the changing profession

Secularism in the Framework of Heterodoxy

GAURI VISWANATHAN

GAURI VISWANATHAN is Class of 1933 Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. She is the author of *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (Columbia UP and Faber, 1989; rpt. Oxford UP, 1998) and *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief* (Princeton UP, 1998), which won, among other prizes, the MLA's James Russell Lowell Prize and the ACLA's Harry Levin Prize. She has published widely on education, religion, and culture; nineteenth-century British and colonial cultural studies; and the history of modern disciplines. Her current book project, "In Search of Blavatsky," is on modern occultism and the writing of alternative religious histories.

THE RISE OF THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT IN SOCIETIES AROUND THE WORLD HAS BROUGHT BACK THE CONTENTIOUS ISSUE OF RELIGION'S PLACE IN modern life. The secularization thesis is constantly invoked to explain the historical devaluation of religion's function in society (at least in the Protestant world) from normative to nominal as religion is relegated to the private space of individual belief. While the subject has engaged historians, sociologists, and religious scholars for a long time, yielding a vast and proliferating body of work (Asad; Berger; Casanova; Connolly; Taylor, *Secular Age*; Wilson), the field of literary studies has not witnessed a corresponding breadth of scholarship. This may be partly due to literature's self-definition as a secular vehicle for ideas whose possible religious origins were subsequently effaced as religious sensibility became absorbed into aesthetic form and imagery, especially in modernist writing. Contributing in no small measure to the perception that literature represents an outgrowth of secularism is Matthew Arnold's influential claim that literature succeeds a depleted Christianity and contains the moral values and direction once supplied by a religious ethos. Here are Arnold's words on the subject:

> [R]eligion comes to a conclusion identical with that which culture . . . likewise reaches. Religion says: *The kingdom of God is within you*; and culture, in like manner, places human perfection in an *internal* condition, in the growth and predominance of our humanity proper, as distinguished from our animality. . . . Not a having and a resting, but a growing and a becoming, is the character of perfection as culture conceives it; and here, too, it coincides with religion. (47–48)

Literature's unique relation to the religious culture it superseded made it an ideal instrument for conveying religiously inspired ethical values in a secular framework and, as I have argued elsewhere, an effective and palatable means by which Christian ideas could be imparted in colonial settings without inciting potential rebellion and resistance by colonial subjects practicing different religious faiths (*Masks*). Thus, secularism is conceived to be the inaugural moment of literature's formation, a defining aspect of its identity, whose re-

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ligious traces are no more than a historical reminder of a displaced worldview.

So definitively is literature's history part of the momentum leading to a secularist worldview that literature appears to have a unique standing among disciplines, in that it chronicles the transition from a religious culture instead of developing methodologies for studying the emergence of secularism. Yet in no way does the scholarly work in other disciplines on secularism have only tangential methodological relevance to literary studies, as is evident in the ways that literary periods are demarcated. If the debates on secularism bear significantly on literary studies, it is often in terms of the dissociation of belief from imagination deemed to be a legacy of the Enlightenment. The periodization inherent in narrativizing the decline of religious culture in these terms, with the Enlightenment as a pivotal transition point, assumes a divide in literary studies between early modern literature, in which a unity of spiritual and temporal powers prevails, and post-Enlightenment literature, in which the influence of the religious sphere on daily life is eclipsed by understandings of the world shaped by reason and imagination rather than by doctrinal belief. This divide appears to affirm the pattern of secularization outlined by the sociological literature, which explains the rise of secularism in terms of ruptures between two worldviews, one religious and the other rational and modern (Wilson). However, there is no basis for assuming that the divide in literary history results from the opposition of religion and reason or that religion disappears altogether. As the sociologist Philip Gorski notes, characterizations of secularism in terms of religious decline are misleading. He prefers instead to use the term "religious change" to signify religiosity's unstable meanings (139). Thus, describing public culture as more religious or less religious is not particularly useful, given that doctrinal ideas remained in tension with residual beliefs in magic, reincarnation, and astrology, among other beliefs. These ongoing practices pointed to other religious systems not conventionally brought under the rubric of mainstream religions such as Christianity or Judaism. In other words, there is no spiritual vacuum one can point to as evidence of religion's total decline.

