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Liturgical Animals in a Secular Age: On Charles Taylor and James K. A. Smith

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Charles Taylor and James K. A. Smith occupy unique terrain among the many genealogists, cartographers, and mission-oriented Christian interpreters of secular modernity. By putting a methodological premium on philosophical(-theological) anthropology and on articulating the conditions—rather than simply the content—of belief in the West today, they approach and elucidate a well-trodden scholarly landscape in new ways. Taylor's A Secular Age *is a monumental,* sui generis *existential and phenomenological history of the West's ever-evolving social imaginary, a history whose methodology and anthropological presuppositions merit extensive analysis (undertaken in part 1). In his Cultural Liturgies trilogy, James Smith takes queues from Taylor's approach and proposes a highly congruous and complementary anthropology to which "liturgy" is the key. His work offers a lexical and hermeneutical toolkit for filling in explanatory gaps in Taylor's narrative of Latin Christendom's "secularization"; for further investigation into any particular feature, idea, or practice in said narrative; and for exegeting the numerous ritual and liturgical practices constitutive of every human life, including one's own (part 2). Despite similar "diagnoses" of secular modernity's malaise, the two thinkers offer meaningfully disparate remedial "prescriptions." Part 3 articulates these differences, as they are important for theologians who are discerning the form Christian mission might take in secular modernity. Part 4 considers an apparent asymmetry between Smith's diagnosis of contemporary Western Christianity's ills and the correlate prescriptions he suggests the church adopt, as well as issues endemic to Taylor and Smith's aims to reincarnate the modern, excarnated self. Taylor articulates the otherwise inarticulate and Smith unveils the pedagogical potency of the otherwise ordinary; when read together—especially with Smith as a constructively critical supplement to Taylor—their categories and analyses capacitate a more holistic understanding of what exactly it means to be—and to be the church—in a secular age.*

Keywords: Charles Taylor, James K. A. Smith, liturgy, anthropology, secular, worship, embodiment

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Introduction

Liturgy suffuses the biblical narrative, a narrative itself commencing with a creational-liturgical procession wherein God calls forth the wonders of the cosmos in a sequence culminating with humanity—those creatures tasked with a doxologically oriented stewardship-in-communion with nature, neighbor, and Creator. In short order, the serpent captures the imaginations of Adam and Eve with not simply an alternative vision of flourishing, but a new and rival narrative that reframes God's sole injunction as a paranoid, self-serving prohibitional ploy intended to suffocate the totality of their created and creative potentials: "You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:4-5, NRSV). Tantalized by the alluring aesthetics of both the serpent's narrative and the fruit itself (a "delight to the eyes"), Eve "desired" the wisdom to be wrought from the fruit and so reached upward to grasp it, performing an ostensibly mundane kinesthetic act (Gen 3:6). Yet, embedded—or, better, embodied—by and in this modest physical gesture was a compressed narrative within which humanity reigns "like God," no longer subservient but rather usurpers of prerogatives once reserved for divinity (Gen 3:5). Reaching up toward the heavenly realm with arm extended from below, domineeringly wrapping fingers around the fruit and thus subjugating that which promised God-like knowledge with but the palm of her hand, Eve "took" this "fruit" from its rightful place above, pulverizing it with her teeth and eating it as she would anything else (Gen 3:6). Condensed into the serpent's compendious, if not laconic, speech is an incisive—because holistic—anthropological appeal: an appeal to the totality of Eve's nature as an embodied, erotic, and aesthetic creature, an appeal made by succinctly narrating a heretofore unimagined vision of human flourishing with an alternative telos. One might say, then, that original sin was a liturgical act of defiance—an act in whose kinesthetic features an aesthetically enrapturing narrative both inhered and was desirously and performatively embraced.

Rather than a fanciful gloss on an inexhaustible biblical story, the preceding imaginative exegesis is intended to illustrate—if exaggeratedly—an anthropology deeply resonant with that of Canadian philosophical polymath Charles Taylor and further developed by Reformed philosopher and theologian James K. A. Smith.[1] Taylor and Smith's respective corpora revolve around

[1] Charles Taylor's writings span numerous genres, engaging as he does social, political, and moral philosophical questions in variously historical, linguistic, epistemological, phenomenological, and hermeneutical veins. To sample the breadth and depth of his learning

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a similar nexus of questions pertaining to philosophical and theological anthropology, culture, and secularity.[2] By placing these two thinkers in a constructive dialogue, this article intends to bring forth the ways in which Smith's work—particularly his three-volume Cultural Liturgies series, wherein he proposes a distinctive understanding of "liturgy" as both an anthropological

as he treats these topics, one could consult any of his four volumes of collected essays: *Human Agency and Language*, Philosophical Papers vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, Philosophical Papers vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); *Dilemmas and Connections* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011). At present, Taylor is best known as an intellectual historian whose moral, social, political, and philosophical genealogical work, as well as his existential cartography of "secularity," are unparalleled in scope, rigor, and acuity. This is particularly evinced in *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989) and *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), the latter of which will be the focus of the present work. Were one to search for a thread tying Taylor's vast corpus together, anthropology—philosophical and otherwise—might be the best candidate, and Taylor describes himself as "monomaniacal" about the topic in *Human Agency and Language*, 1. James K. A. Smith is professor of philosophy at Calvin University. His philosophical and theological work ranges from the acutely academic (hermeneutics and phenomenology; the relationship between Christianity and postmodern philosophy; philosophical and theological anthropology) to the more popular and pastoral, but his diverse scholarship on liturgy, culture, temporality, political theology, and even hermeneutics fundamentally pertains to the question of what it means to be human. Similar to Taylor, Smith has an affinity for linguistic philosophy and hermeneutical thought, though he is apt to draw from more "postmodern" sources than Taylor (especially Jacques Derrida and Jean-François Lyotard). Smith's best-known work is his three-volume Cultural Liturgies series: *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009); *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013); *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017).

[2] Though treating similar subject matters, the two thinkers generally differ in both approach and intended audience, with Taylor writing in a comparatively more descriptive and explanatory mode as a philosopher and philosophical historian and Smith in a more confessional and prescriptive mode as a philosopher, theologian, and cultural critic with the express intention of serving the present needs of the church, particularly his own Reformed tradition. Granted, as evinced by Taylor's lecture "A Catholic Modernity?," in *A Catholic Modernity? Charles Taylor's Marianist Award Lecture*, ed. James L. Heft (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 13–37, and the closing chapters of *A Secular Age*, Taylor by no means wholly prescinds from addressing mission, the state of the church, and what Christian life and praxis should look like today. See, for example, Charles Taylor, "Benedict XVI," *Public Culture* 18 (2006): 7–10, and Charles Taylor, "Magisterial Authority," in *The Crisis of Authority in Catholic Modernity*, ed. Michael J. Lacey and Francis Oakley (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 258–69.

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bedrock and a foundationally formative practice—complements and challenges Taylor's anthropology, his concept of the social imaginary, and his prescriptions for overcoming secular modernity's existential woes.[3]

In so doing, the distinctiveness, cogency, and diagnostic value of their respective conceptual tools, analyses, cultural exegeses, and constructive prescriptions will be brought forth, as these two thinkers occupy unique terrain among the various genealogists and cartographers of the current moment. Namely, by putting a methodological premium on philosophical(-theological) anthropology and on articulating the existential, phenomenological *conditions* of belief in the West today, Smith and Taylor approach and elucidate a well-trodden scholarly landscape in new ways. The important work of delineating salient cultural ideas' nascence, evolution, and devolution; of discerning the means by which the niche, the highfalutin, and the *avante-garde* become popularized and then *passé*; of tracking intellectual progenitors and their inheritors; and of elucidating the major "who's" and "what's" ingredient to the North Atlantic West's seismic cultural shift over the past five centuries continues to be creatively and constructively endeavored.[4] Taylor undoubtedly contributes to this discourse, but to read him as (simply) another "intellectual historian"—though an intellectual historian he is—with (simply) another causal schematization charting the movement from

[3] Regarding the relationship between the two thinkers, it is worth noting that Smith engages with Taylor as more than a prominent thinker to quote and footnote. For Smith, Taylor is an intellectual guide in whose methodology lies something of essential import for the church today. Thus, James K. A. Smith authored *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2014) as a companion volume to Taylor's *A Secular Age*. See also, Taylor, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 13: "Philosophically I locate my project in the vein of Charles Taylor's call to 'overcome epistemology"; see also 109n12.

[4] To name a few examples: Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981); John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1990); Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Sovereignty: God, State, and Self* (New York: Basic Books, 2008); Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Thomas Pfau, *Minding the Modern: Human Agency, Intellectual Traditions, and Responsible Knowledge* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013); Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020). Examples of relevant genealogical histories more delimited in scope to particular topics would be Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995); Alan Jacob, *Original Sin: A Cultural History* (New York: HarperOne, 2008); Carlos Eire, *A Very Brief History of Eternity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); D. C. Schindler, *Freedom from Reality: The Diabolical Character of Modern Liberty* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017).

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past ideas to present realities is to obscure the depth and ingenuity of his approach. One better reads him as a genealogical excavator of Western *thinking*—broadly construed to include its attendant contexts, conditions, presuppositions, and practices—rather than as a nuanced and capacious reader-recounter of Western *thought*. A similar hermeneutical principle holds for Smith. He undoubtedly contributes to contemporary philosophical and theological anthropology's "turn" to the body and resituation-relativization of the intellect, as well as to the church's evangelical efforts, by illuminating the contemporary mission field and its many strange idols. But to see him as (simply) another anti-dualist captivated by phenomenology or (simply) another nostalgic Christian "critic" of secularity summoning readers to either cultural arms or strategic retreat may also be misleading; one better reads him as an apocalyptic exegete of cultural practices and institutions who substantiates his analysis with, among other things, a robust and multifaceted anthropology. Taylor articulates the otherwise inarticulate, and Smith unveils the pedagogical potency of the otherwise ordinary. When read together—especially with Smith as a constructively critical supplement to Taylor—their categories, analyses, and diagnoses capacitate a more holistic understanding of what exactly it means to be—and to be the church—in "a secular age."

Part 1 of this article draws out the philosophical (and arguably theological) anthropology operative but often only implicit in Taylor's *A Secular Age*, afterward describing how Smith's more phenomenologically inflected anthropology complements Taylor's work. Smith depicts human beings as embodied, erotic, and aesthetic creatures teleologically oriented through communally shared narratives toward some imaginative vision of human flourishing, one that simultaneously founds and transcends intellectual depiction. Following this anthropological compendium is a description of Smith's integrative anthropological insight: his thesis that the human person is most fundamentally a liturgical animal. Part 2 further explicates this thesis, particularly insofar as Smith's expansive concept of liturgy and *homo liturgicus* not only substantiates Taylor's novel concept of the "social imaginary," but also illuminates causal and explanatory gaps in the narrative propounded in *A Secular Age*. Part 3 uses Taylor's *Ethics of Authenticity* as a case study to bring forth an illuminating tension between he and Smith: their starkly different appraisals of the capacity for a meaningfully transcendent orientation in and through a secular milieu, as well as of the most adequate Christian response to that milieu. Taylor proposes a cautious but substantive embrace, purification, and deepening of the best of secular modernity, whereas Smith proposes an intentional, decisive, and distinctively Christian counter-formation, counter-liturgical-praxis, and counter-social-imaginary. Following this construction of a Taylor-Smith dialogue, Part 4 notes pressures arising from, first, an asymmetry between

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Smith's "diagnosis" of contemporary Western Christianity's malaise and the correlate counteractive and remedial "prescriptions" he suggests the church adopt, and, second, from Taylor and Smith's broader aims to reincarnate the modern excarnated self.

