1 | The Exigencies of Secular Culture

> The one who craves to be more, becomes less; the one who aspires
> to be self-sufficing, falls away from the One who truly suffices.
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> St. Augustine[1]

It seems counterintuitive to suggest that understanding and developing a theology of the cross is pivotal for a theological response to a secular culture. Is a theology of the cross not the least convenient starting point for addressing the burning question of human flourishing, with which a secular culture is deeply concerned (and rightly so)? Furthermore, even if one would grant that the horrors of the twentieth century explain the focus on the cross by figures such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Johann Baptist Metz, it is not immediately obvious how the cross is relevant in the current age of self-sufficient efficiency, omni-tolerant pluralism, and globalized consumerism. Perhaps it would still be within the bounds of contemporary theological imagination to value the theology of the cross à la Metz, the prophet of dangerous memories that are subversive because they reveal to us the injustices that should not be.[2] But is there a need or room for going beyond that?

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[1] *Ciu*. 14.13 (CCSL 48: 435.62–63): Plus autem appetendo minus est, qui, dum sibi sufficere deligit, ab illo, qui ei uere sufficit, deficit. Translation mine.

[2] See Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Fundamental Practical Theology*, ed. and trans. J. Matthew Ashely (New York: Crossroad, 2007), 87–113, esp. at 109.

The answer that this chapter gives to the *videtur quod non* series above is that a critical (but not exclusive) component of a theological response to a secular culture is a renewed theology of the cross. Addressing the role and significance of the Gospel in a secularized culture leads to a rediscovery that the heart of Christian identity is the law of the cross: paradoxically, saving one's life comes by way of losing it.[3] Furthermore, it will be argued, a secular culture needs a theology of the cross that is both (1) explanatory in that it aims at grasping the mysterious *ratio* of the cross, and finds this *ratio* in the transformation of evil into good through charity and (2) historically minded in that it discerns the generality of the law of the cross in history and knows its own historical development.

Setting my argument within the context of the exigencies posed by modern (post-Christian) secularity is demanded by the modern turn to historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*), as advanced by Martin Heidegger and Hans Georg Gadamer.[4] Building upon their contributions, Lonergan has shown that historically minded theology seeks to understand the meaning of the Christian faith in dialogue with cultures. The opening line of his *Method in Theology* reads, "A theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance

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[3] The phrase "law of the cross" here is used in anticipation of Lonergan's meaning. In Scripture, this "law" is articulated in Mt 5:11–12, 38–48; 16:24–25; Mk 8:34–35; Lk 9:23–24; Jn 12:24–25.

[4] In Heidegger's usage, *Geschichtlichkeit* primarily concerns the facticity (*Faktizität*) of Being (*Dasein*) in all its coming-to-be as existence (*Existenz*). Gadamer's hermeneutics develops Heidegger's notion of *Geschichtlichkeit* as the mediation of historically conditioned meaning and truth, the correct interpretation of which is integrally related to the issue of authenticity. As Frederick Lawrence points out, Gadamer affirms *Dasein*'s historicity to overcome modern historicism and nihilism. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (London: SCM Press, 1962); Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad, 1982); and Frederick G. Lawrence, "Lonergan's Hermeneutics," in *The Routledge Companion to Hermeneutics*, ed. Jeff Malpas and Hans-Helmuth Gander (New York: Routledge, 2014), 160–178.

and role of a religion in that matrix."[5] This line points out what many contemporary theologians hold to be a *sine qua non*, namely, that mediation between the Gospel and culture is an imperative for theology.[6] In contrast to the normative classicist notion of culture, here culture is conceived empirically, namely, as "the set of meanings and values that informs a way of life."[7] Meaning, as Lonergan contends, is a constitutive component of human living that

> is not fixed, static, immutable, but shifting, developing, going astray, capable of redemption; on this view there is in the historicity, which results from human nature, an exigence for changing forms, structures, methods; and it is on this level and through this medium of changing meaning that divine revelation has entered the world and that the Church's witness is given to it.[8]

In this light, neither culture nor theology is a permanent achievement, and a change in one impacts the other: cultural context influences the way theology is done, and theology influences culture by making God's word alive in new contexts. This *aggiornamento* does not mean that whatever is old is out and whatever is new is in. Rather, "it is a disengagement from a culture that no longer exists and an involvement in a distinct culture that has replaced it."[9]

In a sense, then, theology can be conceived as an ongoing conversation between culture and Gospel. As in every good conversation, the themes are dropped or picked up in response to the

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[5] Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, ed. John D. Dadosky and Robert M. Doran, CWL 14 (2017), 3. For an extensive discussion on the different notions and theories of culture, see Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997).

[6] See Stephan B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 3–7.

[7] Lonergan, *Method*, 3; cf. 281.

[8] Lonergan, "Transition from a Classicist Worldview," 7. See also his "Theology in Its New Context," in CWL 13, 48–59, esp. at 54.

[9] Lonergan, "The Absence of God in Modern Culture," in CWL 13, 95–96. Also see his "Pope John's Intention," in CWL 16, 214–227.

other's utterance, and the words or the idioms are chosen so that the other might understand them. Consequently, if theology is to succeed in its role of mediation, it cannot ignore the "languages" and exigencies of its own culture. In particular, a theologian in the North-Atlantic world today has to face the fact that, arguably, the defining feature of a contemporary Western culture is secularity. We do theology in a secular age, to use Charles Taylor's term, a culture where faith is no longer axiomatic as it lives under the cross-pressure of the "immanent frame"[10] and under the daily rhythms of instrumental, expressive, and possessive individualism.[11] The ensuing privatization of religion, and the multiplying of moral/spiritual options that reject all goals beyond human flourishing, make Christian (or any religious) belief and identity especially fragile. The upshot of this is the expansion of social surd that threatens the modern ideal of universal benevolence at its very root, that is, by denying the dignity of human life on the basis of inconvenience or spur for revenge. What can a theology offer in response?

In this chapter, the road to an adequate answer is explored in three steps. The first two steps illuminate the problem by drawing on the contemporary analyses of a secular culture by three "Catholic Hegelians": first, Charles Taylor, and then Michael

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[10] Taylor argues that, in the modern West, living under the "immanent frame" means feeling pulled two ways between orthodoxy and unbelief. Nevertheless, the hegemonic secular reading of the immanent frame creates the illusion of the rational "obviousness" of the perspective that is closed off from belief. See *Secular Age*, 555–556.

[11] Besides Taylor's works, for more on these kinds of individualism, see Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Crawford Brough Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964); Frederick G. Lawrence, *The Fragility of Consciousness: Faith, Reason, and the Human Good*, ed. Randall S. Rosenberg and Kevin M. Vander Schel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017); Jeremy D. Wilkins, "The Fragility of Conversation: Consciousness and Self-understanding in Post/Modern Culture," *Heythrop Journal* 59, no. 5 (2018): 832–847.

Buckley and Nicholas Boyle.[12] In the third step, their insights are brought into dialogue with Lonergan's early essay on secularization to construct a heuristic that will establish the major criteria for a theological response to a secular culture, thematized under five headings: *agape*, conversion, Christ's work, justice, and explanatory framework.

Analysis of Secular Culture: Charles Taylor

A comprehensive analysis of the thought of Charles Taylor is beyond the scope of this work. What follows should rather be conceived in terms of exercising selective intelligence: grasping and creatively interpreting the essential and disregarding the irrelevant. To provide a road map: After clarifying Taylor's notion of secularity, we first discuss the genesis, then some internal contradictions of a secular age. We proceed to elucidate Taylor's implicit theological contribution and complete the section with an appraisal of its significance.

The Genesis of a Secular Condition

Taylor discerns three notions of secularity: (1) political secularity, that is, the removal of religion from the level of the state, (2) secularity as a decline in religious belief and practice, and (3) secularity as a condition in which faith is exercised under the cross-pressures of the "immanent frame." The new, third condition implies "fragilization" of faith, by which Taylor means that – due to the spawning of an ever-widening variety of moral/spiritual options, which he calls the "nova" effect – more people are likely

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[12] The influence of Hegel, who was (sort of) a Lutheran, is one of the reasons why these three thinkers are helpful interlocutors for reflecting on the cross. As we know, *theologia crucis* was central to Luther.

to be uncertain of what to choose or they change between different positions over their lifetime.[13] As the emergence of exclusive humanism indicates, "a secular age is one in which the eclipse of all goals beyond human flourishing becomes conceivable."[14]

Tracing the genesis of secularity in the third sense, the change "which takes us from a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others," is the main focus of Taylor's *A Secular Age*.[15] Taylor argues against the secularization thesis, namely, that "religion must retreat before reason."[16] A "subtraction" account of secularity, which underlies the secularization thesis, uncritically assumes that the modern advance of human knowledge automatically sets in motion an inevitable disappearance of religious belief. On the contrary, Taylor insists that for unbelief to become a conceivable option, there had to be a "positive" or creative element at work. For him, the stance of modern atheists is not forced on them by undeniable "facts" but flows from a certain interpretive grid, a fruit of an ongoing creative effort.[17]

Throughout the book, Taylor examines what generates and motivates the "immanentist" grid that shuts transcendence out.[18] While most interpretations of modern Western culture explain the secular shift primarily in cognitive terms, Taylor proposes that, for the secularizing ideas of the Enlightenment elite to infiltrate the discourse in other niches, to saturate people's social imaginary, and to become prescriptive rather than merely hermeneutic, ethical and

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[13] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 556; see also 229.

[14] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 19–20.

[15] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 3.

[16] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 226; see also 264.

[17] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 275.

[18] The interpretive grid, for Taylor, "spins" the immanent frame in ways of openness and closure, but in itself the immanent frame allows of both readings, without compelling us to accept either. Both belief and unbelief demand an anticipatory confidence, a "leap of faith" (*Secular Age*, 550–551).

