

**TAYLORING A POSTSECULAR THEOLOGY?:
POSTSECULAR INTERPRETATIONS OF CHARLES TAYLOR
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Abstract

This thesis constructively interprets the work of Charles Taylor and appraises how it offers resources for addressing the problematic secular assumptions of a double dualism between both the sacred/religious and the secular as well as between transcendence and immanence. It addresses the first dualism by contextualizing the sociological contributions of Charles Taylor into postsecular discourses by constructing a postsecular critique of the secular. It addresses the second dualism by utilizing Taylor's philosophical contributions as a catalyst for constructing a postsecular incarnational theology of presence. It constructs both a postsecular critique of the secular and a postsecular incarnational theology of presence to provoke new ways of understanding what it means to retrieve transcendence as a viable option of believing and being human in the cross-pressures of a secular, immanent frame.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION: TAYLORING

POSTSECULARITY?

1.1 Thesis Statement, Research Problem, and Research Questions

This thesis analyzes the postsecular sociological contributions and theological potential of Charles Taylor. It does so by problematizing the double dualism between the secular and the religious and transcendence and immanence. Part I analyzes the sociological contributions of Taylor by developing a postsecular critique of the secular to address the dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular. It does this through an analysis of the three postsecular claims of contestability, contingency, and complexity. Each of these will reveal how the assumption of the dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular is a false conception when it separates the sacred and the secular. Part I develops this to contextualize the postsecular sociological contributions of Charles Taylor as participating in a broader tradition of discourse. Part II analyzes the theological potential of Taylor by developing a postsecular incarnational theology of presence to critique the dualism between transcendence and immanence. It does so by developing an incarnational logic and a theology of presence. Each of these will reveal how the assumption of the dualism between transcendence and immanence is not the only way to imagine what it means to believe and be human in a secular age. It argues how Taylor's theistic philosophy may serve as a theological catalyst in dialogue with other philosophers and theologians to construct a postsecular incarnational theology of presence. As such, this thesis poses two research questions to address the problem of a double dualism:

- 1) How does Charles Taylor contribute to a postsecular critique of the secular that questions the dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular?
- 2) How can Charles Taylor be a catalyst for constructing a postsecular incarnational theology of presence that questions the dualism between transcendence and immanence?

1.2 Preliminary Concepts

To contextualize Taylor's postsecular contributions, it is worthwhile to lay out some of his central ideas as they pertain to this thesis. Taylor's *A Secular Age* charts a genealogical account of how we moved from a predominantly Christian culture to our contemporary secular, pluralistic late modern world where religion and belief are now options among many.¹ Furthermore, Taylor's account of how we got from a Christian age to a secular age in the contemporary West offers groundbreaking analyses that counter traditional secularization theses by addressing the long durée of Western history. However, it also offers important insights into the phenomenology of believing in lived experience through his developments of theories like open- and closed-world-structures, the immanent frame, the cross-pressures of believing, and his idea of the supernova effect.²

Taylor describes the contemporary conditions of belief as marked by the cross-pressures to believe, not to believe, and the indifference to belief in what he calls an immanent frame. But the immanent frame is not only about the optionality of believing in a secular age. It also assumes, while sometimes contesting, the phenomenological disposition of a closed-world-structure: the idea that in a secular age, we assume not only the impossibility of belief in God but are closed to its possibility in how we imagine and legitimate our world. Closed-world-structures assume that the world is closed to the possibility of God.³ And yet, Taylor counters this closed disposition to the possibility of God with its contender: an open-world-

¹ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 3.

² David Storey, "Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*: Breaking the Spell of the Immanent Frame," in *Rethinking Secularization: Philosophy and the Prophecy of a Secular Age*, ed. Herbert De Vriese and Gary Gabor (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 177–208, 182–188.

³ For a philosophical and genealogical analysis of modernity and its predisposition for closed-world-structures and how they can be contested, C.f. Charles Taylor, "What is Secularity?" in *Transcending Boundaries in Philosophy and Theology: Reason, Meaning, and Experience*, eds., Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Martin Warner (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 57–76.

structure.⁴ Open-world-structures posit the possibility of God or transcendence in how we imagine our world and play an important role in contending an assumed secular normativity that remains predisposed to the closure of transcendence in how we imagine and legitimate our world.

Part of this open-world-structure is what Taylor develops as his idea of the (super)nova effect: the explosion of religious possibilities in the late modern West that does not lead to the end of believing. Rather the nova effect implies what Paul Cloke et. al. summarizes as “the splintering of positionalities accompanying the re-organization of transcendental belief onto an immanent plane.”⁵ They argue that this condition is marked by a divergence, fragmentation, and “fluid constellation of belief itself” where “choices for belief and unbelief are inherently fragile and hybrid in formation.”⁶ Furthermore, Gregor McLennan highlights an important underdevelopment in Taylor’s account of the immanent frame. McLennan argues that while Taylor primarily, and thoroughly, fleshes out the immanent frame in terms of a closed-world-structure, what Taylor leaves underdeveloped is how the immanent frame can still be open to transcendence.⁷ This thesis argues that this underdevelopment is key to how Taylor can be a catalyst for theology.

A final concept by which to understand Taylor’s postsecular contributions lies in his idea of the three-or-four-cornered-battle. Throughout his corpus he is ambiguous whether this battle is between three or four corners, but also that what constitutes these three or four corners differs depending on the text being read. In both *Sources of the Self* and *A Secular Age*, Taylor uses both phrases of a “three-cornered-battle” and “four-cornered-battle.” Also in each text, what characterizes these corners is ambiguous and inconsistent across the texts. *Sources of the*

⁴ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 544-549.

⁵ Paul Cloke, Christopher Baker, Callum Sutherland, and Andrew Williams, *Geographies of Postsecularity: Re-envisioning Politics, Subjectivity, and Ethics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 63.

⁶ Cloke, et. al., *Geographies of Postsecularity*, 63.

⁷ Gregor McLennan, “Postsecular Plasticity: Expansive Secularism,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Postsecularity*, ed. Justin Beaumont (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 247-257, 247-248.

Self primarily takes us to the turn of the twentieth century while *A Secular Age* takes us to the turn of the third millennium or the twenty-first century: *how Taylor understands the nature of these corners is dependent on the historical end points of his genealogies.*

While later chapters will analyze and unpack these corners with some attention to these ambiguities, broadly speaking I will adopt the phrase “four-cornered-battle” instead of a three-cornered-battle to make my arguments that belief is marked by cross-pressures of what it means to believe and be human in late modernity. Furthermore, there is some consensus among Taylor’s commentators and interpreters of tentative names by which to understand these corners. The first is the religious theist, who still believes in God and transcendence in an immanent frame. In Taylor, I argue there are two forms of the religious theist. One vies for the superiority of the sacred over the secular. Let us call this the exclusive theist. The other vies for serious and gracious engagement with the secular. Let us call this the religious humanist. This thesis in turn tends to assume the bias of a religious humanist.

The second option of the four-cornered-battle is the exclusive or secular humanist, who rejects God and hopes and works towards the progressive betterment of humanity. The third and fourth options are often together called the “immanent counter-enlightenment” and consist of the “Romantic-expressivist-idealist-individualist” (or any cognate of these four terms) and the “neo-Nietzschean anti-humanist.”⁸ What unites both of these options is the doubting of the exclusive humanist’s: a) rejection of transcendence (which the Romantic-expressivists substitute with the spiritualization of nature); and b) hopes for the betterment of humanity (which the anti-humanist views with despair, cynicism, and doubt). Throughout this thesis, I will mostly make use of the phrases “religious theist,” “exclusive humanist,” “Romantic-

⁸ While “neo-Nietzschean” is a contested term by which to define Taylor’s understanding of the anti-humanist position, Taylor does use this term. C.f. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 637.

expressivist,” and “anti-humanist” as heuristic devices to refer to the typologies of Taylor’s modern anthropology.

Each of these ideas lays the foundation for this thesis. However, we must also note the potential problems and the debates on whether Taylor ought to be understood as a postsecular theorist and whether his thought ought to be understood as a catalyst to postsecular theology. It is to these questions that we now turn.

1.3 Preliminary Debates

This thesis argues why and how Taylor ought to be contextualized as a postsecular theorist, both in terms of the sociology of religion and philosophical theology. With Taylor’s notion of secularity³ and Ruth Abbey’s questioning of it, this thesis especially argues how Taylor can be understood as a postsecular theorist if we redefine what we mean by postsecular. Furthermore, by taking Taylor into the realm of theology, this thesis draws him into discourses he does not go to, and this is a distinctly original contribution of this thesis to postsecular discourses as well as scholarship on Taylor. This is because it contextualizes Taylor as a postsecular theorist and utilizes Taylor to articulate a postsecular theology. That said, two points must be addressed. First, why take Taylor into theology when he is not a theologian? Second, how do I define the postsecular and how does Taylor use this term, considering especially that he rejects this term?

As to the first, throughout the thesis, I am careful to *not* say that Taylor is a theologian. Taylor’s work is deeply embedded within the crossroads between analytical and phenomenological philosophy, with publications on Hegel, Gadamer, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty on the phenomenological side, and in analytical philosophy about political philosophy and human agency.⁹ That said, Taylor’s philosophy presupposes a theistic orientation. While

⁹ C.f. Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Charles Taylor, *Human Agency and Language*, Philosophical Papers 1 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Charles Taylor, *Philosophy and the*

this is largely implicit throughout his writings in the sense that Taylor is not closed to God or the idea of transcendence in his philosophical writings, he does not often explicitly address theological doctrines or religious traditions throughout his corpus (with the major exception of *A Catholic Modernity?*).¹⁰ Furthermore, his analyses throughout the chapters entitled “Dilemmas” in *A Secular Age* illustrate philosophical analyses that presuppose not the closure to religious and theological thinking when addressing the problem of suffering, but moreover how theological and religious answers to the problem may offer better answers than non-theistic answers—even if theistic answers are still inadequate.¹¹

However, I argue that the theistic sympathies in his philosophy lend themselves to theological thinking. I am conscious while writing to say that I am taking Taylor beyond Taylor into theological realms. This is one of the contributions of this thesis: I take Taylor into theological territory and use his theistic philosophy as a catalyst for theological thinking. What this generates is a way of understanding the porosity between theological and philosophical thinking. Where philosophy remains open to theological thinking is precisely where philosophy does not presuppose the closure or irrelevance of theological thinking or religious ways of imagining and understanding the world. But when philosophy does presuppose closure to religious or theological thinking, this implies clear demarcations between philosophy and theology. However, where philosophy presupposes an open-world-structure and the legitimacy of religious and theological ways of thinking and imagining the world, this is the space in

Human Sciences, Philosophical Papers 2 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Charles Taylor, “Engaged Agency and Background in Heidegger,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles B. Guignon, Second Edition (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 202-221; Charles Taylor, “Gadamer and the Human Sciences,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, ed. Robert J. Dostal (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 126-142; Charles Taylor, “Merleau-Ponty and the Epistemological Picture,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*, eds. Taylor Carman and Mark B. N. Hansen (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 26-49.

¹⁰ Charles Taylor, “A Catholic Modernity?” in *A Catholic Modernity?*, ed. James L. Heft (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 13–38.

¹¹ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 618-710.

philosophy where we can begin to speak theologically. Taylor himself seems to presuppose this openness and thus may be taken into theological territory.

Thus, the way we understand philosophy as open or closed to the possibilities of transcendence and a religious imaginary determines how we may understand the relationship between philosophy and theology. This thesis presupposes, like Taylor, an understanding of philosophy that remains open to transcendence and the religious. This means that theological thinking and religious ways of imagining the world imply an added layer to philosophical thinking. This theological addition to philosophical thinking adds a theological layer of meaningfulness to believing and being human that offers depth and transcendence to what it means to be human and believe in a secular age.

This means that when we begin from a theological vantage point, the meaningfulness of believing and being human in a secular age is something that not everyone will accept or warrant as legitimate—and this is precisely because modern, secular philosophical ways of viewing the world presuppose the closure to transcendence and the religious. However, this thesis argues that this presupposed closure fails to take into account how the contingencies of history do not *necessarily* determine the closure to religion or transcendence in how we *imagine* our world, even if historical conditions have allowed it to arise. Moreover, this thesis argues that the complicit relationship between the secular and the religious is an important point that subverts the secular closure to the religious and shows how the secular structures shape the conditions for belief in a secular age—in ways that not only imitate the religious but do not *necessarily presuppose the closure to the religious*. So, when we take into account theological ways of thinking about and imagining the world as presupposing an openness to transcendence, this implies an openness in philosophical ways of understanding our world that can generate a theological turn.

As to the second question, Taylor does not use postsecular in the same way that I do. Taylor defines the postsecular as a sense that we are moving into a new age or epoch and Taylor is doubtful that this is so.¹² However, my use of postsecular is in line with and goes beyond his use of secularity₃. Taylor describes secularity₃ as the changed conditions for belief in a secular age wherein transcendence and/or belief in God is not only optional but potentially irrelevant to how ordinary people in secular modernity live their lives. Linked to this is the development of authenticity as a central theme that shapes the conditions for belief in a secular age—in ways that are resourced from and in continuity with the Romantics, and yet do not necessitate the exclusion or closure to belief in God in how modern humans imagine themselves and our world.¹³ Furthermore, Taylor’s secularity₃ implies common ways in which both religious and non-religious people understand their world—as “more personal, more mental, and more voluntary,” i.e., modern humans are less and less concerned with embodiment and practice (incarnation) and more concerned with mental abstractions and ideas of what it means to be human (excarnation).¹⁴

Furthermore, Taylor does not often appreciate the term “postsecular” precisely because it presupposes “a narrow and inadequate conception of what it means to be secular.”¹⁵ In contrast to Habermas, who understands the postsecular as the political problem of creating the space for the religious within modern democratic public policy and discourse, Taylor subverts the political problem in modern democratic states as not only concerned with the creation of a modern moral order but moreover with a concern to take into account religious and non-

¹² Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 534.

¹³ Ruth Abbey, “Theorizing Secularity 3: Authenticity, Ontology, Fragilization,” in *Aspiring to Fullness in a Secular Age*, eds. Carlos Colorado and Justin Klassen (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 98–124, 104.

¹⁴ C.f. Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, eds., Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 1-31, 17, 19-21.

¹⁵ Warner, VanAntwerpen, and Calhoun, “Editor’s Introduction,” 22.

religious diversity in secular democratic states.¹⁶ Moreover, he does this through a genealogical account of how Western secularity has developed since Latin Christendom into the modern moral order of democratic nation-states, the public sphere, and the market economy.¹⁷

While Taylor defines postsecular as an awareness that something is shifting in our imaginary, he is doubtful whether this is happening and whether the term is useful.¹⁸ My use of postsecularity is the sense of wrestling with the enduring presence of the religious in the midst of the secular. Like Taylor's use of secularity₃, I see the postsecular as a condition that wrestles with the cross-pressures to believe or not to believe, between secular and religious pulls that shape what it means to believe and be human in a secular age.¹⁹ The cross-pressures, optionality, and fragilization of believing is a common thread between my use of postsecular and Taylor's use of secularity₃.²⁰ However, my use of postsecular goes beyond Taylor's secularity₃ because it is trying to articulate more clearly how we can imagine an open-world-structure and how the cross-pressures between the optionality between believing and non/unbelieving shape what it means to be human—and how Christians may be agents of flourishing in this world. This is certainly a component based on the cross-pressures of Taylor's three-or-four-cornered-battle, and yet this thesis goes far beyond what Taylor's work imagines it could look like.

¹⁶ Charles Taylor, "Why We Need a Radical Redefinition of Secularism," in *The Power of the Religion in the Public Sphere*, eds. Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Columbia, NY: Columbia University Press, 2011), 34-59, 36-37; Jürgen Habermas, "An Awareness of What is Missing," in *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age*, trans. Ciaran Cronin (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2010), 15-23, 16, 18; Jürgen Habermas, "Pre-political Foundations of the Democratic Constitutional State?" in *The Dialectics of Secularization: on Reason and Religion*, by Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, ed. Florian Schuller, trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2006) 19-52, 46-52.

¹⁷ C.f. Charles Taylor, "Modes of Secularism," in *Secularism and Its Critics*, ed. Rajeev Bhargava (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 31–53.

¹⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 534.

¹⁹ Warner, VanAntwerpen, and Calhoun, "Editor's Introduction," 22-23.

²⁰ Abbey, "Theorizing Secularity 3," 105-113.

1.4 Mapping the Arguments

This thesis is organized into eight chapters: the introduction, three chapters in Part I, three chapters in Part II, and a conclusion. Part I consists of chapters two, three, and four and addresses the first research question of how Taylor contributes to a postsecular critique of the secular that critiques the dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular. Part II consists of chapters five, six, and seven and addresses the second research question of how Taylor can be a catalyst for the construction of a postsecular incarnational theology of presence that critiques the dualism between transcendence and immanence.

Chapter two addresses the contestability claim of a postsecular critique of the secular and contextualizes how Charles Taylor contributes to postsecular discourses. It offers an account of not only how the postsecular is a contested, ambiguous, and polysemic term, but also of how the postsecular contests the secular in generative ways that open the space for religious believing in an immanent frame.

Chapter three addresses the contingency claim of a postsecular critique of the secular by contextualizing the contributions of Charles Taylor's genealogies of modern secular history through analyses of his primary works, his commentators, as well as those who are writing in similar veins as Taylor, such as the Radical Orthodoxy Movement. Chapter three argues how the contingencies of history not only reveal the historical processes that allowed the problem of the double dualism to develop but also that those historical processes do not *necessarily determine* the closure to transcendence or the religious in *how we imagine* our world.

Chapter four addresses the complexity claim of a postsecular critique of the secular to develop this imaginary in terms of complex space and time and several inversions of the assumed dualism of the secular and the sacred/religious. Chapter four engages Taylor with the broader postsecular literature, especially about the contemporary sociology of religion and

Jürgen Habermas. Chapter four is the culmination of a postsecular critique of the secular dualism between the secular and the sacred/religious.

Chapter five critiques the dualism between transcendence and immanence by arguing how this dualism is tied to the rejection of the tension between this-worldly concerns and other-worldly promises. It argues that a theology of presence and incarnational logic mediates transcendence and immanence insofar as they hold together the tension between this worldly flourishing and other-worldly promises insofar as other-worldly promises are aimed at the flourishing, affirmation, and transformation of this world.

Chapter six analyzes Taylor's modern anthropology to address the tension between the question of meaning and what it means to believe and be human. It analyzes Taylor's three-or-four-cornered-battle between the modern conceptions of what it means to believe and be human in late modernity. It does this to argue how the question of meaning is not contingent upon believing and yet that believing adds another layer of meaning to what it means to be human.

Chapter seven analyzes the postsecular horizons of time, space, and human flourishing to argue how the cross-pressures of realized flourishing hold in tension the promises of utopia and presence. It argues how postsecular horizons must hold in tension the promise of human flourishing between vertical and horizontal horizons of space and time in ways that generate the cross-pressures of a realized flourishing in the middle condition between what it means to believe, be human, and flourish in late modernity.

Chapter eight offers a conclusion that re-evaluates the research questions and the contributions of Part I and Part II: it addresses the contributions of a postsecular critique of the secular and a postsecular incarnation theology of presence. Finally, it concludes with an analysis of the main contributions, the limitations, and the interdisciplinary potential of this thesis in academic discourses.

1.5 Rationale for Interlocutors

When it comes to which interlocutors to engage Taylor with, Part I engages with those philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, and political theorists that loom large in postsecular literature. These especially include the work of John Milbank, José Casanova, Talal Asad, and Jürgen Habermas, as well as secondary literature on these theorists and other secondary literature on postsecularism and Charles Taylor. Comparative analyses between Taylor and Casanova and Habermas are especially prevalent in Part I and they demonstrate how Taylor's work is already situated in dialogue with these postsecular theorists. These dialogues between Taylor and postsecular discourses reveal not only the historical contingencies of what we mean by postsecular but also how the term postsecular is both contested among those who use it and/or engage with the discourse, as well as how polysemic the term is.

John Milbank in turn generates an important dialogue with Taylor around their ideas of “Reform” and “intellectual deviation” stories. This dialogue is especially helpful in understanding their genealogies of modernity and the processes of secularization. Jean-Luc Nancy is also present in my analysis of their genealogies of modernity because his genealogy posits secularization as a process of immanentization.²¹ Taylor is situated between both threads. Taylor's idea of Reform is an alternative to Milbank's intellectual deviation stories, and Taylor's notion of subtraction stories is an alternative to Nancy's understanding of secularization as a process of immanentization.

While Habermas affirms the postsecular as a way of understanding the religious in terms of secular, post-metaphysical democratic discourse, Talal Asad and José Casanova point out the historical contingencies of Western secularity in ways that articulate secularity's

²¹ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Gravity of Thought*, trans. Francois Raffoul and Gregory Recco (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1997).

indebtedness to the historical processes of Western modernity.²² In dialogue with Habermas, Taylor wants to develop the idea of an overlapping consensus that allows the space for protecting religious and non-religious diversity in the public sphere.²³ In dialogue with Casanova and Asad, Taylor's genealogical approach fleshes out a broader and more robust narrative of the development of Western secularity than Casanova or Asad, while they address more particular nuances and theses that are not addressed in Taylor's genealogy of Western secularity.

Because Part II is more theological, it demands more theological interlocutors who can be utilized to articulate a postsecular incarnational theology of presence. John Zizioulas and Ray S. Anderson offer theological contributions in chapter five that orient an incarnational logic around Christian theological doctrines such as the Trinity, incarnation, and pneumatology. Ingolf Dalferth, Wessel Stoker, and Raimon Panikkar are also utilized in chapter five to survey the discourse about the relationship between transcendence and immanence. The robust secondary literature questioning and articulating Taylor's contributions is greatly used throughout chapter six. In addition, the work of William E. Connolly is used as a source for understanding the affirmation of immanence in ways that go beyond both Connolly and traditional bifurcations between transcendence and immanence.

However, Connolly is a philosopher who rejects traditional Christian understandings of transcendence and I am using him in more theologically orthodox ways than his philosophy allows. I think Connolly's understanding and rejection of radical transcendence (of belief in a God over and above this world, as the judge over the world) is a misreading of Christian theology because it bases radical transcendence on a caricature of God and an understanding

²² Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, and Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); and José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

²³ Taylor, "Why We Need a Radical Redefinition of Secularism," in *The Power of the Religion in the Public Sphere*, eds. Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Columbia, NY: Columbia University Press, 2011), 34-59.

that does not do justice to a deeply embedded theme in Christian theology: it is not only that the world is judged by a self-sufficient God, but also that the world is restored by God—and humans are given a command and gift to rule justly and righteously over creation as priests for its flourishing.²⁴

Underlying Connolly's rejection of radical transcendence is a standard caricature of God that does not pay enough attention to the Hebrew and Christian understandings of God as intending the flourishing of creation. Part of what forms my argument for a theology of presence between the temporal and spatial horizons that cross-pressure the possibilities of belief and being human is the idea of incarnation where humans participate in the purposes of God as incarnate agents acting for the flourishing of this world. I follow David H. Kelsey here quite intentionally, and he is implicitly used as a catalyst for critiquing Connolly's rejection of radical transcendence.

Chapter six follows Taylor's accounts of modern anthropology as they are found in primary and secondary literature, analyzing his philosophical anthropology through the lens of what belief adds to the meaningfulness of being human. In chapter seven, Heidegger looms in the background to much of the discourse around the horizons of presence, temporality, and spatiality, and theologians like Paul Fiddes, George Eldon Ladd, Martin De Nys, the Radical Orthodoxy Movement, and David H. Kelsey offer generative nuances and definitions to orient my constructive account of how Taylor's middle condition and the cross-pressures of a realized flourishing contribute to a postsecular incarnational theology of presence.

²⁴ C.f. John Zizioulas, *Priests of Creation: John Zizioulas on Discerning an Ecological Ethos*, eds. John Chryssavgis and Nikolaos Asproulis (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2021).

PART I:
CONTEXTUALIZING THE POSTSECULAR CONTRIBUTIONS OF
CHARLES TAYLOR

CHAPTER TWO: POSTSECULAR CONTESTABILITY: DEFINING THE POSTSECULAR

What is the postsecular? To answer this question, we must evaluate *how* we define both the secular and the postsecular to address the problematic dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular. This chapter begins a three-part analysis of the first research question: *How does Charles Taylor contribute to a postsecular critique of the secular that questions the dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular?* This chapter will survey the literature on the postsecular and contextualize Taylor as a postsecularist by addressing the contestability claim of a postsecular critique of the secular.

Section 2.1 analyzes definitions of the secular and the postsecular to set up the relevance of postsecularity as a legitimate discourse. First, it defines the secular and its three cognates (secularism, secularity, and secularization) and how its definitions, theories, and theses are shaped by the Enlightenment critique of religion. Then it pays attention to the historical and political conditions in which religion endures in the contemporary world. Section 2.2 analyzes James Beckford's analysis of how problematic the term postsecular is in contemporary discourse. While Beckford's critique demonstrates the *ambiguity* of the term postsecular he still charts out the *polysemic* nature of the discourse. In particular, Beckford points out how the postsecular holds in tension the political, the social, the cultural, the philosophical, the theological, and the historical. These tensions illustrate how the postsecular is an interdisciplinary and contested claim—and that the ambiguity of it demonstrates the necessity for defining and categorizing what we mean by the postsecular. However, the term postsecular ought not to be abandoned just because it is ambiguous. It is better to note that it is polysemic and that how it can be used and articulated is dependent upon who is using it and how it is used.

Sections 2.3 and 2.4 survey two examples where scholars have categorically mapped out postsecular discourses and thinkers. Section 2.3 surveys Elaine Graham's analysis of the "post" in "postsecular" to address different theorists' positionality on whether "post" means after, against, or beyond the secular, with Taylor as the shining example of "beyond" secularity. Section 2.4 surveys José Casanova's analysis of the "secular" in "postsecular" to articulate how his work, as well as that of Taylor and Jürgen Habermas, appeals to three ways of defining the "secular" in postsecular. Casanova characterizes his work as "mere" secularity, Taylor's work as an "exclusive" secularity, and Habermas' work as "secularist" secularity. What is notable in these categorical definitions of the postsecular is that Charles Taylor plays a prominent role in both surveys. Hence, this chapter argues that contrary to Taylor's reticence at the word postsecular, *he is already included throughout the literature as a postsecular theorist.*

2.1 The Secular and the Postsecular

The postsecular contests the secular in several ways, particularly around the continued and renewed visibility of religion when the political projects of secularism, the historical processes of modern secularization, and the lived experience of secularity. In each of these cases, the postsecular is understood as the recognition of the enduring presence of religion.

José Casanova argues that the "secular" indicates several cognates: secularism, secularization, and secularity.²⁵ *Secularism* is an *ideology* that shapes political systems and governments in ways that relegate religion out of public political discourse. Furthermore, it is an ideology sustained by the Enlightenment critique of religion and the processes of

²⁵ C.f. José Casanova, "The Secular and Secularisms," *Social Research*, 76, no. 4 (2009): 1049-1066; José Casanova, "The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms," in *Rethinking Secularism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 54-74; and Raimon Panikkar, *Sacred Secularity*, ed. Milena Carrara Pavan, Vol. XI, XII vols., Opera Omnia (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2022), 4-10.

secularization.²⁶ It is often linked to political and philosophical theories that seek to emancipate the state from religious control, often in secularized versions of both messianic and eschatological forms.²⁷

The *experience of secularity* refers to what Taylor calls the phenomenological condition of lived experience in a secular age that assumes the closure to religion, transcendence, or God.²⁸ Secularity refers to a state or condition of ordinary life in which not only is believing optional but also that it is not the norm.²⁹ Secularity entails an imaginary, normative consciousness that posits “as if” the world was not determined by the religious. It assumes a secular normativity in which the religious is both strange and optional, where both non-belief and un-belief are assumed as the norm. This condition is what Taylor calls the “immanent frame” which posits both open- and closed-world-structures in which transcendence is constitutive of, or cut off from, how we make sense of everyday life.

But common to both secularism and secularity is the assumption of *secularization*. Secularization refers to a modern historical process by which religion is overcome. Secularization is often commonly understood to mean that the more modern we become, the less religious we will become. While this definition is far too simplistic, it has fostered several decades’ worth of sociological discourse since the 1960’s. Among those discourses are the advocations for the classical secularization theory among Peter Berger, Steve Bruce, and David Martin, the rational choice theory associated with the work of Rodney Stark, Roger Finke, and

²⁶ José Casanova, “Beyond European and American Exceptionalisms: Towards a Global Perspective,” in *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular, and Alternative Futures*, ed. Grace Davie, Paul Heelas, and Linda Woodhead (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 17–29, 24.

²⁷ C.f. Judith Wolfe, “Messianism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Theology and Modern European Thought*, ed. Nicholas Adams, George Pattison, and Graham Ward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 301–324; Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (London: Routledge, 1960).

²⁸ C.f. Ruth Abbey, “Theorizing Secularity 3: Authenticity, Ontology, and Fragilization,” in *Aspiring to Fullness in a Secular Age: Essays on Religion and Theology in the Work of Charles Taylor*, ed. Carlos Colorado and Justin Klassen (Notre-Dame, IN: University of Notre-Dame Press, 2014), 98–124; Ruth Abbey, “A Secular Age: The Missing Question Mark,” in *The Taylor Effect: Responding to a Secular Age*, ed. Ian Leask et al. (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 8–25.

²⁹ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 1–22.

William Sims Bainbridge, and more recently of the industrial-security theory of Ronald Inglehart, Pippa Norris, and Phil Zuckerman.³⁰

And yet what these secularization *theories* only sometimes allude to is how to make sense of the enduring presence of religion—its explosion, pluralization, fragmentation, and optionality that has resulted in the enduring presence and transformation of both the secular and the religious in the contemporary world.³¹ Not only did Peter Berger recant his position on the classical secularization thesis three decades after his critiques of religion's demise because of the enduring presence and pluralization of religion, but so also do Charles Taylor, José Casanova, Jürgen Habermas, and recent historical events give pause to the secular Enlightenment critique of religion.

Charles Taylor's genealogical analysis of secularization in *A Secular Age* sought to show the long *durée* process of secularization but also demonstrated the religious pluralization of belief through his accounts of the ages of mobilization and authenticity.³² Both of these created the conditions for political religion and individuated religion in ways that are concretized in atheism, agnosticism, pluralism, and spirituality in the late twentieth century.

³⁰ C.f. Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967); Peter Berger, ed., *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999); Steve Bruce, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002); David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978); David Martin, *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory* (New York and London: Routledge, 2017); Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996); Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986); Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000); Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Phil Zuckerman, Luke W. Galen, and Frank L. Pasquale, *The Non-Religious: Understanding Secular People and Societies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

³¹ However, Peter Berger and David Martin are at least two sociologists of religion among the propagators of secularization theories that have recanted their positions. Berger in particular also argues that secularization is defined not by the decline of religion, but rather its pluralization. C.f. Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Kellner, *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness* (New York: Random House, 1973), 81: the "forces of pluralization have undermined the taken-for-granted status of religious meanings in individual consciousness. In the absence of consistent general social confirmation, religious definitions of reality have lost their quality of certainty and, instead, have become matters of choice. Faith is no longer socially given but must be individually achieved." This is a continuation of Berger et. al.'s point that "pluralization has a secularizing effect" (80) because it shifts belief from the social to the individual.

³² Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 423-504.

Accordingly, the pluralization and explosion of religious belief alongside the normativity of unbelief and non-belief sheds light on *both* the contestability of religious belief *and* the continued visibility of religious belief as a viable and enduring presence in the lived conditions of secular life. Following Taylor, what we find is that the secularization thesis is not only contested but that its basic position that “the more modern we become, the less religious we become” is false when we take into account the complexities involved in determining the pluralization and fragmentation of religious believing in late modernity.

In addition to both the secularization theories and Taylor’s accounts of religious disbelief and pluralization, Casanova identifies three secularization *theses* as wrapped up within the Enlightenment critique of religion: the differentiation thesis (or separation of power and legitimacy between church and state), the decline of religious practice and belief thesis, and the privatization thesis (where religious belief is excluded from the public sphere).³³ Moreover, Casanova contests that of these three secularization theses, arguably, only the first—the differentiation thesis—is true.

Following Casanova on the differentiation thesis, the church no longer holds legitimizing power over the public sphere, the citizen-state, or market economy and there is a separation between the power of the church or religion *over* the state in the North Atlantic. The legitimation of the secular went through a long differentiating process where the church lost its legitimating power over the public sphere, the nation-state, and the market economy.³⁴ Through the process of laicization in Southern Europe since the Renaissance, Casanova argues that the church has lost much of its power over the secular. In Northern Europe, the Protestant

³³ For a rich and clear summary of Casanova’s three definitions of the secularization theses, C.f. Eduardo Mendieta and Justin Beaumont, “Reflexive Secularization,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Postsecularity*, ed. Justin Beaumont (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 425-436, 428-429.

³⁴ C.f. Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (New York: Beacon Press, 1975); Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1989); Graham Ward, *The Politics of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009); Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 69-142.

Reformation sparked a political and cultural turn away from the marriage of church and state, historically invoking the state's sovereignty over the church in several Northern European states. Nonetheless, the differentiation thesis is weakened by the reality of pluralism, whether religious, ethnic, cultural, etc. In everyday life, pluralism, not the dichotomy between the sacred and the secular, is assumed as the determining norm—and how we imagine it in everyday life bleeds into politics, economics, and the public sphere.³⁵ The differentiation thesis is also challenged by what Linda Woodhead calls “de-differentiated pluralism” in everyday life that blurs the lines between the sacred and the secular in *how* we live our lives.³⁶

When we consider the decline of religion thesis, Peter Berger and Steve Bruce have both argued that participation in religious institutions is in decline, yet are challenged by Paul Heelas, Linda Woodhead, and Grace Davie in their accounts of the softer and spiritual lines of believing without belonging to the traditional church.³⁷ The decline of organized religion may be true, but not necessarily that religious belief or practice has declined: rather it has both transformed and adapted to new scenarios and settings as well as been left ambiguous and complex by the softer lines and tendencies of religious belief and belonging.³⁸

Furthermore, José Casanova's work on the resurgence of public religion across the world in the 1970s and 1980s offers important work that issues not only challenges and reformulations of the privatization thesis but more importantly speaks of the renewed presence

³⁵ Kristina Stoeckl and Dmitry Uzlaner, “Four Genealogies of Postsecularity,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Postsecularity*, ed. Justin Beaumont (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 269-279, 276.

³⁶ Linda Woodhead, “Intensified Religious Pluralism and De-differentiation: the British Example,” *Society* 53, no.1 (2016): 41-46.

³⁷ C.f. Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*; Peter Berger, ed., *The Desecularization of the World*, 1-11; Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966); Bruce, *God is Dead*; Grace Davie, “Religion in Europe in the 21st Century: The Factors to take into Account,” *European Journal of Sociology* 47, no. 2 (2006): 271-296; Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, with Benjamin Seel, Bronislaw Szerszynski, and Karin Tusting, eds., *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

³⁸ David Voas and Alasdair Crockett, “Religion in Britain: Neither Believing Not Belonging,” *Sociology* 39, no. 1 (2005): 11–28.

of religion in the modern public sphere.³⁹ This is striking because part of the Enlightenment critique of religion that came to shape the nature of the secular was the privatization of religious belief as a personal choice—and this was supposed to be separated from the public nature of secular politics. Casanova's account of the global rise of public religions in the late twentieth century gives an important pause to the privatization thesis of secularization because it re-introduces back into modern politics something that had been dislocated and repressed: the enduring and renewed presence of religion in the public sphere. But what the renewed presence of religion also poses is the question of how to define the postsecular—and this is something contested in scholarly literature that must be examined.

2.2 Tensions Within Defining the Postsecular

As a way to demonstrate both the ambiguity and polysemic definitions of the postsecular, James Beckford maps out six perspectives on postsecularism and contextualizes their limits. These six perspectives are: the postsecular as the denial and/or doubting of secularization; the postsecular as a position that comes after and builds on the secular; the postsecular as marked by the re-enchantment of culture; the postsecular as marked by the public resurgence of religion; the postsecular as marked by the interplay of postmodern political, philosophical, and theological thinking; and the view that postsecularism fails to account, or rather, oversimplifies the historical setting and global conditions of contemporary life—implying the irrelevance of religion for most people, not the intersection of religion and the secular.⁴⁰ Thus, the postsecular is characterized by several tensions: between politics and religion; between the cultural re-enchantment and the irrelevance of religion in ordinary life; and between theological, religious,

³⁹ José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁴⁰ James A. Beckford, “SSSR Presidential Address: Public Religions and the Post-Secular: Critical Reflections,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51, no. 1 (2012): 1–19.

and historical readings of secularization and the (dis)continuities between religion and the secular.

On one side, José Casanova certainly gives an account of the public resurgence of religion⁴¹ and John Milbank and those associated with the Radical Orthodoxy Movement give account to the interplay of postmodern philosophy, politics, and theology.⁴² At the opposite end, religious fundamentalists in their advocacy for religious nationalism may not only doubt the reality of secularization but may also deny secularism as a legitimate ideology to govern civil society.⁴³ In turn, when we give an account of the postsecular, are we talking of a historical stage after the secular, and what indeed would define this historical setting and its global circumstances?⁴⁴ Even more so, the assumed irrelevancy of religion in everyday life under the normative structures of the secular is a lived example of what Charles Taylor calls closed-world-structures.⁴⁵ Moreover, Taylor's account of the supernova effect—the explosion of new religious possibilities because of the subjective turn to authenticity—is evidence of both the re-enchantment *and* fragilization of belief in contemporary culture.⁴⁶

Hebert de Vriese and Guido Vanheeswijck argue that in the intricate web of meanings and connotations of multiple discourses where it shows up. “The term postsecular” both 1) ends “conventional ways of thinking about secularism, secularization, and the transformation of religion in modern societies” and 2) implies “a paradigm shift in thinking about the role,

⁴¹ Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*.

⁴² C.f. John Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2013); John Milbank and Adrian Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue: Post-Liberalism and the Human Future* (Lanham, MY: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016); Ward, *The Politics of Discipleship*.

⁴³ In American politics, this issue has its origins in the political debates over faith and science. C.f. Frank Lambert, *Religion in American Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 104-129.

⁴⁴ The global-historical conditions of postsecularism may include the issues of globalization, consumerism, and the democratization of society. Furthermore, when talking of the postsecular, what comes after the secular? Ward argues that it is marked by the doubting of secular normative structures. C.f. Ward, *Politics of Discipleship*.

⁴⁵ C.f. David Storey, “Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age*: Breaking the Spell of the Immanent Frame,” in *Rethinking Secularization: Philosophy and the Prophecy of a Secular Age*, ed. Herbert De Vriese and Gary Gabor (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 177–208, 181-182.

⁴⁶ C.f. Storey, “Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age*,” 197-198.

place, and significance of religion in the contemporary world.”⁴⁷ Furthermore, Mike King argues that postsecularism is marked by “a renewed openness to the questions of the spirit, but one that retains the habits of critical thought which partially defines secularism.”⁴⁸ Peter Nynäs expands upon Mike King: the “emphasis on the need to engage with religion with an open mind involves a potential co-existence of secularism and religion, and the multidirectional possibilities of their relationship” which does not entail a return “to premodern forms of religion.”⁴⁹

Furthermore, in their work on postsecularity, Paul Cloke et. al. states that “what is clear, however, is that secularization did not ‘unmake’ religion; indeed, each has been co-constitutive of the other over the changing canvasses of space and time. In the same way, if more recent changes in public consciousness towards religion suggest evidence for postsecularity, then that postsecularity should not be viewed as in any way ‘unmaking’ the secular.”⁵⁰ Postsecularity constitutes not only the continuation of themes constitutive of the secular and the religious but more importantly constitutes the interplay between them in the complex conditions of everyday life. It is in this space where the religious and the secular co-constitute an arena between the polarities of belief, unbelief, and non-belief in ways that generate new combinations of religious and secular sensibilities and ways of living in everyday life.

This reveals not only the relevance of the term postsecular but also its polysemic applicability to understanding the interdisciplinary relationship between the sacred/religious and the secular. It is not only marked by new historical conditions in which we must wrestle with the continued relevance of the religious in the secular. It is also a thirdspace wherein what

⁴⁷ Herbert De Vriese and Guido Vanheeswijck, “The Performative Force of the Postsecular,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Postsecularity*, ed. Justin Beaumont (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 86-97, 86.

⁴⁸ Mike King, *Postsecularism: The Hidden Challenge to Extremism* (London: James Clarke & Co, Ltd, 2009), 11-12; opt cit. in Peter Nynäs, “Some Critical Remarks on Religious Identity,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Postsecularity*, ed. Justin Beaumont (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 336-348, 336.

⁴⁹ Nynäs, “Some Critical Remarks on Religious Identity,” 336.

⁵⁰ Paul Cloke, Christopher Baker, Callum Sutherland, and Andrew Williams, *Geographies of Postsecularity: Re-envisioning Politics, Subjectivity, and Ethics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 34.

it means to believe in late modernity must now articulate itself as an option among many. Religious (ir)relevance in contemporary culture must now articulate itself as a viable and visible option that goes against the grain of normative secularity in ordinary experience. The role of religion in politics creates a renewed visibility to religion that is linked to the cultural catalysts of religious spirituality, religious mobility, and diversity, and the role and narrative of authenticity that generates the possibilities for de-differentiating the sharp lines between the secular and the religious. This does not mean that the term postsecular is ambiguous as Beckford argues. Rather it is polysemic and interdisciplinary in that it transforms the nature of the secular in a myriad of ways across historical, social, cultural, political, philosophical, and theological lines. In addition to the polysemic nature of the postsecular we can also analyze the term itself by following two categorical analyses of what we mean by the “post” and the “secular” in Elaine Graham and José Casanova's typologies of the “postsecular.”

2.3 Elaine Graham's Three Types of “Post” in Postsecular

In her analyses, Elaine Graham posits helpful categorizations of three ways of understanding the “post” in “postsecular”: as after, against, and beyond the secular.⁵¹ In her first analysis of the “post” in postsecular, she argues that it means “after” the secular. She offers an example of this in Jürgen Habermas' theory of “the potential impact of re-emergent religious voices and activists in public life” where “the postsecular reflects the realities of empirical social change.”⁵² This typology is marked not only by the new visibility of religion in the public sphere but also by its resurgence in its effects on policy and practice. Modeling Habermas, Graham argues that this position asks the question: “Whose project was the secular, and who is now allowed a voice?”⁵³

⁵¹ Elaine Graham, “Interrogating the Postsecular,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Postsecularity*, ed. Justin Beaumont (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 223-233, 226-229.

⁵² Graham, “Interrogating the Postsecular,” 227.

⁵³ Graham, “Interrogating the Postsecular,” 227.

In her second analysis of the “post” in postsecular to mean “against” the secular, she offers a genealogical approach supported primarily by the contributions of Talal Asad, who argues that postsecularism is contingent upon a particular, Western, political history dependent upon its historical relationship and disembedding from the power and dominance of the Catholic Church. In another sense, the postsecular as “against” the secular can imply a return to, and restoration of, Christendom. In this vein, postsecular theologians (such as those found within the Radical Orthodoxy Movement) charge that the secular merely “displaced Christianity in its claim to be normative, transcendent, and universal.”⁵⁴ In this view, “the very category of the secular is a construct, dependent upon the imposition of the reification of religion and the religious as oppositional to a state of secularity.”⁵⁵ This second version of postsecularity then bases its argument on historical, genealogical paradigms and categories of sacred and the secular in Western political history that asks the questions: “Whose project was ‘the secular’ and at what cost does it come?”⁵⁶

However, Graham opts for a third way of understanding the “post” in postsecular to mean “beyond” the secular, which entails new manifestations of the religious and the secular as they intersect in complex relations through what she calls the “postsecular *habitus*.”⁵⁷ Building on Taylor’s analysis in *A Secular Age*, Graham defines this postsecular *habitus* when she states:

The state of secularity has separated people from a sense of enchantment. From the process of disenchantment emerged the imperative of having to find ways of ordering the everyday world in other ways, without reference to a horizon of transcendence or divine agency. Yet the postsecular might, arguably, denote a further turn towards reflexivity, in that we have to acknowledge the persistence of faith in the same breath as realizing that culturally and existentially, the world operates unproblematically within an immanent frame. We cannot unmake the prospect of non-belief; for those of faith, it must either be accommodated within a pluralist worldview or opposed in the name of one, true faith. Yet even that is merely a denial of the presence of the other,

⁵⁴ Graham, “Interrogating the Postsecular,” 228.

⁵⁵ Graham, “Interrogating the Postsecular,” 228.

⁵⁶ Graham, “Interrogating the Postsecular,” 227.

⁵⁷ Graham, “Interrogating the Postsecular,” 227.

however heretical. It is out of the *habitus* of pluridoxy and co-existence that identities and beliefs must be shaped.⁵⁸

Graham argues that Taylor's account in *A Secular Age*

is speculating as much about the quotidian reality of people's taken-for-granted existential milieu as he is about the relations between church and state, or formal statistics of religious affiliation. It is about the shift in consciousness whereby human fulfillment and meaning are identified as coming through sources and life chances that have nothing to do with transcendence and everything to do with human autonomy... the secular age is thus characterized by the inability to revert to a naivete regarding the possibilities of belief: everyone, even the most devoutly religious, recognizes that to believe or not believe are not givens but choices.⁵⁹

Even more so, this idea of the postsecular as "beyond" the secular drifts "away from organized, creedal religion" while maintaining that "this does not necessarily mean that interest in spirituality, religious practices, and teachings necessarily diminishes in equal proportion."⁶⁰ That said, she also argues that, because it is not supported by institutional structures, a byproduct of these new religious and spiritual manifestations is that they are, in the long term, less sustainable and less visible.⁶¹ In turn, this version of the postsecular pays attention to the lived experience of everyday believing where there is marked reflexivity to everyday believing while living in the secular world. Graham argues that this position on the postsecular asks the questions: "What new configurations are emerging, and what difference will they make?"⁶²

Summing this position of postsecular as beyond the secular, Graham states: "'Post' in this respect takes us *beyond* the master narrative of secularization, away from a bifurcation of belief and non-belief, religion and atheism, faith and reason, towards a paradigm in which there is a plurality of ways in which the relationships and boundaries between transcendence and immanence, spiritual and material, are articulated."⁶³ Graham is in support of this third type of postsecularity as beyond the secular, which is largely described in terms of the contributions of

⁵⁸ Graham, "Interrogating the Postsecular," 230.

⁵⁹ Graham, "Interrogating the Postsecular," 230.

⁶⁰ Graham, "Interrogating the Postsecular," 229.

⁶¹ Graham, "Interrogating the Postsecular," 229.

⁶² Graham, "Interrogating the Postsecular," 227.

⁶³ Graham, "Interrogating the Postsecular," 229.

Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*. To reflect on postsecularism as beyond the secular sheds light not only on the quotidian dynamic of religious practice and believing in everyday life, but also on a postsecular critique of the secular that illuminates the continued presence and visibility of religion in the secular. What Graham offers are important ways of mapping the postsecular as “after, against, or beyond” that complement and are complemented by José Casanova’s three typologies of secularity. But what Casanova demonstrates further is how the postsecular imagines the secular through his three analyses of “mere, exclusive, and secularist” secularity.

2.4 José Casanova’s Three Types of “Secular” in Postsecular

When analyzing typologies for understanding religion in a postsecular context, José Casanova articulates a useful three-fold typology of the “secular” in “postsecularism” as: a) mere secularity, b) exclusive secularity, and c) secularist secularity. While the previous sections began our analyses of what is meant by the postsecular, this section extends Casanova’s three-fold typology of postsecularism by problematizing and categorizing what he means by “secularity” from the perspective of three theorists: himself, Charles Taylor, and Jürgen Habermas.

José Casanova questions what exactly we mean by “postsecular”.⁶⁴ He indicates that to understand what we mean by the “post” in postsecular we must also articulate what we mean by the “secular” in postsecular. Casanova problematizes the question involved with the notion of postsecular: “*Are we still secular in a postsecular context?*”⁶⁵ He does this to highlight the problem of what is the “secular” and the question of whether the secular is religious or exclusive of religion.⁶⁶ In response to this, Casanova offers three meanings of the “secular”: 1)

⁶⁴ C.f. Josef Bengtson, *Explorations in Post-Secular Metaphysics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 13-14.

⁶⁵ José Casanova, “Are We Still Secular? Exploration on the Secular and the Post-Secular,” in *Post-Secular Society*, ed. Peter Nynäs, Mika Lassander, and Tehri Utriainen (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2012), 27–46, 27.

⁶⁶ Casanova, “Are We Still Secular?”, 27.

Casanova's own "mere secularity" as "living in the secular world and in secular time";⁶⁷ 2) Taylor's self-sufficient or "exclusive secularity" as living within an immanent frame: "To be or not to be religious, that is the question!"⁶⁸; and 3) Habermas' "secularist secularity" which defines "secularism as a stadial consciousness."⁶⁹ Casanova describes these three modes of being secular and what it means to be secular:

[First] that of 'mere secularity,' that is, the phenomenological experience of living in a secular world and in a secular age, where being religious may be a normally visible option; [second] that of self-contained, self-sufficient, and 'exclusive secularity,' that is, the phenomenological experience of living without religion as a normal, quasi-natural, taken-for-granted condition; and [third] that of 'secularist secularity,' that is, the phenomenological experience not only of being passively free but actually of having been liberated from 'religion' as a condition for human flourishing.⁷⁰

The following offers an analysis of each of these three types of postsecularity, following how Casanova partitioned between each of the thinkers. Throughout the survey below, I articulate and extend Casanova's typologies of postsecularism to draw us into the complex definitions of what we mean by postsecularity to set the stage for what I develop throughout Part I as a postsecular critique of the secular. This is done in an attempt to lay out how the assumed dualism between the sacred and the secular may be contested by how we imagine the complex relationships between the sacred and the secular.

2.4.1 Secularity #1: Mere Secularity

José Casanova defines mere secularity in terms of the apparent visibility of religion even in the midst of the secular. Stemming from his analyses of the return of public religions since the late twentieth century, Casanova argues that the political privatization of religion has reversed and that religion has again become a public imaginary that has shaped global, populist, and

⁶⁷ Casanova, "Are we still Secular?", 28-29.

⁶⁸ Casanova, "Are we still Secular?", 29-31.

⁶⁹ Casanova, "Are we still Secular?", 31-33.

⁷⁰ José Casanova, "Exploring the Post-Secular: Three Meanings of 'the Secular' and Their Possible Transcendence," in *Habermas and Religion*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013), 27-48, 33.

conservative politics.⁷¹ The return of public religion is also marked by the staggering events of 9/11 where the West was forced to make sense of religious fundamentalism, terrorism, and the renewed visibility of religion in secular modernity.⁷² With greater visibility of religion in the modern world, “mere secularity” embraces the notion *as if* religion is a viable option for living amid secular modernity.

But tied to Casanova’s account of mere secularity are also the historical processes of secularization and the laicization of the saeculum. Casanova makes a distinction between the medieval saeculum—which includes both a religious age and world and a secular age and world⁷³—and the Western secularization thesis that ties structural laicization to the decline of religious belief and practice.⁷⁴ According to Casanova, the transition between the medieval saeculum and modern secularity is a process in which the saeculum moves from a spiritually ordered social-political-moral universe to modernizing and secularizing processes in which reality is no longer conceived under the authority of the church. Mere secularity implies the viable experience of religion in secular life without reference to religious and theological structures as ordering principles of the modern saeculum.

Casanova describes the medieval saeculum as a dyad between religious and secular structures of spatial and temporal reality: between the “religious-spiritual-sacred world of salvation and the secular-temporal-profane world.”⁷⁵ Joseph Clair gives an account of the theological dimensions of human finitude within the temporal and spatial realms of Augustine’s saeculum. Clair makes the distinction within Augustine of the notion of saeculum as eschatological temporality (age) and the redemption of social, political, and cultural trends

⁷¹ C.f. Casanova, *Public Religions in a Modern World*.

⁷² Jürgen Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2006): 1–25, 1–2; Charles Turner, *Secularization* (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 115–148.

⁷³ José Casanova, “Secularization,” in *The International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioral Sciences*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (Oxford: Elsevier, 2001), 13786–91.

⁷⁴ Casanova, “Beyond European and American Exceptionalisms,” 18.

⁷⁵ Casanova, “Are we still Secular?,” 28–29.

(spatiality) that are found within eschatological temporality in contrast to a ‘world’ or an autonomous secular worldliness, unhooked from the theological saeculum.⁷⁶

This separation in the Middle Ages was marked by the distinction between religious, monastic clergy, and secular clergy among the laity who sought to make the world holy—radicalized in the Protestant affirmation of ordinary life—through the leaving of the monastery and entering the world to bridge the dualism between the religious and the secular.⁷⁷ Casanova makes the distinction between the Protestant affirmation of ordinary life and its blurring of the sacred and secular realms and the Latin marginalization and separation of religion from secular modernity.⁷⁸ Within this framework is a process that, in hopes of sacralizing ordinary life, the movement from the monastery to ordinary life effectively secularized over time social, political, moral, and religious structures.

Laicization is a process of secularization unto mere secularity in which ordinary life is no longer structured or referenced to religion or the church. Laicization is the institutional emancipation of church power, land, and control over society that develops boundaries between the religious and the secular which seek to “contain, privatize, and marginalize everything religious” excluding it from the secular public sphere, freeing the secular “through a positive affirmation and revaluation of the saeculum... with a quasi-transcendent meaning” to the immanent secular world as geared towards human flourishing—this is the movement of secularization for Casanova.⁷⁹ In the process of laicization, the partitioning of the religious and the secular structures of everyday life, the idealization of ordinary life without reference to the church or religious authority, and the valuation of human integrity and flourishing within an

⁷⁶ C.f. Joseph Clair, “The Concept of the Secular in Augustine’s *the City of God*,” in *Rethinking Secularization: Philosophy and the Prophecy of a Secular Age*, ed. Herbert De Vriese and Gary Gabor (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 27–56.

⁷⁷ Casanova, “Are we still Secular?,” 28–29.

⁷⁸ Casanova, “Exploring the Post-Secular,” 28–30.

⁷⁹ Casanova, “Are we Still Secular?,” 29; C.f. José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*.

immanent frame, the concept of mere secularity implies the process of secularization in which time and space in the saeculum are no longer ordered by the sacred.

Within the framework of mere secularity, living religiously in a secular world implies the very temporality of ordinary life as not only mundane and ordinary but also in some sense normatively secular or non-religious. For a religious believer, mere secularity entails that time is understood not in terms of its participation in eternity, but rather in terms of progress, finitude, and the dynamism of becoming. The experience of mere secularity entails the possibility of religious belief, but undercutting even the possibility of belief is how ordinary life is no longer cohesively ordered by religious structures and institutions. Because of the process of laicization, political, social, and moral structures of secular life are no longer normatively ordered by religion or the church. Mere secularity entails the reality—morally, socially, and structurally—that ordinary life is at its most basic level experienced as temporally secular and no longer governed by participation in an overarching religious temporality, authority, or institution.

And yet, mere secularity also entails the viability and visibility of religion in the secular. It means everyday life can be lived religiously amid normative secular structures. It means that religious practicing and believing can be a normal way of life in its secular normative setting. Mere secularity takes secularity for granted. But it also sees religious practice and belief as a viable way to engage with the secular, live alongside the secular, and live religiously in the midst of the secular. Mere secularity entails the possibility of lived religiosity amid normative and temporal secular structures. It is in this mere secularity that religious belief and life remain possible, only it is no longer normatively shaped by participation in religious structures that govern all aspects of life in the saeculum.

2.4.2 Secularity #1: Exclusive Secularity

Second, Casanova's typology of Charles Taylor's account of the secular is marked by an immanent frame—which entails a self-enclosed, self-sufficient, *exclusive* secularity. This is where we assume the denial of the relevance of transcendence within an immanent frame in ways that may be closed to God and “irreligious” or “devoid of religion.”⁸⁰ Casanova argues that Taylor offers a phenomenological history of the disembedding of religion from cosmic, social, and moral orders that function “as if God would not exist.”⁸¹ Unbelief is linked to the secularization of belief, but people may still be engaged with belief and must justify their beliefs in the face of both the pluralization of belief and contested realms of normative secular structures that assume the closure to belief. This implies that Taylor's account of the immanent frame contextualizes the possibility for belief in a secular age as not only optional but also contested.

And yet the centrality of Taylor's account of the immanent frame is the reality of the invulnerability, self-sufficiency, and boundaries against religion. That is, what characterizes Taylor's “exclusive secularity” is that it excludes not the possibility of God or the religious, but rather the *need* for it. Taylor accounts not only for the disembedding of modernity from pre-modern social, cosmic, moral, and political structures, but also for the developments of the modern buffered, punctual, and disengaged self, which develops across the history of modernity from the elites down, to allow the rejection of God, transcendence, and the religious as a central dynamic of Western human life. This closure to transcendence in Western secular modernity is central to Taylor's account of what develops as what Casanova calls exclusive secularity in our modern social imaginaries.

⁸⁰ Casanova, “Are we still Secular?”, 29.

⁸¹ Casanova, “Are we still Secular?”, 30.

But within this framework, exclusive secularity, like mere secularity, articulates how postsecularity can imply an openness to religion within the normative structures of the secular. But for exclusive secularity, the norm is the secular, and religion remains a contested option. The secular is the standard in exclusive secularity defined by an immanent frame: the view of the secular as closed to transcendence and as contesting religious belief. No longer is belief self-explanatory. Nor can belief live within a mere bubble. Belief must explain itself in contested secular and pluralized space. Belief must now justify itself within the normative secular space of the immanent frame. This implies that the complex space of exclusive secularity is one where we can be both open and/or closed to transcendence based on the background frameworks that must be utilized to justify our beliefs and ways in which we imagine our world about God. And yet, exclusive secularity presupposes the closure to the religious as the norm in how we imagine our social, moral, political, and physical worlds. This means that while believing is an option, it is not only contested *but strange* when we read what it means to believe in secular modernity as both exclusively and merely secular. For the secular to be exclusive means to presuppose the closure to the religious in secular structures. Yet to be merely secular means to allow the possibility of believing in secular everyday life, even while believing remains both a contested and strange option in daily life amidst a world that is normatively and structurally conceived of as if it is closed to the religious.