Although either thinker taken individually offers valuable analyses of dominant strands of contemporary Western individual and social existence and substantiates these with a nuanced anthropology, when read together, they offer a uniquely instructive vantage point into the what, whence, whither, and why of secularity.[5] Their attentiveness to, not simply the *content* of *beliefs* but the *conditions* of *belief*—especially belief's more mundane mechanisms of performance and reinforcement—helps to clarify the complex, multidimensional "space" where speaker and hearer, reader and writer, meet today. For theologians seeking first to understand; for evangelists eager to empathize; or for anyone hoping to incarnate Pope Francis's vision of a "listening church," Taylor and Smith's works capacitate a more nuanced comprehension of and encounter between self and other, church and world.[6]

[5] In *A Secular Age*, Taylor defines "secularity" neither in terms of the compartmentalization or evacuation of religion from social and political spaces, nor in terms of decreased religious belief and practice, but rather in terms of the "conditions of belief": "The 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" (3). Smith uses the term "secular" in its more commonly understood adjectival sense to mean "non-religious," "a-religious," or, occasionally, "neutral [towards ends]." This paper will generally use the term in this second sense.

[6] Before moving to the body of the work, two preliminary notes are in order. They refer to the threat—and in certain ways the regrettable reality—of a twofold occlusion: (1) that of internal diversity and difference within what will be termed the "secular West" and (2) that of the (non-North-Atlantic Western) "other" in Taylor's story of secularization. Regarding (1): the "we" of secularity, modernity, and the West (each term meriting scare quotes of their own right) is notoriously difficult to identify and circumscribe, and Taylor alludes to as much on the first page of *A Secular Age*. Such terms are heuristic and a concession endemic to any project of such geographical and temporal scope, and Taylor's broad definition of secularity in terms of the conditions of belief rather than in terms of political structures or of belief-sets mitigates the blurring incurred by his broad brush. Regarding (2): Saba Mahmood, "Can Secularism Be Other-wise?," in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, ed. Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 282–99, is right when observing that Taylor neglects to discuss the role in which the (non-Latin-Christian) other historically played in the creation of the modern Western "self's" identity. Even so, such a criticism does not thereby wholly negate the reality of secularity as Taylor describes it, the broader direction and structure of his narrative, the anthropology implied in his work (e.g., the reality of the social imaginary), or the elucidative acumen with which Taylor depicts the buffered self, immanent frame, excarnation, and so forth.

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Part 1: Philosophical and Theological Anthropology

Though not itself a treatise on philosophical anthropology, Charles Taylor's self-ascribed "monomania" on the topic cannot but surface in *A Secular Age*. Throughout the "interlocking essays" constituting his five-century-long "story" of secularization, initially subtle motions and transient flutters of the normative veil give way to incisive and far-reaching anthropological claims.[7] When these claims are paired with the text's implicit and operative vision of human existence (as well as with arguments from his wider corpus), one can discern his affirmation of certain anthropological constants, three of which will be discussed here and subsequently augmented by Smith: humanity's irreducible embodiment, erotic-teleologic orientation, and aesthetic-imaginative(-narrative) constitution of self and world.[8] After articulating the way these surface in *A Secular Age* and are expressed in Smith's Cultural Liturgies series, I will argue that Smith's distinctive and capacious employment of "liturgy" synthesizes these constants and that it does so in a way that bears on analyses of the conditions of and for belief today.

Embodied: Enfleshing Cartesian Skeletons

Taylor endorses Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological "refutation of epistemology," of mind-body dualism, and of any epistemic framework within which knowing and meaning are the sole prerogatives of the "mind" (if narrowly construed).[9] In *A Secular Age*, Taylor deploys two terms—the "buffered self"[10] and "excarnation"[11]—to describe the post-Cartesian and Reform-inspired[12] drift toward the

[7] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, viv.

[8] This list is not intended to be exhaustive, and I am aware that "language" has been omitted. References to the individually and communally constitutive function of language is muted in *A Secular Age* in comparison to Taylor's other works, as is the case in Smith's Cultural Liturgies series when compared to his other works.

[9] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 558. See also Taylor, "Overcoming Epistemology," in *Philosophical Arguments*, 1–19. Taylor considers "epistemology" to be the "Hydra" with whose "heads" he constantly contends, the three most important of which are the derivation of ontology from epistemology, the framing of morality in rationalistic and epistemic terms, and a subject-object dualism into which the body as object is subsumed. He sees Descartes as the most influential—because hyperbolic—articulator of these views. See also "Preface," in *Philosophical Arguments*, vii–viv.

[10] First introduced in Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 27, and elaborated on 37–43.

[11] First introduced in Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 288, and elaborated on 554–56, 613–15.

[12] In *A Secular Age, Reform* is a capacious term referring to the pluriform efforts to overcome a perceived "two-tiered" or "dual system" of religious practice wherein clergy and

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popularization and institutional reinforcement of an ontologically bifurcated and hierarchically arranged anthropology—what Drew Leder helpfully terms an "onto-valuational" oppositional dualism between body and soul or mind.[13] This involves a relegation of the body, a philosophically and experientially unjustifiable autonomization and prioritization of the intellect, and a problematic identification of self with mind. The formation of the buffered self—of a self "in here" capable of detachment and disengagement from what is "out there"—marks a notable step toward, not only distance and disengagement between the person and the cosmos, but also distance and disengagement from the body.[14] A detached, disengaged stance vis-à-vis objective, external reality swiftly (d)evolves into a disengaged stance that regards the body itself as something external and instrumental, if not antagonistic.[15] The self buffers itself from itself—from its own irreducibly embodied selfhood—thus effecting a distance between the mind as subject and the body as object.[16] Epistemic and ethical implications are manifold, and these further coincide with a form of disembodied religiosity Taylor terms "excarnation": the "transfer out of embodied, 'enfleshed' forms of religious life to those which are more 'in the head'"; the transition from a religion of communal being, doing, and liturgical performance to a religion of thinking and believing (narrowly construed as a certain mode of affirming propositions).[17] To be a Christian is to believe; to

laity were hierarchically related both ecclesiastically and spiritually (63). He argues that, along with—because a driver of—the Protestant Reformation, Reform's attempt at "producing for the first time a true uniformity of believers, a levelling up which left no further room for different speeds" gave rise to "the disciplinary society," an ethic of disengaged and rational self-control, and a greater uniformity, homogenization, and "purification" of religious practice (77). See 25–218. Here is his concluding summation of the term: "Briefly summed up, Reform demanded that everyone be a *real, 100 percent* Christian. Reform not only disenchants, but disciplines and re-orders life and society. Along with civility, this makes for a notion of moral order which gives a new sense to Christianity, and the demands of the faith" (774, emphasis in original).

[13] See Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 149–56. The "valuational" of onto-valuational designates a filtering of an ontological substance dualism through an evaluative screen: not only is there a real distinction between body and soul, but the soul is good, powerful, and compliant, and the body is bad, weak, and recalcitrant.

[14] The "buffered self" as Taylor uses it encompasses more than "disengagement" or "disengaged reason," but disengagement is what concerns us most here.

[15] See Taylor, "Overcoming Epistemology," 7.

[16] For a relevant discussion that incorporates Taylor's emphasis on the constitutive and hermeneutical function of language—an important aspect of Taylor's work to which this article cannot adequately attend—see Taylor, "Self-Interpreting Animals," in *Human Agency and Language*, 45–76.

[17] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 554.

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believe is to assent; and to assent is to pass an intellectual judgment on the veracity of certain truth claims. For Taylor, the Enlightenment's dualistic lauding of automaton-like ratiocination and the Reform movement's sacramental skepticism and moralized, discipline-centric religiosity worked to entrench in Latin Christendom a fundamentally flawed anthropological vision of disengaged, disembodied selves or minds (i.e., of the mind-as-self). This purging of an implicit but performed acknowledgment of one's mutually implicating relationships with the breadth of the created order unwittingly purged the newly disengaged self and her excarnated faith of deep ontological structures and sources of meaning—*incarnate* meaning.

James K. A. Smith's Cultural Liturgies series—particularly volume 2, *Imagining the Kingdom*—self-consciously elaborates upon Taylor's critique of epistemology by describing the ways in which phenomenology has "overcome" both foundationalism's epistemic overconfidence and modernity's dualistic penchant for disregarding the hybridity of incarnate perceiving, knowing, and meaning. Smith affirms the essential validity of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* as an account of the structures of (always embodied) human experience,[18] and, in an argument "in the vein of Charles Taylor's call to 'overcome epistemology,'"[19] he contends for "the bodily basis of meaning"—what he terms "kinaesthetics."[20]

"Perception" comprises the fundamental structure of human being-in and engagement-with the world. Far from an ocular analogy ushering in a bifurcated notion of disengaged knowing-as-observation, perception rests upon the body as the irreducible "background and horizon of possibility" for experiencing and knowing.[21] "Perception" encapsulates the expansive yet uncircumscribable space between instinct and intellect, between reacting and reasoning. Bodies know, perceive, and mean in a pretheoretical mode that is not any less crucial or real despite the fact that we fail to recognize it.[22]

[18] See Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 41–73.

[19] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 13. He describes this "overcoming" on 10: "The liturgical anthropology at the heart of my project entails a critique of worldview because it relativizes 'thinking' and re-situates 'intellect.'"

[20] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 29. Smith uses "kinaesthetic" as opposed to "kinesthetic" to denote to "the bodily basis of meaning" in all its imaginative and textured richness, since our bodily comportment incarnates an "aesthetics" and a "poetics" (23).

[21] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 50.

[22] Smith offers examples of bodily knowledge that comes by way of perception and without "conscious" theorizing or "intellectual" aversion thereto. These include the way in which we "know" what spaces we can walk or fit through, relate to objects as *pragmata* (Heidegger's term), and can sense when someone flirts with us (termed "erotic comprehension"). See Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 49–66.

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We are embedded in the world—embedded as embodied, embedded *because* embodied. We are our bodies. For Smith as for Taylor, the body as kinaesthetic cannot be circumvented: experiencing, knowing, and meaning are first and foremost—"primordially"[23]—incarnate experiencing, incarnate knowing, and incarnate meaning. The body-as-perceiving functions as a precognitive filter, hermeneutic, and even gatekeeper insofar as "states of the body 'give rise' to states of the mind."[24] In Smith's phrasing: "bodily attunement ... fundamentally governs our-being-in-the-world,"[25] for "our most fundamental orientations to our world are embedded in our bodies."[26] An incarnate phenomenology of perception precedes one's epistemology and ontology as the irreducible condition of their possibility, since intellection is sublative, not exclusively abstractive, "negate-tive," or creative.

Erotic: "You are what you love."[27]

The combination of humanity's desirous impulsion from "within" and (transcendent) teleological drawing from "without" drives the plot of *A Secular Age*'s meta-narrative, functioning as an empirical, sociohistorical testament to what Taylor affirms is the insatiable longing perennially inhabiting the human heart. Such is, in Graham Ward's framing, "Taylor's anthropological *a priori*"—and a "theological" one at that.[28] In the text, Taylor progressively reveals his conviction in the ineffaceable desire for the transcendent[29]—the spiritual

[23] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 71.

[24] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 94. Smith, wary of accusations of biological or kinaesthetic determinism and of relativism, frequently refers the reader back to the fact that, first, "perception" and "kinaesthetics" occupy a unique and hard to define space *between* instinct and intellect (and therefore are not simply preprogrammed reactions), and, second, embodied perception by no means *negates* or militates against intellection and volition but rather are the condition for their possibility.

[25] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 108.

[26] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 94.

[27] This is the title of Smith's popularized summation of the first two volumes of his Cultural Liturgies series: James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 2016).

[28] Graham Ward, "History, Belief, and Imagination in Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*," *Modern Theology* 26, no. 3 (2010): 337–48, at 341–42. Ward might be overstating the matter when calling Taylor's "conviction" in this reality "unproven" (341). Might the content of Taylor's story itself—the ceaseless reshuffling of the theological, philosophical, and political deck to facilitate a means of human flourishing based on some vision of fulfillment, however understood—be a sort of meta-proof rather than simply an assumption or "unproven conviction"?

