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# Toward a Hermeneutic of Religion in the Public Sphere: Encouraging a Robust Public Discourse

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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Toward a Hermeneutic of Religion in the Public Sphere: Encouraging a Robust Public  
Discourse

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
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## **Abstract**

Traditional religious communities view multiculturalism and other forms of liberal secularism as committed to relegating religious aspects of life to the irrelevant margins of civil society by excluding them from public discourse. Faced with such institutional and structural derision, what kinds of counter-strategies can religious communities develop to carve out a space for their continued existence and growth? By translating religious worldviews into secular terms, religious adherents are able to actively engage in public discourse and enter into the fray of the public sphere. However, engaging in public discourse in this way raises questions regarding religious identity and a tradition's integrity. My project will analyse the phenomenon of translation which can be utilised by religious communities to develop a hermeneutic to guide their engagement in political dialogue.

As the role of religion continues to be debated in Canada, studying religious activity in the public sphere will continue to increase in importance. I suggest that the dynamics of translation provides a key to understanding such religious strategies and their effects on their constituents as well as on the broader society. Translation is a useful frame for studying this issue as it lends itself to relevant areas of inquiry. How meaning is derived, maintained, and communicated in different contexts can be analysed through hermeneutics. For my research, I will consider the hermeneutics of religion and translation by incorporating current work in the theory of dialogue and the public sphere.

In this thesis I aim to produce a novel analysis on the religious tensions within the multicultural and secular Canadian society; clarify the tension underlying the deployment of translation as counterstrategies by religious adherents against secularism; demonstrate in what ways the redescription and reinterpretation necessitated by these translations

indicate how we might move forward to a more pluralist society where religious, and other identities, are not forcibly submerged into a model of multiculturalism. The ultimate objective of my research will be to show how the resources of religious traditions may be better able to contribute positively to the Canadian multicultural experiment.

## **Acknowledgements**

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Next, I am very grateful for Dr. Michel Desjardins and Jennifer Koshan whose questions and suggestions strengthened my thesis. They were able to ascertain and convey incredibly useful counsel to me that has shaped this project. Dr. Michel Desjardins was with me at the very beginning when I decided to pursue an academic life and I appreciate all the support he has provided me over the years.

Finally I would like to thank my wife Robyn who has supported me in too many ways to count, not the least of which was to read over the entire thesis providing corrections and insight throughout. My work here, and life overall, would not be complete without her.

## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my wife Robyn and my son Oliver who inspire me to no end.

## Table of Contents

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Abstract.....   | ii  |
| Acknowledgements.....   | iv  |
| Dedication.....   | vi  |
| Table of Contents.....  | vii |
| Epigraph.....   | ix  |
| <br>  |     |
| CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....  | 10  |
| 1.1 Intentions.....   | 10  |
| 1.2 Difference and Proximity.....   | 10  |
| 1.3 Overview.....   | 12  |
| <br>  |     |
| CHAPTER TWO: DIVERSITY.....   | 22  |
| 2.1 A Multitude of Multiculturalisms.....   | 22  |
| 2.2 The Roots of Multiculturalism in Public Discourse: From Policy to Ideology..... | 27  |
| 2.3 Constructions of Multiculturalism.....  | 38  |
| 2.4 Critiques of Multiculturalism.....  | 45  |
| 2.5 Multiculturalism in a Dialogical Space.....                                     | 63  |
| 2.6 Axioms of Multiculturalism.....   | 71  |
| 2.7 Models of Multiculturalism in Metaphoric Juxtaposition.....                     | 77  |
| <br>  |     |
| CHAPTER THREE: IDENTITY.....  | 87  |
| 3.1 Politics and Identity.....  | 87  |
| 3.2 Habermasian Selfhood: Rational Individualists and Autonomous Agents.....        | 95  |
| 3.3 Taylor's Selfhood and the Good.....   | 118 |
| 3.4 Selfhood and Meaning.....   | 128 |
| 3.5 The Constructive Effort in Defining Selfhood.....                               | 135 |
| 3.6 Identity as Narrative.....  | 143 |
| 3.7 Action and Ethics.....  | 149 |
| 3.8 Reciprocity and Mutuality.....  | 155 |
| 3.9 The Self and the Public Sphere.....   | 162 |
| <br>  |     |
| CHAPTER FOUR: THE TRANSLATION PROVISIO.....   | 165 |
| 4.1 Better to Translate than to Never Communicate at All.....                       | 165 |
| 4.2 Habermas' Translation Proviso.....  | 168 |
| 4.3 Including Religion Without Translation.....                                     | 174 |
| 4.4 Translation Per Se.....   | 184 |
| 4.5 Interpretation and Understanding.....   | 191 |
| 4.6 Translating, Mistranslation, and Relevance.....                                 | 197 |
| 4.7 Translation and Appropriation.....  | 204 |
| 4.8 Beyond Appropriation.....   | 212 |
| 4.9 Universalism and Particularism: Secularism and Religion.....                    | 215 |
| 4.10 Translation and the Transference of Meaning.....                               | 224 |
| 4.11 Translating at a Gain.....   | 229 |
| <br>  |     |
| CHAPTER FIVE: A HERMENEUTIC OF RELIGION AND SECULARISM.....                         | 234 |



|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 5.1 Rushing to Conclusions .....  | 234 |
| 5.2 Secularism in Competition with Religion.....  | 242 |
| 5.3 Different Conceptions of Secularism.....  | 255 |
| 5.4 New Frames for Secularism.....  | 260 |
| 5.5 The Religious Worldview.....  | 266 |
| 5.6 Multiple Worldviews in the Same Sphere .....  | 280 |
| 5.7 Irony and Agonism .....   | 286 |
| 5.8 Religion and Secularism Redescribing One Another .....                                  | 296 |
| 5.9 Redescriptions.....   | 301 |
| <br>  |     |
| CHAPTER SIX: TWO CASES FOR A HERMENEUTIC OF RELIGION IN THE<br>PUBLIC SPHERE .....          | 305 |
| 6.1 Differences in the Same Space .....   | 305 |
| 6.2 Alberta, Religion, and Schooling.....   | 314 |
| 6.3 The Exemption Clause.....   | 317 |
| 6.4 Exempt and Incommensurable.....   | 327 |
| 6.5 The <i>Kirpan</i> in Public Discourse.....  | 339 |
| 6.6 The <i>Kirpan</i> and Religious Symbols.....  | 343 |
| 6.7 Translating the <i>Kirpan</i> .....   | 349 |
| 6.8 Translation in the Courts.....  | 358 |
| 6.9 Problems with Reductive Definitions .....   | 362 |
| 6.10 Why We Require a Hermeneutic of Cross-cultural Discourse in the Public<br>Sphere ..... | 367 |
| <br>  |     |
| CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION .....   | 370 |
| 7.1 A Short Summary of Key Themes.....  | 371 |
| 7.2 Further Studies .....   | 376 |
| 7.3 Further Applications .....  | 379 |
| 7.4 Final Thoughts .....  | 382 |
| <br>  |     |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY.....   | 383 |

## Epigraph

*“the parties involved in public debates on important issues in a multicultural society often tend to talk past each other, both because each tends to define the issue in its own terms that are often not intelligible to others, and because they have only a limited understanding of each other's history, background and way of life.”<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2000), 304.

## Chapter One: **Introduction**

### **1.1 Intentions**

In this thesis I intend to develop a hermeneutic of religion and secularism in the public sphere. Both religion and secularism are potent forces today, whether it be in global conflicts, projects of national unity, group struggles for recognition, or in the hearts and minds of individuals. Secularism and religion each have the ability to transcend spheres commonly thought of as separate such as the private, public, communal, national, or transnational. In Canada, religion is commonly understood as a private affair, with issues of diversity (religious and otherwise) addressed under the large umbrella of multiculturalism. This frame for the relationship between religion and secularism is overly simplistic and it hides an important truth – secularism and religion are dynamic constructs and each are simultaneously useful and hazardous poles.

Often religion and secularism are understood as opposites in competition with one another. The secular is presented as universal, rational, and modern. Religion is depicted as particular, irrational, and premodern. While religious adherents and secularists may battle for dominance or influence in certain contexts, I will argue that it is more fruitful for us as a society to embrace the limitations and potential of each worldview. For this task, I suggest we turn to hermeneutics and the intricacies of translation to enable us to redescribe the relationship between secularism and religion. This thesis is an attempt to do just that.

### **1.2 Difference and Proximity**

Religion and secularism do, undoubtedly, find themselves in conflict on occasion. However, I do not believe this is because of an essential discord between the two, it is

simply the result of a dissonance we have yet to fully address. This dissonance has to do with the role, placement, and context for religion in our public spheres. Since the Enlightenment there has been strong support to keep religion out of politics; that politics is a sphere of human activity that need not – and should not – overlap with religious beliefs. The justifications for this line of argumentation are various and they still strike a strong chord in some circles of political theory today.<sup>1</sup> However, the fact of the matter is religions and religious people are involved in politics and always have been to some capacity. As this fact becomes obvious it also becomes painstakingly difficult to ignore, thus we require theoretical frames to address this reality. Religions cannot simply be ignored and marginalized from secular spaces, they both operate in various dimensions of human and social activity alongside one another.

It is very much an issue of space that is a catalyst for many theoretical and practical struggles. Jonathan Z. Smith notes that with distance comes disinterest while proximity provokes us. He states, “we know of thousands of societies and world views which are 'different,' but in most cases their 'remoteness' guarantees our indifference.”<sup>2</sup> As for the dynamic between secularism and religion it provides a fertile ground for exploring new possibilities and therefore we should not treat it with indifference. To have religious and secular worldviews in a potent relationship means that we get to benefit from the creative surplus of meaning stemming from multiple worldviews at work in the public sphere. Different concoctions of human nature, human flourishing, and directions for society can

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<sup>1</sup> In fact I will consider two of the strongest voices for keeping religion out of the public sphere John Rawls and Stephen Audi in Chapter Five, section 5.2 “Secularism in Competition with Religion.”

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith, “What a Difference Difference Makes,” in *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion*, eds. Jonathan Z. Smith (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), 276.

work in tandem as secularism and religion evolve and effect an engrossed dialogical space that makes use of various traditions. This means our social imaginary does not have to choose one worldview over another, or be stagnated by constant strife. It can be built up from the dynamic exchange between different interpretive frames.

### **1.3 Overview**

Traditionally we have sought to mitigate difference in the same space – hence the language of legalism, rights, and accommodation. In Chapter Two I consider how multiculturalism as a policy and as an ideology all too often lends itself to this kind of language in Canada. Yet, pluralism compels us to emphasize and respond to religious diversity in a more creative manner than mere litigation.<sup>3</sup> If we decide to frame our response in terms of accommodation or tolerance we limit our discussion to debates based upon drawing lines in the sand as to what can be accommodated and what cannot. However, this is a poor way to address deep, meaningful cultures that are being expressed side by side. Furthermore, it limits the kinds of discourses we can have surrounding diversity and narrows the solutions we have available to address the very real problems that arise when different worldviews operate in the public sphere.

Instead of accommodation we should focus on engagement. Thus, our focus should not be agreement or disagreement (that comes after engagement). In doing so we escape the cognitive limitations associated with terms like “allowing” or “disallowing.” Instead, we may develop practices and theories that account for social imaginaries and a public

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<sup>3</sup> Will Kymlicka, *The Current State of Multiculturalism in Canada and Research Themes on Canadian Multiculturalism 2008-2010* (Ottawa: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010), 18.

sphere that includes and engages different cultures, worldviews, axioms, presuppositions, and interpretive frames. We do not need one model for agency or human nature and we are not bound by one form of ideal discourse. We do, however, gain access to a multitude of discourses and prototypes for agency or human nature.

One may question how we can set a foundation for such an approach. One model that points us toward this is the dialectic of metaphor. We can construct our public spaces on juxtaposed differences, like having various metaphors play off one another. This not only recognizes or acknowledges difference but uses it for the very makeup of our social construction in a novel way. Since we have different worldviews in the public sphere we can use them to redescribe it (and one another) in a dynamic and creative fashion. This concept will be explored by pitting models of multiculturalism against one another to demonstrate that the limitation of one model can be addressed by using another, yet in doing so we expose ourselves to new limitations. To escape this unending loop of redescription and renewed limitation we can have strengths and weaknesses of each model at work in the same space at the same time giving us more material and building blocks to construct our social imaginaries. In this way, a metaphoric juxtaposition between difference informs my critique of multiculturalism.

In Chapter Three I will consider who constructs the public sphere and ask: what kind of agent should we conceptualize to undertake this metaphoric juxtaposition? Jürgen Habermas has developed a potent and provocative notion of what kind of agent the public sphere needs; we need an autonomous individual who is prepared to engage in rational discourse. While Habermas' approach has its strengths, ultimately it is confined by

Habermas' commitment to a relatively narrowly defined secular, rational, idealistic consensus-seeking, universalistic dialogue participant.

In order to address this limitation, we can turn to Charles Taylor and Paul Ricoeur who offer alternatives as to how we can envision encounters between people. For Taylor people are a gateway into an alternative community, tradition, and culture; as such they are a potential source for one's own identity construction. Difference can enrich one's self-definition or search for authenticity and meaning in one's life. For Ricoeur, the encounter with the Other should be understood in terms of reciprocity. One's perception of the Other and the Others' perceptions of oneself are married in a dialectic that play off one another in an ongoing creative manner.

As these kinds of interactions between agents take place, a hermeneutic understanding of selfhood develops. Therefore my next question becomes how hermeneutics as applied to selfhood can also serve as a frame for engaging the Other. Following Ricoeur, Taylor, and others I will posit that the self is constructed in a feedback loop that depends upon the Other. In this way, our constructs of identity and people in relation to one another have to address the tension that results from this process. Through recognition, ethics, and mutual understanding we can see how this tension may be addressed. However, any attempt at mutual understanding can be problematized by misinterpretation, so we have to consider the aspects of translation in more depth.

Chapter Four explores why translation is such a promising tool for cross-cultural understanding in the public sphere. Translation of course, can occur between two languages, or when one interprets a text, but I will focus on intercultural translation as it is most relevant to the relationship between religion and secularism. Linguistic and textual

translation, or theorists concerned primarily with these kinds of translation, may offer valuable insight into the translation process, yet I will not limit my analysis to any particular form of communication. However, merely turning to cultural translation does not help us escape many of the cognitive traps of mistranslation. I will argue that the manner to address mistranslation rests in the tension between equivocation and relevance. If we look to this dynamic we are able to compare differences in a novel way – one that appropriates, embodies, and ultimately offers balance.

Translation is a means to enhance the event of communication and deepen meaning-making encounters that would otherwise be unavailable to us. This is because translation allows one to understand one's self as well as the Other; even the Other whom initially appears completely not-understandable or foreign. Translation makes connections where at first there seemed none and it offers new worldviews and cultures access to each other. It is for these reasons that translation offers such a promising way forward to address secularism and religion in the public sphere.

Once we have assessed the process of translation we can then turn to appropriation. Translation is an in-depth, involved process. It moves forward through a series of approximations and requires the translator to become engrossed in the work. As a result, translation is never fully complete, it constantly progresses in a series of ebbs and flows between the translated and the source material. On the other hand translation is open to some abuse as one could stop a translation too quickly, or take advantage of the fact that there is room to devise new interpretations. While not having an end in sight may seem disorientating at first it also means translation requires an ongoing relationship between divergent semantic poles. It then can deepen said relationship as meaning is transferred



from one context to another as it is interpreted, checked, and redescribed as one returns to the source for authentication repeatedly. In this way translation can serve as a method to deepen relationships.

Finally, translation can even counter the problems of misappropriation when used in a certain manner. This is because of the potential for translation to benefit all involved. If speech is an event then translation adds to the potency and poignancy of any given speech event.<sup>4</sup> One's message, words, and ideas can be heard by a larger audience and applied to new contexts. On the other side of the equation, through translation ideas that would be lost or ignored are made readily available anew. As such, novel meaning-making models can emerge from cultures expressing, interpreting, and examining notions from different groups. Groups who have less power in general can add to the effect of their speech event and critique or subvert the dominant culture. The public sphere as a whole, then, becomes more diverse with new avenues of exploration possible due to translation.

In Chapter Five I discuss how translation counters the all too common narrative that we have to choose between religion and secularism. To explore this I consider the question: how does translation manifest itself in the public sphere? For these kinds of narratives to work, religion is often presented in a very particular manner: as it is narrow minded, focused on doctrine, stagnant, resistant to change, and frequently associated with a God figure. This is a very simplistic frame for religion however. Many religious traditions do not focus on a God figure or doctrine, but instead emphasize practice, ritual, or

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<sup>4</sup> It is Paul Ricoeur who describes speech as an event in: Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 30.

experience. Furthermore, any religious tradition is constantly evolving or changing as a result of new adherents, changing contexts, diaspora experiences, external and internal pressures, or interreligious encounters. The changes themselves may be deemed positive or negative (this depends on one's perspective) but that does not alter the fact that religions are constantly amending and modifying to some degree.

Secularism is also often presented as a homogenous, cogent, and coherent concept when in practice it is a term used to describe many different ideas.<sup>5</sup> Secularism is a term that has evolved and expanded from its original use. Charles Taylor points out that the term “secular” originally referred to categorizing time: people divided their time between the sacred and the secular.<sup>6</sup> As more and more activities and domains became secular (commerce, politics, leisure, etc.) the term expanded to mean anything that is not religious, and sometimes anti-religious. Thus, to understand a space as secular (even an ambiguous space like the public sphere) comes to mean a place where one spends their time doing things that are not religious (or where religion is not welcome). Secularism, though, does not need to be understood as *a/anti-religious*, it can simply refer to a space where no one religious tradition has dominance. In this way, religion is kept from dominating our public spaces, but we are not cut off from valuable traditions of wisdom and important dimensions to human experience when debating relevant social issues in public.

John Rawls and Richard Audi argue we have to limit or exclude religion to have a rational discourse. Religion is depicted as irrational and even anti-democratic. Religion is

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<sup>5</sup> See: Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2007), 22.

<sup>6</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 54-55.

then presented as incommensurable with secularism and certain ideals we ought to pursue (such as rationality and consensus). Yet, I propose we incorporate religion into our discussions and explore alternative takes on such things as our definitions of rationality, justice, and how we derive meaning or value. In this way, religion is not the alternative to secularism, it is its partner. Religion and secularism are not understood to be incommensurable but each provide valuable and meaningful options and additions to public discourse. Both secularism and religion are potent sources of meaning for people who engage in the public sphere and both can contribute positively to it.

Meanwhile groups like the New Traditionalists or a particular, vocal set of evangelicals want to replace secularism with their version of religion. They commit the same fallacy as the ardent secularists and employ a limited strategy: to replace existing assumptions and presupposition with other ones (specifically their version of Christianity). This is a self-defeating strategy because it necessarily limits our cognitive frames for addressing problems in the social sphere. Every problem would have to be read through the lens of a specific doctrine, as would every solution. If instead we allow secular versions of human nature and society to engage, play off, and subvert religious ideals – and vice versa – we need not be overly committed to one line of thinking.

There are thinkers who do offer a vision for the public sphere based on differences in the same space, namely Richard Rorty and William Connolly. If we consider these two thinkers side by side and build off the notion of translation as discussed in Chapter Four, we end up with a public sphere that allows religious and secularists to interact with one another in a positive, dynamic, fluid, and meaningful manner. To simply put religion and secularism into the same space, even with the process of translation at hand, can still cause

some cognitive struggles as to how we are going to balance the pushes and pulls that will come from having these different worldviews next to one another. Rorty suggests we address this through irony, redescription, and solidarity where common narratives and latent presuppositions in the public sphere are challenged, assessed, and reconsidered by subversive interpretive frames.<sup>7</sup> Connolly argues pluralism can build off antagonistic interactions because different viewpoints both strengthen and challenge us, we can use such interactions constructively if we so choose.<sup>8</sup> Therefore agonism and irony provide a useful manner to approach different value systems engaging with one another in the public sphere.

As an example of what this could look like I turn to Cornel West and his notion of prophetic witness where one worldview offers critiques and challenges to another in a powerful way. Religion is presented as a source to challenge the secular use of power. This is a case where theology, revelation, and action come together in religion in a manner that can critique aspects of our secular sphere without seeking to replace or undermine the system as a whole. An example of this kind of critique is Martin Luther King Jr, who demonstrated the systematic and social prevalence of racism in America while using religious language and metaphors to bring about a positive change in society. Religion, then, can critique secularism while secularists can critique religion as well. If we utilize Connolly and Rorty's system we are not bound by one prevailing worldview to the

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<sup>7</sup> A task Rorty gives to the "liberal ironist," see: Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1989), xv.

<sup>8</sup> William E. Connolly, *Ethos of Pluralization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 154.

detriment of another, but we can use various worldviews to build the best possible outcome for society.

In Chapter Six I consider two cases where worldviews have clashed in Canada and how it was attempted to resolve them without a significant focus on translation. Ultimately, it will be demonstrated that by ignoring the nuances and advantages of translation we have severely limited ourselves. I consider cases that expose the limits to ignoring cultural translation when dealing with clashes between religion and secularism. The first case is a recent legislation in Alberta: the *2009 Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Amendment Act*. Here it states that a student may leave or not participate in any lesson at school that has to do with religion or human sexuality/sexual orientation. This bill was designed ostensibly to protect religious students from being exposed to ideas that counteract their traditions and beliefs. While the notion of protecting religious communities from an entrenching, dominant, secular line of thinking has some appeal in principle, in execution this bill is problematic. This is because it seeks to address divergent worldviews through separation and distinction. Yet, to have different worldviews engage with one another offers us new possible cognitive frames of exploration – something we should encourage youth and adults to take part in whenever we can. This process can be mediated by translation through individuals who understand the dynamic tension between secularism and religion. In this way we can avoid relying on legislation and interpretations of legislation that attempt to mask the problem and we would be able to address diversity directly.

The second case I analyse is the Supreme Court decision to allow the *kirpan* in public schools. Again, this decision has a surface level appeal to it, the court deemed the

*kirpan* an important religious symbol and ruled that it can be worn to school as long as certain guidelines are followed. But to focus on the decisions alone hides the fact that the legal process for deciding these issues is latent with problematic presuppositions and can serve as a very serious blockade to genuine intercultural dialogue. This is because the legal system is focused on winners and losers – as opposed to a hermeneutic approach that seeks creative engagement between participants. Furthermore, our legal system requires stringent definitions as to a symbol's meaning, questions of identity, and the interpretation of a tradition. Legalism does have certain advantages; it has authority, consistency, and it strives for clarity for all citizens. Yet it is not the best tool to address questions of miscommunication, mistranslation, and misrecognition. All it can provide is rulings as to whether we have to allow a particular practice or not. In order to form a collaborative society where meaning is transferred from one culture to another in an ongoing, dynamic fashion we will have to turn to something more than the legal framework.

Difference in the same space is an important tension for Canada's public sphere. Religion and secularism and the relationship between them serve well as a foci for analysing this issue. Furthermore, it is an issue that will only become more pressing as we become more diverse. A hermeneutic approach offers a promising way forward to address this question and this thesis is a small contribution to that project.

## Chapter Two: **Diversity**

### **2.1 A Multitude of Multiculturalisms**

Multiculturalism was first introduced following the awareness of diversity as a political concern. As such, multiculturalism was framed as a model for national cohesion through shared ideals and values such as respect, tolerance, and accommodation. Over the years multiculturalism has become a potent political construct and it is regularly re-evaluated and criticized. Yet, by and large multiculturalism has not abandoned its central premise: that diversity is a problem which needs to be managed. The crux of the critiques against multiculturalism focus on the tension between unity and equality, arguing multiculturalism fails to balance these forces properly. Issues within the frame of multiculturalism frequently revolve around political struggles for recognition and minorities seeking group rights. It is an ongoing question as to whether multiculturalism can find the proper balance between unifying national values and goals while addressing the deep diversity of the populace.

This question is incredibly relevant and pressing today. Differences between groups seem more pronounced in Canada, and cultures appear to be rubbing up against one another more than ever. This is in part due to globalization, urbanization, immigration patterns/policies, and demographics. What it means to be Canadian is constantly changing. The diversity of Canada is greater than it has ever been as minority ethnicities, cultures, and religions are growing with every indication being this trend will continue in the

foreseeable future.<sup>1</sup> While Canada has always had a variety of cultures present to some degree, the issues surrounding accommodation, integration, and Canadian identity seem to steadily intensify as more cultures gain stronger voices in the public sphere.

Part of the problem may be that the public sphere remains a shared space where differences are experienced, expressed, and brought into propinquity with one another. Jonathan Z. Smith argues that the issue of difference becomes much more pronounced as it relates to distance: “rather than the remote 'other' being perceived as problematic and/or dangerous, it is the proximate 'other' being perceived as problematic and/or dangerous, it is the proximate 'other' the near neighbor, who is the most troublesome.”<sup>2</sup> From a religious perspective, it is the heretics who teach a similar yet different doctrine that garners much more attention than the distant philosophy. Or, as Smith notes, religions that are deemed closer are more problematic:

For example, by and large Christians and Jews have not thought much about the 'otherness' of the Hua of the Kwakiutl, of, for that matter the Taoist. The bulk of Christian and Jewish thought about difference has been directed against other Christians and Jews, against each other, and against those groups thought of as being near neighbors or descendants: in this case, most especially, Muslims.<sup>3</sup>

As such, native born Canadians have not worried about certain iterations of citizenship until we noticeably recognize more and more diverse expressions of it on Canadian soil. Since the public sphere is a constructed social space, this sphere for which the meeting of difference takes place upon is also under scrutiny and subject to change. Multiculturalism

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada, *Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity in Canada: National Household Survey, 2001* (Statistics Canada, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith, “Different Equations: On Constructing the Other,” in *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion*, ed. Jonathan Z. Smith, 230-250 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), 245.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, “Different Equations,” 246.



will serve as our first concept for analyzing this social space and the challenges difference brings to it.

Canada, as it has been noted, has always had some degree of difference. Ever since it was construed as a nation, Canada has had different cultures with a stake in nation building projects. Multiculturalism is an element of nation building that has been used by both politicians and philosophers. As an ideal, then, it has been stretched over time and context as it has been applied, assessed, critiqued, and described many times. As a federal policy multiculturalism is no longer merely concerned with provinces or aboriginals, but now there is also a greater emphasis on various cultures, ethnicities, religions, and peoples living in the same city, community, or even street. Therefore the pressures on multiculturalism have changed in one sense and intensified in another. Thus multiculturalism has to be evaluated and reevaluated based upon its ability to address these pressures – having more diversity in the same space. It is best to address this problem now as it appears as though it will only get more prevalent as time goes by.

For the purposes of my analysis I will discuss the philosophical frame and justifications for multiculturalism which, in turn, has been expressed in policy. I will focus on multiculturalism as an ideal and less so on specific iterations or applications, only turning to them to highlight certain facets of how multiculturalism is, and should be, best understood. Phil Ryan discusses the manner in which multiculturalism can be considered an ideology as it is fraught with the advantages and disadvantages of ideological rhetoric. He argues that for multiculturalism there are two opposing – yet appropriate – definitions of ideology that apply. One could refer to: “a well articulated doctrine” or: “a jumble of ideas and sentiments. For many critics, for example, multiculturalism is a mix of relativism,

rigid anti-racism, hatred for 'The West,' and so on.”<sup>4</sup> Multiculturalism simply does not have a stagnant definition or scope. This can be problematic as at times, apologists and critics of multiculturalism are engaging in debates but using the term to mean vastly different things.<sup>5</sup> Often, multiculturalism is focused on how to balance the goals of social cohesion and equality with the diversity of people. Further, when multiculturalism is diffused into different aspects of society it can have a profound impact upon various social spheres.

Sometimes, though, multiculturalism is used descriptively, as in stating that a society is composed of many cultures. For clarity I will use the term “pluralism” or “pluralistic society” when referring to the descriptive element of multiculturalism. It is quite clear that Canada is a pluralistic society and that any approach we take to questions of shared public spaces, constructs, values, and narratives have to account for this on-the-ground diversity. Canada was founded by both English and French settlers who negotiated (sometimes brutally) with the Aboriginal people of the land (who themselves are by no means homogenous). Therefore Canada has always had some degree of difference within the same state. As more cultures are, and continue to become, more prevalent in the constitution of Canada, our narratives, values, and ideologies would do well to reflect this diversity.

The notion of inequality is prevalent (or should be) in any discussion concerning diversity. While one culture enjoys being the majority or dominant culture by default, other cultures strive to gain equal recognition. Furthermore, inequality does not simply occur

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<sup>4</sup> Phil Ryan, *Multicultiphobia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 7.

<sup>5</sup> Ryan, *Multicultiphobia*, 8.

between groups. Within groups there are forms of structural and social power dynamics that can influence the aims of multicultural policies and practices, especially if they are overlooked. In order to address the tensions between universality and particularity, as well as diversity and equality, thinkers often turn to a dialogical model for multiculturalism. Through dialogue it is hoped shared goals can be assessed, realized, or negotiated. However, this process is dependent upon language and communication. Too often the role of translation is underemphasized. As a result the potential for cross-cultural meaning-making endeavours are limited. In this chapter I shall analyse the linguistic constructions of multiculturalism through its metaphors, in order to introduce the promise and challenge of a dialogical frame for multiculturalism fused with hermeneutics.

Furthermore, I will explore the various manners in which multiculturalism is utilized in the political sphere and philosophical/religious discourse. I will focus primarily on the Canadian version of multiculturalism. My goal is to consider key thinkers in constructing our current understanding of multiculturalism – not to undermine or dismiss past constructions – but to re-evaluate, redefine, and redescribe multiculturalism. It will be demonstrated throughout that multiculturalism can be redescribed hermeneutically. Our discussions concerning multiculturalism should be infused with the dynamics of translation as it operates within the tension of diversity and proximity. I will argue it is only through a hermeneutical analysis that multiculturalism can be understood to address the challenge of negotiating difference in the same space. In the following section I will briefly consider the foundations and development of multiculturalism as a vision for the nation expressed through federal policy and then justified as a philosophy (which served to justify and flesh out said vision).

## **2.2 The Roots of Multiculturalism in Public Discourse: From Policy to Philosophy**

The concept of multiculturalism as a political construct first became widespread in Canada in 1971 when it was announced by Pierre Trudeau that the *Multiculturalism Policy* would serve as a guiding principle for the Federal Government. This policy was a response to the *Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism* which was to study the linguistic and cultural contributions of English and French in Canada, among other ethnic groups. This study concluded Canada required a stance that recognized the diversity of the nation and it would also acknowledge the two dominant, historic traditions: French and English. This policy was enacted, enlarged, and redefined into legislation by Brian Mulroney in 1982 as the *Multiculturalism Act*, designed to codify Canada's stance on its diverse population. Furthermore, multiculturalism was deemed a guiding principle in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Charter)* and in the following years each province developed an official multiculturalism policy of their own. The Federal Government maintains an ongoing official mandate to promote the many cultural identities of Canadians to this day.

