

**...God? It Must Be So Lonely:
The Dilemma of Modern Secularism**

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Introduction

No matter where one searches for news about the world, there is one concept which is perpetually arising in some form or another: secularism. But what is meant when this term is used? For the most part, the popular masses have not studied religion, and many are ignorant of even those concepts which define their own traditions. Indeed, it would appear that some media outlets are utilizing this ignorance to create a scare tactic of sorts. In this project I will seek to deconstruct secularism, and present it in a manner that is more accessible when analysing modern media. By so doing, I hope to clarify some of the misconceptions that surround secularism in the modern era. As modernization is not equal among different geopolitical regions, my focus will be on the Western world for the duration of this project. The definition of what “Western” is that I will be using is provided by Charles Taylor, which he categorizes as the geographical region of the North Atlantic.¹ There are forms of secularism which exist in other areas of the world; however, to address all of them in this short project would only lead to confusion.

In this introductory chapter I will tease out the definition of secularism and present it in a contextualized manner. There are many different definitions that exist for secularism, and this is a problem which must be addressed before any further discussion can unfold. After doing this, I will touch upon my inspiration for working on such a topic. Within this section I will also present some key definitions that will be drawn upon in later chapters. Following this, there will be brief introductions to the main themes in each of my following chapters. This is done in hopes

¹ Charles Taylor, “Introduction” in *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2007): 1.

that questions will begin to form in regards to the coming content, and if this is successful then it will serve to create an interest in what is to come. As secularism has gained a reputation of sorts, I openly acknowledge that there may be elements in this text which are not resonant with everyone who may be reading. It is my intention that these difficult topics be handled with the utmost care; in so doing I will also make every attempt to keep any personal biases out of these potentially charged sections.

The three definitions of secularity

Is not secularism, in its simplest form, the separation of Church and State? Unfortunately, the definition is not as clear cut as one would prefer. For the purposes of my analysis, I will be focusing on the three individual secularities proposed by Taylor in his work *A Secular Age*. They are: secularity 1, which corresponds to the secularization of public space; secularity 2, or the decline of belief and practice, and; secularity 3, which is the change of conditions in the modern world. Of these, secularity 1 would appear closest to the ‘simple’ definition of secularism insofar as it represents the separation of the Church most directly. Taylor elaborates that, “in our ‘secular’ societies, you can engage fully in politics without ever encountering God, that is, coming to a point in which the crucial importance of the God of Abraham² for this whole enterprise is brought home forcefully and unmistakably”.³ This, however, can be questioned. It is difficult to live life day to day without encountering something that does not have a religious influence buried within. This struggle will be draw upon in my chapter on politics and secularism later on.

² Taylor uses the terminology “God of Abraham” which discussing Western religion because, for him, the dominant religions existing in the Western world are Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This is not meant to exclude those who do not fall into these three groups, it is simply a means of simplifying what will be a dense argument.

³ *Ibid.*, 1.

What about secularity 2? Taylor writes that this, “consists in the falling off of religious belief and practice, in people turning away from God, and no longer going to Church. In this sense, the countries of western Europe have mainly become secular—even those who retain the vestigial public reference to God in public space”.⁴ What exactly would it look like to have a decline in worship while maintaining reference to a faith? To demonstrate this rather paradoxical phenomenon, Phil Zuckerman’s studies in the Scandinavian countries can be presented. His year working in this region shows an alternative way in which people present themselves when asked what it means to be Christian. To elaborate, he writes that for the Danes and Swedes:

Being Christian is linked to their culture, it is part of their collective heritage, and it is manifested in their childhood experiences and family traditions. [...] As for the redeeming blood of Jesus, or the Virgin Birth, or heaven and hell, or ‘justification by faith’, or the Book of Revelation—these things are marginal if not downright absent from their subjective experience of what it means to be Christian.⁵

Zuckerman relates this phenomenon to that of secular Jews.⁶ He elaborates by stating that during his years in Hebrew school, not even the teachers believed that Moses had received the Commandments from God at Mount Sinai. Relating this back to Taylor’s secularity 2, this can be observed as the falling off of belief in public spaces.

Secularity 3 is different from the above two Western incarnations. This version of secularism does not attempt to repudiate religious beliefs. Rather, secularism of this sort exists due to the intermingling of the many religious traditions that exist in the world. With the advent of technology, social media and the like, humans can now transcend geographic borderlines and

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵ Phil Zuckerman, “Cultural Religion” in *Society Without God: What the Least Religious Nations Can Tell Us About Contentment* (New York: New York University Press, 2008): 150.

⁶ Zuckerman himself claims in the chapter to have been raised in a Jewish family, surrounded by other Jews, though none of them believed the literal teachings of the Jewish religion.

disregard the limits placed on us by time; we can communicate instantly with someone across the world without needing to wait for the post or to travel to their location. In making this advancement, we open ourselves to the knowledge of those we would not otherwise have any contact with. Taylor recognises this and states that, “[t]he shift to secularity in this sense consists, among other things, of a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace”.⁷ This technological gift also acts as our curse, as it can invigorate acceptance or reinforce disdain through knowledge of the ‘other’.

A preview to the secular world

It is within this final form of secularity that I will direct this project and the elements which will be explored within it. The aim will be to demonstrate how the multiplicity of choice, provided by secularity 3, can create both positive and negative social situations and reactions. Secularism has become the new buzz word in discussions on faith and politics. Battle imagery and demonstrations of how conflict is arising cover the media, both on the conservative side of things, as well as within the liberal realms. One example of the conservative argument involves Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas in the United States of America. He believes that, “the First Amendment’s Establishment Clause does not apply to the states”.⁸ Thomas is agreeing that the federal government is responsible for not declaring an official national religion; however, his argument is that the individual states themselves are capable of making such decisions. The establishment clause is supposed to prohibit Congress from making any favourable decisions

⁷ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 3.

⁸ Michael Stone. “Constitutional horror: Clarence Thomas argues states can establish official religion” in *Progressive Secular Humanist*. Accessed November 22, 2014. <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/progressivesecularhumanist/2014/05/constitutional-horror-clarence-thomas-argues-states-can-establish-official-religion/>.

regarding one religion over another. Attempts at finding loopholes like this one are all too prevalent for some jurisdictions and some countries.

Terminology too plays a role in the debate on secularism. For the religious, those who propagate secular values are “atheists” or “nonbelievers”. These are used as derogatory terms to slander individuals who do not believe in the transcendent. Terms like this were used in the premodern epochs; for example, to not believe in God in pre-exilic Israel would violate certain laws. Specifically, to go against the belief in the Deity was to be guilty of being a blasphemer. Leviticus lists in three places that blasphemers are to be put to death by stoning (Lev 24:14, 24:16, and 24:23). In modern times, death may not be the prescribed course of action, but loss of social status, or a “social” death, are certainly imposed. There are those who have reclaimed certain terms in the name of secularism. These include terms such as “freethinker”; this word creatively conveys the idea that, without dogmatic command from clerical hierarchy, they are “free” to “think” however they desire. Groups of freethinkers have begun to congregate in areas where they feel it most difficult to express their true values. For instance, in Kansas City there is a group that meets for secular services once a month; they call themselves the Kansas City Oasis.⁹ The purpose of this group, they state, is to foster community for those who do not desire to be involved with the Church.

More on both sides of this debate will be elaborated on in my chapter on the politics of secularism. For now, the main purpose of highlighting these two very different views on religion in modern life is to demonstrate that the debate is not a black and white issue. Secularism, as most Westerners feel they experience it is a form of secularity 1 and is centred on the society’s

⁹ Kellie Moore. “Don’t call it atheist church; secular communities are growing” in *Religious New Services*. Accessed November 22, 2014. <http://www.religionnews.com/2014/04/11/dont-call-atheist-church-secular-communities-growing/>.

benefit from the separation of church and state. Admittedly, this is not the general worldview for this topic. Instead, there are areas of the world that view secularism as quite destructive to their way of life. In the Middle East, for instance, there was a period of time where secular governments ran nation-states. These governments based their principles on American concepts and values. However, the ruling class was also relatively corrupt and focused the country's funds on creating a lavish lifestyle for themselves.¹⁰ Thinkers such as Sayyid Qutb monopolized on the term Occidentalism in order to convince his people that there was a benefit to opposing secularism.¹¹ In mirroring Qutb's actions political leaders can tackle the perceived threat of secularism, as well as the influence they believe the West holds over their people.

It is important to recognise that secular thought is not a new revelation in recent years. Indeed, thinkers such as G. W. F. Hegel can be shown to have developed concepts which contribute to secularism as we observe it today. For Hegel, there was a divinity in the union of people within their communities. Peter C. Hodgson, writing on Hegel and secularism, states that, “[t]he church plays an essential role in the formation of the body politic; it is the provider of ideals, goals, frames of reference. But on its own it is unable to transform the world into an image of the kingdom of freedom. For that a process of secularization must occur”.¹² This requires a development of the ethical life of individuals, which in turn relates to the world as a social entity. Hodgson continues this thought by asserting that worldliness must be disciplined in such a way that it serves the divine without falling into self-gratification of idolatry.¹³ Such forms of idolatry could be as extreme as fundamentalist movements or as simple as the high

¹⁰ Jose Abraham, “Islamic Fundamentalism” Lecture notes in *Politics and Religion* (Sherbrooke, Quebec: Bishop's University, November 4, 2014).

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Peter C. Hodgson, “Hegel and Secularization” in *The Persistence of the Sacred in Modern Thought*, eds. Chris L. Firestone and Nathan A. Jacobs (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012): 367.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 367-368.

status we tend to place upon our technology in the modern era. This would then place Hegel, and the Hegelian notions which spring from his work, into the category of secularity 3. Indeed, this makes sense when the community aspect of Hegel's work is taken into consideration. Hodgson ends this discussion by highlighting that as of 1821, Hegel was wary of the current state of the secular world. He writes that, "[Hegel] enumerates signs of modern decadence and concludes that philosophers can do little to ameliorate them".¹⁴ For this reason, the conditions that led to secularism, as well as those in our modern day, will be explored throughout this project.

An aspect of secularism which must be addressed is the perceived loneliness that appears to exist in a world that lacks explicit religion. This initial fear makes logical sense; as Alain de Botton writes, "[o]ne of the losses modern society feels most keenly is that of a sense of community".¹⁵ Following this, he asks how religions may have handled this sense of alienation in order to enhance the perceived community spirit among individuals. De Botton argues that in modern times there is no explicit framing of our good deeds and charity, at least not in the way that it existed in premodern times.¹⁶ In this sense, that of the explicit outlining of community, he believes religions have a heightened ability to unify individuals. He writes that, "Catholicism states to create a sense of community with a setting. It marks off a piece of the earth, puts walls up around it and declares that within their parameters there will reign values utterly unlike those which hold sway in the world beyond".¹⁷ Through crossing the threshold and entering into this sacred space that individuals can begin to feel the pull towards community. Those within the congregation are not all of one demographic. Nevertheless, there is an almost universal ability to

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 368.

¹⁵ Alain de Botton, "Community" in *Religion for Atheists: A non-believer's guide to the uses of religion* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2012): 23.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

speaking with another without coming across as strange. The question, then, is how this sense can be achieved in the secular world.

Topics to be covered in this project

Having discussed the definition of secularism in detail, it is important to begin to centralize the focus of this project. In chapter two I will propose five elements of modern Western secularism, and in my discussion I will connect them with the major philosopher who developed each notion. This will serve to outline the more intricate nuances of secularism that cannot be covered through mere definition alone. This chapter will begin with the Reformation and use it as an example for the desire to depart from oppressive dogma. To get the most out of this chapter, it is imperative to keep in mind one overarching theme: the human desire for self-expression. All five of the elements will relate, at least in part, to this theme. It will end with a discussion of how modern ‘militant’ atheists can use these principles to further their fights against religious institutions in the political sphere. While not being an endorsement, there will be a discussion on some of the aspects that can be learned from these individuals.

Following this, chapter three will highlight the anticipated political and socio-economic impacts that this debate has had on Western society. This will begin by analysing the concept of someone responding with “None” when questioned about their faith. According to recent a Pew Research document, this group of individuals is rising in America. What values are inherent to the “Nones”? Indeed, do they possess any unified ethics? The chapter will proceed from these Nones by seeking to answer the question of morality in the political landscape; this will not be for the Nones alone, but rather it will present the religious views as well. On a similar concept, the question of whether or not religious institutions should be permitted to endorse politics will

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be investigated. Does the right of free speech allow religious figures to attempt to sway the views of their congregation? Finally, this chapter will investigate the idea of a completely separated church-state dichotomy; in so doing it will entertain a notion of secularity 1 from both the religious and the nonreligious perspectives.

What does the future have in store for the progression of secularism? Will it fade out entirely, or will it dominate those aspects of society currently under sway of religion? Chapter four seeks to address these questions by presenting several proposals for the future of secularism. The first to be entertained is the idea of secular individuals using religion as a teacher of sorts in an attempt to mirror the tolerance and acceptance which can be found in most doctrines. As secularity 3 is the harmony between the religious and the nonreligious, can this notion of religion as teacher be seen as viable so long as it avoids proselytising? This chapter will also seek to address the opposite side of this argument. Radical secularism, which acts in manners similar to many other fundamentalist groups, will be highlighted as a second possible future for the progression of secularism. In doing so, examples from Turkey, France, and America will be outlined in order to describe how exactly this future could arise. This viewpoint will culminate in the introduction to the New Atheism movement; this will be further defined in the final chapter.

The project will come to a close by addressing the question of whether or not secularism allows for religious inclusion and acceptance. In order to explore this, both the religious view of the nonreligious, and vice versa, will be examined. This final chapter will proceed by addressing an individual within each view that proposes inclusive ideas of the other. For example, the religiously inclusive view will be drawn from Gustavo Gutiérrez and his theology of liberation; while not a secularist theology, it does hold elements which can be adapted for this project. Each section will then progress into more charged and emotional arguments that begin to separate the

two viewpoints from one another. Ultimately, this chapter will end a discussion of the views of Sam Harris, and what he thinks of the notion of belief.

