place in physics (nuclear energy), biology (the antibiotics revolution, DNA, genetic engineering, the food revolution) and artificial intelligence (computers, data, imagery, algorithms, the Internet). Over time, the pre-1914

⁹³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 374.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 374.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 377.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 423.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 423.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 474.

euphoria returned, and with it the Enlightenment hubris according to which man is all-powerful. Such a view no longer required the biblical, transcendent God. As the postwar era matured, the new proclamation was that man (or something like a technologically augmented man) was God, or about to become God.⁹⁹

This time period of substantially greater secularization among the masses partially due to great technological innovations (a mini-scientific revolution) is what Taylor deems the ‘supernova’ effect because of how the citizens of western states gravitated so quickly to these secular ideas that had been developing and slowly gaining steam in the academic world for hundreds of years. The thirst for perfection, for transcendence, still exists. Many would argue that this drive is hardwired into humanity. However, this drive is re-ordered towards man, naturally engaging the Fierbachelorian belief that God is merely a projection of humans. This is yet another development in the shift towards secular exclusive humanism. It is up to the individual to discern if this is an ontological progression or regression with devastating consequences. The future will give some insight into that. In quoting British philosopher and mathematician Bertrand Russell, Taylor notes that a development in the possibility of a universal moral ethic,

...is not based in some way on a connection to the transcendent. Even if we think that this appeal is insufficient, because it leaves something out, we have to recognize that the development of this purely immanent sense of universal solidarity is an important achievement, a milestone in human history.¹⁰⁰

1.8: Absence of a Monolithic Moral Order

This idea was also seriously scrutinized immediately after the Second World War II during the delegation meetings for the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights. The moral framework for universal solidarity has a certain logic to it that is believed by many citizens of the world today, and at this time in the middle of the twentieth century. Reeling from the atrocities of the Second World War, many thinkers remained uncertain about this idea being a social good if accepted by most people in society. The question of a ‘God clause’ to undergird these moral foundations for which all countries should hold as their standard regardless of religious and cultural backgrounds was put forth. The end result decided against a God clause despite most of the delegates themselves being believers and recognizing a creator in their moral foundation individually and as a collective good for their nation. There is no such thing as a monolithic modern moral order that can simply subtract God out of the equation and get everybody to agree on simple, logical moral values that clearly highlight human flourishing. This example helps to highlight the fragmentation that is inescapable in the modern moral order, not just currently but in projecting new innovative ideas:

⁹⁹ Gurfinkiel, Michel. "Christian Democracy." *First Thing*, August 1, 2020.

<https://firstthings.com/christian-democracy/>

¹⁰⁰ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 255.

You can't keep the standards of this order while jettisoning all ontic components. This might seem to be the case with certain contemporaries who invoke the name of Nietzsche, and which are sometimes called 'postmodernists'. But the demands that they make, e.g., for a universal recognition of differences, show that they are constructing their own variant of the modern understanding of moral order.¹⁰¹

While this statement specifically connects to a continued criticism of the conception of a monolithic modern moral order, it touches on a variety of related ideas. Firstly, Nietzsche has already been mentioned above because of the connection drawn through some of his ideas to various fascist ideologies in the early-mid 20th century. The Holocaust was the extreme right-wing application of some of Nietzsche's ideas particularly on nihilism.¹⁰² That being said, Taylor here is identifying some of the left-wing strands of Nietzschean thought that rejected Christianity and deeply emphasized the subjective realm, encouraging people to become a 'superman' or *Übermensch*. This can be done through so many different ways, depending on the person, applying their own conception of morality to whatever works for them. For Nietzsche, writing in the nineteenth century, there is no objective reference point or foundation from which to undergird morality for the individual or the nation. The individual ought to socially construct their own reality and truth, discovering how to fully be human. Social constructionism is a philosophy that undergirds most thinking in the education departments within western countries. While you can certainly layer objective ontic components onto this philosophy, it is presumed that you don't need to. Transcendence is no longer needed or even suggested in the formation of our youth in most schools because in our current climate, it has been deemed best to leave the transcendent dimension outside of education. Religion has a long legacy within the education system and its marginalization has been rather recent.¹⁰³ In various democracies throughout the west, different moral orders lacking ontological components have grown. This is perfectly fine. The problem arises when these different moral orders¹⁰⁴ begin to dehumanize and marginalize any idea that does not respond to their particular moral order. This is a recipe for a disaster in any democracy that generally agrees on key tenets of liberalism such as freedom of speech, religion, employment, property, etc.

Social media growth has expedited the arrival of this inevitable reality that is the increased polarization of our society.¹⁰⁵ There are many reasons for this, and one of them is the different conceptions of our modern moral order, and how to adequately integrate or resist the presence of religion within these moral frameworks. One of the clear benefits of religion in the lives of so many people is the intrinsic connection to meaning & purpose. Taylor is unequivocally clear about the fact that "our disenchanted world lacks meaning, that in this world, particularly youth suffer from a lack of strong purposes in their lives."¹⁰⁶ This is not to say that secular moral frameworks have no answer to meaning,

¹⁰¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 256.

¹⁰² It should be noted that the malevolence manifested in various fascist regimes would have deeply appalled Nietzsche.

¹⁰³ The questions surrounding the mixing of education and religion will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

¹⁰⁴ The plurality of moral orders is only natural given the immense possibility of different worldviews.

¹⁰⁵ Jonathan Haidt's new book, *The Anxious Generation* explores this in greater detail.

¹⁰⁶ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 303.

but meaning is often socially constructed. It is extrinsic, and only meaningful insofar as you attach meaning to that given reality. In a traditionally religious setting, meaning is present in the enchanted cosmos and emanates through to the worldly terrain. This begs the question of the best way forward. I believe Taylor's assessment on this point is the most accurate prudential judgment.

Each one of us has his/her own way of realizing our humanity, and that it is important to find and live out one's own, as against surrendering to conformity with a model imposed on us from outside, by society, or the previous generation, or religious or political authority.¹⁰⁷

Many secular moral frameworks developed at least partially from resisting conformity to a dominant religious authority. That being said, the wisdom illustrates a permanent (if not eternal) truth about peaceful co-existence. Authoritarianism on a grand scale to push a specific type of moral order is no longer plausible and rendered futile by the vast availability of different moral frameworks. The age of the internet has proven similar in utility to spreading these ideas as the printing press did for the Protestant Reformation over five hundred years ago.

Many of the above points also beg the question surrounding democratic models that are based in some sort of religious framework as one of the competing models for peaceful co-existence. It would not be intellectually rigorous to reconsider the benefits of a renewal of a more objective moral framework for our society in a time of deep chaos. British historian Alec Ryrie acutely illustrates the problem of self-evident claims in the modern moral order in that "we really do hold the existence of human rights and human equality to be self-evident. We can't, intellectually, prove it to be true; but that doesn't matter, because we feel that it is true. For now."¹⁰⁸ Knowing our history, can we be so foolish to simply assume that our moral outlooks as they are today will stay the same going forward? Our society is subject to continuous internal and external influences.

It is not about subtracting particular influences, or so goes the old myth about the triumph of secular scientific and moral ideas over traditional religious power and control. Many of us have directed the transcendent desire towards our human condition, and we have also traded a positive role model ideal for a negative, evil exemplar that we must stay away from:

"Replacing a positive exemplar (Jesus) with a negative one (Hitler) comes at a heavy cost. It teaches us what to hate but not what to love. Our culture assures us that we are each free to pursue our own good,...It assures us that we have rights and freedoms. But what are they for? Not, presumably, for triumphantly denouncing one another on social media."¹⁰⁹

Different models have different answers to these moral questions of what to love, or how to center our morality. However, the difference that exists means that each individual needs to work that much harder to know and assent to specific ways of acting and believing, that are not

¹⁰⁷ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 475.

¹⁰⁸ Ryrie. "The End of the Age of Hitler."

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

merely presumed from living in a particular culture. Ryrie is not particularly optimistic, but his assessment is that “knowledge of what to love is the only position from which victory in our culture wars is possible. The question is how much damage will be done along the way.”¹¹⁰ To be clear, secular frameworks can absolutely contribute greatly to filling in this gap. However, the depth of our world’s religious traditions certainly have a plethora of resources to pull from in assisting to answer the question of what to love, and it would be unnecessarily narrow and rather illogical for a sincere truth-seeker to marginalize religion from this question.

1.9: Public Religions in the Modern World

Different countries have grappled with the question of how to restrict and/or integrate a public religious ethos into their societies beyond the 1960s, with particular reaction to the trends of secularization in and surrounding their country. José Casanova’s *Public Religions in the Modern World* sheds light on a few different contexts that merit particular attention to what has been discussed above. Various modern ideas discussed above, culminating with revolutionary social movements collided in the 1960s, and deeply integrating themselves into the social imaginary of the mass populations, beyond the elites. The late 1970s and early 1980s saw different reactions, including some rejection to what occurred en masse in the sixties. Casanova describes this rejection within the context of the 1980s which he says,

... provides the unfolding development of the Islamic revolution in 1979 Iran; the rise of the Solidarity movement in Poland; the role of Catholicism in the Sandinista revolution (Nicaragua) and in other political conflicts throughout Latin America; and the public reemergence of Protestant fundamentalism as a force in American politics.¹¹¹

The fundamental essence of this reaction is a rejection of a marginalizing trend occurring through a particularly narrow interpretation of the separation of the Church and State, which itself is one of the particular theories of modernity that greatly pushes for secularization.¹¹² It was also because religious institutions, its people were significantly more all-encompassing than merely a reduction of power in specific spheres such as politics. Modern social imaginaries often caricatured religion as a source of continual violence and conflict, and while much religious violence in modernity and prior cannot be denied, Casanova asserts that “simultaneously religious activists and churches were becoming deeply involved in struggles for liberation, justice, and democracy throughout the world.”¹¹³ The liberation theology movement in South America is one such example, transferring much Catholic clerical authority to ecclesial base communities. Contrarily, the dialectic between religion and power did not have the same foundation in a country like the United States. It “never had... an absolutist state and its ecclesiastical counterpart, a ceasarpapist state church.”¹¹⁴ Its religious ethos had always been about a nation of heretics to some extent, fleeing the absolute monarchy era of Europe for a land where they could practice their own faith in freedom however they wished. This historical fact is one of the many

¹¹⁰ Ryrie. “The End of the Age of Hitler.”

¹¹¹ José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 3.

¹¹² Ibid, 5.

¹¹³ Ibid, 3.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 29.

reasons why the first amendment in the United States became the freedom to practice one's own religion, and freedom from practicing a mandated state religion. Naturally, most of these people were Protestants, fleeing persecution in their own European homeland that was often either enforcing Catholicism or a specific brand of Protestantism on its land. These authoritarian contexts can often lead to theories that reduce religion to a tyrannical power structure merely interested in control. The possibility of religious institutions being corrupted with power however, is not a new reality that was suddenly discovered in the modern period. "The more religion wants to transform the world in a religious direction, the more religion becomes entangled in 'worldly' affairs and is transformed by the world."¹¹⁵ One might say that certain secular activists merely want to help keep religion purified, away from the politics of the world. From a religious perspective that transcends many traditions, one might say transforming the world is futile, but rather only the citizens themselves. Regardless, the blurred lines between the earthly and religious realm have persisted as somewhat of an eternal problem with no explicitly clear answer, though profound wisdom of how to navigate the trials of life. One of the common conclusions of modern sociological thought states that 'the modern differentiation of autonomous spheres leads irremediably to a pluralism of norms, values, and worldviews. Max Weber attributed 'the polytheism of modern values' to this differentiation.¹¹⁶ The concept of autonomous different spheres should draw the mind back to our earlier discussion of nominalism and its part in the disenchantment of the cosmos, leading to different conceptions of the divine and consequently, our modern moral order. While the pluralism of norms, values and worldviews is an undeniable fact at this point in our western societies, the verdict is not out on whether this is the best path forward. There are many benefits of pluralism, and many of us recognize that an openness to different ideas and models of human flourishing are important discussions for both the individual and the collective to have in hopes of true progress, and a better tomorrow. However, having a much stronger moral consensus among citizens does make it easier for democracy to flourish.

Within modernity, we see the principle of separation of Church and State as having aged relatively well, noting to "the fact that the Catholic church has accepted it after having rejected it obstinately as incompatible with the 'church' principle."¹¹⁷ Some religionists may describe this as a heretical change of doctrine, while the official Church teaching on the matter is that it was a necessary development of doctrine that best helps the Church live out its foundational beliefs on the inviolable dignity of each and every person, created in the image and likeness of God, endowed with free will by the Creator. The Church accepts the fact that the Church and State are both different institutions, but absolutely rejects the idea that religion should be totally marginalized from the public square completely. Casanova states that: "From the normative perspective of modernity, religion may enter the public sphere and assume a public form only if it accepts the inviolable right to privacy and the sanctity of the principle of freedom of conscience."¹¹⁸ This is a generalized notion that manifests itself differently in specific liberal contexts, however the central point here is that individual freedom of choice is the highest value and that can never be replaced. Furthermore, this totalizing value system is such that the State has necessarily become more powerful than the Church. The State now makes value judgments akin to that of the Church. In this way, the State has actually become the Church. Focusing on personal privacy and freedom of conscience is a statement of value, in the moral sphere. Within this modern conception of the state, it is still a moral agent. Morality is not privatized, only religion is privatized. It is

¹¹⁵ Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 49.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 52.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 57.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 57.

easy to see how the privatization of religion can be seen through the lens of certain ideologues merely wanting a different dominant moral ethos at the foundation of its culture. This is not a conspiracy, just the honest reality that there are different ways to perceive the common good. Turkish-American Philosopher Seyla Benhabib puts forth a more comprehensive and authentic liberal approach to the question of any moral discourse in the public square. "If the agenda of the conversation is radically open, if participants can bring any and all matters under critical scrutiny and reflexive questioning, then there is no way to predefine the nature of the issues discussed as being ones of justice or of the good life itself prior to the conversation."¹¹⁹ This furthers the rejection of the idea that there are self-evident truths from which we can all peacefully accept and live in a free and democratic society. It is a rejection of a particular form of modernity that has shown its flaws. It is part of the shift that has occurred from modernity to postmodernity. All narratives should be on the table, and deeper awareness of one particularly dominant narrative should be met with suspicion.