While the Federal Government has not abandoned multiculturalism as a policy, it has changed its focus on how to address issues of diversity over the years. For the first half of the 1990's there was a minister of multiculturalism. However this position was superseded by the Minister of Canadian Heritage who, today, splits multicultural programs with the department of Citizenship and Immigration (although other departments do have multicultural initiatives or programs from time to time).<sup>6</sup> Multiculturalism has been used

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<sup>6</sup> For an overview of the Federal Government's multicultural programs and the departments that run them see: *Annual Report on Operation of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act 2012-2013* (Ottawa:

politically to fund and oversee anti-racism campaigns, educational programs, cultural festivals, parades, celebrations, and various projects for Canadian unity. As a concept, multiculturalism has covered a lot of ground since its initial conception. As a result some philosophers have worked to define and justify multiculturalism as an ideal in the public sphere. This, of course, is an ongoing project, but to fully appreciate and analyse multiculturalism it is important to consider how it has progressed as a philosophical concept.

To consider multiculturalism's promises – and shortcomings – one must consider the wider philosophical discussions of what multiculturalism entails. On this note, Will Kymlicka and Peter Beyer have stated that multiculturalism is not a concept unique to Canada and they present a larger perspective on cultural pluralism across national boundaries.<sup>7</sup> Many countries have adopted certain aspects of multiculturalism; immigration reforms, accommodation for minorities, an increase in focus on minority rights, or recognizing diverse groups in one way or another. Beyer describes Canada's multiculturalism as a particular expression of a movement heavily influenced by globalization. Meanwhile Kymlicka explains the crucial element that links the particular expressions of the global phenomenon of multiculturalism is liberalism.

Globalization is another tricky term to define with any kind of finality. For Beyer, globalization simply means “a quantitative and qualitative jump in the capacity of just

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Department of Citizenship and Immigration, 2014)  
<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/multi-report2011/part4.asp#a1>

<sup>7</sup> Although their analyses do remain largely in the West.

about anybody with the necessary technical equipment to communicate globally.”<sup>8</sup> Beyer is able to establish a connection between multiculturalism in Canada and the rest of the world which developed through communication. He claims that the particular expression of Canadian multiculturalism was an adoption of a wider global trend to focus on heterogeneity. It is the result of being involved in global discourses concerning changes in immigration and demographics throughout countries all over the world. As populations change many countries seek new models for addressing their nation-building projects since traditional nationalism has lost traction. Canada did, however, have its own expression of this wider phenomenon. Yet the emphasis remains for Beyer that one cannot understand the Canadian multiculturalism project without recognizing the wider global trend.

What does make Canada’s multiculturalism unique is not that it was inventive of its central premises but that it had to address the tension between French and English Canada. Consequently the introduction of multiculturalism at a federal level had a profound impact on both of these traditions. Multiculturalism, as first introduced to Canada, was primarily a response to the duality of French/English Canada as a problem for a united federal state. The use of multiculturalism as a tool for aboriginals and minority groups to achieve political objectives did not develop until later. To present Canada as composed of many cultures and not simply one (or two) did cause a reaction at that time (and still does to a degree). This is in part because multicultural ideals were being developed at the same time Quebec was redefining itself, shedding much of its *de facto*, official Catholicism. Such

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<sup>8</sup> Peter Beyer, “Religion and Global Civil Society,” in *Religion in Global Civil Society* ed. Mark Juergensmeyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 13.

redefinition went hand in hand with Quebec's renegotiation of its relationship with the rest of Canada. Quebec, for instance, was undergoing a secularization project, the Quiet Revolution, where the public sphere changed from being steered by Catholicism to Quebec nationalism.

Meanwhile English Canada was not cohesive since: "British imperial identity had faded without even an inchoate successor."<sup>9</sup> This set the stage for a multicultural model that was to be constantly juxtaposed with French nationalism and the ongoing concern for some kind of cohesive, unitary national identity for the country as a whole. Multiculturalism has attempted to appease these divergent poles in the Canadian polity and incorporate French Canadians into the political system, but with an aim to simultaneously recognize the diversity of the Canadian populace at large.<sup>10</sup> Canada's multicultural experiment is in line with global trends as a result of the increase in global communication. However, the dualistic nature of the pre-existing Canadian model, and political influences by various groups within Canada, help to define a particular inculcation of multiculturalism within its borders. However, Beyer does not go into depth as to the extent Canada did successfully and creatively forge a novel multicultural model. Thus, to consider the particularities and developments of multiculturalism I shall turn to Will Kymlicka.

Kymlicka also ties the Canadian multicultural project to wider global trends. But he does not acknowledge globalization as the main catalyst; instead, he turns to human

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<sup>9</sup> Beyer, "Religion and Global Civil Society," 17.

<sup>10</sup> In what Beyer calls a phenomenon that "was bilingual and multicultural" in: Beyer, "Religion and Global Civil Society," 17.

rights discourse and political liberalism. Kymlicka argues that core liberal principles such as equality and freedom naturally progressed to projects of multiculturalism. He further argues that liberal principles of justice compel us to recognize “group-differentiated minority rights.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore critics of multiculturalism are not arguing against an alternative to liberalism, but a particular interpretation and set of practices rooted in liberal principles. He demonstrates that the global rise and spread of multiculturalism is not due solely to its liberal foundations, though, but also on its consistency with broader projects concerning human rights. He claims, “human rights ideals have not only helped to inspire and justify claims for multiculturalism, but also have strongly influenced how these claims are framed, channelling and filtering them to accord with the underlying values of international human rights norms.”<sup>12</sup> By connecting multicultural ideals to liberalism and human rights Kymlicka allows for the spread of multiculturalism while he also sets a foundation for the international legitimacy he thinks it warrants. Wherever the roots of multiculturalism lie, though, Kymlicka notes that since its concoction multiculturalism has developed and changed over the years. In fact, focusing too much on the introduction of multiculturalism to Canadian society may be a red herring as “multiculturalism was introduced without any idea of what it would mean, or any long-term strategy for its implementation.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, in order to understand multiculturalism and what it means, one must consider its development and subsequent criticisms.

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<sup>11</sup> Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 174.

<sup>12</sup> Kymlicka, *Multicultural Odysseys*, 88.

<sup>13</sup> Will Kymlicka, *Finding Our Way: Rethinking Ethnocultural Relations in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998), 40.



One manner in which Kymlicka seeks to develop a deeper understanding of multiculturalism is to delineate and clarify its various uses. While multiculturalism can be linked to other global trends (like an increase in human rights) and it is steeped in liberal principles, its application and propagation are widespread and diverse. Overall, Kymlicka's goal is to create a more nuanced discussion. Once the limits and boundaries of multiculturalism are established, Kymlicka is confident people will realize its potential as a powerful concept and political tool.<sup>14</sup> This is why Kymlicka discusses the differences between various kinds of minorities active in multicultural projects.<sup>15</sup> Such a focus on differences allows Kymlicka to address how minorities seek to attain various motives and goals in a multicultural society. He describes two types of minority groups, national minorities who are native to the land and ethnic immigrant groups.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, Kymlicka notes subcultures and other groups also operate within the parameters of multiculturalism, although he does not discuss these kinds of movements at length. Analysis can be much more succinct by recognizing the different kinds of movements within multiculturalism as "each raises its own distinctive issues, and must be examined on its own merits."<sup>17</sup> As such, a major facet of multiculturalism serves as a guiding framework for minorities seeking further political recognition and influence – and it is to these engagements we shall turn to next.

Political recognition is one way multiculturalism uses a lens based on diversity to make a space for minority identities. Charles Taylor's essay "The Politics of Recognition"

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<sup>14</sup> Kymlicka, *Finding Our Way*, 16.

<sup>15</sup> Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, 11-12.

<sup>16</sup> Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, 13-14.

<sup>17</sup> Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, 20.

has deeply influenced how we frame such struggles. A large part of this essay is devoted to the justification for group rights claims. However, he constructs this argument on a more basic premise: that diversity is a valuable asset to any given society. He calls the “politics of difference” a method that takes into consideration the deep diversity of society more seriously than any other alternative.<sup>18</sup> By focusing on diversity we may allow for individuals to strive for authenticity in a manner that counters the harmful effects of unchecked assimilation models. “The idea is that it is precisely this distinctness that has been ignored, glossed over, assimilated to a dominant or majority identity. And this assimilation is the cardinal sin against the ideal of authenticity.”<sup>19</sup> Taylor calls for a political framework which addresses diversity in a more constructive manner. In his model, one ought to adopt a “different but equal” mentality.<sup>20</sup> Taylor's concern is for minorities to maintain and even flourish in a multicultural society while being able to interact and engage with the dominant culture. This is why he looks to the underlying presuppositions we bring to an Other as a starting point for developing his political theory. He strives for everyone to acknowledge that cultures other than one's own are of value, “but the further demand we are looking at here is that we all recognize the equal value of different cultures; that we not only let them survive, but acknowledge their worth.”<sup>21</sup> With this assumption in place, he sets the tone for an appreciation of diversity in a way that allows space in public discourse for different visions of the good to exist simultaneously.

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<sup>18</sup> Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 38.

<sup>19</sup> Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” 38.

<sup>20</sup> Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” 43.

<sup>21</sup> Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” 64.

In many ways Kymlicka does begin with the recognition of diversity as a social value. He sees this as an important facet of multiculturalism and one that fuels several multicultural projects. Firstly, multiculturalism addresses problematic historical aspects of Western, liberal, democratic societies: “multiculturalism is first and foremost about developing new models of democratic citizenship, grounded in human rights ideals, to replace earlier uncivil and undemocratic relations of hierarchy and exclusion.”<sup>22</sup> In this way multiculturalism is a reactionary model, righting the wrongs of the past. Minority cultures were unfairly treated by nation-building projects at one time, so multiculturalism seeks to include them in present and future nation-building projects. However, by linking multiculturalism with liberalism and nation-building Kymlicka exposes himself to certain criticisms, one of which I shall turn to next.

John McGarry, Brendan O'Leary, and Richard Simeon argue that Kymlicka's multiculturalism is too limited in that it does not go far enough to recognize the inequality between dominant Western liberalism and other minority cultures, “Western multiculturalists tolerate other cultures, but only up until the point at which these cultures challenge liberal principles.”<sup>23</sup> Thus multiculturalism becomes a clandestine force in assimilating and homogenizing society under the guise of liberalism which remains an unquestioned and untouchable presupposition.<sup>24</sup> Kymlicka does note the need for models

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<sup>22</sup> Will Kymlick, “The Rise and Fall of Multiculturalism? New Debates on Inclusion and Accommodation in Diverse Societies,” *International Social Science Journal* 61.199 (2010): 101.

<sup>23</sup> John McGarry, Brendan O'Leary, and Richard Simeon, “Integration or Accommodation? The Enduring Debate in Conflict Regulation,” in *Constitutional Design for Divided Societies*, eds. Sujit Choudhry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 57.

<sup>24</sup> “It is liberal integration in disguise” argues McGarry, O'Leary, and Simeon in: “Integration or Accommodation,” 57. Although Kymlicka does present multiculturalism as a tool for integration, he

of citizenship that account for both the historic persecution of minorities and ongoing power discrepancies which are systemic throughout Western societies. He frames such discrepancies in terms of “demands for inclusion,” and he does not deny that minority groups are expected to integrate into the larger society.<sup>25</sup> Kymlicka argues, then, that the integration of minorities must be done on their own terms.

Kymlicka maintains that integration should be a part of multiculturalism and it should present issues from minority groups' perspectives. By involving themselves in political struggles groups may seek a means of being included, valued, and acknowledged by the dominant society. “Generally speaking, the demand for representation rights by disadvantaged groups is a demand for inclusion. Groups that feel excluded want to be included in the larger society, and the recognition and accommodation of their ‘difference’ is intended to facilitate this.”<sup>26</sup> As an example of this Kymlicka relates the Sikh officer’s request to wear his turban while working for the RCMP.<sup>27</sup> On one hand the officer was seeking to have an aspect that is crucial to his identity recognized by the larger society. On the other, he demonstrated a desire to be included in Canada's national police force. In this way, a call for a special exemption was not born from a desire to merely retain an imported tradition or to segregate oneself from the larger society. Rather, it was a demonstration of a Sikh trying to take part in the larger society without hiding or discarding significant aspects of his culture and identity.

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argues it is a tool that is more fair and serves the needs of minorities in: Kymlicka, *Finding Our Way*, 24.

<sup>25</sup> Kymlicka, *Finding Our Way*, 24.

<sup>26</sup> Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, 177.

<sup>27</sup> Will Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 165.

Although Sikhism is a newer and smaller religion in Canada than some others, that does not mean Sikh symbols are not valuable or worthy of recognition in the public sphere. As such, multiculturalism becomes a tool for integration by valuing the diversity which already exists in society's constituents, "if there is a viable way to promote a sense of solidarity and common purpose in a multination state, it will involve accommodating, rather than subordinating, national identities. People from different national groups will only share an allegiance to the larger polity if they see it as the context within which their national identity is nurtured, rather than subordinated."<sup>28</sup> Multiculturalism does not so much promote or propagate difference, rather it acknowledges it. To value and accommodate difference is not to force and choose between national cohesion and ghettoization. Instead, diversity and divergent cultures are used in tandem with overarching nation-building projects.

Kymlicka thus constructs multiculturalism as a means to address social inequalities that are already present and to integrate minorities without assimilation. Integration in Kymlicka's mind is a necessary and desirable process where any citizen may fully participate in society, political processes, and the market. Assimilation is problematic in its desire to mould all citizens into the same culture and value system. Ideally minority groups and individuals should be able to negotiate the manner in which they integrate rather than face a harsh dichotomy of either assimilation or ostracization. Kymlicka describes multiculturalism as a necessary foundation for such negotiations and the public

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<sup>28</sup> Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, 190.

participation of different cultures.<sup>29</sup> This allows an understanding of multiculturalism that is a dialogical process of citizenship and the participation of diverse groups in the public sphere. This is important to Kymlicka as he regards multiculturalism as successfully working within a larger political system.

With the role and value of multiculturalism established, Kymlicka also focuses on how to frame nation-building in a manner that attends to minorities who work within Canada yet have very different ends in mind.<sup>30</sup> As he notes, there is an ever present need to challenge hegemonic and oppressive systems that marginalize groups.<sup>31</sup> The role for multiculturalism is to address the claims and aims of minorities. Kymlicka, however, at times uses the term multiculturalism merely as a description of certain national projects, as if nations are on a scale, with some being more multicultural than others. With this kind of analysis, multiculturalism becomes the means of measuring and evaluating multicultural programs: whether countries are multicultural enough or becoming less multicultural.<sup>32</sup>

One critique of our initial constructs of multiculturalism is that they were too rigid and unable to bend and account for the new pressures being applied to it. To focus on other axiomatic frameworks (globalization and liberalism) to serve as a foundation for multiculturalism also hinders it as those very thought systems are eventually challenged. Multiculturalism has become less focused on integration as we instead find ourselves asking how we can best create a functional public sphere in a deeply pluralistic society.

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<sup>29</sup> Kymlicka, *Finding Our Way*, 24.

<sup>30</sup> See: Kymlicka, *Multicultural Odysseys*, as an example of this.

<sup>31</sup> Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular*, 4.

<sup>32</sup> For a prime example of this line of argumentation see: Kymlicka, *Multicultural Odysseys*, 165-167. Kymlicka later decries the decline of multiculturalism globally in: "The Rise and Fall of Multiculturalism", 97.

The conversation has changed to focus less on how to integrate minorities. Rather, now that minorities have been here for some time and are growing in number as well as influence we must ask how we can cooperatively construct a public space amongst different voices and visions for society. In response, some have offered several versions of how multiculturalism ought to be understood; in the following section I will discuss some of its more prominent depictions.

### **2.3 Constructions of Multiculturalism**

We have already seen how certain philosophical justifications for multiculturalism developed through Kymlicka and others. In this section I will consider two of the strongest models for multiculturalism. The first is multiculturalism as a framework for addressing struggles for recognition where minority groups seek political gains and objectives and use multiculturalism to validate and serve their cause. Often, the aims of these struggles are expressed as group rights, religious exemptions from laws, or greater autonomy and power for group leaders. The second construct we will discuss here is multiculturalism as a foundation for a dialogical social space. In this mode of thinking multiculturalism is not tied to specific goals or outcomes, but as a process of addressing diversity. Under this construct dialogue may foster better relationships and improve the ability for minority groups to express themselves and be heard, paving the way for other more pragmatic objectives down the line – but initially the focus must be on dialogue itself.

In order to consider the politics of recognition I will turn to one of its strongest advocates, James Tully. For Tully we do not go far enough to put minority cultures into an equal relationship with the dominant culture. Tully examines this inequality in terms of

recognition. He defines a key facet of recognition as: one is able to fully engage in the public sphere no matter one's cultural background.<sup>33</sup> Tully argues that a multicultural society has to acknowledge the different struggles various groups and individuals face when they attempt to take part in the public sphere as active citizens.

Such struggles are hindered by “arbitrary constraints” which frame much of our political processes yet prevent certain citizens from engaging in various forms of governance.<sup>34</sup> These constraints are tied to recognition because they are built upon the cultural framework of the majority group. This is why Tully argues that multiculturalism should be used to counter “structures of domination” which he describes as:

the background conditions free and equal participation appropriate to the practical identities of those groups who have dominated the public institutions for decades: the well-to-do, the able, heterosexuals, males, members of the dominant linguistic, cultural, ethnic, national and religious groups, and so on; and they discriminate against and often exclude others.<sup>35</sup>

This means people who do not belong to the dominant culture are limited by the very framework and underlying assumptions about normalcy that plague the public sphere. This imposition places them in a bind:

If citizens wish to participate and so *become* citizens, they have a strategic choice between two options: either to participate within and assimilate to the given structures of recognition, and so perpetuate the biased system, or to challenge and negotiate the prevailing forms of recognition so they can participate on a par with the other: that is, to negotiate the rules of intersubjective recognition.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> James Tully, *Public Philosophy In a New Key: Volume 1, Democracy and Civic Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 16.

<sup>34</sup> James Tully, *Public Philosophy In a New Key: Volume 1, Democracy and Civic Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 149.

<sup>35</sup> Tully, *Public Philosophy In a New Key*, 149.

<sup>36</sup> Tully, *Public Philosophy In a New Key*, 149.



Here Tully brings together the different strands of his argument. He claims the underlying structures of domination must be open for negotiation. This is because it is the underlying assumptions themselves have such an impact on political engagement. So, if we are to truly include the Other in public discourse, whomever is considered Other must address the terms and dimensions of public discourse itself. Recognition in Tully's mind is very basic in one sense; we recognize different groups when they are able to have a say in how society is constituted.<sup>37</sup> Yet it is also very complex in another sense, this is apparent if one is to consider the application of this kind of negotiations at an individual, group, and state level.<sup>38</sup> This is expressed through Tully's discussion on the terms of negotiation.

Once Tully establishes the terms for citizenship – to be able to engage within politics and to have a say on the terms of engagement – he then develops how recognition ought to unfold. Recognition unfolds within the tension between diversity and equality expressed through power dynamics that have to be negotiated by citizens. Tully argues that there is not one level of being a citizen, but three. The first is the participation in the negotiations we covered earlier, being a participant in dialogues of power dynamics and practices of governance is one level of citizenship.<sup>39</sup> The second is the ability to recognize oneself as part of the larger group, thus beginning to alleviate the tension between diversity and unity. Finally, Tully turns to the political domain, the “awareness of equal subjects to the constitution.”<sup>40</sup> Where one is fully committed to the notion of a nation and its institutions.

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<sup>37</sup> Tully, *Public Philosophy In a New Key*, 146.

<sup>38</sup> Tully, *Public Philosophy In a New Key*, 149, 150-151.

<sup>39</sup> Tully, *Public Philosophy In a New Key*, 162.

<sup>40</sup> Tully, *Public Philosophy In a New Key*, 163.

Through these three levels of citizenship Tully develops an aspect of political recognition that involves dialogue but does not ignore or sweep aside real political outcomes which are meant to come out of such dialogues. By defining citizenship into three levels, Tully presents the groundwork for individuals to reach a state of recognition that is significant to everyone, it is an “intersubjective” recognition that works in a deep manner: “It is a structure of strong evaluations in accord with which humans value themselves, find their lives worth living and their actions worth undertaking, and the description under which they require, as a condition of self-worth, that others recognise and respect them.”<sup>41</sup> To evaluate the Other will impact one's own self-identity. Through such bidirectional evaluation Tully presents a means to promote an equal field despite the diversity in society. Meaningful recognition can only be achieved when we collectively realize the worth of different groups.<sup>42</sup>

While recognition is an important step in Tully's theory, he also seeks to address other challenges for minority groups who wish to participate in the political sphere. The politics of recognition, as Tully describes it, does so by making the recognition of the Other a critical facet of all public discourse. By discourse, Tully means a specific kind of dialogue: negotiation. As he notes, the politics of recognition is a constructive, productive model for public engagement,

One of the most important discoveries of identity politics is that people with very different cultural, religious, gender and linguistic identities can nevertheless reach overlapping agreements on norms of public recognition, such as charters of individual and group rights and

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<sup>41</sup> Tully, *Public Philosophy In a New Key*, 169.

<sup>42</sup> Tully, *Public Philosophy In a New Key*, 162-163.

obligations, as long as these are formulated, interpreted and applied in an identity-sensitive manner.<sup>43</sup>

And here Tully brings in his final dimension to address diversity in a meaningful manner. Diversity can overshadow or hide the fact that there are common patterns in divergent political struggles. That these struggles are formed in an “identity sensitive manner” may cause some to overlook the similarities. However, with an emphasis on culture and identity it becomes clear that different groups most often do seek common objectives such as autonomy, freedom from persecution, participation in the political sphere, and the means to address injustices.<sup>44</sup> Brian Barry, as we shall soon see, takes the notion of equality and steers it in another direction. He argues that a strong sense of equality and commonality between people should be the basis of our political theories, as opposed to its end point as it is in Tully's view.

While multiculturalism may serve as a frame for political struggles, there are those who would rather we focus on how multiculturalism can form a more cohesive society. For this task, we cannot simply focus on struggles for recognition, rather we need to focus on how to construct a public sphere that is inclusive. For this task the most potent construct is multiculturalism fused with dialogue theory and it is a position articulated by Bhikhu Parekh. According to Parekh, one crucial tenant for an inclusive dialogical society is a “multicultural perspective.”<sup>45</sup> This perspective is composed of three aspects, “the cultural

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<sup>43</sup> Tully, *Public Philosophy In a New Key*, 181.

<sup>44</sup> James Tully, “Cultural Demands for Constitutional Recognition,” *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 3.2 (1995): 113-114.

<sup>45</sup> Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2000), 338.

embeddedness of human beings, the inescapability and desirability of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, and the internal plurality of each culture.”<sup>46</sup> From these foundational premises Parekh draws a direct link between the needs of a pluralistic society and a dialogical frame for political sphere. With this framework in mind multiculturalism, then, becomes dialogical both as a practice and a hermeneutic (i.e. a theory of multicultural interpretation).

Through an emphasis on dialogue, Parekh notes, the excesses of society can be mitigated.<sup>47</sup> This is a comprehensive view as our institutions and values are given shape, affirmed, and expressed through dialogue. This is such a foundational concept that Parekh describes society as “dialogically constituted.”<sup>48</sup> Thus multiculturalism is understood dialogically and it functions dialogically. While multiculturalism may be criticized for problematic embedded power dynamics it also contains within it a potential fix to power discrepancies through dialogue.

Dialogue serves as a means to address power only if it holds on to certain basic premises. While Parekh is quick to affirm the value of dialogue, he also recognizes that there has to be certain ground rules established before dialogue can live up to its promise. He argues that: “Every political community needs to provide autonomous spaces in which its different communities can feel secure and both affirm and negotiate their respective

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<sup>46</sup> Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, 338.

<sup>47</sup> Parekh states: “Their continuing contestation and mutually regulating influences have averted the hegemony of any one of them and contained its likely excesses” in: *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, 339.

<sup>48</sup> Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, 340.

identities in their uncoerced interactions with each other.”<sup>49</sup> Here we see two prerequisites for dialogue, one is stated positively and one negatively: people need autonomy and to engage without coercion. In Parekh's mind, this setting will “ensure that their members are willing and able to interact as fellow-citizens in a shared public realm.”<sup>50</sup> This space will in turn promote inclusivity, engagement, and a shared sense of belonging amongst diverse groups in a society. Later in this chapter we will consider how a dialogical model for multiculturalism can be strengthened with a hermeneutical analysis by focusing on the dialectics at the heart of dialogue. For now it is worthwhile to recognize that it is an important step in thinking about multiculturalism and to consider what kinds of issues it tries to address in multicultural theory.

In fact, Kymlicka's multiculturalism rooted in liberalism, Tully's politics of recognition, and Parekh's dialogical multiculturalism all try to address the issue of managing difference in the same space. Each approach this question differently, for Kymlicka the solution is integration that is guided in part by the minority groups and individuals who seek to integrate. For Tully, power dynamics and the terms of engagement have to be negotiated at a fundamental level. Parekh offers a dialogical model where discourse is presented in a certain light to promote engagements that are authentic and serve as the building blocks for any construct of our public spaces. Each approach offers something valuable to the discussion on diversity, yet each faces limitations as well. In the

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<sup>49</sup> Bhikhu Parekh, “Managing Multicultural Societies,” *Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 88.344 (2008): 526.

<sup>50</sup> Parekh, “Managing Multicultural Societies,” 526.

following section I will consider some of the critiques against multiculturalism so that we may return to the concept and re-evaluate it.

## **2.4 Critiques of Multiculturalism**

Often critiques of multiculturalism reside somewhere in the tension between equality and diversity as one cannot easily balance these two poles. It is quite simple to claim that things are equal but different; it has in fact become a common saying. However, as Jonathan Z. Smith notes, we perceive and understand difference in a comparative and evaluative manner. “Difference is seldom a comparison between entities judged to be equivalent. Difference most frequently entails a hierarchy of prestige and the concomitant political ranking of superordinate and subordinate.”<sup>51</sup> When dealing with minority cultures the concern is that minority cultures deal with the 'superordinate' dominant culture on unequal ground. Meanwhile, another concern focuses on the 'subordinate' aspect of comparison. They fear the suppression or oppression of such things such as equality, gender rights, or even the dominant culture itself. The inability to entwine diversity and equality in a cogent and comprehensive manner is an ongoing tension within multicultural discourse.

I will explore this dynamic first by looking to Brian Barry’s critique of multiculturalism where he claims it fails to address issues of equality and then consider some alternatives to his reasoning. Then I will briefly explore other thinkers who expose a potential incoherence within multiculturalism which are rooted in the power discrepancy between superordinate and subordinate cultures. From this analysis I will argue that to

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<sup>51</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith, “What a Difference Difference Makes,” in *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion*, ed. Jonathan Z. Smith, 251-302 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), 253.

address this tension we will need to move beyond dualistic portrayals toward a form of analysis where the elasticity of the terms may be expressed in a manner that allows them to coincide without enveloping one or the other.

In *Culture and Equality*, Brian Barry develops a comprehensive critique of multiculturalism he feels is lacking in literature on the subject.<sup>52</sup> He argues that multiculturalism is in opposition to equality and that in application it provides an unfair landscape – even for the minority groups it ostensibly protects. These factors lead him to conclude the multicultural project as a whole is detrimental. The first problem is in the term itself and its emphasis on culture. For Barry this is misguided, “culture is not the problem, and culture is not the solution.”<sup>53</sup> He then goes on to explain what the problem is: it is not that multiculturalism fails to resolve certain problems, it is that it has set its sights on problems that simply do not exist.

If not culture, what is the problem and what is the solution? In many cases, there is no problem in the first place, so no solution is called for. As far as most culturally distinctive groups are concerned, a framework of egalitarian liberal laws leaves them free to pursue their ends either individually or in association with one another. The problem is invented out of nothing by multiculturalists, who assume that equal treatment for minorities is merely an arbitrary point on a continuum between specially adverse treatment and specially favourable treatment, with neutrality having nothing in particular to commend it.<sup>54</sup>

Thus multiculturalism provides the illusion of a problem, which it perpetuates through its mere existence. Multiculturalism cannot cure society's ills because it has created these ills out of thin air.

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<sup>52</sup> Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 5.

<sup>53</sup> Barry, *Culture and Equality*, 315.

<sup>54</sup> Barry, *Culture and Equality*, 317.

Barry's next critique of multiculturalism is that it is self-perpetuating and dispensing energy with no end in sight. The more group distinctions we put into policy the more entrenched they become in society (in the groups themselves and later as they are recognized by the majority). Thus cultural differences are, and become, perpetually more rigid as more groups, differences, and aspects of culture accumulate. Furthermore, this process distracts and deviates us from addressing actual social ills such as socioeconomic and educational inequalities.<sup>55</sup> These critiques lead Barry to conclude "administered in doses of any strength you like, multiculturalism poses as many problems as it solves."<sup>56</sup> His vitriolic assessment of multiculturalism builds off of his conception of equality and how multiculturalism derides this fundamental value.<sup>57</sup> Consequently Barry goes too far in his attack on multiculturalism. To throw away anything and everything that has to do with diversity and culture leaves little room to deal with issues that do arise from different cultures clashing when they occupy the same social space.

As we have seen earlier in this chapter Kymlicka attempts to root the global movement for multiculturalism in human rights, so too does Barry ground his critique of the multicultural project in human rights. Kymlicka claims human rights align with multiculturalism in that they both call to end oppression and provide the oppressed a means for righting wrongs. Barry points us toward the universality of human rights in that they

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<sup>55</sup> Barry, *Culture and Equality*, 305-306.

<sup>56</sup> Barry, *Culture and Equality*, 328.

<sup>57</sup> Barry states that his goal in *Culture and Equality* is: "I shall argue that multiculturalist policies are not in general well designed to advance the values of liberty and equality, and that the implementation of such policies tend to mark a retreat from both." In: Barry, *Culture and Equality*, 12.



are meant to benefit “all human beings.”<sup>58</sup> Yet, he sees a failure by “western philosophers” to maintain and uphold the ideals found in the Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>59</sup> This is demonstrated by the lack of support for truly universal ideals. To focus on differentiation as Kymlicka and others do is a major failing in Barry's opinion. He calls for a return to policy discourse based on equality as understood as the same laws applying to all people no matter what cultural, historical, and/or identity-based differences exist amongst them. Barry states his aim: “so that everybody enjoys the same legal and political rights. These rights should be assigned to individual citizens, with no special rights (or disabilities) accorded to some and not others on the basis of group membership.”<sup>60</sup> From this assertion it is fairly clear that Barry is opposed to group-based rights and exemptions from the law – even if they have been won in court cases or through lobbying governments by various religious and cultural minority communities in Western democracies.

Barry's argument is that the same legal and political rights should apply to all citizens is based on his understanding equality and fairness. Since all people are equal, they should be treated the same. What Barry fails to account for is that the same law applied to different persons impacts them differently. Barry does not address this point directly, rather he attempts to tackle the concept of fairness and law. To do so Barry turns to religious minorities and claims for special exemptions under the law. He uses religion because it is a prominent catalyst for these kinds of issues.<sup>61</sup> He notes that the law may very well impact

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<sup>58</sup> Barry, *Culture and Equality*, 5.

<sup>59</sup> Barry, *Culture and Equality*, 5.

<sup>60</sup> Barry, *Culture and Equality*, 7.