Conclusion

As demonstrated in this opening chapter, the topic of secularism is difficult to navigate and individuals who espouse it possess a multiplicity of viewpoints. The discussion at hand, then, is to unpack the concepts and opinions on secularism in an attempt to understand its occurrence in modernity. Of course, in attempting this project I am contributing yet another viewpoint to the various which can already be found within the field of study. However, it is my hope that in writing this I can create a positive dialogue between the two major players in this discussion: the religious and the nonreligious. Taylor, in the work that helped inspire my notions of secularity, writes that, “[b]elief in God is no longer axiomatic. There are alternatives. And this will also likely mean that at least in certain milieu, it may be hard to sustain one’s faith. There will be people who feel bound to give it up, even though they mourn its loss”.¹⁸ Does this negate the benefits of religion on society?

To bring this introduction to a close, and to further quote Taylor, “[s]ecularity in this sense is a matter of the whole context of understanding in which our moral, spiritual or religious experience and search takes place”.¹⁹ The methods through which we conduct our everyday lives have drastically changed from the premodern times. With this there is a new set of rules, and these dictate how we interact with individuals in our lives. Can the concept of secularism and the religious sphere be united in one individual? Can the nonreligious truly learn from, and engage with, the religious? Or are we destined to progress into a societal state where either secularism is

¹⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

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universally embraced, or wholeheartedly rejected? Alas, I am getting ahead of myself with these questions. To begin this discussion, we must first turn to the historical progression and the concepts which led to secularism.

History of Secularism

Having outlined a rough understanding of the definition of secularism in modernity, it is time to look at how it developed over time. This chapter will highlight elements of modern secularism, and the main philosopher who influenced each. Thus, these concepts are not necessarily in order of development; rather, they are organized by the era in which they became first realised, later to contribute to the advancement of secularism. First I will analyse the motivations behind the Protestant Reformation of the early 16th century. This will be highlighted in order to express the development of a desire for freedom of choice within what was seen as an oppressive dogmatic existence. This notion carries through to some modern secularists who feel religion in state affairs creates a similar oppression. Following this, I will examine John Locke and his notion that Reason should be the base of belief. Next, the idea that morality is not linked to religion will be elaborated on. This proposal of David Hume's does not negate a deity; however, it will be demonstrated how this can be implied. Building from these notions, Martin Heidegger's *paideia* will be examined in order to draw attention to the idea of inherent notions across humanisms. Finally, contemporary thinkers will be analysed. These final viewpoints will be used in order to show how secularism is currently approached.

Reformation: Revolution of Spiritual Nature

Many factors had a hand in the development of the Protestant Reformation, including the growing religious anxiety among the lay-people. As Steven Ozment writes:

In the century before Luther, traditional religious culture seemed no longer able to deal effectively with the religious anxiety and idealism of many people; to many it had become itself more the source than the cure of such anxiety.²⁰

Protestantism, as an attractive alternative to the religion of the day, provided a structure that allowed for individual relationships with the Lord. The removal of middlemen, such as the ordained Catholics, created an atmosphere in which subjective piety could be conceived. This moment, while still within a religious tradition, can be seen as an essential stage on the path towards the conception of secularism as a viable way of life. To draw from Ozment again, the religion nearing the Late Medieval period was “a mere ‘religion of habits’”²¹. This mechanistic form of devotion was believed to be efficacious; however, Ozment outlines that many lay-people felt “their inner anguish only increased by bare external religious observance; instead of giving comfort, mechanical religious ritual could also intensify and redirect the search for it”.²² This redirection of their existential quest would eventually lay the foundations for personal observances of faith.

Why would Protestants desire a break from tradition, and more importantly, why does this matter in regards to secularism? Foremost, the Protestant Reformation desired to break from the perceived oppression dictated by the hierarchy of the Catholic faith. Ozment details this by stating that, “[f]rom the point of view of the reformers, the issue in late medieval religion was not the challenge of venerable tradition and authority [...] but a religious institution that had become ineffectual in its devotional and liturgical practice and barely credible in its doctrinal

²⁰ Steven Ozment, “On the Eve of the Reformation” in *The Age of Reform 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of the Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980): 208.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 209.

²² *Ibid.*, 209.

teaching”.²³ The dissonance voiced by the reformers was the turning point in the desire for a more personal manner of approaching the Divine. Erasmus in the early 16th century recognised the power of these sentiments, especially those surrounding the figure of Luther. He fought Luther publically in regards to their differing theologies,²⁴ and yet he was never firm on how he felt towards him²⁵ The break between the two came in 1521 when Erasmus realised that Luther did not intend on a slow reform, but rather a radical shift.

The above discussion has demonstrated why a break from the tradition of Catholicism was welcomed by the reformers; now the attention must shift to what this new model offered. A distinctive aspect of the Lutheran reformation was the attempt to resolve the pilgrimage status earlier theologians had placed upon the earthly plane of existence.²⁶ As Ozment clarifies, “the present life remained an anxious pilgrimage; man lived in unresolved suspense, fearing damnation and hoping for salvation, ever in need of confession and indulgence, discipline and consolation, saintly intercession and the self-help of good works”.²⁷ The Reformation provided the faithful with a certainty that they were indeed saved, even before their deaths and judgements, if only they believed. This *sola fide* meant that, above the possible works one could conceivably do in their lifetime, the total belief in Christ would testify to their place in heaven. For the purposes of the analysis of the evolution of secularism, this is an overlooked point of importance. Prior to this stage, “people measured their worth in terms of efforts expended and deeds done; in the eyes of others, they were what they did”.²⁸ By no longer relying on works, and by placing more devotion towards the inner belief system, individuals opened themselves to

²³ *Ibid.*, 210.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 290.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 292.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 374.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 374.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 375.

intense pondering of their own existence. For the enchanted world of the medieval era, this inward thinking maintained a Christian lens, with the focal point being God. I would assert, however, that this development laid the foundation for later Humanist thought that would come out of the Enlightenment.

The denial of a life dictated by a doctrine one does not believe seems natural to us today. We live in an age that, to use Taylorian terminology, is “disenchanted” from the beliefs of the 16th century. For the Western mentality, to conceive of a world in which doctrine is forced upon the population is ridiculous, at least in theory. Of course, this sentiment varies depending on which doctrine is being discussed, and which end of the conservative-liberal debate the individual find themselves. Ours is a world in which choice is the predominant method of assigning faith; when the spiritual path one is on seems to lose its influence, then another option can be selected. In a way, this is similar to the mentality of the Reformation. Mechanistic devotion, with focus on praxis rather than belief, began to be seen as dissonant.

Reason as the Basis of Belief

In the 17th century the movement towards a secular worldview had already begun to take a hold of the political dialogue. The philosophy of John Locke can be seen as influential for the early humanism movement. Jeffrey Reiman says that he believes Locke interwove secular and theological aspects into his works, and that these played an important role in the evolution of modernity.²⁹ In so doing, Locke masterfully combined the opposing moralities of the secular and the theological in a time when a schism was beginning between these two concepts. Continuing on this thought, Reiman writes that:

²⁹ Jeffrey Reiman, “Towards a Secular Lockean Liberalism” in *The Review of Politics*, vol. 67, no. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 473-474.

Though Locke may well have thought (or come to think) that a defense of equality required appeal to God, there are elements in his writing that go beyond this and that can be put together into a plausible secular defense of equality. Indeed, I think they can be put together into a plausible secular liberal moral theory that includes a secular grounding for human moral equality.³⁰

This statement flies in the face of another interpretation of Locke, this time given by Jeremy Waldron. This argument is contained within Reiman's article as he seeks to react to Waldron's work as a buffer for his own thoughts. The argument given is that Waldron is interpreting Locke's ideas to mean that humans are all equal because we are all here on God's business.³¹ Reiman believes that a more secular interpretation of Locke exists as, "humans are alike in that what they believe and how they live their lives are of *intense interest* to them".³² By making such a statement, everyone from the theist to the atheist can be regarded as having equal value.

Reiman then discusses the notion that rational beings can only believe what they perceive to be fully true. He calls this the *kinship of reason and freedom*, and continues to state that, "for embodied rational creatures, this naturally spreads to create an inclination to live according to one's own freely formed beliefs about how to live".³³ This expands upon another notion; that all humans are negatively equal. Reiman defines this concept by saying that no individual has the natural right to harm or dominate another purely based on his or her own capacities.³⁴ This evolution in the processing of individual rights is essential to the creation of a Secular age in Western society. By outlining this concept, it becomes apparent that the break from the imposed doctrinal lives in the medieval era was a positive step towards the development of a more

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 474.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 486.

³² *Ibid.*, 486-487.

³³ *Ibid.*, 488.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 488.

accepting and enlightened society. No individual should have the absolute authority over others who do not maintain the same belief system. As we continue to trace the development of Secular thought, this perspective will play an essential role in counter-arguments to imposed rules of belief.

With these concepts in mind, it is not in Locke that we find the break from Christian religiosity to Secularity.³⁵ In his writings, Locke works at the notion that knowledge of God comes from the ability to use Reason. More specifically, Locke believed that natural reason was the highest method of knowing God, insofar as to know God was through sensory experience.³⁶ Through this he believed that for rational beings, which humans are believed to be, the laws of nature are apparent. To this, Locke adds that at times pagan priests have negatively affected the understanding of scripture in order to secure their place in the world. Parker quotes Locke's *The Reasonableness* in detail, including the following statement about the aforementioned priests:

The Priests, every where, to secure their Empire, having excluded *Reason* from having anything to do with Religion. And in the croud of wrong Notions, and invented Rites, the World had almost lost the sight of the One only true God.³⁷

Parker continues this point by stating that, for Locke, people did not understand that true religion could be based solely upon the force of their own reason.³⁸ This analysis of reason and true religion is another note of import that can be derived from Locke, and it coincides with the first. Reason, from the Lockean perspective, is to become the basis for how one formulates his or her belief system. In modernity, at least in the West, this dependency upon Reason is a prime factor

³⁵ Recall the definition outlined in Chapter 1.

³⁶ Kim Ian Parker, "Reason, Revelation, and the Fall" in *The Biblical Politics of John Locke* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2004): 41.

³⁷ While at first glance this text may appear to contain spelling and grammatical errors, it is a direct quotation from the source I was working with. (*Ibid.*, 41).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

in how one tackles the concept of belief, as well as Religion in general. To modern individuals, if something does not sit rationally with our belief system, or lack thereof, it is deemed appropriate to be able to pass it off. This is considered a part of our set of individual freedoms afforded by Western civilization.

Some writers, like Nicholas Wolterstorff, believe that Locke was more radical than he first appears. Working off of Thomas L. Pangle's writing Wolterstorff highlights the ways in which Locke espoused liberal Christianity; upon further investigation it also remains possible that Locke may have taken his beliefs a step further. He states that, "[t]he liberal Christianity that Locke overtly espoused was not, however, what he actually believed. His actual position was 'a new and *very* liberal, un-Christian and even un-deist outlook'".³⁹ This is expanded upon as Wolterstorff continues his analysis by concluding that what may have appeared as flaws in Locke's work actually point to clues towards his covert beliefs. While an interesting assertion, what role does it play in the developing secular idea? Locke lived in a time where expressing any notion contra to the ecclesiastical norm could result in persecution.⁴⁰ For this reason, posing an esoteric, nearly un-deist form of religion would have been met with protest. If these secretive clues are an accurate reading of Locke, however, then the notion of freedom in reason begins to resemble the shift towards a secular worldview.

Locke was so enthralled by the notion of nature and reason that his writings became a testament to the infallibility of reason.⁴¹ He based this infallibility upon the notion that the very nature of reason was derived from intuition; this was because intuition was essential in revealing

³⁹ Nicholas Wolterstorff, "God in Locke's Philosophy" in *The Persistence of the Sacred in Modern Thought* eds. Chris L. Firestone and Nathan A. Jacobs (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012): 115.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁴¹ Peter A. Schouls, "The Dogma of Infallible Reason" in *Reasoned Freedom: John Locke and Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992): 74.

the truth. Peter A. Schouls elaborates that for Locke, “[t]he infallibility of reason extends to ‘morals,’ to knowledge of how we ought to act in the concrete ethical and political situations of daily life”.⁴² Intuition, or the ability to understand something without needing to consciously reason with it, is interesting. Essentially, it is making a statement that nature and reason, and thus true religion according to Locke, is the ability to understand that which you are questioning within a fleeting second of recognising it. A more colloquial definition of this could be the “gut feeling” individuals experience when first encountering something. This point then emphasizes the utilization of Reason as the prime factor in investigating belief. For the religious individual, this would also validate their total faith in doctrines, such as the Resurrection, as a basis for how they lead their lives.

Morality does not rely upon Religion

If the theist sees salvation as the ultimate reward, what can the atheist aspire to? The earthly life then becomes the ultimate question for non-believers; essentially how one lives their life is the ultimate expression of their humanity. When analysing the shift from the pre-modern to the modern epochs, this change in the ultimate question is immensely important to observe. No longer is the Church in the Western world the ultimate authority over how one lives. Now, with concern resting in the immanent realm, the mind desires an autonomous stance through which to engage with the world. Taylor cites Hume saying that he, “distinguishes the genuine virtues (which are qualities useful to others and to oneself) from the ‘monkish virtues’ [...] which contribute nothing to, even detract from human welfare”.⁴³ By making this statement, we can observe the shift from a Church dominated moral life to a more humanistic sense of living.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 74.

⁴³ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2007): 263.

Individuals could live according to what bettered their lives and those they cared about without worrying about the after-effects of seemingly impious behaviour.