Gorski juxtaposes two conflicting paradigms—one proposing that religion disappears and the other that religion is actually strengthened in the post-Reformation world—to argue that medieval Europe confounded both theories by holding Christianity and the paganism it supposedly vanquished in a steady balance, in which superstition coexisted with institutionalized Christian practices. Before the sixteenth century, the line between magic and religion was not all that clear-cut, and mainstream religion grew by drawing boundaries around itself and relegating magic to superstition and heresy (Thomas; Gorski; Styers). Consequently, the Reformation was less a popular revolt against clerical authority than a radical step toward detaching pagan attributes from religion and creating an autonomous space for religious belief to flourish, uncontaminated by eclectic forms of popular worship. This divide is structured more evidently by the dichotomy of elite versus popular than rational versus irrational. In many respects, the internal history of Christianity, played out against the fault lines of class, is driven by the motor of secularizing tendencies in the manner that radical doctrinal shifts succeeded one another. Each new theological shift streamlines belief, reducing its more variegated popular expressions and banishing the residues of the fantastic, the wondrous, and the superstitious to a pre-Christian, pagan past, while consolidating selective doctrinal tenets that mark off authentic Christianity from its corrupted versions.

The presence of different kinds of demarcations in the evolution of the religious sphere, which cannot all be characterized as reason's triumph over religion, raises broader questions about whether the study of literature might

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help scholars in other disciplines understand the oblique processes of secularization. If, as is the case even in other fields, it is no longer acceptable to describe religion as giving way to science and technology in a straightforward narrative, how might studying the development of literary forms yield alternative descriptions that will help clarify the dynamics of transition from a religious to a secular order? How might renewed interrogation of the Arnoldian proposition that literature succeeds religion, beginning with historicization of the term *religion* itself, help us rethink religion's nature in more than the homogeneous terms assumed by modern secularism?

Belief and Imagination

A closer study of literary history provides insights into the flawed nature of the secularization thesis. Examining the evolution of the literary field, we note that the primary ruptures are not between reason and religion but, rather, between belief and imagination, pointing to a development in which religious belief is contested by the alternative (even heterodox) knowledge systems it had suppressed or marginalized. Alex Owen's study of modern British occultism, *The Place of Enchantment*, is an important place to begin rethinking literature's secular trajectory, howsoever oblique the route is. As Owen notes, the transition from belief to imagination was jagged, not smooth, mediated by occult movements that, in their exploration of forms of higher consciousness detached from religious meaning, created what she calls a fictionalizing process (148–85). She concludes that "it is the crucial alignment of rational consciousness with the apparently irrational world of the myth-creating unconscious that produces the powerful experience of the occult 'real'" (182).

The idea of a mythopoeic unconscious is one of the most important concepts to emerge from such theorizations. Among the notable figures seeking to give scientific validity to occult phenomena was Frederic Myers, a member of the Society for Psychical Research, who conducted extensive psychic investigations into what he called "the subliminal mind," or willed imagination, which, as Owen observes, he conceived of as a powerful instrument for "spinning complex webs of creation with interpretive, explanatory, and even ethical significance," completely outside the agency or knowledge of the conscious mind (182). Myers described the "subliminal uprush" as a psychic phenomenon resembling creative genius or mystical insight, with an integrative function that brought the unconscious mind into concert with the movements of the higher self (20). Myers's use of the spiritual language of soul, higher self, and world soul put him at odds with psychologists and scientists and contributed to his marginalization in scientific circles. Yet he could never be banished to the outer fringes of arcane occultism, since his theories of the subliminal mind kept returning to the central role of the imagination in communicating information unavailable to experience or memory.