In order to better understand the impact that the privatization of religion has had on society and on religion itself, Casanova provides additional insight through the lens of what has traditionally been understood as the masculine and feminine dimensions of societal functions:

The feminization of religion and morality had impoverishing effects on both the private and public realm. Religion, like moral virtue, became so sentimentalized, subjectivized, and privatized that it lost not only public power but also inter subjective public relevance. Exempt from public discursive rationality and accountability, religion as well as morality became simply a matter of individual, private taste.¹²⁰

Casanova draws a parallel of moral virtue and religion here, pointing to this core substance that was mentioned above.¹²¹ By feminizing religion, modernity has put religion into the 'subjective' category, and simultaneously individual rather than collective. It is science, law, rationality & logic amongst other things that are a part of objective modernity.

The place modernity assigns to religion is 'home', understood not as the physical space of the household but as 'the abiding place of one's affections'. Home is the sphere of love, expression, intimacy, subjectivity, sentimentality, emotions, irrationality, morality, spirituality, and religion. This domestic sphere, moreover, is the female sphere par excellence.¹²²

This categorization also fits nicely with the increased pious, disciplined spiritual practices of the modern period in Europe that Taylor discusses are part of our changing modern period. It also explains why religion in the west has been more popular (by this I mean reverent practice) among women in the

¹¹⁹ Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 65.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 64.

¹²¹ Here I am referring to my introduction, and the search for the core of what religion is, and what it can provide for the individual and collective. This personal search for me began when I recognized in my teenage years that the Quebec government had failed to recognize this core within my Catholic education.

¹²² Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 64.

west than men for the past hundred plus years. However, the deprivatization of religion in many contexts that is a form of renewal for many religious institutions and ideas have led to a resurgence of greater popularity among young men,¹²³ especially those who connect more with everything related to the traditional masculine sphere outside the home, such as protector, provider and all the disciplines that are more objective in nature. Various governments have invested financially and through public relations campaigns into recruiting more workers into various trades such as electricians, plumbers, mechanics, etc. This is due to so many workers in trades being set to retire and an acknowledgement of various false stereotypes related to various trade work.¹²⁴ This shift is fitting with the supply and demand of our workforce. The ability to connect both modern grievances and legitimate contributions of modernity with the wisdom of the Judeo-Christian tradition is something that can be greatly attributed to the work of various public figures, most notably Canadian psychologist Jordan Peterson.¹²⁵ On the other side, women in the West tend to be more liberal and their collective religious affiliation has declined in many countries.¹²⁶ This trend will only further divide the sexes, and is not a good recipe for harmonious living between the sexes, especially for the stability of marriages going forward.

However, there are still legitimate reasons to be hopeful for a more authentic recognition of the realistic role that religiosity plays in our society. Fr. Patrick Gilger S.J.'s article in *America Magazine* discusses theologian William Cavanaugh's new book on the tearing down of idols. There are key proposals for changing the dominant discourse of our current cultural experience. Perhaps instead of a secular age, we live in an idolatrous age. Cavanaugh believes that today's western world is not "disenchanted but mis-enchanted."¹²⁷ The religious sense among even those who describe themselves as non-religious has not vanished. It has merely changed.

"What has declined in the modern West is not belief in transcendence," Cavanaugh contends, "what has declined is belief in God." What is different is that the sacred is no longer "confined to gods but applies to all sorts of realities commonly labeled

¹²³ Jill Filipovic, "Gen Z Men Are Going Back to Church. Why?" *Slate*, October 11, 2024, accessed January 29, 2025, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2024/10/men-women-politics-gen-z-trump-harris-church-christianity-religion-gender-divide.html>.

¹²⁴ Employment and Social Development Canada, "Government of Canada Promotes In-Demand Skilled Trades as a First-Choice Career Path," *Government of Canada*, January 2022, <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/news/2022/01/skills-trade.html>.

¹²⁵ Robert Barron, "The Jordan Peterson Phenomenon," *Word on Fire*, accessed January 29, 2025, <https://www.wordonfire.org/articles/barron/the-jordan-peterson-phenomenon/>.

While not a professed Christian in the traditional sense, Peterson is said to be one of the most influential people in evangelizing a new generation of Christians. His biblical series on Genesis and Exodus have helped so many people connect more deeply with biblical texts and make them relevant to their own lives. He has tapped into an audience that may not have been found in the pews. This is a form of deprivatized religion because of its public impact.

¹²⁶ Filipovic, "Gen Z Men Are Going Back to Church. Why?"

¹²⁷ Patrick Gilger, S.J., "Tearing Down Idols: William Cavanaugh's Theology Is a Must-Read for the Modern West," *America Magazine*, July 23, 2024, accessed January 25, 2025, <https://www.americamagazine.org/arts-culture/2024/07/23/review-cavanaugh-uses-idolatry-248377>.

‘political’ or ‘economic.’” The holy has not fled through the wardrobe into Narnia, in other words, it has fragmented. And this means that the problem with secularization stories is that worship remains as prevalent as ever—it’s just that what (or who) is being worshiped has changed.¹²⁸

The religious impulse has never changed. Building on Taylor’s central thesis, nothing has been subtracted but rather transferred into something else. In refuting the separationist myth, Cavanaugh asserts “the holy was separated from politics for the sake of peace; in reality, the emerging state appropriated the holy to become itself a new kind of religion.”¹²⁹ It is this separation that has altered our understanding of religion that was not as restricted in previous eras. Only a “private, inner, voluntary thing that does not interfere with political life”¹³⁰ could allow for a politics that is hostile to religion and see faith as something threatening and dangerous.¹³¹ This is an ideological innovation of our secular (or idolatrous) age.

Part of this renewal and deprivatization of religion can be seen as a project of the political right. However it need not be the case. The political left can enter this discourse too by relying on some of its key historical foundations for success. Firstly, “they must address the crisis of civic belonging”¹³² and focus on the important solidarity that has helped achieve a greater sense of equality in many left-wing social justice movements over the past centuries. It can’t be restricted purely to materialism. It is a great achievement to work to provide universal health care to all, but that does not “generate a sense of social belonging in people.”¹³³ Without belonging, there is no agreement on the common good. Furthermore:

Trying to change impersonal structural forces without an equally powerful humanism threatens to repeat the mistake of Stalinism. Dostoevsky foresaw this perennial trap over a century ago: the love of humanity in the abstract that in practice generates an intense hatred of actual humans with their frailties and limitations.¹³⁴

Hundreds of years ago, a turn to humanism became partially responsible for the disenchantment of our world, culminating with a variant of exclusive humanism that became a dominant worldview in our secular age.

¹²⁸ Gilger, "Tearing Down Idols."

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² David Albertson and Jason Blakely, "From Here to Utopia: What Religion Can Teach the Left," *Commonweal*, May 24, 2021, accessed January 25, 2025, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/here-utopia>.

¹³³ Albertson and Blakely, "From Here to Utopia".

¹³⁴ Ibid.

1.10: Conclusion

There are various humanisms that encompass our postmodern¹³⁵ context. The re-entry of religion to take its appropriate seat in the public domain can be done through an inclusive humanism, one that shares this deep love for humanity and centers around human flourishing with a constant eye on the need for the transcendent. For without transcendence, human society cannot flourish to its greatest degree. Most religions “know how to inculcate practices that can radically transform the self and repair social bonds; indeed, this is their expertise.”¹³⁶ Religions have always been good at creating community, including those that “forge solidarities across class and ethnicity”¹³⁷ and that is one of the missing links in our current individualistic society. The Christian Democrats as a political alliance “insisted on a subsidiarity principle that would protect the local and national democratic powers against interference from the superstate. They also demanded recognition of Europe’s cultural identity in the Constitutional Treaty, including its Judeo-Christian roots.”¹³⁸ However, the “Rawlsian-Habermasian project, a regime based on the twenty-first century’s claim to have distilled the universal dictates of reason into abstract and secular human rights”¹³⁹ has failed to capture the masses. As Taylor himself diagnosed much of what has been lost in our secular age is the “dangers of isolation and loss of meaning. Both of these come from the fact that this space is ‘private’, its public spheres sustained by purely voluntary participation.”¹⁴⁰

The next chapter will discuss one of the secular moral frameworks that insists on the clear separation of religion from the public sphere; *laïcité*. This will also serve to situate my own lived experience discussed in the introduction as well as further pose the question surrounding the integration (or lack thereof) of religion and education that serves as a clear-cut example to help concretize the discussion of what belongs in the public, and private sphere of our postmodern moral order.

¹³⁵ The relevance of postmodernism here is the emphasis on the inclusivity of different perspectives on what is real. Postmodernism rejects grand narratives such as an extreme triumphalism of the hard sciences over other forms of knowing. Furthermore, one of the central tenets of postmodernism is the promotion of different lived experiences, some of which stem from religious foundations.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Michel Gurfinkiel, "Christian Democracy," *First Things*, August 1, 2020, accessed January 25, 2025, <https://firstthings.com/christian-democracy/>.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 53.

Chapter Two: Deprivatizing Religion; a Critique of *Laïcité*

The previous chapter helped to clarify how we got to our current secular cultural moment in the 21st century with a variety of frameworks trying to function in our polarized society. It was important to narrow the scope by only looking at the western tradition emanating from a period of medieval Christendom in approximately the year 1500. There is a brief mention to the prior period that begins to categorize various spheres into greater autonomy, through the philosophy of nominalism. One of the central arguments that has already been presented is that it is in greater congruence with our understanding of secularity in western culture to deprivatize religion. This is not because of the presupposition that we simply need more religion in society. Rather, the advent of postmodernism has provided an entry point to bring religion back into the public sphere. This chapter will go into greater depth on arguably the biggest ideological hurdle to the re-entry of religion back into the public sphere; *laïcité*.

2.1: Sociological roots of *Laïcité*

In his article *Laicity and the Inherited Boundaries between Religion and Politics in Québec*, Jérôme Melançon uses the term *laïcisme* (slightly different from *laïcité*) to describe Quebec's relationship to religious institutions and ideas. *Laïcisme* views religion in the public sphere in such a way that cannot conceivably be divorced from the hyper-Catholic background that existed in [that] society prior to its secularization. Its views on religion will continually be informed by a combination of peaceful and tumultuous memories of the past.¹⁴¹ Melançon's article clearly distinguishes *laïcité* and secularism, helping to illustrate a historical framework for the relationship between religion and democracy in the context of Quebec. The use of the word *laïcité* is deeply rooted in a historical context that necessitates a strict separation between a dominant religious institution (in this case the Catholic Church) and the state.¹⁴²

Contributing to Quebec's conception of religious neutrality, Melançon further distinguishes *laïcisme* from *laïcité* as the former is "born out of the desire to combat the Church or religion itself"¹⁴³ as well as protecting politics from various forms of religious action. This more clearly distinguishes itself from an open secularity, which at its core aims to protect religion from state influence, creating "state neutrality for the sake of freedom of religion."¹⁴⁴ At its core, *laïcisme* strives to provide a great deal of autonomy to its people, forming laws independent of restrictive religion. *Laïcisme*¹⁴⁵ leads to a clash when immigrants arrive with different conceptions of religion in the public sphere. Melançon states that these different conceptions essentially result in opening up "the alternative of finding meaning for collective government in a new struggle against religion instead."¹⁴⁶ This is the consequence of rigidly needing to conceive of politics outside any reference to religion, a requirement of *laïcisme*.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴¹ Jérôme Melançon, "Laicity and the Inherited Boundaries between Religion and Politics in Québec: Reflections after Marcel Gauchet," *Religious Studies and Theology* 34, no. 1 (2015): 87.

¹⁴² Ibid, 87.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 88-89.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 89.

¹⁴⁵ I decided to use the proper French spelling of this word rather than the English translation.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 90.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 90.

The implementation of *laïcisme* resulted in article 41 of the Quebec Charter of Rights and Freedoms to be removed. The article stated that “parents can demand of public schools that their children receive religious or moral teaching in accordance with their convictions.”¹⁴⁸ At its core, *laïcisme* conceives of religion from a shallow cultural perspective to finding meaning in expressions such as ‘neutrality of the state’ as well as ‘separation of church and state’. This notion is incompatible for people of other backgrounds and religious believers alike. Religion often requires individuals to “publicly obey the demands of their religious beliefs, which are in fact, at once, public and private.”¹⁴⁹

Laïcité and its more extreme variant, *laïcisme*, grew out of a particular religious context within western secularism; France. One might make the claim that the roots of *laïcité* are the corruption of any religious institution and authority that was not adequately renewed through the proper reforms. Specifically within the period of medieval Christendom, the Great Schism of the West showed weakness in the leadership of the papacy and its pull towards the French monarchy. Avignon is not Rome. Part of the authentic logic present in the concept of separation between Church and State is precisely illuminated in the issue of the Great Schism of the West. The Church should not be placed under control of the French king, or any earthly king. Nor should the Church rival its earthly power (through the papacy) with State power.

A core value of *laïcité* is the formal separation of Church and State. This concept can be applied to virtually any global context. What makes *laïcité* particular to the French context is that it is historically situated within a combative spirit between the *ancien régime*, the more conservative Catholic Church in France that was resistant to many of the changes proposed by the French revolutionaries. Fundamentally, they wanted to remove the power of the Church more than anything else.

So the original Revolutionaries, in their radical period, attacked the Church, tried to bring about a “dechristianization”, under Robespierre’s rule tried to even substitute a new religion of the “Supreme Being”. And even after Thermidor, the attempt goes on, through the new calendar, through state-organized festivals, to inculcate a new outlook in the place of the traditional Christian one. This Republican hostility to religion was later radicalized, both socially and metaphysically, in Marxist Socialism, which was explicitly committed to an atheist outlook.¹⁵⁰

The religious sense of the individual self, and its important communal connection is recognized even by the revolutionaries at the time. It was the moral clash, the rigid interpretation of certain religious ideas and the specific authoritarian power wielded by the Church that highlights the central grievances. Writing in the nineteenth century, philosopher and mathematician Auguste Comte wanted to “keep the institutions, practices and attitudes of piety, without any of the dogma at all. Comte proposed to institute a hierarchy and sacraments, to offer

¹⁴⁸ Melançon, "Laicity and the Inherited Boundaries," 95.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 93.