This is not to say that Hume denied the existence of God. Nicholas Capaldi argues for six theses regarding Hume and his perceptions of God in the realm of morality.⁴⁴ He elaborates that this runs contra to the general notions of Humeian philosophy as most interpret Hume to be rather against religion. Capaldi's Thesis V and VI draw on the idea that Hume believed morality was independent of religion, not of God. Many individuals, including modern thinkers, posit that due to the publication of his *Treatise* Hume was against the argument for design. Christopher Hitchens writes that, "After his treatment, it was no longer possible to discuss miracles or the argument from so-called 'design' with quite the same confidence as before".⁴⁵ This notion is refuted by Capaldi, who argues that Hume became aware of the misrepresentation of his statements after he was accused by his opposition at the University of Edinburgh of being atheist due to his rejection of causation and the ontological argument.⁴⁶ He states that Hume admitted to his refusal of the ontological argument, but that he certainly did accept the argument from design.

Hume, according to Capaldi, argues that humans cannot infer morality from the proof of the existence of God. He highlights that for thinkers before Hume, "it was common [...] first to 'prove' God's existence and then to draw moral implications from that proof".⁴⁷ Capaldi continues that Hume pointed to this procedure as inaccurate, as the two aspects are separate

⁴⁴ Nicholas Capaldi, "Hume's Philosophy of Religion: God without Ethics" in the *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 1, no. 4 (New York: Springer, 1970): 233.

⁴⁵ Christopher Hitchens, "The Natural History of Religion" in *the Portable Atheist* (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2007): 26.

⁴⁶ Capaldi, *Hume's Philosophy of Religion*, 234.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 239-240.

questions. Misconceptions, such as that of Hitchens, would then be drawn from passages like the following:

Hence the greatest crimes have been found, in many instances, compatible with a superstitious piety and devotion; Hence it is justly regarded as unsafe to draw any certain inference in favor of a man's morals, from the fervour or strictness of his religious exercises, even though he himself believe them sincere.⁴⁸

For Hume, if we are to take the stance Capaldi has outlined, this passage would simply be a critique of religion and not one of God. The association of crime with piety could imply the notions that penance, absolution, or like practices, abdicate the sinner of their wrongdoings. Hume would argue that this form of morality is flawed; by allowing religion to pardon the sins of humanity there is a grand theological problem. Therefore morality, by definition of necessity, is independent of religion.

Arguably, the notion that morality does not implicitly rely on religion is one of the most important concepts that can be developed from Hume's writings. Capaldi states that, "[a]t the same time, he freely admits that the belief in an afterlife of rewards and punishment can reinforce moral behaviour".⁴⁹ I would assert that this is an important stage in the evolution of humanisms that would eventually lead to modern secularism. By disconnecting God from religion, Hume is allowing for morality to rest within the individual. These individualistic moralisms create space for questions regarding the nature of religion, and the role of it within the public sphere. I believe that it is from this ability to question that thinkers, such as Hitchens, feel justified in drawing their conclusions about Hume and 'freethought'.

⁴⁸ Hitchens, *The Natural History of Religion*, 30.

⁴⁹ Capaldi, *Hume's Philosophy of Religion*, 236.

Hume, additionally, is also a proponent in the discussion on rationality and faith. Timothy M. Costelloe writes that, “[b]elief in causality, then, is essentially *non-rational*: philosophical inquiry cannot justify it either through experience, which terminates in constant conjunction, or by way of reason, which discovers nothing more than the subjective belief based on experience”.⁵⁰ This draws upon the discussion of natural versus rational belief systems.⁵¹ This argument then highlights that belief in God is rational, as it does not fit with any of the pre-conditions of natural belief. Insofar as this can be argued, commentators have used this notion to argue that Hume believed that, “religion might well go the same way as certain prejudices or bad taste”.⁵² This conclusion is questioned by other commentators who believe that Hume emphasized religious belief as a necessary part of a natural system and of any flourishing society. To clarify, this argument outlines that religious belief equates God, not religious institution.

Humanism and the Greek Spirit

For philosophers such as Heidegger, humanism was the ideal for a learned, mannerly, and philosophical society.⁵³ His thoughts on the subject stem from his absorption with the Greek notion of *paideia*, which he felt greatly influenced all humanisms that had, or would be, developed. As Gavin Rae explains that, “[w]hile Heidegger does recognize that there have been many other ‘humanisms,’ including Renaissance, Scholastic, and modern versions, he maintains that each version embodies the Greek spirit”.⁵⁴ While this may seem ignorant to the development

⁵⁰ Timothy M. Costelloe, “‘In Every Civilized Community’: Hume on Belief and the Demise of Religion in the *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (New York: Springer, 2004): 173-174.

⁵¹ Costelloe outlines natural belief as having three main characteristics: first, it is pre-reflexive, in that it is instinctive of naive common sense; second, there exist no reasonable alternative beliefs; and third, natural belief creates a pre-condition for action. (*Ibid.*, 174).

⁵² *Ibid.*, 176.

⁵³ Gavin Rae, “Re-Thinking the Human: Heidegger, Fundamental Ontology, and Humanism” in *Human Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (New York: Springer, 2010): 28.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

and change of time, it is important to take note of the timelessness within this statement. Heidegger, in essence, is stating that there is a universality to humanism, and that it is entrenched within the human. For the religious, this would then be the seat of God within the individual. Humanists, along most of the spectrum, would argue that this is the instinct of morality evolved out of social interaction in the human species.

Critics of Heidegger point to the flaw within this harkening to the Hellenistics. Gail Soffer, for instance, expresses disdain for what he perceives to be the oversimplification and distortion of history in Heidegger's approach.⁵⁵ Vito R. Giustinaiani, another critic presented by Rae, emphasizes that Heidegger misinterpreted *paideia* when he equated it to the Roman *humanitas*. He argues that this simplification removes half of the definition of *humanitas* by equating it with a culture of learning instead of a civilization with specific individual characteristics.⁵⁶ While merited, this argument may not be the most accurate. As Rae explains, Heidegger accounts for the apparent differences in each version of humanism through three key aspects. First, Heidegger presents the underlying common understanding of the essence of human beings within each tradition. This is done by highlighting that each humanism had proposed that the universal essence was obvious, with rationality being inherent to being. The second aspect rested within the notion of binary oppositions that had existed in Western thought.⁵⁷ Lastly, he identifies that each tradition holds certain truths to be self-evident.

Predominantly, Heidegger's views focus on the metaphysical essence of man. However, it can be applied to secularism to highlight the notion that inherent rationality is ingrained in

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁵⁷ Rae gives two examples of Heidegger's binary oppositions; the first being the subject/object opposition, the second being the essence/existence opposition. (*Ibid.*, 29).

modern Western thought. To connect this with the discussion above, these inherencies would be the determinants within arguments held by modern thinkers, such as Hitchens, in regards to ‘freethought’. Rationality, the key element in secular arguments, was the primary link that Heidegger made between the epochs of humanism. Likewise, many secularists today argue that a modern society should be one grounded upon rationalism and not upon institutionalized faith. Granted, secularism can be confused for capitalistic instrumentalism,⁵⁸ to which Max Weber alludes by making the comment that, “the Catholics answer with the accusation that materialism results from the secularization of all ideals through Protestantism”.⁵⁹ Essentially, the argument for inherent tendencies varies across viewpoints, with materialism being related to the more modern concepts.

Modern definitions of Secularism

With the completion of this brief survey of the philosophical notions contributing to the rise of secularism, it is now time to shift the focal point to modern philosophy and how it interacts with this worldview. Greg Urban, in his recent analysis of the spread of secularism, outlines that this form of modernity allows for sharing between boundary lines of differentiated faith groups in the modern era. Specifically, he states that, “[s]ecularism can do this because, as part of culture, it has a special property – the property we see in the words ‘freedom’ and ‘religion’ that are at its core. Secularism is about culture simultaneously as it is a part of

⁵⁸ Briefly, instrumentalism is the idea that scientific theories should be thought of primarily as tools for solving practical problems rather than as meaningful descriptions of the world. By pairing this word with capitalistic, the definition then becomes something which uses social and business theories in order to overcome everything else. Indeed, this is seen in the following quote of Weber’s; if materialism results from secularization then that would imply that secularism is merely a tool to get more material wealth than your neighbour.

⁵⁹ Max Weber, “Religious Affiliation and Social Stratification” in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Routledge, 2001): 7.

culture”.⁶⁰ He continues to enforce that secularism, by this definition, allows individuals to interact fully with those others who differ culturally based on belief systems. This coincides with Taylor’s Secularity 3 by enforcing the notion that modernity is not simply about removing religious institutions or declining adherence,⁶¹ but rather the interconnection of a multitude of beliefs and faith systems. This in turn, as Urban outlines, thus relates the two individuals who possess different cultures through a metaculture; they share the same cultural viewpoint upon which they treat religion.⁶² In other words, these two theologically different individuals share a common philosophy: secularism.

As stated above, ours is not an age within which religion has disappeared, only to be replaced with a state based purely upon scientific reason. In the West, for example, the mixing pot of various religions can at times ignite. As Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell write:

Religion, or the lack thereof, informs and shapes people’s deep-seated values, their worldviews. Disagreements over religion are often disagreements over fundamentals: the immovable object of one person’s beliefs meeting the irresistible force of another’s. On the world stage, both history and current events are rife with examples where irreconcilable religious beliefs have led to bloodshed.⁶³

While their focus is specific to America, Putnam and Campbell make an important note as to the effects of secularism: the ability to interact in a metaculture does not come without consequences. By associating these above outlined aspects of religion to current events we can directly observe that these clashes are not something of the past that modern secular individuals should ignore. Rather, if we are to accept the definition of secularism as defined above, then

⁶⁰ Greg Urban, “The Circulation of Secularism” in the *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, Vol. 21, No. 1/4 *Secular Imaginaries* (New York: Springer, 2008): 18.

⁶¹ Recall Secularities 1 and 2.

⁶² Urban, *The Circulation of Secularism*, 19.

⁶³ Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, “A House Divided” in *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2012): 491.

those individuals who are more secularly inclined need to work with the religious in order to create the metaculture in question. However, even in a secular metaculture, there are tensions held towards different religions than those with which one identifies.⁶⁴ I will return to this notion in a later chapter.

As with any discussion, there is more than one stance on the subject. Jacques Berlinerblau works to describe the difference between secularism and atheism, stating that, “American Secularism has lost control of its identity and image”.⁶⁵ He reinforces this notion by outlining that secularism is being equated with atheism in both popular, and scholarly, media. In these manifestations, secularism has been changed to be synonymous with godlessness, God-hating, and other derogative terminology. In this we can observe a stark alienation of the concept that secularism pertains to the living together of people who possess differentiated belief systems. Why do these conclusions become highlighted? Berlinerblau emphasises the negative connotations that secularism has taken on by citing an American survey from 2007; the results of this found that nonbelievers were viewed the most unfavourable belief system in the country.⁶⁶ This unfavourable view of atheists, coupled with the partnership equation *secularism = atheism*, has begun to degrade the secular vision which has been previously outlined in this chapter. How this connotation will affect the future of secularism will be explored in greater detail in a chapter to follow.

To inject another element of density to this already massive recounting of the modern philosophy of secularism, I will now posit the element of the freedom of religion; moreover, the

⁶⁴ See Appendix 1 for table describing this phenomenon.

⁶⁵ Jacques Berlinerblau, “Does Secularism Equal Atheism?” in *How to Be Secular: A Call to Arms for Religious Freedom* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2013): 53.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

freedom of choice of religion. Susan E. Babbitt outlines J. S. Mill's notion that it is always better for people to make their own choices rather than be coerced, even if that choice is the wrong one. She clarifies, citing Christine M. Korsgaard, that, "[c]hoice constitutes a relationship, involving identification, between chooser and event".⁶⁷ Babbitt then references *Sophie's Choice*⁶⁸ in an attempt to demonstrate how choice, and the events that result from the process, is not always better than being coerced. This thought continues as Babbitt highlights Mills, who would argue that choice is still a maximal good, as it provides an authenticity. The argument that evolves from this authenticity is that choosing, "involves 'giving a conscious moment of assent to the way the world is, which need not be the way we chose or would have chosen it to be'".⁶⁹ To shift this concept to the discussion on secularism, this would be another example of how Urban's definition is realised. The two theologically different individuals must choose how to interact with each other in a secular world, one possessing many options for faith, which may not be the world they would elect to have if given explicit power. The individuals who would interact with each other in peace, or at least in tolerance, are those who would thrive in a secular age. Any who fought it, claiming secularism is for the godless or other abrasive terms, would not.

Conclusion

By no means is the above list an extensive compilation of philosophers who contributed to the development of secularism. To make such a claim would be foolhardy; I have presented a glimpse of how events unfolded in this history of Western modernity. Mechanistic religions of habit rarely produce the sense of fulfillment in its practitioners; this is exactly how the medieval

⁶⁷ Susan E. Babbitt, "Secularism, Ethics, and Philosophy" in *Humanism and Embodiment: From Cause and Effect to Secularism* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014): 147.

⁶⁸ This is the story of a woman who was given the choice to save one of her two daughters in a Nazi death camp; this given choice eventually kills her. Babbitt elaborates that if Sophie had been coerced, despite the same result, she may have survived. (*Ibid.*, 147.)

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 148.

believer felt. Through the Reformation, the concept that an individual had choice in their belief system was given to Western society. Locke expanded upon this freedom by asserting that true religion was founded upon reason. This potentially esoteric standpoint granted Western individuals the ability to reconcile religious views on a personal level through their faculties of reason. Reason then shifts to morality, as was discussed in Hume's works. By determining that an individual does not need to rely upon religion to in order to be moral, Western society was again advanced towards modernity as we know it. Heidegger connects several epochs of time through an analysis of the inherent essence within humanism; an essence which I have argued could support the link between rationality and secularism. Finally, through analysing several modern thinkers, some of whom are lesser known than others, I have provided a survey of the differentiated philosophical stances of this metacultural phenomenon. With this history defined, we now turn our attention to modern politics and the stage within secularism finds itself.