<sup>61</sup> Barry, *Culture and Equality*, 33.

different people differently, but this is what laws do – almost exclusively. His criteria to decipher if the impact of a law is unacceptable or not is fairness. So he argues that those who pursue exemptions from a law are being treated fairly and they do not need any exemptions.<sup>62</sup> He claims that those who support an argument based on special laws for religious individuals are assuming a flawed logic; simply having a different impact on different people is not enough to criticize a law, one also has to demonstrate how this impact is unfair.

The notion that inequality of impact is a sign of unfairness is not an insight derived from a more sophisticated conception of justice than that previously found in political philosophy. It is merely a mistake. This is not, of course, to deny that the unequal impact of a law may in some cases be an indication of its unfairness. It is simply to say that the charge will have to be substantiated in each case by showing exactly how the law is unfair. It is never enough to show no more than that it has a different impact on different people.<sup>63</sup>

Barry argues that the law should relegate religious practices if there is a good enough reason to do so. Therefore to simply state that a law effects a religious practice or belief is not enough. One has to demonstrate that it is unfair that a religious practice is regulated.

In this way Barry does not assume religion has an intrinsic value, rather it is simply something some people choose. He bases this claim on his interpretation of autonomy. Religious people may choose to lead lives that are stringent in what they are or are not able to do; to eat only certain meats, to eat no meat whatsoever, to follow certain dress codes, to pray five times a day, and so on – or they may choose not to impose these restrictions

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<sup>62</sup> Barry does note, however, that a law may be unjust and may need to be revised to litigate its impact upon citizens, but this may be done in a universalistic framework, not through group rights, minority rights, or exemptions from the law in: *Culture and Equality*, 39.

<sup>63</sup> Barry, *Culture and Equality*, 34.

on themselves. The point of emphasis for Barry is that they are free to choose their religious practices and observances as long as they stay within the parameters of the law. It is not as though an observant Jew cannot eat bacon, it is that she or he chooses not to. This line of argumentation assumes that simply because choice exists, all choices are equal. While it is possible for one to leave a religious community he or she was brought up in, the social and psychological costs are often very large indeed. While choosing food or dress along religious lines may seem superficial (often people do choose certain foods or articles of clothing in a superficial manner), to compel one to dispose of meaningful symbols, traditions, and connections of various sorts from one's life is a heavy burden.<sup>64</sup> Yet the emphasis on autonomy is important to Barry as he ties it to his discussion on fairness and impact of the law.<sup>65</sup>

In order to demonstrate how a religious observance may impact a religious minority specifically, Barry considers the case of a Sikh who desires to wear a *kirpan* (a religious symbol that resembles a knife) in public.<sup>66</sup> Barry opines that the current knife laws are so restrictive that they do impact Sikhs who wish to wear a *kirpan* while the law does not impact people of other religions. However, this is what laws are meant to do, restrict people from partaking in activities society deems undesirable. Because knife-carrying could make society less safe it is illegal and so *anyone* who wants to carry a knife would find this law

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<sup>64</sup> I address this issue of choice and meaning again in Chapter Three, section 3.4 "Selfhood and Meaning" and in Chapter Six, section 6.7 "Translating the *Kirpan*."

<sup>65</sup> Barry, *Culture and Equality*, 37.

<sup>66</sup> I consider the Multani case and wearing a *Kirpan* in public schools throughout Chapter Six in sections: 6.5 "The *Kirpan* in Public Discourse," 6.6 "The *Kirpan* and Religion Symbols," 6.7 "Translating the *Kirpan*," 6.8 "Translation in the Courts," and 6.9 "Problems with Reductive Definitions."

to be an infringement on their freedom; the law was designed to be an imposition in this sense. Therefore Barry concludes a Sikh is impacted, but not in a manner that is unfair. Barry argues that the rest of society ought to retain an emphasis on safety despite the fact that the law does impact Sikhs in a particular manner does not make it unfair.<sup>67</sup> This becomes a clash between fundamental values where one has to win out at the expense of the other:

If Sikh religious beliefs entail that men carry a *kris* (or dirk), then prohibiting the carrying of knives in public is unquestionably an abridgement of freedom of religion for Sikhs. At the same time, though, there is an equally undeniable public order interest in not having one portion of the population carrying offensive weapons. We can disagree about which of these two values should prevail in this particular case, but it would not be sensible to deny that, whatever the outcome, something valuable will be lost.<sup>68</sup>

Barry's argument then becomes a defence of how religion should not win out against other human values such as security. It would be unfair, in his mind, to allow someone to choose a religion that allows weapon carrying while the rest of society are not permitted such a luxury and therefore one group is given an unfair advantage over another.

One may counter Barry's claim, that "something valuable will be lost," from three different angles. This is a potent statement but it loses its veracity if one were to consider the nature of the valuable thing that will be lost. According to Barry, the lost value in the case of the *kirpan* is security. However, in Canada, the Supreme Court had to rule on the legality of the *kirpan* and decided due to all evidence available at the time it could not deem

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<sup>67</sup> Barry, *Culture and Equality*, 38.

<sup>68</sup> Barry, *Culture and Equality*, 152.

the *kirpan* a dangerous weapon.<sup>69</sup> According to Valerie Stoker's study of this case, the *kirpan* seems to have more potency as a "symbolic threat" to the dominant culture than it does as an actual weapon.<sup>70</sup> It becomes clear that while Barry discusses equality and fairness in a seemingly persuasive manner, when one takes the time to consider the actual religious claims and desires the discussion can take a different turn.

The second objection to Barry's argument is tied to his portrayal of fairness. Barry demonstrates that an inequality of impact is not sufficient to undermine a law. He argues that one must display how the law's impact on individuals is unfair. Bhikhu Parekh asserts that Barry is playing with terms, taking a narrow perspective which fails to recognize the underlying inequality between dominant and minority cultures. This comes into play when judging other cultural practices (such as wearing a religious symbol). Parekh notes that we have to be careful and aware of various nuances when we evaluate other cultures:

moral life is necessarily embedded in and cannot be isolated from the wider culture. A way of life cannot therefore be judged good or bad without taking full account of the system of meaning, traditions, temperament and the moral and emotional resources of the people involved.<sup>71</sup>

As different cultures have different values, symbols, and expressions of human flourishing, to expect that one law could promote and appreciate each dignified worldview is ludicrous.

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<sup>69</sup> *Multani v. Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys*, [2006] 1 S.C.R. 256, 2006 SCC, 6-7.

<sup>70</sup> Valerie Stoker interviewed people and studied the symbolism of the *kirpan* in Quebec during the Supreme Court deliberations concerning the legality of wearing the *kirpan* in schools. She surmised that while the threat of the *kirpan* as a weapon was minimal, because of people's perceptions it remained a potent "symbolic threat." Valerie Stoker, "Zero Tolerance? Sikh Swords, School Safety, and Secularism in Quebec," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75.4 (2007): 824.

<sup>71</sup> Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2000), 47.

In fact, Parekh also challenges the notion that one vision for society could (or should) suffice for all people in any capacity.

In the example of the *kirpan*, Parekh argues that taking a stance like Barry's lacks an appreciation for different contexts and different cultures while it prevents one from recognizing how a law impacts different groups in an unfair manner. "As for the complaint of inequality, there is a prima facie inequality of rights in the sense that the Sikhs can do things others cannot. However, the inequality arises out of the different demands of the same basic right to religion and does not confer a new right on the Sikhs"<sup>72</sup> Here Parekh notes that there is an overriding claim by the Sikhs that is based on a notion of fairness – the right to express and practice their religion which others already enjoy. To deny certain religious expressions does impact Sikhs, but not other religious communities. It is in recognizing the value and use of a religious symbol that the inequality becomes apparent. For instance, when one sees a *kirpan* there is a fear that security is being threatened, that it will be used to stab or cut someone rather than serve its purpose as a religious symbol. Yet if a church were to place a large wooden cross in front of its building one would not assume the church intended to crucify individuals, it is a recognized symbol within Christianity and within our society at large. How we understand a crucifix has transcended its practical purpose as originally designed. At the same time, we readily treat the *kirpan* as a knife because it looks like one. This is a manner in which religious freedom, expression, and symbols are treated differently and unfairly. In claiming to consider society as a whole

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<sup>72</sup> Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, 249.

Barry employs a skewed version of fairness as his criteria for judging the practices of religious minorities.

The third objection to Barry is to point out that he relies heavily on a false dichotomy. He assumes in his formula that there will be winners and losers and that people will fit easily into one of these two camps. If Sikhs wear *kirpans* those who want safety automatically lose out. Meanwhile if Sikhs do not wear a *kirpan* they lose the ability to express their religion to the fullest. This is the kind of thinking that dominates discussions surrounding religious freedom and diversity in the public sphere. It assumes that difference has to be understood in terms of competition and that one way of life has to smother any other. This is a very limited way of thinking about diversity and society. People could learn to understand, engage, and communicate with difference instead of seeking to squash or be squashed by it.<sup>73</sup> In the case of the *kirpan* this could be done from recognizing it as a religious symbol instead of a weapon, if we were all to accept that it is a symbol of dignity and virtue instead of violence perhaps no one would feel threatened by *kirpan* wearing Sikhs. In the same way, Sikhs would benefit from open conversations about their religion, traditions, heritage, and symbols in that they would translate their religion into other terms. In doing so, they could emphasize and translate their religion differently, opening new cognitive possibilities. This process would allow for critical evaluation and mutual understanding to take part within the Sikh community and the other communities who engage with them. This kind of frame, though, rejects the very notion that only winners

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<sup>73</sup> As we shall see later, I will develop an alternate non-zero-sum model to address these kinds of issues.

and losers emerge from a cross-cultural encounter. Instead all parties may benefit from the encounter and exposure to different worldviews and interpretive frames.

Though we have dismantled Barry's critique of multiculturalism based on fairness, he has one final stroke against multiculturalism. Multiculturalism he remarks, does not simply fail society at large, it even adversely impacts those it is trying to defend, i.e. individuals pertaining to minority groups. Barry sees multicultural policies as pejorative and constraining on minority cultures themselves. It is pejorative in that it places the minority cultures in a place where they need the state to become caretakers of their own culture.<sup>74</sup> This means that the state has to decide what the minority culture is (or become convinced of what it is) and then preserve it. I will turn to this issue shortly but first I will look to Barry's discussion of preservation itself.

Barry has a particular problem with the notion of preservation as it leads to stagnation and a situation where minority cultures are not free to grow, adapt, or change as they see fit. To demonstrate his point Barry turns his analysis to Charles Taylor and the issue of aboriginal cultures in Western Democracies.

The idea that aboriginal cultures are extraordinarily fragile is profoundly patronizing. Charles Taylor insists (as we shall see later) that we must recognize in all human beings an equal capacity for culture. I endorse that proposition, and simply wish to add that we should also attribute to all human beings an equal capacity for cultural adaptation. Of course, just as an equal human capacity for culture does not entail equal cultural achievement, so an equal human capacity for cultural adaptation does not entail that all cultures are equally well equipped to cope with change.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Barry, *Culture and Equality*, 256.

<sup>75</sup> Barry, *Culture and Equality*, 256.



Barry directly criticizes Taylor's politics of difference because it will not provide groups with the ability and freedom to change themselves. However, one must wonder what exactly Barry means here by *change*. In his mind, minority cultures may not be able to “cope” or “adapt” which implies a certain kind of change, and one that is not value neutral. To cope or adapt means one is under either duress, stress, or needs to evolve to fit better with one's surroundings. Consider what exactly are the surroundings of a minority culture – it is the dominant culture. Therefore to cope or adapt means reacting to the dominant frame of Western liberal democracy.

While on one hand it is true minority cultures ought to take advantage of opportunities to take on aspects of another culture as they see fit – cultural exchanges and interactions form all basis for human societal constructions and impact people on the individual level as well.<sup>76</sup> On the other hand, to argue that minority cultures need to adapt to the dominant culture can simply be a reiteration of past preferences for the Other to assimilate (and not on their terms as Kymlicka, Tully, and Parekh would have it). Barry sets up an argument that resembles a line of thinking where cultures or identities which are different from the majority are deemed taboo, offensive, or in need of adaptation, based solely on their being different.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, Barry’s critique fails to acknowledge that

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<sup>76</sup> Wilfred Cantwell Smith provides an excellent example of how cultural stories can be shared and transferred throughout history. This process can occur without those involved even realizing. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, “The History of Religions in the Singular,” in *Wilfred Cantwell Smith: A Reader*, ed. Kenneth Cracknell (Oxford: Onewell Publications, 2001), 86-90.

<sup>77</sup> Recall Kymlicka's example of the Sikh wearing turban while serving in the RCMP. This man wanted to integrate, but also wanted to be able to negotiation the terms of his integration. Ironically, it was the backlash against the turban (that the RCMP uniform cannot change) which may be understood as unable to adapt or cope with the new reality—that of a pluralistic society.

culture and religion can have an impact on an immigrant community that reaches into various spheres of life.

Following a quantitative study on immigrants in Canada and their ability to adapt and be successful in terms of education and employment, Philip Connor and Matthias Koenig demonstrate religion is a significant factor to the process. Specifically they argue that “religion seems to operate as a bridge for most immigrants seeking to make a better life in Canada, but at the same time as a barrier for religious minorities.”<sup>78</sup> Therefore being a minority religion places one into a position where statistically they will be less successful than those who are not. What it comes down to is that suspicion of difference, or Barry's predilection to overlook differences in favour of universally applicable laws, does not allow diversity to flourish but does allow the predatory and enveloping nature of dominant cultures to suffocate divergent worldviews. Multiculturalism, as Barry notes, need not define cultural identity in a way that “it is destroyed by any change in the culture.”<sup>79</sup> But it does need to address power dynamics at play when minority groups are negotiating a space for themselves. In order to address social power dynamics we will next to turn to thinkers who seek to study the various levels on which a community or an individual struggle with discrimination.

However, it is worth further considering Barry's basic premise: that multiculturalism, as it is often enacted, does cause particular struggles for minority groups. As we shall see, the strongest criticisms of multiculturalism address the notion of power

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<sup>78</sup> Phillip Connor and Matthias Koenig, “Religion and Socio-economic Integration of Immigration across Canada,” in *Religion in the Public Sphere: Canadian Case Studies*, eds. Solange Lefebvre and Lori G. Beaman (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 308.

<sup>79</sup> Barry, *Culture and Equality*, 256.

discrepancy in a nuanced manner. First minority groups have to contend with the domination of the majority culture. I shall briefly explore this through Wendy Brown and Janet Halley as well as Pamela Klassen and Courtney Bender who expose certain ways in which the dominant culture can coerce a minority. Secondly, minority cultures have to address structural forms of domination within their own community. I will turn to Ayelet Shachar who argues that while the dominant culture often imposes itself, the struggles for authority within minority groups can be just as problematic.

Multiculturalism may be limited in its inability to address wider societal problems. Wendy Brown and Janet Halley demonstrate two manners in which a liberal democracy can dominate minority cultures in a coercive manner.<sup>80</sup> One is the preeminent understanding of selfhood and another is the limited deliberative process of our legal system. In terms of citizens, liberalism provides a narrow definition of the self intricate in its power dynamics. “Here we propose that legalism often deploys liberalism as a normativizing, regulatory form of power: when liberalism posits that we are individuals primordially, that human selfhood is a given, not constituted, that choosing is the preeminent human deed, it bids to constitute us as individuals and choosers.”<sup>81</sup> Thus, there becomes a cognitive boundary on one's ability to recognize different prospects for human selfhood.<sup>82</sup> Alternative models of humanity, perhaps based on collectivity, or that certain

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<sup>80</sup> Recall our discussion of Kymlicka where he argues multiculturalism is entwined in liberalism. He claims multiculturalism as an ideology may be justified on the basis that it is an extension of liberalism in: section 2.2 “The Roots of Multiculturalism in Public Discourse: From Policy to Ideology.”

<sup>81</sup> Wendy Brown and Janet Halley, “Introduction,” in *Left Legalism/Left Critique*, eds. Wendy Brown and Janet Halley (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 17.

<sup>82</sup> Charles Taylor and Paul Ricoeur argues that how others perceive us influences how we perceive our selves, this will be discussed more fully in Chapter Three.

actions are dictated by higher authorities (and therefore not subject to 'choosing') are not only incompatible with this articulation but are constantly suppressed by its pervasiveness.

The second method in which the dominant culture is coercive is the manner in which the legal system reduces complex issues into narrow terms. This is done either for pragmatic purposes (we cannot address all of human injustice in a court room) or political reasons, we only choose to address certain injustices while leaving others as they remain too politically sticky to be addressed. However the fact remains that the legal culture brings with it a certain frame within which all problems have to fit:

Legalism not only carries a politics (and liberal legalism carries a very specific politics) but also incessantly translates wide-ranging political questions into more narrowly framed legal questions. Thus politics conceived and practiced legalistically bears a certain hostility to discursively open-ended, multigenre, and polyvocal political conversations about how we should live, what we should value and what we should prohibit, and what is possible in collective life.<sup>83</sup>

Here Brown and Halley argue against the narrow and confining nature of legal discourse, where multilayered issues are treated in a uniform manner. According to Brown and Halley, both legal discourse and language of rights abuses is part of the problem. By simplifying multi-layered questions of identity or oppression into legal formality, where definitions and limits on practices are the status quo, one cannot escape the structural and institutional frame for one's struggle. In this way, the very framework in which multiculturalism operates can be problematic and multiculturalism has been unable to address such discrepancies so far.

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<sup>83</sup> Brown and Halley, "Introduction," 19.

It is limiting to rely solely on a legal system that is normative and embedded in certain cultural practices. This limitation then becomes a cognitive boundary for exploring societal issues, such as deep, basic questions as to what our values are.<sup>84</sup> However, this is not merely a limitation on cognitive expressions and explorations, it also limits the potential for a true dialogical model to understand jurisdiction and law. Klassen and Bender argue that religious minorities need to be freed from the cultural discrimination this frame propagates. “Once cultural conflict is embedded in the language of rights and legal accommodation, by its very nature the rule of law exerts a kind of structural dominance immiscible with dialogic forms of cross-cultural encounter.”<sup>85</sup> This limitation of public institution and concept becomes a form of domination. The solution to such derision is dialogue theory, “displaying the limits and recognizing that tolerance only applies until a religion presses against constitutional norms, rules or authority. Managerial style of constitutionalism leaves us with only the option which is to make a new system of constitutionalism which is based upon dialogue theory.”<sup>86</sup> And so it becomes clear that dialogue serves as a response to latent domination by the state toward vulnerable groups. The actual manner in which a dialogical theory of multiculturalism may unfold will be considered later on in this chapter. But before we may tackle what a dialogical frame would entail, other power dynamics need to be considered, such as in-group propensity for discrimination.

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<sup>84</sup> Brown and Halley, “Introduction,” 19.

<sup>85</sup> Pamela Klassen and Courtney Bender. *After Pluralism: Reimagining Religious Engagement* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2010), 119.

<sup>86</sup> Klassen and Bender, *After Pluralism*, 120-121.

While some people and groups are coerced as a minority amidst a dominant culture, this is not the only manner in which discrimination occurs. Multicultural policies may in fact be complicit in certain other forms of subjugation. Ayelet Shachar claims multiculturalism is problematically conceived because of certain unintended consequences that arise when we support group rights. One such consequence is the “systematic maltreatment of individuals within the accommodated group.”<sup>87</sup> Such as when a group member of a minority becomes victim to abuses or discrimination by their own in-group authorities, traditions, or simply other members of the community. In what Shachar calls the “paradox of cultural vulnerability” in protecting minority cultures in the name of freedom and equality, the state may be supporting and even protecting through law the “most hierarchical elements of a culture.”<sup>88</sup> Thus the state becomes a complicit partner in systematic discrimination against vulnerable citizens.

This problem does not arise merely from theoretical considerations, Shachar argues that these kinds of problems can be recognized from an analysis of how actual accommodation is implemented.<sup>89</sup> For instance, Shachar notes how the Jewish *Halakhic* marriage and divorce law is understood to be both important to the Jewish tradition and also open to abuse in that it gives husbands certain privileges and means of enforcing power over women throughout divorce proceedings.<sup>90</sup> Susan Shapiro argues such matriarchal and chauvinistic attitudes persist in Judaism and are deeply rooted in the metaphors that have

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<sup>87</sup> Ayelet Shachar. *Multicultural Jurisdictions: Cultural Differences and Women's Rights* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2.

<sup>88</sup> Shachar, *Multicultural Jurisdictions*, 3.

<sup>89</sup> Shachar, *Multicultural Jurisdictions*, 17.

<sup>90</sup> Shachar, *Multicultural Jurisdictions*, 59.

“cultural and social consequences.”<sup>91</sup> Such metaphors work their way into becoming justifications for abusive relationships that take on the guise of Jewish philosophy: “It is a universe where philosophy’s founding metaphors are taken up by Jewish philosophy with the result of perpetuating and reinforcing the asymmetrical relationships between real men and women, thus putting, for us, a husband’s exclusive right to discipline a wife always under rhetorical and actual suspicion.”<sup>92</sup> Hence, supporting group-rights in this instance places women into a system where they are vulnerable to in-group discrimination. To grant a religious community’s authorities legal rights is to enforce their cultural norms even when certain aspects of human dignity are compromised. In fact, certain instances of competing norms and mores is inevitable when we consider providing minority groups special rights. For if they simply wanted to follow the majority culture’s norms and regulations there would be no need to seek exemptions from legislations or special authority over certain areas of law.

In order to address this *paradox of vulnerability* Shachar suggests a complicated model for the legal system which she calls transformative accommodation. In this model minority groups are given freedom to protect and practice their cultures while certain safeguards are put in place to make sure their members are unburdened by discrimination. This model breaks away from dualistic understandings of jurisdiction and instead allows

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<sup>91</sup> Susan Shapiro, “A Matter of Discipline: Reading For Gender in Jewish Philosophy.” In *Judaism Since Gender*, eds. Miriam Peskowitz and Laura Levitt (New York: Routledge, 1997), 161.

<sup>92</sup> Michael Oppenheim, *Judaism and Jewish Life: Encounters of Consequence: Jewish Philosophy in the Twentieth Century and Beyond* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2009), 359.

for overlapping authority to be shared between the state and minority groups.<sup>93</sup> This is achieved by opening up dialogue between the state and minority groups. Shachar then notes individuals ought to have the option to seek out the kinds of legal framework that suits them:

By creating an ongoing dialogue between state – and group – based norms according to the principles of joint-governance, it is hoped that a new “horizontal” separation of powers may become established: each entity will now be required to contribute its distinct legal input devoid of monopoly, with each individual self-selecting his or her own jurisdictions.<sup>94</sup>

However, before one can consider the option of shared jurisdiction between groups, one must ask: what kind of dialogue is needed to explore new models of multiculturalism? It is with this question in mind that a dialogical model for multiculturalism will be discussed next. From this analysis we may ascertain the need for a deeper, hermeneutical model for understanding multiculturalism which we shall return to when we consider the rhetoric and metaphors of multiculturalism. For now, I will delve more deeply into the notion of multiculturalism and dialogue.

## **2.5 Multiculturalism in a Dialogical Space**

Multiculturalism cannot simply appropriate dialogue in order to make it a stronger concept. What kind of dialogue and what the context is for the dialogue are important facets to

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<sup>93</sup> This argument appears in a similar form by Bhikhu Parekh: “There is no reason to believe that the state should represent a homogenous legal space, for territorially concentrated communities with different histories and needs might justly ask for different powers within an asymmetrical political structure; or that every state should have a uniform system of laws, for its different communities might either not be able to agree on them or might legitimately demand the right to adapt them to their circumstances and needs.” Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, 195.

<sup>94</sup> Shachar, *Multicultural Jurisdictions*, 146.



consider. Mikhail Bakhtin was a leading figure on dialogue theory and he described a dialogical approach as something that “does not deflect discourse from its actual power to mean in real ideological life, an approach where objectivity of understanding is lined with dialogic vigor and a deeper penetration into discourse itself.”<sup>95</sup> He argued it is within the power of language and communication itself to surpass power, ideology, and even objectivity. Through dialogical exchanges people may seek, discover, and create new meanings. In this way, dialogue can be used to expose and critique underlying assumptions about power and its uses. This sounds like a promising start as it addresses the power of language in discourse. However, to access such presuppositions when we are working with people from very different interpretive frames requires more analysis into the context of multicultural dialogues.

While dialogue offers some insight for re-evaluating multiculturalism as an ideal, it is important to note the actual conversations to take place within a plural society will be in the public sphere. The public sphere is an undefined space where multiple conversations can take place simultaneously. Charles Taylor describes it as:

A common space in which the members of society are deemed to meet through a variety of media: print, electronic, and also face-to-face encounters; to discuss matters of common interest; and thus to be able to form a common mind about these. I say 'a common space' because although the media are multiple, as are the exchanges that take place in them, they are deemed to be in principle intercommunicating.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Mikhail Mikhaïlovich Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Texas: The University of Texas Press, 2004), 352.

<sup>96</sup> Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Duke University Press, 2004), 83.

Taylor describes public discourse as occupying a space concerned with the exertion of authority but it is not a practice of power itself.<sup>97</sup> Taylor's analysis of the public sphere is useful to develop an understanding of multiculturalism on two fronts. One is that the dialogicness inferred by Sachar and Parekh now has a bit more clarity and precision. Public dialogues take place over various media, by various participants, and over undefined lengths of time. The second strength is that such dialogism is connected to individual struggles for recognition, which is an important issue for diverse societies, as has been demonstrated by Tully. While multiculturalism is framed as a paragon of diversity, it often is restricted by its legal, political framework, as well as its underlying presuppositions and cultural baggage.

In order to consider dialogue and multiculturalism, one ought to consider how diversity is expressed and communicated dialogically. Lisette Dillon, for example, notes that for a space to be truly dialogical, it cannot limit people in their search for self-identity:

Thus, while some spaces may seem to operate dialogically (because they are interactive), they are, in effect, 'monologic' if they work to restrict a young person's capacity to engage in open and honest dialogue about him or herself. In sum, what makes a space "dialogic" is that it includes the opportunity to engage in fruitful conversations that support the ability of individuals to conceive of themselves in many different ways.<sup>98</sup>

Multiculturalism cannot simply allow plurality in the same space, it must also allow for diverse expressions of identity. Dillon argues such expression must be a part of fruitful conversations so true interactions promote positive encounters instead of merely providing

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<sup>97</sup> Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 83.

<sup>98</sup> Lisette Dillon, "Writing the Self: The Emergence of a Dialogical Space" *Narrative Inquiry* 12.2 (2011): 219.

space for any kind of interaction. People should not be constrained or confined in their self-exploration of identity or in the way they express their identity.

Habermas avers, suggesting the public sphere has a different function; it developed historically as a break from political controls and it currently serves as a space for people to be critical of the government. Like in Taylor's model, this allows for self-expression to take place on the political realm without necessarily any ties to formal power structures.

Nonetheless, the democratic arrangement of parliamentary elections continues to count on the liberal fictions of a public sphere in civil society. The expectations that still exercise a normative influence on the citizen's role as voter are a social-psychological mirror image of those conditions under which a public of rationally debating private people once assumed critical and legislative functions. It is expected that the voter, provided with a certain degree of knowledge and critical capacity, might take an interested part in public discussions so that he might help discover what can serve as the standard for right and just political action in rational form and with the general interest in mind.<sup>99</sup>

Therefore the public sphere is not simply a means of self-expression or interaction with other citizens. It also serves as a means of participation in political processes. Habermas calls for a certain degree of knowledge and rationality to define the norms of public discourse. He argues that this normalizing discourse must be based on what he terms communicative action. Where public reasoning is based upon norms of discourse that emphasize authenticity as well as expression and comprehension.<sup>100</sup> Further implications of Habermas' communicative action will be considered in Chapter Three, for now we will explore the contours of a dialogical space as a context for multiculturalism.

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<sup>99</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 211-212.

<sup>100</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. William Rehg (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 3-4.

For Tariq Modood, dialogue theory has a ready-made foundation in multiculturalism, as pluralism in a shared space naturally compels communication. Modood sees the strength of multiculturalism to be its ability to incorporate difference into a cohesive whole. However, he goes further and notes that difference has to be dealt with at an ethnic or communal level, as well as at an individual level.<sup>101</sup> Modood states that our political theory has to be based upon a tripartite foundation: that difference is understood as a part of the whole, a positive force for society, and as relevant at an individual level:

Citizenship is not a monistic identity that is completely apart from or transcends other identities important to citizens; in the way that the theory – though not always the practice – of French republicanism demands. The plurality is ever present and each part of the plurality has a right to be a part of the whole and to speak up for itself and for its vision of the whole. As the parties to these dialogues are many, not just two, the process may be described as multilogical. The multilogues allow for views to qualify each other, overlap, synthesize, modify one's own view in the light of having to co-exist with that of others', hybridize, allow new adjustments to be made, new conversations to take place.<sup>102</sup>

Here Modood articulates how plurality and dialogue are interrelated. Modood rightly notes a limitation in the term 'dialogue' in that it denotes a discussion between two agents. When discussing societal conversations there are often various actors at work simultaneously, thus the term “multilogue” is used to emphasize the cacophony of political actors and discussions taking place at any given time.<sup>103</sup> However, Modood also notes identity is not stagnant or monolithic. Through discourse one's identity may change as it has the option of synthesis or hybridization. Because of such fluctuations in identity and such complex

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<sup>101</sup> Tariq Modood, *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 39-40.

<sup>102</sup> Tariq Modood, “A Basis for and Two Obstacles in the Way of a Multiculturalist Coalition,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 59.1 (2008): 49.

<sup>103</sup> Although, for consistency I will use the term dialogue throughout this thesis even though I recognize there may be more than two participants in any given discussion.

multilogues that all take place in the public sphere translation is a useful analytical device to critically analyse diversity in the public sphere. This is because translation itself must fluctuate while at the same time can serve as a focal point of intersection between many components of an exchange simultaneously.<sup>104</sup> Before we delve too deeply into the intricacies of translation, though, let us return to James Tully and his use of dialogue for multiculturalism.

While Modood focuses on the notion of dialogue itself, James Tully considers what kind of dialogue is the best fit for multiculturalism. Tully argues that dialogue can help minority cultures obtain the recognition they seek, if it adheres to certain guiding principles. For one, dialogue must incorporate mutual understanding between minority groups and other groups:

participation in these open practices of dialogue (practices whose norms of recognition must also be open to negotiation) must also help to generate a sense of mutual understanding and trust among the contesting partners and an attachment to the system of governance under dispute, even among those members who do not always achieve the recognition they seek.<sup>105</sup>

Even if political goals are not met dialogue is an important part of political engagement. However, Tully does not stop at articulating the need for dialogue, or even certain guidelines for promoting an ideal dialogue. Instead, he offers a deep analysis of power dynamics within Western societies and he concludes that the emphasis has to be on more than mere communication, but that we need negotiation.

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<sup>104</sup> We will consider the motion of translation in Chapter Four, section 4.8 “Translation and Appropriation.”

<sup>105</sup> Tully, *Public Philosophy In a New Key*, 292.

This is why he turns the notion of dialogue, it directly relates to power dynamics in that having a say in how power is exercised in a democracy is an essential aspect of citizenship.<sup>106</sup> Much like Kymlicka who argues that multiculturalism requires a negotiation to address historical mistreatments of minority groups and as a process of delineating the terms of integration, Tully turns to negotiation as an important aspect of the dialogical model for approaching issues which plague multiculturalism.