[29] Some would argue that the veil between description and proselytizing was torn asunder nearly twenty years earlier in Taylor's *Sources of the Self*. Such is the criticism leveled by Stephen Mulhall in "*Sources of the Self*'s Senses of Itself: A Theistic Reading of Modernity," in *Can Religion Be Explained Away?*, ed. D. Z. Phillips

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and existential restlessness memorialized by the likes of Augustine and Pascal. Taylor shifts from parenthetically and inquiringly noting this desire as "(the perennial human situation?)" (435) to describing it as "a strong independent source of motivation in modernity" (530) and "a perpetual human potential" (620) until, finally, forthrightly expressing that "the religious dimension [of life] is inescapable" (708) because such is the means by which "we are responding to transcendent reality" (768). As embodied, affective creatures teleologically oriented to a vision of human flourishing—one that, Taylor suggests, is definitively fulfilled only in and by a transcendent reality—we *cannot but* experience a desirous, passionate drive toward this telos, one that manifests itself in those experiences, tasks, and relationships constitutive of flourishing as we envision it. Taylor's holistic, incarnational thinking—if not also his Christianization of Romantic insights—is manifest: the ineffable desire for contact with transcendence to which he alludes is physical- and affect-inclusive, not exclusive.[30] This explains the discernably negative evaluation-via-description Taylor gives of "the disciplinary society's" excarnational and repressive denial—or at least deep skepticism—of desire's bodily-basis and manifestation, as well as his frequent, practically nostalgic recurrence to the cathartic indulgences and uproarious ecstasies of Carnival, feasts of misrule, and the like. To be human is to be simultaneously propelled and beleaguered by an existential-erotic dearth, and "the void demands to be filled."[31]

Smith shares Taylor's erotic-teleologic framework, but rather than merely acknowledging it as a subterranean mechanism whose contours and implications do not necessarily require explicit formulation, Smith places love, desire, and eros[32] at the center of human nature and identity: "Our identity is shaped by what we ultimately love or love ultimately" because "we human creatures are lovers before and above all else."[33] While appreciative of Heidegger insofar

(Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 131–60. Yet, consider Carolyn A. Chau's articulation of the matter in *Solidarity with the World: Charles Taylor and Hans Urs von Balthasar on Faith, Modernity, and Catholic Mission*, Theopolitical Visions 19 (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016): "While Taylor does not expressly claim to seek to retrieve *homo religiosus*, in many ways, this is the effective consequence of his work on modern malaise and modern selfhood in general, when refracted through his opus on modern secularity" (76).

30 See Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 609–17.

31 Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 444.

32 For Smith, "erotic" is a term that can be, but is not constitutively, related to sex. Smith uses it interchangeably with "love" and "desire." See Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 51n20: "In this book, I basically make no distinction between love and desire, eschewing any distinction between *eros* and *agapē*. As will become clear [in the following], *agapē* is rightly directed *eros*."

33 Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 37, 15.

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as he recognized that the primordial mode of intentionality is noncognitive and affective ("care," *Sorge*), Smith's reading of Augustine leads him to contend that Heidegger does not frame the matter precisely enough. Smith prefers Augustine, who "would argue that the most fundamental way that we intend the world is *love*."[34] Love defines us, directs us, and drives us, and the human story cannot but be a love story. Because the locus of human identity is what Smith terms the "heart"—or, at times, our "guts" (his rendition of the Greek, *kardia*)[35]—he can say: "We are what we love," and, importantly, we may not love what we *think* we love.[36] Furthermore—in accord with Taylor—Smith argues that the intentionality characterizing the human race is not only erotic, but erotic-teleologic—love does not propel us *simpliciter*, but it propels us *toward* a goal, an end, a T/telos: "Our love is always and ultimately aimed at a telos, a picture of the good life that pulls us toward it, thus shaping our actions and behavior."[37] The proximate, subordinate, and instrumental are shaped according to the demands of the remote, superordinate, and ultimate. Taylor and especially Smith both affirm that confessional or "practicing" adherents of particular religious traditions by no means possess a monopoly on an ultimate, all embracing—and therefore properly "religious," in Smith's lexicon—desire. This anthropological constant is ineradicable, and even "a secularized culture is not devoid of religious fervor; it just finds new outlets."[38]

Aesthetic: Images, Visions, and Visionaries of the Kingdom

Intimately related to the preceding sections on embodiment and desire—and in some ways their culmination—is the aesthetic, imaginative dimension of human existence. The narrative force and perspicacity of *A Secular Age* are testaments to the aesthetic-imaginative valence of Taylor's operative anthropology. Going beyond—or beneath—a modern Western *intellectual* history cataloguing successive philosophical movements and their downward, vulgarized trickle to the masses, Taylor instead articulates a *phenomenological-existential* history of Latin Christendom's collective or

[34] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 49, emphasis added. This insight was previously affirmed (but not elaborated upon) in James K. A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-secular Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 244. See also James K. A. Smith, "'Confessions' of an Existentialist: Reading Augustine after Heidegger: Part I," *New Blackfriars* 82, no. 964 (2001): 273–82.

[35] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 24.

[36] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 40. For another articulation of this fundamentally Augustinian insight, see Max Scheler, "Ordo Amoris," in *Selected Philosophical Essays*, trans. David R. Latcherman (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press), 98–135.

[37] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 80.

[38] Smith, *Awaiting the King*, 22.

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social "imaginary."[39] He articulates the means by which "we" changed from spontaneously envisioning porous selves within a hierarchically ordered and enchanted universe ontically dependent on the divine into atomistic denizens of a self-subsistent, immanentized, egalitarian, and disenchanted cosmos wherein (theistic) belief is but one disputed "option" in the vast marketplace of ever-proliferating ultimacies.[40] His is not simply a history of modern Western *ideas*, but of aesthetic-imaginative *ideals* and idealizations.

For Taylor, a disengaged, dualistic, *res-cogitans*-inspired intellectualism insufficiently accounts for the scope and depth not only of human being-in-the-world, but of the entire moral-metaphysical(-religious) composite we aesthetically construe and inhabit (and not simply "subscribe to" or "affirm"). "Bare truth" alone—if there is such a thing, given the coincidence of perception and evaluation within the horizon of one's social imaginary—is profoundly underdeterminative. Much of what purports to be purely "intellectual" debate between dueling theses and counter-theses is in fact more commonly a contest between implicit and unthematized "pictures" of the good life in all their intertwining ethical, metaphysical, and religious dimensions, dimensions whose ensemble forms an aesthetically alluring or repelling whole. The clash of ideas is always also a clash of ideals. For example, those grappling with the question of God's existence do not weigh competing positions in a rational vacuum. Rather, they are more *drawn toward* a textured

[39] See Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 773–76, for Taylor's comparison of his "Reform Master Narrative" and social-imaginary-based approach with what he terms "Intellectual Deviation" or "trickle-down" theories of secularization (of which he chooses Radical Orthodoxy as an example). Of essential importance to Taylor is the "we" of the *social* imaginary: the presupposition of humanity's constitutive intersubjectivity predominating *A Secular Age* finds ample and more explicit expression elsewhere in Taylor's writings. See, for example, Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Taylor, "Irreducibly Social Goods" and "To Follow a Rule," in *Philosophical Arguments; The Malaise of Modernity*; part 1 of *Sources of the Self*; Charles Taylor, *The Language Animal: The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2016). See also Chau, *Solidarity with the World*, 43–49.

[40] Gregory Baum, "The Response of a Theologian to Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*," *Modern Theology* 26, no. 3 (2010): 363–81, also describes Taylor's work as "a detailed phenomenology of the rise of secular modernity" (363). José Casanova uses similar language in "A Secular Age: Dawn or Twilight?," in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, 265–81. This is his opening sentence: "Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* offers the best analytical, phenomenological, and genealogical account we have of our modern, secular condition" (265). Eric Gregory and Leah Hunt-Hendrix helpfully term it an "existential genealogy" in "Enfleshment and the Time of Ethics: Taylor and Illich on the Parable of the Good Samaritan," in *Aspiring to Fullness in a Secular Age: Essays on Religion and Theology in the Work of Charles Taylor*, ed. Carlos Colorado and Justin D. Klassen (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 217–39, at 218.

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vision of, say, atheistic resoluteness, courage, and self-assertion in the face of the void than to theistic infantility or obscurantism, or more *attracted to* a vision of theistic coherence, meaningfulness, and the posthumous guarantee of justice over atheistic nihilism or moral relativism.[41] The "strictly" intellective finds its place *within* this broader aesthetic milieu.

Taylor performatively affirms and embraces this dialogical and rhetorical reality when, at the close of *A Secular Age*, he expounds emblematic "itineraries" for navigating through and beyond secularity's closed world system unto an encounter with transcendent fullness. His itineraries of Charles Péguy and Gerard Manley Hopkins trade in aesthetic, theo-poetic, and affectively evocative language rather than in discursive discourse or bland biography.[42] He hopes to conjure an enticing and captivating vision of these pilgrims of secularity who inhabited yet broke out of the immanent frame—without, of course, leaving its "contents" behind. Capturing one's imagination by appealing to one's aesthetic sensibilities and inchoate but nonetheless experientially constitutive "feel" for the world is a more holistic and persuasive apologetic than theoretical argumentation alone.[43] Ryan Duns terms Taylor's argumentative strategy "*ad hominem*" (lit.: "to the person"), reading Taylor as one whose dialogical approach is more anthropologically adequate than "apodictic," (*solum*) *ad mentem* discourse.[44] Just as John Henry Newman affirmed that the principles one argues *from* are more salient than what one argues *for* (such that fundamental enough differences in the former *a priori* precludes

[41] See Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 364–68, for Taylor's treatment of the rise and staying power of a certain strain of atheistic materialism (understood as a form of intellectual "manliness").

[42] See Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 745–65. Aware that he focuses on literary figures, Taylor notes that "there are also those who have found new paths of prayer or action, like Charles de Foucauld, John Maine, Jean Vanier, Mother Teresa, and Thérèse de Lisieux" (765). Given the anthropological priority Taylor gives to the aesthetic, his selection of Péguy and Hopkins is as unsurprising as it is fitting.

[43] Smith is particularly struck by these portraits, not only for their content but also for their form. See Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 132–33, emphasis in original: "Taylor gravitates to those whose conversion was on the order of 'sense.' And the 'story' of *A Secular Age* is intended to work in the same way, appealing to something like a 'gut feeling' . . . The portraits *are* the apologetic." In which case, and considering various criticisms of Taylor's work, Fergus Kerr, "How Much Can a Philosopher Do?," *Modern Theology* 26, no. 3 (2010): 321–36, asks: "To what extent is *A Secular Age* not just a phenomenology of the decline of the 'social imaginary' of the sacred but a lamentation and a follow-up 'retrieval'?" (332). With a similar question in mind, Ward, "History, Belief, and Imagination," goes so far as to call Taylor's text "a new genre of theological inquiry"—an "apologetic" via narrative (338; see also 343, 348n1).

[44] Ryan G. Duns, *Spiritual Exercises for a Secular Age: Desmond and the Quest for God*, foreword by William Desmond (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020), 33. See also Chau, *Solidarity with the World*, 8–10.

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real agreement in the latter), so too does Taylor affirm that the framework or picture one argues *within* or *inhabits* is more salient than the propositions one argues *to*.[45] Even if particular ideas are foregrounded, they appear as they do only in light of the broader background within which they are situated and take shape. Dialogue and the power of persuasion are not occluded, nor are conversion and transformation thereby precluded, but they are resituated and recalibrated. In sum, when Taylor invokes Wittgenstein's famous line, "a picture held us captive,"[46] one could argue that what is meant metaphorically for Wittgenstein is meant literally for Taylor: a *picture*—an aesthetically attractive image of the whole, an "image of order"[47] and of human flourishing therein—*captures* us.[48]

Taking his cues from similar sources as Taylor, Smith makes explicit in his own philosophical anthropology what is only implicit in *A Secular Age* by expressly placing the aesthetic and the imaginative at the center of human meaning-making. Smith defines "the imagination" amply as:

> A quasi-faculty whereby we construe the world on a precognitive level, on a register that is fundamentally *aesthetic* precisely because it is so closely tied to the *body* . . . A kind of precognitive perception that is to be distinguished from perception proper . . . The imagination is a kind of midlevel organizing or synthesizing faculty that constitutes the world for us in a primarily affective mode . . . "The imagination" is a way to name this everyday capacity for such unconscious "understanding" of the world.[49]

[45] From John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 321: "If any one starts from any other principles but ours, I have not the power to change his principles, or the conclusion which he draws from them, any more than I can make a crooked man straight."