Present State of Secularism

With a solid understanding of those philosophical aspects which paved the path towards secularism, the attention of this project will now shift to the political sphere. In addressing this aspect of public life there are undoubtedly risks, as it is impossible to agree with everyone. Thus, the goal of this project will not be to accuse one side or the other. Instead, an effort will be made to recognise the arguments on both sides, while emphasising the secular issues at hand. To begin, the discussion will analyse a report published by the Pew Research Center in 2012. This document presents the notion that the Nones are a growing group within American culture. The information presented within this report will serve to contextualise the arguments presented later in this chapter. Following this, a discussion of morality in the political sphere will be presented. For this section, it is important to remember the arguments presented when Hume was analysed in the previous chapter. The final sections will focus on discussing the religious and the secular sides to two different elements of political life: the notion of political endorsement, and the separation of church and state. The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to demonstrate how secularism is viewed in modern Western politics by showcasing the debates in which it is involved.

The Nones Are Coming

The first element of political religiosity that needs to be addressed is the notion that the Nones are a group which is growing statistically. This term, None, is the identifier given to anyone who would respond on a survey that they have no religious affiliation. While the

religiously unaffiliated tend to be less religious in practice, they are by no means wholly secular. According to Pew research released in 2012, 18% of the subset “nothing in particular” said that they were a religious person, and 37% described themselves as spiritual but not religious.⁷⁰ The research also indicates that only one in ten of these “nothing in particulars” are actively seeking religious affiliation. This subset, along with those who identify as affiliated, appear to both agree that religion is losing its influence on society. This, to recall previous discussion, indicates the development of secularity 3. With less societal influence, the multiplicity of plausible belief-systems has become more internalised. This indicates that the world of the everyday is experiencing a stronger desire to be without religious implications; the public now desires a more secular daily existence.

The interesting phenomenon of the “nothing in particular” continues when they are questioned about the existence of God. A staggering 81% of respondents who found themselves in this category responded that they do, in fact, believe in God or a universal spirit. Of these, several even admit that they are certain of such a spirit. Interestingly enough, 14% of atheists and 56% of agnostics agree that they believe in God or a universal spirit.⁷¹ The most peculiar here would be those atheists who, despite their identifier, are comfortable claiming that a spirit does exist. Another interesting aspect to consider when making statements about Nones is the reason they do not attend religious worship. Roughly 59% of the unaffiliated expressed religious reasoning for why they refused to attend services, with 28% stating that this was because they did not believe in religion as an institution.⁷²

⁷⁰ See Appendix for comparison with other belief systems (Luis Lugo, “‘Nones’ on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation” from *The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2012): 41).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 50.

Research would appear to indicate that the unaffiliated are also more likely to be liberal-minded when questioned about politics. In 2008, for example, 75% of the unaffiliated voted for Obama while 23% voted for McCain; this expresses a 52-point gap.⁷³ Comparisons like this appear to be normal, as 72% of the unaffiliated believe that abortion should be legal, 76% are positive about homosexuality, and 73% are for same-sex marriage, to give a few examples. In our ever-changing world, being more open-minded to issues in politics is certainly beneficial; whether or not the opinion is embraced is more of a personal issue, what is more important is being able to entertain the opinion of another person. These statistics express views of liberal morality, which comes into direct conflict with more conservative aspects of the 'moral life'. This tension between the two sides results in public, politically fueled debates, some of which involve an aspect of religiosity.

Morality and the Political Landscape

A government without moral principles is a rather terrifying thought, and a majority of individuals would agree on this without question. Therefore, we must then ask what exactly morality is. The problem here arises when debaters delve into the notion of religion as a basis for a moral life. This is a dangerous and polarised topic of debate when discussing religiosity in the Western world. As discussed in the section on Hume, morality does not rely on religion as a prerequisite to function; however, morality in being as such does not negate religion. A. James Reichley introduces his discussion on democracy with the following statement:

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 66.

In more recent times some Americans have come to regard religion as a kind of consumer good [...] that should be available in a pluralist society but that makes no essential contribution to the moral foundations of society. [...] [Democracy] requires no moral base beyond that supplied by purely secular values.⁷⁴

He continues to outline this view by explaining that some civil humanists have indicated that religion is not without social cost. This comes in different forms; Reichley mentions abortion and school prayer as two viable debates that are influenced by religion. The argument is made that both the religious right and left can create conflict that impedes pragmatic compromises; these are the very compromises that democratic countries rely on to function.

The question, then, is whether or not society can survive without the support of religiously inspired values. Reichley proposes that there are three forms of secular value systems: egoism, collectivism, and civil humanism.⁷⁵ The first option, egoism, is not met with praise from Reichley. The egoistical left believe that, when freed from economic deprivation and sexual repression, human nature becomes benign. This, Reichley asserts, is starkly against the historical record, as material appetites remain unsatisfied even in the richest nations of the world today. The egoist right, while maintaining economic marketplace saturation and maximization, leads to a Hobbesian brutish society. Reichley builds on this by defining that, “egoism, whether we like it or not, *is* the human condition”.⁷⁶ He quickly responds to his statement by affirming that while this is nature it is by no means democracy. We then move to collectivism, which bases itself upon social authoritarianism. This, Reichley writes, is in its essence hostile towards democracy. This is because the aim of these collectivist regimes appears to be cleansing society through short periods of dictatorship. Finally, we arrive at civil humanism; this is a value-system that is

⁷⁴ A. James Reichley, “Religion and Democracy” in *Faith in Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2002): 351.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 352.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 354. (Emphasis original).

comprised of balanced aspects of egoism and collectivism. Where this form of secular value-ethic differs from its transcendental counterpart is that it derives its foundation from natural interpretations of existence.⁷⁷ Thus the question is presented as such: can civil humanism function as a democracy?

Reichley is not convinced. He believes that this form of secular value-ethic is more suited for aristocratic manifestations of government. The claim is made that civil humanism, “fails to meet the test of intellectual credibility”.⁷⁸ Using purely natural phenomena, and omitting any reference to the transcendent, the balance of self and society cannot hold without one or the other eventually becoming sovereign. If the self dominates, those values which serve selfishly become prominent; if the society advances, then personal freedoms fall under the dominion of external authority. As the above statements demonstrate, Reichley appears to be arguing from an incredibly strong personal bias. This becomes more apparent when he switches the analysis to demonstrate that the Judeo-Christian tradition recognises human rights as deeply engrained in the moral teachings. He states that, “social authority is legitimized by making it answerable to transcendent moral law”.⁷⁹ Reichley solidifies this view by asserting that in democratic societies religious-based value-ethics are more important to maintaining societal health than in traditional cultures, as these can be maintained through social inertia or customs.

Reichley immediately recognises that as societal religiosity reaches absolutism or ecstasism, the benefits of this transcendental moral law begin to wane. For these values to maintain a coherent society, they must be rooted in transcendental idealism. While he does not make this connection, Reichley does mirror his religious systems with those secular types he

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 355.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 357.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 358.

described in detail. His definition of absolutism resembles a theologically based collectivism by renouncing the rights of individuals within the society. Ecstasism, then, corresponds with egoism through a denouncement of civilization and law. Therefore, whether he intended this or not, Reichley's transcendental idealism becomes something akin to a theologically inspired civil humanism. If this is the case, how is it possible to make the statement that one side of the mirror can function, while the other cannot? This appears to be a flaw of bias in his descriptions of political morality with regards to religion and democracy.

As observed with the above discussion, there is a multiplicity of stances available for individuals to engage in the political realm. Some involve religion, while others rely on secular motivations to base their value-ethics. This discussion will now shift to a more specific manner of approaching these topics in order to present the issues. Christianity, as it maintains significant representation in politics within the Western world, will thus be highlighted in this endeavour. With its strong presence, should Christianity be able to influence politics? If it happens to do so, does this negatively affect the freedoms of individuals who do not belong to the Christian faith? To focus on the definition of secularism we have been using, it can be argued that any faith which influences the societal lives of non-adherents is acting in a negative manner. This is, as can be assumed, met with retaliation from those with opposing viewpoints. If Christians represent a large population, why should their needs not be met in their political representations? The argument I am working to fulfill would agree that the religious are entitled to representation; however, it cannot come at the detriment of another group, religiously inclined or not.

Should Religious Institutions Advocate Political Endorsement?

The concern of this chapter now turns towards whether religious institutions, not individuals, should be able to endorse politicians in order to gain favour for their endeavours. This question will be analysed by looking at preachers and whether or not they can advocate for their parishioners to vote a specific way. This debate begins with Ron Johnson Jr.; his opinion is that the IRS⁸⁰ should not be allowed to keep churches out of politics. His belief is that the First Amendment allows all Americans the right to speak freely about their political opinions, and that as such pastors should be able to address their congregations without risking the church's tax-exempt status. He and other pastors gave sermons that, "were part of a broader effort, the Alliance Defense Fund's Pulpit Initiative, which is designed to protect pastors' First Amendment rights".⁸¹ The argument here is that the location of the individual's work should not dictate whether or not they can address political issues in the workplace. While this in theory is understandable, it is also a dangerous notion. Politics are an individual right, yet it is one that many do not capitalize on. Even in the workplace, advertising political views is not something that is looked down upon or discouraged. If, however, that workplace involves someone with significant influence speaking to an individual, or group, with less influence then a problem begins to arise. This is especially true when the conversation is happening in a closed area, such as behind church doors in Johnson's case. By acting in this way, this can result in an explicit, or even sometimes implicit, coercion.

Johnson argues that the Pulpit Initiative is not seeking to encourage pastors to endorse political candidates from the pulpit. Rather, it aims to promote an atmosphere where pastors are

⁸⁰ This acronym stands for the Internal Revenue Service.

⁸¹ Ron Johnson Jr., "Preachers Should Be Allowed to Endorse Political Candidates from the Pulpit" in *Religion in America*, eds. David Haugen and Susan Musser (New York: Greenhaven Press, 2011): 144.

capable of speaking freely in front of their congregation without fear of governmental punishment. He says that their aim is to, “[do] what churches do: speak on any number of cultural and societal issues from a biblical perspective”.⁸² He continues this statement by outlining that the church has always been involved in politics, as the civil realm owes its existence to God. With this in mind, Johnson argues that a major role of the church throughout its existence has been to influence the political sphere to accept what is good and to reject what is evil. He then states that the IRS has placed itself as the administrator of what messages are inherently political, which effectively removes the pastor’s ability to participate as highlighted above.

The argument continues with Johnson stating that, “[c]hurches are tax exempt because they are churches, not because the government decided to bless them with a ‘subsidy’”.⁸³ He makes this claim as churches are outside of the government’s appropriate tax base; they are non-profit organisations. Through what he calls the false dichotomy of sacred/secular, Johnson feels that the pastors are losing their right to speak within their own four walls. The IRS should not dictate what messages are given within the church; this is for the pastor to decide. He concludes by stating that the church needs to have the right to be the church. As emotionally charged as his statements are, Johnson does raise a theoretically valid argument. However, this falls back to the undesirable political fear of being able to coerce people to vote one way or another.

A more inclusive approach to the issue of endorsement is developed by Eric Williams, who believes that pastors should respect the political diversity of the congregation. In phrasing the issue as such, it can be demonstrated that secular views do not, as have be highlighted in

⁸² *Ibid.*, 145.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 146.

previous chapters, rely upon atheistic systems of belief. A theist can embrace secular values in their religious life. Williams writes that he was contacted by the Alliance Defense Fund, the same institution mentioned in Johnson's writing, in an attempt to convince him to preach against political candidates who do not fall in line with scriptural values. In his opinion, the ADF is trying to, "tear down the wall that separates church and state," which is terrible as, "this wall protects citizens from the hurricanes of religious extremism".⁸⁴ Williams asserts that the vitality of the faith community rests upon its diversity and that, if pastors begin making brash statements for or against specific politicians, it will chip away at their ability to serve society's most prominent concerns.

Williams' viewpoint comes from the idea that people are just as diverse in their politics as they are in their interpretations of scripture. His opinion on the freedom of speech at the pulpit is that, "it is important to engage the important moral and political issues of the day".⁸⁵ To do so, he argues, involves knowing where the church-state line is and consciously accepting it. The job of the pastor is to differentiate the political from the electoral. Williams believes that:

We can raise difficult issues. We can hold challenging forums. We can champion important causes but we must not endorse particular candidates, raise money for their campaigns or parties or offer favours not extended to others.⁸⁶

For the Christian, religion should shape society; this will always be a greater task than any single candidate or platform can commit to. Therefore, he says, to lose sight of God's law and endorse a single candidate goes against His teachings. The biggest argument from the other side is that the government is regulating free speech; however, Williams does not agree that this is the case. He

⁸⁴ Eric Williams, "Preachers Should Not Be Allowed to Endorse Political Candidates from the Pulpit" in *Religion in America*, eds. David Haugen and Susan Musser (New York: Greenhaven Press, 2011): 148.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 149.

believes that what the IRS is trying to regulate is the use of tax exempt dollars being used to support politics.⁸⁷ Therefore, while he recognises the good intentions of the Pulpit Initiative, he also decries it as unethical and illegal behaviour unbecoming of a pastor.

Separation of Church and State

The intermingling of religion and politics is a delicate minefield of accusations and conflict. If an individual makes a critique of any aspect involving the religious influence on provincial, state, or federal politics then they open themselves to harsh criticism from the opposing side. No clearer is this than in the American battle over the Pledge of Allegiance. Both sides of this argument have valid notions, legitimate or self-perceived, regarding the inclusion of God in the Pledge. For this example I will focus on two authors: Warner Todd Huston will be used to analyse the argument that Church and State should not be separated, and Marci Hamilton will demonstrate the desire to make these two institutions separate entities.