Myers's pivotal assertion, that the unconscious mind generates fictional propositions ("scraps of thought and feeling") in its search for knowledge of the occult real, brought imagination into open conflict with preexisting belief (27). To be sure, occultist practices aiming at an experience of the world of supersensory phenomena drew on psychic models that might, on one level, have borne comparison with protocols of religious belief. The key difference, however, is that for occultists the conscious mind directed the "complex web of creation" induced by the subliminal mind (identified with the "higher self" in Myers's thinking). Occultists saw this web of creation as having been generated by the higher self's experiences of a virtual realm, beyond imagination or mysticism. Most important, as the higher self moves into this realm, the actions of a conscious mental agency give narrative form to the fictional propositions generated in the process. However, the resulting narrative cannot be described as entirely fic-

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tional since it is based on experiencing, rather than imagining, supersensible phenomena.

The signal contribution of Myers's psychic research, as well as of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, which put his findings into practice, was an epistemology of the occult real based on "fictions," an alternative term for psychic experiences of hidden realities. The distinctions between occult knowledge and religious belief emerge in the ways that the occult real is illuminated. Rather than produced by texts of revelation, as is the case with religious belief, occult knowledge is built on storytelling, which occult practices treat as a form of revelatory experience. The title of one of Owen's chapters, "Occult Reality and the Fictionalizing Mind," captures the shift in register from belief to imagination as the initiator of secularizing processes in modern culture.

Oppositional Religious Discourses

I will have more to say about occultism's place in the history of secularization, but here I want briefly to draw attention to religion as a broad construct that includes both orthodox and heterodox elements. While it is convenient to see empirical reason as constituting a principal challenge to religious doctrine, the mistake is to homogenize religion and understate the degree to which it comprises competing beliefs, some of which were historically marginalized, others obliterated, and still others assimilated to a dominant religious system. To conceptualize religion in opposition to reason, therefore, misses the role of oppositional, so-called heretical discourses like Gnosticism, Manichaeanism, and Hermeticism in defining what Karen King calls "the boundaries of normative Christianity" (7). That Gnostic beliefs were rendered equivalent to oriental heresies furthered the aims of colonialism in propagating Christianity as the only authentic religion. The standard argument about the Enlightenment as a vehicle for secularization, in which conceptions of divinely inspired history are replaced by the idea of history as a product of human agency, pays little heed to religious heterodoxies in the secularizing process. These oppositional knowledge systems challenged canonical tenets and initiated skepticism and resistance to official, state-sponsored doctrines. Furthermore, at least one of these knowledge systems—Gnosticism—called for a return to inaugural moments in the rise of religion when the mysteries of life, while being an object of religious thought, at the same time provoked an "existential experience of human alienation" (11). The attempt to turn such experience into theodicy, to offer systematized explanations for suffering that eventually put in place doctrinal religions, was a prime target of heterodox thought.

It is interesting that Max Weber, notoriously credited with having institutionalized the notion of the "disenchantment of the world" as a secular outcome of religion's decline, has received far less attention for several arresting passages in his work tracing the genealogy of the intellectual to theodicy. According to Weber, the modern intellectual—the ultimate product of a secularized world—has been paradoxically consumed by the need to understand the causes of pain and suffering in the world. Weber offers what to all intents and purposes is a theory about the religious origins of the modern intellectual. From ethical guilt and unjust suffering, the intellectual develops a compensatory ethics that ultimately seeks not to reject religion but to *rationalize* it. The compulsion to explain seemingly random and meaningless suffering is accompanied by the conviction that there must be just recompense for unjust suffering. Such compensation is found in ethical meaning. Suffering, for Weber, is the key starting point for rationalization of the world. His deliberately oblique argumentation links compensatory meaning with human alienation and loss of mystery. Weber argues, for example, that the more one seeks to find meaningfulness, the more the world is devalued. Conversely, the more the world is devalued, the more its value

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is sought. . . . But in what, exactly? That object remains elusive for Weber.