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practical factors were decisive.[19] Taylor argues that the self-acclaimed neutrality of the modern subject, from which "transcendent" values are problematized, was bogus from the very beginning. In fact, this "neutrality" was an expression of the modern ethic

> of independence, self-control, self-responsibility, of a disengagement which brings control; a stance which requires courage, the refusal of the easy comforts of conformity to authority, of the consolations of an enchanted world, of the surrender to the promptings of the senses.[20]

In Taylor's reading, this new vision of moral order played a key role in the development of modern (post-Christian) Western world.[21]

At the heart of the modern moral order, Taylor demonstrates, is the ethic of freedom and mutual benefit.[22] It can be traced back to the Natural Law theories of the seventeenth century, especially by Hugo Grotius and John Locke, which introduced a twofold invention: the placement of the industrious and instrumentally rational subject over the polity and the pleading of human rights against power.[23] With Locke's social contract theory, namely, that society exists for the mutual benefit of individuals and the defense of their rights, gaining currency, a Western subject gradually comes to conceive herself or himself predominantly in terms of personal autonomy and universal benevolence.[24] Taylor maintains that, far from becoming outdated or replaced, the idea of a modern moral

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[19] See *Secular Age*, 146, 160–161, 172–173; cf. ibid., 159–162, 267–268. Elsewhere, Taylor endorses this by proposing that "in Western modernity the obstacles to belief are primarily moral and spiritual, rather than epistemic." See "A Catholic Modernity?," in *A Catholic Modernity?: Charles Taylor's Marianist Award Lecture*, ed. James Heft (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 25.

[20] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 559–560.

[21] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 159.

[22] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 171, 259–269, 305, 489, 633. For more on the modern moral order, see ibid., 159–171.

[23] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 159–160, 237.

[24] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 160, 222, 245.

order implicit in Locke's view of society has undergone a double expansion in extension and intensity.[25] In a seed, it contains the "wave" both of instrumental individualism, which dominated the Age of Mobilization, and of expressive individualism, a widespread option in the current Age of Authenticity.[26]

However, for Taylor, foregrounding the role of the Enlightenment in the rise of the modern moral order is not the end of the story (or, more accurately, not the beginning). In particular, his account brings to light the deeper Christian roots of the ethic of freedom and mutual benefit. He argues that the main facets of modern humanism – the moral ideals of equality, self-discipline, active reordering, freedom, and mutual benefit – emerged from the forms of Christian faith and can be traced all the way back to the Axial revolution.[27] In the first place, the character of Christian charity, which takes one beyond the existing bounds of solidarity and preexisting community, is still recognizable in the moral ideal of universal benevolence that acts for the good of others just in virtue of their being fellow humans.[28]

How did the replacement of Christian *agape* by a secular *agape*-surrogate, namely, exclusive humanism, which rejects all goals beyond the securing of human life and the means to life, happen? Taylor argues that exclusive humanism crept upon us through an intermediate form of Deism. Through the Reform-associated anthropocentric shift in four directions, which Taylor subsumes

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[25] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 160.

[26] For Taylor's distinction between the three stages of the Ancien Régime, the Age of Mobilization, and the Age of Authenticity, see Part IV of *Secular Age*, "Narratives of Secularization," 421–536, esp. at 437–438. For a comprehensive discussion of various forms of individualism in Taylor's account, see Jennifer A. Herdt, "The Authentic Individual in the Network of *Agape*," in *Aspiring to Fullness in a Secular Age: Essays on Religion and Theology in the Work of Charles Taylor*, ed. Carlos D. Colorado and Justin D. Klassen (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 191–216, esp. 199.

[27] See Taylor, *Secular Age*, 151–158, 247.

[28] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 246–247.

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under the heading "Providential Deism," the notion of *agape* gradually migrates from being conceived as an ultimate and eschatologically fulfilled reality to being understood as a moral imperative exclusively for here and now. "Providential Deism," the first and decisive facet of Deism, prompts a fourfold anthropocentric shift by narrowing God's goals for us to the single end of our encompassing the order of mutual benefit God has designed for us. This shift entails a gradual fading (1) of the ultimate *telos*, (2) of grace, (3) of the mystery of the human heart and God, and (4) of the anticipation of eschatological transformation.[29]

From Taylor's account of the fourfold shift, it follows that the genesis of exclusive humanism pivots upon a two-way movement. As the highest goals are brought down and the ends beyond human flourishing gradually fade from view, the enhanced human moral powers rise to meet the goal halfway. Disengaged reason and innate solidarity and sympathy, or the Kantian synthesis of the two, acquire the status of new and exclusively immanent moral sources.[30] Having discovered the intra-human sources of universal benevolence, the modern "buffered self"[31] now is assured of its inner capacity and of success in remaking the world. Exclusive humanism becomes a livable option. The vision of life according to exclusive humanism truncates human meaning and value and overlooks the sense of fullness, available to everyone. Notably, Taylor understands this sense of fullness very broadly: from the limit-experiences of something akin to Rudolf Otto's *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* to the more ordinary states of being deeply moved, puzzled,

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[29] For more on the fourfold shift, see Taylor, *Secular Age*, 221–266. The fourfold anthropocentric shift is complemented by the second and third facets of Deism, respectively, the primacy of impersonal order, and the idea that true, natural religion needs to be recovered.

[30] See Taylor, *Secular Age*, 245–258.

[31] The "buffered self" in Taylor's vocabulary refers to the self of the disenchanted world who, by gaining confidence in its own powers, is no longer open and porous to a world of spirits or to the Spirit; see *Secular Age*, 27.

unsettled in a way that lines up human life energies.[32] Taylor proposes that modern civilization is basically defined by a refusal to envisage transcendence as the meaning of this sense of fullness. Truncating a further discovery, and barring the door to the fullness of being, is not the fault of an atheist alone: any clutching onto an idol, in a sense, shuts out the true God.[33]

The Fragility of the Immanent Moral Sources

The discovery of the intra-human sources of benevolence, according to Taylor, has a positive side to it as well: besides being a "charter of modern unbelief," it is also "one of the great achievements of our civilization."[34] That is, on the upside, such a discovery, and the resulting end of Christendom, underlies the previously unseen practical penetration of Gospel values, such as universal benevolence, equality, and the affirmation of universal human rights to life, freedom, and self-realization. The ensuing worldwide mobilization for the relief of suffering and for the redress of injustice does not have precedents in history. Thus, Christians owe "a vote of thanks to Voltaire."[35] On the downside, however, the eclipse of transcendence that follows the immanentization of the moral sources can easily make the project of exclusive humanism self-defeating. Taylor demonstrates the vulnerability of the professed ideals of exclusive humanism (1) in his treatment of the counter-Enlightenment "revolt" and (2) by tracing some common distortions in the conception and execution of universal benevolence.

(1)

Taylor contends that the "revolt" against exclusive humanism from within the "immanent frame" is manifested both in the Nietzschean

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[32] See Taylor, *Secular Age*, 6.
[33] See Taylor, *Secular Age*, 769.
[34] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 257.
[35] Taylor, "Catholic Modernity," 18.

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protest against the primacy of life and the Romantic turn to subjectivity. This revolt shows that, even as judged by unbelievers, exclusive humanism lacks a dimension. In a sense, both the Nietzschean and the Romantic moves take us beyond life: Romanticism, by searching the depths of nature and of artistic meaning, and the Nietzschean reaction, by aspiring to the enhanced life and by "incorporating a fascination with the negation of life, with death and suffering."[36] The revolt from within belief, resonates with that from within unbelief.[37] Both show that the vision of life according to exclusive humanism contracts human meanings and values and conceals the sense of fullness.

Moreover, Taylor argues that both exclusive humanism and the revolt share the same provenance: "just as the secular Enlightenment humanism grew out of the earlier Christian, *agape*-inspired affirmation of ordinary life, so the immanent counter-Enlightenment grew out of its transcendent-inspired predecessor."[38] By extension, the multiple options that have proliferated under the cross-pressures of the three-cornered battle among the secular humanists, neo-Nietzscheans, and those who acknowledge some good beyond life, including the most current offshoot of Romanticism, expressive individualism, still can be traced back to Christian roots.[39]

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[36] Taylor, "Catholic Modernity," 28.

[37] See Taylor, *Secular Age*, 258 and 371–372. Pietism, Methodism, and the Sacred Heart devotion are just a few examples of early reactions from within belief.

[38] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 372.

[39] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 299. For more on Taylor's "three-cornered battle," see ibid., 636–637; and "Catholic Modernity," 29. Taylor notes that any pair in this battle can gang up against the third one 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 . . .. In a third lineup, secular humanists and believers come together in defending an idea of the human good against the antihumanism of Nietzsche's heirs" ("Catholic Modernity," 29).

(2)

Taylor also shows that, detached from its origins in Christian *agape*, "immanent" universal benevolence is vulnerable to distortions, such as the rationalization of human vices. For instance, since Jean-Jacques Rousseau's fusing together of the primitive instincts of self-love (*amour de soi*) and sympathy (*pitié*), the doctrine of harmony of interests penetrates the social imaginary and manifests itself in the commonly held belief that society can be so organized that lowly, interest-driven self-love is conducive to public benefit.[40] Private vices then are rationalized as beneficial for social order, an idea canonized in the invisible hand doctrine of Adam Smith.[41] In a society with its prevailing ends of security and prosperity, organized in accordance with Smith's vision, a self-referential love is given primacy. Moreover, higher heroic aspirations are conceived as counterproductive or outright disruptive of the "economic" order, that is, a peaceful and productive exchange of services and goods, prompted by mutual interest.