Tully turns to negotiation for several reasons. For one, he notes that various aspects of governance must be on the negotiation table which commonly are not. For example, to define citizenship we must have input from the government, those seeking citizenship, as well as current citizens. Under this condition alone can we justify the popular notion that citizens of a democratic state are free: “So, engaging in the agonistic and interminable public discussions and negotiations, both *within* and *over* the conditions of citizenship, constitutes and sustains our identities as 'free people'.”<sup>107</sup> Negotiations are therefore able to influence and impact all parties involved, the dominant and non-dominant alike. Tully opines this would lead to a reciprocal relationship between groups: “As governors and governed participate in the intersubjective and negotiated relations of power and coordinated conduct, they gradually acquire a specific form of subjection or practical identity, a more or less habitual way of thinking and acting within the assignment relations and languages of reciprocal recognition.”<sup>108</sup> The end goal for Tully is reciprocal recognition. As negotiation requires that one recognize the other in order to make

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<sup>106</sup> “Citizenship in a democracy means being in a dialogue with those in power concerning how power is exercised.” Tully, *Public Philosophy In a New Key*, 145.

<sup>107</sup> Tully, *Public Philosophy In a New Key*, 164.

<sup>108</sup> Tully, *Public Philosophy In a New Key*, 16.

concessions, Tully ties the politics of recognition into a dialogical theory of the public sphere where diversity, dialogue, and power dynamics intersect.

However, framing multiculturalism as a dialogical process which hinges on negotiation does have limitations. While reciprocal recognition is desirable and power dynamics do have to be addressed, looking to negotiation may lead us to think in terms of outcome-based dialogue where only productive discourse is deemed worthwhile. This may in fact burden dialogue with the narrowing and reductive tendencies we see attributed to legalism by Brown and Halley because there would no longer be any need for expansive open-ended dialogues. Negotiations frame dialogical encounters in a manner that do not necessitate shared bonds that prosper after the negotiations are finished. So, for on-going projects such as personal identity, social cohesion, and social imaginaries other kinds of dialogue will be needed in addition to negotiation.

From this analysis it has become clear that the dialogical model serves as a means of understanding how diversity can operate in a shared space as well as how power dynamics can be addressed in a multicultural model. It also serves as a critique of rigid narrow multicultural projects that leave problematic frames unquestioned. Our next task is to delve deeper into how translation can inform our analysis of multiculturalism. For this, I will turn to hermeneutics as different aspects of the language and metaphors of multiculturalism will be critically evaluated so that we may appreciate a more expansive and open-ended interplay between different ideals.

## 2.6 Axioms of Multiculturalism

Proponents of a dialogical model for multiculturalism often overlook the role of shared understanding through interpretation. This is certainly the case for Tully who (in contrast to Charles Taylor and Jürgen Habermas) argues interpretation is not necessary for public discourse.<sup>109</sup> He claims understanding and interpretation are two different cognitive functions which may overlap but are not always interrelated. Yet, if one is going to analyse the ideological aspects of multiculturalism, as well as the political struggles it encompasses, the field of hermeneutics will prove a useful theoretical frame.

Consider, for example, Bhaktin's claim that ideology and language are entwined in discourse: "We are taking language not as a system of abstract grammatical categories, but rather language conceived as ideologically saturated, language as a world view, even as a concrete opinion, insuring a *maximum* of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life."<sup>110</sup> Language itself is fused with axioms, presuppositions, and frames for understanding and interpreting the world. It informs how we experience the world, and to encourage mutual understanding we need to recognize the dynamism of language. Such an approach to language lends itself to hermeneutical analysis where the meaning and the underlying worldview behind the discourse is considered. An example of such an approach will be discussed when we consider the metaphors of multiculturalism below.

Metaphors are useful for analysis because they offer insight into two facets of communication. First, they provide a gateway to explore hidden presuppositions, expose

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<sup>109</sup> Tully, *Public Philosophy In a New Key*, 63-64.

<sup>110</sup> Bhaktin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 271.



limitations of thinking and offer interpretive insight. Secondly, metaphors offer a way to explore new ideas and novel cognitive constructs. In *Metaphors We Live By*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argue: “Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.”<sup>111</sup> This places metaphors at the very heart of our cognitive and interpretative frameworks of the world. Metaphors are commonplace and associated with apprehension, for example: “Media sometimes use this type of expression to describe a topic not so familiar to the audience. By bridging the unfamiliar topic with common knowledge about the vehicle, a story becomes easier to understand.”<sup>112</sup> Lakoff and Johnson also argue that metaphors are typically considered within the domain language alone, however, they urge us to seek the action and experience of metaphors, a useful principle for analyzing political concepts expressed metaphorically.<sup>113</sup> Once we are able to establish that metaphors are constructs in shaping our descriptions and interpretations of reality it should become apparent that they are significant to the political domain.

Lori Bougher discusses how metaphors are useful in political discourse because of the tendency to utilize abstract, complex concepts which serve as a communicative tool by both politicians and citizens.<sup>114</sup> However, like other aspects of rhetoric and communication, a metaphor can be a double-edged sword, so to speak. This is because while some may use a metaphor to highlight a certain point, how it will be interpreted and

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<sup>111</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 3.

<sup>112</sup> Xu Xu, “Interpreting Metaphorical Statements” *Journal of Pragmatics* 42 (2010): 1622.

<sup>113</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 3.

<sup>114</sup> Lori D. Bougher, “The Case for Metaphor in Political Reasoning and Cognition,” in *Political Psychology* 33.1 (2012): 148.

what exact impact it will have on others is not always clear. This process can happen in a benign manner or it can be manipulated to deliberately accentuate certain truths over others. This is because metaphors “provide frames of reference that highlight some elements of comparison, while masking others.”<sup>115</sup> Such masking can be to one's favour, or be the result of competing interests.

Take, for example, a common description of a multicultural society: the mosaic metaphor. In this metaphor different cultures come together to make one picture – which sounds idyllic – yet we can pull different interpretations from this construct. For instance, what is often meant by this metaphor is diverse pieces of society exist harmoniously in a cohesive whole. A mosaic, after all, is a pattern or a picture that is the result of bringing pieces of different shapes, sizes, and colours together. However, what may also come from this metaphor is an emphasis on the whole. Consider the outcome of a mosaic as a picture; static with a predominant and predetermined pattern as to what the picture is supposed to look like, supposed to *be* like.<sup>116</sup> This comes into play when one hears an argument along the lines of: “Canada is a Christian country.” Other religions are present in the Canadian mosaic, but they do not provide the overall picture of Canada, only one religion/culture gets that place of prominence. In this way it becomes apparent that “metaphors both shape and constrain political understanding.”<sup>117</sup> Beneath the apparent surface meaning of a political metaphor may lie a disruptive or disconcerting emphasis as well. In order to

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<sup>115</sup> Bougher, “The Case for Metaphor,” 147.

<sup>116</sup> Ryan discusses how past metaphors for culture were detrimental in that they endorsed rigid and static understandings of identity. Minority groups’ cultures were once described as a “compartment” or as “walls.” *Multicultiphobia*, 12-13.

<sup>117</sup> Bougher, “The Case for Metaphor,” 157.

address this issue more deeply, the mosaic metaphor and some notions associated with it will be analysed further.

The mosaic metaphor was developed by John Porter in *Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada*. Here he wrote an influential critique of Canadian policy and how ethnic groups are impacted by their socio-economic status. However, mosaic has become widespread and is used for many multicultural projects or analyses of multiculturalism broadly speaking.<sup>118</sup> While it is true the metaphor may be used less frequently in certain current political discussions than it was in the past, without a careful examination of why the metaphor can be problematic and without offering alternatives to the mosaic metaphor we would leave a cognitive void as to our shared descriptions and constructions concerning diversity in society. Furthermore, the term does have resonance for merely describing Canada's plural society; when depicting the religions of Canada, Pashaura Singh argues that for the diverse Sikh groups, “The ideal before them is integration into the Canadian mosaic without the loss of their cultural and religious identity.”<sup>119</sup> The mosaic metaphor here is used almost innocuously. It is not something which is explicated or scrutinized like the term multiculturalism is – it is something some people simply want to be a part of. This is the manner in which metaphors can become

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<sup>118</sup> The Mosaic is a common term for multicultural festivals throughout Canada, for example the annual Mosaic South Asian Heritage festival in Mississauga or the Regina Mosaic Festival of Cultures. As such it is a prominent term in the Canadian consciousness for diversity. Also we may find the metaphor in studies on Canada's diversity like in: Ninette Kelly and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010); Janice Gross Stein et al. *Uneasy Partners: Multiculturalism and Rights in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2007); Statistics Canada, *Canada's Ethnocultural Mosaic, 2006*, (Census. Ottawa. Catalogue No. 97-562-X, 2008); or Richard F. Day *Multiculturalism and the History of Canadian Diversity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

<sup>119</sup> Pashaura Singh, “Sikhs,” in *The Religions of Canada*, eds. Jamie C. Scott (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 342.

quite nebulous. It is a common metaphor used and repeated throughout multiculturalism discourse and its frequency has become an obscuring cloak. It is the mosaic metaphor that innocuously remains unburdened while multiculturalism itself is frequently criticized and dissected.

Although, it is not fair to say the mosaic metaphor has not been criticized at all. Reginald Bibby describes Canadians as fragmented and without a “commitment to shared ideology but rather a tenuous willingness to coexist.”<sup>120</sup> He goes so far as to say, Canada is an “unassembled mosaic.”<sup>121</sup> Elsewhere Bibby argues that census data infers the notion of a religious mosaic is largely a myth, Canada remains predominantly Christian and the assimilative forces of the dominant culture prevent any mosaic from maintaining its form.<sup>122</sup> Society is more like a huge ocean with a few small islands in it, eroding away.

For Bibby, the mosaic metaphor is problematic because it fails to accurately describe Canada. The metaphor is not apt as it brings together two ideas that really have no business interacting. This is very different than Taylor's description of society: “deep diversity,” or Paul Bramadat's analysis of census data when he argues that Canada has to prepare for greater religious diversity.<sup>123</sup> Not to mention the many Canadians who articulate discontentment with marginalization and misrecognition by the dominant

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<sup>120</sup> Reginald W. Bibby, *Mosaic Madness: The Poverty and Potential of Life in Canada* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1990), 95.

<sup>121</sup> Bibby, *Mosaic Madness*, 95.

<sup>122</sup> Reginald Bibby, “Canada's Mythical Religious Mosaic: Some Census Findings,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 39.2 (2000): 235-239.

<sup>123</sup> Paul Bramadat, “Religion in Canada 2017: Are We Prepared?” *Canadian Issues* (2001): 119-122. The study Bramadat refers to in this article by Statistics Canada has been updated to state that the growth of minority religions will be even greater than first predicted <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-551-x/2010001/hl-fs-eng.htm>.

political and cultural forces in the public sphere. So while Bibby does criticize the mosaic metaphor he does so merely (and problematically) on descriptive terms, yet he does not address the central question, the problem with describing society as a mosaic and the interpretations and meanings such a description propagates.

Some argue that whatever the statistics say, there is a problem if we define Canada as just a collection of different cultures. This would imply we are merely a sum of our parts. Consider Bissoondath's argument that multiculturalism can foster a superficial tolerance that alienates the Other, while projects that promote acceptance and belonging are neglected.<sup>124</sup> Superficiality then, overrides multicultural efforts as we focus on festivals, or the dress and food of the Other while deep recognition remains largely unpursued.<sup>125</sup> Of course, multiculturalism does not have to be solely superficial. We have seen Tully, Kymlicka, and others describe multiculturalism as a means of protecting human rights and allowing minorities to participate in the public sphere on their own terms – these are deeply potent ideas. Furthermore, simply being in a pluralistic society has an effect upon people.<sup>126</sup> While Bissoondath argues that multiculturalism is a failed ideology, I would

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<sup>124</sup> Neil Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 2002), 193.

<sup>125</sup> Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions*, 84-85. Bissoondath's critique, while contested by some, does suite the mosaic metaphor quite well. For example, a mosaic as a descriptor for society could be dismissed as superficial and it places the emphasis is on living next to one another, not on interaction and meaningful exchange.

<sup>126</sup> Yolande Cohen and Yann Scioldo-Zürcher study Jewish migration in Quebec and show how multifaceted the impact of new Jewish groups can be on society. Established Jewish communities strive to grow through migration, new migrants are compelled to interact with new forms of Judaism as well as non-Jews. All the while the host society itself changes as the population of its minority religious communities evolve and grow. These findings leave them to claim: "that both migrants and members of host social structures underwent wide-reaching cultural reconfiguration" in: "Maghredbu Jeeewish Migrations and Religious Marriage in Paris and Monréal, 1954-1980," in *Religion in the Public Sphere: Canadian Case Studies*, eds. Solange Lefebvre and Lori G. Beaman (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 121.

rather we redescribe it – starting with its metaphors – to see what other possibilities are available to us.<sup>127</sup>

A mosaic allows difference to exist side by side without encroachment, without a challenging of the overall picture by a single piece. The dominant frame for the picture is not in negotiation with the smaller bits as to what the overall image should look like. If there is a pattern, by design it is not to be broken. However, there are alternate, better descriptions of a pluralistic society. Descriptions that are dynamic and negotiated where the inclusion of different cultures is valued, where engaging in political processes and public discourse by all is not simply allowed but encouraged. With these notions in mind, the mosaic metaphor is not simply ambiguous or inarticulate, it deters us from better constructs. And so, we need to construct more suited frames to understand diverse societies and escape this cognitive trap.

## **2.7 Models of Multiculturalism in Metaphoric Juxtaposition**

Since we have deconstructed the mosaic metaphor and considered its limitations we are left with a void we can now begin to fill. Ricoeur argues metaphors are potent and powerful linguistic tools. Frequently, the tension within multiculturalism is presented in limiting language. Either a strident defence of particularity is presented, where an individual's identity must be valued over the needs of society. Alternatively, there may be a call to unity in which all people should subsume to one vision for society. I would argue the dialectic

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<sup>127</sup> Bissoondath argues “multiculturalism has failed us” in: *Selling Illusions*, xii. Both Richard Rorty and William Connolly explore the potency of redescription as a response to ideologies and social constructions as we shall see in: Chapter Five, section 5.7 “Irony and Agonism.”

tension that comes from having difference in the same space can be analysed through metaphoric descriptions of society. Metaphors are especially useful for considering visions for society as they can be crucial in meaning-making projects as they often denote different levels of nuance to various concepts. Paul Ricoeur considers how metaphors are created. He turns to a basic attribute of metaphors: that they bring different ideas into the same space.<sup>128</sup> This jointure of divergence allows for each notion to be thought of in a new manner, it ‘re-describes reality’ in a new and novel way.<sup>129</sup> Thus, from a juxtaposition of differences being equated, and the subsequent redescription of the world which follows, a new meaning is developed. This meaning-making moment Ricoeur describes as a twist, and it is the centre of comprehending metaphors.<sup>130</sup>

So if we leave the mosaic metaphor behind we ought to develop new means of describing society, new live metaphors to allow a dialectic of meaning to unfold. For such an endeavour I will analyse the thinkers and theories about multiculturalism we have already discussed alongside new imagery for pluralistic societies in order to discern how we can use the metaphoric disposition to better understand and analyse competing visions for society.

In this chapter we considered how Kymlicka and Beyer think of multiculturalism as a means of nation-building. It is part of the project that ties liberal societies to such notions as human rights or national and historical struggles. As such, a vision based upon diversity calls for a cohesive whole which provides space for some difference. Perhaps a

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<sup>128</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of the Metaphor*, trans. Robert Czerny, Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 230.

<sup>129</sup> Ricoeur, *The Rule*, 22.

<sup>130</sup> Ricoeur, *The Rule*, 98-99.

minimally tended garden would work to describe this kind of society. Plants seed and grow in amongst one another, overgrow even into each other's spaces. Sometimes there is competition – for light, water, or desirable soil, yet the goal is to find a balance or a harmony between the competing plants, not the eradication of one or the other. Meanwhile, plants (and cultures) do get to cross-fertilize, they grow and change with the seasons, yet there would still be a recognizable distinction between a daisy and a lily. This metaphor also complements Tully's presentation of diversity in terms of competition and negotiation where each plant has to have a role in defining the whole garden, else they will not flourish.

However, a garden metaphor does bring with it certain concerning questions. Such as to what extent should it be tended, as in, to what degree should different cultures be allowed to express themselves in public spaces? Or, who gets to tend the garden? Is this a collaborative effort by society as a whole, or do we leave this kind of work to the government or courts alone? Furthermore, if we are going to think of society as a garden, this also evokes the imagery of unwanted plants, namely weeds. As weeds are a problem for any garden, so too are they a problem for a garden metaphor. To describe the undesirables of society as weeds has some historical precedent, and the notion of weeding out certain members of society is not new. Yet, there are different interpretations to be had, weeds could be seen as current undesirable aspects of a society that ought to be plucked out – terrorists, perhaps, are a modern weed. Now we can all agree that terrorism is deplorable but what kind of thinking does equating people to weeds lead to? Plucking a weed out of the garden has a finality to it, the weed is uprooted so that no trace of it remains (otherwise it will simply grow back). In practice, this could mean deporting terrorists. Otherwise one could take away one's citizenship if one is found guilty of terrorism –



another problematic, permanent solution to a “weed of society.”<sup>131</sup> Otto Santa Ana is critical of using the term “weed out” to refer to any person as it is degrading and a means of presenting someone as without any merit.<sup>132</sup> Yet a weed refers to *any* plant that is undesirable, it is a term without a strict referent. What is a weed in one context may not be in another. Perhaps this is where an opening for redefining our weed problem is to be found. While dandelions are often considered a weed they are in fact quite nutritious, and an important ingredient in several salads – or as a side dish to other meals. However, balancing different interpretations for a garden metaphor may prove to be a difficult endeavour.

Perhaps the garden metaphor is too limited in its ability to evoke the ideal pluralistic society. An alternative, then, is to describe society as a musical chord. A chord consists (most often) of three notes which are heard simultaneously. Each note has its own sound, but played together create a harmony in the literal sense of the word. We can devise different chords with different note combinations and a great deal of creativity is required to bring different notes and chords together. Each culture, then, has a distinct sound – each has something to offer the whole – and when cultures do come together in a well-functioning society the result is delightful, musical, and gratifying. For this to occur, we need the different cultures to come together at some level. After all, a single note does not make a melody. Recall Taylor who argues we ought to regard diversity as an intrinsic value in “The Politics of Recognition.” He states that as a society we must consider minorities as

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<sup>131</sup> A private member's bill was proposed to the House of Commons that stated any Canadian charged with terrorism who had dual citizenship would lose their Canadian citizenship. To date no such law has passed but the fact that such an action was considered by Canada's legislative branch is concerning.

<sup>132</sup> Otto Santa Ana, *Brown Tide Rising: Metaphors of Latinos in Contemporary American Public Discourse* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 89.

different, but still equal to any other citizen.<sup>133</sup> He builds this argument off the premise that diversity is a valuable asset to any given society. Taylor considers the underlying assumptions we bring to diversity and equality as the foundational tenants for political theory. He argues that if we do so, we may produce a harmonious society.

This understanding of the relationship between diversity and equality has been challenged by Brian Barry. Barry grounds his critique of multiculturalism in the legal sphere throughout his analysis of religious groups who seek exemptions from laws. For Barry, a law should be applicable to all citizens, no matter what their religious or cultural background may be. Equality means treating people the same, therefore exemptions or special laws result in treating people differently. Barry's approach to equality does not focus on the sound of the notes a piano makes or the chords that come from combining them, instead he focuses on the keys; they are uniform, indistinct and to be treated in the same manner despite their differences. Parekh critiques Barry for failing to value and recognize that different people need to be treated differently in order for the system to be fair. This is because laws impact different people differently. Therefore simply recognizing that difference exists is not enough, we need to have a system where difference is given a prominent role in the makeup of society. If we return to our metaphor of harmony once more, in a song there are many notes present but often the individuality of each note will get lost in the music. One has to have a finely trained ear to hear distinct notes in a cacophony of instruments all playing at once. While diversity is important in this model

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<sup>133</sup> Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," 43.

for society the uniqueness of the individual components that make up the diversity are in danger of becoming lost.

How we define equality is a key question for multiculturalism. Such debate takes place within a public sphere that is normative, hierarchical, and embedded in certain cultural practices. This limitation becomes a cognitive boundary for exploring societal issues, such as deep, basic questions as to what our values are.<sup>134</sup> However, this is not merely a limitation on cognitive expressions and explorations, it is also limiting the potential for a nuanced model for our understanding of society and cultural interactions.<sup>135</sup> Again, the question remains how we are going to describe society in a manner that allows for the dynamic, evolving, interactions between different groups. So how might we describe society in light of an assertion that difference must be visible? In the music metaphor difference is present, but how to deal with it is unclear. A kaleidoscope, then, has various colours working together to make a beautiful image and this could serve as a better metaphor. The colours and colour arrangements are not fixed but twist and turn as the light refracts in different ways. However, if we are going to discuss a kaleidoscope it is important to recognize that the colours do not shift on their own, it is a specific alignment of glass and mirrors that maintains the effect. As such, there is an overarching controlling element which informs how different cultures interact and are perceived. If people's identities are represented by colours in a kaleidoscope then what tools we use to emphasize certain aspects of culture over others is an important avenue to pursue.

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<sup>134</sup> Brown and Halley, "Introduction," 19.

<sup>135</sup> Klassen and Bender, *After Pluralism*, 119.

The tools we currently use to define the role of diversity has been criticized by Wendy Brown and Janet Halley. They argue that the method for deciding which colours interact in whichever manner (the legal system of rights) is too confining and reductionistic. This is because every concern or identity marker has to be presented in terms of legal rights, even though that kind of language lends itself toward some kinds of expressions and not others. Further problematizing this issue is Shachar who demonstrates that even well intentioned efforts to promote diversity can lead to oppression, such as when minority groups allow for their authority figures to enforce traditions which are patriarchal, or harmful to any subgroup within the community. Thus the frame which was devised to allow diversity to flourish in fact stifles certain persecuted people. Another consideration for a kaleidoscope as a metaphor for multicultural societies is that while the lights and colours do move, they do not fully interact. They remain separate and distinct, which does not allow for hybridity and synchronicity. This metaphor may be too rigid for dynamic, complex current societies.

An alternative would be to turn to another artistic metaphor which would change the overall impression we are left with. A painter's pallet, for example, captures the concept of fluidity and hybridity. Where different colours exist side by side and again maintain their uniqueness, but as the pallet is rolled or turned one way or another we see some colours bleed into one another. New colours are created – blue and yellow make green. Further, there remains hybrid, interstitial, liminal spaces where colours are only partially formed, where cultures overlap but are not completely compromised. New colours are added and some fade in time. By thinking about multiculturalism this way, the dynamic, fluid, permeable aspects of culture are emphasized. Often this fluidity is what is implied

by dialogical models, where change happens, and yet contrasts are exposed, even interact with one another. However, if fluidity is over-emphasized the cohesion and overall vision for society can easily become lost. The structure and value of maintaining a static vision for society is not something people are ready to abandon all together. Or maybe the metaphor lends itself to the opposite reading. It may be in line with the common trope of a melting pot where difference is fused into one entity, where all the colours are mixed together to the point where one ends up with an entirely greyish-brown pallet instead of a colourful variety. It quickly becomes clear, then, that any metaphor for a diverse society can emphasize certain admirable qualities we ought to pursue, but are also in danger of being interpreted in such a manner that what makes a diverse society special is at risk of being lost.

Jonathan Z. Smith argues that recognizing differences necessarily leads to an evaluation where one group is placed in a position of favour over another.<sup>136</sup> To counteract this tendency I have analysed society as a garden, a chord, a kaleidoscope, and a painter's pallet. All these metaphors highlight certain attributes of the relationship between particularity and unity or the tension with having difference in the same space. Society is a complex entity that can be defined and interpreted different ways. Moreover, our ideological framework for addressing this complexity can be expressed through metaphors – however, a heavy reliance on any one metaphor to describe the nuance, complexity, and fluidity of society is dangerous. Instead, it would be more fruitful to consider models for society in a manner that they play off one another, highlighting different aspects of our

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<sup>136</sup> Smith, “What a Difference Difference Makes,” 253.

frames for addressing diversity and social cohesion so that our meaning-making metaphors are not overly constrained by self-imposed cognitive boundaries. It appears as though the perfect metaphor for diversity is elusive, yet through emphasizing various images and evoking different aesthetics we can point to the kinds of understandings of pluralism we seek. To use metaphorical dialectic provides both insight into interpretations of multiculturalism and potential to open up new ways of thinking about society. From this dialect it is clear we should have trouble describing people as bound or constrained by their culture. We also now have trouble placing individuals and cultures into stagnant or rigid definitions and relationships to others. We gain, however, the ability to recognize the contingent, fluctuating nature of society and political processes.

What becomes clear from this analysis is that the language we use to describe (and subsequently redescribe) multiculturalism is nuanced and with high stakes. Furthermore, a focus on interpretation theory will be useful in deciding how to consider public constructs, because how we interpret our visions for society makes all the difference. Multiculturalism as a term with various uses and associative concepts needs to be examined in a manner that recognizes the potential and influence of language. This is because multiculturalism has developed from a basic tension between various political ideals. Debates concerning universalism and particularism or diversity and equality frame our understanding of what it means to be a multicultural society. As a political concept, multiculturalism encourages certain kinds of political discourses and discourages others. Political struggles for recognition are an important part of multicultural discourse. However, these struggles may be complicit in societal, institutional, or in-group forms of discrimination. As a result the very foundational constructs for the polity and society must be open for dialogue between

the dominant and the politically engaged minority cultures. However, any such dialogue is burdened by difficult interpretations and descriptive metaphors that do not account for the dynamic discourses we need to address the deep divides between cultures. In order to address political power divisions and to allow for meaningful projects of intercultural discourse to develop we cannot ignore the role of interpretation in public discourse. It is through a hermeneutic of the public sphere that communication and joint endeavours to define such basic aspects of society such as the public good, the role of a citizen, or public discourse can fully develop.

## Chapter Three: **Identity**

### **3.1 Politics and Identity**

How we understand models for a pluralistic society is intricately linked with how we understand identity. As we have seen, multiculturalism lends itself to certain notions concerning society as a whole, but it also has an impact on our conception of a person at an individual level. If we perceive humanity as composed of individualistic, autonomous, and rational beings our constructs of the political sphere and public discourse will reflect such a view. Public discourse will be designed as reasoned debates and rights will be construed for the individual's benefit. If instead we understand identity as fluid, something that can change depending on one's interaction with surroundings, narratives, histories, cultures, and communities, it will impact how we frame the public sphere. This would mean that how we construct a discursive space would be much more nuanced and contingent. Translation, then, serves a valuable role of bringing discourse to a level where reasoned debates and insight can emerge from a nebulous public sphere. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how certain thinkers have come to describe the construction of identity as an ongoing, dynamic process and what this means for our social imaginaries.

Identity is a part of many political debates because it can serve as a catalyst for many political issues. In Chapter Two we considered how diversity and political recognition are addressed by multiculturalism. Sujit Choudhry, however, argues we do not do enough to acknowledge the political struggles for recognition by different communities, and that this failing leaves us vulnerable. Choudhry notes that if we do not course correct



one (or several) group(s) will feel isolated from the discussions and consequently may attempt to undermine the political workings of society as much as possible.

In the absence of trust and expectations of reciprocity across members of different ethnocultural groups, it may become impossible to reach political decisions on important questions of public policy such as the environment, health care, and the economy, especially if the burdens and benefits of those policies are – or are perceived to be – distributed unevenly along ethnic lines. If political decisions are made, they may be condemned as discriminatory. In other cases, political debates on routine policy issues can escalate quickly into political dramas of respect and recognition that are removed far from the actual interests at play, and that are out of proportion to the significance of the issue at hand. Every issue is assessed through the lens of ethnocultural identity.<sup>1</sup>

Choudhry describes a situation when portions of the polity do not identify with the political sphere. He argues this is especially dangerous when there are prominent ethnocultural divides within a society. I would add, however, that distinct religious identities can be a powerful means of division as well.<sup>2</sup> Division between constituents and political processes can also be expressed through other important facets for selfhood and identity, the environment, ethics, or broad visions for society.

As we shall see, Charles Taylor posits there are many important sources for selfhood from which one can derive meaning for one's life. If this is the case, to focus solely on ethnocultural divisions is limited. The symptoms of a growing tension between an unrecognized self and politics are well observed by Choudhry. Individuals will evaluate all political practices through their perceived disconnect and their condemnation of

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<sup>1</sup> Sujit Choudhry, “Bridging Comparative Politics and Comparative Constitutional Law” in *Constitutional Design for Divided Societies*, ed. Sujit Choudhry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Consider, for example, Mennonite groups which have sworn off the wider society as a whole or religiously fueled political debates such as the right to have an abortion or same-sex marriages.

political decisions will escalate. If this is the case, Taylor argues, people may furthermore develop “counter-identities”; an attitude of defiance or separation from the dominant society as a result of their being neglected in the public sphere.<sup>3</sup> Such practices would be detrimental to political engagement. Later in this chapter I shall consider Habermas’ argument that engaging in political discussions is a central facet of citizenship and a key element in validating democratic practices. If too many citizens are not recognized, or are misrecognized, the function and validity of much of our political systems are put in jeopardy.

In order to address issues of recognition and to reframe our approach to the public sphere we must consider the self of a political actor. As it stands, liberalism dominates the political discourse in Europe and North America. Liberalism coincides with an understanding of people as individual, rational beings who are by default free, and so one can only limit said freedom through political institutions with sufficient justification. Isaiah Berlin argues that liberal concepts of freedom are interlaced with particular understandings of selfhood and are subject to manipulation: “conceptions of freedom directly derive from views of what constitutes a self, a person, a man. Enough manipulation of the definition of man, and freedom can be made to mean whatever the manipulator wishes. Recent history has made it only too clear that the issue is not merely academic.”<sup>4</sup> Here Berlin raises two

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Taylor, “What is Secularism?” in *Secularism, Religion and Multicultural Citizenship* ed. Levey Braham and Tariq Modood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), xiv.

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty,” in *Liberty: Incorporating ‘Four Essays on Liberty’* eds. Isaiah Berlin and Henry Hardy (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2002), 182.

distinct but important points. First, freedom and selfhood are interconnected. Secondly, they are both subject to manipulation.

Berlin argues that there are different understandings of freedom, both positive and negative which are often – by elision – presented as one concept.<sup>5</sup> If freedom can be misconstrued, it would make sense that any understandings of the self can be as well. This is because freedom is often a central concept for political struggles for recognition: the desire to be free to be oneself, to express oneself, or to practice a certain kind of life requires freedom from oppression. Such rhetoric becomes problematic when one considers what a political actor is actually seeking in terms of recognition by the state. Berlin describes how all political struggles are framed as struggles for freedom, though in reality this is not always the case. For Berlin much political struggle is seeking “something akin to, but not itself, freedom; although it entails negative freedom for the entire group, it is more closely related to solidarity, fraternity, mutual understanding, need for association on equal terms, all of which are sometimes – but misleadingly – called social freedom.”<sup>6</sup> While Berlin notes these pursuits are important, it is still relevant to distinguish different political aims from one another, and to put all struggles under the same heading, the “pursuit of freedom,” is misleading.