[46] From Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 549: "In general, we have here what Wittgenstein calls a 'picture,' a background to our thinking, within whose terms it is carried on, but which is often largely unformulated, and to which we can frequently, just for this reason, imagine no alternative."

[47] Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 8–9. "Inescapable Frameworks," the tellingly titled first chapter of *Sources of the Self*, characterizes that undertaking as an attempt to "explore the background picture of our spiritual nature and predicament which lies behind some of the moral and spiritual intuitions of our contemporaries" (3–4). As Smith intends to broaden the scope of what "liturgy" is and of what it means to be "religious," so in *Sources of the Self* Taylor intends to broaden the scope of what "morality" or "moral reasoning" entails.

[48] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 549. As evinced by his voluminous authorial output and quasi-apologetic ends, Taylor also affirms the transformative power of articulating this background. Thus, he can characterize *Sources of the Self* as a work "of liberation . . . of retrieval, an attempt to uncover buried goods through rearticulation—and thereby to make these sources again empower" (520).

[49] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 17–18, emphasis in original.

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As imaginative or aesthetic beings, we constitute the world by way of value-laden and meaning-making images, visions, and narratives that are both received and created. We are situated amid a bricolage of imbricating micro-narratives composed of images, memories, and proximate teloi that are unified by an ultimate telos—a vision and a story of human flourishing, what Smith calls each's vision of "the kingdom."[50] The "aesthetic nature" of which he is speaking encompasses more than beauty and its allure: it includes images, pictures, implicit visions of fulfillment and the good life, stories, legends, and narratives. Smith often compares his construal of "imagination" to Taylor's construal of the "social imaginary," and he frequently references Taylor's definition of said term: "the way ordinary people 'imagine' their social surroundings . . . [that] is often not expressed in theoretical terms, but is carried in images, stories, and legends."[51] Importantly, these osmotically appropriated images, stories, and visions of the kingdom—these *social* imaginaries—are intersubjectively shared. They are as much tradition*ed* as they are one's tradition.[52] For Smith, we inhabit the world incarnationally as bodies, intend the world affectively by desire, and constitute the world aesthetically through imagination.[53]

Atop of his own phenomenological training, extended engagement with Radical Orthodoxy appears to have planted seeds in Smith's mind, which, after nearly a decade of germination, burst forth as a philosophical-theological treatise. Consider the following from his *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*:

> Affectivity [is] a means of knowing that is more fundamental—and *perhaps* more primordial—than the cognitive . . . The result is the revaluing of

[50] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 54–55.

[51] Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 23.

[52] James K. A. Smith's recent *How to Inhabit Time: Understanding the Past, Facing the Future, Living Faithfully Now* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2022), offers his vision of a Christian temporality within which the acknowledgment of one's historicity is vital. Consider the following from the introduction: "I'm thinking of a kind of temporal disorientation that is unrecognized because it's buried and hidden by the illusion of being above the fray, immune to history, surfing time rather than being immersed and battered by its waves. Such temporal disorientation stems from the delusion of being 'nowhen,' unconditioned by time. Those who imagine they inhabit nowhen imagine themselves wholly governed by timeless principles, unchanging convictions, expressing an idealism that assumes they are wholly governed by eternal ideas untainted by history" (4). A Taylorian point indeed.

[53] The distinction crucial to this point is occasionally blurred by what appears to be lexical variability stemming from Smith's repeatedly emphasizing a similar constellation of theses while attempting to avoid repetitiveness. He hopes to articulate that the way in which we intend, experience, and engage in and with the world occurs on an affective, erotic register, while the way in which our world and meaning are constituted and construed occurs on a fundamentally aesthetic, imaginative register. See Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 14–20, 103–37.

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> images and aesthetic media as *perhaps* the most fundamental and effective means for the communication of truth.[54]

This conjectural "perhaps" soon evanesces and is replaced by a full-throated affirmation in *Imagining the Kingdom*: "A 'general poetics,' then, is a phenomenology of our being-in-the-world that recognizes that meaning-making is, for us, a primarily aesthetic matter," and this general poetics affirms "the fundamentally aesthetic mode in which we constitute our world."[55] Our imaginative core—our aesthetic-perceptive being-in-the-world—is a function of and bound to our incarnate nature: embodied perceivers are inevitably embodied imaginers and thinkers. Thus, Smith's neologism, "kin*a*esthetics." The affective power of images, narratives, and inarticulate teleological visions of flourishing are imbibed by and imbued in us on a precognitive yet supra-instinctual level, are tied to the body-as-perceiving, and provide the "fuel" our world "begins from" and "lives off."[56]

Homo Liturgicus: The Consummation of Anthropology

Taylor acknowledges the formative power of liturgy in *A Secular Age* in two separate but related contexts. First, in his discussion of Reform, Taylor notes the interpenetration and coconstitutiveness of theory and religious practice, of social imaginaries and collective rituals. If the Reformers (in Taylor's sense of the word) were to instantiate the ordered, disciplined, and rationalized Christian society they desired—if they were to effect a revolution in the social imaginary—then "white magic," Carnival-esque inversions and subversions of norms, and inherited pagan rituals, however "Christianized," needed abolishing.[57] Collective expressions of religious practice—liturgies both within and outside of church walls—were to be purified, pared down, and better regulated, lest their enchantment of the material "ordinary" devolve into debauchery, idolatry, and so blur the boundary between "principalities and powers" and angels of light, between demonic malevolence and divine benevolence.

The second reference to liturgy occurs at the end of the book, where Taylor, now writing in a more normative and prescriptive mode, notes that loosing the shackles of excarnation and disenchantment so as to "rehabilitate the body" and re-sacramentalize the material requires liturgical and ritual reform and renewal:

[54] Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 224–25, emphasis added.
[55] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 127, 127n44.
[56] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 17.
[57] See Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 61–145.

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> To undo the reduction [of enchantment] would be to rediscover the way in which life in our natural surroundings, as well as *bodily feeling, bodily action, and bodily expression, can be channels of contact with fullness. Earlier religious life was full of such bodily modes and rituals*. But it is precisely these which have tended to be sidelined with the advance of Reform, through more cerebral forms of Christian faith and ritual, and then into the disciplined, disengaged secular world.[58]

Given humanity's embodied, desirous, and aesthetic nature, any transformation as broad and far reaching as "Reform" required what Smith calls a "revolution in devotion, not metaphysics."[59]

Apart from these two references, liturgy receives little attention in *A Secular Age* and elsewhere in Taylor's corpus. Smith traces Taylor's neglect of liturgy to the fact that Taylor "seems to affirm a rather traditional and narrow definition of 'religion'" in terms of belief and unbelief wherein one is only countenanced as "religious" if one affirms both a transcendent reality and a transcendent form of human flourishing.[60] Smith proposes a more expansive notion of "religion," jettisoning the transcendent referent and reality requirements stipulated by Taylor as "too narrow."[61] Instead, he considers one's religion to be that which one loves ultimately, concomitant with the rituals, practices, and liturgies that instantiate, perpetuate, and direct that love. He categorizes ritual, practice, and liturgy in ascending order of formative power: rituals are any intentionally performed and repeated bodily action that can sediment as habits; practices are a subset of those repeated bodily actions whose goal is some good internal to the action or process itself and whose end is more meaningful ("thicker") than those of rituals;[62] and liturgies are a subset of practices defined as "rituals of ultimate concern: rituals that are formative for identity, that inculcate particular visions of the good life, and do so in a way that means to trump other ritual formations."[63] Liturgies are "thick" and architectonic "ritual practices that function as pedagogies of ultimate desire," participation in which contextualizes and transforms our engagement in other practices

[58] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 766–67, emphasis added.

[59] Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 41.

[60] Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 80.

[61] Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 80.

[62] Smith loosely draws from Alasdair MacIntyre's discussion of practice in *After Virtue*, 187–94.

[63] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 86. See 85–88 for his typologizing. Smith occasionally blurs these distinctions and uses the terms interchangeably rather than consistently or technically. The precise boundaries among rituals, practices, and liturgies are fuzzy and open to variation by individuals. What is a practice for one person might be a liturgy for another.

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and rituals.[64] For Smith, everyone loves some vision, some ideal, some thing, some one, or some G/god(s) above all else. The all-encompassing nature of such love—the way in which it organizes and coordinates lesser loves—along with its concomitant rituals, practices, and liturgies orients and structures the direction of one's life. Religion is our "that for the sake of which," witting or otherwise, and liturgy is the preeminent means by which one's religion is shaped and reinforced.

Liturgy is the consummation of Smith's anthropological project. It is his unique expansion of a broadly Taylor-inspired, phenomenologically attuned, postmodern-inflected, and Christian-audience-directed account of the human person, one put forward in contradistinction to the *res cogitans* model he suggests is regnant in many Christian circles.[65] Incorporating our nature as enfleshed and embodied, liturgies involve attentiveness to physical comportment throughout a series of motions that conscript our bodies into a story told by us, upon us, and inscribed within us.[66] Incorporating our nature as erotic and affective, liturgies "take hold of our gut and aim our heart to certain ends," priming and guiding the perpetual flow and flux of human desire toward a particular story and vision of human flourishing.[67] And, lastly, incorporating our nature as aesthetic and imaginative, liturgies are "absorbed into our imaginative epicenter of action and behavior" through an alluring—even if implicit or ostensibly innocuous—narrative of human flourishing, an aesthetically construed narrative inarticulately articulating a certain telos that is embedded in the liturgy's performance.[68] That which is proposed as the ultimately good, true, and beautiful—that which is worthy of worship—is appropriated by performance more than by preaching and is lived more than it is didactically learned. Repeated liturgical engagement engenders a correlative construal of human flourishing, one that operates as the functional background for our experience as incarnate perceivers. Liturgy tutors and molds our "embodied, kinaesthetic intentionality" into that form most apt for attaining some particular "vision of the kingdom" and fashions self-understanding by situating one's comportment to and in the world within a larger narrative.[69] To live humanly is to love humanly; to love humanly is to worship humanly; to worship humanly is to worship liturgically.

Despite the ubiquity and inevitability of human religiosity, Smith contends that the designation *homo religiosus* insufficiently and imprecisely accounts

[64] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 87.

[65] See Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 17–35.

[66] See Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 139.

[67] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 40.

[68] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 109.

[69] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 178. See also 125–27 for a dense yet concise summation of the Cultural Liturgies series's aim.

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for the breadth and distinctiveness of human existence: the mode in which our religiosity relentlessly manifests itself is liturgical and through worship. Because worship inexorably draws upon our embodiment, affectivity, and imagination, and because liturgy engages and synthesizes these indelible anthropological constants, Smith considers himself justified in preferring the label *homo liturgicus*. We intend the world teleologically by way of love, constitute the world aesthetically through our imagination, and inhabit the world as a perceiving and meaning-making kinaesthetic body. If, as Smith argues, we are defined by what we love ultimately (a love we can't not have); and if this ultimate love is both formed and expressed by means preceding and exceeding intellection or "belief" through "tapping into" these three anthropological features, then, given his definition of liturgy, humans are inevitably liturgical. Our ultimate loves constitute us, and liturgy shapes our ultimate loves.

If such is Smith's argument as a philosophical anthropologist, his argument as a confessionally Christian cultural critic concerned with Christian education and faith formation is that competing liturgies abound even in "secular" modernity: liturgies of consumerism (trips to the mall),[70] nationalism (the pledge of allegiance; presidential inaugurations), narcissism (social media), sports-fanaticism (ritual clothes and meals; processions; collective ecstasy or rage; totemism), or the more easily identifiable ones of institutional religion.[71] For Smith, each "demands" and seeks to "extract" nothing less than total allegiance as one's architectonic world-shaping and meaning-making love whose vision of the kingdom—whose aesthetically constituted and enticing narrative of human flourishing—orients and makes sense of your life as a satisfied consumer and embodiment of a brand's ethos; a loyal patriot, proselytizer, and defender; the center of the social universe; difference-making team devotee; or broken-yet-beloved child of God. If, as John Milbank and the Radical Orthodoxy school in which Smith was immersed would have it, "Secular modernity is the creation of a perverse theology," then secular liturgies are tantamount to said (anti-)theology's public performance.[72]

[70] See Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 19–23, for his memorable, ingenious, and frankly unsettling apocalyptic exegesis of the mall as a religious and liturgical institution.