In this context, mutual benevolence loses touch with the unconditional nature of Christian *agape* and risks being reduced to a profitable economic exchange. Likewise, justice is conceived in primarily horizontal terms, proper to the commercialized world and its transactional activities. Such a horizontal justice is motivated by self-interest and regulated by impersonal legal codes, which can easily turn into what Taylor calls "code fetishism" or "nomolatry."[42] Such justice lacks a vertical dimension that "involves a kind of motivational conversion, and ability to forgo the satisfactions of retribution" and by virtue of forgiveness to go beyond the kind of fairness envisioned by horizontal justice.[43]

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[40] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 202, 372.
[41] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 229.
[42] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 707.
[43] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 707.

The "flattening" of human motivations that comes with the denial of transcendence can imperil the most valuable gains of modernity, such as the practical affirmation of human dignity and life.[44] In his Marianist Award lecture of 1996, Taylor presents three different scenarios in which immanent motivations for universal benevolence are deflated or give rise to a coercive misanthropy. These three scenarios can be easily grasped by those who ever entertained inner dialogues such as these: "Does anyone care to say 'thank you' for all I do?"; "These people will never change, what's the point of helping them?"; and "Who could object to my holy anger?" Due to a lack of external affirmation or inner satisfaction, because of the disappointments with actual human performance, or through the temptation to seek revenge for injustices, we easily fail to embrace the difficult good that is needed for the transformation of an evil situation. Consequently, our best intentions notwithstanding, we might become "generators of new modes of injustice on a greater scale."[45]

The Network of Agape

In the context of the extraordinary role that Taylor assigns to *agape* in the genesis of secular culture marked with the fragility of immanent motivations for universal benevolence, it is not surprising that in the last and perhaps most theologically committed chapter of *A Secular Age*, "Conversions," Taylor suggests that the retrieval of the authentic moral ideal of modernity starts with a lived response by the network of *agape*.[46] With the view of developing a theological meaning of this notion later, let us consider his proposal in some more detail.

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[44] See Taylor, "Catholic Modernity," 30.
[45] Taylor, "Catholic Modernity," 34.
[46] See Taylor, *Secular Age*, 728–873.

According to Taylor, the network of *agape* is constituted by free persons called by God out of the existing social order to personal friendship with God and, through participation in "the enfleshment of God," with others.[47] Such a web of personal relations is open outwards and upwards: it reaches out to create new "links across boundaries, on the basis of a mutual fittingness which is not based on kinship but on the kind of love which God has for us, which we call *agape*."[48] In this treatment of the *agape*-network, Taylor seems to relativize the false dichotomy "community prior to members" vs. "members prior to community." Everyone belongs to the flesh of the *agape*-network "through" God's love incarnate. In anticipation of my argument in the later parts of this book, we might add that the absence of such a supernaturally grounded friendship results in the amnesia of one's duty to one's own full humanity.

Taylor's recounting of Ivan Illich's interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan weaves together the different aspects of the *agape*-network outlined above:

> The Samaritan is moved by the wounded man; he moves to act, and in doing so inaugurates (potentially) a new relation of friendship/ love/charity with this person. But this cuts across the boundaries of the permitted "we's" in his world. It is a free act of his "I" . . .. It creates a new kind of fittingness, belonging together, between Samaritan and wounded Jew. They are fitted together in a dissymmetric proportionality . . . which comes from God, which is that of agape, and which became possible because God became flesh.[49]

In Taylor's reading, the main temptations that the network of *agape* has to beware of are the temptation to power, which results from rationalizing violence in the name of the eradication of evil, and "excarnation," by which Taylor understands the primacy assigned

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[47] Taylor associates this network with the Christian church. See *Secular Age*, 739.

[48] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 739.

[49] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 738–739.

to reason disengaged from the heart, one form of which is idolatrous legalism.[50] By casting the network of *agape* in the light of the image of the Communion of Saints, Taylor advocates a new "incarnate," relational, and eschatologically oriented order: "a communion of whole lives, of whole itineraries towards God," a journey that moves the pilgrims "beyond the present orders to God."[51]

In sum, Taylor affirms that true fullness of life is impossible without participation in God's eschatologically definitive *agape*/friendship/love, which is the source of the network of *agape*, the antidote to the self-sufficiency of modern individualism. As a Christian, Taylor recognizes that the modern ideal of authenticity/expressive individualism is not sustainable if detached from divine *agape*, the epitome of which is the Paschal mystery: "Being really ourselves requires an abandonment, a letting go, a sacrifice. So that the moment at which Christ enters most fully our lives is (if we allow it) the moment of our death."[52]

Taylor's Contribution to Envisioning a Theological Response to a Secular Culture

Taylor's emphasis on *agape* and on the affirmation of "life beyond life," explored above, as well as his demonstration of modernity's investment in exploring the "dark genesis of humanity," provide a theologian with some critical criteria for constructing a theological response to a secular culture. In a nutshell, a heuristic anticipation of such a response would include the retrieval of the meaning of

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[50] Taylor discerns the presence of "excarnation" in Christianity's "steady disembodying of spiritual life, so that it is less and less carried in deeply meaningful bodily forms, and lies more and more 'in the head'" (*Secular Age*, 771). Concerning legalism, Taylor notes that even though we cannot live without codes, they "can become idolatrous traps, which tempt us to complicity in violence. Illich can remind us not to become totally invested in the code, even the best code." See ibid., 743; cf. 158, 288–293, 613–615, 745–746.

[51] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 754–755.

[52] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 763.

agape as the principle of universal benevolence, understood in the context of God's incarnate response to human suffering and of human freedom. Furthermore, a theological treatment of Christian charity as the love of friendship cannot be isolated from an examination of the horizontal and vertical dimensions of justice: the justice of reward and punishment and the justice of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Taylor's effort to unveil the fallacy of the secularization thesis, and his recognition of the role played by the immanentization of moral sources in the development of an exclusive humanism, call for yet another component in our heuristic. Namely, a theological response to a secular culture has to be both explanatory and rooted in epistemic humility. Disregarding the former, the explanatory dimension, would implicitly grant the secularization thesis, namely, that unbelief is the only intellectually defensible option and therefore inevitable in the world come of age. The lack of epistemic humility, on the other hand, would be conducive to the further eclipse of the mystery of the human heart and the mystery of God (the third anthropocentric shift). Thus, a theological response has to navigate between the Scylla of mere romanticism and the Charybdis of rationalism. As we will see later, Lonergan's turn to the subject allows for self-knowledge that is both explanatory and normative and therefore has a great potential for navigating this dangerous route on the level of our time.

Though Taylor's contribution to envisioning a theological response to a secular culture can hardly be overestimated, a theologian still finds certain aspects of Taylor's account wanting.[53]

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[53] See Gregory Baum, "The Response of a Theologian to Charles Taylor's *Secular Age*," *Modern Theology* 26, no. 3 (2010): 363–381; Dominic Doyle, "Retrieving the Hope of Christian Humanism: A Thomistic Reflection on the Thought of Charles Taylor and Nicholas Boyle," *Gregorianum* 90, no. 4 (2009): 699–722; and *The Promise of Christian Humanism: Thomas Aquinas on Hope* (New York: Crossroad, 2011), 27–31; Stanley Hauerwas and Romand Coles, "'Long Live the Weeds and the Wilderness Yet': Reflections on *A Secular Age*," *Modern Theology* 26, no. 3 (2010): 349–362. See also José

Granting that, as a philosopher, Taylor cannot provide a full-fledged and conceptually equipped theological response, different aspects of his account call for a further theological refinement and development. In the context of some important questions raised by others, my main concerns are two: the first regards Taylor's notion of authenticity and the second his soteriological presuppositions.

It is striking that, though Taylor calls us to recognize that in suffering and death we find "not merely negation, the undoing of the fullness of life, but also a place to affirm something that matters beyond life, on which life itself originally draws,"[54] this implicit reference to self-transcendence does not seem to significantly impact his understanding of the moral ideal of authenticity.[55] Even if Taylor's treatment of the *agape*-network broadens the meaning of authenticity beyond that of personal self-fulfillment, implying that authenticity is something like an autonomy-through-belonging, Taylor does not spell it out explicitly. Neither does he clearly relate the ideal of authenticity to self-transcendence, although one of the main categories of his inquiry is "beyond."[56] In this context, perhaps he would benefit by learning from his compatriot Lonergan whose notion of authenticity as an intellectual, moral, and religious self-transcendence, seems to align better

Casanova, "A Secular Age: Dawn or Twilight?," in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, ed. Michael Warner, Jonathan Van Antwerpen, and Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 265–281; Saba Mahmood, "Can Secularism Be Other-wise?," ibid., 282–299; Graham Ward, "History, Belief and Imagination in Charles Taylor's *Secular Age*," *Modern Theology* 26, no. 3 (2010): 337–348.

[54] Taylor, "Catholic Modernity," 20.

[55] It could be that this results from the fact that his approach is largely descriptive.

[56] A rare but not explicit exception to this is Taylor's reference to authenticity as "choosing ourselves in the light of the infinite." See *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 449. Some of Taylor's comments in "Catholic Modernity" also give an indirect indication of his understanding of authenticity as self-transcendence.

with what Taylor is getting at.[57] For Lonergan, authenticity chiefly regards the free unfolding of the (in itself) unrestricted desire of the human spirit.[58] Besides human authenticity, which is founded upon intellectual and moral self-transcendence, he also articulates the norm of "Christian authenticity," as grounded in self-transcending cruciform love:

> As human authenticity promotes progress, and human unauthenticity generates decline, so Christian authenticity – which is a love of others that does not shrink from self-sacrifice and suffering – is the sovereign means for overcoming evil. Christians bring about the kingdom of God in the world not only by doing good but also by overcoming evil with good (Romans 12.21).[59]

This insight of Lonergan, as we will see in more detail later, provides a foundation for understanding what it takes to reaffirm Christian identity under the threat of secularization.