While this section posits through Casanova's typologies of mere and exclusive secularity the contestability, yet also viability and visibility, of religion in the normative structures of the secular, Casanova's typology of Jürgen Habermas' *secularist* secularity entails a reading of postsecularity that is only quasi-postsecular. This is because Habermas leans on the post-metaphysical overcoming of religion through a secular teleology of history, the critical reevaluation of religion, and the self-critical reflexivity of reason as something geared towards overcoming the naivete of secular assumption. But each of these still retains the secular drive

to overcome religion and metaphysical thinking through the normativity of secular forms of reasoning in the public sphere.

2.4.3 Secularity #3: Secularist Secularity

Casanova's third typology of the postsecular as “secularist secularity” is embodied within the work of Jürgen Habermas. For Habermas, postsecularity is defined as a secular stadial consciousness that naturalizes secularity as a philosophy of history and a “universal process of human development” that teleologically moves to the abandonment of belief and to mature unbelief.⁸² Indeed, the stadial consciousness entails both the continuity with, but also the questioning of, the Enlightenment project of critiquing religion. If the Enlightenment critiqued religion as superstitious, mythical, and governed by emotion, then the Enlightenment also castigated tradition and elevated the instrumental use of universal human reason as the arbiter of reality. Furthermore, the modernization process continued the Enlightenment project in terms of political and economic theories, science, industrialization, and evolutionary theory—effectively disenchanting and disembedding our world from religious structures. In these terms, secularist secularity entails a philosophy of history that sees secularism as the end of religion.⁸³

But the *postsecular* stadial consciousness also means *no longer taking secular unbelief as a naïve assumption* of indifference to belief *or* the absence of belief. However, a *secular* stadial consciousness means “having overcome the irrationality of belief.”⁸⁴ I think the difference between a secular or postsecular “overcoming of the irrationality of belief” depends on whether or not belief is assumed to be irrational *without* questioning the possibility of its

⁸² Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *Habermas and Religion*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013), 1-23, 10.

⁸³ Tied to this, Fernand Tanghe problematizes Marcel Gauchet’s notion of secularization as the end of religion by offering a historical-genealogical account of the process of disenchantment where religion is gradually secularized as the end of religion: c.f. Fernand Tanghe, “Marcel Gauchet and the End of Religion,” in *Rethinking Secularization: Philosophy and the Prophecy of a Secular Age*, ed. Herbert De Vriese and Gary Gabor (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 153–76.

⁸⁴ Casanova, “Are we still Secular?”, 31.

rationality, logic, and ways of thinking. When the irrationality of belief is no longer assumed and belief's internal logic and rationality are re-evaluated, *there* is a transition between a secular to a postsecular stadial consciousness. A postsecular stadial consciousness wrestles with the possibility of religious rationality and overcomes the secular assumption of religious irrationality. A postsecular stadial consciousness questions the secular stadial consciousness' naïve assumptions of religious superstition and irrationality, examines the logic of religious traditions, and warrants the possibility of their rationality or reasonableness.⁸⁵ If a secular stadial consciousness is to become postsecular, it must examine its assumptions and narratives—which can be characterized by the notion of subtraction stories.

In Charles Taylor's critique, the secular stadial consciousness entails the emancipation or loss of belief and the coming of age of the secular in terms of "subtraction stories."⁸⁶ David Storey analyzes Taylor's account of Enlightenment subtraction stories in two senses: 1) reason is liberated from religion, reducing religion to myth and superstition; and 2) religious belief, practice, and institutions decline due to developments of modern direct access society and the disembedding of belief through frameworks of modernization.⁸⁷ Casanova states that "for Taylor, this stadial phenomenological experience serves, in turn, to ground the phenomenological experience of exclusive humanism as the positive self-sufficient and self-limiting affirmation of human flourishing as self-denial and self-defeating."⁸⁸ Here we see that a secular stadial consciousness is one in which religious believing is conceived of as something undesirable because the Enlightenment project assumes that believing has both gradually lost: a) the ability to structure the modern social imaginary; and b) its legitimacy in structuring

⁸⁵ Arguably, this does not just entail questioning a single religious tradition, but rather both the nuances within that tradition and the nuances in and between the logic of multiple traditions.

⁸⁶ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 269.

⁸⁷ Storey, "Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*," 180.

⁸⁸ Casanova, "Are we still Secular?", 31.

modern human life. In a secular reading of this genealogy, what is assumed and argued for is the overcoming of religion and belief by the powers of human reason.

This implies that the secular stadial consciousness is a teleological philosophy of history from belief to unbelief, from irrational religious premodernity to rational secular modernity. The secular vision offers a philosophy of history that moves “from primitive irrational or metaphysical religion to modern rational post-metaphysical secular consciousness.”⁸⁹ The secular stadial consciousness means “to be secular is not experienced as an existential choice which modern individuals or modern societies make but rather” are natural outcomes “of becoming modern.”⁹⁰ But the *postsecular* stadial consciousness both questions the assumed irrationality of religion *and* the rationality of modern secularity. This is Habermas’ understanding of a *postsecular* stadial consciousness where we become reflexively self-aware of a “secularistic self-*mis*understanding” that fails to recognize both the naïve belief in reason and the unexamined rejection of the logic of religious belief.⁹¹

2.4.4 Analysis of Casanova

According to “exclusive secularity,” Casanova analyzes Taylor’s “immanent frame” as an internal component to mere secularity where non-belief is broadly assumed and experienced in a secular age. In terms of exclusive secularity, the postsecular means the non-necessity, but also the possibility and contestability, of religious practicing and believing in secular modernity. In terms of mere secularity, the postsecular means the potential de-secularization of the world and implies how the experiences of modernity can become religious again.⁹² But how they become religious again is a contested claim. While Casanova may hold to a limited appeal to the viability and visibility of religious beliefs in everyday life, arguably mere secularity implies a

⁸⁹ Casanova, “Are we still Secular?”, 32.

⁹⁰ Casanova, “Are we still Secular?”, 32.

⁹¹ Casanova, “Are we still Secular?”, 33.

⁹² Casanova, “Exploring the Post-Secular,” 30-31.

postsecular critique of the secular that is not limited to just everyday life, but also to the structures of secular modernity.

By contrast, “secularist secularity” buys into modern teleological progress and sees secularity as a stadial human consciousness that becomes liberated from religion and sees the secular as the natural and progressive end of religion. Postsecularism in this context means abandoning or questioning a secular stadial consciousness and becoming reflexively self-aware of the secularistic self-misunderstanding of the powers of reason and rejection of religion in hopes of overcoming them.⁹³ Mere secularity by contrast posits the viability and visibility of religion in modernity in terms of its ordinariness. Mere secularity entails religion’s reality as a lived experience in the temporality and normative structures of the secular life. How it imagines itself in the midst of the secular is porous, ambiguous, and polysemic—it will come in differing shapes and forms, in various intensities, and in individuated, idiosyncratic creations and combinations of traditional religions.

Within this framework, to be postsecular entails the possibilities that: 1) religious belief may be a lived, viable option; 2) living without religion may be normal and taken for granted; and 3) one may be “liberated from religion as a condition for human flourishing.”⁹⁴ But John Torpey states that for Casanova, “the ‘postsecular’ can only mean the abandonment of the ‘stadial’ consciousness associated with the ideology of secularism and its expectation of the (welcome) demise of religion.”⁹⁵ Casanova’s exclusion of secularist secularity as a postsecular position indicates his advocacy for the abandonment of a secular teleology of history. For Casanova, the postsecular does not include secularist secularity, but he does affirm mere secularity and exclusive secularity as real possibilities of believing in the midst of the secular.

⁹³ Casanova, “Exploring the Post-Secular,” 31-34.

⁹⁴ Casanova, “Are we still Secular?”, 33.

⁹⁵ John Torpey, “A (Post-) Secular Age? Religion and the Two Exceptionalisms,” *Social Research* 77, no. 1 (2010): 269-296, 277.

If the postsecular is marked by the enduring presence of religion in the midst of the secular, then a secularist's interpretation of a teleology of history ultimately denies any "post" secular and collapses it back into the secular in the overcoming of religion by the secular. By contrast, true postsecularity includes both mere secularity and exclusive secularity. Mere secularity allows the lived experience of religion in the midst of the secular, while exclusive secularity assumes the normativity of the secular and its ambiguous tension with the uncanny presence of religion in the midst of the secular. If mere secularity implies the visibility and viability of religion in the midst of the secular from a religious perspective living under the normative and temporal structures of the secular, then exclusive secularity implies the optionality, contestability, and peculiarity of religious belief in the midst of living as if we live in a normatively secular world.

Casanova argues that "the fact that we are asking the question 'are we still secular or are we postsecular?' is in itself evidence that a change has taken place in the secular zeitgeist, that we have crossed a threshold that we cannot be simply un-reflexive secularists anymore."⁹⁶ While Casanova problematizes what we mean by postsecular, I argue that the postsecular entails not the closure to religion, but rather the openness to religion in the midst of the secular.

2.5 Conclusion

While this chapter has begun to answer the first research question—*How does Charles Taylor contribute to a postsecular critique of the secular that questions the dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular?*—it has done so by developing how contested the term postsecular is as a way of articulating the contestability claim of a postsecular critique of the secular. Furthermore, this chapter has argued that Taylor's work is deeply embedded within postsecular discourses through surveys and analyses of how to define the postsecular. It has

⁹⁶ Casanova, "Are we still Secular?", 42.

shown that not only can we contest Taylor's reticence at the term postsecular but also that his work is constantly situated and contextualized in postsecular discourses.

This chapter has shown how Taylor's postsecular contributions can be contextualized by engaging his ideas in dialogue with others who have sought to define and categorize not only the secular but especially the postsecular. The contestability claim of a postsecular critique of the secular is supported in part by Taylor's contributions to understanding the fragilization, optionality, and pluralization of believing alongside his emphases on the normativity of the secular as an assumed way of living in the contemporary world. It is in this way that Taylor contributes to the contestability claim of a postsecular critique of the secular as a postsecular theorist because he holds open the space in an immanent frame for the possibility of religious believing. In this sense, Taylor's postsecularity is certainly beyond the secular, for it creates the space for belief in the midst of the secular as a viable, if optional, alternative to assumed secular normativity because it remains open to the possibilities of religious believing.

This chapter has addressed the contestability claim of a postsecular critique of the secular through an analysis of how we define the postsecular to show how the dualism between the secular and the sacred/religious is a false conception. The dualism is false precisely because it fails to understand how contested the strict bifurcation between the sacred/religious and the secular is when we question how to define the postsecular. How we define the postsecular reveals its polysemic nature that generates a critique of the dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular. The next chapter will continue to analyze the first research question by arguing how a postsecular critique of the secular requires an analysis of Taylor's understanding of the contingencies of history to show how the secular assumption of the necessity of the double dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular and transcendence and immanence is problematic.

CHAPTER THREE: POSTSECULAR CONTINGENCY:

TAYLORING GENEALOGIES OF HISTORY

Chapter two addressed the contestability claim of the first research question, of how Charles Taylor may be contextualized as a postsecular theorist who contributes to a postsecular critique of the secular dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular. This chapter continues to address the first research question, though focuses on the contingency claim of a postsecular critique of the secular. It does so by problematizing Taylor's genealogical contributions to show how the contingencies of history generate both the possibilities of the dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular as well as the dualism between transcendence and immanence.

The analysis of the contingency claim in this chapter will reveal how postsecular genealogies of cultural history reveal the contingent development of the double dualism but that it does not necessarily preclude the closure to transcendence and the end of the religious in the secular. In a postsecular critique of the secular, the contingency claim historically contextualizes the possibilities for a critique of this double dualism through an analysis of the historical and genealogical contingencies that shape how we *imagine* the enduring presence of the religious in secular modernity.

This chapter demonstrates how the historical development of the dualism between the secular and the religious is implicitly linked to the historical development of the dualism between transcendence and immanence. The double dualism is historically contingent on the processes of history. But to address this problem, this chapter argues that Taylor's retrieval of transcendence in an immanent frame only becomes possible because of the historical conditions that give rise to this opening, and these conditions are based on *how* we have *imagined* the *possibility* of transcendence in Western history.

First, section 3.1 utilizes Taylor and his commentators to articulate the centrality of contingency to both his rebuttal of acultural history and subtraction stories and his attempt to

recover transcendence as a viable option when we imagine the immanent frame as open to the retrieval of transcendence. Second, section 3.2 offers two genealogical readings of the contingencies of history to show how the double dualism historically developed. Section 3.2.1 begins with a reading of three genealogical accounts of secularization—of Taylor, John Milbank, and Jean-Luc Nancy—to offer a genealogical framework that shapes how we can understand the historical development of this double dualism. Then section 3.2.2 narrows down on the historical contingencies that give rise to the dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular through a cultural reading of Western history. This is done particularly by reading Taylor alongside his commentators (such as Ruth Abbey and David Storey) as well as José Casanova to generate a more robust analysis of the contingencies of Western cultural history. Finally, section 3.3 analyzes the patterns of Taylor’s genealogical readings of the contingencies of history to critically engage how his understanding of the contingencies of history holds open the space for imagining transcendence in secular modernity. This is done to show how Taylor contributes to the contingency claim of a postsecular critique of the secular.

3.1 Tyloring Contingency and Retrieving Transcendence

One of Taylor’s key contributions is his emphasis on the genealogical contingencies of history. While the following two sections will articulate the contingencies of history about the development of the double dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular and/or transcendence and immanence, this section will argue how contingency is central to Taylor’s genealogical critique of modernity through an analysis of his emphasis on the retrieval of transcendence. If the Enlightenment critique of religion is marked by the disembedding of religion from the public sphere, the citizen-state, and the market economy,⁹⁷ then it also makes

⁹⁷ Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 49-142; Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 146-158; Charles Taylor, “Modes of Secularism,” in *Secularism and Its Critics*, ed. Rajeev Bhargava (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 31–53, 31-45; Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (New York: Beacon Press, 1975); and Jürgen

a metaphysical, political, and religious bifurcation between the sacred and the secular, the public and the private, and the church and the state. This separation is argued by Josef Bengtson as a contribution of the Protestant Reformation, developed throughout Western history into the metaphysical conflict and opposition between transcendence and immanence, which resulted in the autonomous spheres of the sacred and the secular, public and private, and church and world.⁹⁸ The Enlightenment critique of religion effectually differentiated modernity, both politically and socially, from the religious—the church—and began to operate along the lines of a metaphysical worldview characterized by closed-world-structures and an immediate, direct-access society.

But what Taylor offers is an analysis of the historical contingencies that not only reveal how modernity has closed itself to transcendence but also how these contingencies of history do not *necessarily* preclude the closure to transcendence in how we imagine what it means to believe and be human in late modernity. Taylor's genealogies of history demonstrate how we may doubt this closure and imagine again what it would look like to retrieve religion and transcendence as a viable option in the experience of secularity. Indeed, it is in his emphasis on the long *durée* of the contingencies of history that a postsecular openness to the continued relevance of religion in our contemporary world is imaginable. Taylor's emphasis on the latent effects of the Axial Age illustrates how history is contingently shaped by how religion endures in secular modernity. Because of this, Taylor offers resources by which we can retrieve transcendence in how we can imagine what it means to believe and be human in late modernity.

From *Sources of the Self*, Ruth Abbey argues that Taylor's work aims at a genealogical attempt to trace the sources of the modern self to both illuminate self-knowledge and to emancipate the modern self from its acultural roots by recovering a cultural awareness of its

Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1989).

⁹⁸ C.f. Josef Bengtson, *Explorations in Post-Secular Metaphysics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 112-114.

historical roots.⁹⁹ Furthermore, in summarizing Taylor's arguments in *A Secular Age*, Eoin Cassidy remarks:

In a well-argued analysis, [Taylor] contends that for the first time in the history of 'Western' civilization, we have witnessed in this short space of time and on a mass scale a cultural loss of connectedness to any objective horizon of meaning and/or values. At the vertical level, this connectedness would have been in the past shaped by a belief in the presence of God or the Good, and at the horizontal level by a relationship to neighbor or neighborhood, which is expressive of the belief that human beings are shaped by family, friends, and community. As Taylor is at pains to point out, this loss of connectedness with a transcendent horizon of meaning is not without its consequences for individual fulfillment and societal coherence.¹⁰⁰

Within the theistic framework of Taylor's analyses of secularity, Anthony Campbell argues that Taylor's orienting question is: "What should be the place of transcendence or the transcendent in our secular modern lives?"¹⁰¹ Campbell argues that there are three prongs to Taylor's guiding idea: 1) that it is a work of recovery; 2) that it is a work of polemics against marginalizing the transcendent; and 3) that it is a work of persuasion for the transcendent in secular modernity.¹⁰² The guiding framework of retrieving transcendence as a constitutive source for the modern self implies an argument not only that there is something wrong with modernity, but that modernity has lost something. Terry Pinkard states:

The problem in modernity's account of itself is that by its terms it has not only failed to come to terms with what is really at stake in it, but it has also actually obscured what is of importance in the modern term to natural science coupled with its faith in technology. Instead of polishing up the standard self-account of modernity, what is required is an account that both draws out and defends the picture of human agency and human reality which has been submerged by the distorted self-account. It is also necessary to give an account of how it is that we came to share such a widely held distorted picture of ourselves, which at the same time contains within itself the potential for a much richer and potentially satisfying account of agency.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Ruth Abbey, *Philosophy Now: Charles Taylor* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 72-73; C.f. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989).

¹⁰⁰ Eoin Cassidy, "'Transcending Human Flourishing': Is There a Need for a Subtler Language?," in *The Taylor Effect: Responding to a Secular Age*, ed. Ian Leask et al. (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 26-38, 28.

¹⁰¹ Anthony Edward Hugh Campbell, "Charles Taylor and the Place of the Transcendent in Secular Modern Lives" (Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 2017), vii.

¹⁰² Campbell, "Charles Taylor and the Place of the Transcendent in Secular Modern Lives," xxvi-xxvii.

¹⁰³ C.f. Terry Pinkard, "Taylor, 'History,' and the History of Philosophy," in *Charles Taylor*, ed. Ruth Abbey (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 187-213, 189.

While Taylor affirms this loss as real, he also seeks to recover some sense of this loss through his work of retrieval—Taylor nuances the possibility of retrieving transcendence by arguing that it and religious theism are possible options within modernity. How this is possible is contested, but Taylor’s diagnosis of modernity entails the hope for and the recovery of transcendence in its ability to articulate how human agency is oriented more fully and satisfactorily by religious concerns and orientations.

Part of Taylor’s work of retrieval is done against the tendencies of modernity. Modern tendencies castigate the pre-modern as superstitious and irrational and fail to take into account the pre-modern sources and influences that have shaped modernity. The Radical Orthodoxy Movement has contended that Duns Scotus, William Ockham, Suarez, the Protestant Reformation, and the Pelagian-stoic tendencies between Augustine and Descartes are all pre-modern sources that have produced trends in modernity. In contrast to Taylor, the Radical Orthodoxy Movement’s projects of retrieval of Neo-Platonism, Augustine, and Aquinas in classical Catholic theology are used as alternative ways of re-enchanting the world.¹⁰⁴

But for Taylor, there are two ways of reading modern history about pre-modernity: cultural history and acultural history. Cultural history articulates the revaluation and acknowledgment of the pre-modern roots of modernity. By contrast, acultural history neglects and sees pre-modernity as irrelevant and bound to religious superstition. Acultural history

¹⁰⁴ C.f. Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 121-133; Michael Hanby, *Augustine and Descartes* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003); John Montag, SJ, “Revelation: The False Legacy of Suarez,” in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, ed. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward (New York: Routledge, 1999), 38–63; Laurence Paul Hemming, “Quod Impossibile Est!: Aquinas and Radical Orthodoxy,” in *Radical Orthodoxy? A Catholic Enquiry*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming (New York: Ashgate, 2000), 76–96; Michael Hanby, “Desire: Augustine Beyond Western Subjectivity,” in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, ed. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward (New York: Routledge, 1999), 109–26; Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 115-142; James K. A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-Secular Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 103-122; John Marenbon, “Aquinas, Radical Orthodoxy and the Importance of Truth,” in *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy*, ed. Wayne J. Hankey and Douglas Hedley (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 67–84; Wayne J. Hankey, “Philosophical Religion and the Neoplatonic Turn to the Subject,” in *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy*, ed. Wayne J. Hankey and Douglas Hedley (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 32–47; Paul J. DeHart, *Aquinas, and Radical Orthodoxy: A Critical Inquiry* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012).

forgets its roots in pre-modernity in being “enlightened by reason” and sees no value in pre-modern thought. Acultural history is the dominant social imaginary in which modernity is understood by us today.¹⁰⁵ The characteristic of an acultural reading of modern history and the disparagement of pre-modernity by the power of reason is the idea of a subtraction story, which has two components: loss and coming of age.¹⁰⁶

While Taylor castigates “coming of age” subtraction stories he still affirms a subtraction story in which we have lost “something vital and indispensable for human’s understanding of themselves and the world they inhabit.”¹⁰⁷ In a subtraction story, religion is lost and modern humans come of age in a world devoid of superstition by the power of reason. Subtraction stories are modern myths of the liberating power of reason. In modern subtraction stories, human concerns for religion are abandoned in favor of a scientific, universal human rationality defined by the efficient use of instrumental reason. Modern rationality is wielded by a responsible human agent disengaged and buffered from the world as a punctual self.¹⁰⁸ The modern vision of the human agent is one where the human agent is not affected by the world, remaining invulnerable to it as a responsible agent wielding reason to uncover the laws of nature in hopes of progressively bettering humanity as an end that the instrumental means of reason are meant to serve. Nicholas H. Smith comments on the emphasis on reason in Christianity to argue how rationalized Christianity is a central outcome of the processes of history in Charles Taylor’s genealogy of modernity.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Abbey, *Philosophy Now: Charles Taylor*, 77-78.

¹⁰⁶ C.f. Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert Wallace (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985); Paul D. Janz, “Transcendence, ‘Spin,’ and the Jamesian Open Space,” in *Aspiring to Fullness in a Secular Age: Essays on Religion and Theology in the Work of Charles Taylor*, ed. Carlos Colorado and Justin Klassen (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 39–70, 51.

¹⁰⁷ Janz, “Transcendence, ‘Spin,’ and the Jamesian Open Space,” 51.

¹⁰⁸ C.f. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 143-176; Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 159-211, 303; Charles Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 220; James K. A. Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 64.

¹⁰⁹ C.f. Nicholas H. Smith, *Charles Taylor: Meaning, Morals, and Modernity* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2002), 227. Smith states:

Rationalized Christianity [of the seventeenth century forward] transformed the underlying sense of the constitutive good. The moral life was experienced as a set of demands on a self 'buffered' from the spirits

This means that through the modern drive of reason, not only does a rational Christianity lose its authority for articulating common goods, but so also means that the modern self becomes invulnerable from the effects of religion to shape what it means to be embedded as a human being within an enchanted world. While it is true that we have certainly lost something in modernity, Charles Taylor is doubtful whether we have “come of age.” Taylor doubts both the universality of reason and the abandoning of religion. Taylor certainly does not see religion as unable to offer us benefits in a late-modern context. Moreover, his advocacy for the retrieval of religion within the context of a secular age does so in hopes of resourcing, reforming, and retrieving sources of the modern self through a project of radical reflexivity. Colin Jager argues that radical reflexivity and disenchantment are the hallmarks of secular experience. We are aware of the awareness through which our minds, thoughts, and feelings are buffered from the world.¹¹⁰

However, Taylor’s *Sources of the Self* is a book of retrieval and liberation: the retrieval of spiritual elements of modern anthropology and liberation from its suppression.¹¹¹ Moreover, Taylor’s *A Secular Age* is a genealogical account of the loss of religion where the closedness immanent frame is contested by the possibilities of openness between faith and secularity. Both of these are essential points in Taylor for two reasons. First, if we can recover the spiritual roots of our modern identity, we can ward off the tendencies to see the self and the world as close to

and demons that inhabited the 'enchanted' world. By standing up to these outside forces—by taking them on, so to speak, and vanquishing them with the God-given weapons of reason and purity of heart—the buffered identity acquired a sense of its power and invulnerability. The enchanted sense of moral power, Taylor argues, was crucial for building and sustaining the modern moral order. As rationalized Christianity evolved into Enlightenment naturalism, self-responsible reason came to be viewed as a purely human power rather than a divine gift. And while, once the disenchanted cosmic imaginary took firm hold, this power was no longer needed to fend off demons and spirits; it was still required to immure the self from the comforting but regressive illusions of religion and metaphysics, as well as the siren song rising from the subterranean realm of the instincts. The buffered identity thus continued to sustain the modern moral order after the demise of rationalized Christianity, and, in Taylor’s view, it is one of the characteristic features of life in a secular age.

¹¹⁰ Colin Jager, “This Detail, This History: Charles Taylor’s Romanticism,” in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, ed. Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 166–92, 169–170.

¹¹¹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 10, 520; Janz, “Transcendence, ‘Spin,’ and the Jamesian Open Space,” 52.

transcendence. Second, if we can retrieve transcendence as a viable alternative to the secular, then we can imagine our world and the self as meaningfully shaped by the possibilities of transcendence. If we understand faith and secularity as an agonistic and generative relationship that presupposes an openness to faith amid secular experience, then this implies not only how we may retrieve transcendence in an immanent frame as a viable option in how we imagine our world, but also that the retrieval of transcendence holds open the space for the meaningfulness of how we can understand the secular and the religious as cross-pressured and mutually contingent upon one another in the articulations of a postsecular incarnational theology of presence developed in Part II.

3.2 Two Readings of the Contingencies of History

This section articulates and analyzes two cultural readings of the contingencies of history. First, section 3.2.1 does so through a reading of three genealogies of secularization, which will include analyses of Taylor, the Radical Orthodoxy Movement, and Jean-Luc Nancy. Furthermore, section 3.2.1 will analyze Taylor's idea of Reform-Master-Narratives, the Radical Orthodoxy Movement's genealogical readings of history, and, in particular, John Milbank's conception of an intellectual deviation story. Second, section 3.2.2 articulates a cultural reading of the history of the secular by reading Taylor in relation to the contributions of José Casanova and Taylor's commentators. Sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 both reveal how the contingencies of history allowed the rise of the double dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular and transcendence and immanence. And yet, section 3.3 will reveal Taylor's account of how the arrival of this double dualism is not the only way in which to read his genealogical accounts of cultural history.

3.2.1 Three Genealogies of Secularization

The lines between the secular and the religious are not as clear-cut as may seem. And yet, when we consider the genealogical histories of secularization offered by several philosophers and theologians, we begin to see that the double dualism between the sacred and the religious and between transcendence and immanence are both linked together by the contingencies of history. The long genealogical histories of secularization offered by Charles Taylor, the Radical Orthodoxy Movement, and Jean-Luc Nancy tell us that the history that led to the secular has its roots in the theological developments of Medieval Christianity. Whether theologically in terms of univocity¹¹² in terms of the Radical Orthodoxy Movement,¹¹³ sociologically in terms of “Reform” for Charles Taylor,¹¹⁴ or philosophically by a process of immanentization for Jean-Luc Nancy,¹¹⁵ the process of secularization tells us that the secular is the logical end and the product of movements within and out of Christianity. Bruce Ward reflects on the question of how the secular was born out of the logical processes of Christianity that led to the development of an exclusive humanism that ultimately rejected Christianity.¹¹⁶

¹¹² I have addressed the debates over the Radical Orthodoxy Movement’s understanding of univocity in relation to Duns Scotus elsewhere: C.f. Andrew D. Thrasher, “Postmodern Ontology at the Limits of Modernity,” in *An Advaitic Modernity?: Raimon Panikkar and Philosophical Theology* (Lanham, MD: Fortress Press, 2024).

¹¹³ Catherine Pickstock, “Postmodern Scholasticism: Critique of Postmodern Univocity,” *Telos* 33, no. 4 (2003): 3–24; Pickstock, *After Writing*, 122–131; Catherine Pickstock, “Duns Scotus: His Historical and Contemporary Significance,” *Modern Theology* 21, no. 4 (2005): 543–74; John Milbank, “Scholasticism, Modernism, and Modernity,” *Modern Theology* 22, no. 4 (2006): 651–71; John Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 29–31, 50–56; John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, Second edition (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), xxiv–xxvi; James K. A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 87–103; John Milbank and Simon Oliver, eds., *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 21–24; Critiqued by: Richard Cross, “Duns Scotus and Suarez at the Origins of Modernity,” in *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy*, ed. Wayne J. Hankey and Douglas Hedley (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 85–102; and Daniel P. Horan, *Postmodernity and Univocity: A Critical Account of Radical Orthodoxy and John Duns Scotus* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014).

¹¹⁴ Charles Mathewes and Joshua Yates, “The ‘Drive to Reform’ and Its Discontents,” in *Aspiring to Fullness in a Secular Age: Essays on Religion and Theology in the Work of Charles Taylor*, ed. Carlos Colorado and Justin Klassen (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 152–87, 154–155.

¹¹⁵ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Gravity of Thought*, trans. Francois Raffoul and Gregory Recco (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1997).

¹¹⁶ Bruce Ward, “Transcendence and Immanence in a Subtler Language: The Presence of Dostoevsky in Charles Taylor’s Account of Secularity,” in *Aspiring to Fullness in a Secular Age: Essays on Religion and Theology in the Work of Charles Taylor*, ed. Carlos Colorado and Justin Klassen (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 262–90, 166–167:

“For Taylor, if modern secularity is the child of Christianity, this is above all because exclusive humanism is a child of Christianity. Taylor’s story of how exclusive humanism arose first as an intellectual vision

Bruce Ward's reading of Charles Taylor's genealogy of history articulates the contingent historical components that have led to a secular age. Charles Taylor draws out through a cultural history the complex conditions that led to the rise of the secular West as originating in the Christian movement for Reform.¹¹⁷ Reform plays an important role in this historical process because it emphasizes the drive to perfection in the project of Reform. And yet, this drive to Reform also led to a break away from Christianity through the modern emphases on exclusive humanism and the development of the Modern Moral Order—which effectively: a) divorced religious power from its influence over the modern social imaginary; and b) legitimized the possibility of unbelief.

In another postsecular genealogical reading of secularization, John Milbank argues that the genealogical reasons for the “heresy” called secularism originated in the medieval debates between the abandonment of neo-platonic *mathexis* (participation) and analogy for late-medieval univocity, nominalism, and voluntarism.¹¹⁸ Between Milbank and those associated

among the elite during the Enlightenment and then, through political-cultural developments, became a livable option for many ordinary people, and how all this is linked to the obsession with reform originates in Latin Christendom, is dauntingly complex. It begins with the mission to lay people of the mendicant friars in the Middle Ages as the first stage in an ongoing Christian reform of society that culminates in the Protestant Reformation. With the crucial mediation of the ‘providential deism’ of the Enlightenment, Christian reform is eventually given secularized expression in the ‘modern moral order’ of mutual benefit envisaged by liberal political thought. From there it is but a short step to the exclusive humanism that has come to characterize the metaphysics of the liberal project. The story is one of an ever-decreasing need for the presence of God in the developing modern moral-political order of mutual benefit, hastened by a justified reaction against bad Christian theology and authoritarian Christian institutions. If in 1500 in the West it was almost impossible not to believe in God, whereas now it is relatively easy and, in some milieus, even the default position, this is not, according to Taylor, primarily due to the famous disenchantment of the world brought about by modern science, nor the exclusion of religion from the public sphere, but to the rise of exclusive humanism, with its alternative vision of human flourishing, as an attractive option on a mass scale. Religious belief is now inevitably beset by the uncertainty raised not only by the presence of other religious faiths but also by the assertive presence of an attractive unbelief. That secular, moral, political, and cultural space within which diverse religions now exist, shaped as it is by three centuries of exclusive humanism, constitutes, in Taylor's phrase, an ‘immanent frame’ profoundly tending toward closure against transcendence.”

¹¹⁷ James K.A. Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*; Nicholas H. Smith, *Charles Taylor: Meaning, Morals, and Modernity*; Taylor, *A Secular Age*; Charles Taylor, “Western Secularity,” in *Rethinking Secularism*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 31–53; Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*; Taylor, *Sources of the Self*; Taylor, “Modes of Secularism,” 31–53.

¹¹⁸ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 3; C.f. James K. A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 127–131; Milbank and Oliver, *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader*, 3–12; Critiqued by Neil G. Robertson, “Milbank and Modern Secularity,” in *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy*, ed. Wayne J. Hankey and Douglas Hedley (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 103–20.

with the Radical Orthodoxy Movement, nihilism is the logical end of theological univocity, nominalism, and voluntarism—but not necessarily of Christianity.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, the movement from the analogical medieval worldview to secular nihilism is offered by Milbank as a genealogical account that negatively portrays the secular as both unhooked from God in its imagined autonomy and, by implication, as without integrity or worth if unhooked analogically from its participation in God.¹²⁰

If Milbank and the Radical Orthodoxy Movement articulate the idea that without participation in God, then the imagined autonomy of creation lacks integrity and nihilism is the logical end of Christianity.¹²¹ However, as Jean-Luc Nancy argues, in the absence of God this means that immanence, apart from participation in God, has its own integrity precisely because in the absence of God, immanence articulates its own integrity as worthy through its opening to an immanent transcendence after its closure to an other-worldly transcendence.¹²² Despite these divergencies in views of the integrity of immanence, what remains key is that their genealogies of the secular demonstrate that religion and the secular are inextricably bound together through the contingencies of history.

¹¹⁹ C.f. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 87-89, 96-103; Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 29-31, 50-56; and Adrian Pabst, *Metaphysics: The Creation of Hierarchy* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 272-303; Guido Vanheeswijck, “The End of Secularization?” in *Rethinking Secularization: Philosophy and the Prophecy of a Secular Age*, ed. Herbert De Vriese and Gary Gabor (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 1-26, 9-12; Conor Cunningham, “Nihilism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Theology and Modern European Thought*, ed. Nicholas Adams, George Pattison, and Graham Ward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 325-44.

¹²⁰ C.f. The arguments in the first chapter of *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*: John Milbank, Graham Ward, and Catherine Pickstock, “Introduction: Suspending the Material: The Turn of Radical Orthodoxy,” in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, eds. John Milbank, Graham Ward, and Catherine Pickstock (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 1-20; Milbank and Oliver, *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader*, 3-12, 21-24.

¹²¹ Conor Cunningham, *Genealogy of Nihilism* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Cunningham, “Nihilism,” 325-44; Laurence Paul Hemming, “Nihilism: Heidegger and the Grounds of Redemption,” in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, ed. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward (New York: Routledge, 1999), 91-108.

¹²² This is I would contend the true meaning of Jean-Luc Nancy’s book and the meaning of its English title, *Dis-Enclosure*. C.f. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*, trans. Bettina Bergo, Gabriel Malenfant, and Michael B. Smith, *Perspectives in Continental Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

Moreover, the transition from medieval Christendom to secular modernity implied the transition in our social imaginary from a society, cosmos, and morality formerly governed by a heteronomous hierarchy of the Great Chain of Being that was implicitly ordered with a social, cosmic, and moral cohesion that kept the fabric of reality together.¹²³ The development of the Modern Moral Order, industrialization, science, and Enlightenment rationality debunked the medieval teleological conception of the cosmos as ordered to and by God, and articulated the cosmos as a neutral universe ordered providentially by natural laws. Modernity also emphasized a direct-access society,¹²⁴ rather than one mediated primarily through religious structures such as the medieval church.¹²⁵

This illustrates the contingent historical links in the development of a secular social imaginary that imagines the world as an immanent frame closed to transcendence. In context, these genealogical movements argue that secularization is a process wherein transcendence has gradually become displaced since theological developments of the late Middle Ages and replaced with secular immanent forms of modern life such as the emergence of the citizen-state,¹²⁶ public sphere,¹²⁷ and market economy¹²⁸ in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹²⁹ This shift of social imaginary is characterized by both an account of the gradual legitimization of a direct access society and the transference of religious structures into secular structures. For instance, Taylor describes the shift from a medieval heteronomous hierarchy to a modern citizen state, public sphere, and market economy as a process of disembedding.¹³⁰ Milbank argues that this is merely the reality that the secular has replaced the religious, displacing the

¹²³ C.f. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 146-211.

¹²⁴ C.f. Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 155-162.

¹²⁵ C.f. Taylor, "Modes of Secularism," 31-45.

¹²⁶ Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 109-142.

¹²⁷ Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 83-108.

¹²⁸ Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 69-82.

¹²⁹ C.f. Taylor's accounts of the process of disembedding in: Taylor, "Modes of Secularism."

¹³⁰ Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 49-68.

religious in and as a secular form.¹³¹ While Jürgen Habermas draws into question the legitimation of a direct access society in *The Legitimation Crisis*, Taylor builds on Habermas' account of the emergence of the public sphere.¹³²

Charles Taylor's account of secularization implies a genealogical process of Reform as a master narrative to help explain the broader, more general transitions in how we imagine our world and ourselves within it between medieval Christendom to a modern secular age at the turn of the twenty-first century. Bruce Ward argues that for Taylor, Reform is the Western pattern of response: "The Romantics counter to the Enlightenment deist, [as the Enlightenment deists] counter to the Calvinist, [as the Calvinists] counter to the scholasticism of the late Middle Ages."¹³³ Furthermore, John Milbank and others have argued for what they call the "intellectual deviation" story, wherein the theological and intellectual developments at the top of society implicated a gradual displacement of God from ordinary life at the bottom of society.¹³⁴

Josef Bengtson argues that "Milbank agrees with Taylor; but where Taylor focuses on how the West, through Reform, became a disciplinary society and how 'the ethical replaced the religious,' Milbank seeks to trace the theological differences which he argues are to blame for the emergence of secular modernity."¹³⁵ Milbank's intellectual deviation story and Taylor's Reform-Master-Narrative complement one another insofar as the former tells a story of secularization through a top-down movement of intellectual ideas, while the latter tells a complimentary story of secularization from the bottom up.¹³⁶ The lesson of this narrative is

¹³¹ C.f. John Milbank, "A Closer Walk on the Wild Side," in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, ed. Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 54–82.

¹³² C.f. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*; Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.

¹³³ Bruce Ward, "Transcendence and Immanence in a Subtler Language," 265.

¹³⁴ Milbank, "A Closer Walk on the Wild Side"; Vanheeswijck, "The End of Secularization?"; Nicholas H. Smith, *Charles Taylor: Meaning, Morals and Modernity*, 208.

¹³⁵ Bengtson, *Explorations in Post-Secular Metaphysics*, 135.

¹³⁶ C.f. Taylor's reflection on how his Reform-Master-Narrative comes into contact with the Radical Orthodoxy Movement's Intellectual Deviation in: Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 774–776.

that how medieval Christendom imagined their world gradually transitioned from a Christian and enchanted worldview into a modern disenchanted worldview wherein belief in God has become an optional extra.

Guido Vanheeswijck, influenced by both Taylor and Milbank, offers a complimentary account of Milbank's intellectual deviation story to Taylor's Reform-Master-Narrative. Vanheeswijck argues for the triangulation of secularization as between not belief and unbelief, or transcendence and immanence, but an additional middle ground in which God or the 'Other' finds space in the aftermath of the process of secularization. Vanheeswijck's intellectual deviation story picks up with Milbank's account of Medieval nominalism and theological voluntarism as the initial problem, but also that in Ockham's razor, there are two edges—in hopes of protecting the sovereignty of God, 1) creation is given its autonomy and 2) God is infinitized and becomes inaccessible, and at the same time God is believed to order creation by natural laws. In this schema, God becomes other and inaccessible, allowing secularization to work out a process of immanentization where transcendence is eclipsed and immanence is given full autonomy.¹³⁷

On the other side, while a Reform-Master-Narrative tells the story of the historical transitions within the Western imaginary through the processes of Reform—demonstrated most noticeably in the Protestant Reformation's hopes of sacralizing all aspects of ordinary life—an intellectual deviation story tells the intellectual developments that were gradually and historically diffused into our social imaginary. Reform for Taylor entails the push in Christendom to make everyone fully Christian in all aspects of life. This homogenizing, and ideally sacralizing, force led ironically to disenchantment and the anthropocentric turn away from God.¹³⁸ David Storey argues that this “distancing of faith” in the process of Reform

¹³⁷ Vanheeswijck, “The End of Secularization?” 9-12.

¹³⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 774.

shattered the hierarchy and “leveled the playing field” between religious and secular, ordinary life.¹³⁹ Within Taylor’s framework, Reform-Master-Narratives tell us of the common movements and historical transitions within how we have historically imagined our world, while intellectual deviation stories articulate the intellectual movements in Western history that gradually impacted how the West historically imagined their world.¹⁴⁰

This drive to Reform is most notably demonstrated in the Protestant affirmation of ordinary life. By affirming ordinary life, the Protestant reformers believed “that a significant part of one’s identity is expressed in the realms of work and family life, and that what happens in these domains makes a substantial contribution to one’s sense of the value or meaning of life.”¹⁴¹ As the moral order of Christianity made demands of faith, ironically with the Protestant affirmation of ordinary life—which was originally introduced to sacralize ordinary life¹⁴²—in turn, rationalized faith in such a way that it became excarnational and fully rational,¹⁴³ unhooked from the formative power of embodied practices found within Catholic liturgy and thus also the intimations of participation in eternity. Tied to this, James K. A. Smith has argued from a Reformed perspective that worship as embodied practices not only informs us of belief, but reforms our identity, and counter-forms our hearts and loves from the loves for and allegiances to the world.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ David Storey, “Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age*: Breaking the Spell of the Immanent Frame,” in *Rethinking Secularization: Philosophy and the Prophecy of a Secular Age*, ed. Herbert De Vriese and Gary Gabor (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 177–208, 191.

¹⁴⁰ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 774–776.

¹⁴¹ Abbey, *Philosophy Now: Charles Taylor*, 89; C.f. Charles Taylor, *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 155, 255; Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1991), 45, 49–50.

¹⁴² Abbey, *Philosophy Now: Charles Taylor*, 90; Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 289; c.f. my arguments for this via the work of Raimon Panikkar in: Andrew D. Thrasher, “Panikkar’s Postsecular Vision,” in *An Advaitic Modernity?: Raimon Panikkar and Philosophical Theology* (Lanham, MD: Fortress Press, 2024).

¹⁴³ Nicholas H. Smith, *Charles Taylor: Meaning, Morals and Modernity*, 227.

¹⁴⁴ C.f. James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, vol. 1, 3 vols., Cultural Liturgies (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009); James K. A. Smith, “Secular Liturgies and the Prospects for a ‘Post-Secular’ Sociology of Religion,” in *The Post-Secular in Question: Religion in Contemporary Society*, by Philip S. Gorski, David Kyumankim, John Torpey, and Jonathan Van Antwerpen, eds. (New York and London: New York University Press and Social Science Research Council, 2012), 159–184; James K.A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2016).

Since the Enlightenment, religion, and modernity mark two pathways into what Taylor calls excarnation. Excarnation emphasizes intellectual, heady, mental, and *rational* knowledge, over against the premodern emphasis on incarnational embodiment and participation in the sacred embeddedness of social, moral, and cosmic orders. Since the Enlightenment, religion, by modernity, has been seen as irrelevant, dogmatic, and superstitious—it has nothing to do with human reason. On the flip side, since the Enlightenment, Christianity has become increasingly more focused on rationalized belief rather than embodied practice.

Paradoxically, since the Enlightenment both religion and modernity have bought into the Enlightenment focus on excarnation. The difference between the two, however, lies within the realms of reason or belief. For modern Protestants especially, belief becomes the focus of excarnation and the defining criteria of religious orthodoxy. “What I believe can be logically articulated through the power of reason over against heretical views of belief” becomes the hallmark of Protestant Christian religious identity and indeed of modern Protestant orthodoxy. For the modern secular person, by contrast, reason becomes the hallmark of the self through the reductive, instrumental, disenchanting structures of human reason through the formative powers of modern science, materialism, and technology.

David Storey highlights Taylor’s Reform-Master-Narrative as a genealogical approach that problematizes the closedness of the immanent frame as a secularized stadial consciousness to offer a new or alternative story to the secular to highlight the conditions of belief.¹⁴⁵ Storey problematizes Taylor’s account of secularization as a Reform-Master-Narrative to show how religion may be a catalyst for “reform and rationalization and need not always be an impediment” to the secular. Likewise, Storey highlights Reform as providing “moral stances that [modernity’s] naturalistic ontology cannot ground.”¹⁴⁶ Storey uses Taylor to unpack and

¹⁴⁵ Storey, “Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age*,” 186-188.

¹⁴⁶ Storey, “Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age*,” 195.

critique traditional accounts of the secularization thesis by showing how, secularization as the decline of religious belief, fails to give account of Taylor's conception of the immanent frame as conditioning potential possibilities of the openness to belief. This not only articulates the genealogical roots to the secular and the enduring presence of religion in the secular but also that the secular misunderstands itself if 'secular' means the abandonment or eclipse of the religious.¹⁴⁷

This section has articulated key theoretical frameworks behind Charles Taylor's genealogical reading of the secular alongside those found especially among those proponents of the Radical Orthodoxy Movement. Tied to this narrative is not only a genealogical explanation for secularization but also the imagined eclipse of transcendence in the contingencies of history. These are important for two reasons. First, it means that the dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular is linked to the dualism between immanence and transcendence. Second, it means that the processes of secularization created the conditions for this double dualism. However, this double dualism, while determined by the contingencies of history, does not necessitate that it necessarily must be so. While this will continue to be developed, the following section reveals how a "cultural" history of the secular offers another way of understanding the historical conditions that can open the space for the retrieval of transcendence in secular modernity.

3.2.2 A Cultural History of the "Secular"

As the previous section analyzed the genealogical link between the double dualism through an analysis of three genealogies of secularization, so also may we read secularization through a cultural reading of history to show how cultural history pays attention to the historical transitions behind secular modernity. This section analyzes the moments in Western cultural

¹⁴⁷ Storey, "Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*," 195-200.

history where there was a shift in the cultural, social, and religious imaginary, particularly paying attention to the transition between the medieval saeculum and the modern Enlightenment. These contingent historical moments are marked by the turn away from the spatial-temporal participation of human persons in the medieval saeculum through the affirmation of ordinary life in the Protestant Reformation to the turn to rationalized Christianity and the disconnect between reason and religion during the modern Enlightenment. Each of these moments articulates genealogical steps in a historical process that were dependent upon previous historical processes for the next step to arrive. But what they reveal are the historical contingencies that shape the development of the dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular.

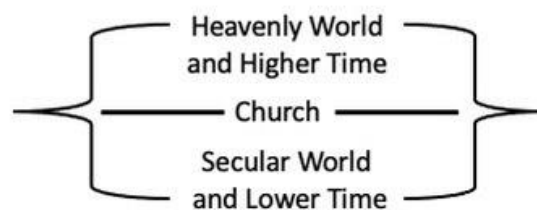
The “secular” comes from the word “saeculum,” which was understood in antiquity as referring to an “Age.” Originally, the saeculum referred to a temporal framework of how the ancient Western world made sense of time. However, with Augustine, a new framework was introduced into the temporal conceptualization of the saeculum—the spatial—which coincided with Augustine’s views of the Kingdom of God and how that was understood through his conceptions of the City of God and the City of Man.¹⁴⁸ Adding the spatial to the temporal dimensions of the saeculum produced a dyad between the temporal and the spiritual, between sacred and secular views of time and the world.¹⁴⁹ Time was split between higher and lower time and so was the world marked by a higher and lower world.

¹⁴⁸ C.f. Joseph Clair, “The Concept of the Secular in Augustine’s *the City of God*,” in *Rethinking Secularization: Philosophy and the Prophecy of a Secular Age*, ed. Herbert De Vriese and Gary Gabor (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 27–56.

¹⁴⁹ José Casanova, “Secularization,” in *The International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioral Sciences*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (Oxford: Elsevier, 2001), 13786–91, 13786; Charles Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 304–305.

In the Middle Ages, the saeculum divided how reality was conceived: the lower participated in the higher through the mediations of the church and the sacraments. The church played an intermediate role, with one foot in the sacred and one foot in the secular world.¹⁵⁰ The lower world referred to those aspects of everyday life that were not under the purview of the church—those worldly professions of daily life that needed the higher realm that was mediated through the church.¹⁵¹ The power of the church's intermediary role was not something arbitrary. In the medieval world, it was unimaginable to think of the saeculum as unhooked from the sacred, and the church played an important role in the mediation between the two to make sense of social,

**Figure 3.1:
Medieval Saeculum**



moral, political, and cosmic reality. Arguably, in the Middle Ages, participation in the church was *the* way to participate in the sacred. The church ordered and mediated the sacred to the saeculum in ways that not only allowed the saeculum to participate in the sacred but condescended the sacred into the saeculum in ways that perfected the latter.

José Casanova argues that the medieval differentiation between religion and the secular entailed both a spatial and temporal understanding of the saeculum that does not separate the secular and the religious. Rather it overlaps the former with the latter as a way of encompassing social, moral, and cosmic life under the authority of transcendence and the church. But it is in the convergence of transcendence to the world—by making worldly the church's effects in the mundane—that secularization starts.¹⁵² The binary between transcendence and immanence when it was no longer mediated by the church allowed the space for the eclipse and rejection

¹⁵⁰ José Casanova, "A Secular Age: Dawn or Twilight?," in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, ed. Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 265–81, 275–76; Casanova, "Secularization," 13786.

¹⁵¹ C.f. Figure 2.1.

¹⁵² José Casanova, *Global Religious and Secular Dynamics: The Modern System of Classification* (Leiden and Boston: Brill 2019), 10–12.

of transcendence and the separation between the secular and the religious since the Protestant Reformation.¹⁵³

The medieval view of the saeculum was unhooked over a space of several centuries beginning in the late Middle Ages. Throughout history, the church lost its power to influence politics, economics, and social life through both the Southern European process of laicization—of selling church property—and the Northern European aftereffects of the Protestant Reformation.¹⁵⁴ Casanova distinguishes between the Nordic-Protestant and Southern-Catholic tendencies towards secularization. The former was geared towards making the secular religious and the religious-secular by both mendicant orders and the Protestant Reformation. The latter was marked by the gradual separation between ecclesial institutions and their control over secular and political spheres. Furthermore, secularization for both was marked by an increased confessionalization *and* deconfessionalization—a turn that desacralizes the secular through the development of early modern political states as the new “social sacred.”¹⁵⁵ Casanova argues that in modernity, the arrival of the secular was tied to philosophical and historical trends that paint humans as “self-sufficient” and as having a “stadial consciousness” that both affirms human flourishing, rejects transcendence, *and* offers a teleology of human belief that assumes unbelief as the natural outcome of history in the secularity of everyday life.¹⁵⁶

Tied to this, the Enlightenment critique of religion sought to liberate humanity from the oppressive and repressive powers of institutionalized religion and propagated religion as superstitious and prone to violence in the aftermath of the seventeenth-century wars of religion.¹⁵⁷ Ruth Abbey argues that for Taylor, freedom from theistic belief was an important

¹⁵³ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 306.

¹⁵⁴ Casanova, “A Secular Age: Dawn or Twilight?”, 276-277.

¹⁵⁵ Casanova, *Global Religious and Secular Dynamics*, 12-14, [14].

¹⁵⁶ Casanova, *Global Religious and Secular Dynamics*, 14-16.

¹⁵⁷ Casanova, “Secularization,” 13786-13787.

point in the Enlightenment narrative that argued for the rational maturation out of religious belief.¹⁵⁸ It sought to do so through the power of human reason. Reason became a modern universal—something that could liberate us from superstition through instrumental means, such as technology, efficient labor, and industry. Casanova argues that this Enlightenment theory of secularization was one where humans would evolve out of believing towards unbelief, from faith to reason, and from religion to science.¹⁵⁹ Reason offered a modern vision, a secular vision, of progress—a secularized utopian vision of the progressive betterment of humanity grounded in a theory of benevolence.¹⁶⁰

But this secularized utopian vision is one that was unhooked from the Christian hope for the new heavens, new earth, and New Jerusalem that the Protestant Reformation sought to actualize on earth through their intent to sacralize ordinary life, which was affected over time through the idea of the “priesthood of all believers,” and the ascetic influence to what Max Weber called the “Protestant work ethic.”¹⁶¹ And yet this paradoxically resulted in the secularization of ordinary life. Ruth Abbey’s analyses of Taylor’s account of the Protestant Reformation reveal how the Protestant affirmation of ordinary life was ultimately secularized though its drive was originally intended to sacralize work for the glory of God.¹⁶² The lingering effects of Protestant utopia were secularized into modern spaces and visions of the good life through the emphases on rationalized Christianity, progress, self-sufficient humanism, and human flourishing.¹⁶³ This secularization of the Protestant affirmation of ordinary life resulted in a secularized promise of utopia grounded in the universality of reason and the progressive betterment of humanity. The vision of the secular hoped and worked towards liberating

¹⁵⁸ Abbey, *Philosophy Now: Charles Taylor*, 198.

¹⁵⁹ Casanova, “Secularization,” 13787-13788.

¹⁶⁰ Abbey, *Philosophy Now: Charles Taylor*, 91-93.

¹⁶¹ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (Pantianos Classics, 1905).

¹⁶² Abbey, *Philosophy Now: Charles Taylor*, 89; I argue elsewhere via Panikkar’s view of Man as a ritual being that this is something that could be retrieved: C.f. Andrew D. Thrasher, “Panikkar’s Postsecular Vision” in *An Advaitic Modernity? Raimon Panikkar and Philosophical Theology* (Lanham, MD: Fortress Press, 2024).

¹⁶³ Abbey, *Philosophy Now: Charles Taylor*, 197-198.

humanity from illness and superstitious belief in a disenchanted cosmos that was ruled by the universality of autonomous reason. *The promise of modernity is of a utopia obtained through the progressive betterment of humanity through instrumental power and means of reason.*

3.2.3 Analysis of Genealogies and Cultural History

This cultural reading of the turn from a spatial-temporal understanding of the medieval saeculum through the Protestant Reformation's emphasis on sacralizing all of ordinary life to Enlightenment emphasis on reason and the progressive betterment of humanity illustrates the contingent historical moments that lead to secular modernity. Yet, this section complements section 3.2.1 in three significant ways. First, reading this cultural history alongside Charles Taylor and the genealogical readings of secularization offered by the Radical Orthodoxy Movement and Jean-Luc Nancy reveals how the drive to Reform is key to the processes of secularization. The drive to Reform is concretized by the Protestant Reformation's move away from a sacramental conception of the world and the mediations of the church. By unhooking lower time and the secular from its mediation and participation in higher time and the heavenly world, the Protestant Reformation began the process of the desacralization of the world that has culminated in a secular modernity marked by the Enlightenment critique of religion. Second, this cultural history reveals something missing in section 3.2.1: there is a shift in the social, religious, and cultural *imaginary* that shapes the possibilities of how we have come to imagine our world. If the Medieval saeculum was characterized by a conception of reality that embedded the human person within a wider whole of culture, society, politics, and cosmos, then the historical conditions that led to its disembedding were the gradual transitions of the effects of the affirmation of ordinary life and the rationalization of Christianity.

Third, this account of Western cultural history reveals key moments in the contingencies of history that have culminated in the dualism between the sacred/religious and

the secular. While the previous section developed how three genealogies of secularization tell the story of the historical contingencies in the development of the *double* dualism, this section explicitly develops the contingencies of history by which the dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular developed. As such, the contingencies of history, whether through three genealogical readings of secularization or a cultural history since medieval Christendom, reveal how the double dualism developed across Western history. This is important to note because, for a postsecular critique of the secular and a postsecular incarnational theology of presence to articulate the continued relevance of the religious or retrieve transcendence in a secular immanent frame, one must understand the historical conditions that have come to shape the common secular imaginary. This is because the modern secular imaginary shapes what is possible to believe and how we can imagine transcendence as a viable option in the contemporary West.

3.3 Patterns of Contingency in Taylor's Genealogies of History

While the previous sections articulated the centrality of contingency in both the development of the double dualism as well as Taylor's promise of the recovery of transcendence to provide an alternative to the double dualism, this section focuses exclusively on the patterns in Taylor's genealogies of history in his *Dilemmas and Connections* to flesh out how Taylor's historical genealogies do not necessarily foreclose the possibility of transcendence in secular modernity. First, this is done by focusing on Taylor's genealogical reading of history as centered on his historical reading of the latencies of the Axial Age. The latencies of the Axial Age set the stage for the recovery of transcendence through their emphasis on religious individualism. Second, this is done by showing how Taylor historically locates this genealogy to individualism in three sociological categories—what I call Taylor's "kairological" moments, Taylor's rescriptions of Durkheim, and the question of re-enchantment—found within three *historical* imaginaries—

the pre-modern, modern, and late modern—that correlate to three sets of *religious* sensibilities that question the necessity of the closure to transcendence as the only option in our late modern imaginary.

Conceptually, it will be helpful to lay out these three historical imaginaries and their religious correlations. First, within the *pre-modern* historical imaginary Taylor utilizes what I call his three pre-modern religious imaginaries: the notions of the medieval *ancien regime*, paleo-Durkheimian religiosity, and the enchanted world. Second, within the *modern* historical imaginary, Taylor uses three notions to describe what I call his modern religious imaginaries: the Modern Moral Order, neo-Durkheimian religiosity, and disenchantment. Finally, within the *late-modern* historical imaginary, Taylor uses the notions of the age of authenticity, post-Durkheimian religiosity, and re-enchantment to describe what I call his late-modern religious imaginary.

Furthermore, I correlate these three religious-historical imaginaries in Taylor to three sociological categories: the “kairological” moments represent the first sociological category of the *ancien regime*, the Modern Moral Order, and the Age of Authenticity; the second sociological category is the religious rescriptions of Durkheim (paleo-Durkheimian religiosity, neo-Durkheimian religiosity, and post-Durkheimian religiosity); and the question of re-enchantment reflects the third sociological category that includes enchantment, disenchantment, and re-enchantment. After laying out Taylor's genealogical account of the Axial Age contributions, the following sections then examine what constitutes the pre-modern, modern, and late-modern religious-historical imaginaries of each sociological category to articulate how they are marked by historical contingency.