Writing on disenchantment, Marcel Gauchet draws attention to Gnostic thought as refusing any kind of rationalization: "At one extreme lay gnosticism's great rejection, the irrevocable devaluation of this world in favor of the unimaginably other to which the soul aspires." At the other end are proto-secularist efforts to "reintegrate the order here-below with its source in the beyond, the theocratic attempt to put worldly life on the same footing as life directed toward the beyond" (49). If Gnosticism represents one extreme, radical in its rejection of rationalization, we find Weber struggling to break out of a bind that kept the intellectual in the grip of religious rationalization, despite the apparent worldliness produced by such intellectual moves: "For the more intensely rational thought has seized upon the problem of a just and retributive compensation, the less an entirely inner-worldly solution could seem possible, and the less an other-worldly solution could appear probable or even meaningful" (353).

Reading Weber, I am reminded of Simon During's suggestive analysis of literary history, which finds that the more literature is devalued, the more it breaks off from its institutional affiliations and enters the fantasy spaces of wonder (45). Unlike tradition or orthodoxy, wonder has no institutional home, no anchoring mechanism that channels its expression in determinate ways. It does not require a structure of reference and intertextuality for its meaning to be construed—indeed, it thwarts all identification with systematized forms of knowledge. It would seem Weber makes an uncannily similar move by opening up the possibility that the "existential experience of human alienation," to use King's phrase, initiates a search for value in an as-yet-indeterminate space. The fact that this search results in rationalization, which in turn perpetuates the repetitive cycle of devaluation and revaluation of the world, does not take away from Weber's characterization of the intellectual enterprise as shot through with motivations akin to those driving theodicy.

Furthermore, Weber's understanding of rationalization follows a peculiarly dialectical progression:

> The less magic or merely contemplative mysticism and the more "doctrine" a religion contains, the greater is its need of rational apologetics. . . . The more religion became book-religion and doctrine, the more literary it became and the more efficacious it was in provoking rational lay-thinking, freed of priestly control. From the thinking laymen, however, emerged the prophets, who were hostile to priests; as well as the mystics, who searched salvation independently of priests and sectarians; and finally the skeptics and philosophers, who were hostile to faith. (351)

Strikingly, Weber's account of acts of intellection brings the anticlerical, antinomian intellectual closer to Gnostic ways of knowing than to Enlightenment rationalism as we understand it. To quote Weber again: "[E]very religion in its psychological and intellectual sub-structure . . . has taken a different stand towards intellectualism, without allowing the ultimate inward tension to disappear. For the tension rests on the unavoidable disparity among ultimate forms of images of the world" (352). This is clearly not a triumphalist narrative of reason's ascendancy over belief but a subtle reading of oppositionality as internal to religion. Such oppositionality embraces different dissenting traditions and even includes conversion, which at times employs rational apologetics in an effort to reshape the religion to which an individual has converted (Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold*).

Most important, Weber recognized the bonds that kept the intellectual tied to rationalizing processes in religion: "[R]edemptory religion will see nothing but the intellect's desire to escape its own lawful autonomy. . . . Above all, religion sees all this as a specific product of the very rationalism that *intellectualism, by*

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these endeavors, would very much like to escape" (353; my emphasis). Weber sees rationalization as a trap that the intellectual can escape only by, paradoxically, taking recourse in what During, describing literary subjectivity, characterizes as the fantasy space of wonder (45). If this is the inevitable but startling trajectory of rationalization, then its outcome in spurring resistance to rationalism points to the oblique routes through which we would need to trace not only the pathways of intellectual activity but also secularism itself. For if rationalization in explaining irrational experiences like suffering and pain ironically produces equally irrational concepts like original sin (the example Weber gives), then true acts of intellection must go in opposite directions, short-circuiting the compulsions to rationalization. So perhaps more than he intended, Weber brings the skeptic and the intellectual closer to the dissenting knowledge systems that posed heterodox challenges to mainstream doctrine by questioning the very premises of religious rationalization.