¹⁵⁰ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 412.

a series of rituals for the crucial transition moments in life.”¹⁵¹ Furthermore, Comte “was ready in a sense to match Catholicism point for point. But the doctrinal core centred on Humanity, and its Progress through Science.....the ritual couldn’t sustain itself on such a weak basis.”¹⁵² This point touches on many of the hopes coming out of the Enlightenment period which simply put, did not pan out the way many of its thinkers had hoped. None of these philosophies share a comprehensive bulwark to sustain itself long-term as many religious traditions have done, evidenced by their survival for thousands of years. Embedded in this grievance is a specific disdain for dogma.¹⁵³ What specific dogma impedes progress? Depending who you ask, each one may have a different answer, and care more about one versus another in a different time period. Some today may still believe certain dogmas are more irrelevant, such as the true nature (divine or human) of Jesus Christ, rather than specifically impeding progress. Part of this notion of progress is the interpretation of religious vs secular values. On a very basic level, a secular value is one that does not specifically require any sort of divine transcendence, such as the basic equality between the sexes. A religious value points to that divine transcendence. It mirrors the creator in some way, in harmony with the created order. However, these lines can also be blurred. One can logically conclude that the importance of family is a religious value connected to the golden rule, or honouring your mother and father. Many people prioritize their family over their career, meaning they value family over career. They see this as a unit pointing to the heavenly order of creation, and a duty from God to care for our kin. This can also be a secular value. In an exclusive humanist framework, one can easily share this perspective where the individual focuses on prioritizing certain humans in their family over other humans and caring for their subjective needs, regardless of any objective moral requirement.

2.2: *Laïcité* as Closed World Structure

Exclusive humanism created many different narratives surrounding the flourishing of the self and the value structure that purportedly was embedded within this new understanding of reality. Taylor states:

The narratives of self-authorization, when examined more closely, are far from self-evident; and yet their assuming axiomatic status in the thinking of many people, is one facet of a powerful and widespread CWS (Closed World Structures), imposing a closed spin on the immanent frame we all share. I have been outlining four facets of a take on modernity which make it appear as a closed immanent order. I have called these ‘close-world structures’, because they (wrongly) make this take seem obvious, unchallengeable, axiomatic. These facets are in a sense variants on a narrative of coming of age, moving from a childlike to an adult consciousness.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 390.

¹⁵² Ibid, 390.

¹⁵³ Dogma, in the Catholic tradition, is different from doctrine. Dogma is a specific core revealed truth of Faith from the Scriptures that is absolute and can never change. Doctrine parallels teachings that have various levels of interpretation.

¹⁵⁴ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 589.

This is not to generalize the opposite, that all secular value frameworks are childish and only religious value structures are more open-minded. Rather, it is a more realistic assessment of the fact that closed-world structures that operate within an exclusive humanist framework are not open to the transcendent. It is closed off from that possibility. This also helps to explain why religion is often closed off from the public square, because it uses a language about values and rights that many exclusive humanists are simply not open to. Their closed-world structures,

...function as unchallenged axioms, rather than as unshakeable arguments, and that they rely on very shaky assumptions, are often grounded on illegitimate naturalizations of what are in fact profound cultural mutations, and in general survive largely because they end up escaping examination in the climate in which they are taken as the undeniable framework for any argument.¹⁵⁵

The previous chapter on the history of secularism provides further evidence that there are a variety of religious and secular frameworks relying on different foundations based on the history of ideas, and the sorts of cultural mutations that Taylor talks about. For instance, what is the assumption for the equality of human persons? It is evident that in the history of Latin Christendom, the belief of equality as practiced in the running of society was not the case. Why can equality not be refuted? Does science somehow ‘prove’ that all people should be created equally? Humans are created with a variety of different strengths and weaknesses both physically, mentally, emotionally & spiritually. It is in the nature of our species that some are wired much more for success than others. There are good reasons why we have chosen to value equality, but they are multi-layered and far from self-evident. Rather, it has become a basic value from which to build a more peaceful society. An exclusive humanist framework is one option among many.

It is a metaphysical construct that defines our “social imaginary,” offering a total interpretation of reality that systematically excludes the apprehension of God from our operative notions of being, nature, knowledge, and truth. God is banished from our most authoritative forms of knowledge, from our modes of social organization, and from the basic habits and patterns of life.¹⁵⁶

One of the core grievances of *laïcité* is the divide between the clergy and the lay people (non-clergy) or in French, *laïques*. As we can see from the previous example, the dichotomy between the religious and the secular is secondary, but the checks and balances of power are primary. The association of God with the perceived tyrannical *ancien régime* is embedded in the consciousness of the French people. Taylor states it is partially a “moral issue too much in terms of the favour or disfavour of a capricious tyrant. We are now beyond this.”¹⁵⁷ It is also connecting back to the historical understanding of the divine within a population whose

¹⁵⁵ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 590.

¹⁵⁶ Various. “The Future of the Catholic Church.” *First Things*. August 1, 2024. Accessed January 25, 2025. <https://firstthings.com/the-future-of-the-catholic-church/>

¹⁵⁷ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 364.

ancestors believed in many gods, some of which were inherently tyrannical. That divine characteristic had ultimately been appropriated in time onto the *ancien régime*.

Hypothetically, there would be the possibility of a religious renewal among the French people but only if it were led by non-clergy. Religion, and transcendence is only rejected by its association with an oppressive power structure. This is naturally more of a problem historically for the Catholic Church compared to other Protestant denominations because of the traditional hierarchical structure. The history of secularism illustrates this as one of the reasons that many Protestant groups have been successful at recruiting followers away from the Catholics. There is a certain identity formation through faith that is very simple in a Protestant-majority country like the United States, contrasting “the Jacobin-republican formula of ‘laïcité’, where the integration takes place by ignoring, sidelining or privatising the religious identity, if any.”¹⁵⁸ This formula also provides insight into one of the reasons why integration of various immigrant groups have largely failed in a country like France, and why it is so contentious in the Canadian province of Quebec, where the philosophy of *laïcité* also reigns supreme among the people. “We shouldn’t forget the spiritual costs of forced conformity: hypocrisy, spiritual stultification, inner revolt against the Gospel, the confusion of faith and power, and even worse.”¹⁵⁹ This fracture is best understood today, as the power individuals gained through democracy and various cultural revolutions gave so many people an easy path out of their religious heritage. Not only an out, but leading to the belief that they would flourish better as humans without the control of religion.

2.3: Quebec’s Relationship to Modernity

Quebec’s entry into modernity was marked by a staunch rejection of the Catholic Church. This had obvious ramifications on the political order itself, that would naturally contradict certain key Christian doctrines, such as original sin, believing that there is a possibility of perfection in our nature to some extent. The republican “free society must inculcate a philosophy, and build a social imaginary, which is grounded in exclusive humanism.”¹⁶⁰ This is part of the rupture after Christendom, but it cannot happen all at once because social imaginaries and its cultural mutations take time to form and take shape. The eventual social imaginary built by the French would have much in common with the other exclusive humanist frameworks in this sense:

In this purposeless universe, we decide what goals to pursue. Or else we find them in the depths, our depths, that is, something we can recognize as coming from deep within us. In either case, it is we who determine the order of human things-and who can discover in ourselves the motivation, and the capacity, to build the order of freedom and mutual benefit, in the teeth of an indifferent and even hostile universe.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 524.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 513.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 412.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 367.

You would be correct in recognizing this is the common language found in most self-help books today. This is a moral framework inculcated within our secular culture. The relationship of the French to the Catholic Church shares a paralleled social consciousness with that of Quebecers. However, it all happened much later, and in a shorter period of time. While the French revolution was part of the early phases worldwide for social modernity, Quebecers awakening to modernity in the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s was both quicker and more peaceful. Quebecers nonetheless sought to maintain this monolithic identity and culture, as a unique group within Canada. Therefore, the root of culture shifted from both religion and language, as Catholics in an otherwise Protestant majority, to purely language. Figuring out how to replace the traditional Catholicism of their ancestors has been a cultural project in Quebec for the past few decades, evidenced in the intensity of language politics and the possibility of sovereignty from Canada, but also in the moral realm of education and the de-confessionalization of religion in the curriculum.

“Today’s Franco-Catholic Quebec is torn by ambivalence, struggling with a combination of resentment and peaceful memories. This division is in part due to a generation gap. Many young historians are able to explore their religious roots and to reconstruct collective memory in a much more serene fashion than did their counter- parts who had themselves lived through a rupture with the Church.”¹⁶²

There are remnants of this logic that are present in the construction of the Ethics and Religious Culture program in Quebec, that was the state-wide curriculum in elementary and high schools from 2008 until 2024. It is not this curriculum itself, but rather its imposition onto religiously-affiliated schools that shows hypocrisy and a very narrow understanding of secularism as well as the possibilities of religious institutions contributing to the common good. A sensible understanding of the history of ideas within western secularism shows that the disembedding of Catholicism can lead in so many different directions. There is a cultural chaos still seen today much more clearly in Quebec society than other modern societies. This is the case because Quebecers still desire to be a distinct people. Quebecers are modern in how they reacted to the “system which smothered creativity, individuality and imagination.”¹⁶³ This liberal spirit in which Quebecers widely embraced, and so even as the Church evolved in this period, it was still seen as representing the old traditional order that stifled these human goods. However, Quebecers also resist a multicultural globalism that is pressured on virtually all affluent wealthy western societies. This is consistent with the thesis so far on the consequence of secularization; there are endless directions for which a society can undertake.

2.4: History of Catholic Education and Deconfessionalization in Quebec

The history of Catholic Education in Quebec and its de-confessionalization in the past few decades is contentious primarily because it is one of the sectors in which both the Church and State desired control for a very long time. Going back to the nineteenth century, Anglo-Protestants attempted to create a public system of education. Looking into the 1830s,

¹⁶² Solange Lefebvre. “Socio-Religious Evolution and Practical Theology in Quebec, Canada.” *International Journal of Practical Theology* 4, no. 2 (2000): 290.

¹⁶³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 476.

French-Canadian nationalists such as Louis-Joseph Papineau also expressed a preference for the State being more involved in Education. This was part of the liberal-conservative divide at that time. Like many other matters that often had to do with engaging modernity, Boudreau states that The Catholic Church in Quebec, following Rome's directives, was uncompromising about the supremacy of the Church over the state in educational matters.¹⁶⁴ This was part of a broader Church attitude of "absolutely no acceptance of modern freedoms, absolutely no attempt to reconcile liberalism and the Church."¹⁶⁵ This is not to say there wasn't a strong contingent of more progressive Catholics, even up in the Church hierarchy that was more open to state involvement. "However, the anti-liberal position of the ultramontanes dominated and would influence Catholic education for decades."¹⁶⁶ One of the central progressive concerns was "the necessity of adapting the school system to the job market."¹⁶⁷ This concern would be met at least in part with the Church running Education. However, it was not as advanced as other educational models often run by the State, or even by the Church in other provinces and countries.

The biggest shift that would begin the path towards secularization would occur in 1964 with the passing of Bill 60, creating the Ministry of Education through the recommendation of the Parent Commission.¹⁶⁸ This is a clear-cut example of the power in Education being transferred from the hands of the Church to the State. The specific transition to secular education can best be described as a few key phases of decreasing religious education in the schools. When the Ministry of Education is created, "the only two committees of this advisory body who have regulatory power are the Catholic and Protestant Committees."¹⁶⁹ This made sense for a couple of reasons. First, the vast majority of students had Catholic or Protestant backgrounds and that was how the schools had already been divided prior to this secular shift. Secondly, despite a rupture that was occurring at this time, most Quebecers still identified as Catholics. Parents wanted religious education for their children. The central concern even for these progressive revolutionaries at the time was that they did not want the entire educational enterprise being controlled by the Church. They preferred even religion itself being taught by lay people (non-clergy). It was more of a rejection of the clergy than religion itself. Most Quebecers at this time recognized that their moral values were still foundationally Christian.

While the Catholic and Protestant committees had a say, the administration and application of these regulations belonged to the Ministry of Education and the school boards.¹⁷⁰ These committees were primarily lay-run, and getting solid perspectives from the Bishops was hard to come by because of the massive rupture. They were undecided and paralysed. It's explained that this is because they were "generally ill-prepared by their traditional training to face a society clamoring for change."¹⁷¹ The Church hierarchy went from a force of

¹⁶⁴ Spencer Boudreau, *Catholic Education: The Quebec Experience* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1999), 10.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 11.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 11.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 12.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 18.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 18.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 19.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 22.

unquestioning authority to exuding a ‘nervous humility’ within just two decades.¹⁷² Recognizing this is key to deconstructing some of the false stereotypes often central to *laïcité* advocacy.

It was the Lesage government’s ability to show Quebecers that modernization was in their best interest to flourish as Quebecers that led to their success. The Lesage government helped “promote industries owned and managed by French Canadians.”¹⁷³ This resulted in “an outburst of cultural creativity.”¹⁷⁴ This led to the questions of education formation, pitting modernization against classical thought. The new Quebec elite, consisting of doctors, lawyers, business owners... etc., would need the education system to focus more on the development of these professions. It is at this time that the Ministry of Education was born. Many Catholic activists were in favour of the changes that were occurring during the Quiet Revolution. The Church itself underwent major changes with the Second Vatican Council from 1962-1965. Many Quebecois Catholics, clergy included, supported more power for lay people, embracing certain modern trends of the culture, while acknowledging past mistakes in the Church, especially under the Duplessis government.¹⁷⁵

The desires of the ever-changing Quebec Catholic Church are perhaps best seen through *Le Rapport Dumont*, in which the Quebec Church appointed a commission led by French sociologist Fernand Dumont to listen to the people and formulate concerns in hopes of making the Church a bit more democratic. Conclusions from the report, released in 1971, suggested ecclesiastical reform, giving lay people both more freedom and responsibility in the Church. Unfortunately, Pope Paul VI had already restored emphasis on the primacy of the papacy, insisting on ecclesial uniformity. This turned the report from a source of hope to disappointment, and perhaps the last straw for the Quebec Church at maintaining a stronghold on a Quebecois culture that was in the process of reformulating its identity.¹⁷⁶ Within just a few years, the Quebec Church lost two-thirds of its participating members. The practice of faith was deemed irrelevant, given the advances and accomplishments of Quebec society in the 1960s.¹⁷⁷

In the decades to follow, Quebec bishops would not revert back to a deeper conservative brand of Catholicism. Rather, their statements often paralleled the social justice ethos of their non-practicing flock. At both the federal and provincial levels, bishops were often bold in their pastoral statements that condemned neo-liberal capitalism and promoted a preferential option for the poor, synthesized with the teachings of the gospel. Regardless of this attitude from the hierarchy, active participation in the Church continued to decline.¹⁷⁸ The statements of Quebec bishops regarding nationalism in 1979 also maintained a very moderate approach. The core of their message was that it was not the job of the bishops to instruct the faithful on how to vote, but rather to illustrate that the nationalist movement could be ethical only under four conditions: 1)

¹⁷² Boudreau, *Catholic Education*, 23.