3.3.1 The Axial Backdrop

To set the stage for Taylor's critique of the presupposed foreclosure to transcendence—and his retrieval of transcendence as a viable option that can transform how we imagine the space for transcendence in late modernity—it is important to understand Taylor's emphasis on the long *durée* of history through an analysis of the impact of the Axial Age as a way to critique this presupposed closure. Taylor offers sporadic analyses of the implications of the Axial Age throughout his works, and yet it plays an essential backdrop to understanding his reading of Western history and how religious belief and the retrieval of transcendence may be imagined in the contemporary world.¹⁶⁴

This is developed progressively so that we may come to the central insight of Taylor's reading of the Axial Age—that through the movement from pre-Axial religions, the Axial Age, post-Axial religions, and modernity, at the end of Western history is a drawing to completion of a movement from ambiguous divinity and ritual sacrifice, through the institutionalization of self-transcendence and its unstable tension with individuated belief marked by self-renunciation for a greater good, *to the individuation of personal religion*.¹⁶⁵ The fruit of Axial Age spirituality for Taylor is accordingly a conception of the world “as constituted by individuals,” particularly of human agents.¹⁶⁶ Taylor states that “the whole sweep, as it continues up to and into Western modernity, can be seen as a great disembedding of the merely human, and even of the human individual.”¹⁶⁷ As such, my reading of Taylor shows that the trajectory of religious history is aimed at individuated religion—of which we are beginning to see the fruition in contemporary spirituality and late modern forms of religious practice and belief.

¹⁶⁴ Indeed, though he sporadically addresses the Axial Age across his writings, he has offered a short essay on it at the end of his book *Dilemmas and Connections* that I will be summarizing throughout this section along with several other essays from the volume.

¹⁶⁵ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 216.

¹⁶⁶ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 225.

¹⁶⁷ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 218.

First, Taylor's reading of pre-Axial religion demonstrates a certain ambiguity of the divine towards human flourishing. The gods are fickle and morally ambiguous, and demand forms of collective sacrifice and ritual to appease them. These traditions are called "archaic religions" by Robert Bellah,¹⁶⁸ and demonstrate the centrality of a collective identity in the face of gods who have the power to shape and affect the natural world.¹⁶⁹ The centrality of collective participation was essential in this ritual because community participation in the ritual was necessary "for the efficacy of the ritual."¹⁷⁰ Humans offer sacrifices to these gods to fulfill their desires, wants, and needs, and yet the promises of health, flourishing, and deliverance are not always guaranteed.¹⁷¹ In this sense, the pre-Axial religions collect people together in worship of gods who may not care for human flourishing.¹⁷²

Second, with the Axial Age, these religious sensibilities were subtly transformed by charismatic religious figures, philosophers, sages, and prophets, as well as various scriptures, philosophies, and theologies that ranged from Confucius, Siddhartha Gautama, the Upanishads, Mahavira, Laozi, Socrates, the Hebrew Prophets, and Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁷³ But the key developments of the Axial Age are its emphases on the moral transformation of the idea of the divine as concerned with not just human flourishing, but also with the goal of human life as something beyond human flourishing, with the human moral response to the divine, and with the *cultivation of virtue* through self-denial and renunciation *for* a good beyond human flourishing.¹⁷⁴ This development from pre-Axial emphases on the collective ritual sacrifice to a God for an ambiguous promise of human flourishing to the Axial emphases on moral

¹⁶⁸ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 217; Robert Bellah, "What is Axial About the Axial Age?" *Archives europeennes de Sociologie* 46, no. 1 (2005): 69-89.

¹⁶⁹ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 218.

¹⁷⁰ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 217.

¹⁷¹ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 221, 368, 370, 375.

¹⁷² Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 222.

¹⁷³ I personally include a longer view of the Axial Age (c.800 BCE-100 CE) because though Jesus and Siddhartha are separated by 500 years and Jesus does not fit within the normal dating of the Axial Age (traditionally ending in 300 BCE), the likenesses of both Jesus' and Siddhartha's impact upon their societies radically transformed the nature of human history as they were institutionalized in the post-Axial Age.

¹⁷⁴ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 373.

cultivation of virtue through self-renunciation for the promise of a good beyond human flourishing was an important step towards individuation in Western religious history. However, the problem is that Axial Age developments did not fully realize the individuation of religious beliefs. Rather the post-Axial Age developments institutionalized Axial Age developments tendencies.

This leads to Taylor's point that the post-Axial Age developments of institutionalizing Axial Age religions left an "unstable amalgam" between the collective and the individual forms of religiosity.¹⁷⁵ On the one hand, Axial Age religiosity moved religious history towards individuated cultivations of moral virtue for a higher good beyond this world and human flourishing. Taylor argues that this led to a level of disembedding whereby the search for the Sacred "revises notions of flourishing or even exceeds them, and can be carried through by individuals on their own and/or in new kinds of sociality, uncoupled from the established sacred order."¹⁷⁶ And yet, on the other hand, the latency of pre-Axial religious emphases on the collective organization of religious practice led in the post-Axial Age to the institutionalization of certain Axial Age religions like Christianity and Buddhism.¹⁷⁷ Particularly in the West, the post-Axial developments of Christianity set the stage for Western religiosity through the medieval creation of the concept of the "Great Chain of Being" in a pre-modern imaginary that unites the social, cosmic, and political imaginaries of medieval Western Europe.

And yet the unstable amalgam of post-Axial medieval Christianity is centered according to Taylor between the drive for order and its balance with chaos.¹⁷⁸ This drive and balance is generated according to Taylor out of the tensions between the social embedding within the cosmos and its resolution through its paradoxical denial to sustain itself.¹⁷⁹ In turn,

¹⁷⁵ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 373-374.

¹⁷⁶ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 224.

¹⁷⁷ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 174, 222.

¹⁷⁸ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 377.

¹⁷⁹ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 376.

Taylor argues that the movements of Carnival and Reform in medieval Christendom overturned this instability between social and cosmic embeddedness by unhooking the social from the cosmic. Taylor states that the secularized result of medieval Christendom was the purging of the cosmic embeddedness of social life.¹⁸⁰ This is something we have seen above as the turn away from the participation of the secular world in sacred higher time. But what it produced was not only the generation of a secular immanent frame understood without the necessary reference to transcendence but also a destabilization and decentralization of Western religiosity in the gradual development across modernity of individuated religious belief and practice.¹⁸¹

This reading of Western religiosity towards individual religious belief and practice is important because it helps us to understand how Taylor makes sense of what is happening in a secular age where the conditions for believing have changed from the Great Chain of Being to the explosion of individuated religious beliefs and practices in the twenty-first century. To examine this turn, let us analyze Taylor's three kairological moments of Western secularity in the following section. The next section demonstrates how the kairological moments are correlated with the post-Axial revolution and its culmination in what Taylor calls the late modern age of authenticity.

3.3.2 Tayloring Three Kairological Moments

What I am calling Taylor's three kairological moments of Western secularity are the developments from a medieval *ancien regime* through the Modern Moral Order to the age of authenticity. Each of these begins to paint a picture of what I call Taylor's first sociological category for his historical-religious imaginaries of medieval pre-modernity, modernity, and contemporary late modernity that will be correlated in the sections below. It is important to

¹⁸⁰ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 225.

¹⁸¹ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 304-306.

note that these three kairological moments of Western secularity are not strictly chronological, but rather capture the “mood” of each stage in Taylor's genealogy of Western history. This means there is no clear starting or stopping point between each kairological moment in Western history. Rather it implies that there is a level of chronological overlap between these three kairological moments. But what each kairological moment captures is Taylor’s sense of the mood or imaginary of each stage of Western secularity.

Taylor’s views of the Middle Ages are marked by what he calls the *ancien regime*: a notion that evokes the centrality of hierarchy. There are higher and lower orders along all sides of the Great Chain of Being. As discussed above, the medieval saeculum was split between higher and lower time and ages, and these higher and lower orders were shaped by the embedded meaningfulness of lower orders through their participation in higher orders.¹⁸² But this embedding of meaning was not only imagined in an abstract sense. It was structurally played out in how the political, social, cosmic, and moral orders were each tied to and embedded within one another for the mutual support of the medieval pre-modern imaginary. For Taylor, “human agents are embedded in society, society in the cosmos, and the cosmos incorporates the divine.”¹⁸³ We already saw that the social imaginary was embedded within the cosmic imaginary. And so also was the moral and political medieval imaginary grounded in their participation in the sacred through the sanctions of the church. Morality was embedded within the church’s interpretation of scripture and tradition while the political sphere was embedded in a hierarchy where the Church legitimized political authority across all aspects of medieval society.¹⁸⁴

In the Middle Ages, the king represented the presence of God in the cosmos to society as something intended and designed by God.¹⁸⁵ Taylor goes forward argues that in an *ancien*

¹⁸² Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 304-305.

¹⁸³ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 371.

¹⁸⁴ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 217, 370-73.

¹⁸⁵ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 228.

regime the hierarchy of society encompasses relationships of responsibilities towards those above and below us, including the religious, the social, and political, in ways that mediates the cohesion of medieval society.¹⁸⁶ This corresponded across all aspects of the medieval social imaginary—between the church and state, King and subjects, and even among the animal realm.¹⁸⁷ But as Western history continued, there were gradual contingent developments driven by Reform and diffused from the elites into the disenchantment of Western society that changed the Western imaginary.

With Taylor's notion of the Modern Moral Order, there was a gradual transition across several centuries from the medieval social imaginary to a modern social imaginary, and this is not only characterized by the development of the public sphere, the citizen-state, and the market economy that have been so prevalently throughout this thesis. The Modern Moral Order also “enshrines...three [basic] principles: 1) the rights and liberties of the members, 2) the equality among them, and 3) the principle that rule is based on consent.”¹⁸⁸ In short, this implies that the Modern Moral Order enshrines three norms of contemporary nation-states and societies: “1) human rights, 2) equality and non-discrimination, and 3) democracy.”¹⁸⁹ Each of these is supported by the historical development of the modern social imaginary and by its reconceptualization of time and space. No longer is reality marked by vertical relationships with higher times and worlds, but rather modernity is characterized by horizontal forms of time and space. This horizontal vision of reality rejects the notion of participating in higher time and space and arguably rescripts the teleological aim of history in terms of secularized progress. Furthermore, it locates time and space simultaneously in ways that generate the co-constitutional development of society along the axes of making the world a better place through values of liberal reason: human rights, equality, and democracy.

¹⁸⁶ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 230.

¹⁸⁷ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 291.

¹⁸⁸ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 318.

¹⁸⁹ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 318, 311.

Furthermore, the Modern Moral Order is also the space in which secular modernity was able to imagine the separation between transcendence and immanence. Taylor states that with the transition into the modern social imaginary, “the crucial change... [was] the possibility of living within a purely immanent order; that is, [it was the actualization of] the possibility of really conceiving/imagining ourselves within such an order, one that could be accounted for on its own terms, and thus that leaves belief in the transcendent as a kind of ‘optional extra.’”¹⁹⁰ This possibility of imagining our world as purely immanent “presupposed the clear separation between the natural and the supernatural as a necessary condition” and the structures of a modern social imaginary: the public sphere, citizen-state, and market economy.¹⁹¹

But when we turn to late modernity, there is a further development in the modern social imaginary. Taylor coins this turn as the “age of authenticity,” which is the turn to spirituality, authenticity, and expressive individualism. Part of Taylor’s masterful analysis of the age of authenticity is based on what he calls the age of mobilization, setting up the disembedding between religion and the state as a precondition that allows the full development of individual religious beliefs and spirituality. The age of authenticity is marked notably by the term “expressive individualism,” which a) has its roots in the Romantic era of the turn of the nineteenth century, and b) presupposed the contingent and constitutive nature of the modern self upon the search for depth and spiritual meaning in nature. What was once a niche phenomenon among the Romantics however, beginning in the 1960s, became a mass phenomenon that was shaped by both the moral/spiritual and instrumental individualisms of the pre-modern and modern social imaginaries.¹⁹²

While Taylor affirms that we do not find meaning in nature today in the same way that the Romantics did in the early nineteenth century, underlying expressive individualism is the

¹⁹⁰ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 227.

¹⁹¹ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 227.

¹⁹² Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 239.

sense that there is *more to being human* than mere reason and the parameters of the Modern Moral Order that determine how our lives are constituted. This affirmation of something more than human can be expressed in the age of authenticity with the turn to spirituality as opposed to organized religion. But this is also characterized by the subjective turn guided by our feelings that a) maybe there is something wrong with me or our world, or b) shape the constitution of who I am as I express my true self as I engage with and through my world. It is at this turn in the age of authenticity towards the outward expression of the inward self to the world that the late modern imaginary's emphasis on the individual's human agency comes to shape the character of religious beliefs in late modernity. But to articulate Taylor's genealogy of modernity more fully, we must also examine both his rescriptions of Durkheim and the question of re-enchantment before we turn to articulate more succinctly the shape of Taylor's postsecular genealogy of pre-modern, modern, and late modern imaginaries of belief.

3.3.3 Tayloring Rescriptions of Durkheim

Throughout Taylor's corpus, he utilizes what I would call three "rescriptions" of the insights of Émile Durkheim. Durkheim's contributions to the sociology of religion are an inescapable legacy because they posit how traditional forms of religion provide meaning, control, and coercion for the religious practitioner. But it is the ligaments of Durkheim's view of modern religion and secularization that are relevant in Taylor's rescriptions of Durkheim. Durkheim posits how traditional religion links society to religion through a collective representation, but moreover, it is marked by what Durkheim calls a mechanical, regimented, segmented, ordered, and cohesive society.¹⁹³ With modernity, Durkheim posited the idea of a society marked by organic solidarity, which is marked by differentiation and individual freedom.¹⁹⁴ Furthermore,

¹⁹³ W.S.F. Pickering, *Durkheim's Sociology of Religion: Themes and Theories* (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke & Co, 1984), 243, 446-447.

¹⁹⁴ Pickering, *Durkheim's Sociology of Religion*, 446-447.

Durkheim posits how modern religion must hold a credo to unify society, and while this does not necessarily have to be religious, it provides social solidarity and cohesion.¹⁹⁵ This resonates with the idea of political religion or how the modern state can unify society in ways that allow the space for individual freedom combines with a credo to shape society.

But W.S.F. Pickering's analyses of Durkheim's views of contemporary religion and secularization shed light on how reverence for science and reverence for man are key elements of the regression of traditional religious sociality that allow the possibility of modern morality and the cult of the individual.¹⁹⁶ Tied to the regression of religious sociality in modern religion is how the latter increasingly lacks societal integration—which allows the pluralization of individuated belief.¹⁹⁷ Durkheim's sociological theories of modern religion can help emphasize how Taylor rescripts or re-interprets Durkheim's theory of the social organization of religious societies through Taylor's genealogy of modernity. Particularly this was done through Taylor's use of the phrases “paleo-Durkheim,” “neo-Durkheim,” and “post-Durkheim.” Each of these terms is of central importance to help make sense of Taylor's postsecular genealogy of Western secularity because they shed corresponding light upon both his kairological moments and the question of re-enchantment.

Taylor's use of paleo-Durkheimian religiosity corresponds to his view of the *ancien regime*, though what he particularly hones in on is the “sense of ontic dependence of the state on God and higher times.”¹⁹⁸ By contrast, Taylor's use of “neo-Durkheimian” religiosity is of much greater importance throughout his work. In short, it articulates the reciprocal utilization of the church and the state to articulate political religious identity in ways that mobilize the state for religious purposes or as a replacement of the religious in political terms—while also articulating the civilizational link between religion and the state. While a paleo-Durkheimian

¹⁹⁵ Pickering, *Durkheim's Sociology of Religion*, 452.

¹⁹⁶ Pickering, *Durkheim's Sociology of Religion*, 484, 498.

¹⁹⁷ Pickering, *Durkheim's Sociology of Religion*, 452.

¹⁹⁸ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 150.

view of religion may mediate the Sacred through the *ancien regime*, the neo-Durkheimian view of the state is mediated by a political entity unhooked from the sacred and articulated through the Modern Moral Order in an immanent frame. Neo-Durkheimian views of the state not only mobilize a secular citizen-state in purely immanent terms, but also uphold the norms of the Modern Moral Order: democracy, human rights, and equality. This in turn shapes the religious dimension of modern political civilization, where people have a sense “of the basic order by which they live, even imperfectly, as good and (usually) as superior to the ways of life of outsiders, be they ‘barbarians,’ ‘savages’ or... ‘less developed’ peoples.”¹⁹⁹ What characterizes the relationship between religion and the state in the neo-Durkheimian model is particularly the reality that the secular takes on a quasi-religious form of expression articulated through its lens of mobilizing modern societies along the lines of democratic civilization.

But what is essential to the “post-Durkheimian” view of religion is most notably that it is unhooked from the neo-Durkheimian emphasis on the marriage to and utilization of religion for the state. While the neo-Durkheimian phenomenon can be expressed in the contemporary movements of the Moral Majority, Christian Right, and recent Trumpian evangelicalism, what characterizes the post-Durkheimian view of religion is how the individuation of religion is unhooked from both religious and modern political identities.²⁰⁰ On the other side, though post-Durkheimian religiosity is individuated, this does not mean there is no collective spirituality. Rather, individuated religious and spiritual identities are formed by loose connections of community that fulfill the need for belonging and personal fulfillment.²⁰¹ Taylor highlights the centrality of the transition from religious conformity to religious choice. While paleo-Durkheimian religiosity conforms because it is unimaginable not to in a pre-modern imaginary because one’s identity is dependent on participation in and conformity to the system, with both

¹⁹⁹ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 235.

²⁰⁰ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 256.

²⁰¹ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 256.

neo-Durkheimian and post-Durkheimian religiosity one only conforms when one gives consent to and agrees with—chooses—the religious or political identity. Second, it reveals that expressive individualism comes out in three ways.

First, post-Durkheimian religiosity comes out in the expressiveness of my participation in the religious identity I have chosen. Second, neo-Durkheimian religiosity, is understood in terms of choosing, consent, and agreement with the religious structures and/or complicity with one's national identity. Third, it comes out particularly in the age of authenticity through one's sense of community among others who hold similar religious or spiritual views while also potentially being unhooked from organized religion.

Each of these highlights that the hallmark of Western religiosity has been a drive to expressive individualism or individuated religion. But the individuation of modern society is generated through contingent processes of history that generate kairological shifts in the Western social imaginary. While a paleo-Durkheimian religiosity finds its structural expression in the social imaginary of an *ancien regime* and the Great Chain of Being, the neo-Durkheimian religiosity finds its expression in the political rescription of religion of the Modern Moral Order—and the age of authenticity is the historical frame through which religion is individuated in post-Durkheimian religiosity.

What each of these rescriptions and analyses of Taylor's understanding of Durkheim implies are overlapping kairological moments of religious consciousness that are generated through the contingencies of history. Arguably, each of these finds its genesis in the tensions between pre-Axial, Axial, and post-Axial Age developments of human religiosity. Furthermore, they display a genealogical reading of history that generates a teleological reading that ends in individuated religiosity. While this section has fleshed out Taylor's Durkheimian rescriptions through kairological readings of Western history to situate the

individuated sense of late modern religiosity, what remains is to examine Taylor's question of re-enchantment.

3.3.4 Tayloring the Question of Re-enchantment

The idea of re-enchantment presupposes the reality of something we lost. Modernity has been described as the process of disenchantment or disembedding from a religious or spiritual world (an enchanted world). And yet, the question of re-enchantment is not only whether it is proper to return to an enchanted world, or what it would look like and whether it is possible, but also whether the West has truly become "disenchanted." Throughout his analyses, Jason Josephson-Storm shows how alongside the scientific rationalization of modernity there was also the developing of a fascination with magic by the very proponents themselves of disenchantment.²⁰² The myth of disenchantment—or the demagification of modernity—has an obverse side hidden within the narrative: we are still shaped by and fascinated with enchantment. Whereas Josephson-Storm points out how even the proponents of disenchantment were fascinated with the supernatural, the notion of enchantment does not only mean—and cannot be reduced to—mere fascination with the supernatural. By contrast, Tone Svetelj describes an enchanted world according to Taylor as follows:

In the enchanted world, everything had a divine purpose; everything was included in a pre-established order seen as an act of God, who was implicated in the very existence of society (i.e., various associations, parishes, boroughs, guilds, polis, kingdoms, and church). The existence of God was the guarantee that good would triumph, at least that the plentiful forces of darkness would be kept at bay. Human spiritual and moral aspirations pointed inescapably to God. Without God, they would make no sense. The 'fullness' of life was guaranteed in God. The presence of the saints and the importance of relics embodied people's faith. Certain objects, like blessed objects, candles, and particular rituals, were charged and incorporated with a special power and meaning.

Believers perceived the existence not only of God but also of good and bad, spirits and demons. Believers felt themselves subject to the benevolent or malevolent powers of these spirits. The line between humans and impersonal forces of nature was not at all drawn. Such a world was the place where people found responses to their

²⁰² Jason A. Josephson-Storm, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017).

concerns about the meaning of life. Meaning as such existed there in the enchanted world, independently of humans and before their contact with it. People came in contact with this meaning by communication, imposition, or by bringing themselves into its force.²⁰³

This succinct reading of enchantment sheds light on several central themes of Taylor's reading of enchantment. According to Svetelj, enchantment entails the connection to the *ancien regime*, the porous identity, and its belief in spiritual beings, magic, and sacred objects.²⁰⁴ Furthermore, it situates meaning in a sacred cosmos.²⁰⁵ And yet, this enchanted vision of reality has largely been lost in the modern Western world. The questions of meaning and the fullness of life are no longer necessarily tied to belief. The encompassing power of the Catholic Church over the Western Middle Ages to shape how we imagined reality in a Great Chain of Being where our moral, social, and cosmic worlds made sense in light of an enchanted, religious reality has certainly been lost through the modern processes of disembedding and disenchantment.

And yet, what do we mean by "disenchantment"? While Hans Joas argues that Max Weber's coining of the term *entzauberung* (popularly translated as "disenchantment" but more accurately as "demagification") is more ambiguous and misinterpreted in our contemporary context than Weber's account allows, what remains central to the popular account of disenchantment is the reality that an enchanted way of imagining the world has largely disappeared in the modern West.²⁰⁶ Taylor's reflections on disenchantment reflect the concern not just for demagification, but also of the delegitimization of all "practices for dealing with spirits and forces because they allegedly either neglected the power of God or directly went against it. Rituals of this kind were supposed to have power in themselves and hence were

²⁰³ C.f. Tone Svetelj, "Rereading Modernity—Charles Taylor on Its Genesis and Prospects" (Boston, MA: Boston College, 2012), 395.

²⁰⁴ C.f. Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 287-288.

²⁰⁵ C.f. Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 291.

²⁰⁶ Hans Joas, *The Power of the Sacred: An Alternative to the Narrative of Disenchantment*, trans. Alex Skinner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 88-153.

blasphemous. All such rituals were put into a category of ‘magic.’ The category was constituted by the rejection, rather than providing a clear reason for the rejection.”²⁰⁷

Furthermore, Taylor articulates that “the process of disenchantment is the disappearance of [the spiritual] world, and the substitution of what we live today: a world in which the only locus of thoughts, feelings, and spiritual elan is what we call minds; the only minds in the cosmos are those of humans...; and minds are bounded, so that these thoughts, feelings and so forth are situated ‘within’ them.”²⁰⁸ This boundedness of the mind entails the creation of meaning through the feelings, responses, and significations of the world in our minds, but in ways that we are invulnerable and buffered from the world outside of us as we experience these emotions, feelings, and meaning we attach to them.²⁰⁹

In his discussion of this buffered self, Taylor uses the enchanted porous self as a contrast.²¹⁰ While the porous self is open to “its most powerful and important emotions... [and they are] outside the mind,” this means that there is no clear boundary between the self and the world. Taylor states that this “boundary between agents and forces is fuzzy in the enchanted world, and the boundary between mind and world is porous, as we see in the way that the charged objects can influence us.”²¹¹ This also includes spirits and the potential for possession or domination by good and bad spirits.²¹² This implies the sense that to know reality is to experience it in ways that we remain open to its influence upon us.²¹³ By contrast, the buffered self is distanced and disengaged from these experiences, and meaning both arises within the mind and the “meaning of things is defined in my responses to them.”²¹⁴ Taylor states that “as a bounded self I can see the boundary as a buffer, such that the things beyond don’t need to

²⁰⁷ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 288.

²⁰⁸ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 288.

²⁰⁹ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 288-289.

²¹⁰ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 220.

²¹¹ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 221.

²¹² Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 221.

²¹³ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 221.

²¹⁴ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 220.

‘get to me.’”²¹⁵ To be buffered then, means to see the self “as invulnerable, as master of the meanings of things for it.”²¹⁶

Most importantly, Taylor connects the buffered identity to the process of disembedding. While the pre-modern self was embedded in social, cosmic, moral, and political hierarchies, by contrast, the buffered identity is characterized by the “insistence on personal devotion and discipline, increased distance from, disidentification with, even hostility to, the older forms of collective ritual and belonging.”²¹⁷ Central to this process of disembedding then is the individual’s commitment and the drive to Reform in such a way that generates modern secularity.²¹⁸ Taylor posits the modern process of the “disembedding” of belief through the separation of political, social, and economic structures from religious structures as a way to give account to the transitions from a religious to a secular worldview.²¹⁹

But if disenchantment is now the common condition of Western secular society, then Michiel Meijer and Herbert De Vriese question the problem of “whether or not we lost [enchantment], and whether or not it needs to be retrieved.”²²⁰ But they also emphasize what late modernity imagines of the possibilities of believing is marked by the potential of recovering what has been lost (enchantment) through the re-enchantment of the possibilities of belief.²²¹ They argue that within this framework, “re-enchantment is best understood as emerging from meaningful experiences within contemporary life—experiences that blur the distinctions between theoretical and practical domains as they seem to cut across the boundaries between different value spheres.”²²²

²¹⁵ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 220.

²¹⁶ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 220.

²¹⁷ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 226.

²¹⁸ Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, 226.

²¹⁹ C.f. Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 49-68; Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 146-158.

²²⁰ Michiel Meijer and Herbert De Vriese, “Introduction,” in *The Philosophy of Reenchantment* (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 1-14, 2.

²²¹ Meijer and De Vriese, “Introduction,” 2.

²²² Meijer and De Vriese, “Introduction,” 4.

Furthermore, Paul Cloke et. al., raise the possibility of thinking about postsecularity in terms of Marika Rose's notion of "post-disenchantment" to give an account of the "co-constitutive forces of disenchantment and enchantment at work in late capitalist societies."²²³ The notion of post-disenchantment challenges the idea that we live in a disenchanted world that can only be solved by "a process of 're-enchantment'."²²⁴ By contrast, Rose argues that post-disenchantment, "recognizes not only that we can no longer evade the persistence of magical thinking and practices, but also that the entangling networks which constitute contemporary capitalism function as a system of technological re-enchantment, a secular reiteration of the kinds of structures of power and dominion which characterized the enchanted universe of classical Christian thought."²²⁵

But the possibilities of re-enchantment or post-disenchantment do not presuppose that only theistic perspectives are warranted—they do not only imply Christian responses to disenchantment.²²⁶ It can also, and must, wrestle with secular forms of re-enchantment.²²⁷ This thesis contends that we must not only pay attention to theistic responses to the secular but also see the secular as a tradition of discourse that must wrestle with the effects of religion alongside

²²³ Paul Cloke, Christopher Baker, Callum Sutherland, and Andrew Williams, *Geographies of Postsecularity: Re-envisioning Politics, Subjectivity, and Ethics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 69.

²²⁴ Cloke, et. al., *Geographies of Postsecularity*, 69.

²²⁵ Marika Rose, "Machines of Loving Grace: Angels, Cyborgs, and Postsecular Labor," *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory*, 16, no. 2 (2017): 240-259, 243; opt. cit. in Cloke, et. al., *Geographies of Postsecularity*, 69.

²²⁶ C.f. John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*; John Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013); John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*; John Milbank and Simon Oliver, eds., *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader*; Francis Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1978); Francis Schaeffer, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001); Francis Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2006); Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publishing, 2008); Lesslie Newbigin, *Proper Confidence: Faith, Doubt, & Certainty in Christian Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1995); Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1989); James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*; James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, vol. 2, 3 vols., *Cultural Liturgies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013); James K. A. Smith, *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology*, vol. 3, 3 vols., *Cultural Liturgies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017).

²²⁷ C.f. Akeel Bilgrami, "Might There Be Secular Enchantment?" in *The Philosophy of Reenchantment*, ed. Michiel Meijer and Herbert De Vriese (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 54–77; Akeel Bilgrami, "Secularism: Its Content and Context," in *Secularism, Identity, and Enchantment*, ed. Akeel Bilgrami (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 3–57.

its history. This implies a sense of postsecularity that both the theist and secularist alike must address the problems disenchantment has left behind. As a key to postsecular notions of re-enchantment, Paul Cloke et. al. argues that postsecularity entails a level of “affirmation of things in the world” that counters modern processes. They argue that “to some extent, secular reinstatement of enchantment leans on the capacity of the postmodern to restore to the world what modernity had denuded of it; a reinvigoration of initiative and authorship of action, and the right to give meaning to and construe narratives counteracted a de-spiritualized and de-animated model of the world in which the capacity of the subject has gone missing.”²²⁸ By building on the postmodern, the idea of secular re-enchantment hopes in “a restored ontology of agency in both the human and non-human world.”²²⁹ In an appeal to William Connolly’s affirmation of immanence as a form of re-enchantment, Cloke et. al. argues that Connolly,

Contends that the distinction between secular public and religious private life needs to be reworked and that traditional ideas about unity and solidarity need to be translated into drives to form new ideas of provisional assemblages comprised of multiple constituencies and creeds... He draws on a meliorism that prioritizes collective reflective action, and on Deleuzian notions of immanence in a world that is always becoming. Taken together, moments of reflexive and coincidental postsecularity can emerge as key components of re-enchantment. Religious and secular dispositions can be made to resonate in ways that re-enchant a world stripped of its mystery, ineffability, and virtually impossible.²³⁰

Cloke et. al. point out how the tensions between the secular and the religious suggest how “*existential ressentiment* and *spiritual ennui* might facilitate, as well as serve a bulwark to, a willingness to enter into the space of postsecularity.”²³¹ Furthermore, Meijer and de Vriese state: “The point here is that while re-enchantment can be interpreted in theistic terms, it need not be, to the extent that not just religious but all human beings share an enchanted kind of

²²⁸ Cloke, et. al., *Geographies of Postsecularity*, 18.

²²⁹ Cloke, et. al., *Geographies of Postsecularity*, 18.

²³⁰ Cloke, et. al., *Geographies of Postsecularity*, 20.

²³¹ Cloke, et. al., *Geographies of Postsecularity*, 22.

sensibility in encountering the world through irreducibly normative experiences such as wonder, horror, delight, and agony.”²³²

The question of meaning, after the plausibility structures of the Christian sacred canopy have been weakened by secular and modern processes and ideologies, results in both the threat of emptiness in ordinary life that strives to make sense of life without God and the question of whether fullness or flourishing may be experienced within an immanent frame. Both of these are also marked by a certain disillusionment and wonder, and hope and nostalgia at what it means to believe after secular in everyday life. Indeed, the notion of disenchantment is rightly understood as “the removal of magic from our perception of the world,” and yet in Taylor’s terms this is a turn away from an enchanted world, porous self, and the wonder found there towards a buffered self that experiences “wonderment” for and in and by the centrality of the human “appreciation of the world.”²³³ It is with the tension between meaninglessness and meaningfulness in ordinary life that the question of meaning arises in light of secular modernity. No longer is meaning inherent in the West because the Christian sacred canopy has lost its explanatory power to make sense of reality and everyday life. The collapse of this sacred canopy is also a history, a process of disembedding from the religious structures that no longer meaningfully help us make sense of our world.

This section has argued not only that Taylor lays out helpful schemas by which to understand enchantment and disenchantment, but also that the question of re-enchantment may be a misnomer. I think Marika Rose’s notion of post-disenchantment more adequately describes what needs to happen because it is not as if we could merely reverse the developments of modernity and return to the pre-modern religious imaginary defined by enchantment, the porous self, and a world that participates in higher orders of time and space. I agree with Taylor

²³² Meijer and De Vriese, “Introduction,” 3.

²³³ Justyna Miklaszewska, “The Idea of Immanence in Charles Taylor’s Philosophy of Religion,” in *The Sources of Secularism: Enlightenment and Beyond*, ed. Anna Tomaszewska and Hasse Hämäläinen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 35-51, 38.

that this is not possible, nor is it desirable. The late modern situation is indelibly marked by disenchantment and the marks of modernity. Because of this, how we believe must always come face to face with the bulwarks of disenchantment.

But there are ways in which we may live and believe in a post-disenchanted world that can cultivate the senses of a porous identity, participation in eternity, and spiritual realities. Tentatively, this can look like viewing ourselves not as the arbiters of meaning and invulnerable to spiritual forces, but rather as able to see and imagine ourselves as affected by spiritual realities that can meaningfully influence, confront, and encounter us in our finitude. This in turn sets the stage for a late modern way to imagine participating in eternity as remaining open to the possibility of transcendence and spiritual realities and the affections of their energies upon us. This most notably implies that post-disenchantment entails cultivating a lived sense of transcendence that is present to us. For transcendence to be present to us means that the immanent frame remains open to the possibility of transcendence as something that can give us meaning even if we no longer live in a medieval social imaginary of the Great Chain of Being. While this will be developed below in Part II, we must first draw together the threads of this section to illustrate how Taylor's retrieval of transcendence and genealogical readings of the contingencies of history contribute to a postsecular critique of the secular.

3.3.5 Analysis of Taylor's Genealogical Imaginaries

This section analyzed several sociological-historical-religious categories by which to demonstrate how Taylor's understanding of the contingencies of history reveals that the foreclosure to transcendence is not necessarily so. Ranging from the Axial backdrop and his kairological moments, Durkheimian rescriptions, and the question of re-enchantment, this section argued how each of these three triads could express pre-modern, modern, and late modern religious-historical imaginaries and sociological categories by which to make sense of

Taylor's genealogical understanding of the contingencies of history that hold open the space for the recovery of transcendence. Taylor's sociological and genealogical readings of religion across history show how a cultural reading of historical contingencies considers the question of *how* we have *imagined* our world in ways that shape whether we are open to and can recover transcendence and what religion looks like within these visions of our world. This section unpacks each of these religious-historical imaginaries and sociological categories as a way to systematize the connections across each of the triads.

The pre-modern religious-historical imaginary is marked by what Taylor calls the *ancien regime*, paleo-Durkheimian religiosity, and enchantment. Each of these sheds light on the embeddedness of the human being in a cohesive and constitutive understanding of reality. The human agent is embedded within a social, cosmic, and political world and participates in higher orders of time and space through the mediations of the church. These give the human agent meaning and sense as s/he grapples with the porosity of the self as s/he is beset with magic and spiritual realities that can harm or heal him/her. The social dynamic of the pre-modern religious-historical imaginary is embedded in a spiritual world of meaning that can affect and influence the human agent in ways that situate the human person in a world where we participate in God's eternity through an enchanted world. To participate in this eternity through the church means that meaning is given, so long as we find ourselves conforming to the hierarchical way in which transcendence condescends to us through the church.

By contrast, the modern religious-historical imaginary is buffered, disenchanted, and disembedded from the pre-modern Great Chain of Being. This means that the modern religious-historical imaginary functions from within a presupposed closure to transcendence, from a presupposed pure immanence. But when we examine the neo-Durkheimian rescription of modern religion, we see both that the state takes on a quasi-religious meaning when it comes to nationalism, and that the religious makes the effort to influence and shape the state with

inflections of religious morality. In turn to disenchantment, the modern religious imaginary is one buffered from and invulnerable to the influences of the spiritual in its closure to transcendence. This is sustained by the disengaged orientation of the self to the world as a mind that determines what is meaningful to the modern self. The process of disembedding thus entails the unhooking not only of society, culture, politics, and the cosmos from the transcendent, but marks off boundaries between the self and spiritual realities in its rejection of magic and superstition. But what lies ahead of this imaginary are things latent since the Axial Age, namely the fulfillment of individual religion in late modernity.

With this in mind, this entails that the late modern religious-historical imaginary is marked by the fulfillment of individuated religion, where the age of authenticity locates religious beliefs and practice in the individual's preferences feelings, practices, and disciplines that are connected to others through various commitments and communities surrounding what we believe and consider common goods worth acting on. This can include the turn to spirituality, which is chosen and cultivated through various practices that connect the self to spiritual realities and ideas through practices that lead to wholeness and flourishing. A question to pose a late modern religious-historical imaginary however, is whether there is space for an otherworldly fullness that is beyond human flourishing, or rather, what does it look like in late modernity to incarnationally practice that other-worldly good in the here and now of our everyday lives in ways that hold open an immanent frame to the presence of transcendence? Before we examine these questions, we must first evaluate the contributions of this chapter.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter argued that Taylor offers key frameworks for understanding how the contingency claim of a postsecular critique of the secular reveals both the historical contingencies of the double dualism between the secular and the sacred/religious and transcendence and immanence

as well as how his appeal to the retrieval of transcendence and his sociological-religious-historical imaginaries offer components that point to a critique of the necessity of imagining the foreclosure of transcendence and religion. We learn from this chapter that an analysis of historical contingency is an important point of explanation and critique of this double dualism. This is because the genealogies of secularization take into account not only what has happened, but also guard against a determinative reading that it was teleologically necessary. After all, the contingencies of history shape how the recovery of transcendence is based on how we historically *imagined* the possibility of transcendence.

This chapter did so by arguing how the drive to Reform finds its origins in the Axial backdrop and emphasizes individuated religion as an open end to this narrative in that it can subvert the closure to transcendence. Furthermore, we learn in this chapter that a cultural reading of the contingencies of history and a genealogical reading of Western secularization reveals how a postsecular critique of the secular is grounded in the conditions that shape *whether we imagine the world as open to transcendence or not*. This means that these cultural contingencies of history and secularization *do not necessarily have to produce* the dualism between the secular and the religious/sacred or even the dualism between transcendence and immanence. Rather, they open the door to their potential inversion if we conceive of immanence as open to the retrieval of transcendence.

While this chapter focused on the contingency claim, the next chapter will begin to develop more fully how a postsecular critique of the secular critiques the dualism between the secular and the sacred/religious by articulating the complex inversions of the secular and the religious. Each of these chapters in Part I question the assumed dualism between the secular and the sacred/religious by showing the complicity between the two through their analyses of the contestability, contingency, and complexity claims of a postsecular critique of the secular as outlined in the first research question [see page 7].

CHAPTER FOUR: POSTSECULAR COMPLEXITY: POSTSECULAR INVERSIONS OF THE SECULAR

While the previous chapters analyzed the contestability and contingency claims of a postsecular critique of the secular, this chapter offers an analysis of the complexity claim. This chapter argues for the postsecular critique of the secular's dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular by analyzing several postsecular inversions of the secular. The complexity claim of a postsecular critique of the secular argues how the secular is implicitly religious, or at least how the secular bifurcation between the secular and the religious is a lie when we examine not only how religion exists within the secular, but also how postsecular politics problematizes the contested space for the religious in the secular public sphere. This chapter argues how an analysis of how the sacred/religious and the secular create a postsecular thirdspace where believing is possible and marked by complex space and time. This is done through several postsecular inversions of the secular to show how the dualism between the secular and the religious is a false claim, particularly when we consider the quotidian, political, and social dimensions of the postsecular thirdspace.

First, section 4.1 contextualizes the complexity claim of a postsecular critique of the secular through analysis of the discourses on "complex space and time." In doing so, it contextualizes the central role of the postsecular thirdspace as marked by spatial and temporal dimensions of the postsecular as orienting factors that generate the complex tensions between the sacred/religious and the secular. Second, section 4.2 analyzes Taylor's metaphorical "house of secularism" in conjunction with his commentators to demonstrate an inversion of this house. This inversion reveals how a house of postsecularism pays attention to the porous interplay between the social, political, and quotidian dimensions of the postsecular. Furthermore, it reveals how the postsecular thirdspace can imagine the reversal of the secular rejection of religion through the lived experience of religious belief in the secular.

Third, section 4.3 offers two postsecular critiques of the secular to argue: a) how a survey of postsecular literature reveals the complicit relationship between the religious in the secular; and b) how Jürgen Habermas' postsecular political theory problematizes the complex space in which religion is situated in secular political discourses. Finally, section 4.4 analyzes two postsecular inversions i) how the secular and the religious are grounded in the concept of incarnation and ii) how Casanova's secularization theses may be reversed. Concluding, this chapter poses the problem of what we must learn from a postsecular critique of the secular to constructively interpret how it addresses the problem of the double dualism via the contextual contributions of Charles Taylor found across Part I.

4.1 Imagining Postsecularity as Complex Space and Time

This section examines the complexity claim through an account of spatialization, demonstrating how the postsecular imagines belief in a world where religion and the secular contest one another and vie for viability in complex space and time. Lois Lee argues that postsecularism is a theoretical conception of concrete perspectives of the secular. But it is also a critical reflexive stance towards the secular that reimagines the secular in renewed ways, drawing out the sensibilities and redefinitions of how we imagine believing in the secular.²³⁴ Imagining belief in the postsecular can be understood through analyses of it as a complex space, a tense space with different and multiple traditions of embodied practice.²³⁵ Complex space offers us a way of understanding the postsecular in ways that produce imaginaries of how we may *believe* in the postsecular. Belief in the postsecular is not only an imagined reality: it is grounded in the concrete sensibilities, the porous boundaries, the contestability of normative

²³⁴ Lois Lee, *Recognizing the Non-Religious: Reimagining the Secular* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 45-46.

²³⁵ C.f. Hent De Vries, "On General and Divine Economy: Talal Asad's Genealogy of the Secular and Emmanuel Levinas's Critique of Capitalism, Colonialism, and Money," in *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors*, ed. David Scott and Charles Hirschkind (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 113-33, 132.

structures, and the religious imagination of everyday life. The everydayness of belief in the postsecular evokes new and imagined ways of understanding and contesting how religion and the secular mutually penetrate one another, fluidly interact, and produce a thirdspace where we can imagine religion and belief as a viable option in the midst of the secular.

The postsecular thirdspace posits a complex space and complex time between religion and secularity. It pairs the re-enchantment of secular ordinary life with a transcendence that resacralizes secular life within the normative structures of a secular, immanent frame. It questions the irrelevance of religion in secular discourse. It questions the desacralization of ordinary life and may work towards the delaicization of religion in secular politics. Within this framework, Amy Allen offers important reflections on postsecularism:

In light of the continued importance of religion, then, our multicultural world society must be considered not secular but postsecular. The problematization of our secular self-misunderstanding leads to the shattering of the secularistic confidence in the immanent disappearance of religion. The awareness of living in a secular society is no longer bound up with the certainty that advancing social and cultural modernization can occur only at the cost of the public influence and personal relevance of religion. [Jürgen] Habermas reminds us that the secularization hypothesis was originally connected with theories of modernization and social evolution. Hence, the question of the future of religion is inextricably bound up with our judgments about the fate of modernity.²³⁶

Moreover, the fate of modernity cannot merely be about abandoning or transcending religion. Postsecularism entails a complex space between the possibilities of believing. This complex space is where the question of the possibilities of believing is granted and explored in the normative structures of secularism. But it also questions and constructively posits how belief is imagined within and shapes the secular political, social, cultural, and quotidian spheres. The future of modernity is intimately bound to both how religion is imagined, its historical processes, and the potential reversals of religion in late modernity. The future of religion in late modernity implies a postsecular thirdspace marked by a complex space and a complex time

²³⁶ Amy Allen, "Having One's Cake and Eating It Too: Habermas' Genealogy of Post-Secular Reason," in *Habermas and Religion*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013), 132–53, 136.

that holds open the space for the possibility and optionality of believing in everyday life. It is a complex space because it is where we believe in modernity. But it is also a complex time in which we believe because of the historical narratives and threads that shape the possibility of believing in late modernity. The complex space and time of believing in the postsecular thirdspace are characterized by the tensions between religion and secularity in late modernity.

As part of an analysis of how a postsecular critique of the secular critiques the dualism between the secular and the sacred/religious, it is relevant to ask the question, “How do we imagine the relationship between the secular and the religious in everyday life?” To answer this question, the following section develops the first of several inversions of a postsecular critique of the secular. It does so by articulating and inverting Charles Taylor's house of secularism into a house of postsecularism as a way of imagining how, in everyday life, believing in the secular holds out for a tensile openness to the possibility of believing. Furthermore, this inversion articulates the complexity of postsecular space and time through a metaphor of how the complexity claim inverts the social and political dimensions of the secular through the lived dimensions of how we imagine the tactical religious possibilities of quotidian life.

4.2 House Metaphors

To imagine the postsecular as marked by complex space and time, this section invokes two metaphors. Both are depictions of a “house.” While the first house is provided by Charles Taylor—the house of secularism—the second house is a postsecular inversion of Taylor's original house. What differentiates the two houses most notably is the openness of the second, postsecular house to belief and religion after the first house of secularism has been constructed as closed to belief and religion. The second house opens the doors of the first house, both internally and externally, to both the porous interchange between floors and the outside world symbolized by belief. Religion does not seep into the house of secularism by accident. Its doors

open to the possibility of religion in the house of postsecularism, and religion then subtly moves between rooms and floors. While we can speak of two houses, one closed and one open to belief and religion, they are in fact the same house. While the first house follows the secularization process in Western modernity in closing the doors to transcendence, the second house reopens its doors to belief and religion after the first house realizes what it has lost—and in reopening its doors it begins to retrieve transcendence in the house of secularism by opening up again to the formative role of belief and religion in late modernity.

4.2.1 The House of Secularism

Charles Taylor contextualizes secularism in terms of three ideological types that differentiate the religious from the secular: 1) political secularism₁—where secular politics argues for the privatization of belief from the public sphere;²³⁷ 2) sociological secularism₂—which advocates the traditional secularization thesis wherein the more modern we become, institutionally, the less we believe and practice, i.e., the less religious we become;²³⁸ and 3) phenomenological secularism₃—which nuances the changed conditions for belief within the secular immanent frame.²³⁹ Taylor's account of the secular demonstrates the problematization of religion in the secular and pays close attention to the shifting sands on which political and sociological secularism are based.

Sociological secularism has been internally critiqued over several decades, often quickly adopting and abandoning the secularization thesis.²⁴⁰ In terms of political secularism₁,

²³⁷ This is the common thread of secularization since the Enlightenment, which was challenged by the emergence of public religions in the 1980's. C.f. José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

²³⁸ Based on empirical data in the late 1960s numerous scholars propagated this position. C.f. Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1967), 23; Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 105-125.

²³⁹ C.f. James K. A. Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2014), 20-24.

²⁴⁰ C.f. Herbert de Vriese's historical analysis of the sociological flip-flop over the secularization thesis: Herbert De Vriese, "The Charm of Disenchantment," in *Rethinking Secularization: Philosophy and the Prophecy*

the process of deprivitization of religion entails that religious traditions refuse to accept the roles modernity and secularization ascribe to them. By engaging in secular spheres of state and market economy, religion challenges the legitimacy and autonomy of the secular. As such, this postsecular trend within political secularism₁ implies the challenge to the secular in ways that re-legitimizes the religious voice in alliance with political ideologies that can integrate religious voices. Here we see “a dual, interrelated process of re-politicization of the private religious and moral spheres and the re-normativization of [religion in] the public economic and political spheres.”²⁴¹ To flesh this out, José Casanova defines political deprivitization:

to signify the emergence of new historical developments which, at least qualitatively, amount to a certain reversal of what appeared to be secular trends. Religions throughout the world are entering the public sphere and the arena of political contestation not only to defend their traditional turf, as they have done in the past, but also to participate in the very struggles to define and set modern boundaries between private and public spheres, between system and lifeworlds, between legality and morality, between individual and society, between family, civil society, and state, between nations, states, and civilizations, and the world system.²⁴²

Within this framework, Taylor articulates with the metaphor of a house how secularism may be understood:²⁴³ the basement is secularism₁ wherein the role of religious belief has diminished in the public sphere, privatizing belief out of public discourse; the first floor is secularism₂ where the diminishing participation in religious institutions implies a type of sociological secularism marked by the decline of religious belief and practice; finally, the upper floor—secularism₃ or phenomenological secularism—offers explanations of how the secular changed the conditions for belief in modernity.²⁴⁴ Taylor’s threefold metaphor of the secular can be characterized by Tone Svetel’j’s summary of it: 1) secularism₁ is a retreat of religion

of a Secular Age, ed. Herbert De Vriese and Gary Gabor (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 233–86, 237–253.

²⁴¹ Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 5–6.

²⁴² Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 6.

²⁴³ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 431–433.

²⁴⁴ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 431–433; Tone Svetel’j, “Rereading Modernity—Charles Taylor on Its Genesis and Prospects” (Boston, MA: Boston College, 2012), 445–448. Henceforth as “Rereading Modernity.”

from public life; 2) secularism₂ is the decline in belief and practices; and 3) secularism₃ is the changed conditions for belief.²⁴⁵

From the basement up we see a differentiation thesis developed across the historical process of secularization in the modern West. If the basement describes the political disembedding of religion from the state (the church no longer holds authority over the state and the state replaces the church as an autonomous entity governing the contours of politics, culture, and society), the central, first floor describes the sociological implications of the decline in institutional religion (modern persons become disembedded from religious practice and participation in institutionalized religions declines). As we move upstairs to the top, second floor, we move into a space where religion articulates itself within the confines of the secular, and where the secular begins to doubt its self-misunderstanding as influenced by the Enlightenment critique of religion.²⁴⁶

Charles Taylor challenges the secularization theory advocated by the Enlightenment critique of religion as one-sided and narrow-minded. By following a cultural historical-genealogical approach to secular modernity, Taylor argues that religion adapts to new historical contexts. Furthermore, it is marked by discontinuity and continuity to and in modernity via adaptation and adoption of a re-embedding of religious beliefs and practices within the supernova effect (the pluralistic explosion of religious options). Taylor's account of secularization demonstrates the genealogical development of the transformation of religion

²⁴⁵ Svetelj, "Rereading Modernity," 449.

²⁴⁶ C.f. José Casanova, "Beyond European and American Exceptionalisms: Towards a Global Perspective," in *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular, and Alternative Futures*, ed. Grace Davie, Paul Heelas, and Linda Woodhead (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 17–29, 24: José Casanova articulates three dimensions of the Enlightenment critique of religion:

"the cognitive critique of religion as a primitive, pre-rational worldview to be superseded by the advancement of science and rational thought; the political critique of ecclesiastical religion as a conspiracy of rulers and priests to keep the people ignorant and oppressed, a condition to be superseded by the advancement of popular sovereignty and democratic freedoms; and the humanistic critique of the very idea of God as human self-alienation and as a self-denying otherworldly projection of human aspirations and desires, a critique which postulated the death of God as the premise of human emancipation."

into modernity in such a way to indicate the phenomenological difference between a pre-modern participatory worldview, as advocated by the Radical Orthodoxy Movement, and a late-modern, immanent frame wherein the postsecular becomes an “immanent critique” of the secular wherein it “invites the secular to historicize and contextualize itself.” This invitation to historicize and contextualize the secular is done by way of de-transcendentalizing the secular and seeing it as fallible—by getting rid of its “reductionist and ‘fundamentalist’ assumptions.”²⁴⁷

In Taylor’s analysis of this house of secularism, he sees the basement and the upper floor as linked because the historical processes of secularization found in the basement have shaped the conditions for belief today on the upper floor.²⁴⁸ He reflects on this to show how the possibility of believing in modernity faces a fundamental challenge because in secular modernity, religion is often seen as irrelevant and its power to shape how we imagine our world has both been lost and discredited.²⁴⁹ Part of this is tied to the motivating power of religion in a secular age, which Taylor describes as marked by two theses: the disappearance thesis (which posits that the motivations to believe “tend to disappear in modernity”); and the second is the epiphenomenal thesis (which posits how religious motivations are episodic in their ability to shape human actions).²⁵⁰ And yet this motivating power of religion that has largely disappeared or become episodic can be explained by another reading of Taylor’s notion of secularity.

Andrew Root offers an important categorization of Taylor’s three notions of secularity—particularly because of his attention not only to a typology but also to the historical contingency that shapes the development of each type of secularity. Root describes secularity₁ in terms of the pre-modern world to reflect on how the sacred and the secular are characterized

²⁴⁷ Hent De Vries, “Global Religion and the Post-Secular Challenge,” in *Habermas and Religion*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013), 203–29, 203–204.

²⁴⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 433.

²⁴⁹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 433.

²⁵⁰ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 433.

by higher and lower planes, but that time participates in eternity, or rather that time gets its meaning from the participation in the rhythms of sacred time. Secularity₁ then implies the participation of time in eternity in ways that layer the secular world with sacred meaning.²⁵¹ Secularity₂ by contrast is the first step to secularization. It is where a spatial distinction between the secular and the religious develops—where the whole world is no longer overlaid with sacred meaning and certain spaces are unhooked from their participation in the eternal. This entails an imaginary where how we conceive of the sacred and secular are unhooked from one another—the secular now becomes autonomous in ways that create spaces where the divine is no longer found meaningful in how we make sense of our temporal lives.

Here we see that the secularizing transition between time and space is marked first by the unhooking of the secular from sacred time which allows secular space to develop in ways unhooked from the sacred.²⁵² This in turn breeds secularity₃ where transcendence may be conceived of as irrelevant, opening the door to reject transcendence, God, and religion, because it is no longer relevant to shape the temporal and spatial dimensions of our lives. But important to secularity₃ is that while it imagines the world as closed to transcendence it also generates the turn to spirituality and authenticity in ways that subtlety challenge the closure to transcendence from a horizontal plane.²⁵³

Hence while secularity₃ for Root generates the possibility of the irrelevance of religious belief in God and the closure to transcendence, it also implies how Taylor's accounts of the secular offer important and subtle points of how to hold open the space for transcendence in everyday life. This means that one would have to imagine again the spatial and temporal relevance of eternity in how we move and live throughout our lives. This means living in another world while also seeing our world as overlaid with and participating in eternal

²⁵¹ Andrew Root, *Faith Formation in a Secular Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 104-106.

²⁵² Root, *Faith Formation in a Secular Age*, 106-109.

²⁵³ Root, *Faith Formation in a Secular Age*, 109-112.

significance. To re-enchant the secular would entail not only a subtle reversal of the secular, but this can only happen when we imagine ourselves as incarnationally participating in the spatial and temporal overlap of our secular lives in eternity.

From these accounts of Taylor's views of secularity and the metaphor of the house of secularism, there are three ways of understanding how the secular developed through a genealogical history. If political secularism₁ was the first stage between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, then sociological secularism₂ increasingly became apparent in the twentieth century, especially in the advent of postmodernity in the last third of the last century. Finally, Taylor's phenomenological secularism₃ offers resources for understanding not only how the secular is normative but also how religion is imagined and contested in twenty-first-century everyday life. Underlying this house of secularism, Root's analyses of secularity shed light on the spatial and temporal losses that come with the secular, and his analyses pinpoint the central claim for the transformation of the secular: incarnational participation in eternity. Without this participation in eternity, the viability of religious belief in the secular cannot be sustained. It is at this point that we can turn to the house of postsecularism as an inversion of the metaphor where belief in twenty-first-century everyday life still remains possible and believable.

4.2.2 Inverting the House of Secularism

The house of postsecularism opens the doors of Taylor's house of secularism. If the political basement of secularism₁ is marked by the privatization of religion, then the postsecular door into the basement is marked by the return and resurgent visibility of religion in the public sphere. The door into the basement opens political secularism₁ to its potential reversal. Tied to a postsecular basement is the possibility of a neo-Durkheimian deprivitization in the public sphere where religion's influence upon the public sphere has shaped the possibility not only of

political religion but also the potential of a contemporary Christendom. Hubert Knoblauch problematizes José Casanova's position of the deprivitization of religion as an intimate reversal of the privatization thesis. Knoblauch, following Casanova, points out that privatization is not an essential element of the secularization thesis, but draws out a critique of Casanova's defense of public religions as a phenomenon of postsecular religion in the public sphere.²⁵⁴

If the sociological first floor of secularism₂ is marked by the decline of religion, then the individualization, pluralization, and subjectivization of belief in late modernity's age of authenticity mark its transformation. But the individuated recreations and imaginations of what we want to believe and find possible to believe implies not a reversal of the decline of religion. Rather they imply religion's inversion, transformation, and re-enchantment of the secular in new and unique ways. While there is certainly a decline of participation in institutional religion—both in creedal belief and regular practice—what we find in late modernity is that the pluralization of belief and practices is far more porous and complex than we can easily capture with the naivete of a simple bifurcation between the secular and the religious that neglects the transformation of the conditions for and against belief in the contemporary world. This transformation of the conditions of belief can be captured in part by both the sense of belonging that shapes Northern European religiosity and the turn to spirituality that culturally shapes Western spheres of the world like Europe, Australia, and North America.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁴ Hubert Knoblauch, "Deprivitization, the Public Sphere, and Popular Religion," *Religion and Society: Advances in Research* 2 (2011): 5-8.

²⁵⁵ C.f. Grace Davie, "Believing Without Belonging: Is This the Future of Religion in Britain?" *Social Compass* 37, no. 4 (1990): 455-69; Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain: A Persistent Paradox*, Second Edition (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2015); Grace Davie, *Religion in Modern Britain since 1945: Believing Without Belonging* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell inc., 1994); Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1996); Paul Heelas, *Spiritualities of Life: New Age Romanticism and Consumptive Capitalism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008); Paul Heelas, et al., *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion Is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005); Steven J. Sutcliffe, *Children of the New Age: A History of Spiritual Practices* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003); Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman, ed., *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000); Adam Possamai, *In Search of New Age Spiritualities* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).

While the first floor opens us to the renewed possibility and transformation of religion after secularism, the second floor (secularism₃) phenomenologically embodies this openness and closedness to believing in the lived conditions of everyday life. The stairwell from the first floor to the second floor of postsecularism implies how religion is imagined and *lived* in everyday life. The second floor of postsecularism is characterized by the quotidian possibilities of believing. Everyday conditions for and of believing become the phenomenological space where belief is embodied, embedded, and lived. Arguably, the second floor was never fully secularized. There remained on the second floor the residual conditions for belief, whether that meant still believing amid secular modernity, or whether belief transformed into this-worldly concerns that inverted the secular as religious.

But the front door into the house of postsecularism also entails its back door. Sociologically, each door opens and closes, allowing in and out the sociological possibilities of religion in the midst of the secular. This is exemplified in the flourishing of spirituality and authenticity alongside the decline of participation in institutional religion. The side door in the basement of the house of postsecularism entails a sidestepping of the doors on the first floor. The basement door opens the privatization of religion to its public resurgence. In doing so, it sidesteps the sociological decline of institutional practice and belief and creates the complex rewiring of the social and cultural imaginaries with a contested religiously renewed political sphere. Even more hidden is the external, open door to the second floor, where an outside stairwell leads to a deck entrance where religion has always been tacitly infiltrating the house with the conditions of and for belief. In this sense, the second floor of the house of secularism had always been implicitly religious because it is marked by the quotidian conditions of belief that appear as alternate and viable options—*as if* believing is still an assumed, if contested, possibility of how to live and imagine the presence of religion in the mere and exclusive secularity of ordinary life.