Consider the connection between selfhood and freedom in terms of expression and political struggles for recognition. Minority groups are often told what they want and what their political goals should be by the dominant society. Berlin describes this phenomenon

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<sup>5</sup> Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty*, 205.

<sup>6</sup> Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty*, 205.

in terms of paradox. The paradox is found in how an individual's freedom to choose is contingent upon the fact that they make choices in a certain manner.<sup>7</sup> For those who do not fit this mould, their political goals and aspirations may be derived from an understanding of selfhood that does not correlate with dominant political conceptions. This is why Berlin takes issue when one equates free, autonomous, rational individuals to all political actors. One need not subscribe to the same kind of rationality or autonomy as that purported by political theorists to have something meaningful to say in the public sphere. Berlin describes such an equating as a "monstrous impersonation" where people are told what they would choose if they were rational beings without engaging those who actually seek recognition.<sup>8</sup> This kind of association between freedom and selfhood becomes even more of a dilemma when we consider other presuppositions on which political theories of selfhood rely. One such presupposition is what autonomy means.<sup>9</sup> Often the designation of people as "free-choosers" hinges upon other understandings of personhood, such as individualism and a particular understanding of reason.

Not only does identity inform politics (and political theory), the reverse is also true. This is because identities can be galvanized into action in the public sphere in an effort to obtain or maintain political power. When a community utilizes its particularity to challenge

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<sup>7</sup> Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty*, 181.

<sup>8</sup> Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty*, 181.

<sup>9</sup> Berlin describes how we understand autonomy can be skewed by arguments like one who coerces another for their own good, this can be done even in the name of freedom. For Berlin's discussion on this see: *Two Concepts of Liberty*, 179-182. For Berlin, autonomy is related to liberty—liberty as not merely the removal of obstacles, but having self-determination and self-control, in: Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty*, 190.

the state in some manner, often this is framed as a human rights debate.<sup>10</sup> Richard Pildes argues that the “most powerful and effective incentives for mobilizing identities” is the competition for influence in the political sphere.<sup>11</sup> This competition for political clout surely relies on an existing identity, however, it also affirms and concretizes a certain portrayal of identity. Political struggles for power often reinforce community ties through the process of a shared struggle, and compels certain kinds of articulation and introspection of a community's identity. Of course, this is not an entirely open-ended process; if political power or practical freedoms are sought, one is not at liberty to present or frame identity in any manner as it has to be done in order to promote political influence. Thus there is a narrowing dimension to political struggles in terms of identity. Pildes describes this process as strategic yet it may have unforeseen consequences, “the structure of political competition both creates incentives to mobilize identities along certain lines rather than others and provides a focal point for the coordination of citizens' strategic choices about how they self-identify.”<sup>12</sup> This focal point for coordinating a group's political action may be relevant and important for the political struggle at hand, but it may not be the best identifier for a particular group.

For example, consider Bhikhu Parekh's discussion of Sikh turbans. He argues that the turban has become more and more a religious requirement for Sikhs while it used to be

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<sup>10</sup> How different cultures can use their unique perspective, worldview, and interpretive frame to challenge, subvert or question the majority will be discussed in Chapter Five, section 5.8 “Religion and Secularism Redefining One Another.”

<sup>11</sup> Richard Pildes, “Ethnic Identity and Democratic Institutions: A Dynamic Perspective” in *Constitutional Design for Divided Societies*, ed. Sujit Choudhry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 177.

<sup>12</sup> Pildes, “Ethnic Identity and Democratic Institutions,” 178.

a cultural, symbolic item.<sup>13</sup> This is due to the turban serving political struggles for recognition where framing an issue as religious affords one a gravitas that a mere cultural practice lacks. Pildes argues that political institutions influence identities by their design and how they function. Furthermore, this implies an accountability on how we construct and construe political systems.<sup>14</sup> We must be vigilant to design political processes which will not have an adverse effect on people's identities, and if they do they should be held accountable on that accord.

To further explore this tension it is important that we recognize the need to relate issues of identity as a significant facet of politics. Such is hindered by the conception that the state is supposed to be a consistent and singular entity, while the populace is an inconsistent cacophony of political actors. As Choudhry notes, "it is not possible for the state to be neutral on every type of ascriptive identity."<sup>15</sup> In fact, the state is rarely neutral when it comes to addressing diversity or what it sees as a failure for some to integrate. This is evident as pluralism is too often presented as a predicament that needs to be rectified. This goes in hand with Lori Beaman and Peter Beyer's argument that Othering difference in society is still a very common practice, "Certainly in the realm of public policy discussions there is a sense that diversity implies a problem and an 'other' that is the source of that problem."<sup>16</sup> Not only is diversity a problem, but so is anyone deemed "Other." As

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<sup>13</sup> Bhikhu Parekh, "Cultural Diversity and Liberal Democracy," in *Democracy Difference and Social Justice* eds. Gurpreet Mahajan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 208.

<sup>14</sup> Pildes, "Ethnic Identity and Democratic Institutions," 201.

<sup>15</sup> Choudhry, "Bridging Comparative Politics," 11.

<sup>16</sup> Lori G. Beaman and Peter Beyer, "Introduction," in *Religion and Diversity in Canada*, eds Lori G. Beaman and Peter Beyer (Boston: Brill, 2008), 2.

such, the blame and resolution must fall upon the heads of the Other and not the dominant society. Othering can be heightened to becoming a source of fear.

The notion of fear relates to Martha Nussbaum's argument that fear and animosity are frequently "a product of ignorance and fantasy propelled by political rhetoric."<sup>17</sup> While this rhetoric is based on ignorance and fantasy, Nussbaum does not deny that it can still be potent, in fact she states throughout *The New Religious Intolerance* that it is a central problem for politics today. Nussbaum asserts that while it is common to project our fears outward onto others, it is an inherently narcissistic act. To be in fear means to be "always relentlessly focussed on the self."<sup>18</sup> As such, how we understand self and selfhood in relation to an Other can help form a formidable response to the problematic politics of fear. If we consider people through the lens of individualism, as Habermas does, we have less means to address this fear. If, instead, we were to develop an understanding of selfhood that is contingent and also interconnected to the Other – a project that Taylor and Ricoeur help set the foundation for – we could reframe diversity so that it is not a "problem" or "fear," but rather an integral part of every person's political identity. However, before we can consider theorists that expand, critique, and complement Habermas' political theory we should look to his key insight into political agents and communicative action.

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<sup>17</sup> Martha Nussbaum, *The New Religious Intolerance: Overcoming the Politics of Fear in an Anxious Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2012), 21.

<sup>18</sup> Nussbaum, *The New Religious Intolerance*, 56.

### **3.2 Habermasian Selfhood: Rational Individualists and Autonomous Agents**

As we shall see in Chapter Four, Habermas raises the issue of translation in the political sphere. Here I am going to consider his constructs of selfhood and public discourse as a precursor to translation. We will consider what kind of people will take part in, and undergo, translation. In his early work Habermas presents the strengths of having reasoned, secular discourse as the template for political dialogue. Later, Habermas comes to question the role of secularism especially in its relation to religion. Before we can get to that though, we ought to consider an important building block for his theory of communicative action: the citizens of the state. It will become apparent that Habermas takes the construct of an autonomous, rational individual to the limits of theoretical benefit (and perhaps beyond). First we shall consider how Habermas himself responds to questions of identity amidst plurality.

Habermas proposes a model where engaged citizens actively take part in political discourse. This is how one accesses political institutions. Habermas calls this “communicative action” where participants seek to understand one another throughout public discourse.<sup>19</sup> This process allows public discourse to serve as a critical assessment of other political bodies by those who do not take part in the direct exercise of political authority. “The public opinion which is worked up via democratic procedures into communicative power cannot itself 'rule' but can only channel the use of administrative

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<sup>19</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One. Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1981, 96.



power in specific directions.”<sup>20</sup> Habermas envisions such discourse as an extension of communicative reason: a functional set of practices which allow for productive communication to result from interactions between rational actors.<sup>21</sup> However, this kind of reasoning requires participants in the discourse to take steps to ensure the dialogue is both functional and ideal; it must be genuine; agreement seeking; concessions must be made once validity is established; and communication has to remain consistent and comprehensible.<sup>22</sup> Habermas focuses on communication because he views deliberation as the link between a citizen’s political concerns and political processes at large. In fact, Habermas argues that the strength of his discourse theory is that it is able to institutionalize disjointed political practices via communication.<sup>23</sup>

Such an approach serves as the connection between legislative practices of a body of government and the public debates of citizens. Habermas’ model allows for a dynamic assessment of political power and it provides a meaningful way to incorporate public interests to political institutions. He wants to develop a theory of communication that allows for greater communication between people than is normally afforded. In Habermas’ words: “Discourse theory works instead with the *higher-level intersubjectivity* of communication processes that unfold in the institutionalized deliberations in parliamentary bodies, on the one hand, and in the informal networks of the public sphere on the other.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other*, eds. Ciaran Cronin and Pablo De Greiff (Cambridge: MIT Press), 250.

<sup>21</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. William Rehg (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 3-4.

<sup>22</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 4-6.

<sup>23</sup> Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other*, 248.

<sup>24</sup> Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other*, 248.

Therefore it is through discourse that both political institutions and society at large can effect government and develop a cohesive sense of justice.<sup>25</sup> The emphasis on communication as the cornerstone to political processes provides Habermas a means to address individual concerns or agendas within a political system. An example of this could be when lobbyists and public opinion against smoking convinced governments to enforce stricter laws pertaining to when and where one is allowed to smoke. Habermas' system, however, is dependent upon a particular kind of engagement in the political sphere by a particular kind of agent. As we shall see, Habermas' theory depends on certain axiomatic presuppositions such as a narrow definition of rationality, individualism, and universalism. Yet, these presuppositions can distance us from alternate understandings of selfhood and how a person can serve as a political actor. We ought to consider Habermas' use of rationality and some of the concerns that come with this depiction.

For Habermas' goal to be obtained and political discourse to serve as a guiding tool for political processes one would require a certain kind of discourse in the public sphere. Therefore someone who has an emotional or seemingly 'irrational' but valid reason for wanting political action has little to no room in Habermas' model. Religion, for example, is often understood to be non-rational or even anti-rational and this can lead to all kinds of problems. For example, if a person wanted to remove a strip club that opened across the street from his or her home, he or she could claim property value as a motive for doing so. But this is disingenuous if the real reason he or she does not want the club there is based upon religious convictions. Thus, the rational argument takes precedent even though it does

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<sup>25</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 306.

not resonate with the political actor's identity and motivation for engaging in a political discussion. As we shall see, to be effective in Habermas' communicative theory requires a certain kind of actor to produce the right kind of discourse.

One of the main criteria Habermas requires for his theory is that the communicative action behind political debates be first and foremost rational discussion, thus requiring rational actors to take part in it. Rationality serves as the crux for the public sphere. For Habermas, modernization brought about the public sphere throughout a development he refers to as the "rationalization of society."<sup>26</sup> Not only does rationality serve as the foundation for modern society, it is also the main coping mechanism for the disjointed plurality of public discourse. This is because rationality performs a mediating role in promoting understanding:

This rationality is inscribed in the linguistic telos of mutual understanding and forms an ensemble of conditions that both enable and limit. Whoever makes use of a natural language in order to come to an understanding with an addressee about something in the world is required to take a performative attitude and commit herself to certain presuppositions. In seeking to reach an understanding, natural-language users must assume, among other things, that the participants pursue their illocutionary goals without reservations, that they tie their agreement to the intersubjective recognition of criticizable validity claims, and that they are ready to take on the obligations resulting from consensus and relevant for further interaction.<sup>27</sup>

One can understand why Habermas is drawn to this kind of rationality, it promotes understanding and offers an equalizing methodology to assess various claims. Yet, in creating a space where argumentation is always structurally the same, different positions

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<sup>26</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two. Lifeworlds and Systems: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981), 297-299.

<sup>27</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 4.

can come together and interact in only a limited capacity. Differences are able to interact without an out-of-hand dismissal of the Other's perspective because presuppositions must be checked by their illocutionary goals. Thus critique promotes interactions that frame one's goals and worldview. For Habermas this allows different perspectives to encounter one another in a meaningful way: "I have in mind the more open procedure of an argumentative praxis that proceeds under the demanding presuppositions of the 'public use of reason' and does not bracket the pluralism of convictions and worldviews from the outset."<sup>28</sup> Habermas' caveat – that he 'does not bracket the pluralism of convictions' from the outset – is an important one. Habermas allows for the inclusion of different opinions and political agendas in the public sphere, he does not, however, expect diversity to be the foci of political discourse. Instead, the aim is understanding and consensus. For instance, through communicative action we are, as a society, supposed to decide which values are better than others.<sup>29</sup>

Rationality is in Habermasian thought both a frame for discourse and the guiding principle for it. Rationality allows one to choose values collectively, but also dictates the criteria for valuation generally. "The rationalization of society would then no longer mean a diffusion of purpose-rational action and a transformation of domains of communicative action into subsystems of purposive-rational action. The point of reference becomes instead the potential for rationality found in the validity basis of speech."<sup>30</sup> The functionality of speech then serves as an indicator that we ought to turn to rationality. Our discourse is not

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<sup>28</sup> Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other*, 59.

<sup>29</sup> Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other*, 55.

<sup>30</sup> Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, 339.

merely action oriented or goal seeking, it is also integral in valuation. This notion is expanded when Habermas considers rationality as our access to epistemology:

One need not expect that this knowledge itself, which is always already intuitively employed, will take as many diverse forms as there are perspectives. The ever fallible and possibly even false reconstruction does not touch the always already functioning knowledge... In all languages and in every language community, such concepts as truth, rationality, justification, and consensus, even if interpreted differently and applied according to different criteria, play the same grammatical role.<sup>31</sup>

Through a semantic analysis of discourse, rationality serves as the universally applied criterion for communication. Communication, then, serves as the justification for many of society's functions and institutions in Habermas' theory. As such, rationality has a heavy load to bear. In order to assess whether his construction of rationality is up to this task I will critically examine the manner in which rationality functions for Habermas. While he has carefully created an intricate and sophisticated theory of communication I will argue Habermas has defined rationality and the rational actor too narrowly in order to fulfill its role as a universal mediator for plurality. One demonstration of this will be Habermas' own expansion of reason, from not including religion in public discourse to including it. Another critique is based upon the premise that rationality cannot be applied universally in the way Habermas attempts.

Early on, Habermas depicted religion as fundamentally irrational and as a result it was not welcome in public discourse.<sup>32</sup> He follows the popular narrative of religion: after the Enlightenment came the privatization of religion and the secularization of government

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<sup>31</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 311.

<sup>32</sup> An example of Habermas juxtaposing a religious worldview with rationality can be found in: Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, 212-215.

institutions, so the role for religion in the public sphere shrank as it was replaced with superior forces of deliberation, scientific thought, and reason-based rationality. This led Habermas to describe society as “post-metaphysical.”<sup>33</sup> Habermas first describes the movement from the metaphysical to post-metaphysical as a linguistic phenomenon,

The disenchantment and disempowering of the domain of the sacred takes place by way of a linguistification of the ritually secured, basic normative agreement; going along with this is a release of the rationality potential in communicative action. The aura of rapture and terror that emanates from the sacred, the *spellbinding* power of the holy, is sublimated into the *binding/bonding* force of criticizable validity claims and at the same time turned into an everyday occurrence.<sup>34</sup>

People stopped relying on the sacred for authentication and validation to form a worldview and instead turned to the concept of normativity. Habermas describes this turn in relation to power: the potency of the sacred is dispersed and siphoned through rational discourse and conventions. As the terror and aura of the holy is replaced, the justification for beliefs and practices are also replaced with the banality of communication, and eventually communication serves as the new foundation for society.

This development in turn leads to an institutional and legal framework which was unprecedented during the reign of religious worldviews. This new way of thinking promoted rights, individualism and the coercion of the state to replace notions of divine command and judgment.<sup>35</sup> Habermas explicitly states there is a connection between rights and the authority of the state, “the system of rights that lends to individual liberties the coercive force of law.”<sup>36</sup> So, as religion became unable to support its traditional role of

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<sup>33</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 443.

<sup>34</sup> Habermas, *Lifeworlds and Systems*, 77.

<sup>35</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 26.

<sup>36</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 27.

bonding society together, the means of justifying justice and the rules for societal institutions became secularized and rational. Religion becomes an archaic remnant of a time when our worldviews and societies were based upon different foundations, foundations which have been swept away and replaced with validity based upon reasoned discourse. From this description of the decline of religious reasoning in our institutions and lifeworlds, Habermas initially concludes that religious convictions and expressions should not be a part of public discourse. However, in his more recent writings he has taken a different stance on this issue, re-evaluating the role religion can and ought to play in the public sphere.

Habermas has recently altered his initial stance concerning the role of religion in society. Habermas went from describing the gestalt of our time from post-metaphysical to post-secular.<sup>37</sup> Today religion is demonstrably an important influence on political decisions as well as a meaningful source of inspiration for politically active individuals or groups. Religious attitudes and beliefs persist even though forms of expression, doctrines, and the institutions of religion change. However, it is also the element of religion as an important aspect of selfhood that convinces Habermas to include religion in the public sphere: “A devout person pursues her daily rounds by drawing on belief. Put differently, true belief is not only a doctrine, believed content, but a source of energy that the person who has a faith

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<sup>37</sup> See: Jürgen Habermas, Tony Blair and Régis Debray, “Secularism's Crisis of Faith” *New Perspectives Quarterly* 25.4 (2008), 21: “I have thus far taken the position of a sociological observer in trying to answer the question of why we can term secularized societies “post-secular.” In these societies, religion maintains a public influence and relevance, while the secularistic certainty that religion will disappear worldwide in the course of modernization is losing ground.”

taps performatively and thus nurtures his or her entire life.”<sup>38</sup> Consequently, Habermas concedes that it is impractical and unfair to exclude religious convictions from the public sphere.<sup>39</sup> Religious views are important and meaningful to politically engaged citizens and so there has to be a means for religion to be expressed in political discourse. Fairness is presented as another justification to bring religion into what has been previously defined as a secular space:

Religious citizens who regard themselves as loyal members of a constitutional democracy must accept the translation proviso as the price to be paid for the neutrality of the state authority toward competing worldviews. For secular citizens, the same ethics of citizenship entails a complementary burden. By the duty of reciprocal accountability toward all citizens, including religious ones, they are obliged not to publicly dismiss religious contributions to political opinion and will formation as mere noise, or even nonsense, from the start.<sup>40</sup>

Translation now can serve as the mediator between religion and secularism so that diverse worldviews can interact in a dialectic. Translation is described by Habermas as a two-way street which places a burden on each participant; both religious and secular participants are going to have to undertake a process of self-reflection and accept the presence of variant positions.<sup>41</sup> Through redescribing the contours of public discourse Habermas allows translation to serve as the interstitial bridge between opposing worldviews so that different frames for reality can interact in a meaningful manner.

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<sup>38</sup> Jürgen Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere” *European Journal of Philosophy* 14.1 (2006): 8.

<sup>39</sup> Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” 8-9.

<sup>40</sup> Jürgen Habermas, “The Political: The Rational Meaning of a Questionable Inheritance of Political Theology,” in *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, by Judith Butler, Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, and Cornel West, eds. Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 26.

<sup>41</sup> Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” 14-15.



Habermas does not see religion taking part in all aspects of the public sphere though; the legal and legislative branches of government should remain without religious or metaphysical presuppositions.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, decisions regarding “mundane knowledge” should be left to “the institutionalized sciences.”<sup>43</sup> While Habermas acknowledges the practical and philosophical advantages to including religion in public discourse, he is still hesitant to offer a *cart blanche* to religious reasoning in all facets of public discourse.<sup>44</sup> This may hint at a reluctance by Habermas to completely endorse religious thinking to be as legitimate as secular philosophy.

Austin Harrington presents an analysis of the juxtaposition between Habermas' more recent appreciation for religion and his previous dismissive attitudes toward it. Harrington offers a means of bridging this apparent gap when he notes that Habermas only partially accepts religious actors in the public sphere. This is because Habermas maintains that any religious reasoning remains lacking if it does not endorse key concepts that are supra religious. When Habermas allows for the inclusion of religion in the public sphere he describes a process of translation where religious concepts are presented in a form that is neutral to particularistic worldviews, i.e. secularism.<sup>45</sup> This process implies Habermas thinks religious reasoning requires translation in order to be valid. As Harrington notes in

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<sup>42</sup> Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” 5, 10.

<sup>43</sup> Habermas, “The Political,” 26.

<sup>44</sup> Although one may consider Habermas' own arguments and apply them to the legal and legislative sphere. If religion is important to the people whom law applies than they should be able to engage with it in the language of their worldview.

<sup>45</sup> Later in this chapter (and again in Chapter Five) we will discuss why we should not think of secularism or the public sphere as essentially neutral.

Also, in Chapter Four we will consider different approaches to, and understandings of, translation.

Habermas' theory, "No contents of religious language[...] make sense unless they can be defended with the use of context-transcending arguments."<sup>46</sup> In order to transcend their particularistic context, Habermas envisions religious ideals reframing themselves in secular language.<sup>47</sup> Habermas' reluctance to offer religion a place in public discourse that is equal to secularism demonstrates that he is not entirely convinced that religion belongs in the public sphere.

For Habermas, translation is needed as a mediator between religion and secularism which also functions as a check on religiosity. A check which will ensure continued reasoned discourse, as opposed to a religiously informed supposed irrational discourse. Habermas seems wary of religious divisions and the fragmentation of validity claims if religion is taken at face value. Habermas seeks a deliberative theory that accounts for all worldviews while maintaining a measure of neutrality to different positions.<sup>48</sup> When his effort in defending universalism and impartiality lead him to put limits on the role of religion in public discourse Habermas falls back to rationality as a means to mitigate its influence. From this it becomes clear Habermas continues to regard religion and reason to exist as two separate poles which do not necessarily overlap much.<sup>49</sup> The fact that Habermas is willing to include religion in public discourse at all demonstrates he is attempting to stretch the cognitive bounds of his earlier work, however, his theoretical

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<sup>46</sup> Austin Harrington, "Habermas' Theological Turn?" *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 37.1 (2007): 54.

<sup>47</sup> In Chapter Four, section 4.12 "Translating at a Gain" I will discuss the potential for translation to serve as a bridge between two worldviews, without having them collapse into one another.

<sup>48</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 306.

<sup>49</sup> Harrington, "Habermas' Theological Turn?," 50. Later Harrington considers religion and reason "fixed points in conceptual space" which Habermas tries to diplomatically juggle between the two in: "Habermas' Theological Turn?," 59.

constructs surrounding reason and rationality are not so easily elasticated. To explore the limits of rationality in Habermas' work we will return to Harrington. Following that, I will consider Dipesh Chakrabarty, Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak, and Jeffery Stout as each address the issue of expanding our definition of rationality.

To include religion in public discourse demonstrates that Habermas' definition of "reasoned discourse" may adapt and change to some degree. What has yet to be demonstrated is to what extent rationality is not a static and confined concept, or rather contingent and in a state of flux. This could be overstated, such as if we were to reach a point where we have no sense of rationality and no means of communication. However, it can also be understated. This is a particular concern when we are taking any understanding of rationalism and using it to develop concepts of justice, or the good, or the functions of societal institutions. To impose a rigid definition of rationality onto a dynamic, fluctuating space such as the public sphere poses the danger of stagnation and could serve to further disengage citizens from the forces that govern their lives. Habermas is hesitant to stretch the meaning or role of rationalism too much in order to account for religion.

This is, in part, because he attempts to counter fragmentation with consensus, and he desires for a universal philosophy of communication. Habermas' communicative theory is less elastic than it may initially seem. Instead of offering a means for everyone to engage in public discourse (and by extension political processes more broadly) it imposes a method of dialogue with fairly stringent rules. Different political opinions are supported in Habermas' theory, but different approaches to communication, or public engagement as a whole, are not. This in turn implies that otherness is not as welcomed into Habermas'

system as it might seem at first glance. Harrington argues that Habermas' approach to otherness is severely limited.

One might say that in its will to 'include the other', Habermas' thinking about religion has a paradoxical tendency to perform the thing it most seeks to avoid, namely to exclude the 'Other' or to exclude otherness. Its problem is that precisely in its will to universal accommodation, it may only end by immunizing itself against a challenge from something more profoundly outside of itself.<sup>50</sup>

While Habermas remains somewhat infatuated with universalism, he has trouble escaping the challenges of difference.<sup>51</sup> Habermas' communicative theory can accommodate some variances, but not in a profound way. Gayatri Spivak argues that rationalistic universalization is attuned to a particular vision for selfhood. One that makes the world easier to process by offering explanation and homogeneity to what is inherently unexplainable and varied:

The will to explain was a symptom of the desire to have a self and a world. In other words, on the general level, the possibility of explanation carries the presupposition of an explainable (even if not fully) universe and an explaining (even if imperfectly) subject. These presuppositions assure our being. Explaining, we exclude the possibility of the *radically* heterogeneous."<sup>52</sup>

Rationality, in Habermas' mind is a means to achieve mutual understanding between discourse participants. Spivak argues that by seeking shared explanations and mutuality in this manner one excludes difference. Habermas uses reason to frame his theory of

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<sup>50</sup> Harrington, "Habermas' Theological Turn?," 59.

<sup>51</sup> Chakrabarty argues that this is a problem inherent in universalism itself. That the only alternative is to focus primarily on particularity and simply give up universal aspirations. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 76.

<sup>52</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 143.

communicative action which serves to promote understanding, consensus when possible, and shared political goals – he offers anyone who seeks it a path for integration into the political sphere. But Spivak does not share this goal. In fact she argues that she “would not find unity in diversity; sometimes confrontation rather than integration seemed preferable.”<sup>53</sup> And so, left between the choice of Habermas' constrained rationality and functional political discourse and Spivak's deconstruction of rationality and a politics of confrontation it seems like we are presented a fairly bleak set of alternatives. This is why Jeffrey Stout tries to offer a pragmatic means to incorporate different rationalities into the same space.

Stout offers another manner to reconsider the term rationality and its limits. He develops a means to bring people with different arguments into the same discussion without divesting from them the potency of their claims. He does so with a particular concept of recognition, “[toleration] is nourished by our recognition that much of what our neighbors believe is what any reasonable person would believe if situated in exactly the same way they are.”<sup>54</sup> Stout challenges those in disagreement with each other to seriously and deeply consider counterarguments that hold degrees of reasonableness. As a result, we may have different conclusions coming out of reason applied in different contexts. In this way reason does not mean people will hold the same positions; rather, different people in different perspectives, interpretive lenses, and worldviews, will all reasonably believe and argue different points.

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<sup>53</sup> Spivak, *In Other Words*, 141.

<sup>54</sup> Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 177.

Stout maintains we do not need to accept all arguments, but we ought not to dismiss any argument without first looking for value in it. With this underlying practice in place Stout is able to flesh out a more developed notion of what public discourse should look like:

Democratic hopes would often be better served if we used more respectful modes of interpretation as our means of first resort. Our fellow citizens might well hold many false beliefs. We might well be justified in taking them to be in error. But in many cases we ought to be content to explain our differences with them by pointing to differences in context, allowing that they might be justified in believing what they do, and then beginning or continuing the exchange of reasons with them in a charitable and democratic spirit.<sup>55</sup>

In this perspective differences do not necessarily lead to fragmentation or political stalemates. For Stout, pluralism is a given. Taking a pragmatic stance toward public discourse, Stout opines we need not argue over the benefits or costs of pluralism, we have to work within a pluralistic paradigm. That means a plethora of ideas, notions, and conclusions are being drawn and are at work within the political sphere at any given moment. Excluding otherness or difference is not an option for Stout. Thus, to base our political discourse around recognition and respect provide the best means to promote a positive dialogue. Stout thus offers not merely a compromise or a cherry picking of ideas for his model, he offers instead a space for diversity to actually foster its differences without collapsing in on itself.

It is worth considering that throughout his analysis Stout relies on comparing rationalities which are not too radically different.<sup>56</sup> As a result one cannot be sure we have

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<sup>55</sup> Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, 178.

<sup>56</sup> Throughout *Democracy and Tradition* Stout pits Western philosophers who disagree with one another.

yet reached a position where something profoundly different is able to be incorporated into Stout's system. An alternative, then, would be to accommodate different conceptions of rationality and provide a dialogical model which utilizes a more elastic definition of rationalism and reason. Though rationalism laced with universalism is one underlying issues with Habermas' theory, his emphasis on individualism is just as problematic. It is the question of individualism as a cognitive limit in Habermas' theory to which we shall turn to next.

Habermas depends on universalism and a stringent definition of rationalism to serve as indicators as to the kind of public discourse he seeks. Next we will consider the kind of person Habermas needs in order to achieve this kind of discourse. Such a person must be a rational actor, of course, and an individual who uses their decision making powers to construct society from a consensus-forming dialogue. As will be seen through an analysis of Taylor and Ricoeur, his depiction of political actors is quite limited. When we consider other expressions of selfhood later on in this chapter, and other means of describing identity, we are able to formulate new insights into the good and produce a more nuanced depiction of public discourse.

For Habermas, the participants in communicative action are strictly individuals speaking for themselves.<sup>57</sup> His frame does not address situations where a representative speaks effectively for a group, or as part of a group, in a meaningful way.<sup>58</sup> This is because it is the individual who forms the constitutive parts of a society. Furthermore, Habermas'

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<sup>57</sup> Habermas, *The Inclusion of The Other*, 250.

<sup>58</sup> Habermas, *The Inclusion of The Other*, 250.

theory is based upon an understanding in which individualism forms the justification for all of the major functions of a society. “Rather than displaying the facticity of an arbitrary, absolutely contingent choice, the positivity of law expresses the legitimate will that stems from a presumptively rational self-legislation of politically autonomous citizens.”<sup>59</sup> It is through the rational, autonomous individual which provides the justifications for laws and legislations. And so, in turn, the law can offer protection for said individuals, “the establishment of the legal code, which is undertaken with the help of the universal right to equal individual liberties, must be completed through communicative and participatory rights that guarantee equal opportunities for the public use of communicative liberties.”<sup>60</sup> The relationship between law and individuals is reciprocal. Individuals provide the basis for justification of a legal political system, and this system in turn provides laws and rights which protect individual interests and freedoms. In fact, Habermas argues that for the law to function we can only consider individuals: “legal subjects who are in every case individuals”<sup>61</sup> and that for human rights to have any bearings, we must turn to legal speech with all its presuppositions, individualism included.<sup>62</sup>

Habermas has an elaborate system where the justification for a legal system hinges on individuals so that the system itself can only operate effectively when dealing with solitary actors. Society, legal codes, systems, and other political bodies represent one facet of Western, liberal, post-Enlightenment. Yet this facet is not based upon universal justifications and presuppositions. Individualism has served in particular or specific times,

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<sup>59</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 33.

<sup>60</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 458.

<sup>61</sup> Habermas, *The Inclusion of The Other*, 203.

<sup>62</sup> Habermas, *The Inclusion of The Other*, 215.



places, and people, yet it is not the only way to conceive human beings. In fact, in Habermas' thinking, communities and traditions do perform a role, they serve as a backdrop which may feed into certain political debates; but he is careful to maintain they must not be kept from threatening to overtake the rational, individualistic framework for political discourse.