¹⁷³ Gregory Baum. “Catholicism and Secularization in Quebec.” *Cross Currents* 36, no. 4 (Wint 1986): 439.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 439.

¹⁷⁵ Gregory Baum. “How Moving to Quebec Has Affected My Theology.” *Toronto Journal of Theology* 26 (1) (2010): 35.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 35.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 36.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 36.

to create a more just and open society. 2) It must protect the human rights of minorities. 3) It must aim at peaceful relations with adjacent societies. 4) The nation can never become the highest good, which would lead to idolatry.¹⁷⁹ This vision of Quebecois Catholicism, still focused on its own people and the importance of identity, differs immensely from any idea linked to *laïcisme* and its aggressive secular model, both towards Catholicism and other religions.

Lefebvre states that modern Quebecers progressed to be marked by two critical religious orientations. The first fuses and substitutes beliefs and values that distinguishes itself both from secularity and from Christianity.¹⁸⁰ The second is the more staunch rejection of Christianity and religion in general, falling under the umbrellas of agnosticism, practical atheism or secularism. This orientation, Lefebvre illustrates, leads to a clearer definition of “existential and referential poles”¹⁸¹ that better describe the way of life, values and beliefs of Quebecers. The secular pole tends to focus on “technical, economical and political rationality devoid of any religious considerations.”¹⁸² This refers to a separation or privatization of the ideas and practices of faith from daily life. The religious pole refers to the dominant subjective experience.

Following a trend visible in most Western countries, numerous interviewees preferred to speak of spirituality than of religion. Spirituality here would refer to a freer, more inclusive and more subjective experience, lacking the constraints of a religion identified with a system, codes, and orthodoxy.¹⁸³

The continued shifting of religious views on spirituality and subjective experience further allowed the state to continue its expansion in areas such as welfare, something that was not covered by the old order of the Church. This was one of the many aspects of modernization that convinced French Canadians that their government representatives acted in their best interest. This superseded the influence of the Church whose goal was to make Quebec society “the bearer of a higher, more spiritual civilization in contrast with the business civilization characteristic of North America.”¹⁸⁴ The old Catholicism of the Duplessis era was “replaced by a new, secular philosophy of self-determination”¹⁸⁵ leading to a “new French presence in North America.”¹⁸⁶

It is in that same period after the Quiet revolution that Bishop Bernard Hubert writes: “I do not regret the loss of Church prestige and power, but in the area of human needs the Church is going to question, stimulate, contribute and support.”¹⁸⁷ To solely view the contribution of the Church through the lens of power, would be to miss the mark of this multi-layered issue. In 1979, Archbishop Gilles Ouellet stated “we built a new school system in Quebec in just ten

¹⁷⁹ Baum, “How Moving to Quebec”, 38.

¹⁸⁰ Lefebvre. “Socio-Religious Evolution”, 291.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 291.

¹⁸² Ibid, 292.

¹⁸³ Ibid, 292.

¹⁸⁴ Baum. “Catholicism and Secularization in Quebec,” 439.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 439.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 439.

¹⁸⁷ Boudreau, *Catholic Education*, 23.

years. We gave education the new structures it needed. Now we have to give it a soul.”¹⁸⁸ There is a recognition from the bishop of the progress brought about by these new structures. The Church is changing. To quote from the Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, better known by its original latin *Gaudium et Spes*, “Let it be recognized that all the faithful , whether clerics or laity, possess a lawful freedom of inquiry, freedom of thought and of expressing their mind with humility and fortitude in those matters on which they enjoy competence.”¹⁸⁹ These statements about freedom are categorical about the Church’s developed position engaging modernity not just in Quebec, but globally. To further summarize the Second Vatican Council, it “...speaks of the right to revolt against the abuse of authority and encourages a political-juridical order in which ‘the rights of free assembly, of common action, of expressing personal opinions, and of professing a religion both privately and publicly,’ are protected.”¹⁹⁰ The fallout from the Council would change the Church in Quebec in many ways, including its philosophy of education.

The tendency for citizens to see the Church as an oppressor of religious freedom comes from the reality that they simply believe the Church only preaches tolerance and acceptance when it has to, since it has lost power. For many, the development of Vatican II was too little, but more importantly, too late. In the papal encyclical *Dignitatis Humanae*, the need for the Church (as well as other religious traditions) and the State to work together is further defined. “The rights of parents are violated if their children are forced to attend lessons or instructions which are not in agreement with their religious beliefs. The same is true if a single system of education, from which all religious formation is excluded, is imposed upon all.”¹⁹¹ Imposition is the key problem and unfortunately has become somewhat of a cornerstone for *laïcité* thinkers and the generalized structure of Education in Quebec today. “Religion should have a place in the schools, according to the Catholic Committee, because of the nature of the learner and the nature of religion. The learner is ‘a being in search of meaning,’ and religion is a ‘meaning system’ that can provide guidance and strength.”¹⁹² Religious tolerance, especially in the realm of education, was processed very differently by English-speaking Catholics in Quebec.

The English Catholic clergy had not had the history of power and prestige in Quebec society that their francophone counterparts enjoyed, there was no equivalent anti-clerical backlash such as was experienced in French Quebec. The presence or absence of this backlash had and continues to have an effect on the teaching of religion.¹⁹³

The Quebecois ethos of antipathy towards religion would not disappear, leading to the next major step in the deconfessionalization of religious education in Quebec. The goal was to “reorganize the school boards on linguistic rather than religious lines and bring the legislative and administrative framework of the public elementary and secondary school system into line

¹⁸⁸ Boudreau, *Catholic Education*, 23.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 29.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 29.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 30.

¹⁹² Ibid, 37.

¹⁹³ Ibid, 57.

with the public consensus.”¹⁹⁴ This paralleled the new root of Quebecois identity and culture, centering on language rather than religion. Education is often the field where collective priorities are clearly illustrated. The Quebecois people, specifically the *laïque*, (non-clergy) have spoken in their desire to focus much of their politics on the supremacy of the French language. In this phase of deconfessionalization,¹⁹⁵ law 107 was put forth which guaranteed certain key provisions for all such as “the right of all students to choose between moral instruction and Catholic religious and moral instruction.”¹⁹⁶ Taylor’s notion of our secular age being one of many options being present to choose from, counter-cultural groups arose on the Quebec scene such as the *mouvement scolaire confessionnel* who feared the consequences of radical deconfessionalization. Their specific target was le *Mouvement laïque de langue française*,

... because it is a militantly atheistic group that is intolerant toward religion. Secularism, these Catholics state, wants to banish the Church from all sectors of society and in particular from the domain of education. They point out that there is no such thing as a neutral state because every act of state has moral implications. They believe that the contention that the education of children is the responsibility of the state and not that of parents is, in fact, Marxist doctrine.¹⁹⁷

One need not agree with the moral judgments of this Catholic group in Quebec to recognize a couple of key truths. Quebec politics have virtually eradicated the Church from the domain of education given the further secularizing policies adopted in the 21st century. Secondly, there is no such thing as a completely neutral state. Using the term religious neutrality is often a vague way of trying to equally marginalize religions from the public sphere. Furthermore, in the later years of the 20th century, the *Centrale de l’enseignement du Québec* (CEQ) “believed supporting a confessional system, violates basic democratic principles...by favoring one or another religion’s denomination it discriminates against those who do not identify with these denominations.”¹⁹⁸ This is technically true, the majority has more resources and has historically been in charge of education. That being said, removing confessional education altogether need not be a goal to fit these democratic principles for people of various different religious beliefs. Secular schools can exist alongside religious schools. With regards to discrimination, it is the recent Bill 21 as well the 2013 Bill 60 Charter of Values in Quebec, both of which happen to affect Muslims far more than any religious group.¹⁹⁹ Quebec politicians supporting these groups will rarely make such claims in public but the grievances are quite clear. Firstly, they believe that Quebec has a specific secular moral consensus that all immigrants should assimilate into and subscribe to in order to become full citizens of this province. Secondly, there is a deep fear of

¹⁹⁴ Boudreau, *Catholic Education*, 65.

¹⁹⁵ This is the phase that I grew up in prior to the creation of the Ethics and Religious Culture course implementation, further elaborated upon in the autoethnography section of my introduction.

¹⁹⁶ Boudreau, *Catholic Education*, 65.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 69.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 71.

¹⁹⁹ These bills focused on the wearing of religious symbols, including the variety of niqabs, burqas and headscarves typically worn by Muslim women.

Islamic extremism that is greater than any other religious threat because it is a trauma response most clearly connected to the ultramontane Catholic Church of their own past. In rejecting Islamic extremism, symbolized by various head garb, they are rejecting their past oppressor and preventing them from holding power in their modernized province.

2.5: Postmodernity and Value Neutrality

Postmodernity's rise within the history of ideas helps to illustrate the falsehood of Quebec's recent ideological interpretations of religious neutrality. How can one even decide on which values are most important? There are an abundant sources to choose from. Once again, this is the reality of our secular age. Secular viewpoints themselves that prioritize reason, or a humanism without God are all acceptable responses to how one should best live one's life. However, they have no *a priori* epistemic claim that citizens in any society ought to follow. Taylor expresses this clearly. "The entire picture, shot through with 'values', which is meant to emerge from the careful, objective, presuppositionless scrutiny, is now presented as having been there from the beginning, driving the whole process of discovery."²⁰⁰ The immanent frame has undone some of its own values it claims to be protecting, in hopes of greater human flourishing. As Taylor defines it, this is the problem of a Closed-World Structure: "[once you deconstruct it] It seemed to offer a neutral point of view from which we could problematize certain values- e.g., 'transcendent' ones- more than others. But now it appears that it is itself driven by its own set of values. Its 'neutrality' appears bogus."²⁰¹ The breakdown of our moral consensus is the result of our secular age, for better or for worse. The continued shift towards a more aggressive secularism is made clear with this decision:

In its initial brief to the government on (then) Bill 107, the CEQ begrudgingly, under certain conditions, stated that it would not object to accommodating parents who sought Catholic religious and moral instruction for their children. However, urged on by the Alliance des professeurs, the most powerful local of the union, as of 1995 the CEQ's position changed so that it was no longer in favour of any confessional religious instruction or pastoral services in the schools.²⁰²

This can happen simply because the majority of teachers, who by that point are fully secular, had the power to properly suppress any religious instruction. They believed that a uniform, secular approach to religion in the classrooms was the most sensible approach. In reality, it is discrimination against the religious minority and an ignorant understanding of both secularity in the fullest sense of the word, and about the epistemic reality of values. Much like the case of the American founding fathers discussed in my first chapter, Quebec *laïcité* proponents failed to recognize that there are no self-evident truths from which our society can operate in this postmodern age. The ramifications of the new Education Act in Bill 107, beginning in 1988 and ending in 1997 officially moved Quebec to a school board divided on linguistic lines. Given the ideological trends discussed so far, it is not surprising to recognize that

²⁰⁰ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 559-560.

²⁰¹ Ibid, 560.

²⁰² Boudreau, *Catholic Education*, 72.

this was not enough, and a mere ten years later, a new province-wide course was introduced and mandated across all schools in Quebec. This course was called Ethics and Religious Culture. Under the previous model, schools were not religious in any way except for the class on religion and ethics. The previous model recognized a pluralism that existed within Quebec schools for its citizens. Parental rights for the religious education of their child was granted, and students had three options under the branch of ‘Religious & Moral Instruction.’²⁰³ The implementation of this new course is a form of enforced normative pluralism. Given the historic legacy of Christianity in the province of Quebec, the three options were Catholicism, Protestantism, and moral instruction. This gave parents the option of religious education for their children if they wanted. In some sense, it fits the Quebecois ethos of ‘laissez-faire’.

2.6: Cross-Pressures and the Loyola Court Case

Many experts recognized that this plurality of religious education options was never going to last. Many recognized the deep-seated beliefs of many Quebecers regarding any form of religion in the public square, which includes the realm of education. In the prior model, the Church still had some degree of influence²⁰⁴ even though the State had largely taken over. For *laïcité* ideologues, full takeover is a requirement. Taylor speaks of cross-pressures as competing ideas and beliefs that are often shared simultaneously by individuals, creating a wide assortment of worldviews. One clear illustration of this cross-pressure in Quebecois society is the laissez-faire attitude, motivated by Quebec’s desire to engage thoroughly with modernity, and break away from the ultramontane church that had a very narrow and rigid outlook of how public Catholicism should be practiced in society. On the other hand, there is this belief, borrowing from their French ancestors, for all Quebecers and new immigrants especially, to assimilate into a specific Quebec way of life and culture. This is somewhat contradictory, but such is the reality of cross-pressures in our secular age.

The clash of the prior model and the forced implementation of the new ERC course across all schools in Quebec that receive public funding²⁰⁵ is most notable in the case of *Loyola High School vs Quebec (Attorney General)*. While Loyola High School did not oppose the course outright, it took issue with its forced implementation in their own high school that already taught its own religion curriculum, that was being developed, molded and tweaked as the Church had naturally developed in the modern world. This was also the reality of the anglophone world in Quebec, that reacted differently to the Quiet revolution, as discussed above. According to the guidelines of the Education ministry,²⁰⁶ Loyola needs to follow the curriculum guidelines since it

²⁰³ There was a plurality of three options: Religious and Moral Instruction, Catholicism and Protestantism. The latter two were fairly general, and inherited from the previous confessional era.

²⁰⁴ This influence was done primarily through the lay presence of Catholics. The hierarchical Church did not have a strong presence in deciding curriculum, and virtually no power in how teachers chose to discuss religious themes as well as biblical stories.