[71] For a related argument calling for Taylor to supplement or reframe his "itineraries" with more attentiveness to the "radical ordinary," its "daily liturgical work" (Christian and otherwise), and the messy "intertwinement" of immanence and transcendence in everyday life, see Stanley Hauerwas and Ramond Coles, "'Long Live the Weeds and the Wilderness Yet': Reflections on *A Secular Age*," *Modern Theology* 26, no. 3 (2010): 349–62, at 350, 357.

[72] This is the very first of the "four crucial claims" used to characterize "Radical Orthodoxy" in John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (London: Routledge, 1999), i.

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In reality, though, "There is no such thing as the secular."[73] Nations, corporations, institutions, organizations, and countless other entities conscript bodies, minds, and hearts into rival folds—cunning serpents who know human nature and the modern cacophony of competing "religions" far too well to simply whisper temptation into our ears. The truly efficacious means to recruit us into rival kingdoms is through the heart; the way to the heart runs through the body and the imagination; and the most potent engagement of these three occurs in liturgy.

Part 2: Putting a Liturgical Anthropology to Work: The Social Imaginary and a Liturgical Hermeneutic

By elucidating an anthropology deeply consonant with that which is operative beneath the surface of *A Secular Age*, and by further contributing a synthetic and sublative modality (liturgy), Smith does more than clarify and supplement Taylor's implicit anthropological vision. In delineating the incarnate, erotic, aesthetic, and liturgical dynamics of selfhood, Smith provides Taylor's innovative notion of the "social imaginary" with a more robust philosophical foundation. In doing so, Smith illuminates the mechanisms of social imaginary formation and transformation, the latter of which is essential to but never explicitly explained in *A Secular Age*. Not only does Smith's liturgical anthropology and hermeneutic clarify certain causal ambiguities and lacunae in Taylor's account between theoretical idealization and historical realization, but it also concretizes the ambivalent relationship between social imaginaries and practices, thereby better elucidating the means by which the fundamental existential shifts in the conditions of belief between the years 1500 and 2000 occurred.[74]

[73] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 112. He makes a similar point when discussing "religious" and "secular" education on page 26: "There is no such thing as a 'secular' education." This is repeated when he addresses the purported distinction between "religious" and "secular" institutions, calling for Christians "to recognize the charged, religious nature of cultural institutions that we all tend to inhabit as if they were neutral sites" (23). In these instances, Smith departs from Taylor's dominant definition of "secularity"—that is, a context in which belief is optional and contested rather than presupposed and naïve—and uses the term to mean "a-religious" (as in, neutral toward ends). He is clearer on this point in *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 42: "There is no secular, if by 'secular' we mean 'neutral' or 'uncommitted'; instead, the supposedly neutral public spaces that we inhabit—in the academy or politics—are temples of other gods that cannot be served alongside Christ."

[74] Baum, "The Response of a Theologian to Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*," 374–75, makes a Smithian point in a different manner. He argues that Taylor insufficiently accounts for the formative role of "institutions"—especially "democratic" and "capitalist" ones—in

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For Taylor, the social *imaginary*—not "theory" or "belief-set"—is "the ensemble of imaginings that enable our practices by making sense of them."[75] He undertakes the challenging task of verbalizing "the way ordinary people 'imagine' their social surroundings, [which] is often not expressed in theoretical terms, but is carried in images, stories, and legends" and functions as what Wittgenstein calls "the background . . . the largely unstructured and inarticulate understanding of our whole situation."[76] Consciousness, as always consciousness *of*, is therefore hermeneutical or interpretive: perception and evaluation are coincident, and the "social imaginary" refers to that which structures the communally shared perceptive-evaluative paradigm or horizon.[77] Despite being a "background" eluding comprehensive theoretical expression or thematization, the social imaginary is nonetheless "an essential constituent of the real": it is the imaginative horizon within and by which we make sense of practices and of our individual and social existence.[78] It incorporates "images of moral order" through which we make sense of our ethical situation, duties, and relationships,[79] as well as "wider perspectives on where we stand in space and time; our relation to other nations and peoples . . . and also where we stand in our history, in the narrative of our becoming."[80] The social imaginary's scope thus spans cosmology, ontology, morality, and history, and it is the taken for granted, capacitating, and performed hermeneutic by which we construe and navigate social and moral life and their concomitant practices.

Smith appropriates this elucidative conceptual tool in his Cultural Liturgies trilogy, drawing conclusions consonant with his own liturgical anthropology through, among other things, formulating the implications of

the shaping of the *social* imaginary. Even so, Smith would be more inclined to target the rituals, practices, and liturgies by which said "institutions" incarnate and perpetuate themselves than to allude to the broader ethos they generate.

75 Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 165. Taylor often defines this concept in terms of its relationship to practices (of which Smith thinks liturgies are the most formative). Its definition is thereby uniquely amenable to supplementation by and coordination with Smith's notion of liturgy.

76 Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 25.

77 Smith would agree, and he provides a nuanced portrait of the hermeneutical nature of selfhood—of the work of interpretation as "essential" to our created humanity in all of its intersubjectivity, situationality, traditionality, and contingency—in James K. A. Smith. *The Fall of Interpretation: Philosophic Foundations for a Creational Hermeneutic*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 159–74.

78 Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 183.

79 Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 28.

80 Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 27. In this way, the social imaginary is an important constituent of what makes a collectivity a "we."

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Taylor's choice of the concept "imaginary." The notion of a "social *imaginary*" enables Smith to transpose his argument for the imaginative and aesthetic nature of individual persons onto the social plane. If, as individuals, humans most primordially "make sense" of life on a precognitive, imaginative register, the same goes for social life. In Smith's framing: "A social imaginary is not how we think about the world, but how we imagine the world before we ever think about it; hence the social imaginary is made up of the stuff that funds the imagination—stories, myths, pictures, narratives"—all of which are socially transmitted and received.[81] Just as an individual is an intentional creature affectively drawn to some telos that is construed in an aesthetic register as a vision of the good life, so too are social groups and institutions "characterized by the same dynamic, 'ek-static' orientation toward certain ends—in particular, toward certain visions of the kingdom."[82] And, as elaborated earlier, there exists no more potent medium of imagination formation than liturgy: those communal rituals of ultimate concern whose compacted narratives, embedded and enacted visions of the kingdom, and kinaesthetic dynamics (trans)form our imaginations through our bodies, shape our "perception," and orient our desire toward a certain end.[83] For the sport fanatic, this may involve purchasing and donning the appropriate garb, consuming ritual food and drink, chanting and song, processions and totems, identifying insiders and outsiders, and collective elation or despondency as one binds one's fate to the success of the team. For the patriot or political-obsessive, this may include standing up for and making the Pledge of Allegiance with hand over heart each day, taking off one's hat and speaking in hushed tones when entering certain historical monuments, secretly relishing scouring social and corporate media for threats to the regnant or desired political order (even if thousands of miles away), or making a pilgrimage to a presidential inauguration. By such

[81] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 66.

[82] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 72.

[83] Given Smith's expansive notion of liturgy, reading Taylor with a "liturgical lens" by no means requires an exclusive fixation on those "explicitly" religious (namely, ecclesial) liturgical developments occasionally alluded to, however fruitful such an analysis might be (e.g., to consider the evolution of liturgical spaces, such as the institution of rood screens and pews; changes in church decorum and discipline; norms for eucharistic reception; etc.). Rather, one can selectively attend to any number of social, political, economic, and religious practices using this liturgical hermeneutic. It simply asks: To what end(s) does X ritual/practice/liturgy orient participants? What vision of human flourishing and moral order is implicit and embedded therein, and how is this communicated? In what larger teleological framework is it situated? What is suggested and reinforced by one's physical comportment and movement? And, aside from being a useful tool for historical-cultural analysis, Smith suggests that his readers undertake a personal "liturgical audit" in their own lives (see *Desiring the Kingdom*, 84).

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seemingly ordinary yet disproportionately potent practices, Smith believes that the modes in which we intend and constitute the world as social beings are conditioned and formed. More than anything else, liturgies—either sacred or "secular"—condition and form social imaginaries.

Smith's notion of "liturgy," then, constructively relates to Taylor's "social imaginary" insofar as it illumines the anthropological "how" where Taylor only provides the "what." For example, consider Taylor's depiction of the means by which élite "rage for order" and Reform entailed the eradication of various practices—venerating and wielding spiritually charged sacramentals or any other form of "white magic";[84] indulging in "charivaris, Carnival, feasts of misrule, [and] dancing in the church"[85]—and coincided with the "proliferation of modes of discipline, of 'methods,' of procedures" which, as noted by Foucault, involved "programs of training based on the close analysis of physical movement."[86] While Taylor is unquestionably attentive to the disenchantment, individuation, and disengagement endemic to these Reform-inspired changes in practices, Smith's analysis goes deeper by laying bare the precise embodied, affective, and aesthetic anthropological chords struck in and by such concurrent devotional, social, educational, and economic revolutions. *That* increased attentiveness to discipline, order, hygiene, time management, posture, and manners can and did historically contribute to a disengaged and disciplined stance toward oneself receives penetrating analysis by Taylor; precisely *how* these shifts do alter one's existential and social condition and self-understanding receives penetrating analysis by Smith's liturgical hermeneutic. Regarding these disciplinary methods and schemes for social organization, Smith argues: "[movements and] rhythms that are 'seemingly innocuous' are, in fact, fundamentally formative; while seeming to demand the insignificant, in fact they are extorting what is essential. Our bodies are students even when we don't realize it."[87] The quotidian implants the cosmological; the mundane embeds the metaphysical. Compact narratives—visions of the kingdom, of moral order, of the good life, of the

[84] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 79–80.

[85] Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 43.

[86] Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 45, 112. Taylor draws from Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 135–69. From *Discipline and Punish*, 136–37: "What was so new in these projects of docility that interested the eighteenth century so much? . . . To begin with, there was the scale of the control: it was a question not of treating the body, *en masse,* 'wholesale,' as if it were an indissociable unity, but of working it 'retail,' individually; of exercising upon it a subtle coercion, of obtaining holds upon it at the level of the mechanism itself—movements, gestures, attitudes, rapidity: an infinitesimal power over the active body."

[87] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 97.

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way things ought to be—inhere within physical "micropractices"[88] as "incarnate pedagogies" that "operate on the body and thus bypass consciousness,"[89] (re)structuring our imaginative, ecstatic orientation and thus the mode and field of our perception.[90] In Smith's view, "Insofar as we are immersed bodily in these microperformances, we are, over time, incorporated into a Story that then becomes the script we implicitly act out. The Story becomes the background narrative and aesthetic orientation that habitually shapes how we construe our world."[91] Schedules become stories and stories become scripts; minute motions and routines transform from the novel to the empirical, from the empirical to the usual, and from the usual to the normative. For Smith and for Taylor, commands as superficially benign and well-intended as "Sit up straight!" and "Clean yourself up!" are loaded with a normative vision: in this instance, one in which a should-and-would-be sovereign will subjects self—and ideally society—to a disciplined and rational order, an order demanding constant attention to physical presentation and comportment in accord with an aesthetically construed social ethic.