Habermas relies on individualism as a cornerstone for this political theory, and this can be problematic. One reason is that he does not take into account the limits of considering people solely as individuals. If instead we were to describe people as interconnected with their families, friends, and other social networks new cognitive opportunities arise. Isaiah Berlin offers a position that understands how one's self is connected to others. Not only are we interconnected to others but we rely on other people in every significant way.

Moreover, I am a social being in a deeper sense than that of interaction with others... I am not disembodied reason. Nor am I Robinson Crusoe, alone upon his island. It is not only that my material life depends upon interaction with other men, or that I am what I am as a result of social forces, but that some, perhaps all, of my ideas about myself, in particular my sense of my own moral and social identity, are intelligible only in terms of the social network in which I am (the metaphor must not be pressed too far) an element.<sup>63</sup>

If what Berlin states is true, then concepts of one's self depend upon relationships one has with others. This in turn impacts morals, activities, and political engagement. A religious community may in fact deeply resonate with one's sense of self, provide morals, and shape or encourage certain kinds of political activity. While Habermas recognizes he has to make

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<sup>63</sup> Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty*, 202.

a space for religion in the public sphere, it would make sense that the same reasons be given to consider political actors as groups, communities, and even traditions. If we ignore the role social relationships have in constituting selfhood and political activities, any theoretical model proposed would lack an important dynamic to political engagement.

Furthermore, it would not be too difficult to incorporate some thinking of groups into political theory, Berlin argues that we would be able to keep many premises on political activity and processes intact, for “what is true of the individual is true of groups, social, political, economic, religious, that is, of men conscious of needs and purposes which they have as members of such groups.”<sup>64</sup> When we consider participants in public deliberations we should include groups as well as individuals. The legal and legislative branches of government may have some difficulty providing coherent, consistent, and fair treatment of all groups and individuals, however, this is a process to be worked out if it is proved to be of value for society – not dismissed out of hand based upon presuppositions of individualism. Habermas is content to have communities and traditions as a background to the individuals who are the political actors. Later, it will be demonstrated that there are ways of incorporating traditions and the Other into constructs of the self in a deeper manner.

For Habermas, communities and traditions serve as a backdrop in political discourse because they serve as a backdrop for the individuals who partake in it. Habermas uses the term lifeworld to describe a person's worldview and how one lives in the world. It is in the lifeworld that communities and traditions have an impact on a person's self, which

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<sup>64</sup> Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty*, 203.

in turn effects their contributions to the public sphere. “The communicative concept of the lifeworld breaks with the idea of a whole composed of parts. The lifeworld is constituted from a network of communicative actions that branch out through social space and historical time, and these live off sources of cultural traditions and legitimate orders no less than they depend on the identities of socialized individuals.”<sup>65</sup> So Habermas does recognize communities and social networks serve as an important facet of one's self-identity.

Community ties and links to tradition have to be set aside for individuals to serve as the primary units to justify and engage with the legal and legislative powers. Habermas sees this individualization as the outcome, and explicit goal, of socialization.<sup>66</sup> Socialization serves as the individualizing catalyst in society in order to maintain a priority on individuals. This entire machination maintains its foundation because it is individuals who make choices:

The possibility of *choosing* between communicative and strategic action exists only abstractly; it exists only for someone who takes the contingent perspective of an individual actor. From the perspective of the lifeworld to which the actor belongs, these modes of action are not matters of free choice... Individuals acquire and sustain their identity by appropriating traditions, belonging to social groups, and taking part in socializing interactions. That is why they, as individuals, have a choice between communicative and strategic action only in an abstract sense, i.e., in individual cases.<sup>67</sup>

As individuals are the choosers and actors in a communicative action they must be free to choose which communities they are a part of and the perspectives they will uphold. This can be problematic in practice. While one may be free to sustain, disregard, or appropriate

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<sup>65</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 80.

<sup>66</sup> Habermas, *The Inclusion of The Other*, 208.

<sup>67</sup> Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 102.

their traditions – they cannot decide the degree to which their family, community, or traditions will play a role in forming their identity. Much of what makes people who they are is subtle or not specific. It is untenable to suggest that we may simply rationally assess all of our family interactions, experiences, and socializations to then choose which aspects will inform our identity. Alternatively, what if a community were to make a decision collectively? In such a case it is not based on the autonomy of an individual on which actions are taken, consequences fall, and responsibility lies.

For a political system to interact with decisions of a community would infer that individuals are not the sole actors in the political sphere. Thus the autonomy, action, and justification for a system should be built on interconnections and joint actions, intersecting at times between individuals, but also between ideas that come from a collective of thinkers. If, in turn, the justifications for law, legislation, and communicative action can be broadened beyond the individual, perhaps the legal code and legislative initiatives could also extend beyond mere individuals. However, Habermas wants to maintain a focus on individualism because it is individuals that keep the political systems moving, and it is the individual's engagement which leads us to institutions which form the actual workings of politics.

Habermas explains how we get from an individual to a political system and its institutions. Institutions may seem at first glance to overshadow individual actors in modern political systems. Even if broader political processes find their justification in individuals, the processes themselves seem to outshine individual contributions. To a degree this is true, an individual actor cannot dictate at a whim how a democratic society will function and what will be its laws. However, through public deliberations it is

individuals who form political practices and seek mutual understanding and consensus. Political process can utilize the will of the people once a consensus is achieved: “an individualistic civil law must be transposed to the level of collective actors and converted from personal references to system relations.”<sup>68</sup> In this manner it is the collection of individuals which truly fuels political institutions, as the two are interconnected.

Habermas draws a link from unofficial public opinion to formal legislation.<sup>69</sup> So even at a legislative level it is the individual that serves as a catalyst for our political systems. So much are the two concepts interconnected that institutions form a part of a person's lifeworld.<sup>70</sup> Here we are privy to a reciprocal and cyclical relationship in Habermas' system. For Habermas it is the individual who serves as the justification for, and beneficiary of, law and it is the individual who serves as the catalyst for the function and operation of institutions, while institutions form (in part) an individual's lifeworld. In this way it becomes clear that Habermas uses individualism not simply as a means of describing political actors, or as a means of simplifying sociological processes; but rather, individuals are the linchpin holding much of Habermas' theoretical strands together.

Habermas' connection between political systems, individualism, and autonomy is so thorough that institutions themselves become self-referential to the point where they too have a kind of autonomy. Political systems can be understood in such a way that Habermas describes them as having a sort of self-determination. “As with all functional systems,

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<sup>68</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 344-345.

<sup>69</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 314.

<sup>70</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 23.

politics, too, has become an autonomous, recursively closed circuit of communication furnished with its own code. In connection with the legal system responsible for securing legality, such as a contingent, self-referential politics draws everything it needs for legitimacy from itself.”<sup>71</sup> Eventually Habermas comes to speak of deliberative politics as having a self-understanding as well.<sup>72</sup> This is because Habermas considers autonomy to be the key to understanding politics. It is the justification and the central premise upon which political activity is based.<sup>73</sup> As institutions seek to maintain or increase their role in society they function in a particular manner. This process is what Habermas describes as the socializing role of institutions. Institutions take part in the socialization of citizens. Habermas has already argued that socialization was the primary means of forming citizens who see themselves as individuals.

Habermas also argues that individuals validate political institutions and their functions. Finally, Habermas describes the role of the law as a socializing process: “But law must do more than simply meet the functional requirements of a complex society; it must also satisfy the precarious conditions of a social integration that ultimately takes place through the achievements of mutual understanding on the part of communicatively acting subjects, that is, through the acceptability of validity claims.”<sup>74</sup> Therefore the law is justified by individuals and individuals are formed through socialization while the law is an important component of socialization. In a sense, law then serves as creating its own justification for existence. Thus the system of validation, law, individualization, and

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<sup>71</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 341.

<sup>72</sup> Habermas, *The Inclusion of The Other*, 251.

<sup>73</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 418.

<sup>74</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 83.

political institutions correspond and support each other. Yet, when we view identity and self-understanding of people as socialized individuals we are working with a limited understanding of the self. In the remainder of this chapter will explore how we can understand the self in relation to the Other in a deep and meaningful way. In the following sections I will turn to Charles Taylor and Paul Ricoeur to offer different notions of selfhood which both challenge and add to Habermas' communicative action. First we shall consider Taylor who turns to traditional sources of authentic selfhood and seeks to reintegrate them with current projects of identity and social construction. Later, we shall consider Ricoeur who develops a hermeneutic of the self as the Other.

### **3.3 Taylor's Selfhood and the Good**

While Habermas offers a sophisticated and intricate theory of communication to justify political institutions, he does not adequately address how different worldviews can fruitfully engage one another. In the last chapter I proposed that multiculturalism's metaphors and models needed to be reconsidered because, in part, of the manner in which they portray political identities and the public good.<sup>75</sup> In the face of diversity, multiculturalism remains a problematic response because it struggles to fully appreciate the dynamic nuances of today's complex societies. However, multiculturalism is useful as a concept if it is re-evaluated in light of alternate models for selfhood and the public sphere. Charles Taylor demonstrates that the modern self is very much a constructed entity. He argues that how one responds to the forces of modernity (and post-modernity) governs

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<sup>75</sup> Taylor argues that we cannot separate identity and the good as they are so entwined in: Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 3.

one's quests for an authentic self-identity. This is a reoccurring theme in his writings, as it was first fully articulated in his influential *Sources of the Self*; while questions of modernity and selfhood remain in Taylor's more recent writings.<sup>76</sup>

In order to analyse constructions of identity, Taylor provides what he terms a schematic map of three different sources for selfhood:

The map distributes the moral sources into three large domains: the original theistic grounding for these standards; a second one that centres on a naturalism of disengaged reason, which in our day takes scientific forms; and a third family of views which finds its sources in Romantic expressivism or in one of the modernist successor visions. The original unity on the theistic horizon has been shattered, and the sources can now be found on diverse frontiers, including our own powers and nature.<sup>77</sup>

Taylor does realize that applying a map to something like sources for modern identities can be too schematic, as the different aspects he highlights are in flux and there are fecund interstitial spaces between any groupings.<sup>78</sup> However, he does attempt to provide a comprehensive study so far as this is possible into how diverse concepts have shaped current consciousness. For example, Taylor considers theism a source of the self, despite his understanding that belief in God has become “shattered” and diversified.<sup>79</sup> This is part of Taylor's effort to tie selfhood to notions of “the good.” Taylor uses theism as a link to past and potent human constructions of the good.

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<sup>76</sup> This theme plays a prominent role in: Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007). And it is even present in: Charles Taylor and Jocelyn Maclure, *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), as well as in: Charles Taylor, *Republican Democracy* (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2012).

<sup>77</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 495-496.

<sup>78</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 496.

<sup>79</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 496.



Taylor describes the quest for selfhood as interwoven with how one perceives the good. Taylor argues that morality is far from a reasoned, rational, objective matter; rather it is more visceral, inextricably entwined with ontology. When describing how we make moral judgments, Taylor states:

On one side, they are almost like instincts, comparable to our love of sweet things, or our aversion to nauseous substances, or our fear of falling; on the other, they seem to involve claims, implicit or explicit, about the nature and status of human beings. From this second side, a moral reaction is an assent to, an affirmation or, a given ontology of the human.<sup>80</sup>

Morality thus resides in a deep level of cognition, even deeper than rationalization. Such an approach to morality shades Taylor's analysis of the good so that it must resonate with one's self instead of having it exist as an abstract idea. This is not simply a preference, according to Taylor it is imperative as "we cannot but orient ourselves to the good."<sup>81</sup> And how is the good understood? Taylor recognizes that our instincts and tastes are a result of our culture and cultural expressions.<sup>82</sup>

Taylor next ties this discussion of the good to Christianity which he describes as, "a positive vision of ordinary life as hallowed by God."<sup>83</sup> God was, at one time, the primary and central source for ethical and moral systems in the West. However, this eventually started to fade. Theism was replaced by notions that are atheistic or agnostic which tend to ignore or overwrite the influence and tradition of it: "But modern naturalism not only can't accept this theistic context; it has divested itself of all languages of higher worth."<sup>84</sup> Thus

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<sup>80</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 5.

<sup>81</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 51.

<sup>82</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 91.

<sup>83</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 104.

<sup>84</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 104.

Taylor sets up the first tension he is out to address: the erosion and subsequent rootlessness of the foundation for our sense of the good (and later to other sources for selfhood). As a result people need to build up their own foundations for a construction of the good and morality. Furthermore, now that we have the freedom to use theology or not, one can build on religious teachings or reject them altogether. The fact that religious truths are not assumed anymore, even for ethical debates, allows an uprootedness to our sense of morality while at the same time provides space for individuals to consider new methods for developing ethical systems.

As this process is developed by Taylor the good becomes less so an ontic reality expressed through one's culture; rather it is the individual's creative power which forms the good. Taylor argues this became possible because of the Cartesian revolution, where thinking gets tied to being. Following Descartes famous maxim "I think therefore I am," we can now "place the moral source within us."<sup>85</sup> Taylor notes this has the result that an "important power has been internalized."<sup>86</sup> Such an internalization makes the process of selfhood more dynamic than simply having a cultural value internalized, or leaving morality up to basic instinct. As such, the good comes to be in ongoing flux, or "perpetual change."<sup>87</sup> This trend eventually fully matures in modern individualism.<sup>88</sup>

Taylor demonstrates there are problems with placing a source for selfhood within the individual alone. The main issue is tied to what Taylor comes to describe as a quest for authenticity. In his discussion of the "Age of Authenticity" Taylor challenges any quest for

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<sup>85</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 143.

<sup>86</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 143.

<sup>87</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 183.

<sup>88</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 185.

selfhood that is understood solely in the terms of individualism. While he establishes the importance of authenticity and how it may play a crucial role in forming an amalgamated, hybrid, dynamic, fluctuating self, Taylor depicts the process of finding an authentic self as fraught with challenges.<sup>89</sup> Creating an authentic self is, in Taylor's mind, an uphill battle.<sup>90</sup> This difficulty is a result of the challenges of modernity and the paradoxes inherent in modern perceptions of identity. The problem with modern moral consciousness is layered.

Taylor first notes how any self-definition that is too inward-dependent for validation is harmful because it severs people from potentially rich wells. Not only does the internal become a source for the self, it cuts off other options: "Self-determining freedom demands that I break the hold of all such external impositions, and decide for myself alone."<sup>91</sup> Being detached from "all external impositions" may sound liberating, however, Taylor demonstrates why it is problematic as well. He establishes the issue with inwardness through a multifaceted critique of modernity which includes wide ranging phenomena such as the consumer revolution, modern bureaucracies, as well as a more developed critique of individualism.<sup>92</sup>

Taylor's critique of modernity is not limited to any one element of it. Rather, he claims there is a widespread sense of unfulfilment, or *malaise*. This is why he turns to broad historical narratives and a general sense of unease that is the result of people being cut off from potentially fulfilling pools of meaning for identity construction. One manner

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<sup>89</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 473.

<sup>90</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 90.

<sup>91</sup> Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Toronto: Anansi, 1991), 27.

<sup>92</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 181-185.

in which people are cut off is through the “consumer revolution” where people care too much about material things and money. This influences our perception of happiness. Taylor notes how the “pursuit of happiness” has become predominantly a search for instant gratification and material possessions.<sup>93</sup> As the pressures from such forces accumulate “people sense a terrible flatness in the everyday.”<sup>94</sup> The flatness is a sense that life is devoid of any higher meaning and subsequently, life is without a purpose. We can add to this general flatness a consumer, market-driven society which leads to an increased sense that any self construction is ultimately vacant – a notion we shall return to later in this chapter.

While consumer-driven flatness presents a problem for people's quest for authenticity, Taylor also considers this problem alongside political processes. While Habermas places the individual and political process in a cyclical relationship where each influence, validate, and propel the other, Taylor problematizes this system. He does so by pointing out that one issue with politics is modern governments are in constant flux: “contemporary society is continually recreating a balance between requirements that tend to undercut each other.”<sup>95</sup> There are opposing demands on our political system, as there are opposing forces influencing one's selfhood. Such struggles are linked to the problematic aspects of consumerism – Taylor discusses political processes are constantly challenged to find a balance between “market efficiency” and the “welfare state” or between “operations of the state” and “individual rights.”<sup>96</sup> The outcome from these kinds of oppositional

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<sup>93</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 474.

<sup>94</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 309.

<sup>95</sup> Taylor, *Malaise of Modernity*, 111.

<sup>96</sup> Taylor, *Malaise of Modernity*, 111.

deadlocks is political fragmentalization.<sup>97</sup> Taylor describes a fragmented society as one “whose members find it harder and harder to identify their political society as a community.”<sup>98</sup> Where political debates are allowed they do not foster a sense of shared “bonds of sympathy.”<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, judicial decisions encourage a winner takes all mentality, and a loser gets no sense of satisfaction or compromise.<sup>100</sup> These broad, societal critiques are once again tied to Taylor's theory of selfhood and the individual quest for authenticity.

While Taylor's critique of the market lead to a sense of flatness, the political process leads one to a sense of meaninglessness in the pursuits of society. People feel disconnected from political processes as opposed to engaged or as one who is directing political institutions like in Habermas' model. Such disconnect from the activities and pursuits of political sphere adds to a sense of futility which is counterproductive to constructing a valuable sense of self. This connection between futility and the struggle for an authentic self is developed further in Taylor's analysis of how choice is understood and defined in modernity.

Choice is for Taylor an important concept in his theory of selfhood. On one hand, choice is necessary for one to define his or her identity and one is able to develop any aspect of it. On the other hand, choice can become a dangerous promise which leads to false pretenses and even vapidty. Taylor describe this problem broadly in one sense: “It is that the institutions and structures of industrial-technological society severely restrict our

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<sup>97</sup> Taylor, *Malaise of Modernity*, 112.

<sup>98</sup> Taylor, *Malaise of Modernity*, 117.

<sup>99</sup> Taylor, *Malaise of Modernity*, 113.

<sup>100</sup> Taylor, *Malaise of Modernity*, 116.

choices, that they force societies as well as individuals to give weight to instrumental reason that in serious moral deliberation we would never do, and which may even be highly destructive.”<sup>101</sup> Society as a whole is suffering under the same conceptual framework i.e. instrumental reason.<sup>102</sup>

However, choice is also played out at an individual level where people struggle to find meaningful choices. Choice is diminished when people develop an apathetic attitude where a common sentiment is: “there aren't any crucial issues.”<sup>103</sup> So we see the strain modernity has on selfhood once again. Meaning is difficult to obtain because our cognitive power is put into a position where we cannot use it in a beneficial way. This is very different than Habermas' position where he argues that autonomy is a better foundation for society than even a value such as well-being because the concept of autonomy serves the legal sphere so well.<sup>104</sup> If we describe people merely as autonomous in that they make decisions what kind of decisions people make becomes a very important question – one that is often left unanswered, or answered in a manner that is unsatisfactory. On one hand, to present people as choosers seems like a solution to many of the maladies Taylor presents; we could simply avoid the pitfalls or problems of modernity by choosing other, better, options. But Taylor again demonstrates how this process is fraught with potential pitfalls as well. One

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<sup>101</sup> Taylor, *Malaise of Modernity*, 8.

<sup>102</sup> Taylor describes instrumental reason as utilitarian, functionalistic, and reductionist in: *A Secular Age*, 177.

<sup>103</sup> Taylor, *Malaise of Modernity*, 68.

<sup>104</sup> Habermas states: “The distributive aspect of equal legal status and equal treatment—the just distribution of social benefits—is simply what results from the universalistic character of a law intended to guarantee the freedom and integrity of each. The normative key is autonomy, not well-being,” in: *Between Facts and Norms*, 418.

demonstration Taylor uses to exemplify the difficulty in turning to choosing as a solution to selfhood is the abortion debate.

Taylor does not outright argue for any particular position regarding the legal rights for abortion, but considers the overall frame for the argument. He presents the pro-life and pro-choice dilemma as a false dichotomy. His position is derived from how we present the debate surrounding abortion: we tend to focus on choice without considering what kind of choice we are referring to. “A good example of this is 'choice', that is bare choice as a prime value, irrespective of what it is a choice between, or in what domain.”<sup>105</sup> Choice becomes an intrinsic value, unquestionable in its virtue. However, it is apparent that some choices are better than others. This is why Taylor wants to turn the debate to the kinds of choices we make. He argues that if we value choice intrinsically then this has an implication for another aspects of the self as well: it presents a pregnant woman only as a chooser, which is a reductive representation of any person. To present choices (and people) in this manner implies that there are no moral implications to the choices one makes while pregnant.<sup>106</sup>

It is important to note that some decisions – even concerning one's own body – do have moral implications. Therefore to place choice as the upmost criteria for a moral good is problematic.<sup>107</sup> As Taylor argues, it is the context that matters not the fact that we have

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<sup>105</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 478.

<sup>106</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 478.

<sup>107</sup> One reason this line of thinking is problematic is the underlying assumption that people will choose rationally. Taylor does not dwell on this point but consider Nussbaum's criticism of present people as rational choosers: “People often make decisions heedlessly, without sufficient deliberation and self-examination. They don't sort things out in a cohesive and comprehensive way, asking what they really want to pursue and stand for.” In fact people are more likely to make significant decisions out of “fear,” “self-interest,” or “self-protective bias” in: Nussbaum, *The New Religious Intolerance*, 99.

the ability to pick and choose: “The issue should always be which choices, authorities and responsibilities, and at what cost.”<sup>108</sup> By putting the emphasis on the weight and context of choice, choosing can be as much a burden as a responsibility or even a right. Laurie Shrage considers the abortion debate in a manner that analyses the political strategies by those on different poles. She demonstrates that while the pro-choice movement may have made a pragmatic decision to focus on choice as a right, this approach does have its limits:

The “choice” rhetoric took center stage as privacy based reasoning proved to be successful for defending abortion rights in U.S. courts. The privacy defense renders the abortion decision an individual “choice” that needs to be protected from societal interference. Privacy based reasoning is increasingly being questioned by feminist legal scholars and, accordingly, so is the rendering of abortion as a private choice.<sup>109</sup>

The trouble with framing the issue solely around choice is that it lacks any sense of consequence. Any decision has consequences that are meaningful and to remove them from our debates concerning autonomy is poor practice. Otherwise, the right to choose what to do with one's body becomes tantamount to consumerism, absent of any ethical or moral considerations, as if preference and taste are all that matter.<sup>110</sup> Like Taylor, Shrage makes it clear that she is not seeking to put an end to a woman's right to have an abortion, but her goal is to consider how discussions on abortion can be attuned to account for a more nuanced understanding of personhood and our abilities as decision makers.<sup>111</sup> As we shall see, equipped with a more nuanced understanding of choice can allow for a more meaningful understanding of identity construction as a whole.

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<sup>108</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 479.

<sup>109</sup> Laurie Shrage, *Abortion and Social Responsibility: Depolarizing the Debate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 78.

<sup>110</sup> Shrage, *Abortion and Social Responsibility*, 80.

<sup>111</sup> Shrage, *Abortion and Social Responsibility*, 76.



### 3.4 Selfhood and Meaning

The connection between the construction of the self and morality is an important theme for Taylor. Be it through our notions of the good, the perils of consumerism, or the ethical considerations when one needs to balance framing a person as a chooser with the kinds of choices one may have; selfhood is connected to valuation. However, Taylor also questions what we are to do when the foundations for our values are challenged. Taylor argues that without meaningful values informing our self construction we are plagued by meaninglessness. As we shall see, in order to counteract meaninglessness Taylor turns toward the inventive aspects of selfhood and identity construction. While the self is in part a reactive process to the external pressures one faces, in Taylor's model there is also room for the will and creative efforts by an individual to infuse his or her identity with meaning. "This creative imagination is the power which we have to attribute ourselves, once we see art as expression and no longer as mimesis. Manifesting reality involves the creation of new forms which give articulation to an inchoate vision, not simply the reproduction of forms already there."<sup>112</sup> Thus Taylor understands the subjective element to defining and expressing one's identity. To analyse this concept, he considers romanticism and expressionism as catalysts which encourage introspection and self-affirmation.<sup>113</sup> But before we get too far ahead of ourselves we should consider Taylor's discussion of selfhood and meaninglessness, and how to overcome it. Taylor describes this as the ability to

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<sup>112</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 379.

<sup>113</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 446.

overcome the disengagement from valuable sources for selfhood that have eroded away over the past few centuries.

Taylor, as we have seen, is critical of the burdens we place on our efforts to construct authentic selves. He traces the roots of these burdens to the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution along with other significant social phenomena which have helped form modernity. In some ways, meaninglessness is a Gordian knot tying together various thought strands introduced by Taylor, one being the modern conceptions of independence, explained as a “conception of disengagement and procedural reason.”<sup>114</sup> In Taylor's schema, this disengagement separates people from moral hierarchies, nature, and God, all of which had previously provided meaningful existence.

Taylor does not subscribe to the notion that religion will necessarily fade away as a result of scientific or industrial advancement; but he does consider the manner in which religion and spirituality influence self-construction has changed due to the pressures of modernity.<sup>115</sup> In parallel to Taylor's critique of individualism, he also analyses the development of other modern constructs. In ancient or premodern thinking one's self was woven into cosmological, metaphysical, and teleological systems. As a result people stressed harmony and alignment with the prevailing order of the universe. This can be understood in terms of God creating human nature a certain way.<sup>116</sup> Or rather, we can be aligned with nature itself: “the way to be good is to act according to nature.”<sup>117</sup> Therefore our morality, meaning-making, and selfhood all had to be aligned because they all came

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<sup>114</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 174.

<sup>115</sup> Taylor expands on this point in: *Sources of the Self*, 402-410.

<sup>116</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 272.

<sup>117</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 277.

from an overarching source, namely God (although other cosmological systems existed in antiquity). The concept of aligning oneself to a greater moral system was cut off throughout a process Taylor calls disengagement. Now, any epistemological system has to be framed so that humanity is its source: “insofar as we can account at all for the existence of this space in which the good appears, it cannot simply be in terms of the universe as a self-manifesting reality; it has also to be in terms of our own make-up.”<sup>118</sup> The danger of placing meaning-making under the domain of human invention alone allows for relativity to erode previous understandings of the world as created or as being in perfect harmony with itself. In turn, relativity allows for the intrusion of meaninglessness. As we shall see, Taylor links this process of meaninglessness to a disengagement from nature and to the consumer culture which has developed alongside it.

Certainly there are, however, limitations to using nature as a source for selfhood. Throughout the processes of disengagement and meaninglessness Taylor describes how our relationship to nature has devolved problematically. Instead of considering nature as a source for human flourishing, it is too often considered only in terms of resources. This is tied to Taylor's critique of the rise of instrumental reason.<sup>119</sup> Ultimately, we do not attribute to nature different kinds of significance even though we ought to. As Taylor puts it: “Naturalism neutralizes nature.”<sup>120</sup> So we find ourselves cut off and separated from another source. As we shall see, Taylor ties the disengagement from nature and moral orders to the industrial revolution and the advent of the consumer society.

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<sup>118</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 257.

<sup>119</sup> In Taylor's words: “This now defines the human epistemic predicament,” in: *A Secular Age*, 294.

<sup>120</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 383.

The reason consumerism is important to selfhood is how it affects our perceptions about human nature and meaning in the world. Taylor has already established that our sources for selfhood have been altered from their traditional roles. The good, religion, nature, and other sources which had been used to infuse life with purpose previously have become undermined or radically changed. This means new perspectives and outlooks for the human experience need to take their place. It is difficult to reinstate old sources for selfhood, though, when they are so deeply rooted and widespread. Instead of focusing on the afterlife, on spiritual blessings, or on theological dispositions, one only considers the material world. Human happiness, then, is dependent on avoiding metaphysical distractions from worldly good, as Taylor states, it “needs to be rescued not only from false spiritualist explanatory theories but also from the false depreciation that it has suffered at the hands of religion and metaphysics, which have called on men to deny these impulses in the name of purely imaginary goods and satisfactions.”<sup>121</sup> The “purely imaginary” becomes a means of describing anything and everything that is not material. Material becomes equated with the real and in doing so it marginalizes many aspects of many religions.

Cost-benefit analysis serves as our overbearing guiding principles instead of religion and our traditions. Efficiency in engineering and human inventiveness serves as the new order.<sup>122</sup> Since efficiency and inventiveness are understood as key factors in producing wealth the heroes of an age of materialism are not humble martyrs, aesthetes, or

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<sup>121</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 326.

<sup>122</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 177.

even particularly compassionate people; instead, success in monetary sense is seen as a virtue.<sup>123</sup> As Taylor puts it, “We admire and support the rich and well-born, and in return we enjoy the kind of stable order without which prosperity would be impossible.”<sup>124</sup> Thus material culture spreads even into traditional sources for selfhood to the point where it becomes difficult to evaluate a worldview beyond the cognitive boundaries of our material culture.

It is difficult to gauge the effect of a worldview that is so preoccupied with materialism. This is because valuation becomes overrun with instrumental thinking to the point where other modes of assessment are disseminated. Taylor highlights why this is a problem:

But there is also widespread unease that instrumental reason not only has enlarged its scope but also threatens to take over our lives. The fear is that things that ought to be determined by other criteria will be decided in terms of efficiency of 'cost-benefit' analysis, that the independent ends that ought to be guiding our lives will be eclipsed by the demand to maximize output.<sup>125</sup>

Such thinking can lead to consequences like cutting funds for the humanities at universities, where the market-driven programs are regarded as more valuable due solely to their capacity to create wealth.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> An example of this line of thinking would be the caricature of capitalism as seen in Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* (New York: Signet, 1957).

<sup>124</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 177.

<sup>125</sup> Taylor, *Malaise of Modernity*, 5.

<sup>126</sup> Jeremy Seabrook demonstrates how market-driven valuation is problematic for education and humanity in: “Deindustrializing humanity” in *New Internationalists* 451 (2012): 54. While George Ritzer demonstrates that universities have adopted what Taylor describes as instrumental reasoning based on market theories for everything from their programs, to marking, to ranking professors and courses to evaluating the universities as a whole in: *The Macdonalization of Society* (Los Angeles: Sage, 1993), 77-78.

Cost-benefit analysis also has a great deal to do with how Canada chooses who can gain entry into the country as an immigrant. “The point system has been devised as a means to screen economic immigrants applying to immigrate to Canada in order to select the ones with substantial human capital.”<sup>127</sup> Further, there has been an increased emphasis on human capital since the immigration policies were revised in 2002 and remain to this day.<sup>128</sup> Notions such as how to encourage higher learning or the assumption that all people are equal (but not equally desirable by Canada) are being evaluated and assessed based on cost-benefit analysis. Taylor, however, brings this discussion back to selfhood by linking it to consumerism as a means of expressing and defining one's identity:

Now consumer culture, expressivism and spaces of mutual display connect in our world to produce their own kind of synergy. Commodities become vehicles of individual expression, even the self-definition of identity. But however this may be ideologically presented, this doesn't amount to some declaration of real individual autonomy. The language of self-definition is defined in the spaces of mutual display, which have now gone meta-topical; they relate us to prestigious centres of style-creation, usually in rich and powerful nations and milieux. And this language is the object of constant attempted manipulation by large corporations.<sup>129</sup>

Here Taylor raises an interesting point; how expression is manifested in a consumer culture is merely a reflection of purchasing products mass produced by major companies.<sup>130</sup>

Expression is, however, a means of communicating one's selfhood to the rest of society.