²⁰⁵ Philip Authier. “Legault defends private religious schools: Liberal Beauchemin blasts part flipflop,” *Montreal Gazette*, October 25, 2024. Accessed February 1, 2025. <https://www.montrealgazette.com/news/provincial-news/article560185.html>

²⁰⁶ *Loyola High School v. Quebec (Attorney General)*, 2015 SCC 12, [2015] 1 S.C.R. 613. accessed February 1, 2025. <https://decisions.scc-csc.ca/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/14703/index.do>

receives public funding. Loyola is part of the Quebec Association of Independent Schools (QAIS) that is semi-private. Tuition is not free, but they receive partial funding from the government and in return, must abide by ministry guidelines that are not bound by fully private schools. Loyola did not contest on this ground. The specific judgment leveled by the ministry against Loyola High School was that it could not teach religion (especially world religions) from a Catholic perspective. Loyola certainly teaches Catholicism from a Catholic perspective, but aims to teach world religions from a comparative approach. Furthermore, Loyola argued that the competency requirements of reflecting on ethical questions, understanding the phenomena of religion, and engaging in dialogue were being met through their own curriculum.²⁰⁷ The Jesuit, Catholic approach fits these competencies as deeply embedded within their pedagogical structure.²⁰⁸ One of the main ideological reasons for the ministry's contention with Loyola is on the topic of neutrality. There is a deep-seated fear that any form of religious education will tyrannize young minds and not allow them to explore other options. This is clearly believed by the province when they refused Loyola's pushback stating they were fulfilling the ministry guidelines of engaging in dialogue, thinking critically on ethical issues and aiming to serve the common good. The province stated that the Loyola program "does not lead the student to reflect on the common good, or on ethical issues, but rather to adopt the Jesuit perspective of Christian Service."²⁰⁹ This is clear evidence of *laïcité* operating as a Closed-World Structure. How can the ministry come to the conclusion that the Loyola curriculum does not aim to serve the common good? What is their definition of the common good and what are the clear differences? Furthermore, what is wrong with Christian service for others? One would think this should be an obvious consensus point. I can confirm as a current Loyola teacher, that our service sometimes even operates in partnership with other religious traditions for common goals such as feeding the homeless.

A ruling against Loyola would mean any religious institution that works in the public interest would be hesitant to express its own values in Canadian public life, he said. Religious service groups, from schools to charities, regularly display a connection between deeply held beliefs and day to day actions.²¹⁰

This comprehensive perspective on the inherent connection between religion and public life helps to illustrate that the ministry going after a school like Loyola further divides people of different beliefs. Furthermore, it seeks to change consensus points about the dignity of each person, and the common good of society where the Church and State should be able to peacefully work together in supporting human flourishing. The Ethics and Religious Culture course focuses on "two dispositions essential to intercultural citizenship: recognizing that all

²⁰⁷ *Loyola High School v. Quebec*.

²⁰⁸ Ignatian (Jesuit) pedagogy will be the focus of the next chapter. The term 'Ignatian' refers to the founder of the Jesuits, Ignatius of Loyola.

²⁰⁹ Joseph Brean, "Montreal Catholic School Fighting for the Right to Teach Ethics and Religious Culture in Its Own Jesuit Style," *National Post*, March 23, 2014, accessed January 25, 2025, <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/montreal-catholic-school-fighting-for-the-right-to-teach-ethics-and-religious-culture-in-its-own-jesuit-style>

²¹⁰ Ibid.

citizens are entitled to the same respect and rights as oneself and the will to find solutions to societal problems that are in the interest of the common good.”²¹¹

While a teacher can present all topics on any ethical issue, a mandated neutrality regarding religion & values is untenable, as explained above. It is also an infringement on teacher autonomy. There are agreements about this on both sides of the political spectrum. The myth of neutrality here is that in practice, one worldview will almost always triumph over another worldview. Navigating the balance of power between opinions in the classroom, and the mainstream beliefs of any given society is important to give each voice at least a small seat at the table. Maxwell is clearly on the side of specific liberal and democratic values when he states:

As is well known, sexist, patriarchal, and even misogynistic attitudes can [be] seen as incarnated in the practices and sacred texts of many, if not all, of the world’s major religious traditions. Particularly in a class that has as one of its primary aims the development of pupils’ competency in “reflecting on ethical questions,” leading students to reflect critically on sexist religious practices may strike some teachers as an excellent opportunity to raise issues of gender equality, thus integrating the ethics and religious culture components of the curriculum.²¹²

He is pointing to the tension brought about by *laïcité*’s fear of giving voice to religious traditions that are seemingly at odds with modern rights and values that are described above. Might literacy and critical thinking of religious traditions help to illustrate the weaknesses in certain ideologies that go against modern ideas? The clear answer is yes. However, the issue present with the above statement is that these modern truths are believed to be self-evident. The first chapter made it clear that they are not. The specific stance advocated by the ERC course is neutral impartiality, which requires the teacher to mimic a referee in a sporting match when discussing controversial issues.

Teachers do not take sides and take pains not to reveal to students their personal opinions on the matter under discussion. Their role is to facilitate the acquisition of critical reflection skills and ensure that the different sides of the issue get as fair a hearing as possible. This perspective on teacher neutrality...is underpinned by an awareness of the teacher’s position of authority over students and an ethical concern to avoid undue influence in shaping students’ beliefs.²¹³

While this course is not the final fruits of a curriculum that follows *laïcité*, it taps into the grievance of that final point; influence in shaping students’ beliefs. There is a conscious trauma

²¹¹ Bruce Maxwell. “The Pedagogical Impartiality Requirement in Quebec’s Ethics and Religious Culture Curriculum: Is It Consistent with Teacher Autonomy and Charter Rights?” *McGill Journal of Education* 54 (1)(2019): 13.

²¹² Ibid, 23.

²¹³ Ibid, 15.

response to Quebecers who witnessed decades of authoritarian shaping of attitudes and beliefs at the hands of the Church. Within the ERC curriculum, it is far from neutral. Education inevitably involves making choices about what to teach, and in what kind of depth. There is a clear hierarchy of choice in what to discuss and how much time is spent on a given topic/theme and thus, can never be value-neutral. This is even seen in the specifics of religious culture that are a part of the curriculum. It does not treat each religious culture and tradition with the same degree of importance. The course places a special emphasis on Catholicism and Protestantism “based on their historical and cultural importance in Quebec.”²¹⁴ Therefore, history places a role in the hierarchy of religious cultures.

2.7: The Imposition of Normative Pluralism

Farrow critiques the imposition of this course from another angle, helping to make the Catholic perspective a little bit clearer. “Catholics propose this faith to others, but they do not impose it on others. Their pluralism is a pluralism open to the other as other. But they expect the same openness in return.”²¹⁵ The ERC course proposes a specific kind of normative pluralism. This is a model that can work, but runs into problems when enforced on others. Quebec justice Gérard Dugré recognized “the obligation imposed on Loyola to teach the ERC course in a secular (*laïque*) manner is totalitarian in nature and essentially tantamount to the command given to Galileo by the Inquisition to abjure the cosmology of Copernicus.”²¹⁶ This is because Loyola as a Catholic school has a particular mission to serve the Church in accordance with the teachings of Jesus above all else. In an ideal world, Education would be an area where the Church and State can both recognize the common good that Loyola High School brings to the table as a highly reputable academic institution. This case highlights the tension in that matter. Loyola challenged the assumption that “if a religious perspective is offered, then all other viewpoints that do not conform to it will necessarily be derogated and disrespected.”²¹⁷ Once again, this is the viewpoint of *laïcité* because it is founded on a history of hyper-traditional religious education that would have discussed other viewpoints in that way. The unfortunate truth is that there is no real assessment from the Ministry of Education of how religion is actually taught at a school like Loyola. It is an abstraction of ideas, culminating with stereotypes about traditional religious education of the past. Farrow elaborates further on the general problem of normative pluralism in stating:

To value all divergent views equally is to value no view in particular. To build on a foundation of diversity is to build on no foundation at all...this is not the kind of thinking that preserves the foundations on which the country was built. It is not a resolution to the dilemma. It is the self-defeating logic of infinite regress.²¹⁸

²¹⁴ Maxwell, “The Pedagogical Impartiality,” 13.

²¹⁵ Douglas Farrow, *Desiring a Better Country: Forays in Political Theology* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 43.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 43.

²¹⁷ Ibid, 44.

²¹⁸ Ibid, 47.

Even for Quebec liberals in being ‘Maîtres chez nous’ illustrates the explicit value of individual autonomy. Values such as equality between the sexes, freedom of speech, and different ways to live without being discriminated against are all examples of core values that are held by a group of people. Farrow and the postmodernists are in agreement with the idea that “there is no presuppositionless political sphere. Everything says something about the nature of God or of man. There is no polis that has no determinate loves, that makes no commitments, that renders no firm judgment of good and evil, that has no God or gods.”²¹⁹

Looking back at the previous phase of confessionalization in the 1990s, there was an ignorant belief that by releasing Quebec from the purported shackles of confessional education, “all students can be taught the shared values that we as a society wish to embrace.”²²⁰ This is understandable within the uniform ERC course that was put forth in 2008, but it has been made clear that the concept of our shared values in Quebec are more fractured than we might think. Different models of education and their liberty to exist allows for greater freedom, in particular the right for parents to “have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.”²²¹ Because only a few religious traditions have the historic foundation of running schools in the province, that leads some to be skeptical of their real concern for equitable religious education. An authentically pluralist way forward recognizes “this right to religious education should be extended to all religious groups where numbers warrant and if they are willing to submit their program of studies to the rigorous guidelines of the Ministry of Education.”²²² In practice, a school like Loyola makes its mission to recognize that,

The religious freedom and the personal conscience of individual students and their families must be respected, and this freedom is explicitly recognized by the Church. On the other hand, a Catholic school cannot relinquish its own freedom to proclaim the Gospel and to offer a formation based on the values to be found in a Christian education; this is its right and its duty. To proclaim or to offer is not to impose, however; the latter suggests a moral violence which is strictly forbidden, both by the Gospel and by Church law.²²³

This is the current Catholic approach, that if adequately understood and lived out can not only be beneficial for Catholics but can provide a pedagogical basis to function for all students.²²⁴ The tension exists in the reality that “a secular system- is, in fact, a value system, and a value system that competes with those of the religious.”²²⁵ It might not be ideal, but it is the

²¹⁹ Farrow, *Desiring a Better Country*, 58.

²²⁰ Boudreau, *Catholic Education*, 80.

²²¹ Ibid, 81.

²²² Ibid, 95.

²²³ Ibid, 76.

²²⁴ This will be further discussed in the next chapter. It is my belief that if proponents of *laïcité* were to live within this educational environment, they would recognize more similarities with their own values, and at the very least, accept their right to exist in consensus with ministry guidelines towards a broader common good.

²²⁵ Boudreau, *Catholic Education*, 78.

best way forward. “A liberal world that regards religious knowledge as being of a decidedly inferior sort”²²⁶ is a form of tyranny imposed onto religious minorities who are required to “reformulate [their] conscience - to destroy a vital aspect of the self- in order to gain the right to participate in the dialogue alongside other citizens.”²²⁷ A healthy tension between competing models is good for the flourishing of Quebec society. Taylor recognizes that this current polarization might fade. Perhaps “committed partisans on both sides dwindle, and eventually (we hope) later generations will wonder what the fuss was all about.”²²⁸

2.8: Contextual Politicization of Religion

Nonetheless, there are various reactionary politics including within the Catholic Church that have doubled-down on the ways of old and not engaged with the religious freedoms for all proposed by the Second Vatican Council. The Catholic Integralist²²⁹ position believes that a “just society should promote a particular, Catholic vision of the ‘common good’.”²³⁰ This vision is contrary to my implicit advocacy of what a school like Loyola should be free to do in their mission which is “to pursue a Catholic agenda *within* pluralistic societies that defend religious freedom and other liberal rights.”²³¹ There is a direct clash between the integralists and nearly every other secular worldview that is cautious of any kind of deprivatized religion since their goal is admittedly to “create ‘integral’ Catholic regimes that ‘subordinate’ temporal government to the spiritual authority of the Church.”²³² This is a clear return to a time where the State was subordinate to the Church.

The balance of power lies much more clearly in the hands of the Church under this model. Casanova’s text *Public Religions in the Modern World* provides some further insight into grievances behind this fear.

The liberal fear of the politicization of religion is simultaneously the fear of an establishment which could endanger the individual freedom of conscience and the fear of a deprivatized ethical religion which could bring extraneous conceptions of justice, of the public interest, of the common good, and of solidarity into the neutral deliberations of the liberal public sphere.²³³

Based on both past abuses and current integralist notions of religion in the public square renders these fears valid and they should be taken seriously. Much of what has already been discussed in relation to the inevitability of deprivatized religion has hopefully helped to answer

²²⁶ Boudreau, *Catholic Education*, 78.

²²⁷ Ibid, 78.

²²⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 434.

²²⁹ For more information on Catholic Integralism: <https://thejosias.com/>

²³⁰ Timothy Troutner, “The New Integralists,” *Commonweal*, October 28, 2020, accessed January 25, 2025, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/new-integralists>.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 55.

these questions. Being “suspicious of religion’s negative functions”²³⁴ need not result in total religious deprivatization. The history of ideas related to secularity discussed in the first chapter requires the theory of “privatization to question its own normative foundations in the liberal model of the public sphere and in the rigidly juridical separation of the private and public spheres.”²³⁵ Revisiting these questions of normative foundations is also because the Church has fundamentally evolved in self-identity. The public context of Ireland and Poland provide key insights of how religion has manifested publicly while engaging the realities of modern life.

In both cases (Poland/Ireland) religion was strengthened by becoming the focus of resistance to a conqueror. Church and nation became identified at a time when the Catholic church was the only institution capable of cutting across the partition of Prussian, Russian, and Austrian Poland.²³⁶

The Church in these contexts could not be marginalized because “neither church nor state could agree on the boundaries or accept the customary limits.”²³⁷ Rather, the citizens themselves actually wanted the Church to help in various ways against their respective oppressor. In the case of Poland, resources included “the pulpit, the religious classroom, the seminaries, pastoral letters, the Catholic University, the Catholic press- all became autonomous spaces where the collective national identity and the traditions and values of Polish culture could be preserved and transmitted.”²³⁸ It also helped having the Pope at the time in John Paul II essentially represent your country on the world stage, helping to provide “religious legitimation for the model of a modern, differentiated, pluralistic, and self-regulated society.”²³⁹ It is not really in the social imaginary of most other westerners for this type of religion to exist. The truth is that public, deprivatized religion takes on many forms, even one that secular intellectuals might discover the Church to be “a source of democratic and humane values.”²⁴⁰

Although modern Catholicism has recognized the autonomy of the secular spheres, it does not accept the claims of these spheres to have detached themselves completely from morality. It also maintains an organicist conception of society that demands that all its parts work toward the common good and be subordinated to higher moral principles. In this sense, it maintains the principle of communal ethical life.²⁴¹

This recognition should circle the mind back to the beginning of the first chapter regarding the development of philosophical nominalism. For the Church, the tension still exists. In a religious framework, everything is interconnected and works toward the common good, and

²³⁴ Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 56.