Let us consider now the second area where a theologian might find Taylor's account wanting: his soteriological presuppositions. To what extent are the critiques of Taylor in this respect justified? *Pace* the criticisms by Stanley Hauerwas and Romand Coles, to grant that Taylor's account completely overlooks the radical character that *agape* takes in the Christ event does not seem to me warranted. Likewise, in my reading, there is no real duality in Taylor's interpretation of transcendence and immanence, nor the

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[57] Brian J. Braman proposes that Taylor's and Lonergan's accounts of authenticity are comparable insofar as both authors do not think that the desire to be authentically human necessarily leads to narcissism or moral relativism. However, Taylor's account of authenticity is undifferentiated insofar as it refers – and rather implicitly – only to what Lonergan would call moral and religious (but not intellectual) conversion; see *Meaning and Authenticity: Bernard Lonergan and Charles Taylor on the Drama of Authentic Human Existence* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 7 and 98.

[58] E.g., see Lonergan, "Self-transcendence: Intellectual, Moral, Religious," in CWL 17, 313–331. We shall return to this notion of authenticity later.

[59] Lonergan, *Method*, 272.

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negligence of the radically incarnational character of the Christian God, as Hauerwas and Coles propose.[60] Yet, they rightly bring into focus something that in Taylor's account, again, remains rather implicit: that, for Christians, "transcendence first and foremost is the acknowledgement that death could not hold [the God-man]."[61] If *agape* is the key term for retrieving the modern moral ideal of authenticity, transcendence-in-immanence also has a personal name, that of the Son of God – made human, crucified, and risen. In this context, a theologian might wonder whether Taylor does not make the cross more visible because he finds it too offensive to a modern audience of philosophers (something Paul witnessed in his time!) or too much burdened with legalistic interpretations, such as exemplified by the penal substitution theory of atonement.[62] If the latter is the case, a theologian might note that such interpretations are to be faced head-on and challenged as a potential culprit in the genesis of secularism.[63]

Another aspect of Taylor's implicit soteriology, which makes a theologian wonder about the possibilities for advancing his account, concerns the reality of sin. A theologian might ask whether the emphasis on an "agapic" gut-response to human suffering should not be complemented with a clearer conception of redemption as a divine solution not simply to suffering but, in the first place, to the more basic problem of the evil of sin.[64] As Lonergan once noted, it is sin, not suffering, that is the greatest evil, because sin "refuses just

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[60] Hauerwas and Coles, "Reflections on *A Secular Age*," 350.

[61] Hauerwas and Coles, "Reflections on *A Secular Age*," 350.

[62] Cf. Taylor, *Secular Age*, 262.

[63] In fairness, it ought to be noted that Taylor tacitly appeals to the cross in considering some possible remedies against the reconstitution and multiplication of violence through self-righteousness; see "Notes on the Sources of Violence: Perennial and Modern," in *Beyond Violence: Religious Sources of Social Transformation in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. James L. Heft (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), esp. at 39.

[64] Gregory Baum also raises a question whether Taylor takes sufficiently into account the problem of evil. He contends that *Secular Age* largely overlooks the "sinister side of

the best that man can do," that is, to return the love of God.[65] Among contemporary scholars, David Tracy has recently also raised a question regarding what really is evil. In the light of the patristic tradition and the insights of contemporary philosophers, such as Hannah Arendt, he argues that, in the aftermath of the atrocities of the twentieth century, no one can reasonably deny the fundamental role that culpable evil plays in human suffering. Correspondingly, Tracy contradistinguishes the "humanly constituted" evil from the "natural evil." Only the former can be called "evil" in the proper sense.[66] If Taylor had a more differentiated, normative anthropology, perhaps he would also get further on the analysis of evil and draw some more explicit soteriological implications.

Beyond Taylor: The Analyses by Michael Buckley and Nicholas Boyle

Let us now complement my account of Taylor's analysis of secularity with the relevant contributions by Michael Buckley and Nicholas Boyle. As we will see in a moment, each of them adds something important that, together with Taylor's achievement, will be

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modernity," e.g., structures of sin, such as racism and the exploitation of labor, which plague modern Western society ("The Response of a Theologian," 376).

[65] "The Mass and Man," in *Shorter Papers*, ed. Robert C. Croken, Robert M. Doran, and H. Daniel Monsour, CWL 20 (2007), 95. At this point, a note on my usage of inclusive language is in place. As illustrated by quoting this citation as it is, for much of this work I avoid modifying citations by the usage of a more inclusive language. This is because I am aware of the historicity of language. There are different reasons for Lonergan, Augustine, Aquinas, etc., to regard the grammatical subject that refers to the human being as masculine. To presuppose that I know in each case to what extent they meant inclusivity, and to give a semblance of it by changing their language, to me seems presumptuous. Sometimes the inclusive meaning seems obvious, but changing the wording is grammatically or stylistically awkward.

[66] See David Tracy, "Incarnation and Suffering: On Rereading Augustine," in *"Godhead here in Hiding": Incarnation and the History of Human Suffering*, ed. Terrence Merrigan and Frederik Glorieux (Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2012), 79–81.

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consequently brought into a higher synthesis enabled by Lonergan's theoretical framework.

Michael Buckley

Taylor's thesis that a secular culture continues to define itself over and against earlier modes of belief owes to Michael Buckley's penetrating insight that, by using impersonal evidence for defending Christian belief in a personal God, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Christian apologetic effort, de facto, has lent modern atheistic arguments a successful strategy for denying God.[67] Buckley has demonstrated that just as the meaning of the word "atheism" is dialectically parasitic upon "theism," of which it is a denial, so are its origins.[68]

Buckley's account of the dialectical origins of modern atheism complements that of Taylor by clarifying the role theology played in the emergence of the situation in which the reality of God is expressly denied on an unprecedented scale. Buckley argues that, before being a product of simply social, economic, and value-driven factors, much less a logical sequence of the advance of science, atheism is an idea, an argument that has its own intellectual integrity. Theology, in Buckley's reading, has contributed precisely to the ideational origins of modern atheism: "the emergence of modern atheism was driven in a dialectical pattern, i.e., atheism

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[67] Taylor refers to Buckley's insight multiple times. For instance, see *Secular Age*, 225, 293–295, 318, 328.

[68] See Michael J. Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), esp. at 337–338; A good summary of Buckley's dialectical account of the origins of atheism is found in his dictionary entry "Atheism," in *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, ed. René Latourelle and Rino Fisichella (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 49–55, esp. at 50. See also *Denying and Disclosing God: The Ambiguous Progress of Modern Atheism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).

as an argument and theorem was generated by the very intellectual forces enlisted to counter it."[69]

In reaction to the perceived threat of atheism in early modernity, Christian apologists followed the lead of the deistic impersonal and disengaged stance. They bracketed whatever was of a uniquely religious character – in all of its traditional, experiential, devotional, institutional, and social forms – and relied upon the new sciences as foundations for "proving" God's existence "from design." In a sense, this was a failure of theology to follow through the consequences of the intrinsically Trinitarian and incarnational character of the Christian faith. As Buckley observes, "in the absence of a rich and comprehensive Christology and a Pneumatology of religious experience Christianity entered into the defense of the existence of the Christian god without appeal to anything Christian."[70] Without being recognized, this strategy implied that religion lacked cogency, was cognitively empty, and could not secure its own central assertion, that God is. All security was sought in something extrinsic to Christian religion as such.

Consequently, theism passed into its own negation and offered a ready-made argumentative pattern for modern atheists. In particular, the road to denying God's existence had been laid down by the theologians of the early seventeenth century, such as Leonard Lessius and Marin Mersenne, who founded their God-proofs on the "natural philosophy" of Newton's universal mechanics, which explained all reality save the ultimate cause. All that the intellectuals such as Paul d'Holbach and Denis Diderot had to do was to use the same argumentation but to modify the conclusions. To that end, they borrowed from the autonomous mathematics of René Descartes the idea that material reality should not be explained in religious terms, discarded his First Philosophy, and replaced Newton's non-mechanical First Cause, God, with the notion of

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[69] Buckley, *Denying and Disclosing God*, 28.
[70] Buckley, *Origins of Modern Atheism*, 67.

dynamic matter. With that, the "God of gaps" was no longer needed.[71]

Like Taylor, Buckley does not affirm the inevitability of the disappearance of religion. He believes that the self-negation of theism, which comes from the internal contradiction in early modern apologetics, is just a purgative stage. It invites a higher synthesis: the negation of God can itself be negated through reflective appropriation of the personal and communal experience of revelation. However, theology needs to learn a lesson from the dialectical origins of modern atheism. Buckley warns against a theology that is not conscious that God is a self-revealing and self-communicating presence, not just a conclusion.[72] To remedy its error, theology in a secular age has to draw on the personal evidence of who God is and even that God is. Such primordial evidence, Buckley insists, is found "in the person and in the event that is Jesus Christ."[73] Notably, he concludes *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* with the following words of Blaise Pascal:

> All of those who seek God apart from Christ, and who go no further than nature, either find no light to satisfy them or come to devise a means of knowing and serving God without a mediator, thus falling into either atheism or deism, two things almost equally abhorrent to Christianity.[74]

Though, for Buckley, reflection on uniquely Christian evidence is essential, to prevent the damage similar to that inflicted by the reductionist interpretations of Aquinas' "Five Ways" in the past,

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[71] Buckley's entire *Origins of Modern Atheism* is dedicated to illuminating this dialectical process. For a summary, also see Buckley, *Denying and Disclosing God*, 30–36, and "Atheism," 49–54.

[72] Buckley, *Denying and Disclosing God*, xv.

[73] Buckley, *Origins of Modern Atheism*, 361.