For this reason, heterogeneous spiritual movements outside mainstream religion deserve serious study, no matter how eccentric and idiosyncratic they might seem to modern readers (as well as to their own contemporary publics, perhaps). The primary interest in studying movements like Theosophy, for instance (which Jung called "pure Gnosticism in Hindu dress" [qtd. in Carlson 188]), is that the writings by its best-known practitioners—Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Annie Besant, Alfred Sinnett, among others—track the moment when religious mysteries were buried or relegated to superstition, a development that Gorski, citing the work of scholars on secularization, identifies as occurring at the time of the Protestant Reformation (139).

Indeed, Wouter Hanegraaff, who has written compellingly on occultism as a movement shaped by the emergence of secular thought, argues that esotericism's transformation into modern occultism produced an eclectic form in which elements of correspondences and causality were uncertainly intermingled, with ambiguous results. Noting that the development from an internally consistent worldview of correspondences to an uneven, contradictory worldview is symptomatic of the unstable relation between religion and secularism, Hanegraaff suggests that the original coherence of esoteric thought, rooted in arcane symbols and encryptions, was disrupted by the intrusion of new elements of historicity and causality, producing an "unstable mixture of logically incompatible elements" that was alienated as much from scientific rationalism as from traditional esotericism (407). His perspective is at odds with an earlier literature on occultism, which treated the occult as an assemblage of survivals, evoking ghosts of superseded, forgotten creeds and regressing to a primitive stage of cultural and religious development. Such interpretations, Hanegraaff notes, come from a discredited nineteenth-century evolutionism that treated magical worldviews as prehistorical (407). Hanegraaff, on the other hand, views modern occultism as a distinct outgrowth of secular materialism in its deployment of technologies that probe the composition of matter to explain transmaterial phenomena. Indeed, secular culture provides a vital impetus to alternative knowledge systems that contest received doctrine without necessarily endorsing scientific materialism.

The Religious Origins of Secular Knowledge

Secularism's unstable relation to religion, exemplified by the persistence of aspects of religious ideas in the secularization process, dogs the work of even the most skeptical and rational intellectuals, like Friedrich Nietzsche, Weber, and Jürgen Habermas. One need only turn to the recent writing of Marcel Gauchet to note the extent to which contemporary scholarship on disenchantment and secularism accepts the powerful hold of Christianity on the thinking of modern intellectuals, in far greater ways than generally acknowledged. Gauchet

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even argues that Christianity is a precursor to modern secularism because it introduced ideas of rational and moral progress fundamental to conceptualizing modernity. Following Gauchet's argument to some extent, Vincent Pecora's recent book *Secularization and Cultural Criticism* maintains that the Western intellectual can never escape reverting to the deep relation between secularized Judeo-Christian tradition and Enlightenment notions of truth and progress (23). However, Pecora's aim is not so much to affirm that Christianity is a precursor to secularism as to question gaps that persist in contemporary criticism's memory and historical knowledge of secularism, particularly of secularism's religious origins.

Pecora brings secularism within the frame of Christianity's ethical imperatives and establishes as a point of contention in cultural criticism secularism's derivation of messianic trajectories of progress and redemption from Christian tenets. Recognizing the effects of such a bind, Karl Löwith and Hans Blumenberg adopted the most radical and uncompromising approach: in seeking to dismantle secularism's Christian edifice, they distanced themselves from secularism's putative moral trajectory, arguing instead that history is contingent, cyclic, mechanical, and purposeless. Their effort to disentangle secularism from Christianity led them to conceive of human action as mechanistic and random, without anchoring principle or redemptive promise. No doubt, the conception of secularism as a materialistic, mechanical philosophy puts in question the commitment to principles of distributive justice and equality that postreligious societies strive for, in place of the hierarchies preserved by priestly authority. The cold logic that underwrites the mechanistic reinscription of secularism brushes aside the ethical implications of such a position, insisting that secularism must be extricated from its religious antecedents if it is to have consequence.