²³⁵ Ibid, 58.

²³⁶ Ibid, 92.

²³⁷ Ibid, 95.

²³⁸ Ibid, 99.

²³⁹ Ibid, 102.

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 102.

²⁴¹ Ibid, 104.

ultimately back to the creator which is ultimate goodness. Pope John Paul II would not merely address Catholics in his addresses but rather all of humanity. It has been consistent since the Second Vatican Council to do so as part of discerning the ‘signs of the times’ which has been a development of the Church recognizing the truth and goodness in parts of the modern moral order. John Paul II “[challenges] each one to live up to universal human norms, which are derived from the universal human values of life and freedom. These absolute values serve to ground both the sacred dignity of the human person and the inalienable rights to human autonomy and self-determination.”²⁴² Development also works alongside truths that have existed for all-time and consistently believed from the earliest centuries of the church, such as the fact “the legitimacy of the state ought to be subordinated to the common good.”²⁴³

Furthermore, one cannot separate their religious convictions from political actions.²⁴⁴ It would be to ask them to reject a part of who they are. Furthermore, there is a false presumption that we have a moral consensus in which religion can merely be added on. The opposite is true. Many believers buy into a moral idea *because* of their religious convictions, not in spite of them. Nonetheless, tension exists. Perhaps in the Polish case, a strong public religiosity will eventually lead to a “compulsive reenactment of the vicious cycles of the nineteenth-century French-Latin pattern of secularization.”²⁴⁵ However, the various contexts on the global stage are continuing to provide evidence that the subtraction story is false. Religion continues to be present in society, and not disappearing. Rather, the presence of religion has been renewed and revitalized in areas like Poland where it had previously been oppressed. The advent of postmodernity in the history of ideas has also helped to diminish grand narratives like the subtraction story, and emphasize the lived experiences of marginalized peoples, who often share their religious faith as a part of who they are.

Going forward, Casanova predicts that the Church will succeed in sharing its voice publicly on moral issues as “long as it respects the rights of others to express contrary views publicly.”²⁴⁶ This would be a sign of healthy dialogue. It is an antidote to the criticisms of the ultramontane church provided by *laïcité* proponents. The Brazilian Church took a different route from Poland. In recognizing that it “could no longer count on the traditional clerical means of evangelization and pastoral care to confront the new challenges. This was the context within which the first experiments in ecclesial base communities as alternative forms of pastoral care began in the mid-1960s.”²⁴⁷ While some might argue this also democratized Christianity in Brazil, opening up for the possibility of Pentecostalism to gain a greater hold on the Brazilian religious landscape, it nonetheless granted the people greater power over their religious destiny. In time, this pastoral model gained support in various ways from the church hierarchy, despite a few Vatican corrections.

²⁴² Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 104.

²⁴³ Ibid, 105.

²⁴⁴ I have not proposed anywhere that the state should be subordinate to the church. Part of what has been made clear in this text is that there are a variety of models related to church-state relations.

²⁴⁵ Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 109.

²⁴⁶ Ibid, 111.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, 129.

Public religion in the American context is best seen in the evangelical fundamentalist wing that “from the 1930s to the 1970s... had been a relatively pietistic, withdrawn, and virtually ignored sector of American Protestantism.”²⁴⁸ The Franco-Quebec *laïcité* context discussed above centered on problems with authority. That idea transfers to the fundamentalist wing but through a different lens. This is evidently manifest in the American fundamentalist involvement in politics today which renewed itself beginning in the 1980s with the organization Moral Majority led by Jerry Falwell. “Like the ‘infallibility’ of the pope, the ‘infallibility’ of Scripture was turned into a fundamentalist dogma only when Scripture was challenged by modern trends and ideas.”²⁴⁹ This sets up a consistent defensive posture for “the purpose of restoring the American way of life, a counter revolutionary theocratic impulse to impose biblical morality upon the nation, and a proactive involvement in the public affairs of the nation.”²⁵⁰ This led to a broader shift that made the Republican party in the United States the party of greater religious involvement in the affairs of the nation. Though, both parties continue to use religious rhetoric for the justification of different social issues. This idea of an imposition of biblical morality on the nation is what continues to stir the consciousness of the *laïcité* proponents, seeing the ideas connect so thoroughly to the church of their ancestors, igniting fear on how some of these policies may affect them in the present. The idea of imposition is a two-way street. The Church imposing on the State, and the State imposing on the Church. For the fundamentalists and others,

[Thomas] Jefferson’s ‘wall of separation’ was meant to protect the free exercise of authentic religion from any state encroachment and to impede the establishment of any particular church. It was not meant to promote a secular, neutral state or to extend the free-to-exercise-of-religion principle to include freedom from religion. Diffused, generalized, transdenominational, biblical, Judeo-Christian religion should not only predominate in civil society but be able to penetrate the wall and permeate the state and all republican institutions.²⁵¹

One has to be realistic in recognizing that they will rarely convince non-religious people to fully buy into this worldview. That being said, their philosophical claims are no less valid than secularists who believe in certain primary values that they believe are self-evident. The newer strands of the religious right want,

...to enter the political arena making public claims on the basis of private truths. The integrity of politics itself requires that such a proposal be resisted. Public decisions must be made by arguments that are public in character.... Fundamentalist morality, which is derived from beliefs that cannot be submitted to examination by public reason, is essentially a private morality. If enough people who share that morality are mobilized, it can score victories in the

²⁴⁸ Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 135.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 141.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, 157.

²⁵¹ Ibid, 159.

public arena. But every such victory is a setback in the search for a public ethic.²⁵²

2.9: Conclusion

Entering the public arena via private morality is certainly a consequence of our secular age. Our modern moral order has created endless ideas. However, Casanova is correct in pointing out that this is a problem for a greater moral consensus. Both the traditional religious person lamenting the secular age and yearning for a return to Christendom and the *laïcité* proponent have one key point in common. They both recognize that a stronger moral consensus is desirable. It is one of the strengths of any healthy democracy which is greatly lacking from many nation-states today. A perpetual ‘laissez-faire’ ethos on every issue simply doesn’t work. Human beings inherently strive for a better ideal, and a politics based on greater meaning. Casanova states that even for Catholics, there are no Catholic-specific solutions to social problems, only human solutions. “The moral task, therefore, is to humanize all social structures. This means that solutions cannot be mandated, much less imposed from the outside. They can only be proposed for public debate, for experimentation, and for adoption after a public consensus has been reached.”²⁵³ Any common principles that result in the laws of our nation-states are always the “fragile outcome of a process of communicative interaction.”²⁵⁴ Refusing to legitimately communicate and listen to each other’s arguments is yet another sign of a very fragile society, where the foundational cracks become evident. For the secularist, this might be the case if one cannot “avoid the tendency to consider professed faith and religious affiliation as an obstacle for the full admission of the individual to cultural and political citizenship.”²⁵⁵ Consequently, recognizing professed faith as an obstacle refutes the notion of religious neutrality. It is another way in which the State replicates its own form of ‘Church’ that it purportedly tries to avoid. It is akin to saying somebody needs to become a member of a particular religion to benefit from the fullness of citizenship. Ignatian Pedagogy, the topic of the next chapter, acts as a bulwark against pervading fragile ideologies that do not recognize the sacredness of human dignity and the strengths of our modern moral order. It is sorely needed in an era where many of our shared values are being existentially questioned.

²⁵² Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 165.

²⁵³ Ibid, 191.

²⁵⁴ Ibid, 230.

²⁵⁵ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *International Theological Commission: Religious Freedom for the Good of All* (Holy See: March 21, 2019), 4, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20190426_liberta-religiosa_en.html.

Chapter Three: Ignatian Pedagogy and Its Relevance to Diverse Peoples

3.1: Introduction to Ignatian Pedagogy

The word Ignatian comes from the founder of the Jesuits, Ignatius of Loyola, who was born and lived in Spain during the 1500s. This was a time when the Church was going through a lot of changes with the Protestant Reformation in full force. In time, the Jesuits came to represent one of the strong forces in not only this period of counter-reform for the Catholic Church, but also in global Church history. I believe there is an important parallel to be made here with the reformation realities of the 1500s. The Jesuits, and a vast array of their Ignatian work provides its own counter-reformation to some of the radical tides of secularism. It aims to hone some of the strengths brought about by the modern moral order but also works in continuity with older Christian ideas that have contributed to both natural and revealed truths about God, humanity and the world. A strong component of Ignatian contribution not only to the Church but to society at large, is their involvement in the field of education. This chapter will focus on Ignatian pedagogy as a paradigm that is both distinctly Catholic, while engaging many of the contributions of modern pedagogy that focus on student-centred learning. The fruits of this reality is that it is a pedagogy that works for all students of different religious & cultural backgrounds.

Ignatian pedagogy's foundational belief is to educate the whole human person. Ignatian pedagogy has consistently been applied to a broad diversity of students, recognizing that all people of goodwill can benefit holistically from the resources of tradition in caring for the whole human person in dialogue with modern development in critical pedagogy. Ignatian pedagogy is considered methodologically, in dialogue with my own personal self-study that has ultimately helped in putting Ignatian pedagogy to practice, while responding to some of the ideological criticisms that may be skeptical of the benefits that this pedagogy might have for a large diversity of students. Developed from Ignatius' text on the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatian Pedagogy focuses on the interconnected relationship between context, experience, reflection, action and evaluation.

The Ignatian framework, connecting to the temporal realities of the student, deeply parallels the Currere method that recognizes the goal of revealing something of their relation to the Self.²⁵⁶ Within the Currere method, there is a relational element that asks if one is free "from interests whose life has gone out of them, and drawn one on into areas that excite? What is the relation of these interests and concomitant professional activities to one's private life?"²⁵⁷ All these questions ultimately center on the nature of educational experience in a more authentic way, unrestricted by the tyrannical elements of *laicism*.²⁵⁸ The Ignatian way recognizes the inseparable connection between a public education and one's private life, within its desire to care for the whole human person. Questions posed within the Currere framework, in helping to reveal something of the self, are intrinsically linked within the mission of a Jesuit education, with the goal of educational endeavor speaking to the soul, bridging the public/private line in the process.

²⁵⁶ William Pinar, *The Method of Currere*, paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Washington, D.C., April 1975, 19.

²⁵⁷ Ibid, 20.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, 21.

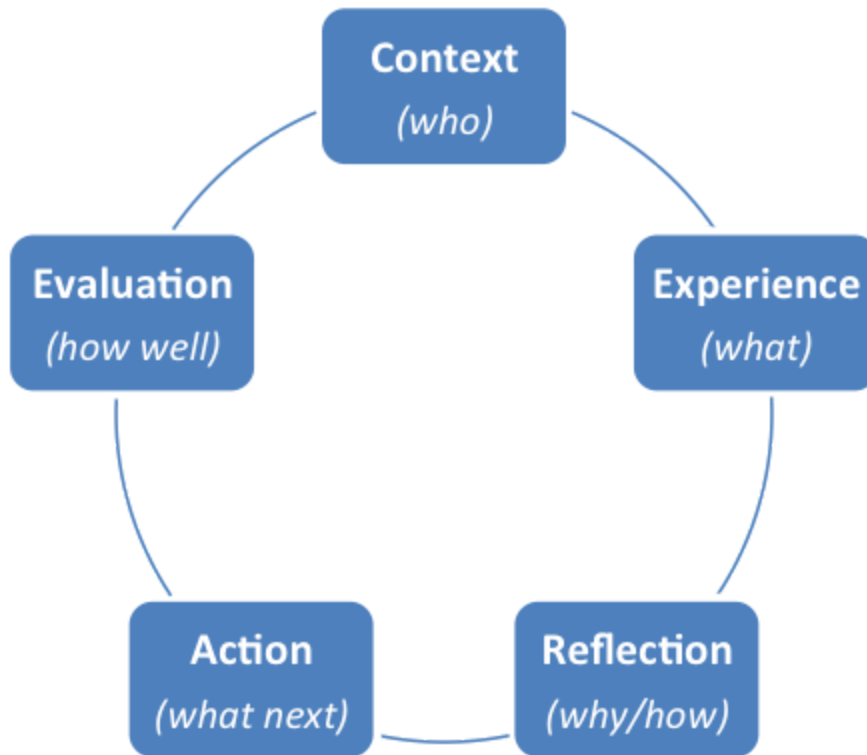
This recognition is important as it relates to the origins of democracy, which was “born on the model of the theological-political formula,”²⁵⁹ from which the previous chapter on the history of secularism clearly described. *Laïcisme* restricts the notion of citizenship, requiring the individual to restrict their religion to the private sphere, in a particular historical progression that reacts to a deeply conservative Catholicism of the 1950s and prior. This creates a problem for the private lives of citizens when they no longer get to decide what is important to them on a personal and religious level since everything is regulated by the state. This results in an abandonment of democracy ‘where most of our action takes place through the courts and through demands for recognition’.²⁶⁰ This opens up the possibility for people who come from different religious backgrounds to be misrecognized or simply denied recognition by the state because the framework of *laïcisme* used by the courts to assess these religious differences is fundamentally narrow and flawed. It is also why religion continues to be taught in Quebec schools though misrecognized as religious ‘culture’ only. A non-laïcist approach would emphasize that “the religion teacher must make the content meaningful through establishing connections and relations between what is being learned and the student’s own life.”²⁶¹

The Jesuit Catholic tradition has consistently aimed at understanding, developing and preserving fundamental philosophical, spiritual, and religious truths and practices about human existence. There are more similarities than differences when comparing this to the construction of secular values. Social constructionist models aim to understand and develop learning between content and the subjective self. Preservation of ancient truths is perhaps the biggest difference between a pedagogy informed through a religious tradition and a modern secular approach. However, the various tools within Ignatian pedagogy will always correct an approach that may rigidly use revealed religious dogma of the past, in order to stifle the development of the individual seeking the good. The fruits of Ignatian pedagogy have helped to illustrate the reason I have spent most of my 20s studying within the disciplines of Theology and Education. I hold an intense desire to show the world that the Church as a community of believers molded by dynamic traditions, can uniquely contribute to the world, to all peoples in their quest for meaning. As a new educator, I can only test this kind of pedagogy in full depth at a handful of the Catholic schools that exist in the province. The Quebec government can try to take religion out of the schools, but they cannot take it out of their citizens’ hearts and squash that desire to share it with others in community, which will ultimately manifest itself in public expression. It is impossible for that not to happen.