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<sup>127</sup> Peter Li, *Destination Canada: Immigration Debates and Issues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 103.

<sup>128</sup> Li, *Destination Canada*, 102.

<sup>129</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 483.

<sup>130</sup> This theme is explored in: Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter, *The Rebel Sell: Why the Culture Can't be Jammed* (Toronto: Harper Perennial, 2005), where Heath and Potter argue companies use rebel or countercultural movements to sell their products and inform advertising campaigns thus absorbing genuine critique into the machinations, systems, and institutions people are attempting to counter.

As we shall see, Taylor is very concerned with the process of self-definition, and here he is critical of a common method of doing just that. Using commodities as a means of expressing oneself is a limited venture which counteracts other efforts for forming an authentic self.

This is because of two reasons, first this method does not produce “real individual autonomy” and secondly, it is a process imperilled by manipulation by large corporations. While consumer choices can be made with ethical implications in mind – like choosing fair trade coffee or deliberately buying clothes that were not made in a sweat shop – choosing what brand to buy merely for the sake expressivism or to articulate selfhood through corporate goods does not have the same kind of gravitas.

Up to this point we have followed Taylor's argument concerning disengagement and instrumental reasoning. These are two factors which have contributed to the separation people feel from potential sources for selfhood such as the good, religion, nature, and authenticity. Furthermore, they have added to trends that can mislead people as they seek authentic sources for self-definition through materialism and consumerism. From our analysis of multiculturalism in Chapter Two, it is clear that there are those who struggle with recognition throughout their quest for an authentic self. If we accept Taylor's arguments we can see that the problem of how we understand others and ourselves is interconnected with larger trends and patterns throughout the Western world. This depiction of selfhood leads to an identity crises where meaninglessness is a prominent and prevalent problem.

Meaninglessness causes people to feel separated, not simply from nature or God, but from one another as well.<sup>131</sup> Taylor further extrapolates that meaninglessness has pervaded our routines, life stages, and it has become an all-consuming common human experience.<sup>132</sup> It is not just a shared narrative that is needed though; the regular, banal factors of modernity (our understanding of time, materiality, and productivity) will serve as insufficient sources for authenticity, which leaves people feeling “lost” or “empty.”<sup>133</sup> As a result, constructive efforts in self-definition are hindered by a disengagement from potential sources of authenticity which leaves one lacking a sense of significance in life and in the world. However, Taylor does not leave us without guiding notions as to how to address these problems. In the following section I will consider Taylor's arguments for constructing an authentic self in the face of the challenges of modernity.

### **3.5 The Constructive Effort in Defining Selfhood**

Taylor argues that there are numerous sources for selfhood and that we need to re-establish our connection to them, so he lays out the groundwork for such an undertaking. Taylor frames this undertaking as the motivation for his work in *Sources of the Self* in which he seeks to address the basic human need: to allow the spirit to flourish. Taylor states, “we tend in our culture to stifle the spirit[...] We have read so many goods out of our official story, we have buried their power so deep beneath layers of philosophical rationale, that they are in danger of stifling. Or rather, since they are our goods, human goods, we are

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<sup>131</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 516.

<sup>132</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 718.

<sup>133</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 718.



stifling.”<sup>134</sup> Losing values and meaningful narratives is not simply a philosophical problem devoid of real world consequence, it is a human problem insomuch that people are unable to thrive under such circumstances. Thus Taylor seeks a “retrieval” and “rearticulation” of these past goods, and direction for articulating new ones. His goal then is to “make these sources again empower, to bring back again into the half-collapsed lungs of the spirit.”<sup>135</sup> Taylor uses a medical metaphor here, positioning himself as the diagnostician, and one who prescribes a cure to the malady of meaninglessness. I have demonstrated how we have become disconnected from different sources for selfhood, next I will consider how Taylor articulates we can reconnect to them.

Making old sources relevant again does not involve simply imposing an ancient or past worldview into the current era. Instead, Taylor turns to movements which show promise for redescription and redefinition in regards to various sources in order to serve as an ongoing, dynamic, meaning-making project.<sup>136</sup> For example, in the expressivist movement Taylor sees promise in redefining the relationship between people and nature. Nature is useful due to its ability to resonate with people's sensibilities.<sup>137</sup> Thus nature is not weighed down by ancient cosmologies or metaphysical burdens, rather it is adaptable and relatable to any individual. Of course, Taylor is still concerned with strident individualism, as he is notably critical of the implications of it. In order to explore the potential but avoid the pitfalls of expressivism and nature, Taylor turns to other sources to

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<sup>134</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 520.

<sup>135</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 520.

<sup>136</sup> See Chapter Five, section 5.7 “Irony and Agonism” for an analysis of Rorty’s use of redescription in the public sphere. Through ironic subversion we can redescribe and challenge prevailing notions and narratives in order to explore new, meaningful ways forward as a society.

<sup>137</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 301-302.

help it along. Taylor recognizes that one's search for an authentic identity can be successful if properly rooted through subjectivism, personal expressions, and decision-making. This is why Taylor turns to community, tradition, religion, and politics as potential means of rooting people's identity in a manner that is not contingent on ancient worldviews but may still capture what makes them so important.

For Taylor, community is best understood in a positive manner which we can contrast to his portrayal of individualism. Community is depicted in what seems to be an intrinsic value. For Taylor, community is a goal of meaning-making projects because it helps up to overcome the divisions between people.<sup>138</sup> In order to establish community as an important facet of one's personal identity Taylor stresses two crucial aspects of community. The first is that it provides the language for self-definition. The second is it provides the context for utilizing language. He states: "No one acquires the language needed for self-definition on their own."<sup>139</sup> Therefore community serves as the means which provides the very tools for expression and self-definition. However, language is not simply expressive, it is an integral aspect of epistemology. We learn, know, comprehend, and communicate through language. For Taylor, community plays a vital role by creating the kinds of words, expressions, and conversations we are surrounded by daily. Thus society becomes the constant throughout a plethora of simultaneous, individual self-definition projects. By providing language through people's relationships, conversations,

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<sup>138</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 384.

<sup>139</sup> Taylor, *Malaise of Modernity*, 33.

and interactions with others, community also provides the very possibility of an authentic selfhood.

Language makes self-definition projects possible and this fact relates to the second attribute Taylor highlights for community – it provides the context for meaning-making projects of selfhood. Taylor describes the “moral order” as an ideal that individuals ought to seek for guidance on how to interact with others in an ethical manner.<sup>140</sup> Ethics and morality are inseparably intertwined with human society, relationships, context, and interactions that form the basis for ethical questions and moral quandaries. While some may argue that even if one were separated from the rest of humanity, morality would remain an important concept, yet practical ethics have to take into account encounters with other people. Even if a lone individual were to decide on one moral code or another, there would be no way of knowing about it or to measure the effects of his or her decisions without some kind of human interaction. In light of our earlier discussion on how the good and selfhood are two concepts that are inseparable for Taylor it becomes clear why society and human interaction plays a key role in Taylor's theory of self-construction.<sup>141</sup>

After establishing the need and role for community in self-definition Taylor goes on to argue for the reestablishment of religion. Once again it becomes apparent that Taylor is not content to simply revert to past conceptions of God and religion's place in society.

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<sup>140</sup> Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 4.

<sup>141</sup> One implication for thinking of the interconnected self could be for prison sentences. Instead of focusing on punishing the individual (through segregation and isolation) certain crimes—and our responses to them—could be understood contextually. A crime committed is a burden on society which we can address through multiple courses, recognition and integration included. This renewed emphasis could function in tandem with our current penal system but it has the potential to challenge and subvert it as well.

Instead Taylor argues that religion can be relevant again because it can help people with current problems; it can hold a place of value in modern worldviews. When discussing people's views on sex and violence Taylor demonstrates how religion can inform our values without backpedalling to a bygone age:

The aim, is not to return to the earlier sacralization of sex and violence, but to find new forms of collective ritual; rites of passage; individual and small group disciplines of prayer, fasting, devotion, modes of marking time new ways of living conjugal sexual life; and new works of healing and sharing, which could give bodily and at times public expression to the worship of God; or the search for Nirvana, or for Moksha.<sup>142</sup>

We can be religiously informed when choosing our values, practices, and forming community. Here Taylor does note that religion is deeply diverse, the aims of religious practice may be worshipping God, or they may be enlightenment, or release from the cycle of death and rebirth. That religion is varied, and that individuals are called to use the tools of religion such as prayer and other rituals in their meaning making endeavours, does not imply that religion is formless or feckless. Instead, religion can be moulded and shaped, yet it can still be very potent.

In *A Secular Age* Taylor argues that one can find transcendence in other areas as well such as art, narratives, history, or literature.<sup>143</sup> Ultimately, he calls for people to take it upon themselves to “make new paths” in terms of religion so that meaningless is

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<sup>142</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 613-614.

<sup>143</sup> Taylor describes how different artistic movements can either demonstrate the significance of ordinary life or be used to highlight a human connection to the transcendent in: *A Secular Age*, 711-712. History is understood to make sense of time and space, two notions which lend themselves to narratives as meaning-making projects as such Taylor sees history as a viable place to look for religion particularly for significance to our narratives in: *A Secular Age*, 714-715. Taylor also describes literature as a “prime loci” for finding the work toward a paradigm shift where order and good are understood as a part of the human experience in: *A Secular Age*, 732-734.

countered in a creative and dynamic manner that is suitable for many people; not simply those adhering to a particular view of God or the cosmos.<sup>144</sup> Religion and other sources have to be updated by whoever is seeking a source for authenticity. Autonomy does play a role in Taylor's thinking, the spirituality of our age is an “autonomous exploration.”<sup>145</sup> The exploratory aspect of religion enforces the notion that new creative paths are needed to bring together the various sources for selfhood, and to redefine past sources that have faded from popular consciousness.

With the importance of community established Taylor is able to make a case for redescribing religion as a method to foster meaning for the individual. Taylor does so by linking both community and religiosity to constructions of society. While individuals may seek their own selfhood, they are not entirely independent. Journeys for selfhood take place within a context of relationships and traditions that inform any meaning-making project. As such, society is an important facet for self-definition. Taylor describes society as a contributing factor to selfhood through our ongoing and active participation in the social imaginary. The social imaginary is a joint project in how we conceptualize and understand society, as well as how we structure the public sphere. Taylor states, “the social imaginary is not a set of ideas; rather, it is what enables through making sense of, the practices of a society.”<sup>146</sup> It is here where Taylor overlaps with Habermas to a degree – both present engaging in the public sphere as a constructive endeavour. Yet the focus is different for Taylor than it is for Habermas. While Habermas was interested in how public discourse

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<sup>144</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 755.

<sup>145</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 509.

<sup>146</sup> Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 2.

informed political institutions and activity, Taylor is interested in how public discourse helps shape conceptions of society at large and the role these conceptions play in identity. Taylor, then, looks to a deeper level of identity for analysis. While Habermas is content to discuss public expression and communication, Taylor looks to the sources that inform our public stances and the issues themselves that arise. This is why Taylor's depiction of selfhood is more nuanced and functions at a more intimate level than Habermas' does.

Taylor describes how forming a social imaginary, much like selfhood, is a constructive process that hinges upon people's interactions, traditions, and worldviews. Like the process for selfhood, creating a social imaginary can be disruptive. "What we imagine can be something new, constructive, opening new possibilities, or it can be purely fictitious, perhaps dangerously false."<sup>147</sup> Taylor cites Western superiority, the regular persecution of others, and the over-reliance on scapegoats as potential dark sides of modern social imaginations which rear their heads all too frequently.<sup>148</sup> However, to have a potential pitfall simply means we must be careful when constructing society. We cannot take for granted things will work out for the better, instead we have to strive for creating an ideal society. This is how society and selfhood are interrelated, having deep wells of value for selfhood can also take form in people's political engagement, thus promoting a society based on well-rooted notions of the good. Political movements can unite people despite the deep diversity of modern societies.<sup>149</sup> This is a challenge as society may by and large be seen as impersonal and the people that make it up independent.<sup>150</sup> However, Taylor

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<sup>147</sup> Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 183.

<sup>148</sup> Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 183.

<sup>149</sup> Taylor, *Malaise of Modernity*, 119.

<sup>150</sup> Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 150-152.

counters these difficulties by relating to people's engagement in society by and large. "Moreover, we relate to this order as established in our civilization the way people have always related to their most fundamental sense of order: we have both a sense of security in believing that it is really in effect in our world and also a sense of our own superiority and goodness deriving from our participation in it and our upholding of it."<sup>151</sup> Thus in a circuitous manner the sources for selfhood can be used to create a better society, while taking an active part in creating a better society can serve as a source of meaning for one's own selfhood. As such, society is not simply the context and frame where projects of self-definition undergo, it is an integral aspect of identity.

From Taylor's analysis we can derive a strong case for selfhood to be a dynamic, ongoing, constructive effort, which needs certain sources for it to be a worthwhile endeavour. Taylor describes these sources (the good, religion, nature, and so on) yet he acknowledges that there are hurdles which prevent us from extracting value from them. The stark individualism of modernity, the devouring consumerism which coincides with the materialistic focus of a market society, and the disengaged instrumental reasoning all contribute to an interpretive frame vulnerable to meaninglessness. While Habermas tries to address the challenges of modernity through institutions and public debate, Taylor attempts to address how we may reconnect with potent, meaningful sources. Taylor argues we cannot simply reinstate a past worldview with regards to a sacred understanding of the

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<sup>151</sup> Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 182.

world. Instead, meaning will come from creative processes which continue to adapt and change to the needs of those constructing their identity.

We cannot expect there will be one endpoint, one vision of the good that supersedes all selves, rather there are “limitless” potential avenues of exploration.<sup>152</sup> Taylor argues we must root such processes in past sources for significance, but that they be reinterpreted, redescribed, and rearticulated, by current projects for self-definition. Selfhood is meaningful when it escapes the rigidity and stagnation of merely adhering to past worldviews without adapting them to current contexts. By highlighting diversity, community, and a manner in which to make traditions flexible for current complex societies it is clear that Taylor's descriptions of selfhood align with many of the demands for a multicultural society. Next I will consider how Paul Ricoeur's ethical discussion of the self and the Other complements Taylor's authentic self. While Taylor does consider tradition and community as important sources for one's own self construction, he does not develop a detailed hermeneutic of the interaction between one's self and the Other. For this task we will have to turn to Ricoeur. As we shall see Taylor and Ricoeur offer a strong foundation for our later explorations of new models for public discourse when we consider translation as a bridge between secularism and religion in Chapters Four and Five.

### **3.6 Identity as Narrative**

Like Taylor, Paul Ricoeur considers identity construction to be challenging. For Ricoeur, identity is not only a project for the individual, it is carried out through connections and

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<sup>152</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 455.



interactions with others.<sup>153</sup> In *Oneself as Another* Ricoeur analyses the ethical and philosophical aspects of identity and Otherness. For this project Ricoeur turns to interpretation theory to frame selfhood. This is because: “Knowledge of the self is an interpretation.”<sup>154</sup> As an interpretation self-construction faces various challenges. A crucial facet of how we interpret selfhood is through a fundamental tension between identity as sameness (*idem*) and identity as selfhood (*ipse*).<sup>155</sup> Selfhood is not reducible to sameness nor vice versa, although we are often tempted to treat them as equivalent.<sup>156</sup> The irreducibility of selfhood to sameness thus becomes Ricoeur's primary hurdle so that any

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<sup>153</sup> For Ricoeur, the ethical and philosophical connection between one person and another through recognition is a deeply complex issue that he examines from different angles throughout his writing. He places this in the forefront of two books, *Oneself as Another* and *The Politics of Recognition*, though he approaches it slightly differently in each. Morny Joy discusses the progression of Ricoeurian thought on recognition when she notes that in *Oneself as Another* Ricoeur discusses recognition in terms of “both solicitude for one’s friends and a passion for justice of those who are at a distance.” In: Morny Joy, “Paul Ricoeur, Solicitude, Love, and the Gift,” in *Phenomenology and Religion: New Frontiers*, eds. Jonna Bornemark and Hans Ruin (Huddinge: Södertörn, 2010), 87. Ricoeur takes the position that one can expand their mutual relationship with the Other through empathy and responsibility toward all humanity. Ricoeur argues that one can extrapolate this process from self-esteem to mutual recognition: “I cannot myself have self-esteem unless I esteem others *as myself*. ‘As myself’ means that you too are capable of starting something in the world, of acting for a reason, of hierarchizing your priorities, of evaluating the ends of your actions, and having done this, of holding yourself in esteem as I hold myself in esteem.” In: Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 193. Thus recognition is intertwined with self-interpretation and it expands outward to any other person. In: *The Politics of Recognition* Ricoeur shifts his focus from the interpretation of the self and the Other and turns to the political, public realm of institutions and concepts such as justice and equality (as described in: Joy, “Paul Ricoeur. Solicitude, Love and the Gift,” 90-91). Ricoeur maintains the Other must be conceptually understood as irreplaceable balancing the need to emphasize people in the public sphere are actual living beings while maintaining enough abstraction to compensate for discussions on pluralism, multiculturalism, and diversity that are deeply steeped in the specifics of particularity (see: Joy, “Paul Ricoeur. Solicitude, Love and the Gift,” 92-93). Though Ricoeur’s use of terms such as “mutuality” and “recognition” progress and display significant nuance throughout his works I will only myself differentiate between his usage if it is particularly relevant to the analysis at hand. Otherwise, I will use his terms and body of work interchangeably in order to address the primary issue I am concerned with here: the tension between identity and engagement in the public sphere.

<sup>154</sup> Paul Ricoeur, “Narrative Identity,” in *Philosophy Today* 35.1 (1991): 73.

<sup>155</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 116.

<sup>156</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 116.

interpretation of selfhood can have lasting effects despite the fact that we as people do change over time.

The term “sameness” implies: “does not change over time.” Yet if one were to meet a childhood friend as an adult one would expect the friend to have changed over that stretch of time, but no one would dispute that he or she is the same person. In order to have a theory of the self that is not dissipated by any and every change one has to account for the dialectic between *idem* and *ipse*. It is through “permanence in time” that Ricoeur brings these two concepts together.<sup>157</sup> Sameness infers permanence – as does selfhood; so there is the concept of continuity in both terms. While sameness and selfhood are not equal, there is some overlap between them.

In order to address the overlap more deeply Ricoeur introduces his theory of narrative identity. Although in stories characters, events, and context can change we still understand the narrative as a whole. With this in mind Ricoeur states, “the polarity I am going to examine suggests an intervention of narrative in the conceptual constitution of personal identity in the manner of a specific mediator between the character, where *idem* and *ipse* tend to coincide, and the pole of self-maintenance, where selfhood frees itself from sameness.”<sup>158</sup> Narrative not only brings together different aspects of identity (like *idem* and *ipse*) but it also serves for self-maintenance as Ricoeur calls it: the ongoing interpretive function where people can grow or develop their selfhood without losing a sense of continuity.

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<sup>157</sup> Ricoeur, “Narrative Identity,” 75.

<sup>158</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 118-119.

Narrative is able to alleviate tensions of continuity amidst change through how we conceptualize stories. For Ricoeur, narrative offers a promising method for interpreting and knowing what selfhood is. Stories are not only similar to selfhood, we understand ourselves and our place in the world through stories that allow us to process self-definition: “narrative fiction, is an irreducible dimension of *the understanding of the self*. If it is true that fiction cannot be completed other than in life, and that life cannot be understood other than through stories we tell about it, then we are led to say that a life *examined*, in the sense borrowed from Socrates, is a life *narrated*.”<sup>159</sup> Ricoeur uses narrative to describe how selfhood does not have to be paired with sameness as does-not-change-over-time to maintain its cogency. Just as a narrative twists and turns, effectively changing throughout plot developments, a person’s self changes over time yet maintains its cohesion nonetheless.

Ricoeur further analyses selfhood alongside the narrative concept of character. Characters are who we relate to in the story and they form examples of agents like ourselves who communicate, desire, and act.<sup>160</sup> Through the communications, desires, and actions of a character we watch as the protagonist traverses a particular story. It is through the passage of events and emplotment that the character becomes known to the reader: “the narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told. The identity of the story makes the identity of the character.”<sup>161</sup> This narrative structure for understanding personhood can then be transposed

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<sup>159</sup> Paul Ricoeur, “Life: A Story in Search of a Narrator,” in *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, eds. Mario J. Valdes (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 435.

<sup>160</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 145.

<sup>161</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 147-8.

to anyone who recognizes themselves as a character, or one who has traversed a life story.<sup>162</sup> In this way, narrative serves as the medium for interpreting selfhood. As Ricoeur puts it, “We equate life to the story or stories we tell about it.”<sup>163</sup> Thus selfhood is not bound by stringent sameness; it is constituted by life expressed within an ongoing narrative.

Through Ricoeur's analysis of narrative identity it becomes clear that selfhood is not static; rather, it is the outcome of self-understanding within the context of one's life. Ricoeur, then, does not need to establish the sources for selfhood as Taylor does or go through historical trends in collective consciousness throughout the recent history of the West. Instead, he looks to personal identity within the frame of narrative. This is not to say Ricoeur dismisses traditions and other inspirations which impact meaning, however, he does not focus on interpreting large ideological movements and developments. Instead, Ricoeur undertakes a more intimate project as he turns to the interpretation of characters which is transposed to personal identity.

The connection between identity and narrative provides a solid foundation for Ricoeur to explore his more ambitious project, to develop a hermeneutic of selfhood in relation to the Other. For Ricoeur, otherness is not simply “other than self” it is best understood dialectically.<sup>164</sup> He acknowledges this idea is in the title of his book *Oneself as Another*: “It is quite different when one pairs together otherness and selfhood. A kind of otherness that is not (or not merely) the result of comparison is suggested by our title,

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<sup>162</sup> Ricoeur, “Narrative Identity,” 78-79.

<sup>163</sup> Ricoeur, “Narrative Identity,” 77.

<sup>164</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 3.

otherness of a kind that can be constitutive of selfhood as such.”<sup>165</sup> What Ricoeur is developing is the notion that the meaning of the self is not separate from the meaning of an Other. The terms are connected conceptually and constitutively.<sup>166</sup> In one sense, it is because they are different that they help define one another. Similar to a metaphor, the contrast between different selves can allow for a constructive project to form meaning out of juxtaposition.<sup>167</sup> As this is the case, it is the distinction between the self and the Other which may serve as a crux for self-definition. Jonathan Z. Smith argues that understanding develops from encounters with difference: “in culture as in language, it is difference that generates meaning.”<sup>168</sup> While Ricoeur does not focus on difference itself to understand selfhood, he does turn to the link between different entities for his analysis.

This link is implied in the term *as* (as in *Oneself as Another*) and it is a theme that arises in other works by Ricoeur as well. Ricoeur argues that the dialectic of self and Other can be framed in semantic terms, “Alone among the operators of identification, the indicators aim at the 'I' and the 'you,' but they do so by the same token as the deictic terms, because they retain their reference to the utterance, understood as an event in the world.”<sup>169</sup> The superficially different references between naming oneself or another person (“I” and “you”) are connected in that they are “indicators on the same level.”<sup>170</sup> Subjective

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<sup>165</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 3.

<sup>166</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 317.

<sup>167</sup> Turning to the field of linguistics Ricoeur notes that this is how the process of metaphors unfolds. Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of the Metaphor*. Trans. Robert Czerny, Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 98-99.

<sup>168</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith, “Close Encounters of a Diverse Kind,” In *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion*, 316.

<sup>169</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 30.

<sup>170</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 30.

perception and cognitive frames for difference between people, then, are within the same semantic frame, function in the same manner, and even maintain a common context – the event of the utterance.

Ricoeur uses the notion of discourse as an event to push the dialectic connection between the self and the Other further.<sup>171</sup> He points out that speech itself is a connection between different people: “The self-designation of the speaking subject is produced in interlocutory situations where the reflectivity is combined with otherness. The speech is pronounced by someone is a speech act addressed to someone else. What is more, it often is a response to a call from others.”<sup>172</sup> Therefore referents, “I” and “you” serve to bring otherness and selfhood into the same plane while language itself presupposes a meaningful connection between distinct people. It is through language Ricoeur begins to demonstrate how we can dialectically perceive a connection between the Self and the Other. This, however, is not the end goal of Ricoeur's analysis as he will further establish the link between the self and the Other through action and ethics.

### **3.7 Action and Ethics**

Ricoeur first establishes a link between action and selfhood, then action and the Other. It is a common saying that one is defined by his or her actions. While identity is an interpretive endeavour, self-definition is related to action. Ricoeur turns to Aristotle's term “coresponsible” to describe how our decisions and our nature form our character in

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<sup>171</sup> Ricoeur describes discourse as an event in: *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: The Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 9.

<sup>172</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, trans. David Pellauer (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 2005), 96.

synergy.<sup>173</sup> The choices one makes result in actions, which in turn take part in the constitution of the self, “the physical and mental characteristics *belong* to the person, that the latter *possesses* them.”<sup>174</sup> We take possession of our actions by ascribing an action to our self. A process at its height when one is able to justify how and why an action was performed.<sup>175</sup>

Ricoeur next demonstrates how action and possession play a crucial role in self-definition. The dialectic between the potential to act and the actuality of having acted forms an important tension for selfhood. In fact, it is this dyad that brings Ricoeur as close as he is willing to get to any kind of ontic status of selfhood, “if there is a being of the self – in other words, if an ontology of selfhood is possible – this is in conjunction with a ground starting from which the self can be said to be *acting*.”<sup>176</sup> Acting is the realization of potential for a character to impact the world or to react to circumstances. It is because of the ability for people to willfully act in a manner that impacts others that actions can be justifiably “submitted to public evaluation and approval.”<sup>177</sup> What kinds of actions someone is capable of, or capable of justifying, are informed by a variety of factors such as context, family, social norms, and so on.<sup>178</sup> Being capable of acting, and which actions one chooses to actually enact, influence one's self-definition significantly. While action

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<sup>173</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 94.

<sup>174</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 94.

<sup>175</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 95.

<sup>176</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 308.

<sup>177</sup> Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, 154.

<sup>178</sup> Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, 138.

performs a key role in self-definition, it will also serve as a crucial component of the connection between the self and the Other.

One manner in which action brings together the self and the Other is through attribution. Ricoeur notes that any ascription of an action begins with the basic axiom that someone (or anyone) has performed an action. This is what he calls the “neutralizing ascription” and it is from this position one is able to either self-designate or not.<sup>179</sup> We know (usually) whether we committed an act or if we did not. Next, one can infer that an action could be performed by someone other than oneself. If I did not leave the tap running, someone else must have. This is what gives attribution relevance, it can oscillate between selfhood and another. Through designating actions to agents selfhood and otherness exist in a dialectic that is interconnected and interwoven. This connection is further demonstrated when Ricoeur considers the kinds of actions and consequences of them.

He associates such notions of action with power by analyzing the Hegelian frame for relationships: “Starting from this otherness, I can *reign over*.”<sup>180</sup> Such a position is difficult to deny as most people acknowledge, at the very least in principle, they themselves can be reigned over. However, for Ricoeur, he does not turn to power and control as a means of best framing interpersonal relationships. Instead, he turns to the manner in which actions can be attributed to another, “the word of the other comes to be placed at the origin of my acts. Self-imputation... is now inscribed within an asymmetrical dialogic structure whose origin lies outside me.”<sup>181</sup> It is, therefore, an interplay of connections between being

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<sup>179</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 98.

<sup>180</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 324.

<sup>181</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 336.



on the receiving end of consequences and actions designated to another and having the ability to act in a manner that affects others that provides a connection between action, selfhood, and the Other. Having established that consequences and acting have important implications for otherness, Ricoeur ties this dialectic alongside his theory of narrative identity to form an ethic of the self.

We have already seen that Taylor presents the good as a key concept for any discussion of selfhood.<sup>182</sup> Ricoeur takes a similar (yet different) approach of weaving together self-identity and ethics. Ethics, for Ricoeur, is “the good” applied – or morality in action. In this way Ricoeur is able to use his foundations of narrative and action and apply them to the field of ethics. In doing so ethics is placed at the apex in his dialectic between selfhood and otherness. Ricoeur establishes the connection between narrative and ethics by the ability to relate a story to one's life. We have already discussed how through placing oneself in a story one is able to maintain a consistent identity throughout the changes that occur (equated to plot and character development). What I will consider now is how narrative produces a frame for the interpretation of actions and events into ethical terms.

Ricoeur articulates how narrative, character, and identity relate: “In narrativizing the aim of the true life, narrative identity gives it the recognizable features of characters loved or respected. Narrative identity makes the two ends of the chain link up with one another: the permanence in time of character and that of self-constancy.”<sup>183</sup> The two links of the chain Ricoeur refers to allows for a tension between time and self-constancy to play

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<sup>182</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 3.

<sup>183</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 166.

out in one's life. The interplay between these two poles have a formative role in providing the constitution for what one considers the “good life.”<sup>184</sup> This is ultimately expressed in what Ricoeur describes as “narrative unity” which he explicates as: “The idea of the narrative unity of a life therefore serves to assure us that the subject of ethics is none other than the one to whom the narrative assigns a narrative identity.”<sup>185</sup> By attributing ethics to the self, through narrative, selfhood and narration are intertwined. This tension can be seen in multicultural discourse when there is a desire for the state to maintain its core values in the wake of a changing population. The national values must face the challenges of change that come with time, even though some may resist this. At the same time, any narrativizing project can provide a person meaning for his or her own identity.<sup>186</sup> This meaning-making dynamic of self-definition then forms a crucial component of an ethics of the self. Such a theory, though, only forms the basis for the relation between the self and the Other. As we shall see, Ricoeur does take the time to address this dialectic in a more extensive manner.

The strength of framing identity in terms of narrative is that it puts one in a position to understand oneself in relation to time and change. Yet, this is a reflexive process which also in turn marks an important step in overcoming the gap between oneself and the Other. The process develops in a circuitous manner in that reflection upon the self leads to reflection upon the other, which finally turns back to the self. Richard Kearney explicitly describes Ricoeur's theory of selfhood and the Other as a hermeneutic and cyclical process:

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<sup>184</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 179.

<sup>185</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 178.

<sup>186</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 179.

“In the most positive hermeneutic scenario, the self returns to itself after numerous hermeneutic detours through the language of others, to find itself enlarged and enriched by the journey.”<sup>187</sup> Thus, reflection upon the self and reflection upon the Other are connected in that they inevitably lead to one another. We can refer to this dimension of the self as the ‘transactional self’ as it is developed and constructed through a series of interactions with other people.

Ricoeur does not end with circuitous reflection – he asserts the transactional self also functions at a deeper level. This deeper level is on the plane of similitude, it is here that one may proclaim, “I esteem others *as* myself.”<sup>188</sup> Whereas Ricoeur defines similitude as “the fruit of the exchange between esteem for oneself and solicitude for others.”<sup>189</sup> Ricoeur then builds on this connection by exploring the tension between substitution and separation. As language presents cases of “nonsubstitutibility” (I cannot refer to anyone other than myself when I use the term “I”) while “solicitude adds the dimension of value” in that being separate from another affirms affection and esteem for oneself.<sup>190</sup> This culminates in deeper separations: “In this respect, it is the experiencing the irreparable loss of the loved other that we learn, through the transfer of the other onto ourselves, the irreplaceable character of our own life.”<sup>191</sup> Though affection is built up while being with another, separation allows one to fully appreciate the value of that shared bond. This

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<sup>187</sup> Richard Kearney, *On Paul Ricoeur: The Owl of Minerva* (Boston: Ashgate, 2004), 2.