Insofar as Taylor states that "it is unfortunately not part of [his] rather narrowly focused intentions to offer a causal explanation of the rise of the modern social imaginary" or the concrete means by which "migration from theory to social imaginary" occurs, Smith's liturgical hermeneutic fills in explanatory gaps that Taylor leaves open.[92] Smith's anthropology offers just such a "causal explanation" by positing "liturgy" as the link between theory and imaginary. This clarifies Taylor's occasionally vague language regarding the ways in which novel theories "*sunk into* the general social imaginary"[93] or regarding the "*process* in which the modern idealization . . . has *connected up with* and transformed our social imaginary on virtually every level."[94] Granted, Taylor briefly treats the interpenetration and dialectical relationship between social

[88] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 110.

[89] By consciousness, Smith appears to mean awareness or reflective attention. His work would be strengthened by a more consistent definition and use of the word, as he vacillates between a Husserlian phenomenological definition—consciousness as intentional, as always consciousness *of*—and a more "popular" usage of the term—consciousness as perception, as explicit cognitive awareness.

[90] See Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 96. To make this point, Smith draws liberally from Pierre Bourdieu's work on *habitus*, practices, and social incorporation as found in Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).

[91] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 110.

[92] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 162.

[93] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 197, emphasis added.

[94] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 161, emphasis added.

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imaginaries and practices in *A Secular Age* and *Modern Social Imaginaries*,[95] but Smith considers these explanations ambiguous and insufficiently attentive to the causal priority of practice to imaginary and theory. When it comes to "this chicken-or-egg-like question" of the relationship between theory and practice, Smith conjectures that "practices precede the understanding."[96] *Lex orandi* [or *cultus*]*, lex credendi*, is not a Christian principle limited to matters of faith, but rather an anthropological universal.[97]

The concrete dynamics of the incarnate, affective, and aesthetic modes in which theories "sink into," "migrate," or get "connected up with" a social imaginary receive extensive attention in Smith's liturgical anthropology. Smith offers an account of the ways in which rituals, practices, liturgies, and social imaginaries interrelate, providing analytical and conceptual tools for studying any particular facet of Taylor's narrative. Smith capacitates an "apocalyptic exegesis" of liturgies and liturgical transformation—both sacred and secular(izing)—that engendered the "secular age" we inhabit.[98]

Part 3: Engaging the Secular: *The Ethics of Authenticity* and a Christian Social Imaginary

Whether it be disengaged rationality, excarnated religiosity, disembedding from cosmos and community, the disciplinary society's ascendence

[95] See Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 161–64, 171–76, 196–97; Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 23–30.

[96] From Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 67n53: "Here we might quibble with Taylor a bit. While he wants to emphasize that the relationship between 'imaginary' and practice is 'not one-sided' (*Modern Social Imaginaries*, 25), there does seem to be some ambiguity in his account. At times he speaks as if the understanding 'makes possible' common practices (23), as if practices 'express' a pre-existent understanding (25). However, at other times, Taylor emphasizes that it is the practices that 'carry' the understanding. While I think he is right to honor the dynamic, dialectical relation between the two, I think it particularly important to emphasize the latter. If there is a priority in this chicken-or-egg-like question, I would think the practices precede the understanding."

[97] See Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 34. From 138–39: "It is crucial that we recall the priority of liturgy to doctrine. Doctrines, beliefs, and a Christian worldview emerge from the nexus of Christian worship practices; worship is the matrix of Christian faith, not its 'expression' or 'illustration.' Just as Taylor emphasized that 'humans operated with a social imaginary well before they ever got into the business of theorizing about themselves,' so too did Christians worship before they got around to abstract theologizing or formulating a Christian worldview." Taylor leaves more room for causality to work either way, and *A Secular Age*, 175, suggests that sometimes a theory "penetrates and transforms [a] social imaginary" through spurring the innovation of new, "improvised" practices.

[98] See Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 209–10.

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and internalization, the buffered self, closure within the immanent frame, the emergence of exclusive humanism, or more specific matters such as Christian-capitalist mutations of avarice into altruism, Smith concurs with *A Secular Age*'s diagnosis of secular modernity. But, when transitioning from description to prescription—from articulating the contours and anthropological substrata of secular modernity to proposing pathways beyond closure in immanence—Smith's liturgical anthropology and apocalyptic cultural exegesis begins to grate against Taylor's thought. This is particularly true regarding Taylor's cautiously optimistic approach to modernity, inasmuch as Taylor aspires to unearth, salvage, and deepen certain of secular modernity's vital insights and ideals (e.g., the "universal" extension of benevolence, sympathy, and the recognition of rights; the embrace of the ordinary; liberation for new and varied modes of self-expression and self-actualization).[99] Taylor undertakes the ethical facet of this project in *The Ethics of Authenticity*, a text that Smith—a close reader of Taylor's vast corpus—never quotes or references. Given Smith's contention that most cultural institutions are in fact religious institutions surreptitiously demanding one's (ultimate) allegiance and love through conscription into various liturgical practices, to maintain a robustly Christian mode of living in a "secular" social and cultural environment requires, not a deepening of purportedly secular ideals, but intentionally pursuing Christian counter-measures: counter-formation through counter-liturgies that give rise to counter-social-imaginaries.

Smith engages in what he terms a "contemporary apocalyptic," "exegeting" so as to unveil the religious pretensions and liturgical machinations of seemingly neutral or secular institutions and practices.[100] Consumerist rituals at the mall, nationalist rituals in the classroom or stadium, and egocentric rituals of social media or at the university tap into the heart and mind through the kinaesthetic body; they are pedagogies of desire and imagination directing us to a vision of a kingdom other than the kingdom of Christ.[101] These rival kingdoms and teloi are, for Smith, nothing less than idolatrous insofar as they

[99] See Taylor, "A Catholic Modernity?," 25.

[100] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 92.

[101] Regarding rituals of consumerism, it is worth considering the effect that the transition away from brick-and-mortar retail to online shopping—one exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic—has on the liturgical nature of consumption. Much of in-person shopping's incarnate fullness and texture is lost: larger-than-life and sensuous images of "fulfillment" (that, ironically but intentionally, draw attention to the model rather than the model*ed*); the sounds of chatter, laughter, deliberation, and salesmanship; affable, personalized assistance; the changing room's mirror of "what could be"; comradery (or competition); and so on.

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"'teach' us to love something very different from the Kingdom of God."[102] As unwitting participants in well-disguised "liturgies of vice"[103] masquerading as banal cultural participation, "we find ourselves *first* immersed in disordered secular liturgies," in relation to which Christian worship operates as a remedial counter-liturgy.[104] Cultural exegesis's apocalyptic valence—unveiling performative idolatry and rival kingdoms—unmasks secular liturgies. For Smith, many of these cultural liturgies warrant interpretation through the Pauline "lens of 'powers and principalities,' seeing them as expressions of fallen powers and perhaps even as demonic."[105] Subtle yet powerful, omnipresent yet camouflaged, mundane yet transformative, secular liturgies are distressingly well-adapted and anthropologically calibrated to infiltrate the depths of our psychosomatic constitution and resultantly mold us into naïve practitioners of culturally sanctioned vices, unsuspecting seekers of rival kingdoms, and unsuspicious lovers of that which is not God. Indeed, for Smith, "the devil has had all the best liturgies."[106] Formation happens everywhere, despite and often in spite of the information and ideas we prime ourselves with. Hearts and souls are always already being shaped. Most often and perniciously, this happens in ways initially undetectable by the mind, thus spawning a performative dissonance between one's thematized and pristinized self-understanding and one's *de facto* values, desires, and G/god(s). Idolatry need not be self-conscious—it can just as easily be performative.

[102] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 88.

[103] Smith, *Awaiting the King*, 201.

[104] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 88n21, emphasis in original.

[105] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 93n5. One might find a point of contact here between Smith and René Girard. Girard's absence in Smith's writings is curious given, first, Taylor's allusions to Girard in the more theologically constructive portions of *A Secular Age* (456, 611–13, 685–89, 707–9), and, second, Smith's situation of "desire" and its sociocultural mediation at the center of his anthropology. René Girard's treatment of Satan and "powers and principalities" in *I See Satan Fall like Lightning*, trans. James G. Williams (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 32–46, 95–100, would fruitfully supplement Smith's allusions to dark forces' operation in personal and communal life. Girard's analysis could also concretize the unspecified agency presupposed by Smith's language of cultural liturgies' and institutions' "demanding" our allegiance and "conscripting" us into "their" fold. Another fruitful dialogue partner would be Karl Barth and his treatment of "The Lordless Powers" in §78.2 of *The Christian Life*, trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 299–327. "Lordless powers" are humankind's capacities and endowments emancipated from and then turned against their would- and should-be "masters." In loosing ourselves from God, our own powers were loosed from us, upon us, and so acquired a dominion over us. Smith might have something like this in mind.

[106] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 40.

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Taylor criticizes a similar gamut of secular modernity's political, economic, and cultural discontents as Smith—for example, capitalist decadence and inequities, nationalist violence and chauvinism, egocentrist materialism and consumerism—but he does so with an overarching irenicism absent from Smith's writings. An example is Taylor's *Ethics of Authenticity*, wherein he, in typical Taylorian style, transcends the opposition between two disparate assessments of "authenticity" as a moral ideal—those of "boosters" and of "knockers"—opting instead for an essentially different yet transformatively integrative option. Narcissism and egoism—"the dark side of individualism"—are the "debased and frightening" form of "authenticity," but authenticity nonetheless remains a desirable moral vision and "truly an ideal worth espousing."[107] In fact, authenticity is "very worthwhile in itself and indeed, I [Taylor] would say, unrepudiable by moderns."[108] Taylor argues that authenticity as a moral ideal has its roots in the late-eighteenth-century Romantics—an era and movement Taylor identifies with[109]—who advocated for self-realization through aesthetic self-creation as the means by which each person's distinct gifts and potentials are simultaneously discovered and actualized.[110] Egocentric and narcissistic modern manifestations are deformations militating against the realization of this intrinsically praiseworthy moral ideal rather than its natural unfolding. There remains an authentic ideal of authenticity, worthy of pursuit both in its own right and in the face of "the irreversibility of the emergence of modern selfhood."[111] In this way, Taylor's (Christianized) Romanticism is a form of realism. Defending this ideal in *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Taylor circumnavigates the argumentative stances of "boosters," "knockers," and those offering a middle-of-the-road "trade-off between the advantages and costs," instead attempting a simultaneous retrieval and renewal so as to "steer these developments towards their greatest promise."[112] Authenticity is a constitutive component of the West's

[107] Charles Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 4, 11, 73.

[108] Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 23.

[109] See Charles Taylor, "Afterword," in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, 320: "I'm a hopeless German romantic of the 1790s."

[110] See Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 15–29, for Taylor's definition and explanation.

[111] Jennifer A. Herdt, "The Authentic Individual in the Network of Agape," in *Aspiring to Fullness in a Secular Age*, 191–216, at 194. Herdt appreciates that Taylor "refrained from demonizing all forms of individualism" and "resisted a nostalgic flight to tradition" (194). Chau, *Solidarity with the World*, 191–92, makes a similar point, noting that Taylor lucidly describes contours of the church's mission field without constantly waving the alarmist's "crisis" banner (though crises there may be).

[112] Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 11–12.

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cultural inheritance and dispensation: the decision for (Christian) skeptics is not between preservation or rejection, but rather how best to decontaminate and purify the cultural air we always already breathe.[113] In this sense, to characterize "Taylor, the Catholic's" approach to mission in modernity as *aggiornamento*-centric is fitting.[114] This is especially so given his wariness of hegemonic instantiations of the missionary mandate (Matt 28:18-20) wherein the spread of "Christianity" is conflated with the spread of a particular, bygone culture (i.e., confusing the contingent, particular-historical, and empirical with the Christian-normative).[115] Rather than fixate on the means to *Christianize* a certain culture according to "code fetishism's" rigid, cut-and-paste structure, Taylor prefers to charitably discern how one can *be a Christian* in said culture and so deepen it.[116] Integral to this approach is solidarity, dialogue, humility, and a forthright recognition of secular modernity's gains. Such is the nature and outworking of Catholicism's "catholicity."[117]

Given Smith's comparatively more pessimistic evaluation of contemporary Western society and his apocalyptic cultural exegesis, one need not extrapolate to conclude that he would take issue with both Taylor's cultural assessment and his corrective prescription. Endeavors to "bend" or "steer" non-Christian *political* institutions is a strategy Smith affirms in *Awaiting the King*, and he does so in opposition to both Benedict-option-style quietism and utopian activism.[118] Yet, insofar as cultural institutions and their moral ideals are concerned, Christians must be cautious and vigilant. Smith issues summons to "monastic abstentions" from performatively idolatrous cultural institutions so that Christians might cultivate an ecclesially rooted counterculture in the liturgical heart of the church, one emanating from the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Christians ideally inhabit the church as the

[113] For an affable yet critical response to Taylor's irenicism vis-à-vis the culture, see George Marsden, "Matteo Ricci and the Prodigal Culture," in *A Catholic Modernity?*, 83–94.