²⁵⁹ Melançon, “Laicity and the Inherited Boundaries,” 91.

²⁶⁰ Ibid, 91.

²⁶¹ Gerald Emmett Carter, *The Modern Challenge to Religious Education: God’s Message and Our Response* (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1961), 212.



3.2: Public Religion and Social Justice

One of the many public expressions of faith in the early church was exemplified through incredibly strong communities and a desire to help the poor and the marginalized for their own sake, rather than any personal or herd consequence. This was an absolutely necessary social progression that made the expansion of the welfare state and other social programs possible in the eyes of citizens endowed with a Judeo-Christian history. It is part of this key attention to social justice through the lens of faith that I have witnessed my Jesuit education both as a student and as a teacher taking direct action on a number of progressive issues. Towards the end of September, there is now a whole week dedicated to Indigenous Awareness, with a variety of initiatives undertaken by a variety of students and teachers alike. There is a DEIB group which takes its name from other Ignatian contexts that focus on issues pertaining to diversity, equity and inclusion with an emphasis on belonging for all students. There are a variety of other key initiatives of socially progressive issues being undertaken at the school that fit the diverse interests of meaning among students and staff alike.

As many religious virtues are manifested through a particular understanding of love, one key Ignatian principle states that “love is shown through deeds, not words”²⁶² In recognizing the ongoing dynamic between experience, reflection and action, in practice this means that “action is

²⁶² Sharon Chubbuck, "Socially Just Teaching and the Complementarity of Ignatian Pedagogy and Critical Pedagogy," *Christian Higher Education* 6, no. 3 (2007): 243, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15363750701268145>.

an outgrowth of students' experience and reflection."²⁶³ There is an inseparable link between faith and justice precisely because of the Christian understanding of God. "A claim to love God without also pursuing justice for men and women is seen as a farce."²⁶⁴ Students solely interested in justice without a faith dimension in this case can adequately work in action alongside their fellow peers, sharing a common mission to help others.

Ignatian pedagogy's inherently inclusive nature also bodes well for the new hegemony of students who are now entering Catholic schools in the Global North: non-practising Catholics. There is a definite challenge for Catholic educators to teach Catholicism to those who are apathetic, and have no real connection to the idea of faith. In this sense, the same pedagogical tools that would be applied to non-Catholics in order to make sense of a Catholic Education, can be applied directly to much of the nominally Catholic student body. Many of these new students are inheriting from an older generation of their own parents and grandparents who have rejected many aspects of religion and faith. However, the young students of today "are able to explore their religious roots and to reconstruct collective memory in a much more serene fashion than did their counter-parts who had themselves lived through a rupture with the Church."²⁶⁵ Lefebvre provides a way forward for Catholics, young and old, within a more highly secularized environment. This idea of a serene fashion to explore is central to the environment fostered by a Jesuit education, allowing both Catholics and non-Catholics to discover religious roots and connect a common spiritual life in flourishing individually, as well as promoting the common good. The inclusive nature of Ignatian pedagogy allows students to recognize historical ruptures within Church history, but educated in a way that they see the fundamental goodness of a Catholic Education, hopefully free of the (often) traumatic educational ways of old, endured by their ancestors.

The reflective element of Ignatian pedagogy connects very well a diversity of students beyond just their religious background because of how it fosters Universal Design for Learning. Pousson and Myers recognize the connection regarding the "subjective nature of knowledge acquisition"²⁶⁶ and "making judgments about new information."²⁶⁷ The stark increase of value judgments stemming from knowledge within our increasingly technological age poses a serious concern, especially for the youth. Our present day is marked by an accepted structure of virtual reality that does not leave enough "time for reflection, where learning takes place from making meaning from the diverse experiences encountered daily."²⁶⁸ Reflection is built into the schedule of the day at many Catholic schools, with time for morning prayer, occasional Masses, and weekly examinations of conscience. For many, this is merely a mandated form of silence, but one that gives time for many students to inevitably reflect during the chaotic busyness of everyday life.

²⁶³ Chubbuck, "Socially Just Teaching," 243.

²⁶⁴ Pedro Arrupe, SJ, "Men for Others," section 4 in *Foundations*, compiled by C. E. Meirose, SJ, 34 (Washington, DC: Jesuit Secondary Education Association, 1994).

²⁶⁵ Lefebvre. "Socio-Religious Evolution," 290.

²⁶⁶ J. Mark Pousson and Karen A. Myers, "Ignatian Pedagogy as a Frame for Universal Design in College: Meeting Learning Needs of Generation Z," *Education Sciences* 8, no. 4 (2018): 5, <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci8040193>.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, 5.

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 5.

Another crucial aspect of education is the mentoring process between faculty and students. From an objective research standpoint, mentoring has had a “positive impact on student persistence (retention and graduation rates) and achievement (grade point average).”²⁶⁹ The Ignatian way goes beyond the objective and deeply into caring for the whole human person. This has already been made clear. This caring for the whole person brings “emotion and affect into the mentoring experience”²⁷⁰ in order to assist in grasping “the value of their learning.” An Ignatian framework will consequently allow the student to not only look forward towards a specific career, but the additional dimension of a “broader vocation or calling, especially with regard to serving others.”²⁷¹

3.3: Religious Sense of Self

The religious sense of self, developed by a variety of traditions, deeply engages the questions of human experience, subjectivity, identity and meaning. As a teacher, this can also be furthered by bringing in one’s own fallible experiences that relate to the subject matter. This is crucial in helping eliminate the notion that teachers can “function as all-knowing, silent interrogators.”²⁷² The teacher cannot assume to know everything about such complex topics. Aiming to make God-talk relevant to students of various different backgrounds is certainly one of the key challenges facing educators teaching a Catholic curriculum within a pluralist student body. Thus, the teacher is tasked with “helping students imaginatively foster a mythological approach ...so they might hear the theological proclamation of the text and begin to challenge the modern myths at work forming and shaping their own lives.”²⁷³ Comparable to the postmodern shift in education that focuses on the subjective truths of each student’s lived experience, so does the Ignatian way foster a kind of interpretation of religion that is inherently inclusive. Lief’s article touches on a core aspect of Ignatian pedagogy, aiming to re-mythologize many of the historic texts that have shaped various cultures, bridging the gap between the text and one’s own reflection, experience and action.

This ultimately challenges modern liberalism’s narrow view of reasoning as a completely secular way of thinking and one that is diametrically opposed to anything of a religious nature.²⁷⁴ This gives students an education in which the concept of reasoning towards a transcendent order can be appreciated, and ultimately broadens the scope of reasoning while recognizing the limits of reason, as articulated by religious thinkers throughout the ages as well as postmodern thinkers

²⁶⁹ Anne H. Reilly, “Using Ignatian Pedagogy to Support Faculty-Student Mentoring,” *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal* 6, no. 2 (2017): 98.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, 100.

²⁷¹ Ibid, 100.

²⁷² bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, Chapter 1, 13–22 (New York: Routledge, 1994), 21.

²⁷³ Jason Lief, “Challenging the Objectivist Paradigm: Teaching Biblical Theology with J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and Guillermo Del Toro,” *Teaching Theology & Religion* 12, no. 4 (2009): 322.

²⁷⁴ Harvey Siegel, “Introduction,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Education* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3.

like Foucault. It further gives students the tools to foster “the abilities and dispositions conducive to inquiry and the achievement of autonomy.”²⁷⁵

Using these tools, Nussbaum’s approach to world history and world religions is quite relevant. I agree with her claim that students “should get a rich and nonstereotypical understanding of the major world religions, and then should learn how to inquire in more depth into at least one unfamiliar tradition, in this way acquiring tools that can later be used elsewhere.”²⁷⁶ The Ignatian way helps to foster depth in the understanding of their own religious/philosophical tradition if they have inherited one as well as dedicate a few months of the Secondary school religion curriculum to the teaching of world religions. It is the responsibility of teachers in this sense to “formulate questions that will broaden students’ awareness and impel them to consider viewpoints of others.”²⁷⁷ By fostering a welcome environment, students are given what they need to express these different viewpoints.

The diverse religious and non-religious backgrounds are as structurally centered within Catholicism as the majority of students attending Jesuit schools 60 years ago, is increasingly important. Non-Catholics and secularized Catholics begin with their own human experience. This is foundational to Ignatian pedagogy.²⁷⁸ “In the spirit of Ignatius Loyola and the Jesuit values of teaching and learning, a respectful, welcoming environment for all human beings is essential.”²⁷⁹ Paralleling the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, faculty accompany students in their intellectual, spiritual, and emotional development.²⁸⁰ Essentially, it is a pedagogy that does not require any revealed religion or specific religious dogma in order to promote the individual’s flourishing.²⁸¹ Much critical pedagogy today focuses on the subjective self, aiming to provide tools and resources for teachers to cater to virtually all the needs of students, regardless of their background. The Ignatian pedagogical paradigm furthers this goal, trying to “know as much as we can about the actual context within which teaching and learning take place.”²⁸²

3.4: Action Research

I found myself in a particular context that prompted differentiated learning within my high school grade ten religion class. In the spring, they were in the process of beginning their major research paper (**evaluation**). There are certain parameters they were to follow, but it was up to me as a teacher to recognize that this is a process, in which I hoped to critically assess the

²⁷⁵ Siegel, “Introduction,” 3.

²⁷⁶ Martha Nussbaum, “Tagore, Dewey, and the Imminent Demise of Liberal Education,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Education*, ed. Harvey Siegel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 5.

²⁷⁷ Sharon J. Korth, “Precis of Ignatian Pedagogy: A Practical Approach,” in *A Jesuit Education Reader* (2008): 283.

²⁷⁸ Pousson and Myers, “Ignatian Pedagogy,” 4.

²⁷⁹ Ibid, 4.

²⁸⁰ Korth, “Precis of Ignatian Pedagogy,” 281.

²⁸¹ Ignatian Pedagogy today often draws from the giants of modern, student-centred pedagogy such as Dewey, Freire, etc.

²⁸² Pousson and Myers, “Ignatian Pedagogy,” 4.

progress of each student along the way. Students were essentially supposed to pick a contentious topic, discuss the position of the Catholic Church, then articulate an opposing view, and conclude with their own personal (and thus possibly nuanced) view of the issue.

The limits of my own teaching autonomy were put to the test as I decided to cover the news story of Pope Francis issuing a formal Papal apology to various Indigenous leaders at the Vatican in the Spring of 2022. The need to take into account student diversity and how precisely to do that in this **context** came to the fore as I had one Indigenous student in my class who had previously expressed was not particularly religious at all. In trying to exercise some flexibility while not going outside the scope of the assignment, I began opening up the possibility of tackling this issue as a research topic, even without knowing exactly how the structure of the research paper would work. This student immediately said he would be interested in taking this as a topic. How could I say no?

It was then my job within this strategy to test (**experience**) how I can have this topic explored and to make sure this student has equitable access to succeeding on this paper, and for him not to have to do extra work in order to accomplish the same goal of writing a good research paper. This is a topic that is extremely nuanced. What is the position of the Catholic Church on this topic? It's not really a fair question. I thought that perhaps I could give this student guidelines in writing about how the Church has responded to Indigenous issues in the past few years overall, maybe using a few key responses from certain bishops. What is an opposing view? There are lots of critics of the Church out there, so it is clear that within the Truth and Reconciliation report, the opposing view can simply be a list of demands of concrete actions that need to be taken, and illustrating how the Church has failed in this area in the past, and how they still may be perpetuating failure through direct and indirect actions/policies. What are their own views on the subject? This ought to be critical (**reflection**). By now, the student will be aware of the various responses of the Church towards this issue. They will be able to assess questions like; What has the Church done? What has the government done? Are their responses similar? How do they differ? The student will be able to critically assess whether their view can examine concrete **action** at this point, or merely assess the apology itself. Within this process of differentiation, I wondered how our religion curriculum could gain further relevance to a diversity of students within the context of a Catholic school.

It is important to recognize that the foundational key ideas about grasping the overall context of each individual in harmony with a Catholic curriculum is not a static response to issues that may be encountered with non-Catholic students. Rather, Ignatian pedagogy provides the tools to navigate an ever-growing list of scenarios in which tension between Catholicism and the individual may be perceived. The goal is to navigate these questions on a case-by-case basis with humility, knowing that being open to growth as a school within the Jesuit tradition is key to facing all pedagogical questions both now and the unknowns that will undoubtedly become present in the future.

One of the core aspects of this paradigm that I have come to further discover over the course of my exploration is the centrality of caring for the whole human person. It is also a paradigm that does not balk at teaching the fullness of Catholicism to non-Catholic students, with a liberal spirit of openness. In the Catholic tradition, one cannot understand the depths of

human flourishing without the intrinsic spiritual dimension of the human person.²⁸³ There is a universal capacity for each individual and that is what the teacher ought to help realize. This particular example looks at a non-Catholic student, and this project opportunity can use Ignatian pedagogy to become relevant to this student, and test the limits of the structure imposed by this research project. This is an experience that can certainly bring about a greater perspective, growth in knowledge, and perhaps even reconciliation on some level. Honest criticism of certain beliefs/action and systemic structures within the Church is not only permitted but applauded if done in a rigorous way, as per the guidelines of any strong academic assessment.

3.5: The Importance of Religious Literacy

Religious literacy is essential to bridging the gap between pure, phenomenological knowledge and its connection to value and meaning. In recognizing the complexity of religion, Moore's approach provides an antidote against any narrow and reductionist view of religion. She advocates for religious literacy through a cultural studies approach that gives students "the tools to be able to recognize and understand how a series of factors converge in specific social/historical contexts."²⁸⁴ This requires intertwining the study of religion within various lenses rather than isolating it as a particularly special discipline. This is precisely because to understand religion is to recognize that it is diverse and evolving rather than monolithic and static.²⁸⁵ The Ignatian way provides a middle ground between the static, rigid defense of the past and tradition, as well as the modern and postmodern rejection of the core of our past in favor of new didactic approaches that often take the position of starting from scratch. Ignatian pedagogy begins with experience. This is followed by reflection, which "is used to reflect and revisit the materials, experiences, ideas, opinions or spontaneous reaction. It should be done in order to help students scrutinize the deeper meaning of the materials they learn."²⁸⁶ This points to the relational element that is core to Ignatian pedagogy, connecting the self to the subject in a thoroughly authentic way.