Notwithstanding a move to disavow secular culture's evolution from religious origins, taken to its limit in Löwith and Blumenberg, we would do well to ask how and why religion lingered even in the work of atheistic intellectuals, who were haunted by the challenge of explaining where a concept of the good comes from if religious belief no longer supplies codes of behavior. Is religion so tied to modern secularism that the latter cannot be conceived without its predecessor? There is a strain of thought in Western philosophy and social science that cannot altogether dispense with the legacies of Christianity, as is clear in Habermas's conflicted theories of modernity, which Pecora examines brilliantly to locate the points at which secularism has been rendered most vulnerable when unmoored from its religious foundations. Secularism's relation to religion is most unsettled when new contexts emerge that change the form and function of art. For example, art objects that have ritualistic religious significance, blending the sacred and the secular in their iconic status as instruments of worship and aesthetic appreciation, become problematic when placed in museums, where the preexisting balance between secular and sacred elements is disrupted, contributing to an instability in the identity of secular culture. Is this a sign that modernity's project is incomplete, as Habermas claimed? If so, the reasons may well lie with secular philosophy's inadequacy in translating "all the *politically significant* religious and presumably still Judeo-Christian concepts into a viable public and universal discourse" (Pecora 53; my emphasis). Pecora's inclusion of the words "politically significant" to characterize the ongoing relevance of religious precepts raises the stakes for the creation of a pluralistic society. Is political significance measured in terms of a common denominator across all religions? Is there indeed a unifying point of reference in religions that yields a public and universal discourse? Or are cultural and religious differences so great that there is no common ground for a shared discourse?

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The Chronology of Secularism

If tearing secularist discourse from its religious antecedents jettisons the theological baggage encumbering secularism, unlocking it from universalizing narratives of progress, this radical move still assumes that secularism succeeds religious culture. This linear chronology defines secularism as a postreligious development and precludes alternative questions, such as these: Was the idea of secularism always there, preceding religion? To what extent can various forms of paganism be considered secular? Can Greek philosophy and mythology be regarded as proto-secular in their representation of human agency contesting divine will? Does the answer to religion's hegemony consist not so much in creating a future condition in which its influence is curtailed and privatized as in returning to conditions *before* religion? These questions also draw attention to the ways mainstream religions acquire their dominant status by absorbing, eliminating, or adapting subsects and heterodox strains.

These questions, however, rarely find their way into contemporary scholarship. Indeed, whatever revisionist turn scholarship has taken is directed toward probing secularism's relation to Christianity, an approach that has restricted our ability to engage with a long view of history. The idea advanced by Habermas and taken further by Gauchet, that Christianity paves the way for secularization by emphasizing rational thinking and moral progress, forbids the secularist narrative from being conceived apart from Christianity's moral and social teleology. This is one of the main problems Pecora probes in his book, although he stops short of exploring the prehistory of secularism, appearing even to propose that if Christianity enables secularism, what precedes Christianity remains outside the realm of secular thought. If Löwith and Blumenberg have their way, secularism must be defined outside the salvific rhetoric of Christianity, but then, instead of moral progress and individualistic will and action, there is only mechanistic movement, cycles, contingency, and nondeliberateness. In neither case is there a conception of a prehistory for modern secularism that does not take Judeo-Christianity as its reference point.