[74] Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (London: Cox and Wyman, 1977), no. 449, 169–170. Quoted in Buckley, *Origins of Modern Atheism*, 363.

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he does not close the door on philosophy either. He especially highlights the need for an adequately developed metaphysical account that does not mistake beings for being itself.[75]

Nicholas Boyle

While Taylor's account emphasizes the affective/practical dimension of faith, Buckley advocates the integration of the speculative, affective/active, and institutional dimensions.[76] The latter is the primary focus in the writings of another contemporary Hegelian thinker, a British intellectual Nicholas Boyle.[77]

Though not a theologian, Boyle does not hide his "theological stem" and Christian commitments.[78] Just as for other thinkers discussed thus far, so also for Boyle, secularity has both positive and negative sides. In his evaluation of secularity in a positive light, Boyle resonates with Hegel, for whom secularization is the work of the Spirit. But he also laments over the impossibility of universal belief in a contemporary world.[79] Furthermore, Boyle concurs with Taylor and Buckley that secularity is a Christian discovery. However, unlike Taylor who recognizes the influence of both Catholic and Protestant Reform movements, Boyle ties the first explicit rendering of secularity to the Protestant Reformation as the driving force behind the emergence of the modern state.[80]

Boyle complements Taylor's and Buckley's analyses of secularity by examining the fragility of contemporary Christian identity from

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[75] For Buckley's rebuttal of the incriminations against Aquinas, see *Denying and Disclosing God*, 48–69.

[76] See Buckley, "Atheism," 55.

[77] See Nicholas Boyle, *Who Are We Now? Christian Humanism and the Global Market from Hegel to Heaney* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1998); *2014: How to Survive the Next World Crisis* (New York: Continuum, 2010).

[78] Boyle, *Who Are We Now?*, 7.

[79] Boyle, *Who Are We Now?*, 89 and 310.

[80] Boyle, *Who Are We Now?*, 89–90.

the perspective of modern globalization – in his view, the defining factor shaping contemporary culture.[81] According to Boyle, secularity is intertwined with the processes of globalization to such an extent that the two notions nearly overlap.[82] Hence, for him, understanding the interdependence between political and economic development is crucial for responding to the imminent crisis that a culture of self-sufficiency is facing unless it risks a change.[83] Boyle emphasizes that this change demands not only personal self-transcendence but also going beyond the self-sufficiency of countries and nations. In particular, he argues that, in the present situation, the globalization of the market is not matched with the supranational structures that regulate the global market and help to distribute limited resources more justly.[84] As he points out, the dollar travels easily but not the poor.[85] The world of global corporations is hardly concerned with global justice.

Hence, drawing upon Hegelian political philosophy, Boyle insists that any effort to build a liberal Christian humanism has to take into account the interplay between the state, market, and society, and that the political exists to regulate the market.[86] With Hegel, Boyle also affirms that the supranational governing body can never be a world-state. In his reading, it ought to be something more like the European Union, or an international unifying organization, such as the Roman Catholic Church has been for centuries. In this context, Boyle maintains that, as a supranational institution and the

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[81] Boyle, *Who Are We Now?*, 75.

[82] For Boyle, the adjectives such as "post-modern, globalized, secularized, marketized" all describe the same complex phenomenon of the post-imperial era (*Who Are We Now?*, 82 and 310).

[83] See Boyle, *How to Survive*, 13.

[84] Thus, "the next world crisis will be not economic but political" and "the global economic crisis is . . . a crisis of global governance" (Boyle, *How to Survive*, xv and 118, respectively).

[85] Boyle, *How to Survive*, 25.

[86] Boyle, *Who Are We Now?*, 88–89.

entity that promotes human vocation for life, the Catholic Church has a significant role to play in responding to globalization and fostering the stability of modern identity. As the global ecological crisis and the recent pandemic brought to light, these insights warn against the shortsighted withdrawal of any world country – but especially of the world's affluent countries – from the international commitments and networks.

Boyle's analysis of consumerism further elucidates some characteristic features of the human condition brought about by globalization. The consumer, with whom the post-modern individual tends to self-identify, does not have an abiding identity but simply generates a series of wishes for instantaneous satisfaction, which results in the "compression" of time and the fragility of the resulting "punctual" self.[87] Since individuality, for Boyle, is a category of collective life, the political and economic crisis is inseparable from the crisis of human identity. The dominant symbol of postmodernism (that is, the global market) becomes the shopping mall, and the one value that postmodernism leaves "undissolved and indissoluble" is "justice (that is, protest)."[88] In response, Boyle proposes that, becoming aware of oneself as a producer, a modern person can reconnect with the past (as a user of the gifts procured by past generations) and the future (as someone who actively engages the creation of it). Consumption is a kind of "consummation, an end," whereas "production is the extension of a line, backwards and forwards."[89] Conceiving oneself as producer, thus, counters the "punctuality" of the modern self and the "compression" of time. It also brings into awareness three relationships that are intrinsic to the economic system but mostly hidden from the view of the

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[87] Boyle, *Who Are We Now?*, 40. This is not unlike Taylor's lament about the "buffered" self and "homogenous" time (*Secular Age*, 209).

[88] Boyle, *Who Are We Now?*, 82.

[89] Boyle, *Who Are We Now?*, 41.

consumer: "confidence (in the future), solidarity (or mutual trust), and obligation," such as of responsibility and gratitude.[90]

To summarize, in comparison to Taylor and Buckley, Boyle adds an emphasis on the need for civic and political choices that lead to "justice and peace."[91] Always at the center of Boyle's attention, concern for justice (primarily, economic and political) makes its climactic appearance at the end of the last chapter of *Who Are We Now?* By drawing on a poem by Seamus Heaney, Boyle (not unlike Taylor) observes that the world in which we live today can no longer "credit" universal faith; such a faith resides in the world gone by, "*In Illo Tempore.*"[92] After recalling Heaney's image of Diogenes searching for a just man in a market, he ends by saying that, even in times of the global market, "it is possible to seek oneself to be just, and that in the end is enough identity for anybody."[93] As Dominic Doyle has pointed out, such an ending might betray that Boyle's account is too accommodating to a secular Christian humanism and lacks an adequate differentiation between nature and grace.[94] Unless Boyle is making an allusion to Gerard Manley Hopkins' "Thou art indeed just, O Lord," mentioned a few pages earlier, his conclusion indeed lacks a vertical axis.[95]

In any case, Boyle's account prompts a theologian to rethink the relationship between justice as fairness and the "justice" of gratuitous self-giving, especially as experienced in the unmerited justification by grace through Christ's self-sacrifice. Likewise,

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[90] Boyle, *Who Are We Now?*, 40–41.

[91] Boyle, *Who Are We Now?*, 4, see also ibid., 93.

[92] Seamus Heaney, "*In Illo Tempore*," in *Station Island* (Boston: Faber & Faber, 1984), 118, quoted in Boyle, *Who Are We Now?*, 310.

[93] Boyle, *Who Are We Now?*, 311. See also the title-poem of Heaney's collection *The Haw Lantern* (New York: The Noonday, 1987).

[94] Dominic Doyle, "Nicholas Boyle's Christian Humanism: An Overview and Critique by a Systematic Theologian," *Heythrop Journal* 45, no. 2 (2004): 240–241; *The Promise of Christian Humanism*, 26.

[95] See Boyle, *Who Are We Now?*, 307.

Boyle's account raises a question of the historical agency of Christians. In particular, his juxtaposing of the identity of the immediate satisfaction-seeking consumer and that of a producer invites theological reflection on the priority of giving over taking, and on trust, solidarity, and gratitude, all of which, again, point to *agape*-love. Furthermore, Boyle's account explicitly calls theologians to reconsider the institutional, economic, and political aspects of human living and, by extension, of the network of *agape*, proposed by Taylor. As explored later, this will be answered in Lonergan's treatment of the historical agency of Christ as the higher integration of the human good of order.

The Contribution of Bernard J. F. Lonergan

Our discussion of Taylor's analysis of secularity, and of the complementary insights by Buckley and Boyle, has brought to light the general contour of a heuristic for a theological response in a secular age. To attain greater conceptual clarity and to advance the construction of this heuristic, we now turn, first, to delineating Lonergan's contribution to understanding secularity and, then, to bringing his analysis into explicit conversation with the thinkers discussed thus far.

Lonergan's Analysis of Secularization and Sacralization

Lonergan's most extensive treatment of the secular condition is found in his lecture on the topic of sacralization and secularization.[96] He announces his limited aim as "clarifying terms and presenting a genealogy of differences."[97] In reality, his achievement goes beyond this explicitly articulated goal. I contend that besides

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[96] Lonergan, "Sacralization and Secularization," in CWL 17, 259–281. With slight variations, the lecture was delivered twice in 1973 and 1974.

[97] Lonergan, "Sacralization and Secularization," 260 (this formulation is absent in the 1973 autograph).

distinguishing between legitimate and illegitimate secularization and sacralization, Lonergan's analysis also yields a principle that can guide a theological response to secularity, a principle that calls for subverting the secularist subversion. Let us examine each of these contributions in some greater detail.

Distinctions: *Legitimate and Illegitimate Secularization and Sacralization.* While discussing the contrasting interpretations of secularity by Marie-Dominique Chenu and Jean Cardinal Daniélou, Lonergan makes several distinctions. He proposes that, in themselves, the terms secularization and sacralization (and derivatives such as "desacralization" and "resacralization") are neutral terms, created to name the process of "making profane" and "making sacred" without indicating a judgment of value, implied in such terms as "desecration" or "consecration."[98] Though in themselves neutral, the terms secularization and sacralization denote the reality, and understanding this reality leads to making judgments of fact and value.[99] The judgment of fact distinguishes between real and apparent secularization and sacralization, whereas the judgment of value decides between "(1) a sacralization to be dropped and (2) a sacralization to be fostered; (3) a secularization to be welcomed and (4) a secularization to be resisted."[100] Since the first and the third, and the second and the fourth, are complementary pairs, this yields two basic categories of legitimate and illegitimate secularization. The two correspond with what we earlier identified as positive and negative sides of secularity.