Though the second floor never became truly secular, the everyday lived experience of religion on the second floor of the house of postsecularism is built on the basement's and first floor's contested openness and closedness to religion. While the open doors on the first floor and the basement are open to the external influences of religion, there also remain stairwells between each floor where the movement between floors demonstrates not just the building blocks of secularism but also that it is combined with the possibility of religious renewal. This religious renewal comes from both the enduring practices and beliefs of religion within dusty, hidden, forgotten corners of the house and from new exposure to religion as doors open again to it. The open doors and stairwells of the house of postsecularism lay out the possibilities for imagining the openness and closedness to religion. It is in the concrete, lived expressions of belief displayed in the house of postsecularism that we can imagine the return of religion—politically, socially, and phenomenologically—that we find the complex space for possibilities of belief in the midst of the secular.

But not only are the external doors open and closed in various ways. The religious conditions on the various floors of postsecularism—its internal rooms, stairwells, and doors—also remain variously open and closed based on the various stages and conditions of everyday life.²⁵⁶ In the movement between floors through stairwells and doors, we find on each floor a porous set of conditions in lived experience where the boundaries between religion and the secular may be both open or closed based on where we dwell in the house and to what religious or irreligious purposes we use the house for. The openness of each floor to outside exposure to religion, as well as from hidden and tacit religious latencies from within, opens the conditions of quotidian life to religious viability and renewal after the normativity of the secular.

²⁵⁶ One can also include here the political relationship between church and state and the contours and developments of Christianity and Western history.

Just as at one point in the day, I may be more public as I emerge from, or more private as I dwell in the basement, so also as I live on the first floor I may religiously or irreligiously cook, work, eat, or relax in the conditions of my social life. Furthermore, as I move upstairs to sleep and refresh myself, I may religiously pray before bed and/or decompress in bed with a TV show, book, or movie that may enchant my imagination and invert my secular lifestyle with stories that reshape my secular life through the participation in sacred rhythms found within my ordinary life. These rhythms speak a sense of lived religiosity, one where our daily habits orient us towards our conceptions of the good life and allow us to rest.²⁵⁷ The rhythms of our habits speak to the patterns of our lives. These patterns, rhythms, and habits may be religious, spiritual, and/or non-religious, but each of them speaks to the condition of our hearts and the lived expressions of the good life inherent throughout the narratives and stories of everyday experience.

The orientations of the house of postsecularism are not merely towards the utilization of the various rooms and usages of each floor. Rather they are oriented towards the integration of each room on each floor to and in the contours of everyday life. Holistic integration of the house of postsecularism is when each room and floor of the house are not neglected. The hidden crevices behind bookshelves, in storage closets, and under beds reveal hidden, tacit, latent, and forgotten religiosities when remembered, cleaned, and recovered. When we know what remains in the house, as well as what is being introduced into the house, the sacralization of the house and renewal of the conditions that shape the possibilities of belief after secular is imaginable. By examining not just the used space, but also the forgotten space, we begin to uncover what we have forgotten and integrate it into the rest of the house.

²⁵⁷ C.f. the following Christian literature on spiritual disciplines and the rhythms of everyday life: Mike Cosper, *Recapturing the Wonder: Transcendent Faith in a Disenchanted World* (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2017); Tish Harrison Warren, *Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life* (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2016); Tish Harrison Warren, *Prayer in the Night: For Those Who Work or Watch or Weep* (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2021).

Hence, we have become aware of the implicit religiosity found in the house of postsecularism. This implicit religiosity is not found on a single floor in the house of postsecularism. Rather it dwells variously and integrally in the movements between each floor, where the porosity between the secular and the religious is marked by a contested openness of and to belief in everyday life. The drafts of the open doors of religion symbolize that through them, we find the inversions and renewal of the secular through the complex contestations and contingencies of religion in the lived conditions of everyday life. As we move up and down the stairs between each floor, and open and close doors to religion, the porosity of religion comes to mark the complexity of everyday life—ranging from the political, social, cultural, and lived experience and integration of religion in the complex spaces of daily life.

This lived experience and integration of religion in the complex spaces and times of daily life is also concretized by the way we imagine time and space. Henri Lefebvre's work on time and space can offer helpful theoretical frameworks on the rhythms of religious life.²⁵⁸ Lived experience follows certain rhythms to daily life—both linear rhythms shaped by modern production-driven ways of controlling time and how we live in time according to cyclical rhythms that repeat the patterns of our lives across daily, weekly, monthly, semesterly, and yearly moments.²⁵⁹ Lefebvre's notion of momentariness is a key conceptualization as to how space and time meet not just in the passing moments, but also in how these moments in time

²⁵⁸ C.f. Stuart Elden, *Understanding Henri Lefebvre: Theory and the Possible* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 197-198, 198: Lefebvre's notion of rhythmanalysis is key to understanding the lived dimension and interconnectedness of space and time, even while "they are often kept quite separate."

²⁵⁹ Elden, *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*, 112: According to Stuart Elden, Lefebvre's notion of everydayness has both the connotations of the 'ordinary' and the repetitions of everyday life. Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, One-Volume Edition, Vol 2: *Foundations for a Sociology of the Everyday*, trans. John Moore (London and New York: Verso, 2014), 341-343, 449-452, 469, 525-526; Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, One-Volume Edition, Vol 3: *From Modernity to Modernism (Towards a Metaphilosophy of Daily Life)*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2014), 801-807; Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time, and Everyday Life*, trans. Stuart Elden and Gerald Moore (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013 (2004)), 2, 4, 15-16, 20, 82, 85.

are substantiated by the spatial and temporal presencing that coalesce in everyday life in patterns of dialectical rupture, instability, and ordinary mundanity.²⁶⁰

Furthermore, if we apply Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis of everyday life to the house of postsecularism, what might this generate? The quotidian rhythms of religious practices that inflect ordinary patterns of the latent religious sensibilities will bleed out in the curses, gasping, and cries of overwhelm and stress. They will also bleed out in the pauses of our work and rest where we may reflect on the greater purposes of the meaning of our work. In this, the quotidian moments where these questions arise will be generated in and through a social or political context where greater meanings in our work will be shaped by our participation in the spheres of our influence across our daily lives. A father may wonder if he is doing enough to help raise his children. An employee may be dis-eased in her desire to change a broken system, yet unable to actualize that change.

Each of these are religious drives for meaning that have social and political potential—and also religious meaning. The employee may desire to see more tangible means by which she can make a difference in the world of her work. The father may embody the tenderness of love through his presence to his children when he is convicted that he does not know his children, their loves, and their struggles. Both of these may create a tension. The father may need to help provide for his family through his work—which interferes with his desire to be present, know, and love his children. The employee may desire to leave human services or the corporate world because she cannot envision or enact what social or political impact or change she may want to accomplish in these spheres.

Do we want to see more tangible effects of our work and how do we hold these in tension with the reality that our quotidian lives—in both work and rest—may not allow us to see the impact our work may have? Here the sense of ennui creates a dis-ease, a tension in the

²⁶⁰ Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, 273-652, 634-652.

rhythms of our private and public lives, in our social participation or lack thereof. Yet this tension is marked by a religious drive to reform our lives so that they make a difference. This tension is also marked by the sensibility and cries out for the meaningfulness of our lives as they face the emptiness of our ordinary day-to-day lives. This is a religious heartbeat that is concerned with the flourishing of our world but is one where the question of meaning and flourishing does not always have the fullness of meaning we may desire. Living between these tensions in quotidian meaning becomes key to what it means to move religiously throughout our daily lives in the house of postsecularism.

How we organize the religious space in the house of postsecularism must pay attention to both the temporal rhythms of the tendencies and concerns of our quotidian lives. And yet, we must also be able to imagine a vision that must be lived and perceived as religiously meaningful. When we reflect on the lived space found in the practices of our daily lives, these practices implicitly hold an abstract, conceived vision that can only be perceived when we begin to analyze not only the ends of what our practices are forming us into but also how these practices are practical means where we may perceive the religious sensibilities of the daily rhythms of our quotidian lives. The conceived space no longer remains an abstraction once we begin to become aware of how the organization of space and time forms us.²⁶¹

Once we begin reflecting on the meaning of our practices and how they are forming us, we may only live into it or alter the way we live when we realize the rhythms of our lives are not generating growth. Rather we begin to perceive that our rhythms speak of religious practices that embody contents of belief in and through the pursuits of what we love.²⁶² What

²⁶¹ The use of abstract, conceived, perceived, and lived "space" throughout this section follows Henri Lefebvre's theory of space and applies it to this thesis. C.f. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans., Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 48, 224; Andy Merrifield, *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 110-113; Christian Schmid, "Henri Lefebvre's Theory of the Production of Space: Towards a Three Dimensions Dialectic," in *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading Henri Lefebvre*, ed., Kanishka Goonewardena, Stefan Kipfer, Richard Milgrom, and Christian Schmid, trans. Bandulasena Goonewardena (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 27-45, 38-40.

²⁶² James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2016).

we love speaks a content of meaningfulness, of what matters most to us, in ways that produce an absolute production of complex space and time where what we believe in is embedded within the very practices of our ordinary lives. The perceived meanings and desires embodied in the practices of our lived conditions shape the possibilities of believing. These possibilities of believing in turn are shaped by the spatial and temporal conditions of our daily lives, and yet may hold a theological content in the very practices of the ordinary. One way in which this may be explored is by imagining ourselves as participating in eternity.

Underlying complex space and time lies the potential for incarnational participation in eternity that shapes our beliefs. To cultivate an eternal perspective in the basement means to see our work in the public sphere not as ultimate, but rather as something that might participate in the call to create pathways in the system that lead to justice for the oppressed, or even the call to stewardship over policy making that leads to the flourishing of created things. When one cultivates an eternal perspective on the first floor, this would entail not merely the participation in fellowship, community, and friendship with others, but moreover the practice of presence and service to others with whom I do life or even those in my spheres of influence. This can look like hospitality, service to the poor and vulnerable, bible studies, or book groups, but it can also just look like delightfully enjoying one another's presence in the appeal to be known and loved. Each of these cultivates an eternal perspective where we dwell incarnationally in the presence of others and seek to serve those who are in need. To cultivate an eternal perspective on the second floor implies not just the individuation of believing, but also rubbing shoulders with others, sometimes agonistically, in daily life where what I believe is, yes, an option among others, but it is also something that I can cultivate through prayer, silence, meditation, and/or solitude as I move throughout my daily rhythms. The viability of mere secularity is demonstrated here because, while it is not systemically changing the world,

it is still something that tactically subverts the closure to transcendence with the cultivation of sensing and orienting ordinary life to and in remembrance of the presence of God.

The lived cultivation of the remembrance of God and participation in eternity in everyday life situates the complex continuities and discontinuities between the secular and the religious in ways that imply a subtle inversion of the decline or irrelevance of religion in the secular. They do so by imagining a postsecular thirdspace as where religion continues in the midst of, and in tension with the secular. The house of postsecularism reveals a postsecular thirdspace marked by a complex space and a complex time. It is in this openness and closedness to religion that we find the possibilities of believing. It is based on the conditions of life and lived experience in which it remains tense between the openness and closedness to and of religion. At its heart, the house of postsecularism is about the lived integration of, and tensions between, religion and the secular in the postsecular thirdspace. Various rooms of everyday life remain open and closed to the integration of belief in ordinary life. Its complex space is marked by the complex interaction between various rooms to various aspects of life through the incarnate participation in eternity.

Throughout this detour into the complex space and time of the house of (post)secularism, I have argued how accounts of Taylor's views of secularism can be inverted to illustrate a postsecular thirdspace marked by complex space and time. These analyses emphasized an incarnational turn to embody and recover participation in eternity, which has a subtle influence and ability to invert the secular with religious meaning. This is because the religious and the secular are intimately linked together. This link is centered around the integration or rejection of religious beliefs and practices in each sphere but also sheds light on the implicit links between the secular and the religious. This will be developed below through several postsecular

inversions of the secular to critique the false dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular.

4.3 Two Postsecular Critiques of the Secular

If the previous sections analyzed the complex space and time of the house of postsecularism to reveal the space for the religious in the midst of the secular (i.e., postsecular thirdspace), then this section offers two postsecular critiques of the secular that contest the assumed dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular. First, it offers a subtle critique of the Enlightenment critique of religion's idea of the emancipation of religion by arguing how religion still endures in the structures of secular modernity. Second, it offers a postsecular critique of the secular through an analysis of Jürgen Habermas' postsecular political theory and its critique. In doing so, this section demonstrates the contestability and contours of the secular from a postsecular critical reflexive stance as central to a postsecular critique of the secular.

4.3.1 Religion in the Secular

If the secular claims that modern structures must be emancipated from religion, then we can question this by examining how the religious exists in the midst of the secular through an analysis of religion in modernity. The tense relationship between religion and the secular in late modernity is marked by the tensions between secularization and sacralization, detraditionalization and crumbling plausibility structures, and the differentiation between religion and the state, the public sphere, and the market economy. This differentiation includes the historical processes of disestablishment and deregulation of religion by the legitimization of the state, where the state now creates a space for religion to exist alongside, dependent upon, and challenge, the public sphere and market economy. The intimacy between religion and the state, public sphere, and market economy suggests a subtle critique of the secular claims to

have been emancipated from religion because of the enduring religious presence in the midst of and alongside the secular.

Linda Woodhead and Paul Heelas argue that “the story of the rise of the market economy is inseparably tied up with the story of the rise of the modern state, and there are many parallels in how religions have interacted with these developments.”²⁶³ They state that “the relationship between religious and economic affairs” is complicated by the relationship between the state and the market.²⁶⁴ Moreover, the differentiation between them is grounded in the complex relationship between capitalism and socialism. On one hand, the economy is “run according to its own principles, regulated by the secular state” or on the other, the religion restrains “its involvement on the grounds (amongst others) of respecting human liberty.”²⁶⁵

The centrality of the differentiation thesis of secularization theses remains one of the most important claims of secularization. The differentiation thesis entails the structural and historical process of separation between church and state, or moreover, the disembedding of the power of the church over the state and market. Richard Fenn argues that the differentiation of religion thesis leads to the diffusion of religion. While religious legitimization of social authority may continue, Fenn argues that “it undermines [the] consensus on the meaning and location of the sacred.”²⁶⁶ That is, with the differentiation between religion, the state, and the market economy, the location of religion within the secular begins to exist alongside or in the midst of the secular by questioning itself and challenging the secular, in a world where legitimization comes from its tensions with secular states and economies. In terms of religious contestations of the differentiation thesis, Woodhead and Heelas comment on Casanova to argue that he:

²⁶³ Linda Woodhead and Paul Heelas, eds., *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 217.

²⁶⁴ Woodhead and Heelas, *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology*, 173

²⁶⁵ Woodhead and Heelas, *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology*, 174.

²⁶⁶ Richard Fenn, *A Theory of Secularization* (Storrs Conn: Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1978), 26; Opt. cit. in Woodhead and Heelas, *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology*, 258-59.

Believes that religion in modern times is differentiated but not privatized. It continues to have public and political significance, even in the secular democracies of the contemporary West... [Casanova] reflects on one of religion's most important continuing political roles: critical reflection and protest at the excesses of the capitalist market and the modern state. It is, he believes, still an open question whether religion will be able to continue in this role, or whether it will be crushed by the forces of modernity.²⁶⁷

Moreover, they argue that social differentiation (the process of laicization where the state takes over control of many social functions from religious institutions),²⁶⁸ is linked to disestablishment in their commentary on Ann Douglas.²⁶⁹ Douglas states that American disestablishment served the symbolic purpose of “preserving and strengthening, rather than... testing and refining the link between” the religious and the political.²⁷⁰ Douglas argues that disestablishment “typified and accelerated a historical process” of “democratization and industrialization of American culture. The result of the disestablishment process was an apparent triumph for the competitive, commercial, and individualistic spirit: a ‘voluntary’ system in which no denomination had automatic precedence over any other, and no person had any obligation to attend worship or to support religion beyond his or her desire to do so.”²⁷¹ Moreover, David Martin argues that differentiation introduces “a redistribution of sacred and secular space” where social activities are differentiated between religious and secular autonomous spaces. In turn, the secular replaces religion, politically allowing religious freedom in the context of “new structures of power, cohesion, identity, and legitimacy.”²⁷² Religion, in turn, finds itself alongside secular political and economic structures that legitimate the space of civil religion.

²⁶⁷ Woodhead and Heelas, *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology*, 257; C.f. Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 234.

²⁶⁸ Woodhead and Heelas, *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology*, 214.

²⁶⁹ Woodhead and Heelas, *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology*, 220-221.

²⁷⁰ Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Alfred A Kopf, 1978), 26.

²⁷¹ Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*, 23-24.

²⁷² David Martin, *Does Christianity Cause War?* (London: Clarendon Press, 1997), 40-41; opt. cit. in Woodhead and Heelas, *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology*, 246.

In the modern creation of civil religion, the economic and the political are integrally linked together with religion. Alfred Stepan's three political arenas in which religion functions (the state, political society, and civil society) indicate the reality that the latter two are where religion predominately acts in Western politics.²⁷³ In their discussion of civil religion, Woodhead and Heelas state that "in Rousseau's sense, [it] is a simple creed deliberately constructed and upheld by a sovereign or state to establish and maintain political legitimacy. For Robert Bellah, by contrast, civil religion is less a deliberate creation, [and is] made up of an eclectic mix of religious and secular beliefs and symbols."²⁷⁴ This eclectic creation, fluidity, and mix of the secular and religious symbols and narratives of invocations across American political history produce a complex understanding of American civil religion.

Robert Bellah demonstrates the tension between the mixture of American Republicanism and liberalism in American civil religion: "Exclusive concern for self-interest is the very definition of the corruption of republican virtue. The tendency to emphasize the private, particularly the economic side of life in the liberal state, undermines the public participation essential to a republic. The wealth the liberal society generates is fatal to the basic political equality of a republic."²⁷⁵ Bellah argues that civil religion in America is both formal in its ambiguity and "marginal in that it has no official support in the legal and constitutional order."²⁷⁶ Bellah traces a tense history in American civil religion—the freedom of religion subordinated to the conscientious self-interest of utilitarian individualism—to demonstrate how the cultural revolution of the 1960s-1970s in America articulates three possibilities for the future of American religion after 1975. Each of the possibilities fits within one of two religious

²⁷³ Alfred Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 3-12; opt. cit. in Woodhead and Heelas, *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology*, 216-217.

²⁷⁴ Woodhead and Heelas, *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology*, 239; c.f. Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses* (London: Dent, 1973), 306-308; and Robert Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," *Daedalus* 96, no. 1 (1967): 1-21, 7-9.

²⁷⁵ Robert N. Bellah, "Religion and the Legitimation of the American Republic," in *Varieties of Civil Religion*, ed. Phillip E. Hammond and Robert N. Bellah (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1980), 2-23, 10.

²⁷⁶ Robert N. Bellah, "Religion and the Legitimation of the American Republic," 12.

categories: exclusive, bounded, orthodoxy which has an attitude of closedness to others, *or* an inclusivist openness to experiencing the other. Between both of the poles are the three possibilities: 1) liberalism; 2) fundamental authoritarian religion; and 3) a mix of both in the revolutionary. The latter remains experientially open to ultimate reality but leaves it undefined. However, it is counter-cultural in its shift towards changing the status quo.²⁷⁷ The religious secularity of American civil religion draws upon both religious and secular sources creating a complex set of beliefs and values at the intersection of religion and politics.

While civil religion is one way of understanding the complex relationship between religion and the secular in late modernity, Peter Berger argues that pluralization is another factor that weakens and transforms the possibilities of belief. Berger states that “modernity pluralizes both institutions and plausibility structures” of believing in secular society.²⁷⁸ Berger continues: “It further follows that the institutional pluralization of modernity had to carry in its wake a fragmentation of ipso facto, a weakening of every conceivable belief and value dependent upon social support. The typical situation in which the individual finds himself in a traditional society is one where there are characteristically unstable, incohesive, unreliable plausibility structures.”²⁷⁹ Linda Woodhead argues that Berger’s central idea of pluralism “undermines stable belief” as the missing “link between modernization and secularization.”²⁸⁰ Pluralism makes religion and belief in modernity precarious. Modern pluralization, then, produces a level of fragmentation to the believability of belief in traditional societies. Modernity casts doubt on the traditional system, fracturing the believability of the tradition.

²⁷⁷ Robert N. Bellah, “The New Religious Consciousness and the Crisis of Modernity,” in *The Robert Bellah Reader*, ed. Robert N. Bellah and Steven M. Tipton (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 265–84.

²⁷⁸ Peter Berger, *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation* (London: Collins, 1980), 17; Opt. cit. in Woodhead and Heelas, *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology*, 334.

²⁷⁹ Peter Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*, 17–19; Opt. cit. in Woodhead and Heelas, *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology*, 335.

²⁸⁰ Linda Woodhead, “Introduction,” in *Peter Berger and the Study of Religion*, ed. Linda Woodhead, Paul Heelas, and David Martin (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 1–7, 2.

If the disestablishment of religion, the differentiation between state and the religious, the creation of civil religion, and the pluralization of belief entail both the shattering of plausibility structures and the eclectic mix of secular and religious symbols, then it also entails the creation of new modes of living and believing in contemporary society. Most notably, the credibility of plausibility structures finds itself in the consumptive practices of late modernity that in turn re-enchant us with religious sensibilities and make credible their possibility. This comes about, Paul Heelas argues, through the deregulation of religion in secular modernity and its connection with modern consumerism. Heelas argues that

the deregulation of the religious realm, combined with the cultural emphasis on freedom and choice, results in intermingled, interfused, forms of religious—or ‘religious-cum-secular’—life which exists beyond the tradition-regulated church...people no longer feel obliged to heed the boundaries of the religions of modernity. Instead, they are positively encouraged to exercise their ‘autonomy’ to draw out what has diffused into culture...they—so to speak—raid the world, drawing on whatever is felt desirable whether religious... [or] non-religious.... Religion—precisely because it is deregulated, operating apart from the disciplines of the church and chapel as a cultural resource—can serve as a vehicle for acts of consumption.²⁸¹

This consumptive dynamic of late modern religion finds its resourcement in the secularization of the Protestant work ethic. Daniel Bell argues that the Protestant work ethic produces (and that its need for) consumers undermines the Protestant ascetic ideal.²⁸² Woodhead and Heelas argue that “the construction of consumer culture and its associated ‘hedonism’ has not only eroded asceticism; it has also meant that work has increasingly come to be valued as the means to the end of (secular) self-gratification.”²⁸³ If the Protestant work ethic and evangelical religious devotion produce the religious ideals of asceticism and self-denial,²⁸⁴ the postsecular inversion of it finds its religious incarnation in the consumptive practices of self-gratification.

²⁸¹Paul Heelas, “Introduction: On Differentiation and Dedifferentiation,” in *Religion, Modernity, and Postmodernity*, ed. Paul Heelas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 1–18, 4-7; Opt. cit. in Woodhead and Heelas, *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology*, 272.

²⁸² Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (London: Heinemann, 1979), 21-22.

²⁸³ Woodhead and Heelas, *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology*, 201-202.

²⁸⁴ James Davison Hunter, *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation* (Chicago, IL and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 72-74; opt. cit. in Woodhead and Heelas, *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology*, 203-204.

To gratify our desires through consumption becomes a religious practice when the individual rules and remains at the center of what we imagine what it means to flourish. The immediacy of consumption based on the gratification of our desires implies a certain religious anthropocentrism by which the individual flourishes as an autonomous consumer.

This section has argued for the complex relationship between religion and the secular. This postsecular critique of the secular offers an account of 1) religion in relation to the state and market economy; 2) differentiation and disestablishment; 3) civil religion; 4) pluralization and plausibility structures; and 5) consumerism and religion in late modernity. In doing so, it has demonstrated the postsecular contestability of a simple secular/religious binary between religion and the secular. The following section draws out further postsecular contestations of the secular's bifurcation from religion through analyses of Jürgen Habermas' postsecular politics and its implications for understanding the contestation of normative structures by and between the secular and the religious.

4.3.2 Jürgen Habermas' (Post-)Secular Political Critique

The political dimensions of postsecularity entail a central question most notably posed by Jürgen Habermas: what is the place of religion in secular discourse and the public sphere? The place of religion in secular discourse in the public sphere can be articulated by three tensions: 1) between whether secular discourse must remain neutral or incorporate religious reasonings in secular discourses; 2) between whether metaphysical and/or post-metaphysical presuppositions should resource secular politics; and 3) between the legitimation of religion and pluralism in public discourse. Underlying each of these tensions is a fundamental tension between religion and politics—whether religious reasonings, metaphysical presuppositions, and religious legitimations of freedom, equality, and rights can be included or serve as resources for secular public discourse. Habermas grapples with these postsecular tensions and

yet remains a secularist, arguing that religious reasonings must conform to neutral secular reasoning and that only post-metaphysical presuppositions can legitimate religious pluralization in the public sphere.

Habermas only argues for a quasi-postsecular position. He argues for the normative role of the secular but also for its need to listen to and include the voice of the religious within the processes of public policy.²⁸⁵ But Nicholas Wolterstorff argues that “Habermas understands ‘rationality’ to be a universally applicable public language that transcends particular communities. That is, reason is a universal language that transcends and incorporates religious communities and languages into rational normative discourse.”²⁸⁶ As critics of Habermas have stated, this implies that for religion to engage in secular discourse, it must become modernized.²⁸⁷ Or rather, for religion to engage in secular discourse, it must articulate its voice in terms of a neutral, rational voice with common secular language and meaning found within the secular public sphere. This means that religion must display logical and rational thinking in such a way that religion is determined “within the limits of democracy alone.”²⁸⁸ J. M. Bernstein argues that for Habermas, the religious believer must become modern in accepting:

three requirements for religion's reasonableness: i) religious citizens must develop a reflective stance towards their own beliefs that sufficiently acknowledges the existence of competing, comprehensive worldviews whose claims from a third-person perspective are equally demanding; ii) religious citizens must accept the findings of modern science as, in their domain, not to be challenged by religious dogma—hence the meaning of religious statements must be adjusted so as not to conflict with scientific theory and practice; iii) religious citizens must make the same concessions to practical reason in the domain of science. Requirements ii) and iii) are the theoretical and practical versions of the same claim to the priority of secular reason.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁵ C.f. Jürgen Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2006): 1–25.

²⁸⁶ Nicholas Wolterstorff, “An Engagement with Jürgen Habermas on Post-metaphysical Philosophy, Religion, and Political Dialogue,” in *Habermas and Religion*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013), 92–112, 97.

²⁸⁷ Thomas McCarthy, “The Burdens of Modernized Faith and Post-Metaphysical Reason in Habermas’ ‘Unfinished Project of Enlightenment,’” in *Habermas and Religion*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013), 115–31, 118.

²⁸⁸ J. M. Bernstein, “Forgetting Isaac: Faith and the Philosophical Impossibility of a Post-Secular Society,” in *Habermas and Religion*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013), 154–75, 158.

²⁸⁹ Bernstein, “Forgetting Isaac,” 158.

But tied to these concessions of the religious for a secular public discourse is a problem: whether in conceding religious rationality to a secular rational public discourse still allows the space for religious legitimacy in secular discourse. Christina LaFont argues that religious citizens are allowed their exclusive positions in public discourse as long as they abide by and argue for the freedom and equality of all citizens.²⁹⁰ She also argues with Habermas against John Rawls' form of political secularism and for a deliberative form of democratic reasoning that respects the equality and rights of all citizens—where religious and secular arguments are both heard and deliberated. She argues for a position of

mutual accountability that imposes the same deliberative rights and obligations upon all democratic citizens. This proposal recognizes the right of all democratic citizens to adopt their cognitive stance, whether religious or secular, in political debates in the public sphere without giving up on the democratic obligation to justify the coercive policies with which all citizens must comply by providing reasons that are acceptable to everyone.²⁹¹

To a religious believer raised in secular contexts, this seems reasonable. But there is also a red flag in this “Because they amount to giving a modern autonomous reason in its theoretical and practical forms emphatic hegemony over truth and morality, they accomplish a brutal devaluing of the standing and worth of religious beliefs.”²⁹² However, as James Bohman points out, “for Habermas, modern democracies should not be thought to be primarily secular or based on mere toleration, but rather are better thought of as ‘postsecular,’ where religion is not merely an obstacle to democracy but a resource whose truth contents can play a role in public deliberation.”²⁹³ This implies the “radical re-evaluation of the role of religion in democracies,

²⁹⁰ Christina Lafont, “Religion and the Public Sphere: What Are the Deliberative Obligations of Democratic Citizenship?”, in *Habermas and Religion*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013), 230–48.

²⁹¹ Christina LaFont, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Secularism*, ed. Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 271–86, 277.

²⁹² Bernstein, “Forgetting Isaac,” 158–159.

²⁹³ James Bohman, “A Post Secular Global Order?: The Pluralism of Forms of Life and Communicative Freedom,” in *Habermas and Religion*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Eduardo Mendieta, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013), 179–202, 179.

but also about pluralism in general.”²⁹⁴ Indeed, Jacob Goodson describes Habermas’ position on postsecularism as the mutual acknowledgment of religious reasoning and voices by secularists as well as the necessary acknowledgment of secularization by the religious believer.²⁹⁵

But when we analyze Habermas’ notion of post-metaphysical thinking, Josef Bengtson challenges this with an analysis of both the implicit reality of and the need for metaphysical underpinnings to secular politics. Bengtson offers an analysis of three metaphysical possibilities that lie in critical contrast to Habermas’ notion of post-metaphysical thinking.²⁹⁶ Habermas’ post-metaphysical theory of public discourse not only reduces religious and metaphysical voices to supposed neutral secular rationality and discourse. He also articulates the need for a post-metaphysical middle position between religious fundamentalism and secular scientism that transcends the problematic dimensions of un-self-reflexive belief.²⁹⁷ If Habermas’ post-metaphysical emphasis implies the eclipse of metaphysics and religious language in secular discourse, then it also implies the emptying and thinning of religious convictions in the public sphere.

Bengtson also argues that Habermas fails to acknowledge the metaphysical underpinnings of secular liberal and democratic discourse.²⁹⁸ Bengtson not only argues against Habermas’ post-metaphysical position that rejects transcendence in modern political discourse, which he argues is based on the problematic Protestant separation of transcendence and immanence,²⁹⁹ but also offers three philosophical or theological alternatives in hopes of revitalizing the metaphysical possibilities of postsecular political discourse. He states that

²⁹⁴ Bohman, “A Post Secular Global Order?”, 179.

²⁹⁵ Jacob L. Goodson, “Communicative Reason and Religious Faith in Secular and Post-Secular Contexts,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Secularism*, ed. Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 316–32, 318.

²⁹⁶ Josef Bengtson, *Explorations in Post-Secular Metaphysics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016),.

²⁹⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2008).

²⁹⁸ Bengtson, *Explorations in Post-Secular Metaphysics*, 1-9.

²⁹⁹ Bengtson, *Explorations in Post-Secular Metaphysics*, 112-114.

“[Charles] Taylor, [John] Milbank, and [William E.] Connolly have all proposed alternative accounts for how to construe, not only the relation between ‘religion’ and ‘the secular,’ but also how cultural and religious differences should be negotiated in pluralistic societies.”³⁰⁰ By analyzing the political implications of Charles Taylor, John Milbank, and William E. Connolly’s metaphysical projects, Bengtson articulates the metaphysical dimensions and possibilities of postsecular politics in pluralistic societies in ways that nuance the importance of difference. Bengtson states that

Milbank argues for a social/political/ecclesial body of the church as a corporate monarchy that allows a harmonious difference within the body. Connolly argues for a rhizomatic, non-hierarchical pluralism that allows difference in itself agonistically, without reconciliation in an ontology of becoming without transcendence that allows generosity and gratitude to pluralistic difference. Likewise, while Taylor argues for an overlapping consensus of a common denominator open to metaphysics as the correct response to religious diversity for a democratic state, this includes both theistic, atheistic, and non-theistic positions that do not seek to control religion but rather find a common good of human concern that overlaps between religion and the secular.³⁰¹

By contrast, Kaltsas, Barbato, and Kratochwil offer analyses of the postsecular politics of Habermas and problematizations with the possibilities of Taylor and Connolly’s legitimations of religion in the public sphere. Barbato and Kratochwil show how Habermas articulates a postsecular critique of modernity a) via the return of religion in the public sphere and b) in the inadequacy of the clash of civilization thesis.³⁰² If Habermas’ postsecular critique of modernity demonstrates a secular self-awareness of the enduring presence and visibility of religion in the midst of the secular, then it also calls us to grapple with it and articulate its legitimations amid secular politics. Like Barbato and Kratochwil, Kaltsas locates within Habermas’ postsecular critique of modernity the limitations of Taylor and Connolly’s postsecularism because they fail to articulate frameworks for the legitimation of pluralism in a postsecular public sphere. Kaltsas argues that Taylor and Connolly fail to address the problem of the legitimation of religious

³⁰⁰ Bengtson, *Explorations in Post-Secular Metaphysics*, 142.

³⁰¹ C.f. Bengtson, *Explorations in Post-Secular Metaphysics*, 142-143.

³⁰² Mariano Barbato and Friedrich Kratochwil, “Towards a Post-Secular Political Order?” *European Political Science Review* 1, no. 3 (2009): 317-340.

plurality and its variety in neutral secular politics. However, Kaltsas demonstrates an agonistic relationship with Connolly's deep pluralism because it offers potential resources for making sense of religion in a postsecular public sphere.³⁰³

The debates of postsecular politics draw us into the complex space and tensions between religion and secular politics. The question remains whether religion offers helpful resources for revitalizing, critiquing, and transforming secular politics. But it also problematizes the question of whether or not that is desirable or even a good thing. The secular definition of its goodness is determined by its protection of human freedom, equality, and rights. The pluralization of religious possibilities of belief in global, secular-democratic politics embroils the problem of religious legitimations of other religions: from what basis can we protect the religious freedoms of citizens? Are religious resources desirable resources that can protect the right to religious freedom? Or, on the opposite end, is a neutral secular public sphere that thins religious reasonings in terms of a neutral secular discourse able to protect and give credence to the religious freedom of its citizens? On one side we question the abilities of religion and religious ideas to provide and protect human freedom. On the other, we question whether secular discourse offers adequate resources for grappling with and sufficiently including the religious (and right to religious freedom) in secular politics.

While for Habermas secular reason is normative for religion in modern discourse—and postsecular political discourse must include the religious—for Taylor, postsecularism entails the contestability of belief, unbelief, and non-belief within an immanent frame. Furthermore, for Woodhead, Heelas, et. al.'s postsecularism, critical reflexivity highlights the contestability

³⁰³ Spyridon Kaltsas, "Habermas, Taylor, and Connolly on Secularism, Pluralism, and the Post-secular Public Sphere," *Religions* 10, no. 460 (2019): 1-19.

of a simple dualism between the secular and religious. Indeed, as I have argued, the postsecular contestation of the secular's bifurcation between the secular and the religious demonstrates the complex relationship between religion and the secular. If the postsecular questions the role, place, and constitutive existence of religion in secular society then each section above offers a postsecular critique of the secular.

However, how each approaches the question of the postsecular is within the realms of politics and modernity sheds light on what a postsecular critique of the secular entails. If Habermas questions the political role of religion under the normative structures of the secular, and Woodhead, Heelas, et.al. question the simple dualism between the secular and the religious, then Taylor questions the conditions of and for belief in the historical conditions of the secular in such a way that opens us to the optionality, credibility, and contestability of religious belief in a secular age. The postsecular contextualizes religion in the secular in ways that contest both the inadequacy of the secular if the secular negates and neglects religion in its self-understanding *and* the inadequacy of the religious if the religious deny the contextual setting of the secular as the complex space in which religion is situated in the Modern West. If this section has offered two examples of inversions of a postsecular critique of the secular, then the following section offers the two more.

4.4 Two Postsecular Inversions of the Secular

This section demonstrates another postsecular critique of the secular through an analysis of two postsecular inversions of the secular to show the false dualism between the secular and the sacred/religious. The first of these postsecular inversions of the secular is an incarnational inversion of the secular as religious, invoking Talal Asad's critique of the secular and Hans Joas' critique of the common misconception of Weber's understanding of "disenchantment." The second is an inversion of Casanova's three definitions of the secularization theses by

invoking a de-differentiation thesis. In doing so, this section argues how postsecular inversions not only re-enchant the secular but subtly transform and renew what it means to be religious in the secular. Postsecular inversions transform and renew the very nature of the secular, articulating how its ideas and narratives are implicitly religious. It is through these postsecular inversions of the secular that we can begin to see how religion not only remains a viable and visible option after the secular but how it transforms and renews the secular by deconstructing the very foundations of the secular as religious.

4.4.1 Postsecular Incarnational Inversions

As Taylor and others have gone to show, the complex history of religion and the secular highlights not the absence of religion in secular modernity, nor merely its decline, but rather its adaptation and transformation into secular structures that are at least quasi-religious.³⁰⁴ Often, when we begin to talk of the secularizing effects of modernity, a go-to word is “disenchantment.” What we have been disenchanted from are the powers of the church to shape our imaginaries, and the belief in transcendence or God, and it is marked by the doubting of religious legitimacy. But Hans Joas argues that what we have referred to as the modern historical processes of disenchantment are based on a conceptual ambiguity in the writings of Max Weber. Weber’s ambiguous understanding of “disenchantment,” or “*entzauberung*,” is viewed by Joas as referring to three different historical processes, of “demagification, desacralization, and detranscendentalization”—not what Taylor refers to as the disembedding of social, cultural, and political life from the church.³⁰⁵ With this conceptual misunderstanding of Weber’s use of disenchantment, what we find in late modernity is not only a misnomer of

³⁰⁴ C.f. Charles Taylor, “Modes of Secularism,” in *Secularism and Its Critics*, ed. Rajeev Bhargava (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 31–53; C.f. Hans Joas, *The Power of the Sacred: An Alternative to the Narrative of Disenchantment*, trans. Alex Skinner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 234–74.

³⁰⁵ Joas, *The Power of the Sacred*, 113.

how we understand “disenchantment,” but also how we understand modern sacralization and its legitimations, inversions, and reversals of religion in secular modernity.

In modernity, sacralization and legitimacy are linked together in the possibility of new sacralizations of secular themes. Joas argues that “new processes of sacralization may cast doubt on old legitimacies while giving rise to new opportunities for the legitimation of old and new claims to power. A whole range of individuals and collectives, objects and ideas, may be sacralized: the ruler of the country, the people and the nation, the race or class, science or art, the church or the commodity and the market.”³⁰⁶ Further, Joas argues that sacralization as “an alternative to the narrative of disenchantment... must be the [contingent] interplay between a plurality of processes... on the one hand and a diverse range of processes of power formation on the other.”³⁰⁷ This produces a plethora of “ever-new [potential] processes of sacralization and ideal formation,” where it neither necessitates the devaluation of sacralities and ideals nor the silencing of new sacralities and ideals.³⁰⁸ Sacralization as such, is neither a simple inversion nor ceaselessly reciprocal movements from sacralization to/from desacralization. Rather it is “a complex and unpredictable plethora of such processes.”³⁰⁹

Hent De Vries and Lawrence Sullivan follow Hans Joas in saying that the postsecular is a mindset that recognizes the enduring “existence of the religious” within the secular.³¹⁰ In support of this, Talal Asad states that:

the secular I argue, is neither continuous with the religious that supposedly preceded it...nor a simple break from it.... I take the secular to be a concept that brings together certain behaviors, knowledge, and sensibilities in modern life.... It is not enough to show that what appears to be necessary is contingent—that in certain respects ‘the secular’ obviously overlaps with ‘the religious.’ It is a matter of showing how

³⁰⁶ Joas, *The Power of the Sacred*, 248.

³⁰⁷ Joas, *The Power of the Sacred*, 249.

³⁰⁸ Joas, *The Power of the Sacred*, 249.

³⁰⁹ Joas, *The Power of the Sacred*, 249.

³¹⁰ Hent De Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan, *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006) 2-3.

contingencies relate to changes in the grammar of concepts—that is, how the changes in concepts articulate changes in practices.³¹¹

José Casanova comments on and critiques Asad on his notion of the secular. Casanova argues that Asad is right in asserting the secular is not the gradual emancipation of religion from the secular.³¹² In disagreement with Asad, however, Casanova argues that the secular is also bound to a “historical process of secularization [where] the religious and secular are inextricably bound together and mutually condition each other.”³¹³ But Asad’s critique of Casanova questions how we imagine and historicize the conditions of continuities and discontinuities between the secular and the religious within the postsecular.³¹⁴ Grace Davie argues that we must imagine religion in the secular in renewed ways—both public and private—as a way of integrating not just intellectually, but also socially, culturally, and politically the intersections of religion and the secular.³¹⁵

The way we imagine the world for Asad is grounded within an imagined community that offers a self-understanding and constructs the “sensibilities that underpin it” through the media and political ideologies.³¹⁶ Asad summarizes Taylor in that secularism legitimized the rise of the modern state in two ways: 1) by finding the lowest common religious denominator; and 2) by attempting to define a political ethic of independent religious convictions.³¹⁷ Just as the state replaced the church in a disembedding movement towards a Modern Moral Order constituted by the public sphere, market economy, and citizen-state,³¹⁸ so also were the

³¹¹ Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, and Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 25.

³¹² Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 191.

³¹³ José Casanova, “Secularization Revisited: A Reply to Talal Asad,” in *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors*, ed. David Scott and Charles Hirschkind (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 12–30, 20–21.

³¹⁴ Kim Knibbe, “Casanova, Asad, and the Public Debate on Religion in Modern Societies,” in *Religion and Society: Advances in Research 2* (2011): 13–17.

³¹⁵ Grace Davie, “Public and Private in the Study of Religion: Imaginative Approaches,” in *Religion and Society: Advances in Research 2* (2011): 9–12.

³¹⁶ Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 1–5, 5.

³¹⁷ Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 2–5; Charles Taylor, “Modes of Secularism.”

³¹⁸ John Milbank, “A Closer Walk on the Wild Side,” in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, ed. Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 54–82, 72–75; Taylor, “Modes of Secularism,” 39–40.

structures of a pre-modern social imaginary replaced by a modern social imaginary marked by the disenchanting forces of science, state, constitution, economy, human autonomy, expressive individualism, and human rights.³¹⁹

Politically speaking, while the premodern Christian imaginary was governed by mediation through the church, the modern imaginary is governed by a direct access society with a focus on freedom, rights, and equality through which political representation, a representational epistemology, and instrumental reason came to dominate the modern imaginary. In modernity, representation and direct “access abolishes the heterogeneity and hierarchy of belonging. It makes us uniform, and that is one way of becoming equal.”³²⁰ In this shift from the pre-modern to the modern social imaginaries Casanova highlights that: 1) the cosmic order was replaced by science and technology; 2) the institutional social order of the state, market, and public sphere replaced the church; and 3) the moral order shifted from communal, group identity to individual human rights.³²¹ Craig Calhoun, Michael Warner, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen argue that secular societies are specific societies with a long history marked by “ethical goods, temporal frameworks, and practical concerns. The secular is never just the absence of religion, or its privatization, or its waning. It is a cumulatively and dialectically achieved condition, and one of its dimensions is the manifestation of religion as an optional axis of mobilization and belief.”³²² As such, belief in a secular age is described by the “optionality, revisability, and fragility of contemporary religious commitments.”³²³ As a

³¹⁹ Taylor, “Modes of Secularism,” 39-40.

³²⁰ Taylor, “Modes of Secularism,” 40.

³²¹ C.f. José Casanova, “A Secular Age: Dawn or Twilight?”, in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, ed. Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 265–81, 277.

³²² Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, eds., Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 1-31, 25.

³²³ Warner, VanAntwerpen, and Calhoun, “Editor’s Introduction,” 6.

modern development, secularism is a long process “which has made religion more personal, more mental, and more voluntary.”³²⁴

With the formation of the state and modern social imaginary, vertical conceptions of time are eclipsed within a homogenizing and immediacy to the whole of a direct access society. That is, just as the Modern Moral Order collapsed a hierarchical universe into a horizontal field of equality, so also does this equal field of immediacy entail the disembedding of religious modes of living within the secular in ways that displaced the authority of the religious for the state and market. Taylor argues that modern democratic secularism and the development of the citizen-state as a direct access society, which eschews hierarchical mediation, horizontally imagines society as “equal and autonomous members... bonded together” in the “common enterprise of self-rule.”³²⁵ As such, the modern process of secularization entailed a shift in imaginary, the imagined ways in which we conceive of our world and ourselves in relation to it and within it. Within these accounts of secularism, there is not just the replacement of religion by secularism, but rather also the imagined ways in which religion has become disembedded from the secular while simultaneously finding itself in a complex space and time within the secular. Hent de Vries defines complex space as “embodied practices rooted in multiple traditions” and complex time as “simultaneous temporalities.”³²⁶

Belief in the postsecular also entails an incarnational inversion in which the secular not only replaces religion, but in its replacement of religion, the secular serves as an inversion of religion *as* a religion. The incarnational inversion of the secular as replacing religion is marked by the replacement of (medieval) religious strategic structures that organized and totalized a dominant Christian society and worldview. In the historical transitions via intellectual deviation stories and Reform-Master-Narratives, Charles Taylor and John Milbank, et. al., have shown

³²⁴ Warner, VanAntwerpen, and Calhoun, “Editor’s Introduction,” 7.

³²⁵ Taylor, “Modes of Secularism,” 40-45, 45.

³²⁶ C.f. De Vries, “On General and Divine Economy,” 132.

how the secular replaces religion in its ability to explain, structure, and organize modern society, politics, and culture.³²⁷ In doing so, the secular not only functionally replaces religion, but it assumes the belief in an implicit new religious mythos defined by the elements of secular modernity.³²⁸

The implicit belief in a secular mythos—marked by political representation, human rights, a direct-access society, and market economy, etc.—strategically organizes society around a vision of the good life through the very practices of secular society—industry and technology, production and consumption, etc. In the shifts between pre-modern to modern and late modern society, what we find is the replacement of religion by the secular *as a religion*. This secular “religion” is undergirded by classical liberal values and the Enlightenment worldview. In castigating religion, modernity created its own religious mythos that are implicitly believed to be good, true, and beautiful. The modern mythos entails how the practices and structures of the secular are themselves religious structures and practices that embody secular beliefs about reality.

If this section has articulated the postsecular inversion of the secular as religion, then what we find is the reality that the secular mythos structures the possibilities of belief, unbelief, and non-belief as an incarnational inversion of the secular as religious. But we also see that the postsecular inversions of the secular are incarnational insofar as the secular not only transforms the possibility of religion in the secular but embodies the structures that shape the possibilities of believing in the midst of the secular. While the postsecular incarnational inversion of the secular articulates the secular as religious, we must also challenge the three theses of the

³²⁷ C.f. John Milbank, “A Closer Walk on the Wild Side”; John Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013); Guido Vanheeswijck, “The End of Secularization?,” in *Rethinking Secularization: Philosophy and the Prophecy of a Secular Age*, ed. Herbert De Vriese and Gary Gabor (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 1–26; Nicholas H. Smith, *Charles Taylor: Meaning, Morals and Modernity* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2002), 208.

³²⁸ C.f. Paul Tyson, *Returning to Reality* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 46–60.

secularization thesis as articulated by José Casanova. To do this I now turn to offer a postsecular inversion of the secularization theses.

4.4.2 Postsecular Inversions of Secularization

According to José Casanova, the secularization thesis comes in three forms: the differentiation thesis (that religion is no longer married to political, social, and economic institutions); the decline of religion thesis (the more modern we become the less we will practice and participate in religious institutions); and the privatization thesis (that with modernity, religion is relegated out of public, political discourse into the private sphere of the home).³²⁹ The postsecular inversion of the privatization thesis finds its critique in Casanova's analyses of the return of public religion in late twentieth-century Western democratic politics.³³⁰ Furthermore, with the events of 9/11, religions have become more visible and Jürgen Habermas argues that the postsecular addresses the continuities and intersections between politics and religion.³³¹ Even Peter Berger has recapitulated his position on the sociological decline of religion.³³² However, while participation in institutional religion has certainly declined, we have also seen an explosion of Luckmann's "invisible religion," or the turn away from religious institutions towards individuated religion, in terms of Taylor's supernova effect: religion is more individuated, fragmented, explosively pluralized, and idiosyncratically created based on our expressive articulations of what we find believable or want to believe.³³³ Taylor argues that in the search for meaning, "we are taken beyond the gamut of traditionally available frameworks. Not only do they embrace these traditions tentatively, but they often develop their own versions

³²⁹ C.f. John Torpey, "A (Post-) Secular Age? Religion and the Two Exceptionalisms," *Social Research* 77, no. 1 (2010): 269-296, 277; José Casanova, "Secularization," in *The International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioral Sciences*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (Oxford: Elsevier, 2001), 13786-91.

³³⁰ Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*.

³³¹ Jürgen Habermas, "Faith and Knowledge," in *The Future of Human Nature* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2003), 101-115.

³³² Peter Berger, ed., *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 2, 10-11.

³³³ Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion*.

of them, or idiosyncratic combinations of, borrowings from, or semi-inventions within them. And this provides the context within which the question of meaning has its place.”³³⁴ This supernova effect of individuated belief is supported in Taylor by the pluralization and optionality of belief alongside the turn to expressive individualism, spirituality, and search for authenticity.

Tied to the explosive inversion of the decline of religion thesis is also the inversion of the differentiation thesis insofar as religious belief finds its expression not only in the intentional crossover between religious or secular liturgies (in religious congregations or secular ritual practices) but more fundamentally in the pluralization of religious experiences in everyday life.³³⁵ The postsecular inversion of the differentiation thesis can be defined by Linda Woodhead’s idea of “de-differentiated pluralism.” De-differentiated pluralism is a third type of pluralism, building on Peter Berger’s two typologies of pluralism (of religious pluralism and the co-existence of religion and the secular) and Casanova’s analysis of the differentiation between religious and secular institutions in modern society. De-differentiated pluralism in late modern society is characterized by the porous and collapsing boundaries between the secular and the religious and their mixtures into ordinary life and practice.³³⁶

The postsecular inversion of secularization theses is historicized by the conditions for believing and the transformation of religion in new political, social, and everyday situated contexts of life. The three postsecular inversions of the secularization thesis are, first, that the differentiation thesis is inverted in the tacit and tactical religious incarnations of secular everyday life. Furthermore, the postsecular inversion of the decline of religion thesis is found in the religious explosion and supernova effect of individuated religious pluralization. Finally,

³³⁴ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989), 17.

³³⁵ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 27-55.

³³⁶ Linda Woodhead, “Intensified Religious Pluralism and De-differentiation: the British Example,” *Society* 53, no.1 (2016): 41-46.

the postsecular inversion of the privatization thesis is found in the return and resurgence of religion in the public sphere. Each postsecular inversion of the secularization thesis finds merit in understanding the imagined continuities and discontinuities between the secular and the religious in ways that are situated in late modern sensibilities and transformations of religion.

Moreover, the postsecular inversions of secularization theses—especially de-differentiated pluralism—indicate how postsecular religious believing is incarnational and porously embedded within the practices and conditions for belief in late modernity. And it is in the logic of incarnational thinking that the potential of a postsecular theology offers ways of imagining what it means to believe and be human in late modernity. What it means to believe and be human in late modernity is to wrestle with the inescapable conditions of the secular and chart pathways through which the possibilities of believing may be enacted and practiced in meaningful ways in the cross-pressures of a postsecular thirdspace marked by realized flourishing and the openness to transcendence as a source of meaning—and this will be developed below in Part II.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter argued that a postsecular critique of the secular reveals both how the secular is inescapably linked and shaped by the religious and how the religious is situated within the secular. It argued that the complexity claim denies the assumed dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular and reveals the complicity of the sacred in or as the secular. This chapter revealed how the complexity claim of a postsecular critique of the secular illustrates how the sacred, religious, and retrieval of transcendence are implicitly linked to the historical, social, political, and quotidian dimensions of how we *imagine* the spatial and temporal dimensions of the religious in the secular in what is called postsecular thirdspace.

This chapter also demonstrated how we might contextualize Taylor as part of a broader postsecular discourse in terms of the complexity claim of a postsecular critique of the secular. In doing so it has argued how the intimate connections between the secular and the religious can be imagined and inverted to deny the assumed dualism between the secular and the sacred/religious. While Part I has analyzed the first research question by contextualizing Charles Taylor in postsecular discourses to show how a postsecular critique of the secular critiques the dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular, Part II will address the second research question by using Taylor as a catalyst to constructively develop a postsecular incarnational theology of presence that critiques the dualism between transcendence and immanence. It does so by developing an incarnational logic and theology of presence in chapter five, the tension between the question of meaning and believing and being human in chapter six, and the horizons and cross-pressures of realized flourishing in chapter seven.

PART II:
CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF
CHARLES TAYLOR

CHAPTER FIVE: POSTSECULAR PRESENCE:

TRANSCENDENCE, IMMANENCE, AND INCARNATION

While Part I focused on the first research question, Part II will focus on the second research question: *How can Charles Taylor be a catalyst for constructing a postsecular incarnational theology of presence that questions the dualism between transcendence and immanence?* This chapter articulates a postsecular incarnational theology of presence by analyzing the concepts of transcendence, immanence, and incarnation to argue how an incarnational logic and theology of presence holds open immanence to transcendence. In doing so, it questions the dualistic secular assumption of the bifurcation between transcendence and immanence.

This chapter dialogues the theological potential of Charles Taylor with philosophers and theologians such as Ingolf Dalferth, Wessel Stoker, Raimon Panikkar, Ray Anderson, John Zizioulas, and William E. Connolly. These philosophers and theologians are chosen either because they have written on the relationship between transcendence and immanence (Dalferth, Stoker, and Panikkar), because they have engaged substantially with Taylor (Connolly), or because they represent leading theological voices on the doctrine of the incarnation (Anderson and Zizioulas).

Section 5.1 begins with the problem of the dualism between transcendence and immanence, questions it through the idea of incarnational presence, and problematizes how it is shaped by the tensions between this-worldly flourishing and other-worldly promises. Then Section 5.2 evaluates three accounts of transcendence and immanence in the work of Ingolf Dalferth, Wessel Stoker, and Raimon Panikkar to show how each problematizes transcendence, immanence, and incarnation. Then section 5.3 analyzes three differing accounts of incarnation in the work of Charles Taylor, William E. Connolly, Ray Anderson, and John Zizioulas to show how the transformation, affirmation, and human capacity for presence are essential in a postsecular incarnational theology of presence. Finally, section 5.4 begins to draw together the

threads that constitute the basics of a postsecular incarnational theology of presence. By the end of this chapter, the stage will be set by which we can begin developing a postsecular incarnational theology of presence that affirms immanence but also transforms it through the presence of human agents who have the capacity for participation in and dependence upon transcendence to act for the flourishing of this world.

5.1 Tensions, Problems, and Promises

At the heart of this chapter is how to imagine the mediation between transcendence and immanence. While the notion of incarnation is a way to mediate between these two, in a postsecular context, the orientations to this-worldly flourishing and an other-worldly promise distinctly mark the possibilities of the mediation between transcendence and immanence and why it is necessary. Arguably, the problem of the dualism between transcendence and immanence is tied to the misunderstanding of how the emphasis on this-worldly flourishing is at odds with other-worldly promises. An incarnational logic can resolve this misconception because it does not neglect the possibilities of this-worldly flourishing in its hope for other-worldly promises. Indeed, a postsecular incarnational logic holds together the other-worldly promise with this-worldly flourishing through human agency and participation in the purposes of God for the flourishing of this world. This is crucial to identify because it reveals the importance of how we can begin to wrestle with the question of how to mediate transcendence and immanence.

Often the relationship between transcendence and immanence is defined in terms of the contrast between this-worldliness and other-worldliness. This is most notable in the later works of Max Weber when he refers to the distinctions between Eastern and Western religions, with the former focused on *this* world and the latter on other-worldly goals.³³⁷ Moreover, Weber

³³⁷ Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (London: Methuen and Sons, 1965).

argued how religions have moved from the animism of primitive societies to the social construction of a priesthood that mediates the sacred to the secular through human institutions. Out of this, Weber states that “the more a religion... has been systematized and internalized... the greater becomes its tension with and opposition to the world.”³³⁸ This is most exemplified throughout his and Taylor’s analyses of Calvinism and the Protestant Reformation’s tension between the work of sacralizing ordinary life and the ascetic drive to transform earthly needs.³³⁹ But it is in Arthur Lovejoy’s landmark text that we truly see the tensions between this-worldliness and other-worldliness as the assumed distinction between Eastern and Western theological ideas of God. Lovejoy states:

The [Western idea of God] was the Absolute of otherworldliness, self-sufficient, out of time, alien to the categories of ordinary human thought and experience, needing no world of lesser beings to supplement or enhance his eternal self-contained perfection. The other [Eastern idea of God] was a God who emphatically was not self-sufficient nor, in any philosophical sense, ‘absolute’: one whose essential nature required the existence of other beings, and not of one kind of these only, but of all kinds which could find a place in the descending scale of the possibilities of reality—a God whose prime attribute was generativeness, whose manifestation was to be found in the diversity of creatures and therefore in the temporal order and the manifold spectacle of nature’s processes.³⁴⁰

Here we see that the conception of God between Eastern and Western religions was primarily conceived in terms of whether God is ontologically distinct from creation. While Eastern religions typically do not adhere to the ontological distinction between God and creation, they still have a conception of the relationship between transcendence and immanence—and yet in terms of the essential generation and participation of creation in the sacred. Eastern religions like Hinduism and Daoism do not see the divine as essentially different from creation. Rather they see the divine as the source from which all things are generated. In these Eastern faiths, the mediation of transcendence and immanence is essentially mediated through creation’s

³³⁸ Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, 207.

³³⁹ Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, 144.

³⁴⁰ Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study in the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 315.

essential being as part of, participating in, and generated out of the divine's self-manifestation in, or play of, creation.