At first glance, Charles Taylor appears to hint at such an absence when he refers to the subtraction theory of secularism, by which he means that secularism is achieved by removing God from the picture ("Closed World Structures" 58). After all, the death-of-God narrative is invariably a key starting point in accounts of secularism, even as it preserves a Christian orientation in the idea of *kenosis*, paradigmatically conveying the ongoing history or tradition inaugurated by the emptying of God into the world (Caputo and Vattimo 74). A set of truisms governs the logic of the subtraction theory as Taylor understands it: you cannot be modern unless you discard the old beliefs; it is impossible to live fully in the modern age and still believe in God; if you still believe, you cannot be modern; therefore, the death of God is the starting point for a modern outlook. But in contesting the subtraction method of attaining a secular society, Taylor takes his argument in a contrarian direction, which in fact preserves aspects of Judeo-Christian ethics in the quest for reimagining secularism from the standpoint of human goods. For Taylor the appeal of materialism lies in its offering a moral outlook rather than in the fact that science drives away religion. Arguing that the death-of-God narrative is a negative model and an inadequate account of modernity, Taylor goes on to propose, as a possibility, that Western modernity might be sustained by its own original spiritual vision, not one generated out of the transition from a religious to a secular worldview. Taylor does not deny the secularization thesis, but he objects to its being played out as a subtraction theory, in which modernity must jettison religion to define itself. Rather, he sees secularization as motivated by a shift in Christianity,

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which leads toward a value-laden humanism. Taylor salvages Christian history as the basis for a new social order shorn of its transcendent content and capable of being embraced outside a religious framework:

> [W]e can no longer rationally believe in God; but the starting point is now the ethical outlook of the modern age . . . [O]ur public life, in societies which are secular in a familiar sense, is exclusively concerned with human goods. . . . Some people see no place in this kind of world for belief in God. A faith of this kind would have to make one an outsider, an enemy of this world. . . . Thus one is either thoroughly in this world, living by its premises, and then one cannot really believe in God; or one believes, and is in some sense living like a resident alien in modernity. Since we find ourselves more and more inducted into it, belief becomes harder and harder; the horizon of faith steadily recedes. (58)

Taylor turns toward an older understanding of humanism as an outgrowth of Christian civility, even using civilizational criteria to define Christianity. The humanist intervention paved the way for what he calls "the modern moral order" (64). This belief in a moral order of socially responsible individuals is not a construct of human will but is, instead, continuous with divine purpose. Taylor's recuperation of Christian humanism is particularly interesting because of the expansive possibilities he sees in it as an instrument of reason and right conduct *and* of dissent against notions of providence. Christian humanism is thus inclusive enough to admit skeptics and detractors (like Voltaire, Edward Gibbon, and David Hume) as well as devout believers. Strikingly, by the terms of this argument, even dissent coheres with divine purposes. Accordingly, Taylor ascribes the moral mandate of secularism to transformations in Christian history. In this reading, secularism is the perfection of a flawed Christianity, which began to correct itself by moving in the direction of reason and civilization as the highest expressions of Christian thought. A drastically scaled-down providential order that centers on human activity is the entry point to modern secularity. Far from being a subtraction of religious influence, secularism is an enhancement of its intended trajectory.

Taylor's argument is reaffirmed, though more critically, by Pecora, who observes that "secularism itself becomes the paradoxical path to a more profound, because more rational, sense of the religious than had ever existed before" (20). Pecora explains secularism's affinity to the religious culture it supposedly replaces in terms of the imaginative energies that religion makes available (through the exercise of belief) and that secularism salvages as a key resource in resisting mechanical, rote thinking: "The will to secular rationality in modern culture . . . preserves the imaginative rudiments of its religious traditions, not merely as a kind of strategic resistance to the irrationality of capitalism's 'iron cage'" (20). Of course, the central paradox is that secularism, despite being perceived as opposed to religion in the public sphere, preserves religious elements in its self-definition. And such preservation is ensured by art, which refines its nonrational propensities of imagination into a resistant rationalism fighting the deadening effects of modern capitalist bureaucracies. Pecora astutely reminds us that none other than Theodor Adorno inadvertently ended up arguing in behalf of a resistant art that, by becoming pure form, preserves a dissenting theology that resists instrumental rationality (20). What Pecora implies by Adorno's dissenting theology is not entirely straightforward, given that Judeo-Christianity is presented as the primary context of modern secularism. Reform religious movements and alternative spiritualities do not find a place in either his account or Taylor's, for these movements invariably draw on the resources of art and literature to stage their opposition to what the Theosophist Helena Petrovna Blavatsky termed "dogmatic

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Christianity" (19). The heterodoxies marshaled by art retain dissenting aspects of belief.