A legitimate secularization to be fostered can be understood as "the liberation of a secular domain from the once but no longer appropriate extension of the sacral."[101] Lonergan's examples that illustrate when secularization is to be welcomed (and sacralization

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[98] Lonergan, "Sacralization and Secularization," 270.
[99] Lonergan, "Sacralization and Secularization," 271.
[100] Lonergan, "Sacralization and Secularization," 264.
[101] Lonergan, "Sacralization and Secularization," 274.

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is to be dropped) echo Taylor's descriptions. For instance, the secularization of the Axial revolution that made the transcendence of God explicit, and the humanization of the post-Enlightenment world, are to be welcomed, whereas the medieval sacralization of the oppressive social and political arrangements, and the sacralization of the outdated church procedures, are to be abandoned. Besides the complementary pair of legitimate secularization and illegitimate sacralization, there is an illegitimate secularization and the accompanying legitimate (re)sacralization. Lonergan's name for the illegitimate secularization, which needs to be resisted by resacralization, is secularism: "the outraged and outright rejection of all religion as the futile champion of a dead and unlamented past."[102]

In Lonergan's reading, secularism was bred by a persistent age-long rearguard action maintained in Roman Catholic and in other circles against the shift to modernity.[103] Without realizing that granting to the secular what belongs to it and thus withdrawing sacrality from such areas as science was long overdue, the church defended itself against legitimate secularization mistaken as an "incomprehensible desacralization."[104] Similarly, as in Buckley's presentation of the dialectical origins of modern atheism, an apologetic zeal, once more, worked out for the worse. The combined effort of Buckley and Lonergan, then, shows that a proof of God's existence has to be formulated in a horizon that itself cannot be proved.[105] One

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[102] Lonergan, "Sacralization and Secularization," 274 and 277. Hence, Lonergan's notion of secularism echoes Buckley's notion of atheism and Taylor's closure of the "immanent frame," or the eclipse of transcendence.

[103] See Lonergan, "Sacralization and Secularization," 274.

[104] Lonergan, "Sacralization and Secularization," 275.

[105] This also resonates with Taylor's appeal to "error-reducing moves," by which a thinker enters a broader horizon instead of resorting to syllogisms. See Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 34–60, esp. 51–55.

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needs to ascend to it by way of conversion, and to persuade others by painstaking *manuductio*.[106]

As do his other interlocutors, Lonergan observes the fragility of the Christian identity that secularism brings about: "When everyone believes except the village atheist, doubting is almost impossible. When few believe, doubting is spontaneous, and believing is difficult."[107] Yet, Lonergan is hopeful about the final outcome: "when secularization becomes secularism, the secularism can be overcome by a resacralization."[108] Examining how this can be made possible leads us to consider what I call "the principle of subverting the subversion."

The Principle of Subverting the Subversion. Drawing upon Paul Ricoeur's application of the double dialectic of suspicion and recovery to Sigmund Freud's work,[109] Lonergan proposes that a fitting response to illegitimate secularization is to subvert the subversion: "to tackle secularism on its own ground and to resacralize what never should have been secularized."[110]

In "The Atheism of Freudian Psychoanalysis," Paul Ricoeur grants that, being a cultural phenomenon, religion indeed might meet the psychic need for being motivated by rewards and punishments beyond measure, an ultimate "carrot and stick." Ricoeur, Lonergan observes, grants the legitimacy of Freud's critique of

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[106] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (hereafter *ST*) I.1.5 ad 2. *Manuductio* ("leading by hand") implies a kind of personal guidance. Note that in all citations of *ST*, the numbers indicate part, question, and article.

[107] Lonergan, "The Response of the Jesuit as Priest and Apostle in the Modern World," in CWL 13, 156.

[108] Lonergan, "Sacralization and Secularization," 275.

[109] Though in "Sacralization and Secularization" Lonergan is not directly referring to the dialectic itself, elsewhere he makes clear that we are to be ready "to use Paul Ricoeur's double dialectic, the dialectic of suspicion to eliminate what appears excellent but is fraudulent; and a dialectic of recovery that uncovers what really is excellent underpinning a position that has become deformed." See "Horizons and Transpositions," in CWL 17, 428.

[110] Lonergan, "Sacralization and Secularization," 276.

religion but "does not grant that the critique is in fact complete."[111] In particular, Freud overlooks the fact of personal religious development. The "carrot and stick" of religion, to use a contemporary metaphor, indeed might appeal to human beings. However, this appeal is to an immature or distorted religious conscience that is motivated by fear and guilt, which changes as religious people grow in faith. Then, "fear gives place to love, and the terrors of guilt yield to shame for one's lack of responsibility and sorrow for one's lack of love."[112]

Just as Freud overlooks personal religious development and mistakes retardation for development, so does a secularist in respect to cultural development. In the light of Freud's mistaking for religious maturity what is in fact religious retardation, Lonergan proposes,

> such terms as sacralization and secularization can assume a precise meaning ... they deal with development and retardation, with mistaking retardation for development and mistaking development for retardation and, most disastrous of all, with triumphantly living out a mistake as though it were the truth, or living out the truth in the agony of fearing it to be a mistake.[113]

Whereas living out a mistake as though it were the truth can arguably be identified with both the secularist outlook (illegitimate secularization) and the anti-modernist stance of the pre-Vatican II Church (illegitimate sacralization), living out the truth in agony speaks to the predicament of a modern believer who lives under the cross-pressure of the "immanent frame" (secularity in Taylor's third sense). In Lonergan's view, this agony, however, does not need to have the final word. The faith of the believer can be reinforced through subverting the secularist subversion (legitimate

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[111] Lonergan, "Sacralization and Secularization," 262.
[112] Lonergan, "Sacralization and Secularization," 263.
[113] Lonergan, "Sacralization and Secularization," 263.

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resacralization). This subversion involves a threefold movement of acknowledging the insight of secular culture, discovering its oversight, and creatively utilizing both:

> I find, then, in Paul Ricoeur's treatment of Freud a model for handling all similar issues. Acknowledge the insight of the critic of religion, and pin it down exactly. Discover the oversight that makes him critic of religion. Use his insight for purification of religion, and use his oversight for a renewal of its vitality and power.[114]

For Lonergan, as discussed in more detail shortly, the key insight of the secular culture concerns the discovery of the historicity of human existence and achievements, especially through the scientific and historical revolutions.[115] A legitimate secularization, then, stems from a recognition that cultural development demands gradually fuller inhabitation of a world mediated by meaning and motivated by value.

This fuller inhabitation, Lonergan argues, occurs through the differentiations of consciousness. What does he mean by that? A "differentiated" consciousness distinguishes, understands, and adequately appropriates different modes in which the human mind operates consciously and intentionally. Lonergan calls these different modes of apprehension "realms of meaning." The four main realms of meaning are common sense, theory, interiority, and religious experience. In the realm of common sense, things are known in their particularity and in relation to us, in the exercise of practical intelligence. The realm of theory engages the theoretic

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[114] Lonergan, "Sacralization and Secularization," 280. It is striking that Sarah Coakley proposes a similar technique to responding to critiques of systematic theology: "current resistances to systematic theology can be answered precisely by acknowledging the force of their critiques – and then subtly shifting the vision of the systematic undertaking to enable a simultaneous response and rebuttal." See *God, Sexuality and the Self: An Essay "On the Trinity"* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 66.

[115] On the two revolutions, see Lonergan, "Questionnaire on Philosophy," 354–356.

or contemplative exercise of intelligence, by which systematic or explanatory meanings emerge; then things are understood in relation to other things. In the realm of interiority, common sense and theory themselves become the data of consciousness' reflection to understand, verify, and evaluate by means of what Lonergan calls "generalized empirical method," a method grounded in self-appropriation.[116] Lastly, the realm of religious experience is a realm where God is known and loved. In this realm, we transcend the discursive mode of operation in mediated immediacy beyond words, concepts, and propositions.[117]

Differentiated consciousness grounds one's ability to shift smoothly between different realms of meaning, without dismissing any, and to distinguish what is fitting when, and why:

> Differentiated consciousness appears when the critical exigence turns attention upon interiority, when self-appropriation is achieved, when the subject relates his different procedures to the several realms, relates the several realms to one another, and consciously shifts from one realm to another by consciously changing his procedures.[118]

For Lonergan, the differentiation of consciousness calls us to work out the explanation of the three stages of meaning that unfold as cultures develop. These "stages" correspond to the realms of meaning, as they emerge and coexist in history: (1) in the symbolic-narrative stage, human knowing follows the mode of common sense; (2) in the theoretical stage, human consciousness is capable of inhabiting the realms of both common sense and theory; (3) in the "methodical" stage, the earlier modes of knowing remain but

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[116] The method is empirical insofar as it can be performatively verified by attending to one's own conscious and intentional operations; it is generalized insofar as it provides the basis for further determinations that yield distinct methods proper to each discipline and field of inquiry.

[117] For more on the realms of meaning, see Lonergan, *Method*, 78–82.

[118] Lonergan, *Method*, 81; cf. 82–95 and 282–284.