Abrahamic faiths by contrast affirmed the ontological distinction between God and creation and thereby separated the transcendence of God from the immanence of creation. The problem posed for Abrahamic religions, then, is how to mediate a God who is self-sufficient and does not need creation for God to be God. All three Abrahamic faiths see this mediation through the historical self-disclosure or "revelation" of God to humanity. But what makes the Christian notion of revelation distinct from both Judaism and Islam is the centrality that the revelation of God is revealed or disclosed to humanity through God's condescension or kenosis of becoming human in Jesus. Here the incarnation remains a distinctly Christian way of divine self-disclosure and has the potential to shape what it means for humans to embody and participate in God through the kenotic sacrifice of God in Christ. In Christianity then, the other-worldly reality condescends to be with, become, affirm, and transform this world through incarnation for the sake of the flourishing and salvation of this world.

We can begin to reflect on a theology of presence when we pause on the notion of incarnation through the condescension of the Son in Jesus. Christians believe that God is Triune and He co-participates and indwells as a mutual communion of Love among the persons (*hypostasis*) of the Trinity while sharing the same essence (*ousia*) as a subsistent relation.³⁴¹ The idea of God as a subsistent relation implies that God essentially exists as the relation of the three persons.³⁴² In the economy of salvation, God reveals himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, of which the Son is understood to have emptied himself of his divine glory and became human. As the Chalcedonian definition adheres, Jesus is One person (God the Son) who has

³⁴¹ Here I am following John Zizioulas and Thomas Aquinas. C.f. John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985).

³⁴² C.f. Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Francesca Aran Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 114-120.

two natures (Divine and Human) without confusion. Or rather, Jesus as the Son lives a perfect life through his human nature's dependency upon his divine nature.³⁴³

But when we reflect on the condescension of the Son to become human, the centrality of his *kenosis* or emptying of his divine glory implies the presence and agency of God amid humanity. In the divine economy of salvation, the Father sends to the Son as the redeemer of the world, and Jesus' presence to those with whom he interacted reveals a level of intimacy. This is an intimacy of presence that both subverted systems of power and embodied the presence of God to those with whom he interacted throughout his ministry. Furthermore, when Jesus sends the *paraclete* (the Holy Spirit, Helper) after his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of the Father and the Son is often understood and experienced as the presence of God in, to, and through those who confess Jesus as Lord.

This theology of incarnation implies a theology of presence. It is so in at least three ways. First, it implies that God became human and enpresenced and enpresented himself in time and space for the redemption of the world.³⁴⁴ Second and third, it implies the human capacity to dwell in the presence of God, both in the sense that the Holy Spirit dwells in the believer and that the Holy Spirit empowers the believer with a capacity for co-participation in the purposes and agency of God for the redemption and flourishing of this world. Here we see that an incarnational presence implies human participation in the purposes of God for the flourishing of this world, as well as the idea that humans play an agential role in embodying the power of the Spirit of the Lord in their ministry as co-participants in God's work for the flourishing of this world.

³⁴³ C.f. Aaron Riches, *Ecce Homo: On the Divine Unity of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016).

³⁴⁴ The word enpresenting comes from Martin Heidegger to refer to the immanent experience in a temporal "now" where one dwells in the experience of time. I use *enpresenting* to refer to the *temporal* experience of a human person who participates in God and *enpresencing* to refer to the *spatial* experience of a human person who participates in God. C.f. Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, Revised edition (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982), 168, 228, 261, 263-268.

But when we turn to examine the tensions between this-worldliness and other-worldliness we begin to see how an incarnational theology of presence is a point of contrast within the history of Christianity since the Protestant Reformation. As Colin Campbell points out, the tension between this-worldliness and other-worldliness is the primary tension within Western religion since the Protestant Reformation.³⁴⁵ This tension spills out across Western modernity as a tension for the religious believer between: a) the notion of a perfect God who desires the flourishing of this world—and humans play a participatory role in this; and b) the drive for a perfect otherworldly, heavenly paradise where there is no more suffering or evil. The problem between both of these is the problem of evil and suffering—only how we can address this problem differs among those who are oriented towards this world and those oriented towards an other world.

Arguably, in modernity, the concern for this-worldly flourishing has been more prevalent and dominant than the other-worldly promise for justice and righteousness in an other-worldly transfiguration of the heavens and earth when it comes to the problem of suffering. It is this promise for otherworldly transformation, as well as the work of this-worldly transformation, that ties the Christian vision together with what will be developed in chapter seven as realized flourishing. But Taylor's project of the retrieval of transcendence opens us to the possibilities of transcendence and its mediation to immanence as key to developing a postsecular incarnational theology of presence. But to address this incarnational theology of presence, we must first analyze the dualism between transcendence and immanence in Western thought.

³⁴⁵ Colin Campbell, "Weber, Rationalization, and Religious Evolution in the Modern Era," in *Theorizing Religion: Classical and Contemporary Debates*, ed. By James A. Beckford and John Wallis (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 19-31, 26.

5.2 The Question of Transcendence

Immanence and transcendence are used in at least three ways throughout religious, philosophical, and theological discourses. Theologically, they are used to denote the immanence or transcendence of God to, in, or from creation.³⁴⁶ In Abrahamic theology, the relationship between transcendence and immanence denotes the asymmetrical relationship between God's transcendence and the immanence of creation.³⁴⁷ This asymmetrical relationship is characterized by both the necessity of God for creation to be creation and the non-necessity of creation for God to be God. Philosophically, however, Charles Taylor uses immanence to refer to the modern closure to God and the disembedding of religious structures that shape modern human life.³⁴⁸ This is what Charles Taylor calls a "closed-world-structure" which entails an "immanent frame": a way of viewing the world in modernity that presupposes the closure to the possibility of God and transcendence, or rather, the buffering against the possibility of God, spirits, and the supernatural through the modern processes of disembedding human life from the structures of religion and the church.³⁴⁹ Religiously, immanence refers to the encounter with, or closeness or experience of, the divine in our everyday lives. This encounter or closeness may be experienced in nature, the rhythms of ordinary life, through prayer, rituals, or other means such as sacraments, that cultivate the dispositions towards spiritual formation.

The term transcendence is often used in religious parlance to refer to a philosophical understanding of God, particularly coming from both medieval scholasticism and the

³⁴⁶ "To" and "from" would be used in Abrahamic religions, while "in" would predominantly be used in Hindu or Primal traditions, the latter of which would not imply an asymmetrical relation because God is not independent of creation.

³⁴⁷ C.f. Amene Mir, "A Panentheist Reading of John Milbank," *Modern Theology* 28, no. 3 (2012): 526–60.

³⁴⁸ Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); José Casanova, "Secularization," in *The International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioral Sciences*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (Oxford: Elsevier, 2001), 13786–91.

³⁴⁹ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 543; Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*.

continental tradition of phenomenology, and it is intimately tied to the experience of God. But the term transcendence is also tied to the terms “Transcendent” and “transcendentals.” When speaking of “the” Transcendent, it is referring to an abstract idea of God proper as an object of study, discourse, or encounter, often with an implicit reference to a theological content of what we mean by “God” as perfect, eternal, and benevolent, etc. When speaking of transcendentals, I am using this, particularly in a phenomenological fashion to refer to the theological or philosophical possibilities that shape the discourse of what we can say about God. Throughout this thesis, I am using “transcendence” to refer to a phenomenological category for what it means both to experience meaning and what the conditions are for the possibilities of believing in an immanent frame.

This means that transcendence is working from the presupposition of immanence, or rather, it is doing theology immanently (speaking of transcendence from the contextual conditions and possibilities of immanent experience). This means that the question or experience of transcendence is a question raised from the perspective and experience of immanence: How do we conceive of transcendence from immanence?³⁵⁰ To answer this question, let us turn to the conceptualizations and categorizations of transcendence and immanence in the contributions of Ingolf Dalferth, Wessel Stoker, and Raimon Panikkar before analyzing the potential and problems of their proposals for understanding transcendence and immanence.

While Dalferth approaches the relationship through a genealogical reading of philosophical theology, Stoker situates his categories of how transcendence can be defined through the lenses of contemporary philosophy and theology. Furthermore, Panikkar situates his categorization of transcendence and immanence cross-culturally and inter-religiously to

³⁵⁰ This is a question I raise in my *An Advaitic Modernity? Raimon Panikkar and Philosophical Theology* (Lanham, MD: Fortress Academic, 2024) where I ask, “How can we speak of transcendence from immanence?” through analyses of Raimon Panikkar’s contributions to philosophical theology in dialogue with Martin Heidegger, William Desmond, Charles Taylor, and the Radical Orthodoxy Movement.

reveal how different religious traditions may conceive of transcendence and immanence. The problem with each of these proposals for understanding transcendence and immanence lies precisely in the question of articulating an incarnational mediation between transcendence and immanence that not only allows the ascension of humanity to God but also allows the possibility of the incarnational condescension of God to humanity. Let us first examine Dalferth's reading and then turn to Stoker and Panikkar.

5.2.1 Ingolf Dalferth's Idea of Transcendence

Ingolf Dalferth's chapter in Robert Bellah and Hans Joas', *The Axial Age and its Consequences*, offers an important conceptualization of transcendence and how it can be conceived across Western philosophical and theological history. Dalferth breaks up his argument into five sections, and for our purposes, we will limit ourselves primarily to the first three. In the first section of Dalferth's essay, he articulates five ways in which transcendence has been understood across the history of Western thought: ontological transcendence, divine transcendence, epistemic transcendence, subjective transcendence (or transcendence of the ego), and ethical transcendence.³⁵¹ While ontological transcendence is based primarily on Plato, it refers to the binary, ontological distinction between this world and an other-world where the other world is the true world that this world imitates. Divine transcendence takes the ontological distinction further and adds the theological language of truth to make a distinction between the creator and the created, adding divine weight to the ontological distinction. But when we turn to epistemic transcendence, what we find is a turn away from the notion of divine truth in the search for certainty, knowledge, and the unity of the subject/object distinction. This epistemic turn sets the stage for the subjective turn, where the subjective ego/self becomes the

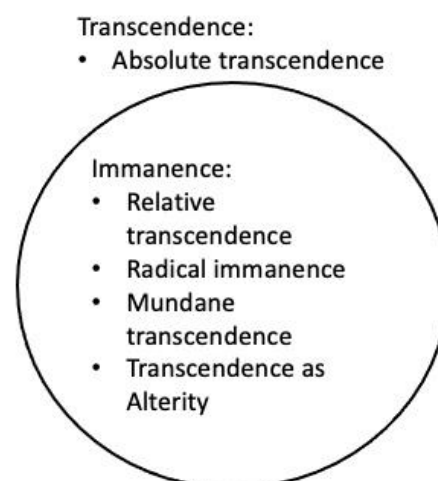
³⁵¹ Ingolf Dalferth, "The Idea of Transcendence," in *The Axial Age and its Consequences*, ed. Robert Bellah and Hans Joas (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012), 146-188, 147-153.

place where truth, knowledge, and transcendence are conceived in terms of self-knowledge. Finally, the turn to ethical transcendence happens when the self turns outwards to the other where the self realizes that the other transcends the self in ways that demand upon the face of the other an ethical responsibility for the other.

But in the second section of Dalferth's chapter, we find an important analysis of transcendence and immanence pertinent to this thesis. Dalferth opens us first to the reality that Transcendence and Immanence are ontologically distinct. Transcendence not only refers to God, but to an other-worldly eternal reality that we cannot access. Immanence refers to this world, but in ways that can refer to a transcendence within the frame of Immanence.³⁵² Dalferth makes a distinction between different types of transcendence in relation to immanence to illustrate how there can be a transcending within Immanence as well as an absolute and relative Transcendence. Dalferth capitalizes Transcendence to refer to “Absolute Transcendence”—an unobservable reality that is outside or beyond Immanence. Think of a circle on a sheet of paper: Outside the circle is “(Absolute) Transcendence” and within the Circle is “Immanence,” which holds the space for “relative transcendence.”³⁵³ Central to Dalferth’s arguments is the notion

of the difference between Transcendence and Immanence, particularly in binary terms, to understand not only the external difference between them but also the internal difference within Immanence between immanence and relative transcendence.³⁵⁴ What these

Figure 5.1:
Dalferth's Model of Transcendence and Immanence



³⁵² Dalferth, “The Idea of Transcendence,” 154.

³⁵³ C.f. Figure 5.1.

³⁵⁴ Dalferth, “The Idea of Transcendence,” 153-158.

differences illustrate is not only a limit or boundary between Transcendence and Immanence, but also the limit between relative transcendence and absolute transcendence because the former is bound to Immanence and cannot bridge the divide between (absolute) Transcendence and Immanence.³⁵⁵

From this, Dalferth posits three ways to understand the relationship between Transcendence and Immanence. First, there is the notion of an immanent transcending, where from Immanence there is an ascent or a transcending within Immanence that is motivated by ethical transcendence for the transcendence of contemporary problems and issues within our world.³⁵⁶ Second, Dalferth posits the condescension of Transcendence into Immanence as a transcendent transcending that starts from Transcendence and enters into—and encounters—Immanence.³⁵⁷ Third, Dalferth posits the *difference* between Transcendence and Immanence as a starting point for conceiving them. Dalferth states that this is no middle position, but rather it is Absolute Transcendence articulating its difference from Immanence while not negating its Transcendence precisely because of its ontological difference from Immanence. Here we see theological parameters not only of encounter but of a confrontation between God and creation that articulates the ontological difference between absolute Transcendence and Immanence.³⁵⁸

These lead to Dalferth's arguments in the fourth part of his chapter to illustrate how Transcendence and self-transcending may be conceived as an Event.³⁵⁹ First Dalferth argues how anthropological ascents to Transcendence are linked to the theological constitution of created things. This in turn allows the space for conceiving of transcendence as a self-transcending that, while condescending to an "immanent horizon" within immanence, absolute transcendence does not lose its transcendent nature. This implies how transcendence breaks

³⁵⁵ Dalferth, "The Idea of Transcendence," 158-160.

³⁵⁶ Dalferth, "The Idea of Transcendence," 160-162.

³⁵⁷ Dalferth, "The Idea of Transcendence," 162- 165. This is something Wessel Stoker calls radical transcendence.

³⁵⁸ Dalferth, "The Idea of Transcendence," 165-167.

³⁵⁹ Dalferth, "The Idea of Transcendence," 167-178.

into immanence as a rupture or event that is made sense of through the notion of a symbol such as “God.” Finally, this symbol is interpreted not only as a “God,” but through its in-breaking event into Immanence without denying its transcendence, this implies its self-revelation to Immanence. Each of these steps by Dalferth illustrates the complex relationship between Transcendence and Immanence and how they are mediated through the idea of incarnation. Before we turn to analyze the promise of Dalferth’s understanding of the mediations between transcendence and immanence, we will first turn to Wessel Stoker’s analysis of transcendence and how this compares to Dalferth’s analysis.

5.2.2 Wessel Stoker’s Four Categories of Transcendence

In a book that charts the notion of transcendence across Western philosophy, theology, politics, and the arts, Wessel Stoker offers at the outset four categories by which to understand transcendence.³⁶⁰ Stoker identifies four forms of transcendence since the Romantics. The first of which is immanent transcendence which refers to the alienation, but not the separation, of immanence from transcendence.³⁶¹ This position sees immanence and transcendence as closely linked together and indeed, includes in the experience of everyday mundane immanence the possibility of experiencing transcendence. The second form of transcendence is what Stoker (and Connolly) calls radical transcendence, which posits the radical difference between transcendence and immanence, of God and creation. The relationship between the two is understood in two ways according to Stoker. First, it describes the encounter as that between God and a stranger. The second way is that God is Wholly Other than humanity. Stoker states that there are two ways in which transcendence and immanence are mediated in this model. The first is where humans are open to revelation from God, while the second is that God reveals

³⁶⁰ Wessel Stoker, “Culture and Transcendence: A Typology,” in *Looking Beyond? Shifting Views of Transcendence in Philosophy, Theology, Art, and Politics*, ed. By Wessel Stoker and W.L. van der Merwe (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2012), 5-28.

³⁶¹ Stoker, “Culture and Transcendence,” 6.

himself to humanity through a movement of God towards humanity.³⁶²

While these two ways of understanding transcendence refer to vertical understandings of transcendence, Stoker identifies two horizontal forms of transcendence that have developed over the twentieth century. These two horizontal forms of understanding transcendence are radical immanence and transcendence as alterity. Radical immanence refers to the denial of vertical transcendence, where transcendence is “neutralized and only immanence seems to be left.”³⁶³ In this model, “the absolute is no longer sought outside of mundane reality; both realities converge, with the absolute emptying itself in mundane reality.”³⁶⁴ The second type of horizontal transcendence, transcendence as alterity, likewise rejects the vertical relationship with transcendence but rather sees transcendence in the horizontal relationships with the other. In this model, the other is irreducible to me (Levinas) or is a groundless originary or trace of transcendence that deconstructs the possibility of an absolute origin (Derrida). With transcendence as alterity, transcendence is found in every other as a wholly other.³⁶⁵

By problematizing the simple distinction between vertical and horizontal transcendence, Stoker distinguishes how each of these fails to take into account the complexity of what he calls the distinction between radical and immanent transcendence. Stoker points out that to collapse radical and immanent views of transcendence into vertical and horizontal categories would fail to do justice to each because, “Each would then be viewed as vertical, which would be incorrect because immanent transcendence bridges the opposition between horizontal and vertical in that both elements are in balance with each other. Radical transcendence has just as little to do with transcendence if the latter refers to something that is purely outside this world.”³⁶⁶

³⁶² Stoker, “Culture and Transcendence,” 6.

³⁶³ Stoker, “Culture and Transcendence,” 8.

³⁶⁴ Stoker, “Culture and Transcendence,” 8.

³⁶⁵ Stoker, “Culture and Transcendence,” 8.

³⁶⁶ Stoker, “Culture and Transcendence,” 7.

This leads to the third option: the opposite of radical transcendence—the notion of radical immanence—which is the utter exclusion of all notions of absolute transcendence and the presupposition that this world is permeated by an utterly this-worldly transcendence. Radical immanence, however, is not the exclusion of transcendence—it is the relegation of all transcendence as within, part of, permeating, and/or sustaining the nature of this world. The fourth notion of “transcendence as alterity,” in turn also resists the notion of vertical transcendence, while yet may hold open the possibility of transcendence as “other.” Could this “other” be God or transcendence, or is this other limited to immanence in ways that exclude the possibility of God? Stoker leaves this question open, and rather focuses on seeing the other as transcending the self as an other that “can appear in every other.”³⁶⁷

Stoker's typology helps extend Dalferth's analyses of the idea of transcendence further because it offers a framework by which to understand the relationship between transcendence and immanence more robustly in terms of this-worldly transcendence and immanence. Whereas the strength of Dalferth is that he offers robust analyses of how transcendence may encounter or reveal itself to immanence, what Stoker offers is a more robust sense of what transcendence looks like on the side of immanence. By contrast, whereas Dalferth lacks an analysis of radical immanence through his over-emphasis on Transcendence, Stoker lacks a fuller account of how transcendence takes into account immanence in terms of both radical transcendence and immanent transcendence. Before turning to analyze these accounts of immanence and transcendence, let us turn to one more interlocutor who may help us conceptualize cross-cultural understandings of transcendence and immanence in the thought of Raimon Panikkar.

³⁶⁷ Stoker, “Culture and Transcendence,” 8.

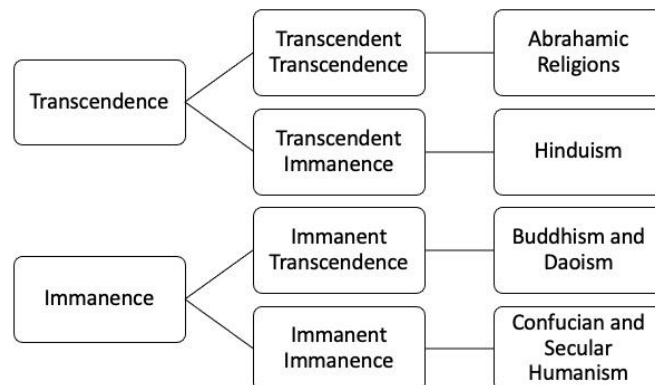
5.2.3 Raimon Panikkar's Categories of Transcendence and Immanence

Raimon Panikkar is known for being the pioneer in inter-religious dialogue, and yet what is less known of him are his contributions to religious studies and cross-cultural hermeneutics. Particularly found in his *Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics* (and now in his *Opera Omnia*) is a conceptual categorization of inter-religious combinations of transcendence and immanence.³⁶⁸ Panikkar, known for sitting between both East and West and between philosophy and theology, offers a cross-cultural categorization for understanding how religious and secular traditions conceive of transcendence and immanence, and yet one that reveals the problem of incarnation through its conceptual silence.

But before we turn to this silence hidden throughout Panikkar's cross-cultural categorization of religion, we must examine how he understands the notions of transcendence and immanence. First, Panikkar

categorically classifies religions between the central themes of transcendence and immanence. Under Transcendence, Panikkar has two notions: transcendent

Figure 5.2:
Panikkar's Categories of Transcendence and Immanence



transcendence and transcendent immanence. Transcendent transcendence for Panikkar refers to the Abrahamic traditions and arguably follows Stoker and Dalferth's notions of radical/absolute transcendence. At the heart of transcendent transcendence for Panikkar is the utter transcendence of God—in ways that God's transcendence cannot be breached by human

³⁶⁸ Figure 5.2 builds on Panikkar's original diagram and extends it to categorize world religious and secular traditions. C.f. Raimon Panikkar, *Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics: Cross-Cultural Studies* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 311-315.

ascent. For Panikkar, transcendent transcendence would require the self-revelation of God to immanence without negating or losing its transcendence.

When we turn to transcendent immanence, Panikkar classifies Hinduism under this umbrella term to refer to a transcendent reality within all of immanence. In Hinduism, this is supported by the Vedantic notion of Atman as Brahman, that the underlying essence of all reality (Brahman) is the truest essence of the self (Atman). Furthermore, all of creation is a creative manifestation of the “play” (*Lila*) of Brahman, only, creation’s underlying essence is hidden by the illusion (*Maya*) of duality that is superimposed (*adhyasa*) on reality because of human ignorance (*avidya*) of the underlying unity and essence of all things as immanent manifestations of a transcendent reality.

Under Immanence, Panikkar again combines notions of transcendence and immanence, only to focus on how immanence is at the center of reality. Arguably, he would call Buddhism and Daoism as proposing an immanent transcendence, and Confucian and secular humanism as examples of an immanent immanence.³⁶⁹ While immanent transcendence is about how we can experience a liberating transcendence and affirm immanence, immanent immanence is about the affirmation and perfectibility of immanence through human agency to enact the flourishing of this world.

For Panikkar, immanent transcendence implies not the condescension of transcendence to immanence, but rather the generation or experience of transcendence as from within immanence. This implies that from the human, this-worldly experience of immanence, one may transcend this world while still experiencing transcendence here and now in the affirmation of this immanent plane of existence. Concretely, Buddhism reflects this when the cessation of suffering and rebirth (*nirvana*) is experienced in this life: nirvana is an experience of transcendence that transcends, yet can be experienced in the immanence of this world of

³⁶⁹ These classifications of religion are original to me.

cyclical existence (*samsara*). Furthermore, Daoism is also representative of immanent transcendence insofar as it reflects the conformation of human naturalness (*ziran*) to the naturalness of nature and how nature conforms most naturally to the Dao. The Dao is notoriously hard to define, and yet what it does imply is that it is an energy permeating and sustaining reality where humans conform to it and cultivate the harmonies between humanity and nature. In this sense, while the Dao is extremely apophatic, it is also an experience of transcendence that is encountered and cultivated in immanence.

In turn, immanent immanence refers to an experience of immanence that is focused solely on this world, especially in terms of its focus on how immanence is conceived of in the absence of transcendence—but also geared towards an emphasis on human flourishing as having a this-worldly emphasis on cultivating the goodness of this world. However, modern secularism rejects the concept of transcendence entirely, because modern reason does not necessitate the existence of God to actualize human flourishing in this world through the power of reason and the promises of technology and the progressive betterment of humanity. By contrast, Confucianism maintains a sense of the sacred through the concept of heaven (*tien*) as a moral principle that humans are supposed to enact as responsible agents who act towards the perfectibility of this world and human nature. However, both Confucian and secular forms of humanism agree that humanity has the power to actualize the flourishing of this world, whether that is through human perfectibility (Confucianism) or the progressive betterment of humanity through the power of reason (secularism).

What Panikkar's cross-cultural typologies reveal is not only how transcendence and immanence are conceived from within various religious and secular traditions. It also reveals a striking silence: Panikkar does not take into account the concept of incarnation as a central component that mediates transcendence and immanence. And yet, Panikkar's typology reveals the centralities of revelation, the experience of transcendence, and the affirmation of this world.

Each of these is important in the articulation of a postsecular incarnational theology of presence, even if they do not reference incarnation. This is because each of these components reveals how an incarnational logic is linked to a theology of presence. This is because revelation implies the encounter with or experience of transcendence as a presence that affirms this world and the human responsibility and agency to act for the flourishing of this world.

5.2.4 Evaluating Models of Transcendence and Immanence

Throughout the accounts above on transcendence and immanence, the question of how incarnation may be conceived in each must be analyzed. While Dalferth's accounts offer the most promise in offering an incarnational mediation between transcendence and immanence through absolute transcendence's encounter with immanence, his accounts of radical immanence and other forms of immanence do not adequately pose a solution as to how to affirm immanence and the flourishing of this world. In contrast to both Stoker and Panikkar however, Dalferth offers the most viable way of articulating the mediation between transcendence and immanence through his articulations of transcendence as an encountered event whereby this world is confronted with an other-worldly reality.

Wessel Stoker picks up on this in his analyses of radical transcendence, especially demonstrated through the theological and philosophical contributions of Karl Barth and Søren Kierkegaard. And yet, Stoker's analyses focus more attention on conceptions of transcendence from the perspective of immanence. Because of this Stoker's analyses tend to neglect the possibility of mediation between transcendence and immanence in ways that hold open the possibility of immanence's transformation by transcendence and transcendence's affirmation of immanence. Both the transformation and affirmation of immanence by transcendence are key components to an incarnational logic and theology of presence but are distinctly underdeveloped throughout Stoker's analysis of transcendence and immanence.

Arguably, Raimon Panikkar's contributions may over-complexify the accounts here, but by illustrating Panikkar's accounts of transcendence and immanence, what they do set up is both a link between transcendence, immanence, and human flourishing through his cross-cultural analyses, even if he is silent on incarnation. The contrast Panikkar's categorization sets up against Dalferth and Stoker's analyses of transcendence and immanence is that they do not take into account inter-religious conceptualizations of each, as well as the distinction between the combinations of transcendence and immanence when they are combined in four different ways. Panikkar's transcendent immanence exposes the Hindu conceptualizations of how immanence is a manifestation of transcendence but reveals Panikkar's rejection of the ontological distinction between God and creation. Furthermore, Panikkar's account of immanent transcendence exposes the Eastern emphasis on the experience of transcendence within immanence but neglects the Western emphasis on the incarnational encounter with the presence of a personal God. Panikkar's immanent immanence resonates with modern secular humanism and also demonstrates an agreement with Confucian conceptions of how humans can affirm this world in the here and now through the cultivation of virtue for the flourishing of this world.

But what remains underdeveloped in Panikkar, Dalferth, and Stoker is the central notion of incarnation as a key component by which to understand the mediation between immanence and transcendence. While Dalferth, Stoker, and Panikkar all present important conceptualizations of how to understand the mediation of transcendence and immanence, I want to construct the notion of an incarnational logic that works with both the philosophical contributions of Charles Taylor and William E. Connolly, as well as the theological ideas of John Zizioulas and Ray S. Anderson. The following argues that a postsecular incarnational theology of presence must affirm and transform this-worldly immanence through humanity's ecstatic dependency and participation in an incarnational presence of transcendence.

5.3 Three Models of Incarnation

To contextualize a postsecular incarnational theology of presence, the immanent frame is a central backdrop through which modern religious believers must make sense of incarnation. The modern West presupposes the closure to transcendence, and it will not merely state that we must remain open to it to challenge that closure. Previous sections analyzed how different theories about the question of transcendence presuppose a level of complexity to the problem of how to incarnationally mediate transcendence to immanence. Hence, an incarnational logic and a theology of presence require us to imagine how we can hold open an immanent frame to the possibility of transcendence as a way of affirming, transforming, and enacting human flourishing in this world.

To do this, the remainder of this chapter examines three themes that can help to articulate elements of postsecular incarnational theology of presence that can mediate between transcendence and immanence. First, section 5.3.1 begins with Taylor's notion of transformation or the transformational perspective to analyze the problem of suffering and evil and the role Taylor plays in adhering to a metaphysical framework that proposes both a weak ontology rescripted as a weak theology. Second, section 5.3.2 poses William E. Connolly as a challenging catalyst through which we can affirm immanence because of his appeal to radical immanence. Third, section 5.3.3 examines the theological notion of *ek-static* humanity through analyses of John Zizioulas' and Ray S. Anderson's theology to reflect on the notion of incarnational presence in how we go about our lives in an open immanent frame. Finally, section 5.4 analyzes the contributions of Charles Taylor, William E. Connolly, John Zizioulas, and Ray S. Anderson to constructively propose elements of postsecular incarnational theology of presence.

5.3.1 Tayloring Transformation as Weak Theology?

Arguably, Charles Taylor is a weak theologian. This is because Taylor is open to theistic sources and his work is aimed at the retrieval of transcendence. Taylor's notion of transcendence is problematically stated to refer to three inter-related notions of the "beyond": as 1) "the sense that there is something higher than, beyond human flourishing... a possibility of transformation... that takes us beyond merely human perfection; 2) "[T]he belief in a higher power, the transcendent God of faith;" and 3) "a view of our life as going beyond the bounds of its 'natural' scope between birth and death; our lives extend beyond 'this life.'"³⁷⁰ Moreover, Phillip Williamson Schoenberg simplifies Taylor's views of transcendence to imply three themes: self-transcendence, God, and immortality.³⁷¹

Each of these is linked to one another in Taylor's analyses of transcendence and implies the tensions described above in modern religiosity between this-worldliness and other-worldliness. The tension between how we conceive of the transcending of the physical body—do we ascend into heaven as spiritual beings after death or does God transform the world with an otherworldly glory, transforming it into a spiritually transfigured material body?—are central questions of immortality. The tension to describe God as transcendence is held in relation, contrast, and difference to immanence. But when it comes to immortality, it holds in tension the reality of this life, here and now, with the promise of life everlasting in spiritually transformed bodies in a New Heavens and New Earth. Tying both self-transcendence and immortality together is the challenge to live in this world while holding onto the promise of another world. While the world to come is perfect, the tension this leaves us here and now is how to realize the already and not yet tension of the otherworldly perfect world in *this* world. Each of these tensions in turn presupposes an open immanence, or an immanent frame

³⁷⁰ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 20; Opt. cit. in Phillip Williamson Schoenberg, "Transcendence and Transformation: Charles Taylor and the Promise of Inclusive Humanism in a Secular Age" (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico, 2016), 80.

³⁷¹ Schoenberg, "Transcendence and Transformation," 80.

characterized by an open-world-structure that rejects the presupposed closure to transcendence found among its secular adherents.

At the heart of Taylor's project of the retrieval of transcendence is the notion of transformation or the "transformational perspective." But what underlies the question of how Taylor understands religion and transcendence in the West is not only the belief in God and the concern for human flourishing and transformation but also whether Taylor is propagating a weak theology. Part of Schoenberg's analysis of Taylor's view of religion is that while Taylor's affirmation of the belief in God is a strong criterion for transcendence, the notion that it is tied to human flourishing and transformation is a weak criterion for transcendence because it is oriented to final ends.³⁷² Furthermore, part of Stephen K. White's analysis of Taylor's political theory is that it can be characterized as a "weak ontology." A weak ontology presupposes categories of being as both contestable and fundamental. It also implies not a closed discourse but rather one of (what White borrows from William Connolly as) "critical responsiveness." This critical responsiveness is a beginning by which to understand the fundamental and contestable ways in which we engage with the world.³⁷³

Certainly, we can read Taylor to presuppose immanence as an open-world-structure that allows the space for the contestability of transcendence. Furthermore, I think it is right to read Taylor as presupposing transcendence as a fundamental category by which to understand this openness. But I think Schoenberg is also right to point out that for Taylor transcendence is a possibility that lies in the face of the reality of the possibility of what Ruth Abbey calls Taylor's "secularity³" which posits how the changed conditions for belief posit the possibility, but not

³⁷² Schoenberg, "Transcendence and Transformation," 32; Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 16, 510.

³⁷³ C.f. Stephen K. White, "Weak Ontology: Genealogy and Critical Issues," *The Hedgehog Review* 7, no. 2 (2005): 11-25; Stephen K. White, "Affirmation and Weak Ontology in Political Theory: Some Rules and Doubts," *Theory and Event* 4, no. 2 (2000); Stephen K. White, *Sustaining Affirmation: The Strengths of Weak Ontology in Political Theory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

necessity, of the decline of religion and belief in God in the modern West.³⁷⁴ Ruth Abbey's analyses of secularity³ shed light not only on the optionality of believing in a secular age but also on how the conditions for believing have changed in ways that make believing in transcendence contestable.

One could also challenge a reading of Taylor that presupposes that transcendence is fundamental. This challenge would primarily come from those who do not accept belief in God or the idea of transcendence, whom Taylor calls exclusive humanists. But the difference by which we can understand Taylor's notion of transcendence as fundamental is whether we include or exclude the notion of transcendence when we conceive of the immanent frame. If we reject the possibility of transcendence, then we live in a closed-world-structure, an immanent frame that excludes transcendence. But if we posit the possibility of transcendence, then we live in an open-world-structure, an immanent frame that holds open and includes transcendence as a fundamental possibility to how we conceive of our world.

Tied to this notion of transcendence is also an important critique of reading Taylor as a weak ontologist. As Michiel Meijer argues, to posit the possibility of transcendence is, yes, contestable, but when we posit transcendence as a possibility we are no longer working from within a closed immanent frame—we are working from a metaphysical framework. Meijer asks the question of whether Taylor was ever a weak ontologist and argues through analyses of Taylor's later works that Taylor was never quite a weak ontologist because he holds open the possibility of transcendence to transform our world. The openness to transcendence is by definition a metaphysical claim that shapes Taylor's later corpus in significant ways. The significant shifts from anthropological moral sources to non-anthropological ones in Taylor's later corpus signifies a shift in his understanding of how to align moral sources to

³⁷⁴ Schoenberg, "Transcendence and Transformation," 24; Ruth Abbey, "Theorizing Secularity 3: Authenticity, Ontology, Fragilization," in *Aspiring to Fullness in a Secular Age* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre-Dame Press, 2014), 98–124.

metaphysics.³⁷⁵ Meijer states that “the burden on weak ontology as a *philosophical* program, then, is that White’s perspective would exclude questions that Taylor’s metaphysics opens up. Operating within a political mode of questioning, White would sustain the affirmations we have given, whereas Taylor, as a metaphysician, investigates what makes such affirmations possible at all.”³⁷⁶

This implies that Taylor's metaphysics not only posits the possibility of transcendence as a viable option in a secular age but that it is fundamental to a religious perspective in a secular age where the conditions for belief have changed. But what does the possibility of transcendence have to say about a transformational perspective? The focus on transformation for Taylor is the crux by which we may gloss on the likenesses to an incarnational logic in Taylor. But the transformation perspective is both lost in the drive to Reform across Western history and it is contingently shaped by the contestability of suffering. Guido Vanheeswijck argues that there are three stages by which the drive to Reform has precluded the closure to the transformational perspective, where transcendence and human flourishing become contested:

the original relation between transcendence and flourishing was a *symbiotic* one. It was exemplified in the relationship between monks/nuns and laity where the ascetic activity of monks/nuns was believed to enable [the] flourishing of everyday believers. This belief was put aside by the reformers’ attack on the supposedly higher vocations of the monastic life and exposed as a superstitious view. Although in the reformer's *purist* view, the ascetic ideals of renunciation were initially seen as goals for everyone and human flourishing was even rejected as a valid aim, they eventually led to the opposite position: due to the reformist critique of all ‘higher vocations,’ the importance of transcendence diminished in favor of an affirmation of ordinary life. All ‘higher activities’ were rejected and replaced by a concern for practical human flourishing. Accordingly, the domain of ‘immanence’ was explained to include most of what was formerly regarded as ‘transcendent.’ As such, the *agapeic* or biblical view that ‘renouncing—aiming beyond life—not only takes you away but also brings you back to flourishing’ got lost. The idea that agapeic transcendence and human flourishing can go together and even reinforce each other (the ‘transformational perspective’) became incomprehensible and incredible for the majority of Western people.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁵ Michiel Meijer, “Is Charles Taylor (still) a Weak Ontologist?” *Dialogue* 56, no. 1 (2017): 65-87, 84.

³⁷⁶ Meijer, “Is Charles Taylor (still) a Weak Ontologist?”, 85.

³⁷⁷ Guido Vanheeswijck, “The Concept of Transcendence in Charles Taylor’s Later Work,” in *Looking Beyond? Shifting Views of Transcendence in Philosophy, Theology, Art, and Politics*, ed. Wessel Stoker and W.L. van der Merwe (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2012), 67-84, 74; Charles Taylor, *A Catholic Modernity?*, ed. James L. Heft (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 13-38, 21-22.

The transformational perspective is not only bound up within the cultural contingencies of Western history, but it also posits the notion of agapeic transcendence as central to the notions of fullness and flourishing. Agapeic transcendence is the notion that through renunciation of this world for the promise of another world, there is a return, a receipt, that gives this world back to us. *Agape* is the Greek word for sacrificial service or love found often throughout the New Testament, and it refers to the notion that I live not for myself, but sacrificially for others. To sacrifice my wants and desires for the betterment of others implies the renunciation of the self for the good of the other—whether that other is God, another person, or something in the natural world. Agapeic transcendence then, implies the renunciation of the self for a greater good that I judge worthwhile. And in turn, through sacrificial service, the idea is that something would change in humans as they act in such a way. This change not only humbles who we are but makes us more in the image of someone who bears what the apostle Paul would call the fruits of the spirit.³⁷⁸ This implies that the practice of agapeic transcendence takes us out of ourselves for the good of others and in a sense returns us to ourselves as servants who work for justice and the flourishing of this world.

But the problem suffering poses is also an issue by which to make sense of this transformational perspective, and Taylor's accounts of the contestability of transcendence in light of human suffering shed light on the reality that there are no easy answers, even from theological perspectives, to the problem of suffering. Taylor spends over ninety pages in *A Secular Age* wading through the problems of evil and suffering and ultimately concludes that no position—whether immanent counter-enlightenment, exclusive humanist, or religious theist—offers fully satisfactory answers.³⁷⁹ Though Taylor hints at the strengths of the religious theists' answers over non-theistic answers, he ultimately concludes that at this moment even

³⁷⁸ Galatians 5: 22-23.

³⁷⁹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 618-710.

they are not fully adequate to offer sufficient answers to the problems of evil and suffering. That said, Taylor is also making a case that by presupposing transcendence, religious theists do offer answers to these problems, and in many ways, Taylor hints that those answers may offer better accounts than those offered by positions that presuppose the closure to transcendence.

This means that Taylor's views of the transformational perspective offer a case *for* transcendence as a viable option in our world. But this case for transcendence is also one that presupposes a contested, but fundamental openness—a disposition of the immanent frame as open to transcendence, or as holding open the immanent frame to the possibilities of believing as well as the potential answers from transcendence when we make sense of our world. While the drive to Reform may have disenchanted the West, what Taylor offers is a turn towards agapeic transcendence that is aimed at transforming our world through renunciation of ourselves for the flourishing of our world. These notions will be picked up again in chapter seven, but for now, let us situate another way of understanding an incarnational logic through William E. Connolly's alternate proposal for a radical immanence that affirms this world.

5.3.2 Alternate Affirmations of Immanence with William Connolly

While the foregoing has analyzed Charles Taylor's theistic bias in his affirmations of transcendence and a transformational perspective, this section offers an alternate analysis that affirms the immanence of this world through William Connolly's notion of radical immanence. This will be done through an analysis of the existential affirmations of immanence found in William E. Connolly's notions of radical immanence, mundane transcendence, and a world of becoming. And yet, it is important to note that Connolly rejects the notion of a radical transcendence. However, though William E. Connolly rejects Abrahamic views of radical transcendence, his affirmation of immanence is an essential component of my postsecular incarnational theology of presence.

Central to William E. Connolly's affirmation of immanence is his differentiation between radical immanence, mundane transcendence, and radical transcendence. Connolly defines these as follows:

[B]y *radical* transcendence, I mean a God who creates, informs, governs, or inspires activity in the mundane world while also exceeding the awareness of its participants. By *mundane* transcendence, I mean any activity outside a non-human force field or human awareness that may then cross into it, making a difference to what the latter becomes or interacting with it in fecund or destructive ways, often without being susceptible to representation before the crossing or explanation by means of efficient causation after it... I confess a radical immanence, replete with multiple, often fugitive encounters with mundane transcendence. On my reading there is an outside of immanence, but it does not translate into divinity.³⁸⁰

Here we see that Connolly rejects the notion of absolute or radical transcendence in his affirmation of immanence. This affirmation of immanence differs from Charles Taylor's understanding of a transformational perspective that affirms God because Connolly affirms an account of transcendence that is not other-worldly or necessarily divine. Rather, Connolly's affirmation of mundane transcendence affirms that there are things in this world that transcend the human experience, yet do not presuppose a radical transcendence over above and governing this world.

As a critique of Taylor, Connolly argues that Taylor's views of secularism need "to defend a spirituality of radical immanence in a world of becoming."³⁸¹ Connolly argues, "that a debate about 'beliefs' is not enough in the secular world of 'multiple options'... we must also come to terms with the existential spiritualities infused into different beliefs, most notably with discernable drives to hubris and existential resentment embedded in some econo-political movements."³⁸² Connolly challenges Taylor whether some lived practices of transcendence and immanence are warranted in the risks of late modernity and questions "whether it is possible to forge a new pluralistic assemblage composed of minorities of various types who diverge on

³⁸⁰ William E. Connolly, *A World of Becoming* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 74-75.

³⁸¹ Connolly, *A World of Becoming*, 13.

³⁸² Connolly, *A World of Becoming*, 13.

belief and creed while sharing positive affinities of spirituality across those differences.”³⁸³ Connolly describes radical immanence as another sense of this-worldly transcendence important to spirituality. It “is transcendence as an intensification of everyday experience so as to amplify sensitivities, open the self or constituency to experimentation, or augment experimental ties across lines of difference.”³⁸⁴

Connolly disagrees in part with Taylor's views of the secular. If it, for Taylor, means closed immanence, then first, it implies that all mystery is scientifically explainable, and second, it implies a conception of time and space closed to faith in a transcendent God over an immanent world. Connolly disagrees with the first and adopts the second in his position because radical immanence implies the contestability of faith, the openness of time to becoming, and explores “different degrees of agency, feeling, and creativity” along two lines of temporal existence where humanity is closed to a personal God but open along the lines of radical immanence to the experience of mundane transcendence.³⁸⁵ Furthermore, Connolly thinks Taylor “is closed to time as becoming and... plays down modes of non-divine agency beyond the human estate.”³⁸⁶ Connolly thinks Taylor limits “real creativity to God alone, while we distribute it to different zones of the universe and the relations between them.”³⁸⁷ Yet, Connolly argues that Taylor brings closer together “two registers of temporal experience...: the punctual time of everyday perception and the experience of duration available when action oriented perception is suspended”—the latter a hallmark of Abrahamic faiths and their views of radical or absolute transcendence.³⁸⁸

In Connolly's commentary on Gilles Deleuze, Connolly emphasizes believing *in* this world, and he states that *in* the ability to “restore attachment to this world” we are able “to feel

³⁸³ Connolly, *A World of Becoming*, 13.

³⁸⁴ Connolly, *A World of Becoming*, 39.

³⁸⁵ Connolly, *A World of Becoming*, 38.

³⁸⁶ Connolly, *A World of Becoming*, 38.

³⁸⁷ Connolly, *A World of Becoming*, 38.

³⁸⁸ Connolly, *A World of Becoming*, 38.

how the attenuated link between involvement and belonging itself sets a condition of possibility for our participation in the reactive element that operates elsewhere in the world too. We are neither consummate agents on this reading nor protected by the grace of an all-powerful God: we participate in modes of becoming that exceed us in a world replete with tragic possibility.”³⁸⁹ Connolly goes further to state that “faith can be either in the powers of immanence or in some version of transcendence, for both speak to an outside that exceeds our capacities of encompassment.”³⁹⁰ But he also argues that belief in this world is not a resignation to exploitation. Rather it implies resources for bettering and instigating action in this world—motivated by our existential *ressentiment* as to what is wrong with our world.³⁹¹

This motivation to respond to what is wrong with our world is at its heart an affirmation both of this world and of what is wrong with this world—both are affirmations of immanence. By exploring Connolly and Lois Lee’s accounts of existential faiths, cultures, and especially of existential *ressentiment*, we can posit how the affirmation of immanence affirms the meaningfulness of ordinary life and belief. Tied to how we imagine believing in everyday life are the existential dispositions of faith and the subsequent existential cultures that incarnate what it means to believe in late modernity. In her examination of non-religiosity and substantial secularity, Lois Lee describes the idea of existential cultures as something that helps us examine how we “incarnate ideas about the origins of life and human consciousness and about how both are transformed or expire after death—they ask ultimate questions.”³⁹² She goes further to state that

these existential beliefs are bound up with distinctive notions of meaning and purpose in life, as well as with epistemological theories about how it is that humans are able to take a stance on existential matters. Finally, these existential positions are manifest in particular ethical practices—not the unspecific ethics imagined when people speak of

³⁸⁹ Connolly, *A World of Becoming*, 64-65.

³⁹⁰ Connolly, *A World of Becoming*, 65.

³⁹¹ Connolly, *A World of Becoming*, 66.

³⁹² Lois Lee, *Recognizing the Non-Religious: Reimagining the Secular* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 159-160.

‘religion and ethics,’ but ethics that can be identified concretely as anchored in existential principles and cultures and distinct from other ethical forms.³⁹³

Lois Lee argues that existential cultures are a return to belief: “the ways in which thought is manifest *in* and as a manifestation *of* cultural traditions and social relations.”³⁹⁴ If existential *cultures* articulate the cultural incarnations of belief in secular (and religious) contexts, then William E. Connolly argues that existential *faiths* articulate “the difference between a positive belief in *transcendence over the world* and a positive belief in the *immanence of the world*.”³⁹⁵ Connolly’s reconceptualization of transcendence and immanence implies an existential turn to understanding faith through what he calls a “world of becoming.” Connolly argues that a world of becoming is an existential faith that challenges and goes beyond radical transcendence (the belief in a personal God or ultimate Being), external salvation, and mastery over nature. Rather, it encompasses immanent life in an affective time of becoming.³⁹⁶

Within this affective time of becoming, Connolly redefines how transcendence may be conceived along the existential lines of immanence. Here, immanence refers to the affective, existential experience of time where our identities are constituted in and through the becoming of time by the affective impact our socio-cultural, etc., relations have on who we are and how we conceive of transcendence. Connolly is not here talking of Taylor’s immanent frame, but rather of what it means to exist within immanence and conceive of transcendence from the immanent experience of time. At its heart, Connolly rejects an other-worldly good, God, or transcendence that does not affirm the world because at the heart of Connolly’s existential faith is the affirmation of the world. The key component of his affirmation of immanence is his account of “*existential ressentiment*.” Paul Cloke et. al. describes Connolly’s “*existential ressentiment*”,

³⁹³ Lee, *Recognizing the Non-Religious*, 160.

³⁹⁴ Lee, *Recognizing the Non-Religious*, 160.

³⁹⁵ William E. Connolly, *Pluralism* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 46.

³⁹⁶ Connolly, *A World of Becoming*, 10.

As the assignment of blame for one's frustration onto others—which can encompass attacks on those who *appear* to 'have it all' as well as meanness towards calls for justice or ameliorative agendas because of a sense of being wronged oneself. Recognition of self-sacrifice is thus transferred onto an expectation for others to do likewise. It is these forces that legitimize a so-called compassionate indifference where care is apportioned according to a metric of trustworthiness and deservingness. At the heart of this... is a closing off of the self and ignorance towards the demands of the other; a non-recognition of distancing oneself that produces an affective collective experience that resonates with personal and collective guilt.³⁹⁷

But *existential ressentiment* implies not only negative connotations that potentially close one off from the possibilities of believing in transcendence. It also entails an appraisal of what we find wrong and meaningful in this world. But what we find meaningful is understood by contrast: the negative connotations of what we resent as what is wrong in this world point to what we find meaningful within it. Here *existential ressentiment* implies a certain “immanent apophatism” where through what we find unappealing we can begin to affirm what is existentially meaningful to us as we grapple with what it means to live in an immanent world of becoming.

But the challenge of a postsecular incarnational theology of presence is not only to affirm this world—it is also to transform this world in ways that transcend the closedness to transcendence in a world of becoming through the incarnate presence of co-participating in transcendence. Connolly works from the framework of radical immanence at the rejection of radical transcendence—while yet affirming a mundane transcendence found within ordinary life. And yet, Connolly's radical immanence still sees transcendence through its mundane permeation in and through the world as a manifestation of how we can encounter something beyond us in the world. While Connolly rejects radical transcendence to imply the notion of transcendence as something breaking into this world to reveal its otherness and transcendence

³⁹⁷ Paul Cloke, Christopher Baker, Callum Sutherland, and Andrew Williams, *Geographies of Postsecularity: Re-envisioning Politics, Subjectivity, and Ethics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 59.

to us, what Connolly does affirm is the meaningfulness of this world, of a transcendence within this world that binds meaning to this world.

Arguably, this takes into account the notion of existential *ressentiment* as an affirmation of this world through the affirmation of how immanent ordinary lives of people participate in the flourishing of this world *while also* crying out for justice and liberation from suffering and oppression. It is this tension between flourishing and injustice that I differ from Connolly. The affirmation and transformation of immanence presuppose a postsecular incarnational theology of presence: the key to a theology of presence is that it adopts an incarnational logic that must affirm and transform this world in light of suffering, injustice, and *ressentiment* for what is wrong with this world. But the incarnational logic of a theology of presence must also articulate how humans co-participate and contribute to the flourishing of this world. It will be through the ecstatic understanding of the human capacity for participating in God found in the theology of John Zizioulas and Ray S. Anderson that we will see this third component of a postsecular incarnational theology of presence.

5.3.3 Human Capacity for Incarnational Presence

The question of the human capacity for participating in the purposes of God was first developed in the work of John Zizioulas and built upon by Ray S. Anderson. In a landmark essay, Zizioulas offers a critique of individuation as a problem grounded in understanding human nature as a thing rather than a person. Zizioulas argues for a reversal of how we understand human beings not as having a human nature, which involves the problem of our capacity and incapacity for God, but rather of being human persons who ekstastically and hypostatically exist as unique, particular, and relational beings.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁸ John Zizioulas, “Human Capacity and Human Incapacity: A Theological Exploration of Personhood,” in *Communion and Otherness*, ed. Paul McPartlan (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 206–49.

To “ek-sist” means to stand outside of oneself in dependence upon another, or rather to have one’s being as derived from another, that is, to be an ectype of another. To “sub-sist” means to be itself, to “sist” as an essence in itself in ways not derived from another, but also to be the ground or archetype for all other “sisting.” That is, to ek-sist means to be derived from subsisting in another.³⁹⁹ While the trinitarian nuances in these themes go beyond the purposes of this thesis, it is worthwhile to state that if God subsists as three persons, one essence, and when humans ek-sist in dependence upon God’s subsisting being through their relational dependence upon the Spirit of God to make humans more into the image of the Son to the glory of the Father’s intent for the flourishing of created things, then this means that human ek-sistence subsists in God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the human (in)capacity to receive Christ.⁴⁰⁰ When the Holy Spirit indwells the believer, their human ek-sistence is transformed through their subsistence in God. But it does not end there. As human agents act in this world towards its flourishing according to the purposes of God to restore shalom, so also do their enactments of flourishing ek-sist in their subsistent dependence upon, empowerment by, and participation in God.

However, Zizioulas argues that individuation hinders this ek-sisting from its intended subsisting in God through the Spirit of Christ. Individuation separates us through sin from ourselves from nature and God because the fallen human *individual* has renounced communion with not just God, but also with nature and other humans. Thereby the human *individual* rejects

³⁹⁹ C.f. Najeeb Awad, “Personhood and Particularity: John Zizioulas, Colin Gunton, and the Trinitarian Theology of Personhood,” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 4 (2010): 1–22; John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985); John Zizioulas, “On Being a Person: Towards an Ontology of Personhood,” in *Persons: Divine and Human*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 33–46; John Zizioulas, “The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: The Significance of the Cappadocian Contribution,” in *Trinitarian Theology Today: Essays on Divine Being and Act*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 44–60; John Zizioulas, “Human Capacity and Human Incapacity: A Theological Exploration of Personhood,” in *Communion and Otherness*, ed. Paul McPartlan (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 206–49; John Zizioulas, “On Being Other,” in *Communion and Otherness*, ed. Paul McPartlan (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 13–98.

⁴⁰⁰ C.f. Andrew D. Thrasher, “Trinitarian Hermeneutics and Cosmotheandric Theology: Christian Reconstructions of the Theology of Raimon Panikkar” (Master’s Thesis, Virginia Beach, VA: Regent University, 2017), 19–37.

the ekstatic participation in God, nature, and others in ways that see the human *individual* as a thing that denies relation. In response to this problem, Zizioulas argues that the human *person* who participates in Christ is ekstatically open to a hypostatic communion with God through Christ and the Spirit in the church as a way of being open to communion with not just an other, but an eternal Other, who constitutes human personhood through the free choice to receive love from God, others, and be an agent of love and communion to others and creation as priests of creation.⁴⁰¹

Moreover, Ray Anderson's theological contributions to incarnational theology are based on the insights of Zizioulas and twentieth-century philosophy and theology. Anderson opens his doctoral research with the question of the silence of God. The silence of God for Anderson is not so much about the changed conditions for belief that Taylor speaks of, but rather, it implies the echoes and cries for the presence of transcendence that shape human longings of the heart. Anderson states that “in this silence, that becomes unbearable, the very whisper of the word ‘god’ becomes a scream. Nor can this shattering stillness be silenced by the familiar voice of Man raised to its highest pitch. No word will ever be sufficient to banish a wordless god, who has never been known, but can never be forgotten.”⁴⁰²

Here we see that being human means, in Augustinian fashion, to cry out for transcendence in ways that the silence of God invokes the cries of human hearts longing for justice, flourishing, and communion. Anderson goes on to argue that this existential predicament in which humans find themselves lends itself to talking about God in ways that invoke “the possibilities of Man's own existence. As Man awakens to new dimensions of self-

⁴⁰¹ John Zizioulas, *Priests of Creation: John Zizioulas on Discerning an Ecological Ethos*, eds. John Chrysavgis and Nikolaos Asproulis (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2021).

⁴⁰² Ray Sherman Anderson, *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God: A Christological Critique* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 3.

understanding, the ‘forgotten language’ is remembered in the sense that the self acquires its authenticity in the full grasp of its existential situation.”⁴⁰³

As part of this existential situation, Anderson argues not only that the crying out for transcendence is possible, but that it is possible through the logic of incarnation. Anderson describes two elements of the inner logic of incarnation as the transcendent limit and the covenant response. The transcendent limit refers to God’s concrete concern for His people and the covenant response refers to the human response to the transcendent limit. Anderson argues furthermore that this inner logic calls humans to their limit in response to God, who in turn concretizes His nature through an incarnational enfleshment found in Christ who draws humans to the transcendent limit.⁴⁰⁴ This notion of enfleshment implies the condescension of God in becoming human, taking on creaturely nature without sacrificing or negating God’s transcendence. But more importantly, it also implies the embodiment of the divine in ways that participate in creaturely existence. This means that these two strands of the “inner logic of historical transcendence” are first, “the transcendence of God” where God places

himself into concrete, historical relation[s] to Man as the limiting reality of Man’s authentic existence. As the Logos becomes increasingly identified with Israel, the transcendence of God becomes increasingly personal and material, rather than formal and cultic. When Man comes up against this limit of transcendence, his existence is qualified by the ‘God who is for Man.’ Secondly, the transcendence of God acts as a ‘covenant response’ which is made possible by the transcendent limit itself. Because this covenant response is intrinsic to the creation-covenant, it is Man’s original affirmation of his own authentic humanity in terms of response in freedom towards God. Thus, from the human side, God’s transcendence works out the covenant response through the humanity of Israel, pointing toward the ‘Man who is for God.’ This logic of incarnation converges upon the person of Jesus Christ and seeks its concrete fulfillment. He is the ‘God who is for Man,’ and at the same time, the ‘Man who is for God.’⁴⁰⁵

Here we see that Anderson’s notion of the incarnational logic is intimately tied to the notion of historical transcendence. Furthermore, historical transcendence is linked to the breaking-in and

⁴⁰³ Anderson, *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God*, 4.

⁴⁰⁴ Anderson, *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God*, 143-145.

⁴⁰⁵ Anderson, *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God*, 151.

transformation of human beings. This transformation of human beings by the incarnation of God is the transcendent limit and covenant response of humans in relation to God. This covenantal relationship between God and Israel through Jesus Christ demonstrates how the logic of incarnation is marked by not only condescension of God to creation but also for the flourishing of creation through God's concern for creation to dwell in a covenantal relationship with God. This covenantal relationship between God and his people is something not only geared towards the flourishing of creation but moreover is grounded in Anderson's notion of lived transcendence.