Huston argues that it was not until long after the Republic of America was formed that the buzz term “Separation of Church and State” came into popular use.⁸⁸ He continues this assertion by stating that even though Thomas Jefferson was the originator of the phrase, there was no attention paid to it until well after his death. He argues that this phrase originated in an 1802 letter to a congregation of Baptist churchmen from Connecticut; these men were trying to glean support in their struggle against what they perceived to be an oppressive state religious program. This was not uncommon for the individual states in the early years of the Republic. The phrasing used, Huston clarifies, was intentionally federal so as to not go against a particular state, despite his sympathy for the Baptists. He continues that:

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁸⁸ Warner Todd Huston, “There Should Be No Separation of Church and State” in *Atheism*, ed. Beth Rosenthal (New York: Greenhaven Press, 2009): 117.

Worse, should a letter he had written attacking a state's Constitution on an issue that was commonly extant in most of the Union become public, it could lead to a messy backlash that Jefferson did not need after the tumultuous and vicious presidential campaign of 1800.⁸⁹

This worry was valid; Jefferson had already possessed a reputation of being irreligious, with such a charge being levied against him in the election of 1800.⁹⁰ At this time, every state had their own sponsored religion, so maintaining a federal position separate from the individual regions was important for avoiding undue conflict.

Despite the political tango, Huston believes that the founders of the United States desired people to be led by religion in their daily lives. He makes reference to several quotations which demonstrate that, “[t]he Founders were as worried about virtue in the people as they were for their liberty and freedoms”.⁹¹ These three quotations assert that morality is based upon religious teachings; therefore there should be no barriers between state and religion. If such a separation existed, would that not then lead to immoral happenings in the government? Thus, Huston finalises his argument by outlining that religious freedom is not the same as freedom from religion. In the time of the founders, the language used in the constitution was used in order to protect the individual states and the delegation of religious regulation.⁹² Huston affirms this viewpoint through making clear that the founders did not wish to distance religion from society, but rather they were employing regulatory methods to assure the health of the society.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁹¹ See Appendix for full quotations. (*Ibid.*, 120).

⁹² *Ibid.*, 125.

In contrast, Hamilton argues that movements such as the Pledge Protection Act are attempting to deprive America of the freedom to believe a multiplicity of possibilities.⁹³ She continues this statement by implying that this is a religious attempt to force the country into a one-size-fits-all set of beliefs. The phrase in question, “under God”, within the Pledge has received support in many polls and has the popular support to remain in the Pledge of Allegiance. However, polls are not what determine legislation; this is a key factor that Hamilton makes clear in her writing.⁹⁴ She continues to state that Americans do not support a government that forces children to choose between their country and their faith. She furthers this view in stating that:

The powers that be at the moment have covered over these fundamental beliefs with misleading blather about how this is a “Christian” nation, implying that Christians are the sole keeper of conscience and morals in the country.⁹⁵

Hamilton feels that this is the problem with the Act, and that the majority of the American population actually believes in a freedom of conscience.

Similar to Huston, Hamilton uses the constitution to argue her point of view; the Establishment Clause, she writes, was created out of fear that Congress would attempt to systematise religion. By attempting to pass the Pledge Protection Act, she asserts that Congress is trying to make a law regarding religion which goes against the constitution. Hamilton writes that, “[i]t’s a one-God-fits-all formula”, which she then compares to the monarchs Mary and

⁹³ To maintain consistent terminology, Hamilton’s pluralist references are akin to statements above on Secularity 3. (Marci Hamilton, “There Should Be Separation of Church and State” in *Atheism*, ed. Beth Rosenthal (New York: Greenhaven Press, 2009): 109.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 111.

Elizabeth of England.⁹⁶ She criticises this attempt to regulate the monotheistic Pledge by stating that the constitution itself is not explicitly Christian. Rather, it is comprised of Protestant theology, Greek and Roman government, and philosophical concepts from thinkers like Locke, Hume, and Edmund Burke.⁹⁷ Thus, attempting to impose uniformity will only undermine the very foundation that the country was built upon. Hamilton ends her discussion by stating that the United States is not a country with a representational majority religion. Instead, there is a multiplicity of religions with Protestantism as the largest group. She concludes that, “[a] variety of beliefs fills the public square and fosters debate”.⁹⁸ Therefore, to regulate in a negative sense places limitations on the discussions in the public sphere. These limitations, in turn, can alter value-systems and what is deemed to be cultural norm.

Conclusion

If this chapter has completed its task, then the debates surrounding secularism in modern politics will hereafter be recognised as dangerous ground. It is difficult to fully understand the viewpoints presented without first recognising the changing population of secular society. While “nothing in particulars” are growing in number, they by no means are leaving religion in droves like some in the media would exclaim. Instead, spirituality appears to be moving towards an inner understanding of God, or the universal spirit. This notion finds within secularity 3 a place for growth and understanding. With this in mind, can society survive without religiously inspired value-ethics? The more religiously inclined writers, like Reichley, would argue against this; however, it appears that secular values are indeed possible. With morality outlined in Hume as well as through a careful counter-analysis of Reichley, it can be asserted that religiosity is not

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 114.

Present State of Secularism

needed for morality, though it is also not excluded by it. Drawing from this, concepts like political endorsements and the presence of God in the Pledge of Allegiance become grounds for debate. If the concept of secularism is to be fully analysed, the question must be approached from yet another direction. To understand this concept, we must now look towards its future for possible answers.

The (Possible) Future of Secularism

With the history and the present state of secularism outlined, it is now time to shift the focus of this project to the future. What does secularism of the future look like? We cannot make absolute claims as it has not occurred; however, educated assumptions can be drawn. This said, the future of secularism appears to be capable of taking two divergent routes. The first, a route of acceptance and tolerance, will be explored by contrasting the religious spheres with the cultural sphere. There is much that secular individuals can gain from the adherent religionist. Included in this analysis will be the phenomenon of cultural identity being rooted in religious education; for the sake of brevity the main focus will be on Scandinavian Christians. Following this analysis the focus will shift to the second possibility: a secularism of intolerance and disdain. It is in this group that thinkers like Sam Harris are found. Without delving too much into the topic of Chapter 5, the analysis will investigate the clash between the religious and the non-religious. Can these two analyses predict the future, and if so, what does the future have in store for society?

Religion as a Teacher

With the advent of science it had become increasingly difficult to be considered intelligent in the 18th and 19th centuries if one believed in God. For some, this now meant that faith belonged to the lower classes; that is, to those who had little to no capacity to exit their current dependent state of life and enter into a more educated level. Auguste Comte was a philosopher who believed this notion to be dangerous, but who also felt that religion as it had previously been defined was irrelevant. De Botton elaborates on this:

Comte recognised, as many of his contemporaries did not, that secular society devoted solely to the accumulation of wealth, scientific discovery, popular entertainment and romantic love – a society lacking in any sources of ethical instruction, consolation, transcendent awe or solidarity – would fall prey to untenable social maladies.⁹⁹

From this it can be assumed that Comte feared experiencing an ethical dilemma: the idea of a society totally devoid of religious influence on the one hand, and his distaste for supporting organized religion as it existed during his time on the other. With this conflict in mind, Comte then worked for years and developed the idea of a Religion of Humanity; in a sense, a religion for Atheists.¹⁰⁰ His argument for this creation was that no human who would dream of inventing a religion in the modern era would propose rituals like those given to us by our ancestors.

Thus, Comte worked with the idea that there are three theoretical stages to philosophy; as such these were the foundation for his positive philosophy. He writes that, “[c]ette loi consiste en ce que chacune de nos conceptions principales, chaque branche de nos connaissances, passé successivement par trois états théoriques différent: l’état théologique, ou fictif; l’état métaphasique, ou abstrait; l’état scientifique, ou positif”.¹⁰¹ Before continuing with this analysis it is important to note that when Comte uses the word ‘fictif’ he is not implying that the theological view is fictional; instead, he is using this term to refer to the supernatural. Thus, our categories are: the supernatural, the abstract, and the positive. For Comte, this progression is the development of the human spirit. In the état théologique, supernatural forces arbitrarily influenced the phenomenon of the universe and in turn were to explain the unexplainable. The état scientifique, on the other hand, “renonce à chercher l’origine et la destination de l’univers, et

⁹⁹ Alain de Botton, *Religion for Atheists: A Non-Believer’s Guide to the Uses of Religion* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2012): 300.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 301.

¹⁰¹ Auguste Comte, “La Philosophie Positive” in *Auguste Comte*, ed. Pierre Arnaud (Paris: Bordas, 1968): 11.

à connaître les causes intimes des phénomènes”.¹⁰² In this manner, through beginning with the universal and moving towards the singular, Comte is describing the process of turning the human attention inward. This is emphasized in a later statement where he attributes life stages to each of the *états*: we are theologians in our infancy, metaphysicians in our childhood, and physicians in our adulthood.¹⁰³

This concept can be taken from the individual human and superimposed on society, with regard to secularism. Secularity 3, as outlined in a previous chapter, involves a harmony of the religious and the a-religious. Those who find themselves in the latter category may have experienced something similar to the positivism of Comte: they were raised religious (theologian), began to question (metaphysician), and finally shifted their focus to solely the current realm (the physician). This in turn does not imply that the religious cannot work in the realm of the physical; it just indicates that the theist is comfortable in religion and the atheist is not. Therefore, the cohabitation of both groups appears to be a modern answer to the issue de Botton highlighted in regards to Comte above. A society which uses religion as a principle point of education, regardless of if a belief system is attached, is one that can incorporate a higher number of individuals and proceed to grow in the most multicultural manner possible. This is simply because it gives the citizens more knowledge of any other individual they may encounter in his or her life.

Working off of Comte’s idea of the Religion of Humanity, it can be argued that religions are effective methods of instilling ethical lessons. In our current stage of modernity, does humanity need such an institution to bring morals to the masses? Within a disenchanting

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 13.

world, one where interconnectivity and social media have united countries formerly separated by geography, is it not possible to learn ethics from characters in literature and our modern day heroes?¹⁰⁴ Certainly the values we currently hold have shifted from those of the pre-moderns; a clear example lies in the fact that today it does not seem impious to experiment with sexuality before marriage and procreation. Thus, I would argue that one possible future for secularism is the disenchantment of religious stories and their transformation into lessons akin to faerie tales. At first glance this idea does not appear to be positive in terms of religious diversity as it involves dismissing them and associating them with fiction; however, it shows that there is value within religious stories and teachings that can extend to the a-religious. This extension, of course, only functions when those a-religious members of society are accepting of diversity and welcome knowledge from all avenues.

I now propose to build off of an idea proposed in Chapter 1. Does the title “Christian” necessitate the belief in Jesus and the Holy Trinity? Certainly we as moderns understand the notion of religious versus secular Jews, but can this apply to other religions? Zuckerman argues that this can be the case with Christianity in Scandinavia. He elaborates on this idea by sourcing Ole Riis’ statement on how the majority of men and women “belong without believing”.¹⁰⁵ To make this more potent, Zuckerman gives statistics for the percentages of Danes and Swedes who believe in biblical concepts versus those who are actively members in a church.¹⁰⁶ He argues that the concept of a cultural religion exists, wherein the members do not necessarily believe in a transcendent reality beyond human perception. Rather, they congregate:

¹⁰⁴ The term “modern day heroes” used here is meant to refer to anyone that an individual can look up to. This can be a character in a film, and actor/tress, a sports star, or even our own parents.

¹⁰⁵ Phil Zuckerman, *Society Without God: What the Least Religious Nations Can Tell Us about Contentment* (New York: New York University Press, 2008): 150.

¹⁰⁶ He cites that roughly 30 percent believe that Jesus was both man and God, 30 percent believe in life after death, and 10 percent believe that the Bible is the actual Word of God. Compare this to 80 percent who are tax-paying members of churches. (*Ibid.*, 150).

[B]ecause it feels special, or because it gives their lives a sense of rhythm and poignancy, or because it brings families together, or because it makes them feel like they are part of something grand and auspicious, or because it is fun, or because it somehow intangibly connects them with the previous and future generations, [...] or simply because of cultural inertia, in other words, “that’s just what we do”.¹⁰⁷

Astoundingly, what is written above is not an extensive list on the reasons why individuals congregate without holding a belief in a transcendent deity. This cultural religiosity appears as a phenomenon wherein individuals identify with historical traditions without truly believing in their content.

This cultural affiliation is rooted in the moral lessons of the faith with which the individuals identify. For example, the Scandinavians Zuckerman interviewed for his project identified being Christian as being a good person.¹⁰⁸ Most of the responses appear to be influenced by the Beatitudes found in Matthew 5-7, more colloquially known as the Sermon on the Mount. Respondents state that Christianity involves looking out for the poor, the down-trodden, and treating others with the compassion one expects will be given to them. Zuckerman asked each of them if they believed in God; the responses he received ranged from a simple no, to more abrupt responses given halfway through his question. In an interview Zuckerman conducted with a woman named Helle he posed the question “Would you say you are more of a cultural Christian”? Helle responded, “Yes, very much ... it means to acknowledge that our culture is based on Christian values and to acknowledge my upbringing, and to acknowledge the role of the church in society”.¹⁰⁹ This is another method through which secularism can progress in order to benefit from the incorporation of religion. A society can become unified through

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 157.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 159.

practicing similar moral values, learned through religious instruction, while not mandating that all members of the society fully and wholly believe in the transcendent.