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are transformed by the turn to the realm of interiority, the realm in which the self-appropriation of the knowing and loving subject gives rise to higher viewpoints, dialectically purged and sifted on the grounds of one's authenticity.[119]

Thus, global and compact symbolic-narrative expressions proper to common sense give way to the second stage and more exacting systematic meanings proper to logical-propositional and theoretical-metaphysical expressions, and, finally, the "methodical" stage of self-appropriation allows for understanding and owning the structured operations themselves in every field of human endeavor.[120] For Lonergan, this dynamic is, precisely, the key to legitimate secularization.[121] Such a secularization results from the differentiation of religious consciousness that moves beyond the symbolic stage, the enchanted cosmos of our historical childhood, and denies the symbol literal meaning but not all significance.[122]

As Lonergan's reference to "mistaking retardation for development and mistaking development for retardation" indicates, the key oversight of the secularist is a truncated account of human development. This account is oblivious to (1) the development of religious consciousness and (2) the dialectical nature of secular advancement. Let us examine each of these points in some detail.

(1)

Lacking the awareness that, over time, the control of religious meaning has developed, a secularist mistakes the symbolic meaning for the literal and therefore denies religious symbols any true meaning. Secularists, considering themselves as having come of

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[119] See Lonergan, *Method*, 82.
[120] Lonergan, *Method*, 82–95, 282–284. The second stage, as seen in Lonergan's "Sacralization and Secularization," can be conceived as comprising the logical-propositional and theoretical-metaphysical phases. In "Horizons and Transpositions," Lonergan seems to be taking these phases as distinct stages.
[121] Cf. Lonergan, "Sacralization and Secularization," 278–279.
[122] See Lonergan, "Sacralization and Secularization," 279–280.

age, do not recognize the difference between the mediating of meaning and what is mediated by meaning, namely, between the symbols, as mediating religious reality, and the reality itself. Thus, secularists relinquish both as the outdated relics of the childhood of the human race. Moreover, they stultifyingly confuse objectifications of religious meaning, whether metaphysical or hermeneutical, as regress to the child's land.

What are some implications of such secular blunders for theology? Prima facie, a theology in the methodical and historically minded stage of meaning, one that is not oblivious of the development of religious consciousness, is best equipped to correct secularist confusion.[123] Discarding the symbolic – be it the metaphors of debt or price in soteriology, or the notion of liberation from the slavery of sin – as empty and simply outdated, as well as rejecting the use of philosophic categories as a lamentable hellenization of the pure Gospel message equally misses the point. This is why Lonergan in our era demands a theology that "confronts its own history, distinguishes the stages in its own development, [and] evaluates the authenticity or unauthenticity of its initiatives."[124] Specifically, discerning the truly sacred is to be guided by the threefold criteria of personal, communal, and historical authenticity.[125]

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[123] Lonergan, "Sacralization and Secularization," 278.
[124] Lonergan, "Philosophy and the Religious Phenomenon," 406. See also "Questionnaire on Philosophy," 357; "Theology in Its New Context," 48–59; "The Absence of God in Modern Culture," 94.
[125] See Lonergan, "Sacralization and Secularization," 271: "The personal criterion is the authenticity of the individual, an authenticity that results cumulatively from his attentiveness, his intelligence, his reasonableness, his responsibility. The communal criterion is the authenticity of the individual's tradition, for it is only a partial and qualified authenticity that results from an authentic appropriation of a defective tradition. Finally, the historical criterion arises inasmuch as religion itself develops, for what is authentic at one stage of religious development may no longer be authentic at another."

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(2)

Another way in which the secularist notion of development is hampered by being truncated is its misconstruing of the dialectical aspect of human advancement. While rightly admitting the possibility of secular progress, a secularist does not easily comprehend "the many ways in which progress is corrupted by bias and turned into decline." Overlooking "the redemptive role of religion in overcoming bias and restoring progress" is then inevitable.[126]

By way of clarifying what Lonergan means, we need to recall his tripartite theory of history, explained in more detail later. Against the Enlightenment myth of progress, Lonergan points out that history is a dynamic compound of progress, decline, and redemption.[127] Human intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility yield the possibility of progress. Unintelligent, unreasonable, and irresponsible decisions result in decline. Then, the magnitude of problem of evil requires a redemptive process that is unsustainable by merely immanent sources. The horizontal processes of human nature are elevated by the vertical finality that finds its proper goal "in a self-transcending being-in-love that begins in the home, reaches out to the tribe, the city-state, the nation, mankind, and finds its anchor and its strength in the *agape* of the New Testament."[128] Lonergan teaches that *agape* is at the heart of God's supernatural solution to the problem of evil, which is the redemption wrought in the mystery of the cross.[129] This redemption results

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[126] "Sacralization and Secularization," 280.

[127] On progress, decline, and redemption, esp. see Lonergan, *Insight*, ch. 7; *Method*, 51–54; "*Insight* Revisited," in CWL 13, 228.

[128] Lonergan, "Horizons and Transpositions," 413; see also "Healing and Creating in History," in CWL 16, 94–103, at 101. Note that, by bringing to the fore the presence of the creative vector of human progress and the need for a complementary healing vector, Lonergan is in accord with Taylor's positive reading of truly humanizing modern achievements and with his focus on *agape*.

[129] See Lonergan, *Insight*, ch. 20.

"from God's gift of his grace to individuals and from the manifestation of his love in Christ Jesus."[130] Hence, besides revision of theological method, the principle of subversion depends on a reorientation of theology's concern. On Lonergan's analysis, such reorientation entails a focus on human conversion and what makes it possible.

To summarize the foregoing, a legitimate and illegitimate (or ideological) secularization/sacralization are distinguished by the judgment each passes on human development. A judgment in favor of legitimate secularization corresponds with the occurrence of insight, while the judgment favoring illegitimate secularization/sacralization is a function of oversight; legitimate (re)sacralization results in the reversal of oversight. The upshot of these options then is a threefold principle of subverting the secularist subversion: (1) acknowledging the insight, (2) discovering the oversight, and (3) using both to turn the oversight "on its head." Based on Lonergan's account of secularity, this threefold principle made it clear that if theology is to gain influence within the contemporary cultural context, it needs a self-reflective judgment of value and an appreciation of the role of conversion.[131] The adequate means for attending to the former is a "methodical" theology; and the critical component of reflection on Christian conversion enables the acknowledgment of God's gift of divine love in Christ Jesus.[132]

The Heuristic for the Theological Response to Secular Culture

We can now explain how this analysis can integrate the insights of Taylor, Buckley, and Boyle. By and large, Lonergan's account of secularization adds to the analyses of Taylor and Boyle an explicitly theological dimension by foregrounding the distinction between

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[130] Lonergan, "*Insight* Revisited," 228–229.
[131] See Lonergan, *Method*, 125–127 and 211; "Theology in Its New Context," 58.
[132] See Lonergan, "The Future of Christianity," in CWL 13, 133.

nature and grace in relation to the problem of evil. Again, Lonergan's understanding of the process of secularization complements and brings to light the underlying structure of Buckley's insight into the dialectical origins of modern atheism.[133] His tripolar dialectic of sacralization-secularization-re(sacralization) yields the threefold principle of subversion that lends itself to guiding a theologian's response to a secular age. To complete our account of the heuristic frame for such a response, we shall now apply the "upper blade" of Lonergan's categories to the "lower blade" of data on secularization identified so far.[134]

As we have seen, for Lonergan, needed resacralization requires a subversion of the secularist subversion by identifying the secularist insight, spotting an oversight, and using both to reinforce the validity of faith. Considered in this way, human history can be understood as an eschatologically oriented series with a basic sequence: sacralization, secularization, and (re)sacralization of what should not have been secularized in the first place.[135] With regard to the genetic accounts of a secular culture discussed thus far, such a sequence might be briefly illustrated as follows. The sacralization of the natural in the "enchanted" pre-Axial period placed the human being within the hierarchical order of the cosmos, but in global and compact cosmocentric symbolisms, so it gave rise to such evils as human sacrifices and scapegoating. The post-Axial secularization, then, offered remedial desacralization of what was illegitimately

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[133] Notably, whereas Buckley's application of Hegelian dialectic presupposes that the internal contradiction destabilizes the atheistic propositions and eventually yields a higher synthesis, Lonergan's use of Ricoeur's dialectic actively reverses the secularist propositions that proceed from an oversight. This aligns with his own understanding of dialectic as "a concrete unfolding of linked but opposed principles of change" (*Insight*, 242).

[134] On the metaphor of scissors, which Lonergan used to describe how the "lower blade" of empirical data meets the "upper blade" of theory, see *Insight*, 337.

[135] Lonergan points out that this sequence is paradigmatically revealed in the Paschal mystery. See "Sacralization and Secularization," 269–270.

sacralized and made room for anthropocentric symbolism of human beings in the presence of the God as truly transcendent.[136] Next, the era of Roman Constantinian and ecclesiastical Christendom again sacralized some aspects of the secular life, against which the Reform movement reacted, not the least by reclaiming the goodness of the ordinary. The correction was brought about by means of yet another, political secularization, in the "passage from Christendom to Christianity."[137] However, the Reform movement was also liable to a turn to Deism's increasingly disengaged impersonal worldview.

With the detaching of divine transcendence more and more from God's transformative immanence, secularism enters the scene, initially in the form of exclusive humanism's "immanent frame." Exclusive humanism, however, does not prove sustainable inasmuch as the self-sufficient self cannot be shown to be capable of living out its own high moral ideals. For Taylor, this is manifested in the fragility of merely immanent motivations for benevolence, resulting in debased forms of individualism. While Taylor's criticism of secularism focuses on how it affects the social imaginary and Christian identity, Buckley demonstrates that when detached from the sources of revelation, and concrete religious experience, theology itself is not immune to distortions. Boyle meanwhile points out that market values are not enough for fully human living, especially when the forgetfulness of being a producer leads to the consumer's punctual self. Lastly, Lonergan's dialectical account of history explains that de facto breakdowns in human progress point to the deeper problem of evil. As the struggle continues, there emerges the need for a more sublime sacralization.