The rise of the modern state as the guarantor of rights to religious conscience has led to one of the most sustained critiques of secularism as dependent on a strong state to ensure that private belief does not become public policy. However, conceptions of the state as a source of enlightened reason create a gap between modern secularism and belief communities that leaves no room for a long view of history in which heterodox sects, because they remained at odds with mainstream religious orthodoxies, were either absorbed into or marginalized by the formation of world religions. In relegating belief to the private domain, the secularist worldview inadvertently closes off historical consciousness of these complex processes. Secularism, in defining itself against religion, has contributed to homogenizing religion's variegated history, which nonetheless continues to exert influence in subtle, oblique ways that escape the secular understanding. As Tomoko Masuzawa observes, "Owing to the complex, highly charged prehistory, moreover, once above ground, the discourse of world religions continued to be sustained and ruled by an occult network of significance not immediately transparent" (11). Following Masuzawa, one might even describe mainstream religions as haunted by their repressed prehistory, a haunting dispelled to some extent by secularism's flattening out of heterogeneous religious histories, which gestures only toward world-religion expressions.

Conceived as an engine of demystification (Bayly 362), the secular state cannot produce an understanding of the spiritualities outside mainstream religions, and so it eventually represses the historical memory of eclectic, heterogeneous beliefs. If recovered, these beliefs would show a split between elite and popular expressions within religion that is as wide as the divide between religion and secularism. In marginalizing the historical memory of beliefs that fall outside mainstream religions, the logic of secularism creates a gap between dominant and popular narratives that broadens to include the state, alongside religious orthodoxies, in the idea of the dominant. In minimizing the role belief plays in the conditions of modern life, secularism has no language to account for other orders of belief that do not easily fit the familiar nomenclature of religion. In the absence of such language, residual folk practices—like maypole dancing or summer solstice worship—are given pagan attributes, labeled "superstition," and relegated to the sphere of popular culture by religious orthodoxies and secular societies alike. The degree to which religion and secularism coincide in their inability to acknowledge alternative spiritual practices is matched only by the scholarly complicity in homogenizing religious histories to fit a composite profile of religious belief.

That popular culture preserves religious debates and issues, albeit as pagan residues, will seem an anomaly, but that is exactly what Victoria Nelson proposes when she suggests, through readings of science fiction, films, pulp fiction, and visual art, that the supernatural encodes aspects of spirituality no longer able to find expression in forms of public belief. Such alternative spiritualities or heterodoxies are equally ignored by secular philosophies and religious orthodoxies, both of which have contributed to marginalizing the popular as the site of alternative beliefs. Note, for instance, the immediate rejection by the Catholic Church of the lost gospel "discovered" in March 2006: the church's instinctive response to the discovery was to deny that the official narrative of Christianity was in any way obliged to undergo revision or rethinking. The more benevolent reactions still insisted that the lost gospel was yet another instance of a host of narratives and that the proliferation of counternarratives merely diluted their heterodox potential, leaving Christianity basically intact and invulnerable to questioning. If the church sets itself up as the legitimate expression of Christianity, secularism concurs

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by seeking to place religion outside the public sphere, thus confining religious authority to the private domain. Having made this move, the secular narrative cannot account for challenges to that authority coming from within heterodox branches of Christianity.

While I do not suggest that heterodoxy is another name for the secular, I am proposing that thinking the secular through the frame of heterodoxy can evoke the dissonant strains in religious history that secularism has collectively grouped under the rubric of belief. My effort in this essay has been to probe heterodoxy in world religions as crucial to an understanding of secularism. How differently would secularism be understood if it was seen through a history omitted from its own narrative? What new terms of definition would arise from this occluded history? Is heterodoxy so resistant to stable cultures of belief that it offers a model for a more expansive idea of secularism? I hope that these questions may begin to chart pathways for understanding secularism as more than the result of ruptures between faith and reason.

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