The essential difference between religious and secular learning boils down to the application of the material learned, according to de Botton.¹¹⁰ He believes that education in the Christian tradition was most effective when it sought to create parabolic connections to the ills of the learners. John Wesley is cited as being skilled at this art; his intimate knowledge of Matthew, Corinthians, and Luke was exposed only when he could integrate it into the lives of his listeners. De Botton highlights that Wesley, “[l]ike all Christian sermonizers, [...] looked to culture principally as a tool, asking of any biblical passage what general rules of conduct it could exemplify”.¹¹¹ The secular world, he states, has much to learn from this approach. While we may be reading the right texts and trying to apply them to our problems, we are lacking a fundamental aspect. We fail to ask questions in a vain attempt to remain secular and decline neo-religious enquiries; however, in so doing we silence our inner needs. Therefore, what secularism can learn from the religious traditions is how to question learning and apply the results in a metaphysical sense.

A final note on the positive future for secularism must be given to the issue involving the debate between atheists and theists. Much to the detriment of a successful Secularity 3, most atheists are lumped into a single group, and often labelled as anti-theists. The current state of affairs leaves many in a position in which they are afraid to admit their non-belief as they perceive a wave of negative repercussions. This marginalization brings about leaders like Sam Harris who, while attempting to defend the non-religious, do more damage than they fix. In some

¹¹⁰ de Botton, *Religion for Atheists*, 111.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 118-119.

cases entire countries have been thrown into this defensive state of atheism; examples of such countries will be explored below. In order adequately join the theists and the atheists in an accepting culture both sides must be given the right to express their beliefs, or lack thereof. If this future is possible, then the true nature of secularism can be fully recognised in the real world.

Radical Secularism

Unfortunately, while secularism seeks to assert an air of acceptance in the West, it is not without radical detractors. As with any other radical group, for example ISIS/L, Fundamentalist Christianity, or the Westboro Baptist Church, these radicals tend to be a very small minority and yet are some of the loudest. Thus, to fully understand the future of secularism it is necessary to observe these radical secularists in their entirety and project upon their ideals as well. This analysis will begin in the eastern-most region of Western society. Specifically, I propose that a critical analysis of Turkey and its attempts to join the European Union merits attention. In the 2007 elections, there was staunch polarization regarding the issue¹¹² of religion. Taspinar, a professor of National Security Strategy in America, cites the Turkish military as reporting on their official website that, “if necessary, the Turkish Armed Forces will not hesitate to make their position and stance abundantly clear as the absolute defenders of secularism”.¹¹³ He continues by asserting that Turkish history is one which is known for military interventions; therefore, this post could easily be considered a threat of a future coup.

¹¹² I use this word in place of more neutral words in order to demonstrate the sentiments held within the country I am discussing. It does not portray any personal opinions.

¹¹³ Ömer Taspinar, “The Old Turks’ Revolt: When Radical Secularism Endangers Democracy” in *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 86, No. 6 (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2007): 115.

Secularism in Turkey involves a rather radical and tense history, and Taspinar highlights this in his article. In the early 20th century, after the First World War, the followers of Atatürk began imposing strict, and often strict, new regimes in Turkey. These Kemalists, as they were called, were exposed to Western-based educations in military academies and this made itself manifest in their policies. Taspinar outlines that, “[i]n an ambitious drive to import European civilization wholesale, the republic disposed of the caliphate, the Arabic alphabet, Islamic education, and the Sufi brotherhoods”.¹¹⁴ These leaders purged the country of Arabic and Persian words and references in an attempt to glorify the pre-Islamic days of the country; they even went as far as to translate the Arabic azan¹¹⁵ into modern Turkish. Men were banned from wearing the fez, women were banned from dressing with an Islamic veil in public, and Western clothing became compulsory for men. In essence, the Kemalists began a program of systematically flushing religion from the public sphere.

To refocus on the earlier discussion surrounding the types of secularism, this would appear to be a radical form of Secularity 1. By denying access to religion in public spaces, the Kemalists sought to create a country free from religious influence. An assertion of Taspinar illustrates this, as he writes that, “[i]n both France and Turkey, religion became a symbol of counterrevolution and opposition to the republic”.¹¹⁶ Granted that this occurred in the early 20th century, it is a curious lesson for the potential future repercussions of radical secularism. With the growing New Atheism movement having hijacked this philosophical concept, and modern media having transformed it into a buzzword, there are new avenues for secularism to create a negative societal state. For instance, what role does the public sphere play on social media? In

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹¹⁵ This is the Islamic call to prayer. (*Ibid.*, 118).

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

the last few years we have seen cases like Raif Badawi wherein his government dictated that social media content could be seen as apostatic. A radically secular government, in the same vein, could potentially regulate the activity of their citizens to ensure this ‘public’ sphere remained without religion.

Another problem that such a secularist regime runs the risk of creating is radical fundamentalism. Taspinar emphasizes that the, “experience of the Arab world clearly shows that authoritarianism only fuels extremism; in the absence of democracy, mosques become the only outlet for dissent, and Islam the only voice of resistance against tyranny”.¹¹⁷ Statements like this should be taken into consideration when analysing the influence secularism can have on the future. In order to maintain a stable environment for both the religious and the non-religious, secularism must adhere to the definition outlined in Secularity 3. Totalitarianism breeds negative counterarguments which seek to remove the dictatorial threat. This concept was outlined in the previous chapter in discussing preaching from the pulpit. For the Alliance Defense Fund, the preachers need to have the ability to speak about politics; any obstruction to this is seen as a totalitarian secular giant crushing the rights and freedoms of the individual members of the church. In doing so, they voice their concerns as dissenters towards what they perceive as a radical regime. Of course, not everyone adheres to this mentality, as has been demonstrated with Williams. What must be taken away, then, is that strict enforcement of radical secularism has the potential to create sub-groups willing to become vocal and publically lash out against the perceived anti-religious threat.

Turkey is not alone in the propagation of radical secularism as a domineering political philosophy. France, and to some extent America, have similar experiences with radical

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, 126-127.

secularisms. To look at France, Kuru states that in December of 2003 the Stasi Commission submitted a report to the president Jacques Chirac regarding secularism. He clarifies that, “[w]hile the primary target of this new law was the Muslim headscarf, it was also extended to cover Sikh turbans, Jewish skullcaps (*kippot*), and ‘large’ Christian crosses”.¹¹⁸ Included in the initial pages of this article is a dictation of the American Ambassador to France, John Hanford, responding to this situation. To respond to the question about the “headscarf ban” he says:

President Chirac is concerned to maintain France’s principle of secularism and he wants that, as I think he said, not to be negotiable. Well, of course, our hope is religious freedom will be a non-negotiable as well [...] [A] number of countries ... restrict headscarves ... where people are wearing these with no provocation.¹¹⁹

In this response, Hanford is referring to Turkey primarily as another country which is banning headscarves without a necessitated reason. According to Kuru’s research, there are roughly 95 states in the world which fall into the same category as France, Turkey, and America.¹²⁰ Does this imply that all of these states will react to religion in the public sphere in the same manner? Given that Turkey and France themselves differ, it can be assumed that the answer to this question would have to be negative.

What can be observed from this inter-distinction within the category outlined by Kuru is the idea of passive and assertive secularism. Passive secularism, he defines, is that which acts pragmatically in order to preserve state neutrality on the issue of religion. On the other hand, “[a]ssertive secularism [...] means that the state excludes religion from the public sphere and plays an ‘assertive’ role as the agent of a social engineering project that confines religion to the

¹¹⁸ Ahmet T. Kuru, “Passive and Assertive Secularism: Historical Conditions, Ideological Struggles, and State Policies toward Religion” in *World Politics* Vol. 59, No. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 568.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* (Parentheses and Italics original).

¹²⁰ To understand the breakdowns implied here see the appendices at the end of the project.

private domain”.¹²¹ Therefore a passive secularist, as Kuru is describing, would be the person who is found within the framework of Secularity 3, whereas an assertive secularist would be more properly conceived of as belonging to Secularity 1. To discuss the negative potentiality for the future of secularism is to deal primarily with the assertive side of this spectrum.

Later in his article, Kuru touches on the idea that, “[r]eligious groups generally design their political preferences regarding sociopolitical conditions”.¹²² He connects this with the idea that civilizations place importance on three principle social factors: the preferences of individuals in society, rational calculations, and the structural constraints of these choices. To incorporate this into the religious sphere allows for an understanding of what exactly is happening in states like France and Turkey. In order to maintain the structure in place, the ruling individuals have molded a secure, secular atmosphere in which the assertive secularists find comfort. This in turn generates a greater aversion to public displays of religiosity, as these displays could be taken as attempts to undermine the comfort of society and plunge the state into inner turmoil. While this train of logic may seem irrational to Canadian thinkers, it is by no means illogical for those currently involved in the struggles.

These are, of course, descriptive of state-based analyses of religiosity; by no means is this reflective of the people. For instance, Kuru argues that America is in the passive secularist category, and in being such they are inclusionary with regards to religion. However, when the lens is turned to observe the general public within the American sphere there are clear areas where religious strife are maintained in such a manner which would compete with this state description. Incidents like that of the Chapel Hill shooting are demonstrative of this. In order to

¹²¹ Kuru, *Passive and Assertive Secularism*, 571.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 577.

keep the current focus on the future of secularism this will be an issue I will readdress in my final chapter.

Another aspect of radical secularism is its susceptibility to fall prey to the negative influences from the atheism movement. Atheism is by no means inherently anti-religious; it is merely a-religious. Eagleton opens his chapter on the Crisis of Culture by emphasizing how long it took modernity to accept and develop an authentic atheism. He states that, “[n]ot believing in God is a far more arduous affair than is generally imagined. Whenever the Almighty seems safely despatched, he is always liable to stage a reappearance in one disguise or another”.¹²³ While Eagleton may not find himself within this camp, assertions like his can be methods of expressing the distaste with the religious influence on society. When such sentiments come together, especially when under the leadership of anti-theists like Sam Harris, conflicts begin to arise. To quote Harris himself, “[t]he medieval church was quick to observe that the Good Book was good enough to suggest a variety of means for eradicating heresy [...] A literal reading of the Old Testament not only permits but *requires* heretics to be put to death”.¹²⁴ Without spoiling my final chapter, Harris is using this ideology in order to defend his stance that the religiously-inclined is willing to go to great lengths to support their faith. He employs Deuteronomistic codes, like 17:12-13 and 13:12-16 to justify his claims of lunacy and fanaticism brought against religious persons.

Returning to Eagleton, he raises two questions in an attempt to demonstrate that culture cannot replace religion as the dominant societal norm. Of these two questions, however, I believe

¹²³ Terry Eagleton, “The Crisis of Culture” in *Culture and the Death of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014): 119.

¹²⁴ Sam Harris, “In the Shadow of God” in *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004): 81-82.

it is important to examine the first proposed, “[m]ight culture succeed in becoming the sacred discourse of a post-religious age, binding people and intelligentsia in spiritual communion”?¹²⁵ His negative answer to this question lies in the idea that aesthetic culture alone is too fragile to support the demands of the society after a removal of religion. He believes that culture is more likely to lay the foundations for social divisions than it is to reconcile them. What, then, does this mean for the future of secularism? Is it possible for culture to take the seat of religion and become such a ‘sacred’ discourse? I believe that this, when taken in and of itself, must be false, but not for the same reasons that Eagleton proposes. I believe that this becomes a problem of interpretation regarding Secularity 3. Culture should not seek to replace religion as what is sacred in society; however, with the current state of mass media this indeed appears to be a possibility. Instead, to change a negatively inclined future into a true secular society it is necessary for both the religious and the a-religious to coincide together.

For some, this is not an acceptable future for the secularism movement. Writers like Zindler believe that the only use that religion has is to be a curious word in the dictionary of atheists. He highlights that there is an argument for the sociobiological inheritance for religiosity, in that natural selection favoured the religious as it supported cohesion in tribal times. However, he also writes that:

That fact that almost 40% of American scientists still adhere to religious beliefs of some kind lends credibility to the notion that there is a genetic bias which can override the rational faculties of even well-educated and otherwise rational people. It is doubtful, however, that 40% of humanity is irredeemably religious.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Eagleton, *The Crisis of Culture*, 121.

¹²⁶ Frank R. Zindler, “Society Does Not Need Religion” in *Atheism*, ed. Beth Rosenthal (New York: Greenhaven Press, 2009): 65.

This idea is continued by stating that there are areas of the world which are not as religious as the West, like China and the former Soviet Union. Thus, Zindler states, it would appear that a world without religion is indeed feasible. He asks of his reader what this irreligious world could look like; would it look like Eden *sans* serpent? This, he says, would depend on how this religion-free world came to exist.

The future of secularism, for Zindler, relies on a mitigation of the intolerances of the religious. He cites how France has come to the point where it is, “necessary to prohibit religious garb and symbols in the public schools”.¹²⁷ This is in order to prevent citizens from embracing those who seek to destroy the secular government, which he refers to as societal suicide. In making this assertion, he essentially outlines that if a society is to grow in a secular manner it cannot allow its citizens to abolish their freedoms by embracing unfreedom. In order to do this he proposes that governments should focus on reason and science instead of supporting religious freedoms. With this mentality, radical secularist growth poses a negative threat to the continuance of diversity in society. This is the extreme of Secularity 1; in it lies the minority, though loud, New Atheism movement.

Conclusion

It is my belief that secularism can take one of two paths listed above, and after a detailed analysis I sincerely hope for the former. When religion is viewed as a basis for the a-religious to live their lives there is space for multiculturalism and acceptance. This is evident in the cultural Christians in Scandinavia; who, despite lacking a belief in the transcendent, adhere to the teachings of a loving Christianity. As de Botton highlighted, the religious education which

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 69.

centres on looking into the ills of society can be applied to the secular world with its own texts. With any dichotomy, there is of course a second side to analyse. If secularism takes the path of intolerance, then strict rules like those which govern Muslims in France and Turkey could eliminate all elements of diversity in Western society. While both trajectories are possible, it is my hope that society will move towards the former, and do all we can to stave off the latter. With this, the central question to this project emerges: is secularism indeed a response to the need for religious acceptance? This will be explored in depth in the final chapter.