Guided by Lonergan's tripolar dialectic between sacralization, secularization, and resacralization, we have discerned an intelligible pattern in the data we assembled; and by applying his three-step

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[136] See "Sacralization and Secularization," 266–269.
[137] Lonergan, "Sacralization and Secularization," 264.

dialectic we were able to clarify the guiding principle for an adequate response to secularization. For the sake of completing my heuristic framework for this response, we now examine somewhat more closely (1) the basic insight and (2) oversight of a secular culture and then (3) draw some implications of the secular insight and oversight for doing theology in a secular age.

(1)

The key insight of a secular culture: Distinction. The key insight of secular culture that needs to be taken forward is the discovery of relative human autonomy that becomes possible with the differentiation of the realms of meaning. In virtue of this differentiation, one can distinguish between various fields of inquiry, for example, religious, moral, political, economic, etc. For instance, Taylor thematized the possibility of autonomous morality as distinct from holiness in the sense of the modern moral ideal of authenticity and universal benevolence. Boyle acknowledged the relative autonomy of social sciences, regarding their competence in political and economic analyses as indispensable to the promotion of understanding that leads to a more just and dignified life for all. So too Lonergan said that truly helping the poor demands "spending one's nights and days in a deep and prolonged study of economic analysis."[138] Moreover, the positive meaning of authenticity for both Lonergan and Taylor emphasizes the legitimacy of this relative human autonomy, so long as it is not self-referential.[139]

Secular culture's critique of religious stances that dismiss the relative autonomy of the secular and foster illegitimate sacralization exposed the inadequacy of a virulent antimodernism that bypassed

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[138] See "Sacralization and Secularization," 280.

[139] To recapitulate, the ideal of authenticity, for Taylor, denotes the self-determination of the subject who uniquely realizes one's true self in relation to the common horizons of significance; for Lonergan, authenticity is based on the self-transcendence of the attending, understanding, deliberating, deciding, and loving subject.

the need for foundations that could support the wholesome, and in some cases diverse, development of religious institutions and practices. Absent such foundations that can acknowledge in a positive way the distinctions between different fields of inquiry, undifferentiated religious consciousness fostered the sacralization that was characteristically classicist in nature. Classicism as based on conceptualism and legalism tends to foster us-against-them divisions through types of illegitimate sacralization as well as to subordinate the significance of charity to the forms of dominative power proper to bureaucratic authority that thwarts the practical primacy of human flourishing in all its contingent particularity.[140] When differences are regarded as threatening, there is only one step to the escalation of animosity between differing groups. It follows that theology in the secular age faces a triple challenge to break free from the straitjacket of classicist, conceptualist, and legalistic approaches and interpretations. Otherwise, illegitimate sacralization continues to undermine the positive contribution that secular insight into human autonomy might bring.

(2)

The oversight of a secular culture: Separation. While the secular age legitimately distinguishes between sacred and profane spheres and

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[140] A series of linked tendencies – a classicist approach to culture, a conceptualist approach to intellect, and a legalist approach to ethics and governance – conspire to obscure the origins and the ends of concrete human action. The classicist assumes a static order susceptible of one universally normative culture, so that differences tend to be interpreted as defects that threaten universal principles. The conceptualist is preoccupied with the products of intelligence and reason – expressed in concepts and their logical deductions – to the neglect of the process of inquiry and insight into concrete situations. Legalism results from a fascination with universal norms to the neglect of the equity required in particular cases, and so the achievable good, which is always concrete, tends to be sacrificed in favor of honoring the universal principle (think of Javert in Victor Hugo's Les Misérables). Lonergan treats these issues in his major works *Insight* (esp. chs. 10, 13, 17, and 18) and *Method* (esp. chs. 1–2), and, in a more condensed form, in his essay "Transition from a Classicist Worldview."

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challenges illegitimate sacralization, the root fallacy of the secularist position is an oversight that turns legitimate distinctions into separations and negations.[141] A secularist overlooks the conditions for the historical emergence of a secular culture and that de facto Christianity fulfilled some conditions dialectically. Due to this flaw in the secularist analysis, progress is mistakenly confined to the secular sphere, excluding religious or theological contributions, while such an analysis downplays decline connected with the emergence of a secular culture. This creates the conditions for uncritically accepting the "secularization thesis" as true, and for dismissing religion as a relict of a world gone by.

Taylor, Buckley, Boyle, and Lonergan expose the ideological aspects of secularism in complementary ways. For Taylor, this secularist bias is based on the unreflective closure of the immanent frame and the immanentization of moral sources. According to Buckley, bracketing special theological categories that explain contingent supernatural interventions in human history contributed to the rise of modern atheism. Lonergan explains why: separating religious and cultural development, secularism inspires the mistaking of progress for retardation and vice versa. Boyle's analysis adds that, by the separation of "taking" in consumption from "giving" in production, the consumerist culture hides the person's producer-identity and subverts any awareness that the most important things we effect are not consumer goods and services but ourselves (both biologically and culturally).

In its own way, each interlocutor thus unmasks that separating (instead of distinguishing) autonomous spheres leads to a modern reductionism that is pervasive in the secularist discourse: it is subtraction theories in Taylor, naturalistic materialism in Buckley, economic reductionism in Boyle, and naïve realism in Lonergan.

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[141] Besides "Sacralization and Secularization," Lonergan treats the subject of secular separation and its consequences for theology in at least two other essays. See "Horizons and Transpositions," 415–418 and 427–428; "The Absence of God in Modern Culture," 92.

Each is a specific instance of the general methodological reductionism of the natural sciences that so often slides into ontological reductionism – by assumption even if not by argument. The eclipse of transcendence follows.

(3)

Using Insight and Oversight: Resacralization. Since, as Lonergan has insisted, insights correlate with progress and oversights bring about decline,[142] human flourishing in a secular age would surely be aided by a theology capable of identifying both secularist insight and oversight and promoting the former and subverting the latter. On the analysis formed by what we learned from Taylor, Buckley, and Boyle, the simultaneous affirmation of authentic human progress and criticism of its aberrations demand a revision of theological method and a reorientation of its concern. Analyzing the insights and oversights of secular culture has uncovered the main exigencies for the needed reorientation of theology's concern and the basic demands such reorientation places on theological method. These needs can be summarized in terms of five major criteria to be met by the theological response to secular culture:

FIRST CRITERION: *AGAPE*. *Agape* is the foundation of Christian discipleship that promotes all-inclusive friendship, as committed to self-donative love. Secularism, however, reduces *agape* to universal good will and thus filters away its fuller meaning as the universal antecedent willingness to bear all things for the sake of the greater good. Universal benevolence shorn of the original Christian context risks self-negating collapse into the "live and let live" of modern social contract theory of Hobbes and Locke. To reclaim Christian *agape* as the divinely originating love of friendship is central to the theological response to secular culture.

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[142] "Insight into insight brings to light the cumulative process of progress . . . insight into oversight reveals the cumulative process of decline." See Lonergan, *Insight*, 8.

SECOND CRITERION: CONVERSION. The insufficiency of merely immanent motivations and support for benevolence means that theologians need to situate *agape* within the context of the evil of sin and in relation to the transformation of an evil situation through repentance, forgiveness, and absorbing the effects of evil without retaliation. This requires theologians to distinguish among sin, suffering, and finitude and, above all, invites theological reflection on conversion. As a dynamic concept, conversion can only be adequately treated by a historically minded theology that leaves behind the unhelpful trinity of classicism, legalism, and conceptualism and thus can explain the "healing" vector in history.

THIRD CRITERION: CHRIST'S WORK. An adequate retrieval of the notion of *agape* in the context of sin entails focus on the personal evidence for a personal God, that is, an incarnate meaning of *agape*, the gift of God's love in Christ Jesus who passes through death to a fullness of life bestowed on the human race. A reflection on God's unmerited gesture of self-sacrificial love, the gift that is both intimate and personal but also all-embracing – for it unites all in Christ and hence with one another – directs the quest for rediscovering God's transcendence-in-immanence toward the answer that is God-with-us-and-for-us.

FOURTH CRITERION: JUSTICE. The ultimately ineffective forms of the secular solutions to the problem of human evil pose a challenge to a contemporary theologian to fully account for how the mystery of God's self-giving love, definitively revealed on the cross, opens up and empowers new ways of understanding human historical agency, especially on the corporate level, and allows for rethinking the intelligible relationship between horizontal and vertical justice, as well as between giving and taking. This shift entails reconsidering the power of the justice of the cross over against "mere" power – the power that simply enforces rigid justice.

FIFTH CRITERION: EXPLANATORY FRAMEWORK. Reclaiming the notion of *agape* in the Age of Authenticity and of the scientific and historical revolutions, finally, calls for a theology that not only

affirms the legitimacy of the turn to the subject while avoiding subjectivism and of historical consciousness without succumbing to historicism but also is methodically adequate to withstand the accusations of alleged irrationality without being rationalist. In an ever-changing context, such a theology provides an explanatory framework that humbly seeks the imperfect and analogical intelligibility of the mysteries of faith.

To conclude, this chapter situates our inquiry in the context of challenges to Western Christian identity posed by modern secular culture's moral discourses, novel social and political imaginaries, and socioeconomic arrangements, by drawing on the accounts of secularity of Charles Taylor, Michael Buckley, Nicholas Boyle, and Bernard Lonergan. We have seen that, in a sense, modern secularity as post-Christian is in no small measure a progeny of Christianity itself. Our overarching concern about the role of Christians in a secularized society raises the question regarding an appropriate theological response to the exigencies of modern secularized culture. By elaborating the threefold principle engaged in subverting a secularist subversion, I set forth a heuristic structure in terms of five criteria for a response to this question. Chapter 2 further outlines my response by detailing how I plan to meet these heuristic criteria in a systematic and biblically grounded way.