Students are often captured by teachers who are authentic witnesses to their beliefs about human flourishing, more than the specific content they introduce to the class. Exhibiting virtue in this manner paves the way for better learning according to Kottler, which "most easily takes place in the context of a safe environment in which people feel secure enough to experiment, to take risks, to venture beyond their capabilities into the great unknown."²⁸⁷ The Ignatian way refers to the unknown ultimately as God, who is most especially discovered through the lived

²⁸³ Karl Rahner, *Nature and Grace: Dilemmas in the Modern Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964), 135-136.

²⁸⁴ Diane L. Moore, "Overcoming Religious Illiteracy: A Cultural Studies Approach," *World History Connected* 4, no. 1 (2007): 29, <https://worldhistoryconnected.press.uiillinois.edu/4.1/moore.html>.

²⁸⁵ Ibid, 5.

²⁸⁶ Albertus Hartana, "The Implementation of Ignatian (Reflective) Pedagogical Paradigm Strategy for the Improvement of Students' Learning Outcomes and Motivation in Learning Natural Science for Fifth Grade Students," in 2nd ICET Theme: "Improving the Quality of Education and Training Through Strengthening Networking" (2016): 1234.

²⁸⁷ Jeffrey A. Kottler, Stanley J. Zehm, and Ellen Kottler, *On Being a Teacher: The Human Dimension* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2005), 48-49.

experience of each individual person. This is hardly a clash, but an opportunity for students of all backgrounds to learn how the Catholic tradition understands the Divine in connection to their own human spirit within the educational context. When educated in a spirit of openness, the Ignatian way helps to ensure that the non-Catholic student does not feel othered.

3.6: Ignatian Pedagogy and the Subjective Self

The Ignatian way helps to counter the narrowness embodied within many western cultural assumptions about religion. This stems from the Enlightenment period in which the pursuit of scientific endeavors often wrongly stripped the subjective significance that permeated a variety of religious traditions²⁸⁸ into merely a set of perceived objective and often dogmatic propositions. This has created a variety of conventional representations of religion among believers and non-believers alike that “ignore the fundamentally personal nature of religious belief in relation to accumulated tradition.”²⁸⁹ This is not to say that religious literacy with regards to objective facts are irrelevant. I can recall a conversation that was had in one of our classes about female Imams leading prayer, whereas not all Christian denominations accept female priests or pastors, for example. This certainly added to the collective knowledge of religious literacy in our classroom. Conversations about religion in passing will often lead people to caricature religion (especially the Abrahamic religions) as stuck in the dark ages. I cannot recall how many times I have heard people tell me that they could never believe in a religion that condemns anyone outside of their religion to hell. Objectively, it is true that certain denominations share that belief, but many do not. Furthermore, the ever-evolving nature of religions as they interact with culture necessitates citizen awareness about such changes.

When it comes to a contentious topic such as LGBT issues and Catholicism, present religious literacy requires people to be keenly aware of Pope Francis’ remarks about same-sex civil unions last year and how revolutionary it is for a Pope to say that. This parallels the reality that many Catholics are eager to see such changes occur, amongst other things. Furthermore, recognizing the statement from the Vatican’s Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith that ultimately axed the possibility in 2022 of blessing of same-sex civil unions (to which the Pope assented) would lead religiously literate people to probe the reasons why. In 2023, Pope Francis published the encyclical *Fiducia Supplicans* which opened the door for priests to bless same-sex unions. Furthermore, solid religious literacy recognizes the nature of hierarchy within the Church and understands that doctrine is not simply anything the Pope dictates at a given time. Delving into the lived experiences of homosexual persons trying to live by love and by extension, the teachings of their faith can often be difficult when it comes to establishing universal sexual norms with regards to long-term romantic relationships. To be religiously literate on a topic like this means recognizing the role of anthropology, psychology, sociology, philosophy, and theology amongst others; forging harmony between the objective and subjective dimensions of religion, while simultaneously conveying truths about the human person related to value and meaning.

²⁸⁸ This occurred primarily through the religious traditions that were most culturally relevant in Western Civilization.

²⁸⁹ Robert Jackson, “Religious Education and the Arts of Reinterpretation Revisited,” in *Autobiography and Pedagogical Theories on Religious Education*, 57–68 (2012): 64.

This grasp of meaning and value, pursuit of truth, and the common good is intended to reveal the beauty and mystery of God. This reflection ought to be formative and liberating in order to help students move from knowledge to action, which is the final major step of Ignatian pedagogy. It is within this step that the discernment of the teacher is all the more important in order to recognize the opportunities available for students that will help them to “implement it in their real lives to act in accordance with what they have learned.”²⁹⁰ While it may be a small step of action, it is one that pushes the individual towards future actions that will hopefully foster a world full of peace, hope, love and greater communion between persons of diverse backgrounds.

Part of this action that is necessitated for a thorough application of Ignatian pedagogy are the religious/spiritual structures and practices that exist within a variety of different traditions. The subjective self can strongly benefit from taking part in a variety of religious/spiritual experiences in the form of retreats, ritualized worship or some other form of contemplative meditation or religious community-building activity in order to truly understand the subjective dimension of religion as it connects to value and meaning. This does not mean that one needs to have been religious at one point in one’s life or needs to believe in certain objective realities of certain religious experiences. I have taken part in many retreats in my life, and have met many non-religious people merely fascinated by the content of the retreat and they truly lived out the experience in their own, religiously literate way.

Ignatian pedagogy, through all the tools described above that help the subjective agent flourish, foundationally requires an objective framework for all teachers or it risks descending into situational chaos, as teachers will encounter such a vast array of situations over the course of their career. It is precisely an objective framework (that can be fostered through religious values) that I believe provides the utmost freedom to each individual, enabling them to flourish as individuals. This is directly related to a classically Christian conception of freedom: the ability to make good choices. Freedom means that we ought to will the good of the people around us. A student causing unnecessary disturbances in class is not exercising their freedom but only their autonomy. Fostering an environment where autonomy is subordinate to true freedom paves the way for promoting each individual’s authentic subjectivity, promoted by an objective set of virtues, yet restricting the chaos brought about by misdirected autonomy.

3.7: Ignatian Pedagogy and Self-Study

Ignatian pedagogy parallels very well with many secular philosophies on self-study. The Currere method staunchly emphasizes regression into the past as a way to understand the present and shape the future. Many of our identities and opinions are held within our subconscious and we find ourselves unable to articulate why we hold certain identities. Currere made me think in particular of that transformative high school experience on retreat that was deeply religious and spiritual. I can best describe it as a transformative experience of God’s love and unification with all my Loyola brothers which was a great way to end our time together. There was also this profound insight that there are real, spiritual practices that help you get closer to the Divine and that should be encouraged, not discouraged in the public sphere. It is a form of knowledge that

²⁹⁰ Hartana, “The Implementation of Ignatian,” 1234.

should unite, not divide people. I certainly analyze specific practices and moments within that retreat but a regression into the past is a deeply necessary tool to recognize how my worldview has developed, and how I conceptualize my teaching curriculum when it comes to religion and ethics, that will undoubtedly seek to manifest a transformative experience within the lives of many students.

My wrestling with religion also stemmed from this understanding that my moral horizons were limited, alongside the ability to grow in humility. The culture of the school encouraged the spiritual journey, whereas public schools tend to only be interested in religion insofar as it is presented as a part of our history. This is why some parents with a Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, or other religious background have sent their kids to Loyola High School. Even though those numbers are small, the kids are accepted on the basis of their desire to have some sort of spiritual formation. In the public system and the vast majority of private schools, there's no spiritual vitality.

When the Ethics and Religious Culture program was introduced across Quebec in 2008, Loyola High School chose to contest this uniform mandate, recognizing their right to be able to continue teaching religion from a Catholic perspective.²⁹¹ Loyola is an independent, semi-private school that for decades has relied on a portion of government funding.²⁹² If the school didn't conform to their norms of education, funding would have undoubtedly been removed. I was struck, shocked and even a bit confused given how much I enjoyed my classes and how thorough they were. I was outraged. Why would they do this? What I was aware of by that time was the fractured relationship that existed between the province of Quebec and the Catholic Church. I really thought Quebec's laissez-faire attitude would not prevail over a laicist, authoritarian form of secularism. Over time, I have critically recognized that my high school played a monumental role in helping to form my conscience and beliefs, gracing me with numerous spiritual gifts. This experience certainly strengthened my Catholic Christian identity, which I brought with me into Cegep and university. This evolving identity, molded by the university experience and eventual need to move into a career direction, has led to more than just a passion or an evolution of something I liked from my youth but a calling, a true vocation to teaching.

A few years ago, the Quebec government announced it was scrapping its Ethics and Religious Culture course curriculum. Government officials have stated that there's too much talk about religion. Quebec is a pluralist society with fellow citizens who all share a wide variety of different practices and beliefs. It's evident that Quebec is on its own journey. Hopefully the witness of a diversity of people, religious and non-religious alike will help in healing for Quebec and through their ministry of education be able to recognize the proper place of religion in the public square without compromising its secular values of not imposing faith on its citizens. Ignatian pedagogy's response to this would certainly recognize the role that religion can play in the lives of so many, and thus to remove it completely, is an assault on the subjective self, on the full development of the human person. In Fall 2024, Loyola High School introduced, along with every other semi-private and public school in the province, the Culture and Citizenship in Quebec course (CCQ). The course at the Secondary level emphasizes "sociological

²⁹¹ *Loyola High School v. Quebec*.

²⁹² Authier, "Legault defends private religious schools".

interpretation, ethical reflection, dialogue and critical thinking”²⁹³ through a variety of issues related to sexuality education, various ideas in the humanities, the different facets of culture and practical knowledge on how to be a good citizen. This course replaced the former Ethics and Religious Culture course. Perhaps this is the final straw in the de-confessionalization process in Quebec education that has been ongoing since the 1960s. I have currently been teaching CCQ in Grades 8 through 10 and honestly have no qualms about the curriculum, especially since religion is still taught at all levels. This is further proof that the Ignatian way adequately teaches a variety of courses in harmony with many of the secular values that often undergird courses such as CCQ.

3.8: Conclusion

The various research critically engaged above have more than demonstrated how Ignatian pedagogy provides valuable tools for a diversity of students, leading them towards human flourishing in order to become deeply impactful citizens in the present world and future. Ignatian pedagogy has been considered methodologically, in dialogue with my own personal self-study that has ultimately helped in putting Ignatian pedagogy to practice, while responding to some of the criticisms that may be skeptical of the benefits that this pedagogy might have for a broad diversity of students.

My experience at World Youth Day, a major Catholic pilgrimage/festival experience in Portugal in the summer 2023 provided a variety of interesting insights that I believe are relevant as a detail to my central arguments. Firstly, religion is more popular among the youth in the west compared to popular perception. As a Catholic event, this reached the entire world with delegations from Chile, South Korea, different parts of Africa, the Middle east and Oceania. It provides a spirit of hope to live and act out goodness in a world dominated by a perpetual pessimism of the future. These experiences, and being connected through religion in general, provides a social and intellectual bullwark against meaninglessness and loneliness that often pervades the secular spaces of our societies. In many parts of the globe, we are living in a polarized socio-political environment. Within many of these ideological battles, the best way to thrive is by witnessing one's own convictions (objective) through individual and/or collective lived experience(s) (subjective). Various strands of authoritarianism on both the left and right have fostered more extreme positions that now dominate our discourse in a way that was not the case at the turn of the 21st century. We must return to a deeper pluralism as an imperfect but nonetheless best option to save our democracies, and ultimately de-popularize the more radical views that, while necessary in any healthy political discourse, sicken the discourse when it dominates.

²⁹³ “Secondary Culture and Citizenship in Québec Program,” *Quebec.ca*, accessed February 1, 2025, <https://www.quebec.ca/en/education/preschool-elementary-and-secondary-schools/quebec-education-program/secondary/culture-citizenship-quebec>.

Thesis Conclusion

In my first chapter, I briefly summarized the history of Western secularity through the lens of Charles Taylor's monumental text *A Secular Age*. This text helped situate secularism in a broader context that aids in understanding some of the grievances and ideological reasons for the secularist temptation to eradicate or at the very least marginalize religion from the public square. Furthermore, I showed that the history of secularism does not support the theory of subtraction that eliminates religious beliefs as scientific and modern ideas gain ground through secularization. Lastly, I discussed the innovative idea of exclusive humanism that builds on an earlier falsehood that certain moral truths are self-evident. These major ideas have provided a variety of different approaches on how to deprivatize religion in the modern world.

In my second chapter, I aimed to deconstruct the ideology of *laïcité* through looking at how it developed within the history of Western secularity. Secondly, I looked at the history of Catholic Education in Quebec. This provided further concrete evidence on how the Church had control, to varying degrees within the educational sphere. This tapped into various grievances of *laïcité* that were discussed through this history as well as the further deconfessionalization phase that began during the Quiet Revolution. Throughout the gradual takeover of Education by the State, I explored one particular example of religious marginalization in Education; the Loyola Court case. This case provided a concrete example of the tensions that exist between *laïcité* and the desire for religious groups to co-exist with the State, working together on shared goals for a future humanity. The imposition of normative pluralism and the developing dominance of postmodernism as ideas were also discussed to further contextualize this court case.

In my final chapter, I aimed to show how Ignatian pedagogy is relevant to diverse peoples. In particular, Ignatian pedagogy is relevant to people of different religious convictions or lack thereof. At its core, the Jesuit way aims to care for the whole person and recognizes the subjective context of each individual, while being rooted in the belief that each person is equally loved by God. This chapter in no way is meant to claim that all students must receive Ignatian pedagogy or that all other pedagogies are objectively inferior. On the contrary, it is one legitimate option among many. This deeply parallels the centrality of my thesis which illustrates why deprivatizing religion contributes to human flourishing. Furthermore, to restrict a Catholic school (or any other religiously-affiliated school) from showcasing their own methods in educational formation is a fundamental loss for humanity. Both religious and secular pedagogies can work together for the common good, providing an antidote to the divisive myth of marginalization of religion from the public sphere.

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