The Big Question

With the history, present, and future of secularism outlined in the above chapters it is now time to delve into the heart of the issue at hand. There is one prominent question which merits an answer: is secularism a form of religious acceptance and tolerance, or is it a monster in disguise? In order to address this, both the religious and the nonreligious must be given room to speak as only then can the truth be uncovered. This chapter will begin with an analysis of the religious standpoint which will be followed by the atheist view. In both sections the content will gradually shift from liberal to radical; this is in the hopes that a full scope of the charged landscape will be highlighted. Is it possible to be religious and secular? Can an atheist reconcile their secularist views while accepting religion as a possible belief-system? The answers would appear to be mixed.

The Religious View

Negating secular issues is not a prerequisite for serious theologians to incorporate into their doctrines. Indeed, the integration of these specific societal needs is essential to living in a functional secularity³. Theologians like Gustavo Gutiérrez Merino believed that action must precede the act of theology; by this he is indicating that writing down events and reconciling them with God must occur after the events have transpired. He writes that, “[t]heology is reflection, a critical attitude. Theology *follows*; it is the second step”.¹²⁸ Gutiérrez experienced firsthand the trials of poverty in Latin America and believed that it was the role of the Church to

¹²⁸ Gustavo Gutiérrez, “Theology: A Critical Reflection” in *A Theology of Liberation*” trans. Sister Caridad Ina and John Eagleson (New York: Orbis Books, 1988): 11.

deal with this corruption. While not directly related to secularism, Gutiérrez makes an excellent points in his discussion on the oppression of individuals in Latin America; some of his ideas can even be applied to other oppression-oppressed dichotomies He states that, “[i]n order to achieve this non-repressive society, however, it will be necessary to challenge the values espoused by the society which denies man the possibility of living freely”.¹²⁹ If the discussion on secularity has any theological connection, this sort of statement would be it. In order to function, a secular society must challenge the cultural norms and fight for human rights and dignities. Those who wish to theologise about it afterwards are free to do so.

Therefore, to function in an inclusive manner both sides implicated in secularism must at minimum be tolerant towards each other. Usually when the issue of tolerance is brought up it is because an atheist has questioned religion. However, the religious are just as guilty of these transgressions against cooperation. Albert Mohler, for instance, believes that the “New Atheism” movement considers religion to be morally wrong in their approach to the topic. He also criticises popular media taking the stance of the atheistic, such as when WIRED magazine ran a cover story in November of 2006 on atheism. Mohler comments that despite its focus on the growing centrality of technology:

[WIRED] consistently offers significant intellectual content and it takes on many of the most controversial issues of the times. Considering the relatively young readership of the magazine, the decision to put atheism on the front cover indicates something of where they think the society is headed – at least in interest.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, “Liberation and Development” in *A Theology of Liberation*” trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (New York: Orbis Books, 1988): 31.

¹³⁰ Albert Mohler, “The ‘New Atheism’ Movement Considers Religion Morally Wrong” in *Atheism*, ed. Beth Rosenthal (New York: Greenhaven Press, 2009): 38.

The concern here is that the New Atheism movement is gaining ground, and doing so in a way that acts similar to how they accuse religion of tackling youth: by brainwashing them. Mohler continues his commentary on the movement through expanding upon a set of interviews conducted by Gary Wolf. These interviews, Mohler explains, “thoughtfully [introduce] the work of militant atheists such as Dawkins, Harris, and Dennett”.¹³¹ Thus, Wolf’s interviews are an attempt to gather information on what the “true” meaning of the New Atheism movement, according to outsider individuals.

The analysis begins with a quote from Wolf; the most interesting thing he says within it is that, “[The New Atheists] condemn not just belief in God but *respect* for belief in God. Religion is not only wrong; it’s evil”.¹³² To recall the much discussed concept of secularism 3, this would indicate that the New Atheism movement is not interested in forming a society of respect and co-habitation between the different belief systems. Instead, the world needs to be a strict secularism 1, and people need to adhere to secularism 2; this is the only way to proceed into the future as a functional society. Indeed, in his introduction to *the Portable Atheist*, Christopher Hitchens writes that, “[b]y all means let us agree that we are pattern-seeking mammals and that, owing to our restless intelligence and inquisitiveness, we will still prefer a conspiracy theory to no explanation at all”.¹³³ He makes reference to this viewpoint being a pathetic solipsism which the religious have created in order to feel better about their belief in something which cannot be proved.

The discussion will return to the views of the militant atheists shortly, for now the discussion will remain with the religiously oriented. Mohler’s analysis of Wolf’s article

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 39.

¹³³ Christopher Hitchens, “Introduction” in *the Portable Atheist* (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2007): xvii.

continues to outline the various New Atheism leaders, beginning with Richard Dawkins. Through his various books with religion as their topic, Dawkins has painted himself to be a “philosopher and (a)theologian”.¹³⁴ Mohler also point out that Dawkins is not seeking to make religion unacceptable, rather even entertaining respect for belief in something higher is to be disregarded as improper. A striking quotation of Dawkins during the interview with Wolf paints a clear picture of how he believes atheism should be thought of as both theological and political. In this interview, Dawkins says that:

The number of nonreligious people in the US is something nearer to 30 million than 20 million. That’s more than all the Jews in the world put together. I think we’re in the same position the gay movement was in a few decades ago. There was a need for people to come out. The more people who came out, the more people who had the courage to come out. I think that’s the case with atheists. They’re more numerous than anybody realizes.¹³⁵

To touch upon the gross misrepresentation and oversimplification of the struggles of LGBT individuals, which are not as peachy as this offhanded remark seems to think, would require more time that can be allotted in this project. Suffice to say, this contrived correlation created a false sense of being victimised. I believe that this self-imposed victimisation is being employed to gain sympathy to the cause of New Atheism; however, this is ironic as the movement is itself practicing xenophobic and anti-religious sentiments which, to keep with the misunderstood example Dawkins uses, is akin to homophobia.

A problem arises when the views of the loud minority become the views placed upon the majority of individuals in any given group. An example of this would be the fear and indignation most Muslims in America grapple with daily in the misinformed view that they are all terrorists.

¹³⁴ Mohler, *The ‘New Atheism’ Movement Considers Religion Morally Wrong*, 39.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

Likewise, individuals within the New Atheism movement are viewed as a representation of the majority. Mohler is guilty of making this assumption himself as he states that, “[Dawkins] is willing to say what many other atheists think. Indeed, he is willing to say what other atheists *must* think, but are unwilling to say for one political reason or another”.¹³⁶ While he begins on questionable ground with the “many”, Mohler quickly descends into blanket statements by insisting that this is what other atheists must believe; this brings him into the category of individuals who cannot be considered tolerant. Unless the connection between atheist and New Atheism is broken society will never be able to fully establish a true secularity 3. Not every atheist agrees with Dawkins, just like not every Christian agrees with the Westboro Baptist Church.

Atheists are not the only problem for the fervent religious, indeed the entire concept of secularism has come under fire. Christopher Klicka, a senior counsel for the Home School Legal Defense Association, argues that the 1997 Supreme Court repeal of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act has massive implications for religion in America. Indeed, he argues that because of this decision, “state and federal courts have diminished religious freedom in many ways”.¹³⁷ Klicka then proceeds to give several examples of issues he believes have been created by the Supreme Court ruling, none of which include explanations as to how they were explicitly targeted because of their religious affiliation. He argues that there is a subtle erosion occurring in the secularisation process which is removing the freedoms of the religious. It is accurate to say that Klicka’s argument for religious freedoms has positive implications which could seriously benefit some individuals. However, the method he presents the arguments are questionable and

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹³⁷ Christopher J Klicka, “Religious Freedom Laws Are Necessary” in *Atheism*, ed. Beth Rosenthal (New York: Greenhaven Press, 2009): 150.

leave room for further discrimination. He writes that, “[a]s of August 2005, by God’s grace, more than a quarter of the states have acted to protect the religious freedom of the citizens in their states”.¹³⁸ What he does not specify is exactly how these new state actions have changed the landscape for the people, and whether or not they help all religious individuals or are primarily installed for the Christian supporters of the legislation.

In an anecdotal box within this article, Kevin Seamus Hasson is quoted responding to a question regarding the biggest threat to religious liberty in America. He states that the, “biggest threat comes from people who think that religious truth is the enemy of human freedom – that the only good religion is a relativist one”.¹³⁹ He makes several references to school boards who believe that the Easter Bunny and Valentine’s Day are not secular enough; after all, both are Christian by definition. These schools, he muses, have changed these days and told children to send each other “special person cards” and have breakfast with the Special Bunny. This, Hasson states, comes not from the public, but from lawyers and politicians who believe, “nativity scenes and menorahs are like secondhand smoke – something that decent people shouldn’t be exposed to in the public square”.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, the argument reads, the secular interpretation of the Constitution is inhuman, and if the battle for religious liberty can be properly framed then the majority, not just the Christian conservatives, will choose to side with it.

The religious view of secularism as atheism in disguise continues to get harsher as we delve further into the conservative camp. The final person I would like to highlight in this negative progression is Chris Hedges and his book *I Don’t Believe In Atheists*. While he specifically targets the New Atheists, the language Hedges employs is susceptible to

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 154.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 154.

misquotation and misinterpretation, hence referencing his work last. To summarize his views on this movement in a single sentence, Hedges believes that, “[t]hese atheists embrace a belief system as intolerant, chauvinistic and bigoted as that of religious fundamentalists”.¹⁴¹ Hedges writes that many of the New Atheists support the wars in foreign lands as a means of fighting against religious terrorism and irrational religion. He then compares them further to the religious right: first he states that, for example, Christopher Hitchens and Sam Harris use racist and intolerant language similar to Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell. Therefore, he considers the New Atheists to be, “a secular version of the religious right”.¹⁴² The comparison continues in that Hedges says New Atheists misuse evolutionary biology and Charles Darwin just as Christian fundamentalists misuse the Bible. Unfortunately, and as said above, Hedges’ opinions can be misinterpreted, and some are even rather extreme themselves. For instance, he says that, “[t]he recent crop of atheists, in the end, offer us a new version of an old and dangerous faith. It is one we have seen before. It is one we must fight”.¹⁴³ With statements like this, it is impossible to create a safe foundation upon which to build a form of secularity 3. This, while well intended, is in and of itself too intolerant to be considered seriously.

The comparison between the religious right, specifically the Christian fundamentalists, and the New Atheists continues in Hedges addressing of the issue in later chapters of his book. He states that:

Fundamentalist is a mind-set. The iconography and language it employs can be either religious or secular or both, but because it dismisses all alternative viewpoints as inferior and unworthy of consideration it is anti-thought. This is part of its attraction. It fills

¹⁴¹ Chris Hedges, “Prologue” in *I Don’t Believe In Atheists* (New York: Free Press, 2008): 1.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 8.

a human desire for self-importance, for hope and the dream of finally attaining paradise.¹⁴⁴

This state of mind is used to justify the hubris society possesses when involved in war, repression, and intolerance. Hedges argues that those who oppose fundamentalists, regardless of if they are religious in nature, are considered to be savages and lesser humans. In regards to the New Atheists, he argues that stepping outside of the childish mockery of religion and into the writings of Aquinas, Paul Tillich, or Reinhold Niebuhr is beyond their capacity. He goes as far as to say that all fundamentalists, “reject intellectual investigations”.¹⁴⁵ This is because, for Hedges, these groups claim to know the ultimate truth about the world.

To conclude his book, Hedges states that we have become obsessed with wealth status in modernity, and that this, “has become a soul-crushing disease”.¹⁴⁶ He makes reference to Alain de Botton and his work *Status Anxiety*. In this book, de Botton argues that the people in the Middle Ages were manipulated by stained glass images and paintings of religious suffering just as we are inundated with pictures of wealth in modern media. Hedges says that this fixation on what is beyond us, in modern times, mocks the majority of Western individuals as they cannot achieve what they desire. According to his analysis, we spend our time in malls buying things we do not need to impress people more shallow than we are in an attempt to stay relevant. This yearning keeps us in a state of ignorance. Hedges then maintains that this constant desire for more is what leaves modern individuals open to the influence of the atheists. He writes that, “[t]hey play to our fears, especially of what we do not understand. Their words are sensational, fragmented, and devoid of content”.¹⁴⁷ This is where Hedges’ true bias becomes apparent, as he

¹⁴⁴ Chris Hedges, “The New Fundamentalism” in *I Don’t Believe In Atheists* (New York: Free Press, 2008): 69.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁴⁶ Chris Hedges, “The Illusive Self” in *I Don’t Believe In Atheists* (New York: Free Press, 2008): 182.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 183-184.

follows this by stating that, “[r]eligious thought is a guide to morality. It points humans toward inquiry. It seeks to unfetter the mind from prejudices that blunt reflection and self-criticism. We are all flawed”.¹⁴⁸ Unfortunately, these are not the words of someone who can help pave the way for secularity 3; rather, they are those which entertain a fight against a small few and blanket over the rest. With such direct words implying that only the religious can be moral, we cannot find even the remotest of tolerances in this argument.