Anderson locates between the poles of historical transcendence and personal transcendence the notion of lived transcendence. Through analyses of the intra-active trinitarian relations displayed in the human life of Jesus, Anderson locates the incarnation and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers as the differentiation between how the Trinity subsists and how human believers ek-sist through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Key to his analysis of lived transcendence for Christian believers is the notion of a kenotic community. He states that two things characterize the kenotic community:

First, the kenotic community is formed of actual people who have their place in the community, not by virtue of their capacity to love or their maturity of spirit, but by virtue of their common humanity with Christ and the reality of the Holy Spirit which comes as a gift. When the Holy Spirit assumes the historical existence of the other man as the form of Christ for me, a cripple is no less real than a whole person. Second, and this follows from the first, the kenotic community offers to each person, to the extent that they are able to bear it, an actual growth into the reality of their own personhood, which is the capacity to live in love.⁴⁰⁶

Anderson connects the kenotic community to the ek-static community insofar as the latter reveals its incapacity for community without the Holy Spirit's presence and this of grace in the kenotic community's capacity to receive grace. This has ramifications in how the human community lives incarnationally in the presence of the kenotic community's experience of lived

⁴⁰⁶ Anderson, *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God*, 234.

transcendence as the encounter of historical and personal transcendence. And yet, what it does mean to live incarnationally in kenotic community is to live for others, including God, other humans, and the world, in ways that sacrificially call for not only a covenantal response but also for presence. The centrality of presence for Anderson is not only an experience, but rather it is an embodied, incarnational practice that draws humans into relationships with others in ways that renounce ourselves for the flourishing of others.

Anderson paints four instances of what incarnational presence may look like when we experience lived transcendence. First, it is experiencing “the enemy that is also the friend.”⁴⁰⁷ This means not only seeing my enemy as someone with dignity and worth but also as someone I am to paradoxically love and pray for. It implies that even when I am persecuted, I am to desire, pray, and work for the redemption and flourishing of the persecutors with a spirit of forgiveness. This radical renunciation of my own flourishing for the sake of those who hurt me is grounded in the promise of another world, a redeemed world, where peace, justice, and wholeness (*shalom*) will reign. Because Christians believe humans are made in the image of God, this implies a certain integrity and dignity to what it means to be human and this ought not be transgressed in how I react or respond to my persecutor just because I am being hurt by them. This is a radical renunciation of the self for the greater good of seeing and practicing love and forgiveness towards even those who cause harm.

Second, Anderson states that lived transcendence means coming to grips with “the flesh that is also the spirit.”⁴⁰⁸ This notion is illustrated in the incarnation as the Spirit of God taking on flesh in human form. But when we take into account that Christian believers also are fleshly beings indwelt by the Holy Spirit, it implies the need for practicing love in ways that respect the ek-static subsisting of humans in God. To be indwelt by the Holy Spirit means that our

⁴⁰⁷ Anderson, *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God*, 296-298.

⁴⁰⁸ Anderson, *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God*, 298-300.

physical bodies and flesh take on something of God's ability to spiritually subsist in human beings. This is what can be called an incarnational participation of believers in God, but this participation is marked by the ek-static difference between what it means to be human as essentially different from God, while yet holding in tension the reality that through the Spirit of God, we come to subsist in God as ek-static creatures with the capacity for dependency and transformation by God through the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰⁹

Third, Anderson points out how lived transcendence holds in tension the reality that even sickness “is also hope” because it articulates not only that something is wrong with this world in the perishable nature of human bodies, but also that there is a promise for spiritually transformed bodies that are imperishable.⁴¹⁰ The Christian belief that God takes on human form is something that Gregory of Nazianzen highlights as the reality that all that God takes on, God redeems. Because God took on human flesh in Jesus of Nazareth, Christians believe that the sickness, deformity, and wasting away of our human bodies is something God has and will redeem through the promise of resurrected bodies.

Finally, Anderson emphasizes how our place in the world also implies the possibility of God’s presence.⁴¹¹ The presence of God’s historical transcendence is something lived with attunement and awareness that even in the absence or silence of God, *there* is the presence of God through the concrete experiences of lived transcendence where God comes into our lives through the incarnate acts of others. These others embody to us the presence and love of God as we participate in our world as historical beings who live and dwell as ek-static persons with

⁴⁰⁹ Like Anderson, I am drawing from the ideas of John Zizioulas here. C.f. Anderson, *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God*, 296; John Zizioulas, “Human Capacity and Human Incapacity: A Theological Exploration of Personhood,” in *Communion and Otherness*, ed. Paul McPartlan (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 206–49; John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985).

⁴¹⁰ Anderson, *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God*, 300–302.

⁴¹¹ Anderson, *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God*, 302–305.

the capacity to subsist in dependency, trust, and participation in the Spirit of God through Christ.

This means that the presence of lived transcendence implies the practice of ethical commands grounded in theological truths that are illustrated in the logic of incarnation. These ethical commands are primarily for justice and mercy for the oppressed, forgiveness of the oppressor, and for human beings to be agents for the flourishing of this world. This logic is supposed to be practiced and embodied through those who believe in God through Christ insofar as the Holy Spirit subsists within and empowers them for these ethical commands. But the human capacity to subsist in God is something tied to the ek-static nature of human dependency upon and participation in God through faith in Christ and dependency upon the empowerment and sanctification of the Holy Spirit. This human capacity for subsisting and ekstatically participating in God is a view of human nature that is fundamentally open to both the transcendence and immanence of God through the incarnation of God through Jesus Christ. What it implies is that humans can co-participate in the purposes of God as human agents for the flourishing of this world.

5.4 Towards a Theology of Presence

While John Zizioulas and Ray S. Anderson articulate a distinctly *Christian* view of an incarnational logic, it also articulates helpful orientations to a postsecular incarnational theology of presence. An incarnational logic means that the human capacity is something that requires not only the belief in the ontological distinction between God and creation but that it is mediated through incarnational presence and participation—that is, it enpresences and enpresents God in and through the human capacity to subsist in the presence of God via the indwelling of the Holy Spirit through humanity's capacity for ekstatic dependency upon God to act in ways oriented towards flourishing and justice in this world. An incarnational presence

not only promises a better world but acts as an empowered ethical agent for justice in this world. It enpresents and enpresences an incarnational wedge that holds open the time and space in this world to its flourishing through the agency of those who act in hope for the promise of a world without evil or suffering. This agency involves a human capacity that holds together both transcendence and immanence as an incarnational presence who acts for the flourishing of this world *because* of the promise of an other-worldly good. Thus, the human capacity for incarnational presence is an enpresenting and enpresencing of lived transcendence where what it means to dwell in the presence of God also means to be present and a presence to—and affirm and transform—this world because of an other-worldly promise for the flourishing and transformation of this world.

An incarnational logic is based on three components: presence, affirmation, and transformation. This chapter examined several philosophers and theologians in which these themes appear. First, Anderson and Zizioulas articulated an incarnational logic of human capacity and lived transcendence, where their work especially embodies the incarnational idea of presence. To be attuned to others, to God, and to creation are central features of what it means to be present. Incarnational presence requires us to pause to dwell with, in, and through our relationships with others in and as an example of the human capacity to be dependent upon God, share in the lives of others, and intentionally act for the flourishing of this world. Second, Charles Taylor presents the idea of transformation as a key component of an incarnational logic. Taylor's work is not only about the transformation of this world, but through this is an attempt to retrieve transcendence as a theological component that holds open an immanent frame to the possibility of transcendence. Third, William E. Connolly provokes in a postsecular incarnational theology of presence the centrality of the affirmation of immanence. Even if Connolly would not use such language of an “incarnational logic” or “theology of presence” I

think his emphasis on *ressentiment* and the affirmation of immanence and this world are central features to be included in a postsecular incarnational theology of presence.

An incarnational logic therefore holds to three theses. First, an incarnational logic must affirm this world. It affirms this world in light of the generative *ressentiment* of what is wrong with this world. That is, what is wrong with this world generates the possibility for meaning and motivates human agents to act in this world for its flourishing. Second, an incarnational logic seeks to transform this world. It transforms this world not only by holding open the possibility of transcendence. It fundamentally believes that God may act in this world, and indeed will act in this world, for the flourishing and transformation of this world into a world where peace, wholeness, and justice (*shalom*) are fundamental characteristics of its existence. The affirmation of a transformational perspective holds out both an already and not yet tension for the flourishing of this world—and it also emphasizes that human persons co-participate as agents in the purposes of God for the flourishing of this world.

Third, tied to both the affirmation and transformation of this world, an incarnational logic sees human persons as having the capacity to be present and a presence to the sufferings of this world—but also to co-participate in the purposes of God for the flourishing of this world. This is possible through the ekstatic dependency of human persons upon their capacity to ek-sist in the presence of God via the indwelling and subsisting of the Holy Spirit. The ekstatic nature of human persons allows them to depend upon and subsistently ek-sist as co-participants in the Spirit of God for the flourishing of this world. But it also allows human persons to practice being present to those who are suffering, to those who face injustice and evil, and to be an incarnate presence of God for the flourishing of this world through their human agency.

Presence, affirmation, and transformation, then, are the central themes of a postsecular incarnational theology. They enpresent and enpresence the mediation of transcendence and immanence through the participation of human agents in the purposes of God for the

flourishing of this world. To mediate between transcendence and immanence is to incarnationally enpresent/enpresence the affirmation, transformation, and presence of God to this world in ways that generates the possibilities of a postsecular incarnational theology. To begin exploring what this looks like is the task of the remaining chapters—where postsecular anthropologies and postsecular horizons will be explored.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has offered analyses of transcendence, immanence, and incarnation to illustrate how my constructive postsecular incarnational theology of presence questions the dualism between transcendence and immanence. This chapter has begun to address the second research question—*How can Charles Taylor be a catalyst for constructing a postsecular incarnational theology of presence that questions the dualism between transcendence and immanence?* It did so by interpreting the weak theological themes in Charles Taylor and in dialogue with several philosophers and theologians. This chapter analyzed several accounts of transcendence, immanence, and incarnation. What the analyses of this chapter reveal is that a postsecular incarnational theology of presence seeks to affirm and transform this world by holding in tension the concern for this-worldly flourishing with an other-worldly promise. Furthermore, this chapter reveals the centrality of human agency as a co-participant in the purposes of God for the transformation and affirmation of this world. Moreover, this chapter also shows how an incarnational logic bridges both radical transcendence and radical immanence with the concern for the flourishing, the affirmation, and the transformation of this world. This means an incarnational logic affirms immanence in ways that do not reject radical transcendence but rather mediate the transformation of immanence through its participation in transcendence via the human capacity for incarnational presence.

This chapter shows that an incarnational presence is not only open to transcendence, but also that humans may embody and actively work towards the flourishing, affirmation, and transformation of this world. While this chapter has laid the foundation of an incarnational logic, the next chapter in particular connects the question of meaning to how we imagine believing and being human through analyses of Taylor's anthropology. Through those analyses, chapter six offers an analysis that will substantiate how believing is intimately linked to meaningfulness. Furthermore, the next two chapters connect what it means to believe and be human to the theological anthropology of David H. Kelsey to flesh out a postsecular theological implication of his turn of phrase, "God intends for the flourishing of what is not God." In this, Kelsey will supply us with a more robust theological account of human flourishing and how it is a central theme of a postsecular incarnational theology of presence.

CHAPTER SIX: POSTSECULAR ANTHROPOLOGY:

MEANING, BELIEVING, AND BEING HUMAN

The previous chapter began to address the second research question by developing a postsecular incarnational theology of presence to question the dualism between transcendence and immanence. This chapter continues the analysis of the second research question with particular attention to the modern anthropology of Charles Taylor to examine how the dualism between transcendence and immanence is cross-pressured between the questions of meaning and of believing and being human. This chapter analyzes the philosophical and theological dimensions of Taylor's anthropology to show how the question of meaning, believing, and being human is central to a postsecular incarnational theology of presence. It argues that a postsecular incarnational theology of presence must pay attention to the anthropological cross-pressures of believing and being human in three ways. First, it argues how modern anthropology contests the meaningfulness of both religious and non-religious options. Second it argues that modern anthropology must acknowledge that what it means to believe and be human is constitutively shaped by how they have been historically imagined. Third, it argues that modern anthropology must pay attention to the complex conditions that are shaped by and shape the question of meaning.

Section 6.1 will examine the cross-pressured between Taylor's three-or-four-cornered battle and how modern anthropology must take into account how religious and non-religious options contest the meaningfulness of what it means to believe and be human. Then, section 6.2 analyzes how a closer reading of Taylor's genealogies of modernity reveals the historical contingencies that shape how we imagine being human in modern anthropology. Section 6.3 will then analyze the typologies of Taylor's philosophical anthropology to show how modern non-theistic conceptions of being human do not warrant belief—and yet are still shaped by the question of meaning in how they imagine being human. Section 6.4 then will examine both: a)

Taylor's understanding of the religious theist and how belief adds a meaningfulness to being human that is lacking in Taylor's non-theistic options of being human; and b) how Taylor's commentators and critics question the necessity of the meaningfulness of theistic belief for being human. Finally, section 6.5 analyzes the connection between believing and being human to the question of meaning to analyze what belief contributes to a postsecular anthropology—and how it is cross-pressured in ways that generate the tensions between postsecular horizons of realized flourishing developed in chapter seven.

6.1 Anthropological Cross-Pressures of Believing

As far as I can tell Charles Taylor only uses the word “postsecular” once to refer to the growing awareness of the continued presence of religion in a secular world.⁴¹² Nonetheless, his genealogical account of the historical shift to a secular age reveals a phenomenological experience of (post)secularity³ that sees the condition for believing in late modernity as marked by the optionality of belief and an assumed secular normativity. This phenomenological experience is one where modern humans are cross-pressured between the meaningfulness or meaninglessness of believing. These cross-pressures shape the conditions for believing in late modernity in terms of Taylor's three-or-four-cornered-battle of what it means to be human in secular modernity.

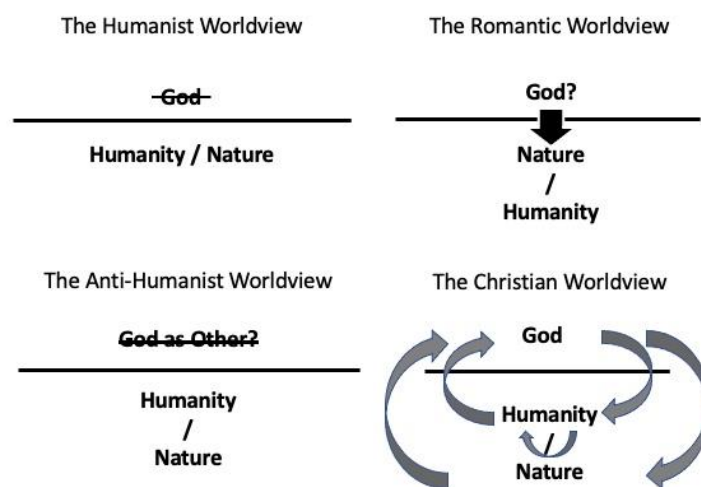
Charles Taylor's notion of a three-or-four-cornered-battle is a helpful tool by which we can understand what it means to believe and be human. This three-or-four-cornered-battle is between the religious theist, the exclusive humanist, and the immanent counter-enlightenment, which is constituted by both the Romantic-idealist-expressivist and the “neo-Nietzschean”

⁴¹² Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 534.

anti-humanist.⁴¹³ The three-or-four-cornered-battle sheds light on how we imagine what it means to be human as shaped by the question of the meaningfulness of belief, unbelief, and non-belief. This can be the denial of God for the exclusive humanists, the contestation of the other for the anti-humanists, the Romantic-individual-expressivist emphasis on authenticity—the heritage of the Romantic version of the immanent counter-enlightenment common among contemporary notions of the postmodern self⁴¹⁴—or the transformative power of belief for the religious theist.⁴¹⁵

Building on Taylor's three-cornered-battle between the religious theist, exclusive humanist, and immanent counter-enlightenment, Guido Vanheeswijck describes three metaphysical frameworks for each option of the three-

**Figure 6.1:
Tayloring Four Worldviews**



cornered-battle about how they imagine the possibility of God. The religious theist holds to the metaphysical trinity of the medieval vision (God, World, and Man). The exclusive humanist holds to the eclipse and unavailability of God, reducing the metaphysical world to human mastery over nature. Finally, the immanent counter-enlightenment, in both forms, replaces and

⁴¹³ I am aware of the problematic nature of the name of these typologies, especially the use of "neo-Nietzschean" when attempting to describe the anti-humanist position. This chapter follows typical turns of phrases to describe these typologies found among secondary literature on Charles Taylor.

⁴¹⁴ Stanley Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 58-137.

⁴¹⁵ C.f. Taylor on the 'transformation perspective': Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 430-435; David Storey, "Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*: Breaking the Spell of the Immanent Frame," in *Rethinking Secularization: Philosophy and the Prophecy of a Secular Age*, ed. Herbert De Vriese and Gary Gabor (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 177-208, 185-186; C.f. Figure 6.1.

reformulates transcendence in terms of authenticity, immanence, and otherness.⁴¹⁶ Moreover, David Storey demonstrates the reality that Taylor's three-or-four-cornered-battle opens up new possibilities for belief, unbelief, and non-belief within an immanent frame that is neither "foreclosed" to transcendence nor demands the closure to transcendence, but rather advocates for the possibility of religion and belief within the secular.⁴¹⁷

Anthony Edward Hugh Campbell states that "Taylor's perspective on belief and unbelief are: 1) that exclusive humanists including many existentialists do recognize that nihilism, despair, and meaninglessness can be actual lived realities in their lives; and 2) that while by definition exclusive humanism excludes theistic belief, the lines between faith and unbelief will always be somewhat tractable, and people's views do evolve with life experience."⁴¹⁸ The complex possibilities of the conditions for and of belief imply that a postsecular experience does not necessarily reject the existence of transcendence, but rather can remain open to it in the immanent frame because there remains the possibility of a given depth, purpose, and meaning to life. The immanent frame is where postsecular anthropologies find themselves in an experience of immanence that may or may not be open to transcendence, while yet finding themselves caught within the cross-pressures of contending beliefs that are often idiosyncratically synthesized, imaginatively created, and/or constituted by our desires and concerns for meaning.

In Charles Taylor's immanent frame, the human visions for the possibilities of transcendence are determined by either open- or closed-world-structures, that is, of perspectives that remain open or closed to the possibilities of transcendence in our experience of immanence. While the religious theist remains open to transcendence within an immanent

⁴¹⁶ Guido Vanheeswijck, "The End of Secularization?" in *Rethinking Secularization: Philosophy and the Prophecy of a Secular Age*, ed. Herbert De Vriese and Gary Gabor (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 1–26, 18.

⁴¹⁷ Storey, "Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*," 181.

⁴¹⁸ Anthony Edward Hugh Campbell, "Charles Taylor and the Place of the Transcendent in Secular Modern Lives" (Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 2017), 218.

frame, all three other options of what it means to be human in modernity are closed to transcendence, or hold in tension the possibility of transcendence, within the immanent frame. A closed-world-structure implies its closure to transcendence—and from this, there is a view that advocates for the possibilities for human flourishing in ordinary life apart from transcendence. A closed-world-structure is a way of viewing the world without reference to transcendence, and human flourishing becomes obtainable without transcendence and by the power of human reason to determine the good. By contrast, an open-world-structure implies the possibility of transcendence within or from the experience of an immanent frame. Moreover, it does so by holding in tension the otherworldliness of the sacred and the this-worldliness of secular life. An open-world-structure holds to the possibility of human flourishing not despite transcendence, but precisely in response to transcendence. Michael Warner, Craig Calhoun, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen state that:

Those attuned to religious belief and experience, as Taylor understands it, are pulled toward openings to transcendence, while others feel the pull of ‘the closure of immanence.’ But between these two poles, as Taylor is at pains to emphasize, are a great many people who have been ‘cross-pressured,’ ‘pulled’ in both directions, caught up somewhere between an ‘open’ and a ‘closed’ perspective on the world.⁴¹⁹

The immanent frame is the contested, fragile, yet constitutive space between modern imaginaries of being human where people find themselves cross-pressured *to* believe or *not to* believe and between the fluid and malleable options of belief, unbelief, and non-belief found in a variety of shapes in everyday life and experience. The immanent frame is not just a battleground of constitutive sources of the self, but it is also one defined by the cross-pressures between the possibilities of belief.

Often this cross-pressured space is one where people may be constituted by one or more options, sometimes in contradictory ways. One may appeal to progress, whether human or

⁴¹⁹ Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, ed. Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 1–31, 7–8.

religious and still doubt in its universality in actualizing or realizing a just or harmonious society. One may believe that there is a depth to immanence that comes through belief in God, or even that there is a depth to immanence in the absence of God found within nature or the human psyche. One may doubt that there is depth to immanence and theism, while still positing the importance and implications of the human search for meaning and the liberating power of reason. One may believe in something from other religious faiths: the optionality between beliefs produces cross-pressures and tensions both between religious traditions and between the secular and the religious—and even within the convictions of individual believers. The tensions between the constitutive possibilities of belief create a contestability between belief, unbelief, and non-belief where what constitutes human life as meaningful is cross-pressured by the complexities of living within an immanent frame.

Within this framework, Taylor advocates for the retrieval of, or at least openness to, transcendence within an immanent frame as a constitutive option in his genealogical account of modern anthropology. Taylor offers four anthropological possibilities of what it means to be human, and each in turn remains, to a certain extent, open or closed to transcendence. This section has highlighted the anthropological cross-pressures of believing in modernity to demonstrate how what it means to be human is to live in tension between modern visions of being human and how they cross-pressure the possibilities of believing in an immanent frame. Furthermore, section 6.2 offers two genealogical readings of the three-or-four-cornered-battle through Taylor's *Sources of the Self* and *A Secular Age* to articulate the inconsistency of how he categorizes this battle across his texts, and sections 6.3 and 6.4 attempt to define salient aspects of Taylor's four-cornered-battle of what it means to believe and be human in Taylor's modern anthropology.

6.2 Tyloring Two Versions of the Three-or-Four-Cornered-Battle

Taylor is somewhat inconsistent as to whether the battle between his modern genealogies of philosophical anthropology is three-or-four-cornered. Furthermore, Taylor is also inconsistent as to what to call these corners between *Sources of the Self* and *A Secular Age*. While I have opted for the typical categorization of what this three-or-four-cornered-battle consists of, it is still worthwhile to pause to articulate how they are genealogically developed in these texts to understand how Taylor's genealogies shape his inconsistencies between what the three-or-four-cornered-battle is between. Therefore, this section examines how Taylor genealogically understands this battle in *Sources of the Self* and then examines the common ways his interpreters of *A Secular Age* categorize this battle.

6.2.1 The Four-Cornered-Battle in *Sources of the Self*

Across *Sources of the Self*, Taylor offers a genealogical reading of how the modern self has developed from Plato until the turn of the twentieth century, all the while underlying a moral critique of the Enlightenment and naturalism. While the first hundred pages offer a philosophical critique of the moral capacity of philosophical naturalism to adequately take into account how to evaluate moral sources, the next four hundred pages offer complex genealogical readings of how the modern self has developed across Western philosophical history.⁴²⁰ The connection between Taylor's moral critique of naturalism and his genealogical account is subtle, but the connecting point is illustrated in how the modern self has developed from a theistic standpoint to a naturalistic standpoint—and this reveals Taylor's doubt about how naturalists can morally evaluate the sources of the modern self. However, across his

⁴²⁰ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989).

genealogical reading of the development of the modern self, Taylor does highlight several shifts that are quite important in his tracing the turn to what he calls expressive individualism.

Taylor begins his genealogy in *Sources of the Self* with Plato and Augustine to articulate not only the archaic backdrop of the idea of eternity, heroism, and the notion of radical reflexivity but also that these sources of the self are the background frameworks by which to understand the modern self. While Taylor jumps from Augustine to Descartes quite abruptly to articulate Descartes' turn away from Augustine's radical reflexivity as oriented to and by God and towards subjective certainty, Michael Hanby has fleshed out this gap to articulate the culpability in this thousand-year span of the infiltrations of not only Stoicism but also Pelagianism into the medieval and early modern account of the self.⁴²¹ In the turn to early modernity, Taylor's account focuses especially on Descartes, Locke, and Rousseau to articulate the shift from a porous self to a buffered, disengaged, punctual self.⁴²² The formation of these modern *views* of the self is crucial to the *development* of the modern self, because they create a barrier between humans and the world, all the while also elevating the role of the human subject over nature through the role of instrumental reasoning to rationally organize, understand, and technologically control the world. This history of the modern self and instrumental reasoning came about through a gradual development across the eighteenth through the nineteenth century. And with it came certain visions of humanity that contested the role of virtue, sentiment, reason, and spirit in the gradual turn from reason, to nature, to cynicism and despair.

With the Enlightenment came the central appeal to human reason to determine, understand, and control the world through the means of instrumental reason. But another side of this trend was the debates between the Radical Enlightenment, the Romantics, and

⁴²¹ C.f. Michael Hanby, *Augustine and Descartes* (New York and London: Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group, 2003).

⁴²² Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 143-176.

proponents of the Enlightenment. This debate was centered around not only the role of reason and sentiment, but also what it potentially loses or crowds out (spirit and virtue), and the Romantic response of turning to nature as a non-anthropological source for (spiritual) meaning. Here we see that there are four modern moral sources: two are anthropological and two are non-anthropological.⁴²³ The anthropological sources are the inward turn to the self and the ethical concern for other humans. These sources invoke the moral command to develop virtue within oneself and to care for others through the modern vision of the progressive betterment of humanity. The non-anthropological sources are nature and God, of which the latter was largely crowded out in modernity, whereas the former became a source for the Romantics while today it has largely lost its spiritual power over the modern imagination. The Romantic view of nature is encapsulated by Taylor as the reintegration of nature into a meaningful order while transforming the notion of embodiment to imply self-manifestation and expressive self-definition.⁴²⁴ But moreover, this was articulated both in the face of the wonderment and strangeness of the universe, while also acknowledging the feeling that we are “out of alignment” with the universe and that “we can aspire to be in attunement.”⁴²⁵ When confronted with the Deist vision of the universe, the Romantics had to assert themselves, their creative imagination, and their views of nature as a spiritual source of meaning up against the scientific responses of disengaged naturalism that suppressed wonderment and uncertainty.⁴²⁶

But when it comes to the other corners in the four-cornered-battle in *Sources of the Self*, Taylor does not consistently use “exclusive humanist” to refer to the Enlightenment vision of humanity, nor does Taylor consistently use the phrase “anti-humanist.” Indeed, the latter primarily references twentieth-century readings of Nietzsche, and Taylor’s analysis in *Sources*

⁴²³ C.f. David McPherson, “Re-Enchanting the World: An Examination of Ethics, Religion, And Their Relationship in The Work Of Charles Taylor” (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University, 2013), 61-64.

⁴²⁴ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 416.

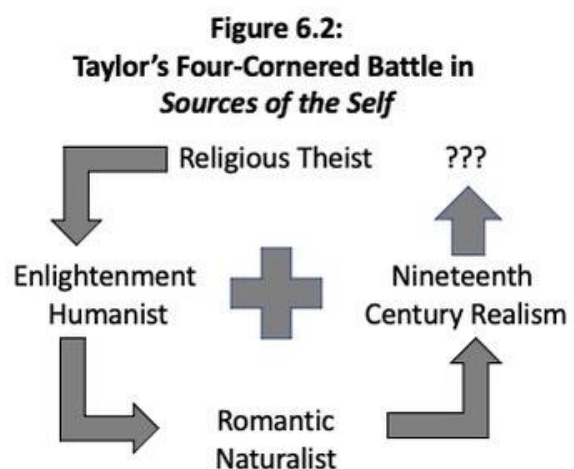
⁴²⁵ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 416-417.

⁴²⁶ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 417.

of the Self ends at the turn of the twentieth century. That said, Taylor does sometimes use the phrase “anti-humanist” to refer to the nineteenth-century turn away from the Romantic emphasis on nature as a non-anthropological moral and spiritual source. But what the nineteenth-century anti-humanists turn to is not towards a re-enchantment, but rather to a spiritual ennui, cynicism, and despair that Taylor traces across the nineteenth century through the writings of Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, Arnold, and Nietzsche to illustrate a nineteenth-century realism that takes hold when this world is all that is.⁴²⁷

This means that what Taylor's commentators call the “neo-Nietzschean anti-humanist” is much more complex than the mere connotation of rejecting Enlightenment views of progress and the Romantic views of nature—much less that the phrase “immanent counter-enlightenment” captures the full breadth of what was happening in the nineteenth century. Rather what was happening in the nineteenth century was a complex processing of what it means to not only lose transcendence as a moral source but also question *both* the roles of progress and reason in making the world a better place *and* the role of nature in providing a sense of spiritual depth to guard against the ennui of a disenchanting industrial world. What both of these leave behind is a sense of despair, cynicism, and realism that takes into account what it means to lose transcendence and an enchanted view of the world.

This means that throughout the genealogies of the modern self in *Sources of the Self*, this so-called “battle” between three-or-four-corners can only be understood through the cultural contingencies of history through which it developed. Arguably, the genealogical development within *Sources of*



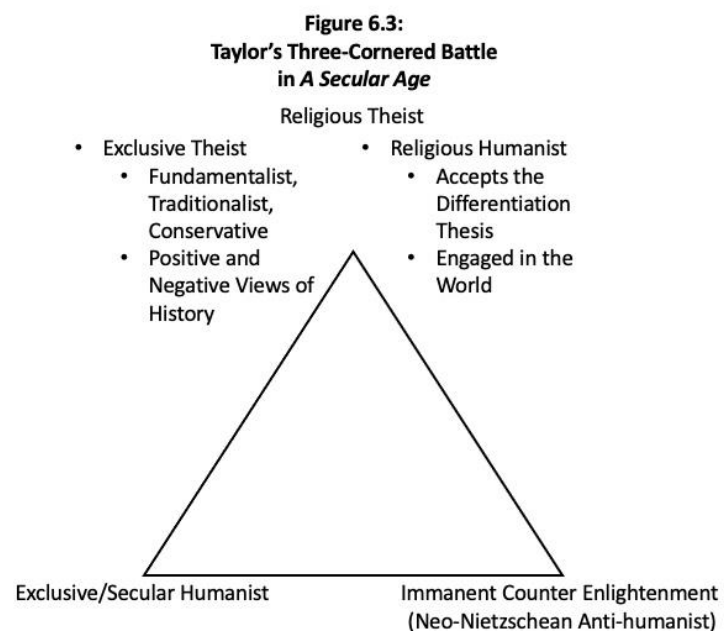
⁴²⁷ C.f. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 419-455.

the Self is from religious theism to Enlightenment Humanism and Romantic Naturalism to Nineteenth-century Realism.⁴²⁸ What this has led to, Taylor does not develop in *Sources of the Self*, though I think he implicitly holds open the space to continue in this history for the possibility of belief in his notion of the religious theist, while seemingly advocating for a Romantic resourcement of spirit. However, the advocacy for the former is something developed primarily in Taylor's *A Secular Age* even while the latter is explicitly the place Taylor lands at the end of *Sources of the Self*.

6.2.2 The Three-Cornered-Battle in *A Secular Age*

While *Sources of the Self* analyzes a genealogy of the modern self that ends with the turn of the twentieth century, Taylor offers another genealogy of modernity to give an account of Western secularization that

brings us up to the twenty-first century. Most of Taylor's analyses across *A Secular Age* offer a rich genealogy of Western secularization and secularity that traces its roots to at least the fourteenth century and



brings us through four of five parts to the turn of the twenty-first century (before turning in Part V to analyze and nuance the problems between secularity and religious views of transcendence in our contemporary world). But throughout *A Secular Age*, we also find more consistency in Taylor's terminology when it comes to the three-or-four-cornered-battle. In *A*

⁴²⁸ C.f. Figure 6.2.

Secular Age, however, this three-or-four-cornered-battle is between the religious theist (of two types—which I call the exclusive theist and the religious humanist), the exclusive (or secular) humanist, and the immanent counter-enlightenment (which arguably also has two types).⁴²⁹ In *A Secular Age*, we may look at this as a three-cornered-battle with nuances in perspective between at least two of the corners.

For Taylor in *A Secular Age*, the religious theist comes in two types that, and as José Casanova argues, cannot be simplified into mere Catholic or Protestant dispositions. While it is true that Catholics tend to have traditional counter-movements to both the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment, it is also true that Protestants also have similar counter-movements to modernity. What unites both is an inverse negative philosophy of history that seeks to defend or restore a lost normative religious age.⁴³⁰ It is also true that though it comes out more keenly with Protestants, there is also another disposition of the religious theist motivated by a positive view of history that is shaped by a “postmillennial identification... of Western Modernity with Christian civilization” that strives to progressively institutionalize Christian principles within secular normative orders.⁴³¹

The dispositions of the religious theists are accordingly noted by the negative and positive roles Christians play in responding to secular modernity as a reactive digging in of fundamental or traditional trenches or as a proactive force to Christianize modernity. Both of these can be problematic, but both are forms in which Taylor understands the religious theist. In particular, I would label this approach as that of the exclusive theist. Furthermore, Taylor offers an account of the religious theist in other senses—some think secular humanism is a mistake while others are religious humanists who (like Taylor himself) think that there is some

⁴²⁹ C.f. Figure 6.3.

⁴³⁰ José Casanova, “A Secular Age: Dawn or Twilight?”, in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, ed. Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 265–81, 267.

⁴³¹ Casanova, “A Secular Age: Dawn or Twilight?”, 267.

goodness and truth to the Enlightenment's differentiation between the church and the state.⁴³²

This is because religious humanists doubt whether religion can positively shape secular institutions in ways that do not lead to the legitimation of a universal religion. This tension can be exemplified by the tension between neo-Durkheimian and post-Durkheimian believers and the tensions between influencing state politics to create policies that are distinctly Christian or religious and the individuated religiosity that builds from grassroots communities and movements to tactically shape different spheres of influence.⁴³³

In turn, Taylor's analyses of the anti-humanist and the secular/exclusive humanist offer two non-religious modern responses to the religious theist. Taylor's account and critique of each of these also shed light on how he uses this three-cornered-battle to make sense of and critique modern secularization narratives. Casanova argues that Taylor's critique of secular humanists entails their blindness to their Christian roots, as well as the hubris of science and technology as disproving religion in a disenchanted mechanistically run universe.⁴³⁴ Casanova articulates Taylor's account of the anti-humanists as an example of the immanent counter-enlightenment—which “revolt[s] against the allegiance to the moral order and the affirmation of ordinary life that exclusive humanism inherited from the Christian tradition.”⁴³⁵ Casanova also argues that the anti-humanists also invoke a critique of Christianity and its role in legitimizing political power as a passionate agreement with the secular, exclusive humanists in their critique of Christianity.⁴³⁶ But while each of the three corners may contend with one another on certain issues, there is also a level of agreement between various pairings of each. Taylor's three-cornered-battle can be summed up succinctly when he states that:

⁴³² Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 637.

⁴³³ I think James Davison Hunter's accounts of these are helpful frameworks for what this may look like. C.f. James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 266-269.

⁴³⁴ Casanova, “A Secular Age: Dawn or Twilight?”, 267.

⁴³⁵ Casanova, “A Secular Age: Dawn or Twilight?”, 268-269.

⁴³⁶ Casanova, “A Secular Age: Dawn or Twilight?”, 269.

There are secular humanists, there are neo-Nietzscheans, and there are those who acknowledge some good beyond life. Any pair can gang up against the third on some important issue. Neo-Nietzscheans and secular humanists together condemn religion and reject any good beyond life. But neo-Nietzscheans and acknowledgers of transcendence are together in their absence of surprise at the continued disappointments of secular humanism, [and] together also in the sense that its vision of life lacks a dimension. In a third line-up, secular humanists and believers come together in defending an idea of the human good, against the anti-humanism of Nietzsche's heirs.⁴³⁷

This means that this three-cornered-battle entails not just three opposing teams, but rather three teams that variously agree with and critique one other, sometimes individually, and sometimes in alliance with one another. But what Taylor's account of the three-cornered-battle in *A Secular Age* illustrates especially is the contestability between these options which leads to the deferral of any ultimate winner. What this means is that Western humans must learn to live in the tensions between these options in ways that hold open the reality of its fundamental contestability, and yet I think what it needs to foster is a sense of agonistic dialogue and presence between the embattled options as we learn to live together in an increasingly pluralistic world.

The accounts above of Taylor's genealogical reading of the three-or-four-cornered-battle would entail that any static account of it must take into account the genealogical cultural history to flesh out the historical contingency that has shaped the role of transcendence and the development of modern anthropologies. But with a dynamic understanding that comes from Taylor's genealogical readings of this three-or-four-cornered-battle, it is still helpful to flesh out what we mean by these corners. Taylor's anthropology holds open the possibility of transcendence as a moral source that can inform how the question of meaning shapes what it means to be human and believe. Before making that argument, we must first examine the

⁴³⁷ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 637.

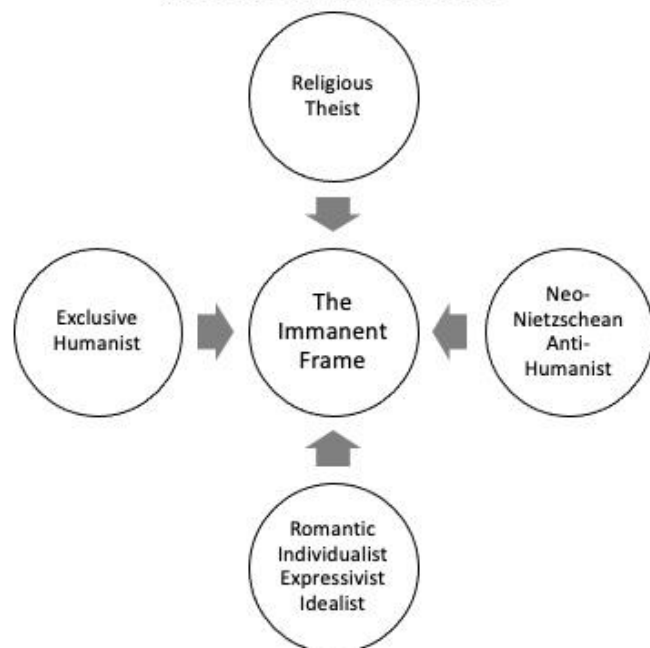
standard typological organization of Taylor's philosophical anthropology to include a four-cornered-battle between an exclusive humanist, the Romantic-expressivist, the anti-humanist, and the religious theist.

6.3 Tayloring Philosophical Anthropology

This section examines Taylor's three philosophical anthropological options of exclusive humanism, the Romantic-expressivists, and the neo-Nietzschean anti-humanists—and their contestations of the possibilities of believing in an immanent frame.⁴³⁸ These three illustrate the contestability of believing in their tensions with belief as a meaningful option for living in the secular. The cross-pressures between religious and non-religious options in an immanence frame contest the openness and closedness towards transcendence in the middle condition of how meaningful these options may be. First, this section offers an analysis of the exclusive humanist and then turns to develop the two options of the immanent counter-enlightenment: the Romantic-idealist-expressivist and the neo-Nietzschean anti-humanist. After analyzing

these three versions of Taylor's philosophical anthropology, then there will be an account of the religious theist and their affirmation of belief through analyses of the question of meaning. The remainder of this chapter will attempt to define each of these four-corners on their own terms, while also intimating how

**Figure 6.4:
The Cross-Pressures of
the Four-Cornered Battle**



⁴³⁸ C.f. Figure 6.4.

they cross-pressure the question of meaning and how that contests what it means to believe and be human in an immanent frame.

6.3.1 The Exclusive Humanist

At its heart, the secular exclusive humanist views the world as a closed-world-structure. In Tone Svetelj's study of Taylor, closed-world-structures have four facets, and they deal with the background and frameworks of the modern narrative. They imply 1) the obviousness that God does not exist; 2) a subtraction story; 3) the sociability and maturation of social-political space in secular society; and 4) the authorization of created values by an autonomous self.⁴³⁹ The following articulates Svetelj's analysis of the four facets of closed-world-structures.

First, the presupposition that it is obvious that God does not exist is based on a horizontal-only conception of the universe and categorically does not reflect or accept the notion of a vertical relation to God. Within this facet the human agent or individual lives within a neutral conception of the world with an intra-mental certainty as a thinking thing. In this sense, the modern individual is marked by a disengaged and punctual sense of self and a new epistemological position based on representation.⁴⁴⁰ Second, the notion of a subtraction story entails a naturalistic perception of the world and assumes the death of God. Thus, a subtraction story is a story about the rise of humanism in such a way as to have lost the spiritual reality—and this story is told in such a way that God becomes irrelevant or believed to be non-existent.

In this context, the subtraction story tells a story of liberation from religious worldviews and frameworks and it does so according to Svetelj in two ways: via exclusive humanism and materialism. The exclusive humanist assumes that God limits human flourishing whereas the materialist assumes that God is unnecessary in understanding the natural world. The exclusive

⁴³⁹ Tone Svetelj, "Rereading Modernity—Charles Taylor on Its Genesis and Prospects" (Boston, MA: Boston College, 2012), 445-448, 431. Henceforth as "Rereading Modernity. The following section comes from Svetelj, "Rereading Modernity," 431-442.

⁴⁴⁰ Svetelj, "Rereading Modernity," 431-433.

humanist sees “belief as necessarily a product of deprivation, humiliation, and a lack of hope, but they cannot perceive it as the reflection of the human desire for flourishing.”⁴⁴¹ The materialist would assume that God is unnecessary in two ways: 1) we can naturalistically explain superstitious things attributed to God, and 2) God cannot break the natural laws of the cosmos and ‘intervene’ within the natural world because it is ordered according to God’s perfect laws. If God created the world with a perfect order and ruled by natural law, there would be no need for God to ‘act’ in the natural world, not only divorcing the graced reality of nature’s participation in God, but also denying the necessity of God to explain the cosmos because there are already God-given natural laws to the cosmos we can unlock and understand using instrumental, scientific, and technological reason and progress.

The third dimension of closed-world-structures is the narrative of maturation and sociability. This position assumes that materialism is essential in the way that it gets rid of illusions but leads to despair and nostalgia (in Nietzsche’s sense). This perspective also advocates that the challenges of meaninglessness in modernity must be faced and that we must create new spaces that help us deal with the disembedding of the self from a disenchanted cosmos. It challenges modern humans to change and create new social structures that help us to: live a life of flourishing, health, and happiness; cope with meaninglessness and fragility; and transform the way we economically, politically, and socially live in the Modern Moral Order.⁴⁴² The narrative of self-authorization serves as the fourth dimension of Svetelj’s account of Taylor’s closed-world-structures. It articulates the character and implications of exclusive humanism as propagating the modern disengaged, punctual self as determining for itself what is good or right, implying its moral autonomy. It also implies via Hume and Kant that happiness becomes a moral imperative that helps human beings operate as ethical individuals.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴¹ Svetelj, “Rereading Modernity,” 433-436, 435.

⁴⁴² Svetelj, “Rereading Modernity,” 436-438.

⁴⁴³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 583; Svetelj, “Rereading Modernity,” 438-442.

Taylor paints the secular exclusive humanist as having a buffered identity within an immanent frame where the natural world is emphasized over the supernatural, and transcendence is displaced and replaced by humanist frameworks of immanence: the ideals of human reason, freedom, and progress. When it comes to the natural world, the modern scientific view of nature sees it as a physical, “brute,” impersonal world governed by laws of science, nature, and human rationality. Akeel Bilgrami states that “Nature, bring brute, could not make demands or put constraints on us. Because it was brute, we did not need to respond to it on its terms.”⁴⁴⁴ Rather, the terms by which we make sense of nature “comes from us,” through utility and gain in converting nature into natural resources.⁴⁴⁵ Thus, an immanent frame informs a new moral order as self-sufficient and in no need of God.⁴⁴⁶ Through this view of nature, as determined by human reason and the denial of God in modern societal structures, atheism develops out of an exclusive humanism where God becomes unnecessary.

For the exclusive humanist, humanity and nature are unhooked from God and the ability of human reason is free to determine the world. Reason in modernity is understood as instrumental, calling humans as responsible agents to understand and control the world for the progressive betterment of humanity. Modern instrumental reason is where human rationality abandons the teleological nature of the cosmos and finds in the ends of production the efficient means that eventually eclipse the possibility of their ends in the gradual production of a technocratic, consumer society.⁴⁴⁷ Human reason, understood without reference to God, focuses on the efficient means to obtain individual happiness through the modern notion of freedom. Human action, grounded in rights, happiness, freedom, and/or equality produces in

⁴⁴⁴ Akeel Bilgrami, “What Is Enchantment?,” in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, ed. Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 145–65, 149.

⁴⁴⁵ C.f. Bilgrami, “What Is Enchantment?,” 149.

⁴⁴⁶ Svetelj, “Rereading Modernity,” 425.

⁴⁴⁷ Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, rev. ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2017); Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 77-89.

liberalism both the modern emphasis on individualism and the hopes for an ideal, utopian society of human agents who can progress and efficiently produce health, safety, and happiness. Instrumental reason reinforces human freedom through a constructivist control and analysis of nature while secular notions of time as human progress and betterment become measured, efficient, and determined by human reason. For the exclusive humanist, human actions are governed by freedom determined by instrumental rationality, self-discipline, and ethical responsibility towards the world.⁴⁴⁸

6.3.2 The Immanent Counter-Enlightenment

In contrast to the exclusive humanist, the immanent counter-enlightenment offers two more options of modern anthropology: 1) the Romantic-idealist-expressivists, and 2) the neo-Nietzschean anti-humanists. The immanent counter-enlightenment saw problems with elevating instrumental reason, constructivist notions of personhood, and representational epistemology.⁴⁴⁹ Taylor sees problems with the process of the secularization and modernization of human reason adopted by exclusive humanists and naturalists since the Enlightenment as denying the meaningful constitution of human personhood by constitutive, meaning-making conceptions of the good.⁴⁵⁰ Part of this problem is the elevation of human reason as an arbiter of reality, the idea of a neutral universe, and the realization of the alienating, isolating effects autonomy has on the modern subject.

In the subjective, expressivist turn of modernity with the Romantic-idealists, Taylor's understanding of the immanent counter-enlightenment offers critiques of the displacement of

⁴⁴⁸ Svetelj, "Rereading Modernity," 424-425.

⁴⁴⁹ C.f. Charles Taylor, "Overcoming Epistemology," in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 1-19.

⁴⁵⁰ Taylor offers a sustained critique of scientific naturalism for determining identity. Self-identity for Taylor is constituted by process of meaning-making done through evaluations of moral sources and evaluations of a moral ontology constituted by constitutive goods and hypergoods. C.f. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 3-107; Charles Taylor, "What is Human Agency?" in *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 15-44; Charles Taylor, "The Concept of a Person," in *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 97-114.

transcendence by human rationality, seeks to recover transcendence in terms of the immanent, natural world, and with Nietzsche and beyond in Foucault, the anti-humanist flipped the tables on exclusive humanism by articulating the fundamental human drive to domination, oppression, and violence over other human beings and the natural world. At the heart of the immanent counter-enlightenment is not only a critique of modern reason but also a description of the problems with its elevation in ways that expose the dark side of modernity and the negative capabilities of human reason. Moreover, Taylor understands that the immanent counter-enlightenment indicates the fundamental meaninglessness and absurdity of life, alongside the dominating bent of human violence inherent in a godless world.

However, Taylor argues that these two movements are still modern critiques of modernity's emphasis on exclusive humanism. First, the Romantic-expressive-idealists saw that transcendence is necessary and meaningful. But they still accepted an immanent frame closed to transcendence in the traditional theological meaning of "God." With the acceptance of the absence of traditional views of transcendence, the Romantic-expressive-idealists replaced God with an inherent transcendence immanent within the natural world. Thus, the Romantics advocated for the spiritual or "mundane" transcendence in the experience of the sublime in the natural world of an immanent frame.

By developing the ideas of sentiment and aesthetics the Romantics articulated a sense of subjectivity that was attuned to the fundamental problems of human nature and finitude. In response, the focus on subjectivity by the Romantic-expressive-idealists sought escape in the impersonal, spiritualized natural world.⁴⁵¹ While the Romantics recognized the reality of suffering and evil as a challenge to the exclusive humanist view of the fundamental goodness of human nature, they still did not accept the notion of divine transcendence, replacing God

⁴⁵¹ Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche*, Second Edition (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

with a spiritualized mundanity of the natural world. For the Romantics, transcendence is not God but rather a spiritualized immanence, a sacralized nature found in the sublime aesthetics of human finitude and the natural world.

The Romantic-expressivist view of immanence is grounded in a horizontal plane that does not necessitate traditional views of God. Rather, the immanent experience of transcendence in the world affirms something more of the world, or a depth to the horizontal plane, without experiencing a transcendent “God.” You can be an atheist and still experience transcendence in the world. This is because transcendence does not necessarily have to mean the belief in the asymmetrical relationship between a Transcendence over the world and the world as dependent upon or created by God. You can experience an immanent enchantment where there is something “more” to the world that does not necessitate traditional views of God.⁴⁵²

The neo-Nietzschean anti-humanist also critiques the Enlightenment exclusive humanist while also remaining modern but in a much more radical way. The neo-Nietzscheans are anti-humanists who: 1) saw the implications for human life if God is dead; 2) doubted the universality of human rationality to progressively better our world; and 3) deconstructed modern and theistic approaches to what and how we exist as humans as bound to systems of determinations of power and oppression. The anti-humanists distrust the power of human reason to better our world. They also doubt the fundamental goodness of human nature and indeed constantly point out the utter meaninglessness of human existence apart from God. The neo-Nietzscheans point out that without God all existence is absurd, meaningless, and anything is permissible. Moreover, the trials of human nature must either embrace nihilism,

⁴⁵² Bilgrami, “What is Enchantment?”, 156-165.

meaninglessness, absurdity, or the negation of life by either committing suicide or embracing and living in a meaningless world without God.⁴⁵³

While the neo-Nietzscheans are at the opposite of the spectrum from the exclusive humanists, they share the sensibility for closed-world-structures. By contrast, however, while the exclusive humanists have a positive and progressive view of human nature, the neo-Nietzscheans are anti-humanists, pointing out that humanity is disposed towards violence and characterized by domination, power, and control.⁴⁵⁴ While the exclusive humanists hold to hope for humanity, the anti-humanists are pessimists, cynics, and skeptics about the capability of human beings to overcome their nature. By and large, the anti-humanist view draws out in late-modernity the washed-out cynic, vagabond, and skeptic who has been burned by society, and family, and lives on the outskirts of culture while yet provoking it in creative ways.

While the anti-humanist denies human benevolence and affirms the meaninglessness and nihilism of life without God, the Romantic-expressivist seeks to uncover the depths of immanence. The tension of the Romantic-expressivist lies not in human nature, though it doubts the goodness of humanity that the exclusive humanist advocates. Rather the tension for the Romantic-expressivist lies between humans and the world. Because of this, the Romantic-expressivist seeks to uncover the religious or transcendental depth of nature. To live in harmony with nature and uncover the transcendental depths of immanence becomes the goal and drive of the Romantic-expressivist vision of modern anthropology.

This section has defined the salient features of Taylor's philosophical typologies of modern anthropology by arguing how the question of meaning shapes the possibilities of believing. Furthermore, it has argued how modern anthropology contests both religious and

⁴⁵³ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983); Albert Camus, *The Stranger* (New York: Vintage, 1989); Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (New York: Everyman's Library, 1992).

⁴⁵⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017); Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, revised ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1992); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

secular visions of humanity in ways that cross-pressure the question of meaning as a fundamental human dilemma. However, the next section develops the notion of the religious theist in terms of the question of meaning through Taylor and his commentator's analyses and contestations of fullness, flourishing, and the middle condition. By linking the religious theist to the question of meaning, the next section argues how belief offers an added theological layer to the question of meaning for what it means to be human in the immanent frame.

6.4 The Religious Theist and The Question of Meaning

Charles Taylor is most notably known for his genealogical accounts of secularism and philosophical anthropology. Though Taylor has written from the perspective of a theist,⁴⁵⁵ his arguments are written from a philosopher's perspective both fail to consider robust theological accounts of other religions and Pentecostalism.⁴⁵⁶ While Taylor's contributions do contextualize faith in a secular context in terms of fullness, Taylor's ideas of fullness and the question of meaning are ways to address an underdeveloped theological dimension in Taylor that posits belief as an added layer of meaningfulness to being human.

At the heart of Taylor's understanding of human religious experience in a secular age is the question of meaning. Taylor's accounts of fullness, flourishing, and the middle condition are key conceptual frameworks that shape what it means to believe and be human. And yet these accounts are both complex and contested in and by Taylor and his interlocutors. But the question of meaning is of central importance to what shapes the possibilities of believing in late modernity because what we find meaningful throughout the experiences of our lives shapes

⁴⁵⁵ Charles Taylor, "A Catholic Modernity?" in *Dilemmas and Connections* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 167-187; Charles Taylor, *A Catholic Modernity?*, ed. James L. Heft (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 13-38.

⁴⁵⁶ In "A Catholic Modernity?" Taylor offers accounts of Buddhism in the context of the Axial Age and Durkheimian religiosity and implicitly draws out an inclusive Christian position that recognizes the common ground between Catholic and Buddhist conceptions of flourishing through renunciation. By contrast, Vondey articulates that Taylor does not understand and fails to grasp the play of Pentecostal theology in a secular context. C.f. Taylor, "A Catholic Modernity?"; Wolfgang Vondey, "Religion at Play: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of a Secular Age," *PNEUMA* 40, no. 1 (2018): 17-36.

how we imagine the possibilities of believing in late modernity. To examine the question of meaning, we will first analyze Taylor and his interlocutors' accounts of fullness, flourishing, and the middle condition, and then we will examine his critics' contestations of Taylor's understandings of fullness and flourishing.

6.4.1 Tayloring Fullness, Flourishing, and the Middle Condition

The question of meaning is a central question for Charles Taylor. Developing this question will require us to examine Taylor's notions of fullness, flourishing, and exile through an analysis of his idea of the middle condition. Ironically, Taylor's analysis early on in *A Secular Age* demonstrates that the "middle condition" doesn't necessarily have to do directly with belief or unbelief, religion or a-religion, but with the experience of connection with or access to what we sense to be *fullness*. Taylor says we all have some sense of what constitutes fullness. We can experience fullness in three ways: first, that the experiences of connection provide an orientation toward fullness;⁴⁵⁷ second, that we may experience an exile from fullness—a disconnection, loss of direction, and despair over the possibility of ever being connected to fullness;⁴⁵⁸ and third, that the "middle condition" is an experience where we are not palpably experiencing fullness—but we also don't feel the pain of exile from it.⁴⁵⁹ The experience of exile from fullness for Taylor is something we aspire to escape from in its threat "of negation, exile, [and] emptiness, without having reached fullness."⁴⁶⁰ This experience of exile:

has a negative slope; where we experience above all a distance, an absence, and exile, a seemingly irremediable incapacity ever to reach this place; an absence of power; a confusion, or worse, the condition often described in the tradition as melancholy, ennui... What is terrible in this latter condition is that we lose a sense of where the place of fullness is, even of what fullness could consist in; we feel we've forgotten what it would look like, or cannot believe in it anymore. But the misery of absence, of loss, is still there, indeed, it is in some ways even more acute.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁷ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 5-6.

⁴⁵⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 6.

⁴⁵⁹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 6-7.

⁴⁶⁰ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 6.

⁴⁶¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 7, 6.

However, in contrast to exile, the middle condition is a place to which we come to experience episodic meaningfulness, “often through some stable, even routine order in life, in which we are doing things which have some meaning for us.”⁴⁶² Taylor argues that essential to the middle condition is: “first that the routine, the order, the regular contact with meaning in our daily activities, somehow conjures, and keeps at bay the exile, or ennui, or captivity in the monstrous; and second, that we have some sense of continuing contact with the place of fullness; and of slow movement towards it over the years.”⁴⁶³

By differentiating between the episodic experience of fullness from the exile of meaning in the middle condition, Taylor characterizes the conditions for belief within the middle condition as where life is not fully constituted with meaning. It is marked by an underlying threat to despair, but also that meaning can be found in the ordinary rhythms of human life.⁴⁶⁴ But what marks fullness and the middle condition are not its theoretical understandings, but rather the lived conditions of human experience that shape the meaningfulness of human life.⁴⁶⁵ But the difference between fullness and the middle condition is the reality that fullness opens us to receive something transcendent, beyond us, which thereby transforms who we are in the relationship between God and humans.⁴⁶⁶ And yet, within the experience of the middle condition, there are lived tensions between the possibilities for the fullness of meaning and the episodic experience of meaninglessness. The experience of fullness, the middle condition, and exile are the cross-pressures that shape the conditions for the meaning of being human in late modernity.

According to Charles Taylor, the notion of fullness describes an experience of the lived richness and meaningfulness of a life in relationship to God. In contrast for Taylor, ordinary

⁴⁶² Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 6.

⁴⁶³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 7.

⁴⁶⁴ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 7.

⁴⁶⁵ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 8.

⁴⁶⁶ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 8.

flourishing in the middle condition is about the experience of episodic meaningfulness of life held in tension with the possibility of meaninglessness. While ordinary flourishing points to a sense of meaningfulness in everyday life, fullness for Taylor deals with a belief that something about the world is deeply meaningful in light of God. Fullness is a vibrant perception of the meaningfulness of reality that points to something more or beyond this world. According to Taylor, while flourishing is common among the middle condition, in an immanent frame fullness is more episodic and less available to us than it used to be even if some people maintain “more consistent access to it.”⁴⁶⁷ Fullness means,

Any experience of life and the world is imbued with meaning, beauty, and connection—whatever the source of the experience. Crucially, it is a subjective experience in which the fullness or satisfying intensity is understood to be objective—the way the world is, or at least can sometimes be—not merely a result of subjective attitude. Our subjective stances may afford us more or better access to fullness, but it is not merely an interior state. Indeed, it is a reflection of our individual, psychological orientation and also our rationalistic, epistemological criteria for knowledge that we try to grasp fullness entirely in terms of subjective states; we say we have moments of transcendent experience, thus, rather than moments when we experience the transcendent character of reality.⁴⁶⁸

Within this context, fullness describes the balance between secular and religious conceptions of transcendence in a way that, while both are dependent upon subjectivity, the theistic experience of fullness is one of encounter, experience, and transformation, while the experience of fullness in a non-theistic way is marked by meaningful depth through the experiences of ordinary life. Jonathan Sheehan argues that fullness challenges the modern narrative of disenchantment through its emphasis on moral proscriptions against incomplete, alienated, and fragmented experiences in the middle condition. Sheehan states that

Fullness is not just a theological first principle. It is also the balancing counter concept of disenchantment. These go hand in hand. Because the drive to fullness is necessarily incomplete, the experience of the world is deeply structured by loss and self-alienation. The future-oriented temporality of fullness—that drive toward a time of reconciliation—depends on the past inscribed into the modern and secular age as

⁴⁶⁷ Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, ed., Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 1–31, 11–12.