[114] Though, *ressourcement* is certainly part of Taylor's project insofar as he uncovers the deep and often forgotten sources of modern selfhood, authenticity, and identity.

[115] See Taylor, "A Catholic Modernity?", 13–14.

[116] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 707. He goes on to say: "There aren't any formulae for acting as Christians in the world. Take the best code possible in today's circumstances, or what passes for such. The question always arises: Could one, by transcending/amending/reinterpreting the code, move us all vertically? Christ is constantly doing that in the Gospel. That's why there is something extremely troubling about the tendency of some Christian churches today to identify themselves so totally with certain codes (especially sexual norms), and institutions (liberal society)" (707).

[117] See Taylor, "A Catholic Modernity?" 13–16.

[118] Smith, *Awaiting the King*, xii, 34–35, 142. In these contexts and throughout the volume, he references Jeremiah 29:7: "But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare."

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radical counter or rival-polis *that it is*, a polis graced with normative and (counter-)formative liturgies that beget a *Christian* social imaginary.[119] Just as, for Milbank, Christianity has or is its own social science, so too, for Smith, does Christianity have its own social imaginary. And just as, for Milbank, "theology [is] itself a social science, and the queen of the sciences for the inhabitants of the *altera civitas*, on pilgrimage through this temporary world,"[120] for Smith, Christian liturgy—preeminently, the Lord's Supper—is the paradigmatically potent inhabitation and imbibing of the Christian social imaginary for the church's *viatores*.

Smith refuses to settle for deepening and purifying a moral ideal like authenticity, which, as Taylor admits, is fundamentally "self-referential" in even its religious manifestations.[121] Although Taylor draws a distinction between authenticity as self-referential in "orientation" but not necessarily so in "content"—such that "[one] can find fulfillment in God" or religion rather than in the self alone[122]—this distinction would not repel criticism from Smith, able as he is to counter it with one of his own: that between "structure" and "direction." The self-referential *structure* of authenticity—even if *directionally* impelling one toward religion—is fundamentally flawed insofar as it is, at base, just that: *self*-referential.[123] To phrase it in a different idiom: medium and message, orientation and content, are mutually implicating. Embracing religion for the sake of self-fulfillment is too egocentric an orientation to be considered meaningfully Christian or Christocentric in Smith's eyes.[124] Because the self-referentiality of self-realization is constitutive of authenticity's moral telos regardless of whether religion is the means to fulfillment, only a self-defeating "authenticity" (e.g., Gal 2:20) is redeemable.[125] Carolyn Chau's assessment of Taylor's principled penchant for cultural rapprochement is apposite: even

[119] See the discussions of "urban monasticism" and "monastic abstention" in Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 209–11, 222–28. It's important to note that, for Smith, cultural abstention is ultimately undergone for the sake of culture.

[120] Milbank, *Theology and Social Science*, 349.

[121] Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 82.

[122] Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 82.

[123] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 52–55. Smith makes this point about iPhones in *Imagining the Kingdom*, 142–45.

[124] Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 106n19, expresses his concerns bluntly: "While Taylor is sympathetic to historic, orthodox Christianity, he does not seem at all constrained by it and is willing to entertain revisions where I would not."

[125] Chau's complementary reading of Balthasar and Taylor in *Solidarity with the World* reveals the Christian tenability of Taylorian authenticity—but only when duly purged by the fires of something like Balthasar's kenoticism and theo-dramatics of personhood. She suggests that, read together, these two thinkers teach us that "mission's form in a secular age is to reveal that the *true expression of authenticity* in person and existence

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given the disciplinary limitations associated with operating as a philosopher, Taylor nonetheless "de-emphasizes the need for the culture itself to be transformed."[126]

Relevant here is the work of the sociologist of religion Christian Smith, particularly his *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Life of American Teenagers*, which presciently documented the seeds of the unprecedented rise of religious disaffiliation in America that is now born out on a massive scale today.[127] Consider some of his assessments:

> Half of American nonreligious teens who were raised in a religion apparently lost their faith or dropped out of religion *for fairly passive reasons*: for lack of interest, for reasons unknown or vague, [and] because they "just stopped" attending religious services.[128]

> Many cannot explain their disengagement from religion; many seem simply to have *drifted*.[129]

> Forty-one percent simply could think of *no reason* why they stopped attending religious services.[130]

The teens documented, surveyed, and interviewed in his research are many of today's "nones": the much discussed, lamented, and still growing cohort of religiously unaffiliated twenty- and thirty-somethings. By my lights, James Smith's anthropology and supple account of liturgy offer insight into the mechanisms behind this otherwise perplexing and reason-less "drift," providing answers unbeknownst to the teenagers-now-turned-adults themselves. If James Smith is right, Christian Smith's verbiage needs an important amendment: to describe these teens' exit from organized religion as a "passive drift" fails to adequately account for their purported a-religiosity.[131] Rather, James

and the height of creative self-expression *lies in personal and communal [ecclesial] relationship with God*" (193–94, emphasis added).

126 Chau, *Solidarity with the World*, 195. See also 192, 200.

127 See Christian Smith, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, with Melinda Lundquist Denton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

128 Smith, *Soul Searching*, 89–90, emphasis added.

129 Smith, *Soul Searching*, 116, emphasis added.

130 Smith, *Soul Searching*, 105, emphasis added.

131 Christian Smith does later trade in religious verbiage when describing the near-universal "thoroughgoing individualism" unearthed in their interviews: "American youth, like American adults, are nearly without exception profoundly individualistic, instinctively presuming autonomous, individual self-direction to be a universal human norm and life goal. Thoroughgoing individualism is not a contested *orthodoxy*

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Smith argues that repeated immersion in secular liturgies gradually and unwittingly (re)oriented their imagination and passions to a "vision of the kingdom" far different from that of Christ's.[132] Daily and unsuspecting participation in disordered liturgies of consumerism,[133] social media or "mass-consumer capitalist" egotism,[134] and sport or political fanaticism first lulls these teens into what James Smith terms "performative idolatry": profession of belief in God on a cognitive register that is wholly compartmentalized within, subordinate to, and dissonant with one's operative architectonic vision of flourishing.[135] Whether consumed with or by consumerism, imbibing an iPhonized self-understanding and social existence,[136] or being more willing to change or leave churches over politics than have their politics changed by their faith, many eventually pass into professed or "conscious" a-religiosity.[137] Their head catches up with their imaginations and hearts; profession finally aligns itself

for teenagers. It is an invisible and pervasive *doxa*, that is, an unrecognized, unquestioned, invisible premise or presupposition. U.S. teenagers' profound individualism informs a number of issues related to religion" (*Soul Searching*, 143, emphasis added). Whereas Christian Smith might be using "doxa" and "orthodoxy" tongue-and-cheek, James Smith would use the terms with grave seriousness.

[132] Smith, *Soul Searching*, 28, uses the language of "competition" when noting that "religious interests and values in teens' lives typically compete against those of school, homework, television, other media, sports, romantic relationships, paid work, and more." For similar framing, see 161, 179.

[133] See Christian Smith, *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood*, with Kari Christoffersen, Hilary Davidson, and Patricia Snell Herzog (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 70–109. In this volume, Smith's word choice is telling: "Contemporary emerging adults are either true *believers* or complacent conformists when it comes to mass consumerism" (72, emphasis added); "Shopping, buying, and consuming *as a way of life* is thus presupposed by most emerging adults, and owning some of the nicer things in life is a natural part of the *purpose of life*" (108, emphasis added). See also *Soul Searching*, 263–64.

[134] See Smith, *Soul Searching*, 176–79, for language anticipating that of James Smith. From 176, emphasis added: "[Mass-consumer capitalism] *incarnates* and promotes a *particular moral order*, an *institutionalized normative worldview comprising* and *fostering* particular assumptions, *narratives*, commitments, beliefs, *values*, and *goals* . . . Mass-consumer capitalism *fundamentally constitutes the human self* . . . as an individual, autonomous, rational, self-seeking, cost-benefit-calculating consumer."

[135] See Smith, *Awaiting the King*, 191–93, 201. Might one consider performative idolatry a, if not *the*, primary prohibition of the second commandment?

[136] See Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 142–45.

[137] Christian Smith, of course, is acutely aware of the need for both "built-in religious content" and the "structural" integration of said content in practices, routines, daily schedules, and so on. See Smith, *Soul Searching*, 130–31, 161–62, and Christian Smith and Amy Adamczyk, *Handing Down the Faith: How Parents Pass Their Religion on to the Next Generation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

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to performance. Through daily pedagogies of desire, hearts are drawn toward "rival" kingdoms without ever explicitly capturing the intellect and its "beliefs'" attention.[138] Disordered secular liturgies engage in covert proselytization, preaching to imaginations and hearts rather than minds. In this sense, many in this cohort might be more akin to converts than to "nones."[139]

To state the matter more pointedly: Taylor seems to betray his own anti-intellectualist anthropology. The ideal of authenticity he describes exists solely in the mind, and insofar as it is untethered to any practices, it cannot take root. Taylor himself admits that "the culture of narcissism lives an ideal that it is systematically falling below"[140] and that the form of authenticity incarnated by contemporary Western culture "in fact [does not] represent an authentic fulfillment of [authenticity]."[141] Such systematic and pervasive failure certainly does militate against the "ideal" of authenticity as Taylor hopes to retrieve it; but, for Smith, these failures are exactly what one can and should expect: they are the bottom-up products of disordered liturgies. The narcissism, consumerism, and crude subjectivism Taylor decries stem not from inadequate attempts to match reality to ideality, but from inculcation into the rhythms and rituals, pedagogies and practices, of a narcissistic, consumerist, and crudely subjectivist culture's liturgies.

Part 4: "The Godfather Problem" and the Body's Recession

Before concluding, and having just staged a contrastive questioning of Taylor via James Smith, I will use the analysis of parts 1 through 3 to undertake a critically constructive questioning of Smith on two topics: (i) "The Godfather Problem" and (ii) the body's recession.

(i) At the close of the third and final volume of his Cultural Liturgies series, Smith anticipates dubious interlocutors raising a matter-of-fact objection in light of the disconnect between Christian witness on the one hand and the profoundly formative role attributed to Christian liturgy on the other: If what you say is true, why don't Christian liturgies seem to work? Aren't Christians just as bad or good as everyone else? Smith terms this disjunct "The Godfather Problem," drawing inspiration from a masterful

[138] The gradualism of this (un)conversion process is also commented upon in Stephen Bullivant, Bernadette Duncan, Catherine Knowles, and Hannah Vaughan-Spruce, *Why Catholics Leave, What They Miss, and How They Might Return* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2019).

[139] Such is similar to Tara Isabella Burton's conclusion in *Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World* (New York: Public Affairs, 2020).

[140] Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 57.

[141] Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 21.