The Nonreligious View

To properly view this issue, the topic must now turn to the viewpoint of the New Atheists themselves. As with the above section, this will progress from what can be considered the most tolerant to that which cannot be considered so in any sense of the word. To begin, I will look at the opinions of Gene Madeo; he believes that atheism has a future insofar as it can be a viable option. This idea fits well within the notion of secularity 3. He starts his work by stating that as a minority group, “it is easy for atheists to express anger, frustration, and disappointment at how we are depicted and treated by believers”.¹⁴⁹ The demonstrations of the religious right in America, he elaborates, is the reason for the rise of figures such as Sam Harris in the New Atheism movement. Madeo believes that these individuals are providing an outlet for the anger towards the religious that atheists can sympathise with and support. However, he believes that people will still maintain that the atheism movement is an affront to their personal beliefs because of the negative connotations it has had placed upon it. Therefore, he says that, “the only way atheists and agnostics will ever reach believers is by offering people a joyful, wonderful

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁴⁹ Gene Madeo, “Atheism Has a Future” in *Atheism* ed. Beth Rosenthal (New York: Greenhaven Press, 2009): 163.

alternative to religion”.¹⁵⁰ To do this, Madeo suggests that the movement learn from religions and begin to cater to the same needs which they do. By offering criticism alone, he believes very few will actually pay any attention.

Madeo is an excellent example of an atheist who could fit snugly into the notion of secularism 3. He admits that he is not a believer, and yet does not insist on forcing others to become the same. Instead, his reaction is to learn from, and with, religions in order to fulfill human desires and needs. The normal response to the question of why someone should be an atheist, he says, needs to move away from, “‘It’s a more sensible, intelligent view of life, and a better way of life’ – because it is not necessarily so”.¹⁵¹ Instead, he says that most groups who offer alternatives to religion, be they atheists, agnostics, or secular humanists, tend to be grumpy and angry from the negativity they have received in the public forum. Madeo’s proposition that atheists move away from the topic of God, especially that of criticizing the concept of belief associated, demonstrates a level of acceptance which surpasses mere tolerance. This is the path for atheists to follow in order to create a viable secularism 3 in our modern world.

Unfortunately, not everyone sees the world in such a tolerant manner. The Institute for Humanist Studies submitted a piece to the same publication Madeo did, however they chose to oppose the Religious Freedom Restoration Act as they believed it to be redundant and discriminatory.¹⁵² This is because they believe the RFRA will call into question many of the current secular laws which have nothing to do with religion; through this questioning the IHS fears that these laws which currently protect all people will be modified to favour one group over

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁵² Institute for Humanist Studies, “Religious Freedom Laws Are Discriminatory and Unnecessary” in *Atheism* ed. Beth Rosenthal (New York: Greenhaven Press, 2009): 142.

the others. Both the First Amendment and Article I section 3 of the Bill of Rights for New York are cited as negating religion possessing any legal establishment or protection. The IHS claims that, “[s]o far New York State has dealt fairly with cases of religious freedom [...] Religious freedom is not in danger in New York State”.¹⁵³ Essentially the argument rests that this additional legislation is not required.

Why is this institution so adamant to go against this bill? After all, if it is redundant then that means the systems it is proposing are already in place, and any additional mentions towards these systems should not affect anything, legally speaking. Right? Not so, according to the IHS. They believe that the RFRA, “seem[s] to have less to do with religious freedom than special privileges”.¹⁵⁴ The IHS then proceeds to list radical examples of what these special privileges would consist of, including: making it easier for Catholic priests to deal with child molestation internally, allowing religious sites to ignore zoning requirements thus endangering those New Yorkers around them, child abuse issues, and polygamy, among many others.¹⁵⁵ As well, the IHS believes that legislations that favour the religious over the nonreligious, such as the RFRA in question within their article, also pit religion against religion.

In the final chapter of her book *Freethinkers*, Susan Jacoby describes a convocation ceremony where Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonin Scalia gave a speech which, in her opinion, was rather shocking. Scalia, who is supposed to represent the populous as a whole and not favour any specific group, harshly criticized the secular government.¹⁵⁶ According to her recount, Scalia’s beliefs fall among those who believe democracy is responsible for the rise of

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 143.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 144.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 144.

¹⁵⁶ Susan Jacoby, “Reason Embattled” in *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004): 348.

the opposition to the death penalty, which is something he is very much in favour of, and that Americans should instead put full faith in God.¹⁵⁷ Jacoby makes very clear that Scalia's views are old and dismissed, even by the Catholic Church which denounced the death penalty in John Paul II's 1995 *Evangelium Vitae*.¹⁵⁸ She continues to break down Scalia's arguments and views by expressing how relatively recent each reference to God is in American popular culture; these references are considered sacred symbols for American Christians.

According to Jacoby, it took five months and a reprint before Scalia's radical speech was given any attention for the negativity it espoused. She explains this by saying that:

The initial absence of any consternation over Scalia's broadside against secular government is one measure of the religious right's success in placing liberals and secularists on the defensive – and of the cowardice of politicians who fear being maligned as antireligious when they stand up for separation of church and state.¹⁵⁹

In making such a strong statement, Jacoby is trying to demonstrate just how radical the religious right can be in matters regarding secularism. She believes that assaults like this are not only attempts to rewrite secular law, but also serve to undermine secularist and nonreligious humanist values. The Bush administration is then cited as another example of just how far politicians can go in blurring, or even destroying, church-state boundary lines. This political concern with religion, Jacoby writes, has created a situation where, "a majority of Americans say they would refuse to vote for an atheist for president, even though they would consider voting for an African American, a woman, a Jew, or a homosexual".¹⁶⁰ Today, roughly 11 years after the publication of Jacoby's book, we have seen the political scales turn, even if only slightly, with the election of

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 349.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 350.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 352.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 354.

Barack Obama. However, there is still a sense of taboo surrounding the idea of an atheist president. It is also interesting that people not that long ago would consider voting for a homosexual president rather than an atheist; this is especially intriguing when marriage equality and LGBT protection rights were relatively unheard of at this time.¹⁶¹

With these progressively harsher critiques of the religious right from the eyes of secularists, it is now time to take a leap towards the far extremes. The final individual I will be presenting is Sam Harris, and his distinctive views on the topic of religion as a whole. To begin unravelling his view, he writes that, “[i]t does not require any special knowledge of psychology or neuroscience to observe that human beings are generally reluctant to change their minds”.¹⁶² With this in mind, he continues by working out the question of faith and why it is difficult to believe. He outlines that an individual cannot answer the question “why” in regards to their belief in God without answering “I believe because”.¹⁶³ This is then cross-examined against the notion that believing that a refrigerator-sized diamond in the individual’s backyard makes the individual feel just as good as believing in God; however, it is equally untrue and thus contra reason as diamonds this big have never discovered nor is it likely to be in someone’s backyard. Thus, he states, “we can see why Pascal’s wager, Kierkegaard’s leap of faith, and other epistemological ponzi schemes won’t do”.¹⁶⁴ For Harris, existence is a requisite aspect for something’s being believable.

¹⁶¹ For example, the only state which had homosexual marriage rights in 2004 was Massachusetts.

¹⁶² Sam Harris, “The Nature of Belief” in *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004): 61.

¹⁶³ Harris outlines just above this section in his book that because stems from the Middle English “by” + “cause” and thus something can only be answered with “because” if it is the result caused by the proposition’s being true. (*Ibid.*, 62).

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 62-63.

Further along in his critique of faith and belief, Harris explains that his dismissal of the concept will most likely seem callous to a good portion of his readers. He justifies this by stating that, “the fact that unjustified beliefs can have a consoling influence on the human mind is no argument for their favor. If every physician told his terminally ill patients that they were destined for a complete recovery, this might also set many of their minds at ease, but at the expense of the truth”.¹⁶⁵ He follows this by stating that the faithful have never been indifferent to the truth, however, their steadfastness to that very faith is what leaves them unequipped to decipher the truth from the falsities of their world.

This section of Harris’ book ends with a discussion on what, for him, we are to believe. It would appear that his opinion on the matter is that the more educated we become the more we learn our beliefs second hand. His example for this is falling from a great height being hazardous to one’s health: unless an individual has witnessed the dangers firsthand, it is most likely that they learned this from an outside source. On this regard he says that, “[I]f life is too short, and the world too complex, for any of us to go it alone in epistemological terms. We are reliant on the intelligence and accuracy, if not the kindness, of strangers”.¹⁶⁶ However, Harris argues that not all authority is correct, and that there are both good and bad arguments for intelligence. Indeed, his belief is that each of us has within us the ability to be the final judge in terms of what we adopt as a truth about the world.

In his typical manner, Harris continues in a much more critical analysis of belief, faith, and God. For the purposes of this project it is acceptable to end here having sampled what he has to offer. It is clear, through what little has been covered, that he is indeed one of the more

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

adamant anti-religionists on the side of secularism. However, as referenced numerous times in this and earlier chapters, it would appear that Harris does not fit into the category of secularism. In fact his intolerant views, especially as they pertain to Muslim individuals¹⁶⁷, would fully exclude him from the acceptance which is necessitated by secularity 3. Unfortunately, as with the southern Christians or the Middle Eastern Muslims, the loud minority becomes the face of the general majority. This indeed creates negative implications for these majority groups.

Conclusion

As demonstrated above, the question of whether or not secularism is indeed a position of tolerance and acceptance is a difficult one to answer. There are liberals, moderates, and extremists in both the religious and the secularist camps. This final chapter has served to identify several names from these groups, and demonstrated how different they can be even within the same belief system. The discussion began with the religiously inclined: first Gutiérrez was utilized to show potential links between liberation theology and secularism. After this Mohler and Klicka gave their testimonies in more conservative manners. This section then ended with Hedges and his stark dismissal of what appears to be all atheists. Following this, Madeo showed us what a true secularity 3 atheist could offer in his proposition that atheism learn from religion instead of criticise it. The IHS and Jacoby followed this with more nuanced, through still more moderate arguments, until finally the discussion ended on Harris and his argument contra belief. Truly, the development into a secular society is wrought with tension; this tension is exactly the matter at hand which must be addressed.

¹⁶⁷ For sake of brevity this has not been covered in this thesis. If interest persists to understand these views, his first book *The End of Faith* dedicates an entire chapter to "The Problem with Islam". Throughout his career he makes several other references to this matter, but that chapter would be an adequate starting point.

Final Thoughts

In order to truly develop into a society which demonstrates secularism in a positive manner, we must push our citizens and politicians to embrace each other and learn from what we are not. There are certainly many definition of secularism that can be utilized in discussions; however, as outlined in the first chapter, there is one which espouses acceptance and tolerance towards all people. This secularity 3 should become our basis as a society. Through tracing the development of religious thought in chapter two, and the slow progression towards individualism, it can be argued that this stance was inevitable. A focus on individual needs within a society is essentially what religious acceptance and tolerance must provide. The current political arena, however, remains divided on the subject. Chapter three demonstrated the changing political landscape and the battles which are ongoing within. Unfortunately, this means that our hopes for a true secularity 3 are not manifest quite yet. Can it occur in the future? Chapter four sought to address this; however, as it is merely a projection there is no telling how events will transpire. This is made especially apparent when the current views on tolerance, as seen in chapter five, are presented. Therefore, one important question remains in our discussion on secularism. Unfortunately, this is one that no one individual can answer. Will we ever reach a point where acceptance becomes the norm? Or, in a more pessimistic attitude, will we eventually destroy each other? The answer to both these question must be answered with a third: who knows?

Appendices

Appendix 1.

Table 14.1
WHICH RELIGIOUS GROUP IS WARM, OR COLD, TO WHOM?
Average Feeling Thermometer Scores (0–100)

		THE GROUPS RECEIVING THE RATINGS							
		Evangelical Protestants	Mainline Protestants	Catholics	Jews	Not religious ¹⁾	Mormons	Muslims	Buddhist
THE GROUPS GIVING THE RATINGS	Evangelical Protestants	66	64	58	61	50	46	41	41
	Mainline Protestants	58	69	63	62	54	51	46	46
	Catholics	54	56	72	56	50	50	44	48
	Jews	46	59	64	79	64	54	45	64
	Not religious ²⁾	46	52	53	57	59	45	46	55
	Mormons	63	64	67	63	61	87	56	54
	Black Protestants	60	55	58	57	47	45	47	36

Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, “A House Divided” in *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2012): 508.

Appendix 2.

Identity as a Spiritual, Religious Person



Luis Lugo, “Nones’ on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation” from *The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2012): 43.

Appendix 3.

Benjamin Rush:

I proceed ... to enquire what mode of education we shall adopt so as to secure to the state all the advantages that are to be derived from the proper instruction of youth; and here I beg leave to remark, that the *only foundation* for a useful education in a republic *is to be laid in religion*. Without this there can be no virtue, and without virtue there can be no liberty, and liberty is the object and life of all republican governments.

George Washington:

Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that National morality can prevail in *exclusion of religious principle*.

James Madison:

The belief in a God All Powerful wise and good, *is so essential to the moral order* of the world and to the happiness of man, that arguments which enforce it cannot be drawn from too many sources nor adapted with too much solicitude to the different characters and capacities impressed with it.

Warner Todd Huston, “There Should Be No Separation of Church and State” in *Atheism*, ed. Beth Rosenthal (New York: Greenhaven Press, 2009): 120. (Emphasis added).

Appendix 4.

TABLE 1
TYPES OF STATE-RELIGION REGIMES

	<i>Religious State</i>	<i>State with an Established Religion</i>	<i>Secular State</i>	<i>Antireligious State</i>
Legislation and judiciary	religion-based	secular	secular	secular
State's attitude toward religions	officially favors one	officially favors one	officially favors none	officially hostile to all or many
Examples	Vatican Iran Saudi Arabia	Greece Denmark England	U.S. France Turkey	China North Korea Cuba
Number in the world	10	100	95	22

SOURCES: Constitutions of the example states; David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); *International Religious Freedom Report 2006*, U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/> (accessed May 1, 2006); James Edward Wood, *Church-State Relations in the Modern World* (Waco: Baylor University, 1998), 81–88.

Ahmet T. Kuru, “Passive and Assertive Secularism: Historical Conditions, Ideological Struggles, and State Policies toward Religion” in *World Politics* Vol. 59, No. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 570.

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