⁴⁶⁸ Warner, Calhoun, and VanAntwerpen, “Editor’s Introduction,” 11.

disenchanting. These are not, it must be said, descriptive, but rather prescriptive assessments. The sphere of indifference or the mundane is not only conceptually excluded. It is also morally proscribed, as a form of inauthentic participation in the world, not reflective enough, unaware of the realization that humans (or at least, modern Western humans) find themselves in.⁴⁶⁹

Fullness is a tool for expressing the theological meaningfulness of religious sensibilities within the immanent frame of our secular age. Theistic views of fullness offer accounts of the transforming, redemptive depth of transcendence as we encounter it. This encounter with fullness transforms us and our experience of the world within the realms of immanence, lifting the immanent frame from the depths of immanence into the beauty, goodness, and truth of transcendence.

Without God, we can fall into the pitfalls of an experience of alienation, fragmentation, and disorientation. The experience of meaning in a closed immanent frame is constituted by a threat of meaninglessness, fragility, fragmentation, and uncertainty: the closure to transcendence leaves us to question the meaningfulness of an immanent frame. James K. A. Smith captures the malaise of immanence in Taylor through his striking commentary: “the emergence of the secular is also bound up with the production of a new option... a way of constructing meaning and significance without any reference to the divine or transcendence. So, it wasn’t enough for us to stop believing in the gods; we also had to be able to imagine significance within the immanent frame, to imagine modes of meaning that did not depend on transcendence.”⁴⁷⁰ This raises the centrality of the question of meaning and the threat of meaninglessness as a central concern of human beings in a secular age. Stephen Costello reflects on this when he says that,

The question is: can we find meaning in the malaise of modernity, in the ‘malaise of immanence?’ The sense of emptiness and meaninglessness, of absurdity and nausea, well documented by Sartre and Camus, is ubiquitous. We seem to have lost a sense of

⁴⁶⁹ Jonathan Sheehan, “When Was Disenchantment? History and the Secular Age,” in Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun, eds., *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 217–42, 238–239.

⁴⁷⁰ James K. A. Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 26.

the sacred, of truth and goodness and beauty and depth and sense, in our quotidian, dry, flat and banal, mundane modern lives. Of the ‘one thing necessary/needed,’ in our crass, capitalistic, and cardboard culture. Taylor distinguishes three modes of these malaises of immanence: 1) the fragility of meaning, the loosening of a sense of or a search for an overarching significance; 2) the felt flatness of attempts to solemnize important moments of our lives; and 3) the emptiness of the ordinary. Transcendence is the answer for some—a return to or deepening relationship with the transcendent; for others who don't share such faith, they will seek their solutions in their own ways, perhaps in working for greater prosperity or peace or justice in a world no longer full of God/gods.⁴⁷¹

Contrasted with the episodic potential for meaningfulness and its threat of meaninglessness in an immanent frame, fullness for Taylor is that which orients us morally and spiritually to and by God in ways that deepen and fulfill our lives with a depth of meaning that constitutes all aspects of our existence. In his consideration of fullness, Taylor sees it as the orientation to meaning contextualized within the possibilities of what allows us to flourish. Taylor argues that fullness is the completion and fulfillment of moral and spiritual flourishing—that which can include the moral sources of nature, spiritual energies, desire, and the drive to Reform as those things that can offer direction to our lives. By contrast, a secularized version of fullness and flourishing in the middle condition is one situated *both* in the episodic experiences of meaningfulness that are constantly threatened by the possibility of meaninglessness and the ennui of our experience *and* in the existential experiences of wonder and awe in everyday life that are coupled with the existential dispositions to find and create meaningful experiences in the everyday life of an immanent frame *apart* from God.

But Taylor also promotes a fullness of life that refers to a good that is “quite beyond ordinary flourishing, and perhaps even incompatible with making this flourishing our highest end.”⁴⁷² Taylor’s distinction between fullness and ordinary flourishing is fundamentally one that differentiates between frameworks of meaning, one vertical and transcendental and one

⁴⁷¹ Stephen Costello, “Beyond Flourishing: ‘Fullness’ and ‘Conversion’ in Taylor and Lonergan,” in *The Taylor Effect: Responding to a Secular Age*, ed. Ian Leask, et. al. (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 39–52, 44.

⁴⁷² Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 611.

horizontal and immanent, in ways that either reference God or lack references to God as it plumbs the depths of meaning in ordinary life in an immanent frame. Because of this lack of reference to God for meaning, for Taylor, ordinary flourishing is a lesser understanding of fullness, because ordinary flourishing lacks the vertical horizon of transcendence in accounting for the good life.

The lack of ordinary flourishing as contrasted to fullness implies that there is something more and deeper than us that we experience within the immanent frame as something “other” that *motivates* us to act in such a way that we may fully flourish. Tied to the *motivations* towards fullness is what David McPherson argues as the question of worthwhileness.⁴⁷³ This question of “worthwhileness” entails the judgment of what is “good” and is oriented by what we find “meaningful.”⁴⁷⁴ Fullness differs from ordinary flourishing insofar as fullness entails the evaluation of what we deem good and meaningful in the light of God, whereas ordinary flourishing does not evaluate and determine what is meaningful or good in the light of God. In Anthony Edward Hugh Campbell’s words, flourishing may or may not include this fullness:

[Flourishing according to Taylor] serves to distinguish a different kind of lived experience for both believers and unbelievers. In both cases there can be degrees of flourishing life but for unbelievers their goals are limited to goals of human flourishing as distinct from lives oriented in addition to the fullness of the transcendent. Human flourishing for Taylor’s typological purposes is concerned with physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being. In the immanent frame human flourishing makes no reference to the beyond or God. In the case of believers, on the other hand, flourishing life will often be associated with the transcendent frame even though believers in the transcendent frame take the view that ‘the highest, the best life involves our seeking, or acknowledging, or serving a good which is beyond, in the sense of independent of, human flourishing.’ Thus, it is not an either/or proposition in Taylor’s view because it is quite possible for a person to seek to live a flourishing life as a subordinate part of a life oriented to the fullness of the transcendent or something other than (only) human flourishing.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷³ McPherson, “Re-Enchanting the World,” 182ff.

⁴⁷⁴ McPherson, “Re-Enchanting the World,” 183.

⁴⁷⁵ Campbell, “Charles Taylor and the Place of the Transcendent in Secular Modern Lives,” 101; Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 16-17.

There is a *theological* distinction in Taylor between fullness and flourishing. Fullness entails a theological belief in vertical transcendence or a Transcendent “Other” that transforms ordinary life and judges it as something good, meaningful, and worthwhile. Flourishing may also include motivations that determine something as meaningful, good, and worthwhile. However, *ordinary* flourishing lacks the vertical relationship with God that gives *theological* meaning and transformation to human flourishing. However, if ordinary flourishing entails the discernment of the meaningfulness, goodness, and worthwhileness of human life and experience, it means that ordinary flourishing can be available to the unbeliever or non-believer as well as the believer. However, when we make a *theological* distinction between fullness and flourishing, it is determined by the (lack of) reference to God as constitutive of its worthwhileness and meaningfulness.

The key differentiation between flourishing and fullness lies in the vertical relationship with God that transforms human life. However, flourishing may be either, or both, theological and/or ordinary, but ordinary flourishing can never be truly fullness for Taylor because of its lack of reference to transcendence and its correlation to the episodic experience of meaningfulness. Fullness as a theological category *includes* ordinary flourishing in the middle condition and presupposes a vertical relationship with God to *transform* ordinary flourishing into fullness. Ordinary flourishing by contrast is the space in which we can experience in quotidian life the worthwhileness of meaningful flourishing in the middle condition *without* reference to God.

But to open the experience of meaning to the heights and depths of human experience in light of transcendence is not the only way to understand human flourishing. Human flourishing also entails the progressive, artistic, spontaneous activity of human agents actively working for the benefit of themselves, others, and our world. Human flourishing is an element of a modern social imaginary that seeks to better and come to grips with what it means to be a

whole human person. Likewise, fullness entails not only the evaluation and determination of the good, but also intentionally enacts it throughout ordinary life as a human agent working for the flourishing of self, others, and creation without reducing it to rationality. Tone Svetelj comments on this:

Fullness cannot be reduced to the requirements of the disciplined, rational, buffered, disengaged rational agent, who is willing to sacrifice his spontaneity, creativity, and feelings. Fullness exists neither in the transformation of nor in the subordination of human desires to something that is ‘higher’ sensually... Neither can fullness be built on escaping, taming, or overcoming the opposed positions, whatever they may be....

What Taylor has in mind is a fullness in terms of integration of all human forces, drives, and desires into something that allows a more harmonious and whole life. The rational, emotional, sensual, creative, spontaneous aspects of bodily existence have to find their place in this concept of a harmony and wholeness.⁴⁷⁶

Anthony Campbell and Tone Svetelj argue that flourishing according to Taylor comes from within us, and in seeking to heal and better the whole person, the self becomes a major agent through which flourishing is achieved.⁴⁷⁷ However, according to *theological* fullness, this healing and bettering of the whole person comes through the transformative relationship with God. In terms of *ordinary* flourishing, this bettering and healing encompasses the whole human being through his/her cultivation of virtue, concern for others, and/or concern for the care of nature. But the *theological* aspiration to fullness and flourishing is most notably marked by discerning what is good and meaningful in light of transcendence.

This theological dimension of fullness must also take into account ordinary flourishing’s aspiration for the good and meaningful. This is when it “is influenced and modified through different factors: the process of adapting or rejecting other positions, the cross-pressures between different positions leads to the creation of a new position, the possibility of conversion, and attraction to certain values and motives, the ethical dimension, and political identity, or the sense of belonging to a broader society.”⁴⁷⁸ Fullness and flourishing

⁴⁷⁶ Svetelj, “Rereading Modernity,” 480.

⁴⁷⁷ Campbell, “Charles Taylor and the Place of the Transcendent in Secular Modern Lives,” 61; Svetelj, “Rereading Modernity,” 473; Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 7-8.

⁴⁷⁸ Svetelj, “Rereading Modernity,” 478-479.

are constitutive of our identity precisely through the narratives of our human experience and our evaluations of what is good and meaningful to us. But what separates fullness from flourishing in the existential conditions of our everyday lives is the centrality of how these conditions of everyday experiences are referenced to and in light of our understanding of transcendence. Here fullness means that the vertical relation to transcendence becomes a reference point by which to understand our horizontal experiences of ordinary flourishing in everyday life.

But it is not just through an evaluation of what is good, whether theological or not, that we can cultivate fullness and flourishing: it also entails an evaluation of what Taylor calls the “maximal demand.” Andrew O’Shea notes that the [four]-cornered-battle between the cross-pressures of the immanent frame must nuance the affirmation of ordinary life and human benevolence without both lowering the bar that governs “our expectations of the highest good” or falling into a primordial violence.⁴⁷⁹ What is needed is both an affirmation of ordinary life and human flourishing that is attentive to the negative aspects of human be-ing (without reducing a conception of the highest good). Also needed is the recovery of human flourishing concerning the highest good that affirms what is good for human life while rejecting the primordial violence where human life may end up. This maximal demand requires us to emphasize the tension between otherworldly imputation for meaning and fullness alongside an emphasis and affirmation on this-worldly flourishing—one informed by a highest good. We need not reduce a highest good, and we need to affirm ordinary life without forgetting the darker sides of human existence. Taylor’s “maximal demand” affirms the highest good as a moral source without denigrating, “mutilating, or denying what is essential to our humanity.”⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁹ Andrew O’Shea, “Sources of the Sacred: Strong Pedagogy and the Making of a Secular Age,” in *The Taylor Effect: Responding to a Secular Age*, ed. Ian Leask, et. al. (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 160–74, 163.

⁴⁸⁰ O’Shea, “Sources of the Sacred,” 163.

From the affirmation of ordinary life in the Protestant Reformation to a humanist critique of religion we have come to an immanent frame that counters the Enlightenment response to religion while keeping the experience of transcendence on a this-worldly plane. Between the two immanent counter-enlightenment responses of the Romantic-expressivist-individualist and the anti-humanist, they draw on “two sources: 1) ‘A continuing spiritual concern with transcendence,’ that cannot be reduced to mere human flourishing;⁴⁸¹ and 2) an ethos that protests ‘the elevating effects of the culture of equality and benevolence.’”⁴⁸² Colin Jager argues that the immanent counter-enlightenment of the Romantics and anti-humanists serves as a counter-tradition that is “especially attuned to the costs—metaphysical, spiritual, psychological—of modernity. It doesn’t simply fight disenchantment with re-enchantment but diagnoses the felt need for both as a product of specific historical events, circumstances, and decisions *that might have been otherwise*.”⁴⁸³

In this context, transcendence and fullness both transform human flourishing and redeem it through its denial of the self *for* transcendence. The paradoxical nature of redemption and transformation implies that in denial of this-worldly things for transcendence or something greater or other than us, there is a paradoxical re-affirmation of what we have lost. Denying something for ourselves in this world for a transcendent good, something higher, and/or for God, it radically reforms our perspective of this-worldly goods in such a way that revalues the good through the lens of fullness.⁴⁸⁴ That is, in redeeming the quotidian good through its revaluation and the reformation of what we find meaningful through the renunciation and re-affirmation of this world through reference to transcendence, we can radically affirm this-

⁴⁸¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 371-372.

⁴⁸² Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 371; Colin Jager, “This Detail, This History: Charles Taylor’s Romanticism,” in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, ed., Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 166–92, 177-178.

⁴⁸³ Jager, “This Detail, This History,” 189.

⁴⁸⁴ C.f. Phillip Williamson Schoenberg, “Transcendence and Transformation: Charles Taylor and the Promise of Inclusive Humanism in a Secular Age” (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico, 2016), 68-69.

worldly goods and flourishing through a relationship with God for what is fully meaningful through a relationship of dependence, trust, and obedience in the worthwhileness of God as the highest good. But Taylor's theistic articulation of meaningfulness, fullness, and flourishing is not the only option—it is to the contestations of a theistic account of meaning that we now turn to.

6.4.2 Immanent Contestations of Taylor

While Charles Taylor offers a theistic approach to fullness and human flourishing, this is also a contested claim. Taylor's theistic stance articulates that fullness and human flourishing require God because if they do not, they would not be *fully* meaningful—they would be threatened by meaninglessness and insignificance so long as meaning is only found in subjective and individualistic self-fulfillment.⁴⁸⁵ And yet, in various analyses offered by Stephen K. White, Nancy T. Ammerman, Paul Heelas, William E. Connolly, William Schweiker, and others we find contestations of Taylor's claim that meaning and fullness can only be *fully* found in light of God. What these contestations demonstrate is that Taylor's idea of fullness is variously: partial, inadequate, or reaches too far in its assumptions. Taylor's critics offer subjective, quotidian, non-theistic, and humanist contestations of Taylor's fullness that orient us back to flourishing as a central dynamic of human concerns.

Agreeing with Taylor to an extent, Stephen K. White plays with the possibility of a fulfilling non-theistic perspective. He argues that for a liberal non-theist to give an adequate ground for human dignity, equality, and respect, it requires an ontological foundation grounded in mortality that both limits agency and connects agents to one another.⁴⁸⁶ In another critique via analyses of everyday spirituality, Nancy Ammerman argues that three dominant discourses

⁴⁸⁵ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 507.

⁴⁸⁶ Stephen K. White, "Uncertain Constellations: Dignity, Equality, Respect, And...?" in David Campbell and Morton Schoolman, eds., *The New Pluralism: William Connolly and the Contemporary Global Condition* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2008), 143-166.

contest the claim that belief and meaning are only found in religious contexts and that the secular lacks these: 1) a theistic cultural package (tying spirituality to the divine); 2) an extra-theistic package (finding spirituality in natural forms of transcendence); and 3) an ethical spirituality of everyday compassion.⁴⁸⁷ In particular, Ammerman describes “extra-theistic” everyday spirituality as an experience of transcendence different from theistic cultural spirituality because it does not necessitate a vertical connection to transcendence. Rather, extra-theistic spirituality experiences the “‘bigger than me’ and beyond the ordinary” sense of transcendence.⁴⁸⁸ She states, “Here spirituality is located in the core of the self, in connection to community, in the sense of awe engendered by the natural world and various forms of beauty, and in the life-philosophies crafted by an individual seeking life’s meaning.”⁴⁸⁹ She goes further to clarify this spirituality:

These ways of thinking about spirituality are often described in the literature as ‘immanent’, flowing from the person, the community, and the natural world and needing no authority beyond the person’s own experience. That may be so, but when our participants talked about this kind of spirituality, they spoke of rising beyond the mundane and the everyday. What they were describing seemed akin to what Taylor called ‘fullness,’ places where ordinary life is touched by an affectively charged perception that things have meaning, where the modern ‘immanent frame’ of explicability and calculation is opened to something beyond. What they are describing may not come from a transcendent deity, and it is certainly not supernatural, but it is nevertheless transcendent in character.⁴⁹⁰

In an immanent spirituality, Ammerman argues that Taylor’s idea of fullness is more akin to an extra-theistic spiritual discourse: as a “rising beyond the mundane and everyday, beyond simple pleasure or rational calculation, beyond self-interest or explanation.”⁴⁹¹ In her study of extra-theistic and ethical spiritualities, she tells us that the spiritual dimension is not about magic and is located in everyday reality. She states, that in

⁴⁸⁷ Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 19.

⁴⁸⁸ Nancy Ammerman, “Spiritual but Not Religious? Beyond Binary Choices in the Study of Religion,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 52, no. 2 (2013): 258-278, 268.

⁴⁸⁹ Ammerman, “Spiritual but Not Religious?”, 268.

⁴⁹⁰ Ammerman, “Spiritual but Not Religious?”, 269.

⁴⁹¹ Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes*, 35.

recognizing the awesomeness of nature, the ideal of the inner self, the call of a life of meaning, or the bonds of human connections, [they] all speak of some reality beyond the mundane self and its interests. Each taps a kind of transcendence, an effort to reach beyond a world that is merely ordinary... It is that fundamental recognition of a 'more than ordinary' dimension in life that the common thread running through all the spiritual stories [of everyday spiritual practices].⁴⁹²

Ammerman doubts a Taylorian understanding that subjective individual experience offers a weak basis for religious belief. Rather, Ammerman argues that spiritual discourses entail moral concerns and communities with a sacred consciousness, regardless of whether deities are present. She argues that sacred consciousness has "significant implications for power, agency, and action. Life narratives always provide direction to action supplying the plots for what is envisioned as possible. Accounts are never merely accounts; they also shape reality. What matters is not only the shape of the narrative itself but also the nature of the conversation in which the story is told."⁴⁹³ Furthermore, she distinguishes "spiritual narratives" from mundane or ordinary stories. She states that "there is in these stories a consciousness of transcendence, a recognition of a sacred dimension that goes beyond the ordinary," which neither requires deity or doctrine, nor organized institutions or even a name.⁴⁹⁴

If Ammerman challenges Taylor's critique of subjective individualism through an analysis of extra-theistic spirituality, then Paul Heelas, both building on and critiquing Taylor, argues that New Age spiritualities of life stem from the Romantic-expressivist turn. Heelas contrasts the Romantic turn inward to the truth about oneself with the Christian enscribed, theological turn to the truth of God. He locates the heart of spiritualities of life within "a spiritually informed fusion of expressivism...and the ethic of humanity."⁴⁹⁵ Heelas describes it as a "humanistic expressivism" without the association of individualism or legalistic formalism. Heelas argues that a Romantic turn within expressivist and humanistic ethics fuses

⁴⁹² Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes*, 292.

⁴⁹³ Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes*, 293.

⁴⁹⁴ Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes*, 293.

⁴⁹⁵ Paul Heelas, *Spiritualities of Life: New Age Romanticism and Consumptive Capitalism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 30.

it and frees it from self-concern towards life and others through the subjective turn where life is experienced as a spiritual unity that invokes an ethics of equality.⁴⁹⁶ Heelas makes a distinction between Christian theism and spiritualities of life's views of the transcendent and of Truth as a difference between the truth for oneself and the truth about oneself:

Finding *the* Truth of the transcendent *for* oneself is not the same as finding *what* is true *about* oneself. With Truth differing between the *formalized* traditions of transcendent theism, Truth (including the Truth of life) is *exclusivistic*; with Truth *experienced* by way of the spirituality at the heart of all (human) life, Truth is *inclusivistic*. In a nutshell, the hierarchical dualism of the spiritualities of transcendent theism contrasts with the egalitarian, monistic holism of spiritualities of the unique life; the sanctity of life deriving from the God of Catholicism contrasts with the Sanctity of life *per se*; finding life within life, the self-life, the living life contrasts with finding the true life through what often amounts to the scripted life of scripture.⁴⁹⁷

Heelas' critique of Taylor situates meaningfulness not in organized religion or religious scripture but rather in spiritualities of life that value the truth of life itself rather than theistic conceptions of truth. The Romantic turn in Heelas' accounts of spirituality is a central component that critiques a theistic account of fullness because it locates meaning in the (spiritual) experience of this world. Here we find confluences with Heelas and nuances with Taylor through William Schweiker's Romantic humanist critique of Taylor.

In contrast to Taylor's account of fullness and ordinary flourishing, William Schweiker argues for a sense of fullness characterized by theological humanism. He argues that fullness allows us to order our lives "for maximal flourishing with the flow of historical time."⁴⁹⁸ In a secular framework, fullness is grounded in the *telos* of flourishing in the modern structures of social, political, and historical contexts. Within the context of this worldly experience within an immanent frame, Schweiker argues that "the moral, spiritual landscape of human life is three dimensional:" 1) there is a depth, power, and fullness to ordinary experience that goes beyond

⁴⁹⁶ Heelas, *Spiritualities of Life*, 30-31.

⁴⁹⁷ Heelas, *Spiritualities of Life*, 29.

⁴⁹⁸ William Schweiker, "Humanism and the Question of Fullness," in Carlos Colorado and Justin Klassen, eds., *Aspiring to Fullness in a Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: University of Notre-Dame Press, 2014), 127-51, 133.

the ordinary; 2) this fullness is marked by moments of exile and brokenness; and 3) there is a constitutive link, connection, and relational “condition between fullness and exile.”⁴⁹⁹ Furthermore, Simon During argues that we can experience fullness within the immanent frame where, in anticipation of death and the utter brokenness of life, we “wake up” from a life without conscience to the fullness of beauty in the meaningless world of contradiction.⁵⁰⁰

The middle condition of the immanent frame is open to immanent forms of (lateral) human flourishing and transcendence and sees in this world a transcendence that is bound to the constitutive conditions of finitude and human existence: through this-worldly conditions of what matters most to us that come from within the bounds of our human contingency. Schweiker argues for a theological humanism that dwells within the middle condition between fullness and exile in a secular age where our religious commitments and moral sources, grounded in a theology of grace, can help us live in the tension between the human condition and affect social, cultural, and political structures without falling into excarnational, intellectual religiosity or secular, exclusive humanism. He argues that we cannot collapse the human and social norms for fullness and transformation, but rather seek recovery and application of divine mediation through the sacramental community to how we live and act in a society, culture, and politics marked by love, forgiveness, and grace, seeking justice and fulfilling our longing through incarnational, embodied communal practices of human belonging and social action informed by religious sources and practices.⁵⁰¹

While Charles Taylor highlights the possibility for transcendence and theism in a secular context, what is clear in his approach to the resourcement of modern conceptions of self is his emphasis on the Romantic-expressivists. This background framework to what it

⁴⁹⁹ Schweiker, “Humanism and the Question of Fullness,” 134.

⁵⁰⁰ Simon During, “Completing Secularism: The Mundane in the Neoliberal Era,” in Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun, eds., *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 105–25, 121–125; c.f. Alan Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005).

⁵⁰¹ Schweiker, “Humanism and the Question of Fullness,” 127–51.

means to be human draws out the implications of finding meaning, authenticity, and depth within the immanent frame in such a way that highlights not the need for transcendence, but rather for what William Connolly and William Schweiker call “mundane” or “ordinary” transcendence and the fullness of immanence.⁵⁰² That is, it is a type of transcendence found within the depths of immanence that yet affirms the meaning and authenticity found in the possibilities of belief. Within this framework, the theistic focus on transcendence generally denies meaning and authenticity within immanence, whereas the Romantic-expressivist affirms meaning and authenticity within the realms of immanence, not because transcendence is present, but rather that the transcendental experience of immanence highlights the depths of immanence without needing a God or the supernatural. In effect, this implies that the Romantic expressivists offer a quasi-religious theism that affirms in some sense the supernatural in the natural world. But the Romantic concern for authenticity implies an *immanent* concern for human flourishing. Yet this immanent concern for human flourishing is *religious* precisely in its orientation for developing a religious philosophy of immanence.

William Connolly offers a key development of a religious philosophy of immanence. He argues that for a Romantic-expressivist, “radical transcendence”—a god governing and sustaining reality—is rejected for a “mundane” transcendence manifested in radical immanence. Mundane transcendence is the sense of transcendence perceived in radical immanence, yet not fully represented by it. The faith or belief of the philosophy of radical immanence, “advances an image of mundane transcendence” that encourages a “movement back and forth between the virtual and the actual.”⁵⁰³ Central to Connolly’s arguments is the notion of becoming. To live in the actual world is to realize its potential—of what it can become. Connolly argues that we need to not only see and believe in a world of becoming but

⁵⁰² C.f. William Connolly, “Belief, Spirituality, and Time,” in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, ed., Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 126–44; and Schweiker, “Humanism and the Question of Fullness,” 127–51.

⁵⁰³ Connolly, “Belief, Spirituality, and Time,” 131–132.

also affirm it.⁵⁰⁴ Connolly's philosophy of immanence is fundamentally religious. Even as he redefines transcendence in terms of mundanity, we can affirm ordinary life and religiously experience it as it is oriented to human flourishing through the authenticity of becoming.

Connolly confesses a philosophy/faith in immanent naturalism, which entails faith or conviction in the interconnectedness of every system in the world.⁵⁰⁵ He argues that an immanent naturalist accepts mundane transcendence: "the idea that multiple forces of various types impinge upon a moving system from the outside. These forces are sometimes transcendent in the sense that they come from elsewhere, are not always identifiable before their arrival, and, sometimes, are not readily isolable once they become infused into the actuality examined."⁵⁰⁶ Connolly argues that radical immanence not only believes in this world but affirms it with refined ethical care for and in everyday human and non-human life, with cultural and ecological care that comes out of and is motivated by existential *ressentiment*.⁵⁰⁷

This means that for a religious philosophy of immanence, we need to affirm the world and our ethical and existential place and responsibility in it and to it in such a way that the possibilities for human flourishing and meaningfulness are grounded in a philosophy of mundane transcendence that maintains the integrity and depths of ordinary life. This is an ordinary conception of transcendence that affirms a given depth to the self as it exists in the world and its finitude. Ordinary transcendence contrasts with the theistic notion of transcendence found with or in God, because while God remains separate from immanence in the modern theistic framework, in the Romantic-expressivist notion of ordinary transcendence, the supernatural collapses into the natural, giving it a sense of depth beyond and within the realms of finitude. As such, a religious philosophy of immanence seeks to articulate the

⁵⁰⁴ Connolly, "Belief, Spirituality, and Time," 135-138.

⁵⁰⁵ William E. Connolly, "A World of Becoming," in Alan Finlayson, ed., *Democracy and Pluralism: The Political Thought of William E. Connolly* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 222-235, 233-234.

⁵⁰⁶ Connolly, "A World of Becoming," 234.

⁵⁰⁷ William E. Connolly, *A World of Becoming* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 79-83.

integrity and depths of everyday life in such a way that affirms immanence as inherently meaningful.

6.5 Meaning, Believing, and Being Human

This section re-evaluates the connection between the question of meaning and what it means to believe and be human. The connection is that believing and being human are both intimately linked to the question of meaning insofar as they are cross-pressured in the middle condition between immanence and transcendence. In particular, through an analysis of Taylor's modern anthropology and three-or-four-cornered-battle this chapter has sought to articulate how believing and being human in a postsecular anthropology: a) contests the meaningfulness of belief for being human; b) understands that what it means to believe and be human is constitutively shaped by historical contingency; and c) understands human being and believing in terms of complex conditions that are shaped by the question of meaning.

To address the connection between the question of meaning and believing and being human, we may ask two questions. First, what is the relationship between belief and meaning when we contrast whether one does or does not believe? Second, what is the difference between the religious humanist and the exclusive theist? As to the first, the religious theist presupposes the meaningfulness of believing as something that they judge as worthwhile. This means that believing for the religious theist adds a layer of meaningfulness to being human that is lacking in the other corners of Taylor's modern anthropology.

And yet can the lives of non-theists be meaningful? Yes. The arguments throughout section 6.4 made a distinction between theological fullness and religious/ordinary flourishing to show how the distinction between the religious theist and, say the secular humanist, is that when there is a belief in a vertical relationship with God there is an added meaningfulness to believing that is theological. However, this does not mean that religious or ordinary flourishing

cannot be meaningful—it can be, but it does not presuppose a theistic belief in a vertical God or radical transcendence. This chapter analyzed the cross-pressures in the four-cornered battle in modern anthropology to show how these cross-pressures can generate meaningfulness, even if belief is absent. Belief in God is meaningful for the religious theist, but not so for the other three options. Yet this does not necessarily mean that life cannot be meaningful for those people who do not believe in God.

Meaningfulness does not necessitate belief, and yet when belief is added, this can generate different kinds of meaningfulness not available to those who do not believe. While the religious theist views belief in a God characterized by radical transcendence as a moral source that provides meaning for being human, the immanent critiques of Taylor show how non-religious options can still be meaningful for what it means to be human. This is precisely through the emphasis on the experience of fullness and mundane or ordinary transcendence within an immanent frame. The experience of meaningfulness is possible for those who do not believe in traditional conceptions of radical transcendence or God. This is precisely because there is a spiritual depth within immanence that provides meaning to the experiences of ordinary life. By contrast, the religious theist finds meaningfulness through their belief in God insofar as their relationship with God adds a layer that transforms and deepens what it means to be human in ordinary life. The belief in transcendence transforms what it means to be human in ways that can shape not only what it means to be human, but also the intentional agency of human persons for the flourishing of this world because they believe in the power of God to enact the other-worldly promise of salvation through the participation of humans in the purposes of God.

As to the second question, this chapter addressed the distinction between the exclusive theist and the religious humanist. But it is worthwhile to pause to reflect a bit more on the difference between these two forms of a religious theist. The exclusive theist is reactive to

modernity. This comes in two forms: their attempt to Christianize modernity and their traditional entrenchment against modernity. Both of these can be problematic. The attempt to Christianize modernity is problematic because it fails to take into account how power is wielded in ways that may unconsciously or consciously lead to oppression. The traditional entrenchment against modernity is problematic because it fails to receive the positive effects of modernity in its attempt to articulate human equality, diversity, etc.

By contrast, the religious humanist differs from both of these tendencies in the exclusive theist in important ways. The religious humanist engages with modernity and works within modern structures to be a voice of conscience to both forms of the exclusive theist. The conscience and agency of the religious humanist counters both the dehumanizing effects of modernity *and* the dehumanizing, oppressive, or silencing repercussions that can result from Christianizing modernity. This is where the religious humanist is to be a conscientious objector to oppressive forms of government, whether religious or secular. On the other side, the religious humanist is also someone who is trying to live between the cross-pressures of the middle condition in ways that engage with the non-Christian world for the flourishing of this world. This means that on one side, the religious humanist is a conscientious objector to oppression while on the other side, they are agents of restoration for the flourishing of this world.

However, if we are to articulate a postsecular incarnational theology of presence that affirms and transforms immanence, we must also take into account views of believing and being human that may not accept theistic views of transcendence. This is because a postsecular incarnational theology of presence is defined most fundamentally by a *cross-pressured* openness of immanence to transcendence. This is because it sees believing as contingently constituted by the historical conditions of secular modernity where what is meaningful or worthwhile may not require vertical conceptions of transcendence, even while it affirms the possibility of the meaningful transformation of and in an immanent frame. This meaningful

transformation of immanence both affirms immanence and can be expressed through the participation of human beings in a source of meaning that they embody through their human agency for the flourishing of this world.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter analyzed another side of the second research question. In the development of a postsecular incarnational theology of presence, Charles Taylor's modern anthropology looms large. Taylor's modern anthropology and the tensions between the question of meaning and believing and being human hold in tension the cross-pressures of transcendence and immanence. It does so by problematizing how transcendence can be meaningfully experienced in an immanent frame. Furthermore, the anthropological contributions of Taylor show how the question of meaning reveals an important dimension to how meaning shapes the possibilities of believing and being human. It shows how Taylor's religious theist concretizes a theological way of understanding fullness, flourishing, and the middle condition.

This reflects both the postsecular concern for openness to transcendence in the immanent frame and problematizes how both secular and religious ways of imagining believing and being human may be meaningful. Furthermore, it points to how we may imagine transformative ways of what it means to believe and be human—and how they may affirm human flourishing through a postsecular incarnational theology of presence. A postsecular incarnational theology of presence holds open the space for both modern conceptions of being human as well as religious conceptions of being human. Both are meaningful, if in different ways and must be taken into account if we are to analyze the horizons of a postsecular incarnational theology of presence. This is because these conceptions and ways of being human may constitute and shape Christian concerns for the flourishing of this world through how they address the spatial and temporal horizons of what it means to believe in late modernity.

CHAPTER SEVEN: POSTSECULAR HORIZONS: TIME, SPACE, AND REALIZED FLOURISHING

The previous two chapters offer substantial contributions to the idea of a postsecular incarnational theology of presence. Chapter five addressed the problematic dualism between transcendence and immanence and offered analyses of how an incarnational logic mediates them—as well as how a theology of presence is situated between this-worldly flourishing and other-worldly promises. Chapter six addressed how the question of meaning is cross-pressured between modern ways of imagining believing and being human with attention to Taylor’s categories of modern anthropology. In doing so it problematized how we experience the cross-pressures of meaning, believing, and being human in an immanent frame that contests the possible meaningfulness of transcendence. Both of the previous chapters have constructed several elements of a postsecular incarnational theology of presence necessary to understand this chapter’s focus on postsecular horizons in which we can understand how to affirm the transformation and flourishing of this world.

This chapter analyzes how the postsecular horizons of time, space, and realized flourishing bring together the threads of a postsecular incarnation theology of presence. Section 7.1 analyzes the philosophical concept of a horizon and links it to the necessary theological ways of thinking found throughout this chapter. It utilizes discourses in biblical theology, eschatology, and two conceptual contributions of Martin Heidegger and Paul Fiddes to differentiate between the horizons of time and space as well as between utopia and eschatology. Section 7.2 addresses the theological notions of realized eschatology, participatory ontologies, and human flourishing with attention to leading or landmark theological voices for each in George Eldon Ladd, the Radical Orthodoxy Movement and Martin De Nys’ resourcement of Aquinas, and the significant contributions of David H. Kelsey.

Then section 7.3 analyzes the horizons of time, space, and human flourishing and transitions the chapter into section 7.4 which analyzes the cross-pressures between temporal/horizontal horizons of utopia and the spatial/vertical horizons of presence insofar as they are aimed at the flourishing of this world. Section 7.5 argues that the center of these cross-pressures is the idea of realized flourishing. This chapter argues that the idea of realized flourishing is a way of situating a postsecular incarnational theology of presence between the cross-pressures of the utopian promises of temporal realization and the spatial promises of meaning found between transcendence and immanence.

7.1 Defining Horizon and Theological Presuppositions

This section develops several spheres of background information necessary for this chapter. First, it analyzes the concept of “horizon” in Taylor. Second, it articulates the influence of Martin Heidegger’s notion of enpresenting. Third, it articulates Paul Fiddes’ nuance between utopia and eschatology. Fourth, it analyzes the theological presuppositions of Kingdom of God theology and its nuanced differentiation between a realized and actualized eschatology. Each of these will be necessary background information to understand the analyses below in its emphasis on a realized flourishing as well as the horizons of time, space, utopia, and presence.

First, the concept of a “horizon” has origins in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger, which are then taken up throughout twentieth-century philosophy and in the work of Charles Taylor. With Nietzsche’s comment of the “thin band on the horizon” as a metaphor for the ends of modernity, twentieth-century philosophy meditates upon the notion of a horizon as ushering in a transition in how we imagine what it means to be human and our world. In particular, Taylor’s understanding of a horizon is linked to the question of meaning as a central concern to what it means to believe and be human.

In Taylor's work, the horizon of meaning is constituted by what he calls strong and weak evaluation. Weak evaluation is where our actions and choices are not consciously informed by the evaluation and motivations of moral sources that inform our actions and human agency with meaning. By contrast, strong evaluation implies the conscious discernment of what moral sources are meaningful and worthwhile to human persons, insofar as they motivate human action and agency. Taylor argues that to be a human agent is to be a responsible personal agent who evaluates the worthwhileness of their desires, commitments, and actions insofar as they are geared towards virtue or a higher good.⁵⁰⁸ These moral sources are used to evaluate what is meaningful or worthwhile to the person insofar as they help the human agent determine what course of action they ought to pursue. Strong evaluation helps the human agent choose what ethical actions to pursue because the human person has determined which moral sources motivate him or her to pursue what they deem as good and worthwhile.⁵⁰⁹

Second, Heidegger's notion of enpresenting is a concept touched on several times already throughout this thesis. Heidegger uses enpresenting to refer to how Dasein experiences time. For Heidegger, Dasein experiences temporality as a duration of the present (nowness) where the past informs the present and how the future is anticipated in the present.⁵¹⁰ Heidegger argues that it is in Dasein's experience of time and temporality that s/he is bound to finitude. As such, the temporal finitude of Dasein shapes what is meaningful for Dasein insofar as our death is always anticipated in ways that authenticate the meaningfulness of Dasein's

⁵⁰⁸ Charles Taylor, "Introduction," in *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 1–12; Charles Taylor, "What is Human Agency?" in *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 15–44; Charles Taylor, "The Concept of a Person," in *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 97–114.

⁵⁰⁹ C.f. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 1–104.

⁵¹⁰ C.f. Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, Revised edition (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982), 168, 228, 261, 263–268; Robert J. Dostal, "Time and Phenomenology in Husserl and Heidegger," in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles Guignon, Second Edition (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 120–48, 135.

existence.⁵¹¹ However, while Heidegger fleshes out the centrality of Dasein's temporality through his concept of enpresenting, I also extend Heidegger's enpresenting to include a spatial horizon when I use the term *enpresencing*. This spatial dimension to being human (or Dasein) implies the location not just in time, but also in space as constitutive of what is meaningful. Indeed, this chapter argues that in the recovery of transcendence, the central point is to recover a sense of participating in God and eternity as a lived experience that is meaningful even as it is cross-pressured by time and space.

Third, this relationship between time and space can also be connected to several important points Paul Fiddes makes between the relationship between utopia and apocalypse and the temporality orientations of the present and the spatial orientations of presence.⁵¹² Fiddes argues that the apocalyptic promises of Biblical literature offer frameworks by which we can nuance the notion of utopia. Eschatologically speaking, full presence implies an *actualized* eschatology wherein God has fully transformed and fulfilled the promise of salvation at the end of history. Furthermore, Fiddes makes a distinction between eschatology and utopia. According to Fiddes, utopia implies the fallenness of human institutions and systems of power, while eschatology refers to how the fulfillment of God's presence to creation at the end of history implies the redemption of human institutions where there is no more sin or suffering. This is an instance of an actualized eschatology in which human institutions are transformed by the power and presence of God. By contrast, Fiddes points out how utopia in twentieth-century literature reflects a certain fallenness insofar as human experience is still marked by a desire to dominate or the numbness and decay of a "perfect" society that appeals to a harmony that silences, rejects, and punishes the dissent from the ideal society.

⁵¹¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2008), 283-284.

⁵¹² The following two paragraphs are based on: Paul S. Fiddes, "Millennium and Utopia: Images of a Fuller Presence," in *Apocalyptic in History and Tradition*, eds. Christopher Rowland and John Barton (London and New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 7-25.

Fourth, the theological concept of the Kingdom of God is a central theological contribution of Jesus as found particularly among the synoptic gospels, and is rescripted in Johannine literature as eternal life and in Pauline literature around the themes of the righteousness of God, being/participating in Christ, and the ethical outworking of these theological tropes.⁵¹³ A certain theological theme uncovered in twentieth-century biblical scholarship is the differentiation between “realized” and “actualized” eschatology and its connection at the crossroads of philosophy and theology in European scholarship around utopia.⁵¹⁴ While realized eschatology refers to the already/not yet dimension of the presence of the Kingdom of God, actualized eschatology is understood as the fully present and historically fulfilled Kingdom of God on earth.

An *actualized* eschatology refers to the historical and theological fulfillment of eschatological promises in the restoration, transformation, redemption, and transfiguration of the new heavens, new earth, and new Jerusalem after Satan is defeated. The millennial debates between premillennialism, post-millennialism, and amillennialism around when the “day of the Lord” is at hand, when the events of Revelation happen/happened (i.e., when Satan reigns, is defeated, and when the rapture and millennial reign of Christi happens, etc.) are central discourses that reflect on the apocalyptic promises of Jesus, Paul, and John throughout the New Testament.⁵¹⁵

However, a *realized* eschatology refers to the presence of the Kingdom of God and the Holy Spirit to the church and creation between the first and second advents of Christ. Jürgen Moltmann argues that between these two advents, the Parousia refers to the *presence* of God

⁵¹³ C.f. Thomas Schreiner, *The King in his Beauty* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 433-582.

⁵¹⁴ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (London: Routledge, 1960; George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism*, Revised Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1974).

⁵¹⁵ C.f. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., Sam Hamstra, Jr., Robert L. Thomas, and C. Marvin Pate, *Four Views on the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998); Craig A. Blaising, Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., and Robert B. Strimple, *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999).

in history, the church, and creation.⁵¹⁶ New Testament theology demonstrates the tension between the already and not yet dimensions of the Kingdom of God in how Christians continue to experience the reality of God's presence in both salvation and sin. To live between the first and second coming of Christ is to live between the tension between both a salvation already received yet not fully here and the reality that Satan and sin have already been conquered while they are still present and active in the world we continue to experience. In a realized eschatology, a Christian lives between the tension between the already and not yet of the kingdom of God that was inaugurated with the first coming of Christ and will be consummated with this second coming.⁵¹⁷

Furthermore, in a realized eschatology in the Kingdom of God, Christians have a responsibility to be agents for flourishing, justice, and reconciliation in ways that wrestle with the reality of sin and evil while being empowered as human agents by the Holy Spirit to realize the purposes of God here and now. As Steven Felix-Jager and Yoon Shin argue, “The kingdom of God is presently transforming the world, so while things may seem grim and without hope, we are to be ready and to be actively doing good as ambassadors of God's kingdom message and reign.”⁵¹⁸ Felix-Jager and Shin’s “renewal” understanding of the Kingdom of God invokes the reality that Christians live between two worlds—the Kingdom of the world and the Kingdom of God—in the here and now where the reality of fallenness, evil, and suffering is still present alongside salvation and healing through faith in Christ and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.⁵¹⁹ Furthermore, they argue that “the kingdom of God gives us a vision of a world governed by peace and goodwill for all humans—a world of equity and justice for all

⁵¹⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1967).

⁵¹⁷ C.f. Patrick Schreiner, *The Kingdom of God and the Glory of the Cross* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018).

⁵¹⁸ Steven Félix-Jäger and Yoon Shin, *Renewing Christian Worldview: A Holistic Approach for Spirit-Filled Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2023), 81.

⁵¹⁹ Félix-Jäger and Shin, *Renewing Christian Worldview*, 80-81.

humans, especially for the poor, marginalized, and dispossessed.”⁵²⁰ This highlights the reality of the tension between both justice and suffering as well as between the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of God in ways that cross-pressures us to wrestle with the reality that Christians are called to be agents of flourishing in this world in the face of suffering and injustice.

For this chapter and the development of a postsecular incarnational theology of presence, it is important to note that Taylor's understanding of the horizon of meaning, the New Testament teachings of the Kingdom of God, and of a *realized*, not actualized, eschatology are central to my arguments below. Furthermore, Heidegger's notion of enpresenting/enpresencing and Fiddes' nuance between eschatology and utopia are central points that shape the arguments below.

7.2 Theological Proposals for Time, Space, and Flourishing

The theological ideas of human flourishing, participatory ontology, and realized eschatology each present essential components that constitute a theological orientation to postsecular horizons. To examine these themes, this section argues that a biblical account of realized eschatology provides the temporal framework through the work of George Eldon Ladd, while a participatory ontology provides the spatial framework through the retrieval of medieval scholasticism and a Protestant sacramental ontology. Finally, it argues that David H. Kelsey offers a robust theological framework for understanding human flourishing that will shape the possibilities of a realized flourishing. Each of these will constructively propose three theological components of a postsecular horizon: time, space, and flourishing.

⁵²⁰ Félix-Jäger and Shin, *Renewing Christian Worldview*, 81.

7.2.1 Temporality and Christian Visions of a Realized Eschatology

After surveying twentieth-century literature on Biblical eschatology, George Eldon Ladd argues that a realized eschatology lies within several tensions: between the present and future; between an immanent presence and the power of God; between apocalyptic and prophetic characteristics of Jesus' teachings; and that the reign and realm of God resolves the tension between the spirituality of the human heart and the eschatological realities of a consummated history when God acts to actualize his Kingdom.⁵²¹ Furthermore, a central tension for a realized eschatology is between history and eschatology, alongside the present Kingdom of God and its not yet consummation at the end of history. A realized eschatology demonstrates the biblical tension between an already present and inaugurated Kingdom of God through the first coming of Jesus with a not yet fully present consummated Kingdom of God that is to come with the second coming of Jesus in the Parousia. This section develops a temporal framework of realized flourishing by analyzing biblical-theological perspectives of realized eschatology.

George Eldon Ladd summarizes the typical view of biblical eschatology as the belief in the Kingdom of God as an eschatological act of God's sovereignty over history and the universe.⁵²² He argues that "Jesus taught that this divine act was about to occur; in fact, it was already in process. The tension between the future and the present is the tension between the Kingdom in complete fulfillment and the Kingdom in the process of breaking in upon the present order. Thus, the signs of the Kingdom are present, though not the Kingdom itself."⁵²³ Ladd makes a contrast where "the consummation of the Kingdom remains future and eschatological; but the Kingdom of God is itself present in the time of messianic fulfillment in Christ."⁵²⁴ Ladd states, "One might say that the historical is realized eschatology, and the

⁵²¹ George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism*, Revised Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), 39-42.

⁵²² Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 7.

⁵²³ Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 7.

⁵²⁴ Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 34.

eschatological is consummated history.”⁵²⁵ He also states that “the presence of the Kingdom of God was seen as God’s dynamic reign invading the present age without transforming it into the age to come.”⁵²⁶ These eschatological and historical tensions play out in the presence of God’s Kingdom demonstrated through the possibility of perfection and righteousness. Ladd argues by analogy that the Kingdom entering history, without fully transforming it, implies the possibility of experiencing its perfection, while still awaiting that perfection in the present.⁵²⁷

Grounding his analysis of Biblical visions of realized eschatology, Ladd focuses on the tensions within Jewish views of a realized eschatology. He argues that the Hebrew account of God sees him as actively revealing himself in history.⁵²⁸ However, Ladd also points out that in Hebrew prophetic and apocalyptic literature, there is a tension between seeing God as acting within history and beyond history respectively.⁵²⁹ His analyses of Hebrew eschatology indicate “that the hope of a kingdom which would issue in a renewal of the world and which could be introduced only by supra-historical forces, i.e., by the direct act of God, is firmly rooted in the pre-exilic prophets. This may be called a truly eschatological hope, for it will mean the *Eschaton*—the age of the consummation of God’s redemptive purpose.”⁵³⁰

The Old Testament prophetic eschatological views were characterized by the hope of God acting in the immediate future because they point to the concern for “God’s will for his people in the present” where the eschatological hope was always in the background.⁵³¹ Ladd states that “another way of expressing this perspective is to say that the future stands in tension with the present. Eschatology is not an end in itself, standing in detachment upon the horizons of time. Eschatology finds its significance primarily in its relationship to history, for both are

⁵²⁵ Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 146.

⁵²⁶ Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 149.

⁵²⁷ Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 292.

⁵²⁸ Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 52.

⁵²⁹ Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 55, 80, 84.

⁵³⁰ Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 56-57.

⁵³¹ Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 64-65.

concerned chiefly with the will of God for his people.”⁵³² In the tension between history and eschatology, Ladd emphasizes that “the Kingdom of God is primarily the sovereignty of God; but this sovereign rule of God will be eschatologically manifested, bringing this age to its end and inaugurating the age to come into which God’s people will enter.”⁵³³

The sovereignty of God holds in tension with human agency the possibility to bring, participate, and dwell within the Kingdom of God with the historical anticipation of eschatological promises wrapped up in the second coming of Christ—with the effects and empowerment of human agents by the Spirit of God of the realization of the Kingdom of God in the here and now. Biblical eschatology points to a tension between history and eschatology where there is a development of a dualistic structure in intertestamental and apocalyptic Jewish literature, which the New Testament imitates through the authority and person of Jesus. Ladd argues that the New Testament intimates the idea that the Kingdom of God is fulfilled by the event of God coming in the flesh in the person of Jesus. That said, there is a tension within New Testament literature that alludes to the intertestamental period’s eschatological dualism between this age and the age to come. Jews were looking “for a new order to be brought about by a redemptive inbreaking of God” in nature and history.⁵³⁴ But Ladd argues that Jewish ideas of the Kingdom of God and its tension between history and eschatology are reinterpreted by Jesus’ views of the present and future. Ladd states that in the teachings of Jesus, “the age of fulfillment is not only near; it is actually present. Nevertheless, the time of apocalyptic consummation remains in the future.”⁵³⁵ Ladd states that “the Kingdom of God means that God is King and acts in history to bring history to a divinely directed goal.”⁵³⁶

⁵³² Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 65.

⁵³³ Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 117.

⁵³⁴ Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 114-115.

⁵³⁵ Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 120.

⁵³⁶ Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 331.

The inauguration of the Kingdom of God in the coming of Christ can be seen as God acting in history but cannot be confused with the consummation of the Kingdom, which, though it inbreaks into history, is itself,

beyond history, for it will introduce a redeemed order whose actual character transcends both historical experience and realistic imagination. However, its coming is inseparable from what God has already done in history. Therefore, even though the goal of history is beyond history, it nevertheless means the redemption of history, when history is transformed into a new and glorious mode of existence.⁵³⁷

These reflections of a biblical eschatology hold in tension the sovereignty of God over history alongside God's presence in history in ways that not only allow both the already present Kingdom in history but also its not yet consummated eschatological realities that transform history beyond history. In what we will see below, a postsecular horizon also works with this already and not yet tension, though without saying that the Kingdom of God can already be fully actualized through human action while also holding onto the promises of God to actualize the consummate Kingdom of God in the transformation of this world at the end of time as the eschatological act of the sovereignty of God over history. And yet, while a postsecular horizon participates in the historical presence of God through human agency as enacting the Kingdom of God as already here and inaugurated through the Spirit of God in the presence of Christ, it also shifts the focus from *actualizing* the eschatological realities of the Kingdom of God to the *realization* of the Kingdom of God through the affirmation of human flourishing as a way to transform this world.

7.2.2 Spatiality and Christian Visions of a Participatory Ontology

Within the plethora of literature surrounding the Radical Orthodoxy Movement, a central contribution of their postmodern philosophical theology has been the emphasis on *mathesis*, or participation. The participatory ontological vision of the Radical Orthodoxy Movement offers

⁵³⁷ Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 337.

helpful frameworks by which to understand what it means to spatially participate in the purposes of God. While John Milbank's understanding of both Neo-Platonism and Aquinas has been questioned by critical scholarship,⁵³⁸ his vision of *mathexis* still plays an important role by which we can construct a vision of postsecular flourishing, especially if we turn to the contributions of the philosophical theologian Martin J. De Nys and Laura Smit's Reformed spin on Milbank's vision of *mathexis*.

Milbank and the Radical Orthodoxy Movement's pre-modern resourcement of Neo-Platonism and Aquinas serve as the traditional bulwark for their vision to theologically out-narrate secular modernity. The Neo-Platonic appropriations by the Cappadocian Fathers of the telos of human existence as *theosis* and by Saint Augustine's notion of the created order as patterned after and participating in an eternal saeculum through his developments of the City of God both illustrate how creation participates in God along temporal and spatial dimensions.⁵³⁹ But it is with the contributions of Thomas Aquinas that we find the articulations of the asymmetrical relationship between God and creation. Amene Mir's account of Milbank's panentheistic reading of Thomas Aquinas is a case in point that articulates this asymmetrical relation between God and creation.⁵⁴⁰

But we also find the notion of a participatory ontology in Martin J. De Nys' reading of Aquinas' on God as Creator. Furthermore, De Nys reads creation as contingent upon the creator through Aquinas' understanding of the essence of God as existence in itself.⁵⁴¹ De Nys draws

⁵³⁸ C.f. Paul J. DeHart, *Aquinas and Radical Orthodoxy: A Critical Inquiry* (London and New York: Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group, 2012); Wayne J. Hankey, "Philosophical Religion and the Neo-Platonic Turn to the Subject," in *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy: Postmodern Theology, Rhetoric, and Truth*, ed. Wayne J. Hankey and Douglas Hedley (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 32-47; John Marenbon, "Aquinas, Radical Orthodoxy, and the Importance of Truth," in *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy: Postmodern Theology, Rhetoric, and Truth*, ed. Wayne J. Hankey and Douglas Hedley (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 67-84.

⁵³⁹ C.f. Joseph Clair, "The Concept of the Secular in Augustine's *the City of God*," in *Rethinking Secularization: Philosophy and the Prophecy of a Secular Age*, ed. Herbert De Vriese and Gary Gabor (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 27-56.

⁵⁴⁰ C.f. Amene Mir, "A Panentheist Reading of John Milbank," *Modern Theology* 28, no. 3 (2012): 526-60.

⁵⁴¹ C.f. Thomas Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, trans. Armand Maurer, Second Revised Edition (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1968).

out not merely the existence of God as necessarily free, but also the participatory link of creation as dependent and contingent upon the creator precisely because all “being” is suspended or manifested in its dependence upon Being itself. Where De Nys understands the creator as “Being itself” it implies not merely the essence of all existence, but that its existence is its essence and that all of creaturely existence is dependent upon this essence.⁵⁴² In De Nys’ analysis, creaturely existence is understood in its contingent relationship with the essential existence of God through its participation in this God as the ultimate principle of Being. In this finite-infinite relationship, creatures are not merely found in their difference from the creator based on their finitude, but rather their finitude is completed in their dependency and willing response to participate in the infinite creator as the principle of their existence. The difference between the essence of the creator and the essence of the creature is articulated by De Nys in terms of analogy and participation of creatures in their creator.⁵⁴³ He states that divine transcendence and the immanence of creation are reconciled in this participation wherein:

The very substance of the Godhead is most intimately present in creatures inasmuch as God is the first principle and cause of their very being. At the same time, it cannot be the case that God requires any connection with creatures in order to be or to be understood. Both of these propositions follow from the assertion that divine existence exhausts and exercises the whole power of being and is identical with the very nature of God. Because God exists in a way that exercises and exhausts the whole power of being, divine existence and perfection are necessarily intelligible with reference to Godself alone. God exists and is all that God is on account of Godself alone, and thus not in a way that requires a connection to anything else. God may be said to be once again, wholly self-determining with reference to divine existence and excellence. At the same time, since it is God’s very nature to be, God has the being of creatures as God’s most proper effect. This, in turn, accounts for the most intimate presence of God in and to creatures.⁵⁴⁴

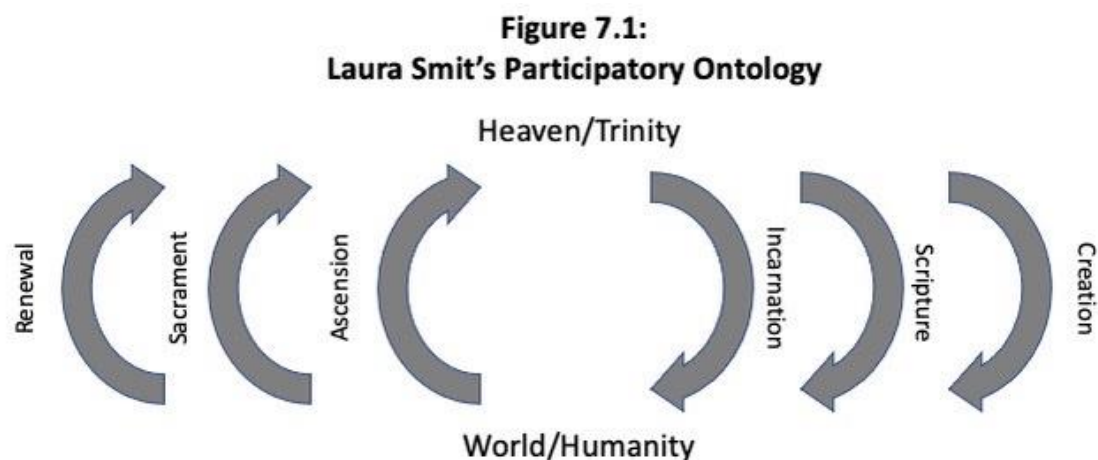
⁵⁴² Martin J. De Nys, *Considering Transcendence: Elements of a Philosophical Theology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 130, 132.

⁵⁴³ De Nys, *Considering Transcendence*, 132-133.

⁵⁴⁴ De Nys, *Considering Transcendence*, 133.

Here we see in De Nys' reading of Aquinas and medieval scholasticism the notion that creation participates in its dependency upon God as Creator for its Being. But we also see how the Being of God essentially enpresents itself to created beings without exhausting the infinitude of God. The relationship between finite creation to the infinite creator is marked by an asymmetrical relation of createdness' finite dependency upon the infinitude of God. With this analysis of medieval Christian visions of a participatory ontology in place, I want to also situate the Reformed participatory ontological vision of Laura Smit into my account to give a narrative-sacramental dimension to a participatory ontology.

Laura Smit offers an important analysis of what a participatory ontology would look like from the Reformed perspective. Smit articulates a participatory ontology through the lens of a narrative-sacramental theology of three condescensions and reconciliations.⁵⁴⁵ Through a series of incarnational movements from transcendence to immanence (condescension) and then from immanence to transcendence (reconciliation) Smit argues that for creation to participate in the redemptive purposes of God, it must be transformed through its incarnational reconciliation with—and sacramental participation in—the narrative of God's story of the redemption of this world. Working through correlative movements of condescension (incarnation, scripture, and creation) to movements of reconciliation (ascent, sacrament, and



⁵⁴⁵ C.f. Figure 7.1, adapted from Laura Smit's diagrams in: Laura Smit, "'The Depth Behind Things': Toward a Calvinist Sacramental Theology" in *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition*, ed., James K.A. Smith and James H. Olthuis (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 205-227, 213, 217, 225.

renewal), Smit argues that what it means to incarnationally participate in the purposes of God is to sacramentally redeem the incarnational embodiment of what it means to be human and created in light of God.