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scene in Francis Ford Coppola's film, *The Godfather*, wherein shots of mafia-boss-in-the-making Michael Corleone's participation in an elaborate Roman Catholic baptismal liturgy are interposed with shots of brutal assassinations carried out at his behest. This poignant and condensed cinematic portrayal of liturgical inefficacy juxtaposes the purposiveness of Michael Corleone's baptism by blood with his perfunctory participation in the church's baptism by water.[142]

To this problematization, Smith offers a twofold retort. First, rather than delegitimize his insistence on liturgy's uniquely formative potency, the reality of every-Sunday-worshipers whose unthematized imaginative-narrative telos is nonetheless oriented by and toward power-hungry bellicism, consumerism, egoism, nationalism, or any other "secular" "ism" *further substantiates* his thesis. Unwitting anti-Christian indoctrination evidences the power of competing liturgies—liturgies participated in with far greater frequency, earnestness, and devotion than explicitly Christian liturgies. Second, he acknowledges rival liturgies' tremendous success in forming and molding hearts to their liking and suggests that the church adopt the following counteractive measures: proactive and routinized ecclesial liturgical counter-action; interconnecting ethnography and ecclesiology in order to promote "theologically motivated accountability to empirical realities";[143] encouraging the apocalyptic exegeses of secular liturgies (in preaching, Bible studies, and church education programs); and incorporating liturgical catechesis into sermons and church-based youth and adult education. Considering these four proposals, along with two other curative measures espoused in volumes 1 and 2—namely, performing the requisite "entry angle" adjustments before participation in liturgy[144] and fostering more "intentional Christian worship"[145]—one is struck by their predominantly *intellectual* nature. How might this cohere with Smith's core thesis regarding the primacy of embodied, affective, and erotic intentionality over explicitly cognitive or "conscious" action? If it is true that "the failure of catechesis often contributes to [a] compartmentalization that *effectively nullifies the liturgical practices of worship*, undercutting their counter-formative power" because "when we are never invited to understand why we do what we do when we worship, then the repertoire of practices *is longer worship* but something else," then why wouldn't the same apply to secular liturgies and worship—the very liturgies he urges Christians to unveil precisely because

[142] See Smith, *Awaiting the King*, 165–208.
[143] Smith, *Awaiting the King*, 188.
[144] See Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 189.
[145] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 208.

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their acute effectiveness is contingent upon their hiddenness?[146] This is especially unclear if, as he suggests, "one of the best things we can do to ensure the transformative, rehabituating power of Christian worship is to foster *reflective intentionality* about what we are doing and why" because "the posture or stance we effectively adopt upon 'entry' [to worship] affects our receptivity to the formative power of the practices, and . . . can *effectively shut down* the formative power of the practices."[147] Although Smith cites "research indicat[ing] that only about 5 percent of our daily activity is the product of conscious, intentional actions that we 'choose,'"[148] it appears that this meager 5 percent has a disproportionate effect on the composition of our visions of the kingdom and thus warrants more thorough integration into his anthropological schema. This disconnect between diagnosis and prescription raises questions regarding the role that the intellect—bodily based and affectively and aesthetically conditioned as it may be—exercises or ought to exercise amid liturgical performance. In sum, there's a way in which Smith foregrounds the constitutive power of our enfleshed, imaginative affectivity at the expense of acknowledging the "intellectual" facets of intentionality and agency.[149] Tacit in his own prescriptions is the affirmation that, even if "conscious" and "intentional" actions constitute so little of human experience, those times when they are primarily or distinctively operative may be the most (trans)formative of all.[150]

A notion of what could be termed "sublative redirection" might be useful in mitigating these tensions. The term could describe the employment of those "top-down" intellectual operations and adjustments to which Smith alludes—for example, "liturgical catechesis," greater "reflective intentionality," "entry angle" adjustments—for the sake of redirecting and transforming the "bottom-up" anthropo-logic of liturgical participation. Even if the body, affectivity, and imaginativity condition our exercise of the intellect, the intellect—according to the logic implicit in Smith's own prescriptions—is capable of architectonically structuring and directing one's engagement in otherwise "bottom-up" liturgical participation and one's appropriation of its

[146] Smith, *Awaiting the King*, 205, emphasis added.

[147] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 189, emphasis added.

[148] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 81.

[149] This is complicated by that fact that, as noted earlier, terms such as *consciousness, the intellect,* and *rationality* are left undefined in his trilogy.

[150] Granted, it is important to keep in mind that his stated intention is to ameliorate the pedagogical and apologetical effects downstream of flawed, dualistic anthropological models assumed by many in his Protestant milieu that would overestimate the role of the intellect in faith-formation. He clarifies this in the face of criticism in James K. A. Smith, "Two Cheers for Worldview: A Response to Elmer John Theissen," *Journal of Christianity and Education* 14, no. 1 (2010): 55–58.

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pedagogical effects. Liturgies of all sorts maintain their predominantly pre- or other-than-intellective access routes to our "core," but the mind's sublative and redirective capacities are nonetheless affirmed as particularly powerful and as capable of a reciprocal and occasionally custodial relationship with the pre- or other-than-intellective.[151]

(ii) Relatedly, and though I concur with both Taylor and Smith's denunciations of certain anthropological dualisms, and though I also concur that, incarnate as we are, "pure" intellection is a chimera, it is nonetheless also the case that there is simultaneously a persistent *experience* of duality—and occasional bifurcation and antagonism—between mind and body, between reason and the passions, between what one "knows" and what one feels affectively or aesthetically drawn toward. Smith, of course, is not unaware of this: his target audience consists of Christians who have variously neglected, forgotten, misinterpreted, or been misdirected regarding the complex, intertwining reality of humanity's psychosomatic constitution and are therefore uniquely susceptible to the equation of intellectual assent with Christian faith and thus some form of performative idolatry. Even so, it seems that Smith (and Taylor) give insufficient attention to the fact that the body itself is a—if not the—main cause of this near-instinctual experiential dual*ity*-turned-theoretized-dual*ism*. Those theoretical dualisms—Platonic, Christian, Cartesian, or otherwise—most commonly lambasted as distortive, truncative, and excarnational might be more akin to *post hoc* symptoms of the body's recession than to causes of its neglect. This merits mention in a discussion of Taylor and Smith given their respective contributions to anthropology's (re)turn to the body in recent decades.

[151] A different but relevant concern with Smith's relativization of the intellect is whether his thought affords sufficient resources for a critical interrogation of Christian liturgy and practices themselves. His arguments recommending "historic Christian worship" as uniquely anthropologically adequate because the bearer of centuries of embedded, Spirit-guided wisdom are compelling and well-taken. It remains unclear, though, what the source and means of intra-Christian liturgical criticism may be. If there is "no such thing as the secular" given that competing ultimacies, teloi, and their agents ceaselessly vie for our attention, how will the liturgy itself be immune to the deviations of the sociocultural setting within which it, its agents, and its practitioners are situated? To give an example: consider the fact that the emergence of pews in Reformation churches occurred in increasingly sermon-centric worship gatherings and that this coincided with (or contributed to?) a more "heady" faith, sacramental-skepticism, and the rise of regimes of physical discipline and order. Do pews constitute a liturgical reinforcement of passivity and of encroaching intellectualized and excarnational religiosity? In which case, does this development imply the "secular" cooptation of the Christian liturgy itself?

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Drew Leder gives voice to the experiential basis of this reflexive or default perception of duality in *The Absent Body*. There, he cautions critics of Western Christian culture's "gnostic" tendencies not to overstate the impact of theory and thereby errantly conclude that the West's historic predilection for lauding rationality at the expense of corporality is merely a contingent, unfortunate, and wholly surmountable cultural idiosyncrasy. The body's sensorimotor powers are "ecstatic" in orientation, because of which "the body conceals itself precisely in the act of revealing what is Other. The very presencing of the world and of the body as an object within it is always correlative with this primordial absence."[152] He argues that "dualist metaphysics" are in fact "first suggested by aspects of body experience," whether this be due to the healthy body's recession and self-occlusion; the near-immediate phenomenological disappearance of the body of the signifier and supplantation by the ideality of the signified; or the body's problematic (re)presencing and otherness precisely in moments of dysfunction, pain, disease, or in the experience of the "I cannot" (all of which Leder calls the body's "dys-appearance").[153] Especially in view of that last point—that the body disappears until it dys-appears—Leder acknowledges a "built-in" because experientially justified bias toward framing the experience of duality in ontological and more classically "dualistic" terms:

> The body, forgotten in its seamless functioning, comes to thematic attention particularly at times of breakdown or problematic operation. That the notion of "body" then becomes philosophically associated with dysfunction and Otherness is not a purely contingent matter. Lived experience has already laid the groundwork.[154]

The lived body's empirical, experiential disappearance and its problematic reappearance via dys-appearance are interpreted in ontological, normative terms and subsequently reinforced in theory and practice. Brian Robinette refers to this distinction as between *existential* dualism—the body's experienced "absence," withdrawal, hiddenness—and *ontic* dualism—when dualism is "project[ed] onto an onto-valuational screen" and then theologically justified.[155] It is to the latter that Smith and Taylor object. Yet, in so doing, they rarely acknowledge such dualism's bodily basis. Irony notwithstanding—insofar as proposals to correct embodiment's neglect

[152] Leder, *The Absent Body*, 22.

[153] Leder, *The Absent Body*, 152; see also 69–99.

[154] Leder, *The Absent Body*, 127.

[155] Brian D. Robinette, *Grammars of Resurrection: A Christian Theology of Presence and Absence* (New York: Herder and Herder, 2009), 135.

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themselves neglect embodiment—such an omission misses an important nuance relevant for contemporary theological-anthropological discourse.[156]

Conclusion

The buffered self, the immanent frame, disengaged reason, excarnation: these terms ingeniously encapsulate so many otherwise vague intuitions and inchoate senses of the present, and they are terms for which we have Charles Taylor to thank. Developing and incorporating these into his methodologically *sui generis* existential and phenomenological history of the West's social imaginary constitutes a towering achievement, one that philosophers and theologians alike continue to benefit from. James K. A. Smith takes cues from both Taylor's method and the substance of his analysis to develop a highly congruous liturgical anthropology that offers constructive, synthetic bulwarks to unexamined aspects of Taylor's work and narrative. Furthermore, Smith's broader project supplements—and occasionally challenges—Taylor's. Boundless in its possible application, Smith offers a lexical and hermeneutical toolkit for filling in causal and explanatory gaps in Taylor's account of Latin Christendom's secularization and the rise of the modern self; for further investigation into any particular feature of or practice in said narrative; and for exegeting the ritual, practical, and liturgical dimensions constitutive of human life—including one's own. Smith's anthropologically substantiated wariness of too eager and optimistic a rapprochement between the church and (secular, Western) culture is also worth considering and juxtaposing with Taylor's cultural irenicism. Theirs are important contributions not only to theological

[156] Theological anthropologies centered on embodiment are uniquely compelling when correlated with a theology of—or at least theological reflections on—the experience of suffering. For example, consider M. Shawn Copeland's *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*, Innovations: African American Religious Thought (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010). There, Copeland theologically and anthropologically prioritizes human embodiment by *methodologically prioritizing instances of its privation*—the sufferings endured by Black women under the "slavocracy" and by the crucified Christ. If one opts to rehabilitate the body in Christian anthropology, Copeland's method is, phenomenologically speaking, especially cogent. When it comes to theorization about and the thematization of embodied experience, those who enjoy the gift of bodily forgetfulness are most apt to require consistent, constant, and conscious aversion. And, conversely, those plagued by ailments, privations, and sufferings are painfully aware of their embodiment. It is as experientially unsurprising as it is ironic that denizens of an age of unprecedented opportunities for maintaining health and bodily integrity need to remind themselves of themselves—of their own embodiment—and go on to lay blame at the feet of the hegemonic mind.

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and philosophical anthropology, but also to the contemporary theological conversation regarding secularity, mission, dialogue, and inculturation.

Ultimately, both thinkers are deeply cognizant of the existential suffocation induced by the immanent frame constricting so many in this, our secular age. Despite its radiance, its boisterousness, and its alluring veneer, both contend that secular modernity is too existentially stifling and metaphysically thin to adequately bear the full weight of human desire. They suggest that despite the sounding of its brass and the clanging of its cymbals, secularism dies, not with a bang, but with a whimper. As evinced by their respective projects, Taylor and Smith have heard those sighs and sobs and sought to explain their causes and their history, to offer pathways and itineraries toward the fullness of transcendence, and to give others means to experience, understand, and imagine the world otherwise.

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