These condescensions and reconciliations are tied to the life of Jesus, the role of the church, and eschatological promises. The first category of condescension and reconciliation is Christological, wherein the incarnation of Jesus is the Christological condescension of the Son and the ascension in Jesus' return to heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father is the Christological reconciliation between God and the world/humanity. The second category of condescension and reconciliation is ecclesial. When it comes to the role of the church, Laura Smit argues that the movement of condescension is marked by the formation and gift of scripture while the movement of reconciliation is mediated through the human participation in the sacramental practice of the church. Finally, the eschatological promises mark the third movement of condescension and reconciliation with the creation of the world and, what I would posit as an umbrella term, "renewal," to refer to the judgment, restoration, and spiritual glorification of all creation in a New Heavens and New Earth.

Central to each of these participatory ontologies is the notion that creation participates in (the purposes of) God. Arguably, what participatory ontology offers is the notion that creation spatially and ontologically participates in the Being of God, but what a realized eschatology also offers is the temporal participation of creation in the purposes of God. While the notion of the flourishing of creation remains implicit within these accounts, the next section articulates the contributions of David H. Kelsey to a Christian theology of flourishing.

7.2.3 David H. Kelsey and Human Flourishing

David H. Kelsey offers a theological account of human flourishing as a *response to God* in contrast to the modern tradition that rejects God as counter-intuitive to human flourishing.

Kelsey does this by examining *what* it means to be human, *who* we are as humans, and *how* we are to live as humans in relation to God and what is not God. Kelsey offers a trinitarian theological anthropology that seeks to address what, who, and how to be human via a trinitarian theology of humanity and quotidian life that respects the integrity of created existence and allows the flourishing of humans and humans in relation to creation as the intention of a Triune God. By doing so, Kelsey offers a Christian account of personhood, the quotidian, the human problem, and a trinitarian grammar for its redemption that is grounded in the idea that God intends the flourishing of what is not God.

From a relational conception of human personal identity marked by a Christian trinitarian theological anthropology, Kelsey surveys modern accounts of individualism (political, economic, epistemological, religious, and ethical)⁵⁴⁶ to show their inadequacy in describing a Christian, trinitarian theological anthropology.⁵⁴⁷ If modern individualism is marked by a methodological individualism geared by the principles of human dignity, autonomy, privacy, self-development, and abstract individuals,⁵⁴⁸ then Christian theological anthropology contrasts with it as marked by relationality (social, personal, natural, and cultural) and its theological orientation of response to God for the moral responsibility to care for and respect the integrity of the quotidian's flourishing.

In Kelsey's examination of personal identities, he makes a distinction between basic personal identity—the position that we are created by God, which implies a basic orientation of our personal identities as before or seen by God—and quotidian personal identities—the contingent conditions of everyday life that constitute our identities, such as race, environment, gender, socio-politico-cultural contexts, and the historical conditions of everyday life. Kelsey states that,

⁵⁴⁶ David H. Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 392-395.

⁵⁴⁷ Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, 395.

⁵⁴⁸ Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, 396-398.

Through a prolonged maturation process, human creatures are profoundly formed by the quotidian proximate contexts into which they are born and in which they live. The social and cultural aspects of those quotidian worlds hand on already formed—traditional—ways of acting and interacting with other human creatures in community, the humanly constructed cultural and social dimensions of their proximate contexts, as well as with the non-human dimensions of their proximate contexts, and also traditional ways of interpreting and relating to everything that happens to them. This includes ways of appropriating racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual differences... A human being's quotidian identity is always a negotiated combination of a social construct or constructs provided by the quotidian proximate context and an original self-construct by the human being.... Moreover, the self-construct aspect of quotidian identities involves some degree of originality, however, slight or subtle, in the peculiar ways in which a given human being concretely enacts the expectations its proximate contexts lay on it, the concrete ways it goes about playing the roles assigned to it, and the concrete ways it occupies the status to which is it assigned.⁵⁴⁹

Stephen Milford argues that for Kelsey, “the quotidian is formative for the human being and decisively shapes human creature’s identity. God relates to the human being creatively by forming them as part of, and setting them in, this quotidian context.”⁵⁵⁰ Moreover, quotidian identity is marked according to Milford by four peculiarities: that we are open and unfinished, differentiated, reflective, and individuated.⁵⁵¹ Quotidian personal identity for Kelsey thus is marked by contingency and the systemic structures found in everyday life.

However, while *quotidian* personal identity is formative for Kelsey’s theological anthropology, Kelsey’s *basic* personal identity *underlies* quotidian identity because it provides an orientation to an identity formed by God. It also provides an enduring coherence and wholeness of identity for Kelsey that is shaped by what it means to be a creature. Basic personal identity for Kelsey is one oriented by its ultimate context: God “relating to [human beings] as their creator.”⁵⁵² Milford states that “it is this context that ‘ultimately defines what and who we are and how we are to be.’ This broader context is defined by the triadic way God relates to all

⁵⁴⁹ Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, 382.

⁵⁵⁰ Stephen R. Milford, *Eccentricity in Anthropology: David H. Kelsey’s Anthropological Formula as a Way Out of the Substantive-Relational Imago Dei Debate*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series, 238 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019), 100. Henceforth as *Eccentricity in Anthropology*.

⁵⁵¹ Milford, *Eccentricity in Anthropology*, 100-101.

⁵⁵² Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, 160.

that is not God in creative blessing, eschatological consummation, and reconciliation.”⁵⁵³ Shannon Craigo-Snell argues that for Kelsey, quotidian identities are included in the larger contexts of humanity’s basic identities as creatures. She states that “this basic identity is that of being created, consummated, and redeemed by God... This basic identity is not something we work at, strive for, create, construct, actualize, realize, or develop... It is just who we are” as created beings.⁵⁵⁴

For Kelsey, creation and humanity have integrity because they are created. Kelsey argues that the basic identity of human persons is the very fact that they are created. And yet, each human person remains fallen in systemic and personal ways. Kelsey defines sin as the distortion of human relatedness to God. Joy Ann McDougall concisely describes Kelsey’s trinitarian grammar of sin as distortion in three senses—as misplaced trust in the quotidian, as eschatological hope gone awry, and as distorted love to God and love for neighbor.⁵⁵⁵ McDougall argues that Kelsey’s articulation of sin is not primarily concerned with categorizing actions or finding their roots in sin.⁵⁵⁶ Nor is Kelsey articulating sin as mere rebellion against God. Rather, Kelsey argues that sin is systemic and personal—it is a condition of bondage that governs all aspects of human life. And yet, McDougall argues that Kelsey integrates an important nuance between sin and moral evil through his trinitarian analyses.⁵⁵⁷ Kelsey argues how sin distorts the existential “how” of existence through an analysis of original sin, while

⁵⁵³ Milford, *Eccentricity in Anthropology*, 101; Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, 162.

⁵⁵⁴ Shannon Craigo-Snell, “From Narrative to Performance?,” in *The Theological Anthropology of David Kelsey: Responses to Eccentric Existence*, ed. Gene Outka (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2016), 147–71, 167, footnote 49; Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, 384: “Kelsey asserts human creature’s basic identity is, ‘who they are by virtue of God relating to them to create, draw to eschatological consummation, and to reconcile when they are estranged from God.’”

⁵⁵⁵ Joy Ann McDougall, “A Trinitarian Grammar of Sin,” in *The Theological Anthropology of David Kelsey: Responses to Eccentric Existence*, ed. Gene Outka (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2016), 107–26, 111–118.

⁵⁵⁶ McDougall, “A Trinitarian Grammar of Sin,” 112: “Kelsey does not pinpoint a fundamental root or motive for sin, but keeps his eyes trained on the array of distorted relations that display our warped loyalty to the triune God.”

⁵⁵⁷ McDougall, “A Trinitarian Grammar of Sin,” 119: “Sin is an inappropriate response to God’s creative, consummating, and reconciling agency toward us, while moral evils are violations of the other creature’s integrity that fail to support their well-being.”

then turning to examine how sin implies not just distortion but bondage.⁵⁵⁸ McDougall extrapolates on the existential “hows” to demonstrate the distinctive nature of sin in human life as the distortion of the delight, wonder, and perseverance with which God addresses creation.⁵⁵⁹

Kelsey articulates the distortion of sin in terms of being bound with a distorted identity in three senses. First, sin’s distortion is found when we find our meaning in our trust in the quotidian without reference to God as inherently meaningful. This implies a way of seeing quotidian creation (environment, culture, everyday life) as in bondage and as distorted when it has no reference to its creator and when we confuse God’s glory for creation’s glory. Second, sin’s distortion is to love God but not the quotidian. This is when God becomes a moral source but is distorted because the love of God has no practical reference in guiding human love in quotidian life. The third possibility of sin’s distortion is when the quotidian’s intended glory is bound to anthropocentric bondage to love of self where it distorts what it means to be a creature before God *in* the quotidian. This option might abuse creation and others in its overemphasis on loving oneself at the expense of loving God and neighbor—even when it affirms belief in God and God’s love for the human person. In this instance, the human person is blind to the reality that God’s love for them also requires a reciprocal concern for both the love of God and the love of the neighbor. Hence, the distortion of sin implies the distortion of what it means to be a creature in relation to God in quotidian life.⁵⁶⁰

Through analyses of sin as distortions of how we are to exist as faithful to God’s intent for the creation and humanity’s flourishing, how we are to exist hopeful in God’s eschatological

⁵⁵⁸ C.f. Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, 422-423.

⁵⁵⁹ McDougall, “A Trinitarian Grammar of Sin,” 112: “For example, sin takes the form of a distorted delight that falsely idealizes one’s fellow creatures and leads to a sentimental attitude toward them (Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, 413). Similarly, sin manifests itself in distorted wonder, when fellow creatures are no longer respected in their ‘concrete particularity,’ but become ‘instances of stereotypes,’ be they racist, classist, sexist, or otherwise (Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, 415). Finally, sin expresses itself in distorted perseverance, in which the quotidian is viewed in wholly negative terms as having no future. For some, this can lead to postures of resignation—for others to desperate measures of self-preservation; in either case the result is the same: one becomes ‘utterly indifferent to the well-being of the quotidian for its own sake.’” (Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, 417).

⁵⁶⁰ C.f. Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, 422-438.

consummation, and how we are to exist identifying as creatures loved and reconciled by God as His beloved, Kelsey offers an analysis of sin and moral evil as distortion of theological praxes of faith, hope, and love. McDougall states that,

Kelsey logically interweaves the realities of sin and moral evil in such a way that the ways we are called to respond to the triune God in faith, hope, and love include per definition ways of living in and responding to one's proximate context properly. So, for example, faith requires that we live in our proximate contexts trusting God as the ground of our being and value, and expressing loyalty to God's project with creation. While God may alone ground our identity, the very nature of God, a God who delights in the well-being and flourishing of all creatures, calls us to respond in wise practices for the well-being of the quotidian. To do otherwise is not only to violate the dignity of one's fellow creatures, but to distort one's faith in God.⁵⁶¹

Furthermore, Kelsey articulates the counterparts to sin as the flourishing and practicing of 1) doxological gratitude for God's faithfulness to our flourishing,⁵⁶² marked by faith and trust in God and caretaking of the created integrity of the quotidian as living on borrowed breath; 2) joyful hopefulness in our and creation's flourishing on borrowed time insofar as creation's finitude is perfected and anticipated to be perfected in the consummating work of the Father through the second coming of Christ and the renewal of creation via the Spirit;⁵⁶³ and 3) a passionate desire to love God (love to God) and love for neighbor through prayer and *agape* as modeled after the reconciliation between God and creation through Christ.⁵⁶⁴ These practices in turn orient one in faith, hope, and love for God, self, others, and creation away from distortions of creation and humanity's flourishing and our vision of God.

While humans remain distorted by sin, and thus seemingly autonomous, a trinitarian perspective articulates the intent to reconcile a fallen creation and the human responsibility to participate and act as agents of reconciliation within the trinitarian intent for the flourishing of humanity and creation. Humans are to flourish in relation to themselves, to one another, and in relation to creation in ways that reflect a trinitarian grammar and theocentric relationship to the

⁵⁶¹ McDougall, "A Trinitarian Grammar of Sin," 119-120.

⁵⁶² C.f. Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, 333ff.

⁵⁶³ C.f. Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, 478ff.

⁵⁶⁴ C.f. Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, 793ff.

flourishing of “what is not God.” By developing a trinitarian helix of God’s creative, consummative, and reconciling work towards what is not God, Kelsey offers a robust trinitarian theology of redemption oriented towards the *flourishing* of what is not God. James Buckley offers a synopsis of Kelsey’s trinitarian helixes, indicating their complex unity as “buoys” that demonstrate how the trinitarian God relates to humans in ways that imply that what it means to be human is to be an “image of the image of God”: humans are human precisely because their identity is derived from what God is and how He relates to what is not God.⁵⁶⁵

The trinitarian helix of God's creation, eschatological consummation, and reconciliation of humanity and creation imply not only God's intent for the flourishing of what is not God but also of the theocentric orientation of human response to God to *be* an agent of flourishing in the quotidian. The anthropological implications of the asymmetrical relations in, between, and among the triunity of God’s perichoresis in how God triunely creates, consummates, and reconciles creation to himself also offers a vision of what it means to be human as responsible agents of reconciliation and restoration. Kelsey argues that the theological framework of how each *hypostasis* creates, consummates, and reconciles creation via a generative and relationally substantial set of relations in the immanent trinity is economically oriented towards what *is not* God for *its* salvation.⁵⁶⁶ The theological foundation of the trinity for Kelsey serves as the model by which humans are also to act towards the flourishing of our world. This means that rooted in the nature of the triune God is a model for how humans are to act towards the flourishing of our world. Humans then, work towards human flourishing not only in light of God’s desires for the flourishing of what is not God but also because they bear the imprint of God’s nature as an image of the image of God.

⁵⁶⁵ James J. Buckley, “Buoys for Eccentric Existence,” *Modern Theology* 27, no. 1 (2011): 14-25.

⁵⁶⁶ C.f. Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, 120-131.

Kelsey's account of a trinitarian theological anthropology reorients humans as creatures in quotidian life before God and does so in ways that display a theological definition of what it means to be human as a person in relation to a triune God. Kelsey offers an assist to how a religious theist may perceive their existence in relation to God in the quotidian and does so by offering a theological anthropology marked by belief in a triune God and oriented towards human flourishing in quotidian life. Indeed, if an option of openness to transcendence entails the possibility of belief in God within an immanent frame that allows the complex space of relations of dependence, trust, and faith in God, then Kelsey offers a robust theological anthropology that grounds what, who, and how it means to be human within quotidian life in relation to God in ways that allow the freedom of human beings to participate in God's intent for the flourishing of what is not God. In Kelsey's account, for humans to act in ways that lead to flourishing articulates that belief in God is not a detriment to human flourishing, *but rather as essential to it*.

7.3 Transitions and Analysis

So, what do Christian visions of realized eschatology, participatory ontology, and human flourishing have to do with a realized flourishing of a postsecular horizon? While these may be three different theological frameworks, a postsecular horizon plays with and rescripts key elements of each. While a biblical eschatology will posit the centrality of God's sovereignty over history, a postsecular horizon will emphasize the human participation in—and realization of—the already present dimensions of the Kingdom of God. Stemming from the secularized visions of progress and liberation, sovereignty is determined not only by the promises of God but also by the human realization of the presence of God in this world as participating in the purpose of God towards the fullness and flourishing of human life.

A postsecular horizon holds open the possibility of God in shaping what it means to flourish as human beings in late modernity. It does so through the belief that humans participate in the purposes of God for the flourishing of this world. The role of a participatory ontology comes to the fore in its theological articulations of what it means for humans to be dependent upon God. If all that is created is dependent upon the Being of God, and that human agents are called to participate in the movements of condescension and reconciliation, then this implies that a postsecular horizon of fullness and flourishing implies the co-constitutive role and co-participation of both human and divine agency to realize the flourishing of this world. And yet a difference between a Christian participatory ontology and a postsecular participatory ontology is that while the former *necessarily* presupposes that creatures essentially exist through their participation in God, the latter does not *necessarily* hold this theological presupposition—while also advocating for the participation of human agents in the purposes of God for the flourishing of this world—because one does not necessarily have to *believe* in God to participate in the purposes of God for the flourishing of this world.

A key element of a postsecular horizon is living in an immanent frame with an open tension to the possibility of transcendence. This openness to transcendence in an immanent frame implies a level of *ambiguity* in how we imagine the time and space for God in this world. But it also holds open the *possibility* for God to act in the time and space of this world, and especially for God to act in this world *through* human agency. This holding open to the possibility of God implies an eschatological hope that affirms and transforms immanence with the possibility of the flourishing of this world through the retrieval of and participation in transcendence. So, what does this look like? When we hold open to the possibility of God, we are holding open the possibility for a realized flourishing that gives theological and religious meaning through human participation in the presence of God to the cross-pressures of the middle condition of an immanent frame. The middle condition is cross-pressured between both

horizontal and vertical horizons of meaning in time and space that can lead to the experience of flourishing in an immanent frame open to transcendence. The next section offers these constructive possibilities through an analysis of the concept of realized flourishing.

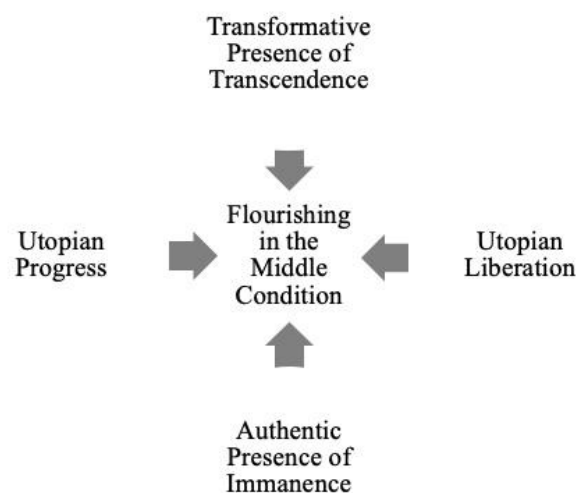
7.4 Constructive Possibilities of Realized Flourishing

While the debate in the previous chapter revealed the tensions between fullness and flourishing as lying between whether ordinary flourishing and fullness are meaningful in an immanent frame, this section argues that there are implicit strategic and tactical concerns tied to the meaningfulness of believing and how the

cross-pressures between how we imagine being human shape the possibilities and cross-pressures of human flourishing in the middle condition. These concerns for flourishing are found in the middle condition and articulate the cross-pressures of realized flourishing—the tensions between presence and utopia along vertical/spatial and

horizontal/temporal axes.⁵⁶⁷ If the Romantic-expressivist and religious theist draw us into the spatialized horizon of presence characterized by depth and transformation, then the exclusive humanist and anti-humanist draw us into the temporal horizon of utopia characterized by progress and liberation. Underlying each of these concerns is a fundamental horizon that shapes the possibilities of human flourishing in the middle condition.

**Figure 7.2:
Cross-Pressures of
Realized Flourishing**



⁵⁶⁷ C.f. Figure 7.2.

Realized flourishing is marked by an idea of flourishing patterned after the Christian idea of a realized eschatology, in which the flourishing of this world is found in the tension with the world to come. But a realized flourishing rescripts this to articulate the tension between its vertical and horizontal horizons of presence and utopia. Realized flourishing is found between the cross-pressures of presence and utopia. At one end of the horizontal-temporal horizon, we find the orientations of progress and the progressive betterment of humanity and our world. At the other end of the horizontal-temporal horizon, we find the Marxist-liberation tendencies of utopia that invoke the overcoming of history, injustice, violence, and oppression. If the vertical-spatial horizon of presence invokes not only the presence of God in the human experience, it also entails the transformation of what it means to be human in its orientations towards fullness. On the opposite side of the vertical-spatial horizon of presence, the depth of human experience and life invokes an orientation of deep meaningfulness and authentic experience of what it means to flourish in the middle condition. The concept of realized flourishing points to the experience of meaning at the juncture of both the horizontal-temporal horizon between the possibilities of utopia in its progressive and liberating forms and the vertical-spatial horizon between a transformation of human nature by God and the immanent depth of human experience. It is to these two horizons, the horizontal-temporal horizon of utopia and the vertical-spatial horizon of presence, that we now turn to construct a postsecular horizon of realized flourishing.

7.4.1 The Temporalization of Utopia

Underlying the concerns of both the humanists and anti-humanists is the fundamental drive to utopia. Utopia is a (religious) phenomenon oriented towards the perfection of human life and society. While an in-depth discussion of utopia is beyond the contours of this thesis, it is worth noting that its Christian heritage influences even the modern movements toward utopia. The

realized eschatology of the New Testament—the tension of living between the inauguration and the consummation of the Kingdom between the first and second coming of Christ—displays an ethical command to actively live and act in hope for justice, perfection, and restoration in a broken world in the anticipation of the second coming of Christ as central dynamics of the Christian promise of utopia. As utopia developed in the Middle Ages with the beatific vision and the rational, teleological ordering of humanity and the cosmos towards its perfection and completion in God through Christ, the Protestant Reformation developed a progressive element embedded within the notion of utopia. The development of Protestant post-millennialism entailed that Christians have a responsibility to *realize* the work for the betterment of the world and towards its (and human) flourishing.⁵⁶⁸

The developments of modern utopia are shadowed by this religious latency and yet became disenchanted from it. But a modern utopia promises that it would be *actualized* by science, reason, industrialization, technology, and medicine. Or rather, human flourishing is oriented by the concern for the progressive betterment of what it means to be human through the *actualizing* tools of science, reason, medicine, and technology to create a better world. And yet the modern project of utopia is eclipsed by the very means it uses to actualize the utopia. Here the ends are eclipsed by the possibilities of its means—reason, science, and technology transcend their means when they produce the excesses of technical society.⁵⁶⁹ Arguably, because of the modern mechanistic view of the natural world, in the disenchantment of a theological telos towards which humans work or participate in, humans have lost any *theological* reason to live ethically in our *use* of reason, science, and technology. The secular humanist drive for the betterment of humanity has produced both the wonders of science, medicine, and human technology, but at the potential detriment of what it means to be human

⁵⁶⁸ José Casanova, “A Secular Age: Dawn or Twilight?”, in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, ed. Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 265–81, 267.

⁵⁶⁹ Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Vintage Books, 1964).

and what that means for human flourishing through the ennui left behind in how we ethically *use* reason, science, and technology.⁵⁷⁰

If the exclusive humanist holds to the progressive betterment of human life, then the anti-humanist points to the liberation of human life from violence, domination, and oppression. Between the humanist and anti-humanist lies the question of human nature. If human nature is deemed as inherently good by the exclusive humanist, the anti-humanist views humanity as oriented by power, domination, violence, and the desire for control. While the exclusive humanist remains blind to the negative, destructive capabilities of human reason in its appeal to the progressive betterment of human nature, the anti-humanist remains a cynic to the positive capabilities of human reason because of their attunement to the destructive, dominating, and oppressive tendencies of human nature. Underlying both the humanist and anti-humanist view of flourishing in quotidian life lies the tension between whether humans are good or evil and *whether we can transcend how we imagine what it means to be human*.

While the humanist argues that humanity may become progressively better via the use of instrumental reasoning, it also fails to acknowledge the negative dispositions of humanity. The anti-humanists argue that the negative dispositions of humanity are found in the will to dominate and any exclusive humanist who fails to address the problem of power fails to recognize the modern systemic structures of power and domination as inherent to humanistic progress. However, any anti-humanist who fails to recognize and appreciate the goodness of what the progressive power of reason offers—science, medicine, technology, etc.—fails to grasp the positive implications of how modern reason produces conditions for human flourishing. The progressive concern of the exclusive humanist opens us to the potential for the betterment of our world in ways that cannot be ignored.

⁵⁷⁰ C.f. Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2008), 307–42.

While the anti-humanist articulates the negative dispositions of humanity, it also addresses the systemic strategies of oppression and creates a vision for its liberation. The emphasis on the idea of liberation for the anti-humanist implies that there is a problem to be overcome. Systemic oppression produces not just inequality but the negation of freedom and flourishing. It also produces both the possibility of its overturning and the disillusionment with its possibility. An anti-humanist who remains hopeful for liberation must also in some sense be dissatisfied or disillusioned with not just the system but also the actualization of its redemption. Liberation for the anti-humanist remains an unrealistic, unactualizable, nihilistic hope for the progressive liberation of humanity from the strategic power dynamics of human dispositions.

And yet in the middle condition, this tension between the longing for justice found in both the humanist's vision of the progressive betterment of humanity and the anti-humanist's vision of liberation from humanity's tendency towards violence, power, and domination sheds light on the temporal hopes for utopia. While the humanists vie for human agency in bringing about a better world, the anti-humanist offers a tempered realism of this hope through their cries for justice and liberation. To dwell temporally in the utopian promises of a realized flourishing is to dwell between the active human agency for the betterment of this world and the reality of its deferment. But while this does mean that the utopian promises of modernity are not actualizable, this does not mean that we cannot be agents to *realize* the betterment of this world by working towards the utopian promise of liberation from injustice and oppression. To dwell in the middle condition between progress and liberation is to live in the tension between the problems and promises of modernity as active agents for its flourishing.

Hence the temporalization of human flourishing is oriented by the (im-)possibilities of the horizontal-temporal horizon. The tensions between the progressive betterment of humanity and its disillusionment imply the reality that human flourishing cannot merely be determined by what we envision of the possibilities of human progress. It requires not just temporalization

but also the spatialization of human flourishing. The temporal promises of utopia entail both the realized betterment *and* disillusionment of what it means to flourish as human beings. The temporal potential for utopia can never be actualized by a flattened conception of human possibilities. The temporal processes of utopia can never *actualize* human flourishing because it requires both depth and transformation that come from transcendence. And this comes through the spatialization of presence of what it means to exist as humans in the middle condition.

7.4.2 The Spatialization of Presence

If the humanist and anti-humanist address the hope and longing for a better world in human life, whether believed to be realizable or not, the vertical horizon of presence offers both the spatialized sense of depth, authenticity, and transformation of human beings in light of God. Human flourishing requires the spatialization of presence—something offered through the depth and meaning in/of immanence and through participation in transcendence. Along the vertical-spatial horizon, the Romantic-expressivist orients human flourishing to its expressions of authenticity and depth in human life through its emphasis on subjective experience. Human flourishing for the Romantic-expressivist posits the possibility of a transcendental depth within immanence in ways that counter the humanist rejection of transcendence and the anti-humanist's acknowledgment of both the loss of transcendence and its disillusionment with transcendence as a possible source of meaning. Authenticity allows the space for the immanent possibility of transcendence in ways that posit a quasi-religious basis for human flourishing within the immanent frame.

Subjective authenticity allows the spatial depth to be human in everyday life. It gives value to ordinary experience and everyday life in ways that speak meaning into it. Subjective authenticity opens humanity to the dynamism of life—an internal realization that life is worth

living. The Romantic-expressivist emphasis on subjective authenticity radically re-evaluates immanence, not in light of transcendence, but rather of immanence as something meaningful, worthwhile, and good. To dwell with one's family, or in a community with a pack of kids as adults decompress with one another and share life together, speaks of the meaningfulness of ordinary life and its weekly rhythms of being with and for others. Subjective experiences of doing life with others in the community offer a spatial depth to what it means to be human by living life together with those most intimate to us.

If the Romantic-expressivist captures the immanent experience of everyday life as one with depth and meaning, fullness captures the incarnate capacity of human experience to be transformed by transcendence. Fullness offers a theological account of making sense of meaning in the immanent frame in ways that capture the heights and depths of human experience. Its capture ranges from the heights of extraordinary religious experiences of God to the most ordinary sense of God's presence to us as we participate in worship and liturgy. Furthermore, it can also be captured in the sense of God's absence in seasons of silence and doubt. It also captures what it means to be human in the everyday dynamism of human relationships and the relational realities of hurt, brokenness, joy, and love. But underlying each of these, fullness offers an account of the redemption and transformation of human experience. It implies making sense of the mundanity of quotidian life in light of who God is.

With the Christian idea of God, fullness captures and redeems through its reconciliation and transformation of quotidian life in its participation in God. The heights of God must meet humans within the very lows of human experience. Fullness is deeply incarnational—it reaches into the depths of human experience and exposes us to the painful, but beautiful transformation of what it means to be human. It is where transcendence condescends to become with us, to experience what it means to be human, and offers the redemption of human life through its transformation into what it means to be human in light of, and conformity to, God's glory in

Christ. This is possible because God becomes human and experiences the heights and depths of human experience. Fullness entails the transformation of human life precisely through the meeting of transcendence within the immanent experience of human life through the sharing of life in Christ.

Thus, to dwell between the cross-pressures of presence is to dwell between the heights and depths of human experience within an immanent frame, where meaning is constituted through both the subjective experience of meaning found within the depths of human experience in nature and community, as well as the incarnational encounter with the presence of God through our human experiences of quotidian life. To dwell between immanence and transcendence is to dwell between the presence of God and the depths of our human experiences in the world. The spatialization of presence opens up an arena wherein we may experience meaning within the very contours of the concrete experiences of everyday life. In these experiences, the space between God and nature meets in the quotidian life of the human person. Hence the vertical horizon allows humans to realize flourishing through their participation in God insofar as God condescends to the depths of human experience as we exist in the cross-pressures of the middle condition.

This section has articulated definitions and articulations of horizontal-temporal and vertical-spatial horizons of the four corners that cross-pressure the possibilities of realized flourishing in the middle condition. In doing so, it has illustrated not only how a postsecular anthropology includes Taylor's typologies of modern anthropology, but also how a realized flourishing articulates their cross-pressures for the realization of meaning in the experience of the middle condition of the immanent frame. Furthermore, it also cross-pressures the experience of meaning in the incarnational affirmation and transformation of immanence through the participation of immanence in the presence of transcendence. To develop these

points further, the next section explicitly focuses on what those cross-pressures entail when it comes to realized flourishing.

7.5 Cross-Pressures of Realized Flourishing

Human flourishing along the cross-pressures of realized flourishing is oriented by both strategic and tactical dispositions and sensibilities through which we can make sense of what it means to be human and flourish within quotidian life. Underlying the possibilities of a postsecular horizon lies the tension between the spatialization and temporalization of the possibilities of human flourishing. Postsecular horizons dwell between the cross-pressures not only of believing but also of what it means to be human. It is in this space that we may realize the possibilities of human flourishing and believing. The openness to depth and transformation found with the spatialization of presence orients the temporal horizons towards human flourishing by opening the possibilities of believing to the realization of becoming human in the concrete experiences of everyday life.

If the strategic concerns for the horizon of utopia are the controlling and systematizing powers of progress and liberation, its tactical concerns are grounded in the manipulation of systems of power and domination in ways that produce the ideal of flourishing. This idea of flourishing promises the betterment of humanity through liberation from violence and oppression. The ideal of flourishing however, must find the balance of presence between the truths of both ends of the horizon of utopia: the promise of actualizing the strategic forces of liberation reverses the abuse and violence of the oppressor as the new oppressed, while the promise of actualizing the strategies of progress produces a blind naivety of human goodness that denies the reality of its violence, oppression, and abuse. The liberative view of utopia may be characterized by genocide and (the reversal of) oppression in the name of a greater good, often couched in the language of patriarchy, race, totalization, domination, etc. But the

progressive view of utopia also may be characterized by the blind advocacy for technology and science without awareness or attention paid to their dehumanizing effects.

Moreover, the strategic concerns of the horizon of presence by the religious theists are the eschatological transformations and judgment over creation by God, whereas its tactical concerns are that of realizing the kingdom of God through human participation in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, who draws creation to its eschatological completion in Christ as the glory of the Father. Furthermore, the strategic concerns of the horizon of presence by the Romantic-expressivists are the active articulations, practices, and cultivations towards a depth of subjective experience and authenticity in everyday life, of creating a life that leads to self-understanding, self-realization, and self-actualization, while its tactical practices are the ontic concerns of being present to and with others in nature in the immanent experience of mundane reality as a way to counter the overwhelming effects of modern technological experience.

But we also can run into a problem when we only have the strategic actualization of the vertical-spatial horizons of presence without the horizontal-temporal horizon of utopia. When the strategic concerns of the Romantic-expressivist fail to appreciate the horizontal-temporal horizon of utopia, they appeal to a superfluous quasi-spirituality that cannot affect the conditions for flourishing other than for the individual, and even that is debatable—it is an individual spiritual experience of who we are without concrete application to the world. This is when our expressions of who we are fail to effect any change in the world. When the strategic concerns of the religious theist fail to effectuate change for the flourishing and betterment of this world, whether, in their social relationships or the systemic transformations of society, culture, politics, etc., they have failed to concretize the presence of transcendence as a utopian promise for liberation and a better world. When strategic concerns of the religious theists are at play without concern for the horizontal horizon of utopia, then they seek to actualize the kingdom of God on earth, often without necessary concern for the transformation and

redemption of the systemic conditions of political, economic, social, individual, and cultural flourishing.

Vertical flourishing without horizontal flourishing is individualistic and ineffective in bringing about true flourishing in anything other than for oneself. Horizontal flourishing without vertical flourishing fails to appreciate the humanizing effects of transcendence and immanence found in their ability to transform the conditions of everyday life. What is lacking in the vertical-spatial horizon is the applicability of flourishing across the concrete situations and conditions of human life. What lacks in the horizontal-temporal horizon are the humanizing effects of flourishing in the experience of everyday life. The power of the vertical-spatial horizon of presence tempers the horizontal-temporal horizon with the reality that the lived and transformative experience of transcendence and the authentic depth of everyday life grounds the experience of the horizontal-temporal horizon in a realized flourishing.

There is an asymmetrical relation that characterizes the spatial and temporal horizons: the idea of presence without utopia is absent from the idea of utopia without presence. If utopia without presence can be characterized by naivety and the abuse of human life, then presence without utopia can be characterized by the absence of the situated structures and contingent conditions of human existence where the human agent acts towards the flourishing of this world. The possibility of participation, affirmation, and transformation of presence in this world is dependent upon the existence of the (utopian) structures that shape the conditions for the humanizing experience of presence in this world. The utopian structures of the world must necessarily exist for humans to experience presence.

While realized flourishing always remains unfinished, yet always realized as already and not yet, along the lines of temporality we can also posit the possibility of flourishing when we begin to integrate the spatialization of presence into our experience of everyday life. Whereas humans and God work towards flourishing at the meeting point between the

temporality and spatiality of everyday life in the middle condition, where we find the potential for flourishing in the already, the not-yet dimensions of temporalized flourishing are always deferred into the future and unto the possibilities of becoming what we are not yet. The already and not yet tensions of postsecular horizons allow not only the space for presence but in that presence the possibilities of depth and transformation. Furthermore, the already and not yet tensions of postsecular horizons also allow the temporal possibilities of realizing utopia—for the potential flourishing of human beings in quotidian life. But it is only where the spatialization of presence and the temporalization of utopia meet that we can adequately give an account of the possibilities of human flourishing in the middle condition of an immanent frame. Realized flourishing requires the realization in the present time and experience of the possibilities of depth and transformation to human life. Between the temporal and spatial cross-pressures of the middle condition lies the possibilities of a realized flourishing. It creates a space where humans may temporally and spatially flourish: it creates a tempered space where humans act towards flourishing in the here and now while expecting to become what we are not yet through the co-participation with God for justice and the realization of a better world found in the contours of everyday life.

The idea of realized flourishing can only be worked towards through the crossing of the temporal-horizontal horizon of utopia with the spatial-vertical horizon of presence. What religious fullness presents to the middle condition is the possibility of its realized (eschatological) transformation. What the depth of authenticity and experience presents to the middle condition is the presence and appreciation of a lived and meaningful everyday life. What the progress of utopia presents to the middle condition is the enacted realization of the good across human life. What the liberation of utopia presents to the middle condition is the realized (and promised) liberation from the bondage to the concrete conditions of sin, oppression, and violence.

At the crossing of the matrix, we find not only the realized flourishing that is not yet reality but the possibilities of its realization in the already here and now even while its actuality is deferred. While this schema presupposes an openness to a theistic orientation and transformation of human flourishing as necessary for a realized flourishing, this does not discount the possibilities of meaningful and worthwhile enactments of human flourishing in everyday life. Realized flourishing presupposes that presence and utopia encounter one another in the lived experiences of everyday life. Therefore, a postsecular horizon is oriented by the possibilities of meaningful existence found between the cross-pressures of spatialized presence (with connotations of depth and transformation) and temporalized utopia (with connotations of progress unto perfection and liberation from oppression) in the middle condition.

7.6 A Postsecular Horizon?

If a postsecular horizon entails the possibility of living out a realized flourishing where the horizons of presence and utopia meet in the middle condition, it also entails that fullness and flourishing in the middle condition are marked by a complex space where everyday belief is lived in tension with the reality of unbelief and non-belief. The middle condition of quotidian life demonstrates a complex space where flourishing can be found in the belief that lies in tension with unbelieving and non-believing. Realized flourishing may be constituted by various strategic or tactical concerns—whether they be progress, liberation, authenticity, or fullness. And yet, each draws us into the contested, complex space between the possibilities of believing where what it means to be human lies in the tension between immanence and the possibility for transcendence. The openness of faith to transcendence remains possible in the middle condition, but *how* it is imagined is contested, contingent, and complex.

This chapter has developed the idea of a postsecular horizon in terms of a realized flourishing. It has built upon both theological frameworks and how we envision humanity and

has taken us into the contested, contingent, and complex space of what it means to flourish in the middle condition. While this chapter has shown that an immanent frame remains open and constituted by the worthwhileness, meaningfulness, and goodness of quotidian life, it has also shown that the possibilities for believing are framed within strategic and tactical concerns for human flourishing that display the tension between the cross-pressures of the middle condition found between the temporalization and spatialization of realized flourishing in the middle condition. The possibility for transcendence opens us to the possible transformation of human flourishing in religious ways. And yet, the concern for human flourishing orients us to the possibilities of a better life—whether this is through progress, liberation, authenticity, and/or fullness. The orientations of realized flourishing in postsecular experience indicate it as a complex space marked by both the contestation and possibility of transcendence and fullness in everyday life as well as the contingency of what it means to believe and be human within the concrete conditions of the quotidian experience.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter concludes the analysis of the second research question by arguing how Taylor, in dialogue with theological voices, is a catalyst for addressing the dualism between transcendence and immanence through the development of a postsecular incarnational theology of presence. Moreover, this chapter has shown how a postsecular incarnational theology of presence mediates transcendence and immanence by holding out for hope—between both the possibilities of future hope in progress and liberation as well as in the transforming presence of both transcendence and the depths of immanence—in the cross-pressured horizons of a realized flourishing. A realized flourishing holds in tension the affirmation and transformation of the flourishing of this world through both the temporal hope for justice, progress, and liberation and the spatialized hope for transformation and depth as something already here and

not yet fully here. It finds its already and not yet in Taylor's middle condition of an immanent frame insofar as it is constituted between the cross-pressures of vertical and horizontal horizons. Thus, Taylor serves as a catalyst for constructing a postsecular incarnational theology of presence that concretizes the idea of realized flourishing through human participation in the affirmation, transformation, and flourishing of this world.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION:

CONTRIBUTIONS

This thesis posed how the contributions of Charles Taylor can help to address the questions of a) how a postsecular critique of the secular can critique the problem of the dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular and b) how a postsecular incarnational theology of presence can critique the problem of the dualism between transcendence and immanence. Part I focused on the sociological dimensions of Taylor's postsecular contributions to address the first problem through an analysis of how the three claims of contestability, contingency, and complexity offer a postsecular critique of the secular. In turn, Part II developed how Taylor serves as a catalyst for a constructive theological proposal of a postsecular incarnational theology of presence as a way of addressing the dualism between transcendence and immanence. To conclude, this chapter will analyze how this thesis addressed the research questions, what messages the two theses of a postsecular critique of the secular and a postsecular incarnational theology of presence contribute to scholarship, as well as examine the limitations and originality of this thesis, alongside the interdisciplinary contributions of this thesis to the field.

8.1 Re-evaluating Research Questions

Part I analyzed the first research question—*How does Charles Taylor contribute to a postsecular critique of the secular that questions the dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular?*—through analyses of the contestability, contingency, and complexity claims. First, chapter two contextualized Taylor in postsecular discourses through an analysis of the contestability claim of a postsecular critique to show that how we define what we mean by the polysemic and ambiguous term “postsecular” plays an important role in critiquing the dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular. Second, chapter three turned to analyze how Taylor offers a postsecular genealogical critique of the secular through his cultural readings of

history to demonstrate the contingency claim of a postsecular critique. They showed how the contingencies of history have given rise to the secular, but also that the separation between the sacred/religious and the secular as well as between transcendence and immanence are not necessarily determined by the contingencies of history. Historical contingencies can also hold open the space for the possibility of religious belief in transcendence as a viable option in an immanent frame. Third, chapter four contextualized Taylor in postsecular discourses to analyze the complexity claim of a postsecular critique of the secular. This was done through constructive inversions of the secular to show how complicit the sacred/religious is to and in the secular, as well as how one may imagine belief in transcendence as an enduring and viable option in an immanent frame. Each of these chapters developed a postsecular critique of the secular assumption of the dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular and offered intimations to addressing the problem of the dualism between transcendence and immanence.

Furthermore, Part II analyzed the second research question—*How can Charles Taylor be a catalyst for constructing a postsecular incarnational theology of presence that questions the dualism between transcendence and immanence?*—through analyses of incarnational presence, modern anthropology, and postsecular horizons. First, chapter five argues how a postsecular incarnational theology of presence lives in the tensions between the concerns for this-worldly flourishing and other-worldly promises in ways that are aimed at the transformation, affirmation, and flourishing of this world. Chapter five argues how an incarnational logic and theology of presence must mediate presence between how we imagine the relationship between transcendence and immanence. Second, chapter six argues how a postsecular incarnational theology of presence lives in the tension between the question of meaning and the cross-pressures generated in modern anthropology between believing and being human. These cross-pressures generate not only an understanding of how religious belief adds a layer of meaningfulness to being human but also that non-religious forms of being

human can also be meaningful. Chapter six mediates between immanent conceptions of being human in ways that are held in tension between modern anthropological conceptions of transcendence and religious belief. Third, chapter seven argues how a postsecular incarnational theology of presence lives in the tension between the cross-pressures of temporal and spatial horizons of what it means to be human insofar as they are aimed at affirming this world via the realization of human flourishing. Chapter seven argued that these cross-pressures generate a space in which the horizons of what it means to be human in an immanent frame must take into account the tensions between the spatial meaningfulness of presence as well as the temporal meaningfulness of utopia as a way to mediate between transcendence and immanence.

8.2 Synthesizing the Contributions of the Thesis

The point of this section is to draw together the threads of what this thesis contributes to the field. Because Part I and Part II addressed two specific research questions and developed two central theses of this thesis, I will reflect on what each Part reveals as an original contribution of this study. First, it will examine the contributions of a postsecular critique of the secular. Second, it will examine the contributions of a postsecular incarnational theology of presence. Both will reveal how the problem of the double dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular and transcendence and immanence are critiqued.

A postsecular critique of the secular critiques the dualism between the sacred/religious and the secular by demonstrating how the sacred/religious and the secular are inescapably linked. This comes in three forms: a) the secular displaces and replaces the church as a (quasi) religious structure that shapes human life; b) religion remains an enduring presence that is complicit with modern secular structures; and c) postsecular critiques of the secular reveal new ways of imagining believing and being human.

As to the first, this thesis has shown how the modern nation-state, public sphere, and market economy replaced the role of the church in governing how modern humanity imagine their lives. This is particularly revealed through an analysis of how the participation in the vertical relationship with God and participating in higher conceptions of time and space (i.e., eternity) collapsed into a horizontal conception of a direct access society that secularizes what it means to be human is supported by the notions of human rights, equality, and benevolence. This is largely the point of Taylor's own work as well as in dialogue with the contributions of José Casanova, as found throughout Part I.

Second, Part I has shown how religion is complicit within and inescapably linked to modern secular structures. This was done through an analysis of how the differentiation between the secular and the religious does not mean the absence of religion in secular modernity, such as in politics or the contingencies of history. In politics, the analyses in chapters three and four showed how the ideas of civil religion and neo-Durkheimian religiosity reveal the complicity of the religious in the secular as well as in secular politics. Moreover, my analysis of Jürgen Habermas' political postsecularism reveals the enduring problem of the religious in the secular. In the contingencies of modern history, chapters two and three revealed how the processes of laicization and secularization, the historical effects of the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment, the Axial Age backdrop, and the genealogical concepts of Reform-Master-Narratives and intellectual deviation stories reveal that the secular is contingently shaped by particular historical processes of modernity that do not necessarily exclude or preclude the absence of religious believing as a viable option in secular modernity.

Third, Part I revealed how human persons can imagine new ways of living open to transcendence and God in everyday life as a counter-movement to the assumed closure to transcendence in the immanent frame. This was done by showing that we can live *as if* religious belief is an alternative to normative secular structures. This was done through sections 2.3 and

2.4, as well as in section 4.2. In particular, section 4.2 pointed to how we can temporally and spatially participate in eternity through the everyday rhythms of life as a counter-movement to both the modern secular assumption that excludes transcendence as a viable option in the experience of secularity and that the immanent frame of secular structures and quotidian life necessarily has to be non-religious.

When it comes to Part II, a postsecular incarnational theology of presence critiques the secular dualism between transcendence and immanence by retrieving transcendence and religious belief as viable and meaningful lived options in secular life. This comes in two forms: a) it reveals the meaningfulness of both religious and non-religious ways of imagining being human as viable options that must live in tension with one another; and b) it transforms how we imagine what it means to be human in ways that can take into account the meaningfulness of belief as a criterion for human agency aimed at the flourishing, affirmation, and transformation of this world.

As to the first, chapters six and seven (and section 3.3.4) in particular showed how both religious believing and non-religious options are meaningful and must be lived in the tensions and cross-pressures of one another. Section 3.3.4 reveals how re-enchantment or “post-disenchantment” implies how contemporary understandings of the spiritual or supernatural must always articulate themselves up against or in relation to secular views of the world, as encapsulated in the concept of *entzauberung*. Chapters six and seven both argue how both secular and religious understandings of what it means to be human shape the possibilities of meaningfulness in everyday life. Moreover, they showed what both the cross-pressures between what it means to be human and to believe, and between the horizons of time, space, presence, and utopia generate when they realize that human flourishing must wrestle with these tensions with one another. Furthermore, sections 6.4 and 7.3-7.6 argued how the question of worthwhileness both shapes the possibilities of a meaningful life as well as implies the

evaluation of meaningful horizons—whether those horizons are grounded in belief or non-belief or the realized cross-pressures of presence and utopia.

As to the second, a postsecular incarnational theology of presence shows how it transforms how we can imagine being human. It does so by arguing how what it means to be a human person means to be cross-pressured between secular and religious options as well as between time and space. Furthermore, it argues how the emphasis on human flourishing is a this-worldly good affirmed by God. Tied to this, it argues that humans have a responsibility to act for the flourishing of this world as human agents who participate in the purposes of God for the flourishing of this world whether we acknowledge God or not. This is a postsecular, not Christian orientation, of how an incarnational theology of presence is aimed at affirming human flourishing for the transformation of this world: to be a human agent aimed at the flourishing of this world does not necessitate belief in the Christian God for it to be meaningful work. However, Christians add another layer of meaning to this work which is absent in non-Christian anthropological positions because they believe that the promise of the other-worldly good of God and salvation creates a criterion for strong evaluation that motivates Christian agency aimed at the flourishing of this world—and that is belief in a conception of transcendence revealed in the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth.

8.3 Academic Limitations, Originality, and Contributions

This section addresses the academic limitations, originality, and contributions of this thesis. Section 8.3.1 begins with the limitations of this thesis, which is centered on the breadth of interlocutors and its possibility of the lack of nuance, especially when taking into account the theological traditions and thinkers it engages with. Section 8.3.2 analyzes the main contributions of this thesis by paying attention to who this thesis engages with in dialogue with Taylor, the specific contributions found throughout this thesis to Taylorian scholarship, and the

broader contributions of the two theses this thesis proposes. Finally, Section 8.3.4 articulates how this thesis contributes to interdisciplinary studies as an academic field of study.

8.3.1 Limitations of the Thesis

The primary limitation of this thesis is its breadth of engagement. This thesis has connected Taylor to a vast set of literature, ranging from particular theorists, theories, disciplines, and theologians. This breadth of analysis risks overlooking the complexities of the discourses engaged with, and reveals that certain ideas may not have been substantially engaged with enough. This in particular includes scholarship and debates around spirituality, dominant sociological theories of secularization, as well as the nuances between Christian theological traditions.

When it comes to the spirituality debate, Ammerman and Heelas are the main interlocutors throughout the thesis, and yet what is not developed in this thesis is an analysis of how they work with Taylor's understandings of expressive individualism, authenticity, and the subjective turn. In turn, when it comes to sociological theories of secularization, even with a passing remark on classical secularization theory, the rational choice theory, and the industrial-security theory, there is much to analyze in their relation to the decline of religion thesis as well as in relation to Taylor's emphasis on the pluralization, optionality, and fragilization of the possibilities of belief in late modernity.

Finally, I have been ecumenical in my use of various theologians who come from several different theological traditions. John Zizioulas is Greek Orthodox. David H. Kelsey is Reformed. I draw on the Radical Orthodoxy Movement (a predominantly Anglo-Catholic movement) and their use of Aquinas and Reformed theology to develop a participatory ontology. George Eldon Ladd and Ray S. Anderson represent evangelicalism. But there are two problems with this ecumenical resourcement. First, it does not pay attention to the nuances and

debates between these theologians and the traditions they represent. Second, it risks the assumption that I have merely drawn on those theologians I agree with. As to the second, I am guilty as charged. However, I use these theologians not only because I generally agree with them but because they represent the *leading* voices in the discourses to which they contribute or have contributed.

As to the first, I have utilized a more ecumenical approach precisely because I did not grow up in nor have been academically informed by any particular Christian theological or confessional tradition. While I have recently turned from American non-denominational Evangelicalism to American Anglicanism, I am originally trained in Asian philosophy and religion, continental philosophy, and comparative theology. Furthermore, I was raised non-religious with very minor exposure to the Methodist tradition. In light of this, I have never been personally influenced or concerned with the doctrinal and traditional barriers that separate and divide various denominations of the Christian tradition. As such, having learned my theology as an adult convert to Christ, I have sought to be faithful to the Christian theological tradition around the classical Christian doctrines that developed in the early church and into the Middle Ages. It should be no surprise then, that I have sympathies with the Radical Orthodoxy Movement and the Catholic tradition and their projects of theological resourcement to address problems in the contemporary modern world.

Moreover, having come to faith through American Evangelicalism and its Reformed Baptist shape, as well as having been originally trained in theology by Wesleyan-holiness Pentecostals, American Protestantism remains a motivational influence upon my work even while I am aware of its inadequacies (i.e., intellectual, cultural, formative, etc.). Thus, the limitation of not being grounded in any particular Christian tradition can be both a strength and a weakness. It is a weakness because it does not speak for any particular Christian tradition. However, it is a strength because it draws ecumenically on a wealth of leading theological

voices and ideas to creatively and originally articulate how Taylor can be a catalyst for theological thinking.

8.3.2 Main Contributions

Throughout this thesis, there are several original contributions. These can be classified in three ways: a) the dialogue partners I engage with Taylor; b) the particular contributions to Taylorian scholarship in specific sections of this thesis; and c) the broader argument found within the thesis questions and research problems. First, one of the most unique contributions of this thesis is who I engage Taylor with. This ranges from those with whom Taylor himself has engaged (William E. Connolly, Jürgen Habermas, José Casanova, Hans Joas, Talal Asad, Stephen White, and Paul Heelas, etc.) as well as theological voices with whom Taylor has yet to be engaged with (David H. Kelsey, John Zizioulas, and Ray S. Anderson, etc.). Furthermore, this thesis has dialogued Taylor both with particular discourses in which his work relates (i.e., weak ontology, secularization, philosophy of (re-)enchantment, spirituality, etc.), as well as with theological traditions and doctrines (i.e., Kingdom of God theology and Incarnational theology) that are utilized throughout this thesis. What this has done is not only examine Taylor in conjunction with his regular and well-documented dialogue partners but also take Taylor into theological territory. The latter is especially an original contribution to this thesis as it engages Taylor with theological discourses and thinkers that have yet to be connected to Taylor.

When it comes to the originality of particular sections of this thesis, there are three places of specificity in which there are original contributions to Taylorian scholarship. First, section 6.2 offers something I have found lacking in scholarship on Taylor—How does Taylor understand the three-or-four-cornered battle throughout a genealogical reading of *Sources of the Self* and *A Secular Age*? Most of the literature does what is found in sections 6.3 and 6.4, but I have not yet seen someone offer a genealogical reading of how this battle develops across

his texts. Second, section 5.3.1 connects secondary literature around Taylor's project of the retrieval of transcendence to the debate of whether Taylor is a weak ontologist and argues how he ought to be considered a weak theologian. Third, section 4.2 re-reads Taylor's "House of Secularism" through the lens of the quotidian as an imaginary inversion of the metaphor. This is unique because it not only implies how we can imagine the reversal of political and sociological secularism but also how we can imagine its religious renewal by overlapping the house of secularism with an openness to the role of religion and the lived experience of transcendence throughout the ordinary rhythms of quotidian life.

The originality of broader arguments throughout this thesis comes in two forms: a) it contextualizes Taylor as a postsecular theorist by developing a postsecular critique of the secular in dialogue with the dominant voices in the discourse; and b) it takes Taylor into theological territory, by dialoguing between Taylor and other philosophers and theologians as a catalyst for constructing a postsecular incarnational theology of presence. The originality of the first broader argument demonstrates how Taylor ought to be considered a postsecular theorist. This is not only because Taylor is already utilized in the discourse, but also, despite his reticence to use the term postsecular, his contributions to understanding the conditions for belief in a secular age reveal similar questions to those posed in the discourse. To examine this, let us examine how Taylor comes up against the key postsecular theorists of the Radical Orthodoxy Movement, Talal Asad, José Casanova, Jürgen Habermas, and William E. Connolly.

While the Radical Orthodoxy Movement sheds light on a theological counter-narrative to the processes of secularization, Taylor's genealogies of modern secularity and anthropology also reveal how the questions of what it means to be human in a secular age are central to contemporary genealogical critiques of modernity. Furthermore, while Talal Asad and José Casanova reveal the sociological and anthropological concerns of genealogical critiques of secular modernity, this thesis has shown how Taylor also fits into this debate. While Casanova

and Asad are focused on secularization theses and the formations of the secular, Taylor's genealogical account reveals his concern for the long *durée* of historical processes that have contingently allowed the change in the conditions for belief over the last several centuries in Western history.

Furthermore, while Jürgen Habermas' postsecularism is concerned with creating a space in modern democratic politics for religious voices—even if they are reduced to post-metaphysical, secular reasoning—Taylor's emphasis on an understanding of the modern social imaginary reveals how secular democratic states cannot escape the drive to make room for religious and non-religious diversity. Linked to this, William E. Connolly's concerns for creating the space for religious pluralism and diversity in a secular state find resonances in Taylor insofar as Taylor's concerns for understanding the changed conditions for belief demands that secular and religious voices take into account one another as viable options in an immanent frame.

The originality of the second broader argument comes in several forms. First, it articulates a postsecular incarnational theology of presence as tied to both being present to others as agents of flourishing as well as enpresenting the tension and meaningfulness of what it means to believe and be human in a postsecular context. Throughout this thesis, I use “being present” or “enpresenting” to refer to temporality and “presence” or “enpresenting” to refer to spatiality. Connected to both of these horizons is also the theological conviction that originates in the work of David H. Kelsey: “God intends for the flourishing of what is not God.” That is, human flourishing is linked to a theological understanding of God where God and human agents co-participate as agents actively aimed at the flourishing of this world. Second, tied to this is the Radical Orthodoxy Movement's notion of a participatory ontology. Finally, it builds on a trinitarian, incarnational, and pneumatological theology that finds its origins in the contributions of John Zizioulas and Ray S. Anderson.

Each of these contributes to a postsecular incarnational theology of presence that connects human agency to its participation in (the purposes of) God to act as agents of restoration for the flourishing of this world. In particular, the horizons of temporality and spatiality concretize the cross-pressures of believing and being human and situate human agency between these cross-pressures of how we imagine what it means to be human and flourish as human beings. In particular, the role of belief adds another layer to being human that cross-pressures what it means to flourish and be human between temporal and spatial horizons that allow humans to be present in time as a spatial presence aimed at the flourishing of this world.

8.3.3 Contributions to the Field

This thesis has shown to be deeply interdisciplinary. Its contributions to several fields are manifold. A primary way to examine these contributions is to reflect on how this thesis demonstrated the polysemic nature of the postsecular as attuned to multiple discourses (postsecular politics, sociology of religion, philosophical anthropology, genealogies of history, and philosophical theology) that reveal the connection between the sacred and the secular. First, it contributes to the field of postsecular politics because it shows how democratic societies must wrestle with the enduring voices and presence of the religious in secular politics. Second it contributes to the field of sociology of religion by showing how Western society must dwell in the tension between different options of belief, such as a) the meaningfulness of religious belief, b) the continued presence of traditional forms of religious belief and practice, and c) the meaningfulness of non-religious perspectives.

Third, it contributes to the field of philosophical anthropology by showing both a) how modern understandings of humanity must take into account the meaningfulness of belief as an added layer to being human and human agency and b) how modern religious understandings

of humanity must live in tension with the voices and legitimacy of non-religious understandings of being human. Fourth, it contributes to the field of genealogies of history by showing how theories and theses of secularization must pay attention to the contingencies of history as not necessarily determining unbelief as the final outcome of modernity. Fifth and last, it contributes to the field of philosophical theology by showing how modernity can imagine new ways of understanding the relationship between transcendence and immanence by taking into account how the logic of incarnation can be mediated by a human agent embodying an incarnational presence aimed at affirming and transforming what it means to be human for the flourishing of this world.

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