<sup>188</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 193.

<sup>189</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 193.

<sup>190</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 193.

<sup>191</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 193.

appreciation of value for an Other can then be applied to the self, increasing self-esteem as we understand what it means to be deemed valuable.

As Ricoeur argues it is the experience of the other that allows one to develop a self-definition in a meaningful manner, “In the hypothesis that I am alone, this experience could never be totalized without the help of the other who helps me to gather myself together, strengthen myself, and maintain myself in my identity.”<sup>192</sup> It is the valuation attributed to self that is interdependent on experience with, and interpretation of, relationships to others. This entire process hinges upon solicitude.<sup>193</sup> Empathy allows us to extend understanding, recognition, and ethics in relation to the Other. With such a foundation in place, Ricoeur demonstrates how these transactions can inform an intricate system of ethics. For this task Ricoeur discusses the role of mutuality and reciprocity.

### **3.8 Reciprocity and Mutuality**

In order for Ricoeur's theory of identity to fully address ethics and the dialectic between the self and the Other he has to establish more than mere interdependence between these two concepts. While value is built up in Ricoeur's tension between solidarity and esteem, to apply this to the good life he must explore how we derive the good from our interactions with the Other. Ricoeur addresses this point when he considers in what manner a connection between the self and the Other is good for both parties.<sup>194</sup> How one treats the

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<sup>192</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 332.

<sup>193</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 192.

<sup>194</sup> Kearney describes Ricoeur's use of ethics as a teleological endeavour as opposed to a deontological one, which he ascribes to morality, Ricoeur does not ignore morality but he favours ethics and gives it the position of prominence for theoretical importance in: *On Paul Ricoeur*.

Other depends upon an understanding that the other has value *and* adds value to one's own self. As we have come to appreciate, this process is an interpretive endeavour.

How a person understands the Other impacts how he or she understands him/herself. Yet perception and knowledge of the Other is a multifaceted venture. Ricoeur states that: "I have always known that the other is not an object of thought but, like me, a subject of thought, that he perceives me as other than himself, that together we intend the world as a common nature, that together, as well, we build communities of persons capable of behaving, in their turn, on the scene of history as personalities of a higher order."<sup>195</sup> Perception, then, while in some ways individualistic, is also intersubjective. Similar to Taylor's critique of any individualism that does not account for other people, traditions, or external sources for selfhood; Ricoeur notes that self-understanding and self-definition are implicated with interdependencies and various transactions with other people. Next, he turns to the ramifications of these interdependencies: that perception, and therefore recognition, are extensions of our connections to others.

While self-definition is an important and complicated process, to understand an Other adds a whole new dimension to it. This is what Ricoeur tackles in his theory of recognition. That recognition is an important concept becomes apparent once we realize how misrecognition can so easily become perpetually reinforcing: "We do not mistake ourselves without also being mistaken about others and our relations to them."<sup>196</sup> By failing to recognize oneself, others are misconstrued and eventually even the social order is

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<sup>195</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 332.

<sup>196</sup> Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, 257.

disrupted. As a result, any interaction between the Other and the self are subsequently skewed. In order to overcome misrecognition Ricoeur calls for mutual recognition where the self and the Other exist in a transactional relationship that is beneficial to one another. Furthermore, the connection between each is acknowledged and the merits of this process are had by all. As we shall see there are both political and cognitive hurdles to achieving this kind of recognition.

In political struggles for recognition the focus is not on constructing an authentic or valuable self-understanding, rather one attempts to have others properly understand one's own self. Often such struggles are also tied to political power or pragmatic outcomes. In the public sphere recognition may be difficult to achieve due to ideological and sociological factors. In the political sphere selfhood now has to face the challenge of misinterpretation by an Other, but the Other we are talking about becomes both more specific and more erratic – it represents the other people involved in the political sphere, whomever they may be. Furthermore the frame for a political identity is often presented in terms of a “struggle” or a “fight”. This kind of rhetoric is problematized by Ricoeur. He does not see any fruitful outcomes that will emerge from a process of recognition built upon struggle. This is not to say that misrecognition does not occur or that convincing others to recognize the value in different identities is not difficult. Rather, Ricoeur wants to shift the focus of the debate from struggle to something more constructive.

One promising response to the frame of political identity and struggle, Ricoeur notes, is to reframe the process. He would rather we understand recognition dialectically as he notes, “the investigation of mutual recognition can be summed up as a struggle against misrecognition of others at the same time that it is a struggle for recognition of oneself by

others.”<sup>197</sup> Mutuality, as we shall see, serves as the foundation for recognition. Mutual recognition is fully realized when both parties are able to acknowledge and appreciate themselves and the Other. So Ricoeur replaces the concept of struggle with that of mutuality. This can be seen in Ricoeur’s emphasis on mutual recognition: “the process of mutual recognition is to be sought in peaceful experiences of mutual recognition, based on symbolic mediations as exempt from the juridical as from the commercial order of exchange.”<sup>198</sup> The symbolic mediations Ricoeur is referring to is gift-giving which will serve as an important crux at the dialectic between recognition of oneself and recognition of the Other.

For Ricoeur, gift-giving is an example that provides insight into mutual recognition. At the surface, gifting is based upon exchange as one person is presented with a gift and the receiver returns in kind. Yet, at another level, each gift is a means of affirming the Other as valuable and deserving of one’s possessions. At this point one may note that the value of a gift need not be framed in terms of mere materialism. If the gift represents affirmation of the Other, the symbol for self-worth and others-worth is a token and the gift itself points to something beyond its material value. Another critique of gifting is that it is prone to disingenuous giving, it is rather done out of obligation or social pressure. However, Ricoeur demonstrates that the symbolism of gift-giving does not end at the point of duty – rather gifting itself can serve as the cornerstone of our interpretation and meaning of recognition:

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<sup>197</sup> Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, 258.

<sup>198</sup> Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, 219.

The paradox of the gift and the gift in return will constitute in this regard the polemical site par excellence where the unilateralness of *agape* will be able to exercise its critical function with regard to a logic of reciprocity that transcends the discrete acts of individuals in the situation of an exchange of gifts. In this way, the ground will be cleared for an interpretation of mutuality of the gift founded on the idea of symbolic recognition.<sup>199</sup>

Ricoeur ascertains that the symbolic value in giving is not in the materiality of the process, but rather the action. This allows for an interpretation of giving that connects selfhood to others. As we have seen throughout our discussion of Ricoeur, he notes there is a great deal of weight to actions. In this case, the gift transaction serves as an interpretation of mutuality and presents a symbolic act of recognition. As an interpretation and symbol the key factors of Ricoeur's theory are expressed indirectly, but aptly, through giving.

Ricoeur turns to the dialectic tension between receiving and giving to address the notion of genuine giving versus mere responsiveness. In a crass manner gifting may be done superficially, however, there is potential to recognize a deeper meaning in the process if we approach it from a certain angle. Ricoeur suggests that the tension between *agape* (selfless love) and justice offers an insight into gifts which highlight a particular interpretation of giving as an event. "The dialectic of love and justice takes place precisely through this disproportion, which continues up to the paradox of the gift returned. And it is again on the level of language that its discordant dialectic can be apprehended: *agape* declares itself, proclaims itself; justice makes arguments."<sup>200</sup> Instead of acting to fulfill a sense of justice, giving can be better understood through the implementation of *agape*.

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<sup>199</sup> Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, 220.

<sup>200</sup> Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, 223.



*Agape* transcends the need to make arguments or place oneself in a better position. In this way, *agape* brings together Ricoeur's theory of ethics from narration and action to the point of mutuality. As we shall see, Ricoeur's theory of mutuality is complemented by his focus on ethics which culminates in his analysis of reciprocity.

The final stage of Ricoeur's analysis of selfhood concerns the link between the self, the Other, and the good. In order to culminate his analysis of ethics Ricoeur notes the Golden Rule serves as a cross-cultural referent and it is highly esteemed in its various inceptions throughout the world. This is phenomena he refers to as the norm of reciprocity.<sup>201</sup> It may be stated in negative terms (do not do to others what you do not want to be done to you) or in the active, or passive voice – but the common factor in all these iterations is the emphasis on reciprocity. In sum, our actions toward others should reflect how we want others to act in accordance with ourselves. Ricoeur has taken a great deal of effort to demonstrate that one's self is connected to the Other, so it is fairly clear that this rule aligns with Ricoeur's theory of selfhood. If a person's selfhood is constructed and defined in a narrative that is interwoven with others then he or she ought to treat others in a manner that is good since the Other effects his or her own self-identity and he or she impacts others in turn. It is through this process of transaction and its ethical implications that otherness is defined in a manner where distinctions are not what determine us, rather our connections do.

Ricoeur uses this construct to eliminate difference in one sense: “Introduced as the mediating term between the diversity of persons, the notion of humanity as the effect of

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<sup>201</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 219.

lessening, to the point of eliminating, the otherness that is at the root of diversity, otherness which is dramatized in the dissymmetrical relation of the power one will holds over another, opposed by the Golden Rule.”<sup>202</sup> While power discrepancies and actual diversity between people exists, reciprocity remains a powerful concept to underscore the connection between selfhood, otherness, and the ethical dimension of this dialectic. Reciprocity then, serves as a means of bringing together various threads of Ricoeur's analysis; recognition, gift-giving, and *agape*. With reciprocity as the ethical foundation for social interaction and relating to the other, the different themes of Ricoeur's theoretical work hold together.

Ricoeur, furthermore, considers reciprocity from another angle: instead of merely addressing the ethical implications of a connection to otherness he also argues that we need others for any ethical system to exist at all. It is through interaction with an Other that our choices and actions are actualized in terms of treatment of the Other. Thus to act morally means to act morally toward another person, giving morality a depth that it would not have if we only considered actions with regards to one's own self. “I am speaking here of goodness: it is, in fact, noteworthy that in many languages goodness is at one and the same time the ethical quality of the aims of action and the orientation of the person toward others, as though an action could not be held good unless it were done on behalf of others, out of *regard* for others.”<sup>203</sup> In this way ethical discourse hinges on otherness. As such, Ricoeur's discussion of the good feeds into his analysis of selfhood and Others, which in turn feeds

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<sup>202</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 223.

<sup>203</sup> Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 189.

into his discussion of reciprocity – the crucial concept in any ethical discourse. Again, the dialectic and circuitry of concepts bounce off one another, build off one another and even leads us to a position where any theory of selfhood seems impoverished if does not take into account the interwoven dimension of otherness, actions, and ethics.

### **3.9 The Self and the Public Sphere**

Now that we have considered identity construction in a pluralistic society, in the next chapter we can turn to questions of social constructions. In the following chapters we will consider how individuals negotiate identity in a pluralistic, secular society. Such negotiations are carried out in a number of ways; however, diversity seems to be a key catalyst for questions and redefinitions concerning identity. It is through contrast and difference that we challenge our assumptions and are able to consider new perspectives. Through synthesis, identities can be hybridized by incorporating facets of the Other into their own self-construction. Or, in a reactive manner, one may reject the Other and strive for a firmer sense of self through processes of conservatism or isolationism. In this manner the connection between cultural diversity within a particular society can have a resounding impact on individuals and communities. We need not be overly alarmist as diversity has many merits and values associated with it as well. It is imperative that we bring together in a focused way aspects of the existing discourse on religious diversity, identity construction, political theory and the overlaps and interpretations that take place between them.

Identity construction can be understood as a hermeneutic endeavour. A self is built up through one's interpretative frame regarding one's actions and narratives as well as one's relation to others. The process is regularly carried out in the public sphere where Habermas'

desire for universalism and mutual consensus still have a strong foothold. Yet, the basis for this foothold can be challenged. Habermas' definition of rationality needs to be more expansive and fluid to account for different kinds of rationalities. Universalism also must make way for other notions such as authenticity and recognition that better handle differences and particularism. Even the agents engaging in the political sphere need redefinition concerning what we mean by autonomy and a renewed emphasis on the transactional self informed by interconnections between people, communities, and traditions. How to redescribe people and their relationships to one another is a central theme for both Charles Taylor and Paul Ricoeur.<sup>204</sup> Each look to various sources to inform our self construction, be it Taylor's appreciation for the good or Ricoeur's analysis of the self and the Other. Both complement Habermas' communicative action so that we may understand the agents in the public sphere in a more complex and genuine manner.

Religion serves as a catalyst which brings different worldviews, selfhoods, communities, traditions, and models for political engagement into political processes. Once one has considered how meaningful identities can be constructed through Taylor's analysis of different sources and the dialectic relationship between selfhood and otherness in Ricoeur's hermeneutical study of identity one is better equipped to consider public discourse as different worldviews collide. The actors and the interwoven relation between participants in discourse can be appreciated in a more nuanced manner. Furthermore, we can directly access presuppositions or underlying worldviews as well as the connections

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<sup>204</sup> The notion of redescription will come into fruition when we consider the role of religion in the public sphere in Chapter Five, section 5.8 "Religion and Secularism Redescribing One Another."

between people at a deeper level than we can without such insight. It is important for the public sphere to provide an ethical interpretation of the Other and the self and to do so we will require a method for developing interpretations between worldviews. In the following chapter we shall consider such a method. We cannot simply relegate difference out of our political discussions or force it to conform to one model for engagement as it is different sources which constitute our selves in tandem with the Other which forms an important facet of our own identity. In the same way we form the Other's identity through our actions and interpretations of the Other. Ultimately, such an undertaking should provide a more grounded and dynamic means to construct and frame the political sphere.

## Chapter Four: **The Translation Proviso**

### **4.1 Better to Translate than to Never Communicate at All**

So far I have been attempting to address the tension that arises when we have difference in the same space; specifically diversity in the public sphere. Multiculturalism remains the prominent frame for the public sphere amidst pluralism. As a construct multiculturalism resolves some issues, but it raises others. By and large multiculturalism is framed in legalistic language where accommodation, national cohesion, and consensus are potent ideals. Yet, each of these ideals limit our ability to recognize difference, particularism, and the fluidity of many cultures. As a way forward I turned briefly to metaphoric juxtaposition of models for society; although, if we are going to reconceptualise the public sphere we need to consider how we are going to understand the agents who act in it. Through Charles Taylor and Paul Ricoeur it became apparent that identity is a complex, nuanced concept. For Taylor identity hinges upon community, tradition, and an authentic reinterpretation of various sources at one's disposal for self construction. Ricoeur adds to this by highlighting the interconnection between one's self as the Other in both hermeneutic and ethical terms. How we engage those different from ourselves is not only an important question for the public sphere, but also for questions concerning identity and morality on a foundational level. In this chapter I will consider difference in the same space with regards to the interactions between different worldviews and communities.

If we are to have interaction between divergent worldviews we require some kind of process to facilitate it. As we have seen, religion informs people's identity which is connected to how they perceive others and how we construct our social imaginaries as a

whole. At the same time, today the public sphere is predominantly understood as a secular space. Since religion deeply informs people's identity and the constructed public sphere which is infused with secularism, there is a disconnect between an important dimension of selfhood and our public space. I will argue that we can overcome this disconnection through translation. This is because translation allows for meaningful nuanced and non-reductionist interaction between different languages, contexts, and worldviews. Since we have religion and secularism operating within the same space we can turn to translation to facilitate the oscillation of meaning and dialectic exchanges between these two paradigms.

It is worth taking a moment here to consider what is meant by translation for our purposes. The answer to this question can be very complicated. As we shall see, translation is a deeply involved and multifaceted procedure. But, at its base, translation is to make something intelligible or understandable. However, the term also denotes movement. *Trans* is derived from the Latin term for through, between, or beyond. Translation, then, can be understood as the process of moving meaning from one space to another. In practice, one transfers meaning from a language, context, or culture to another. Textual and linguistic translation will serve as examples throughout this chapter in order to elucidate specific aspects of translation, but it is worth noting that the goal in analysing translation is to apply it to communication between divergent worldviews. With this in mind, I will consider two particularly crucial facets of translation, concepts which are frequently found in tension with one another: equivocation and relevance.

On one pole, equivocation directs us to how different words are alike. If the French term *roi* is properly understood to be equivalent to the English *king* then we have a sense of similitude between the two words. Yet, this may be complicated when we consider

relevance which is what makes equivocation meaningful. Relevance according to Meriam Webster means relation to the matter at hand. Therefore relevance offers us the means to address the context and depth and particularity of any equivocation. That is to say, which king? Or is kingship the same thing in French as it is in English? Relevance challenges us to question the limits and dimensions of our proposed equivocation. The dynamic pull between these two facets of translation will inform any work which actually attempts to transfer meaning from one context to another. This is no mere trifle, interpretation hinges upon properly balancing these two concepts.

Take for example the classic tale of King of Lydian, Croesus who visits the Pythia at Delphi to ask if he will reign for a long time. She responds: “When the Medes have a mule as King... Flee and do not stay, and do not be ashamed to be a coward.”<sup>1</sup> Croesus interprets this to mean that he will be king for as long as possible since a mule could never become a king. By interpreting the prophesy in that manner he failed to fully consider the role of equivocation. The term mule and Croesus' main rival do have a connection – Cyrus was born to a low-class father and could therefore be called a mule by anyone insensitive enough to take advantage of that particular colloquialism. Furthermore, Croesus failed to catch the relevance of the prophesy; he was in fact served a riddle, not a simple prediction. Based upon his misinterpretation “life or death, the survival or destruction of a kingdom could all depend on the outcome.”<sup>2</sup> Obviously not all translations have quite so much at

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<sup>1</sup> This prophesy is itself translated and retold by Frederick G. Naerebout and Kim Beerden in: “Gods Cannot Tell Lies”: Riddling and Ancient Greek Divination,” in *Beiträge zur Altertumskunde: Muse at Play: Riddles and Wordplay in Greek and Latin Poetry*, eds. Jan Kwapisz, David Petrain, Mikolaj Szymanski, (Munich: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 125.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick G. Naerebout and Kim Beerden, “Gods Cannot Tell Lies,” 126.



stake in such a direct manner. Yet, the interplay between equivalence and relevance remains. And the task to properly interpret meaning and carry it forth, whatever the consequences may be, is dependent upon the translator. As this procedure is threatened by misinterpretation it is crucial to consider the requirements of translation so that when we use it in the public sphere we can be sure to achieve effective communication. Furthermore, we must devise some kind of method for successfully navigating the perilous waters of translation at large. I will argue here that translation is both required for the incorporation of religion into the public sphere, and that it will benefit participants.

#### **4.2 Habermas' Translation Proviso**

Translation has the potential to be a potent concept for public discourse. Habermas argues that if we are to have religious and secular worldviews in the same space we must turn to translation. As we have seen, the public sphere as it is currently conceived is limited in its ability to truly incorporate difference. Yet the religious/secular divide within society is a tension that strains politically active individuals, groups, and communities. This tension must be resolved at various levels so that religious adherents are able to fully participate within public discourse – not outside or on the margins of it. This coincides with a larger trend in scholarship which criticizes the justifications to relegate religion out of the public sphere.<sup>3</sup> Habermas presents both an argument for the inclusion of religion in the public

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<sup>3</sup> For an example of scholars who argue that religion should play a greater role in public discourse see: Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004); Brian T. McGraw, *Faith in Politics: Religion and Liberal Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Cornel West, *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004); Courtney Bender and Pamela E. Klassen *After Pluralism: Reimagining Religious*

sphere, and a methodology as to how to accomplish this. First, Habermas justifies allowing religion into the public sphere based on a basic concept of fairness. Religious individuals are engaged citizens, just like secular ones, so why cannot both enter into political debates using their own frame of reference? The principle of equity seems compelling in this case. Because engagement in political processes is a foundational tenet of democracy, this implies the public sphere should be framed in such a manner that people are not put at a disadvantage because of their beliefs.

Habermas argues that if we are to take public engagement seriously we cannot expect citizens to express themselves “independently of their religious convictions or world views.”<sup>4</sup> This relates to fairness in the most basic sense: secular individuals can speak in a frame that comes naturally to them but religious individuals cannot. Thus, we have a fabricated system where one aspect of the polity has an arbitrary hurdle between motivation and engagement.<sup>5</sup> If a religious person wants to take part in political debates and is motivated by religion to do so, yet he or she is convinced one must maintain the secularity of public discourse, he or she cannot speak plainly.

Charles Taylor adds to this discussion when he states that a school would automatically accept any argument which allows a girl to cover her head for medical reasons, while it can be tremendously contentious to wear a headscarf for religious

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*Engagement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Erin K. K. Wilson, *After Secularism: Rethinking Religion in Global Politics* (Basinstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Brendan Sweetman, *Why Politics Needs Religion: The Place of Religious Arguments in the Public Square* (Illinois: IYP Academic, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Jürgen Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 14.1 (2006): 8.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Taylor and Jocelyn Maclure, *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 31.

reasons.<sup>6</sup> As a result, one may be tempted to frame any issue without reference to one's traditions or the moral teachings of one's religion. This creates a kind of false debate where definitions are skewed to represent a person's pre-existing but hidden agenda for political purposes. If religious arguments could be presented plainly we could turn to questions of the interpretation and meaning directly.

Habermas also argues that in order to adopt a practice of reciprocity, religious convictions should be permitted in politics:

The assumption of forgoing reciprocity and of mutual indifference seems to be justified by the fact that the liberal standard version is intrinsically self-contradictory if it equally imputes to all citizens a political ethos which in fact distributes cognitive burdens unequally between secular and religious citizens.<sup>7</sup>

Religion and secularism ought to be treated equally and fairly so that both can participate and serve to better the political sphere. Additionally, Habermas provides a pragmatic reason to include religion suggesting it is already hugely influential amongst many people in democratic societies. In short, religious organizations “can attain influence on public opinion and will formation by making relevant contributions to key issues, irrespective of whether their arguments are convincing or objectionable.”<sup>8</sup> Therefore religion can have an impact on political debates even though religious arguments do not necessarily resemble secular ones. As such, religion is an important contributor to political processes and people's frames so it should be discussed openly. Since Habermas alludes to both the

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<sup>6</sup> Taylor and Maclure, *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience*, 69.

<sup>7</sup> Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” 13.

<sup>8</sup> Jürgen Habermas, Tony Blair and Regis Debray. “Secularism's Crisis of Faith,” *New Perspectives Quarterly* 25.4 (2008): 20.

benefits and dangers of including religion in the public sphere, he does not regard religion as a simple good or evil but one that requires serious consideration.

Having established that religion should be a part of political discourse, Habermas next argues this requires translation. Because the frame and scope of the public sphere is secular, to include religion we need some process which is able to transfer meaning from one worldview to another. For Habermas, the overarching secularity of the public sphere is a given – the desire to be free from any particular religious dogma allows a dialogical space to operate without cosmological presuppositions weighing it down. Yet, this does not mean religion cannot participate in the discourse at all, simply that it needs to be translated so that it may be applied into a wider field of discourse.<sup>9</sup>

Habermas notes translation is not a one-way street, it is an exercise which has ramifications which oscillate between all parties involved. He describes the translation process as circular in that it impacts both the secular and the religious. The impact upon the religious adherents is a result of the self-reflection they must undergo:

But all that is required here is the epistemic ability to consider one's own faith reflexively from the outside and to relate it to secular views. Religious citizens can well recognize this 'institutional translation proviso' without having to split their identity into a public and a private part the moment they participate in public discourses. They should therefore be allowed to express and justify their convictions in a religious language if they cannot find secular 'translations' for them.<sup>10</sup>

Habermas argues that those on the "religious side" must undertake a process of translation which is a burden unto itself. For those on the "secular side," the burden is different: one

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<sup>9</sup> Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere," 14.

<sup>10</sup> Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere," 9-10.

must accept that another worldview is operating in what was recently (and historically) dominated by secular thinking.<sup>11</sup> In this way both parties must make concessions and find space for all who want to participate in the public sphere.

While it is apparent Habermas wants to make sure both sides are impacted by the process of translation, it appears as though the religious have a larger burden to bear.<sup>12</sup> As a secular citizen, all one is required to do is tolerate a line of thinking that was previously (and I would add supposedly) not tolerated. However, for religious individuals, their ability to function in the public sphere hinges upon successful translation of their worldview into another. Though Habermas does concede untranslated religious language should stand if no other alternative is available. Or as Habermas puts it, “They should therefore be allowed to express and justify their convictions in a religious language if they cannot find secular ‘translations’ for them.”<sup>13</sup>

It is true Habermas tries to balance the process a bit when he states secularists may take part in the translation of religious language as well: “Indeed, a liberal political culture can expect that the secularized citizens play their part in the endeavours to translate relevant contributions from the religious language into a language that is accessible to the public as a whole.”<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Habermas defends the translation proviso burden placed upon

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<sup>11</sup> Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” 15.

<sup>12</sup> Although, this may be tempered somewhat if we consider a recent study on translation it was discovered that merely hearing a foreign language causes anxiety in: Xian Zang, “Foreign Language Listening anxiety and listening performance: Conceptualizations and Causal Relationships,” *System* 41.1 (2013): 164-177.

<sup>13</sup> Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” 9-10.

<sup>14</sup> Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, trans. Brian McNeil, eds by Florian Schuller. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 51-52.

religious people because it is “the price to be paid for the neutrality of the state authority toward competing worldviews.”<sup>15</sup> However, this line of argumentation presents secularism as neutral and juxtaposes it against religion which is framed as decidedly not neutral. In one sense this is appropriate, religions often compete amongst each other for prestige and recognition while claiming that their interpretation of the world, cosmology, or morality is correct. Yet on another hand this is very misleading, to present state institutions and processes as neutral because they are secular is frankly not valid.

Tariq Modood notes that public space is simply “never neutral.”<sup>16</sup> The public sphere, while secular, is still loaded with presuppositions, axiomatic assumptions, and thus has a stake in how public discourse is conceptualized and enacted. All we have is biased competing worldviews with either religious or secular being predominant in any particular time and place. This is an issue we shall return to shortly when we consider Brian McGraw’s critique on the neutrality of secularism. For now I would argue whichever side we support in such competitions does have ramifications. Because Habermas regards religion as the opposite to neutrality, he engages in a sort of inclusion/exclusion of religion in public spaces. Religion, for example, may be a part of public debate but it should not be included in any justification for legislation.<sup>17</sup> It becomes clear, then, for Habermas religion is not only to be included by a system of translation, it is to be limited and mitigated as

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<sup>15</sup> Jürgen Habermas, “The Political: The Rational Meaning of a Questionable Inheritance of Political Theology.” In *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, by Judith Butler, Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, and Cornel West, eds. Edwardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 26.

<sup>16</sup> Tariq Modood, *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 54.

<sup>17</sup> Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” 6; Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. William Rehg (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 56.

well. In order to move forward we must change course from trying to develop the most sophisticated system of line-in-the-sand drawing where religion may be expressed here, but not there.

Alternatively, we may focus on Habermas' central premise: the notion of translation as a communication device and method to bring divergent worldviews into the same space. With translation we may be able to escape the dichotomy of religion versus secularism and move to more fruitful ground of religion and secularism in a dialectic in which the two frames interpenetrate each other with meaning. The burden and impact of translation is not merely to find new terms with which to express oneself for one group and to tolerate new ideas by another. Instead, it is the obligation to recognize the transformation of the relationship, structure, and system in which we find secularism and religion. However, before we delve too deeply into the waters of translation theory, we ought to consider the other side of the argument. To do this I will turn to Brian McGraw who argues that religion should be included in the public sphere, but that there is no need for a process of translation.

### **4.3 Including Religion Without Translation**

In contrast to Habermas Brian McGraw claims religion should not be translated into secular terms for a simple reason – it does not need to. Religion can, and should, be a part of politics without any intermediary processes. With regards to Habermas' translation proviso McGraw states, “There are no necessary structural reasons why religious believers should have to translate their religious arguments into secular ones within even 'formal' political

institutions like legislatures.”<sup>18</sup> McGraw contends that by distinguishing in which spheres religion should be permitted and which it should not ultimately leads to arbitrary rules which undermine the value of religion.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, McGraw points to Casanova's system – where religion should not take part in the electorate process, political parties and legislature – as similarly flawed.<sup>20</sup> According to McGraw, excluding religion from any political system is either arbitrary or it is actually a means of suppressing different worldviews through the guise of neutrality. In such systems secularism is presented as the paragon of neutrality. Religion, it is argued, cannot be trusted to fully engage the political sphere, as it is too biased and divisive. Yet, secularism too can be divisive.<sup>21</sup> Consider Quebec's Charter of Values: a bill that would have banned civil servants from wearing ostentatious religious symbols if it had passed last year.<sup>22</sup> This bill was put forward to maintain both the secularism and neutrality of the

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<sup>18</sup> Brian McGraw, *Faith in Politics: Religion and Liberal Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 125.

<sup>19</sup> McGraw, *Faith in Politics*, 117.

<sup>20</sup> In José Casanova's *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) he argues that religion should not be included in political processes. Although, Casanova does readdress this issue and dramatically changes his stance later (after McGraw's critique in *Faith in Politics* was published) when he states:

“I cannot find a compelling reason, on either democratic or liberal grounds, to in principle banish religion from the public democratic sphere. One could at most, on pragmatic historical grounds, defend the need for separation of church and state, although I am no longer convinced that complete separation is either a necessary or a sufficient condition for democracy. In any case, the attempt to establish a wall of separation between religion and politics is both unjustified and probably counterproductive for democracy itself.” In: “Rethinking Public Religions” in *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs* eds. Timothy Samuel Shah, Alfred Stephan, and Monica Duffy Toft (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 31.

For McGraw critique of Casanova's initial stance see: *Faith in Politics*, 121.

<sup>21</sup> Lori Beaman describes the “tainted neutrality of the secular” as she describes how particular iterations of secularism are deeply rooted in religious, and particularistic, interpretations of society and the human condition in: “Is Religious Freedom Impossible in Canada?” *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 8.2 (2012): 279.

<sup>22</sup> “Affirmer Les Valeurs Québécois,” Gouvernement du Québec, accessed October 4, 2013, <http://www.nosvaleurs.gouv.qc.ca/fr#ministre>.



state.<sup>23</sup> However, this bill caused a great deal of debate, controversy, and inspired various public protests; even many secularists opposed it. To claim a policy is neutral because it is secular as many of the Charter of Values' defendants did is considerably challenged by the fact so many people vehemently oppose it.<sup>24</sup>

These kinds of issues are exacerbated by the fact that there are so many definitions of secularism. Not only are there various ways in which the term “secular” is used in Western nations, if one considers non-Western countries the term becomes even more obfuscated.<sup>25</sup> There are opposing views as to whether a secular state should allow religious expression in the public sphere as much as possible or if one should follow a *laïcité* model which promotes the exclusion of all forms of religion whenever it can. The different definitions and applications of secularism imply it is not a neutral term or ideal, rather, it is a construct used to promote a particular agenda. As such, the presupposition that secularism is neutral does not hold up even before we consider religion. If we do include religious worldviews it is clear that there is nothing neutral about excluding one group from certain kinds of public engagement.

McGraw rightly notes neither secularists nor the religious are more neutral if we consider any contentious public debate, the two worldviews serve as competing

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<sup>23</sup> “Affirmer Les Valeurs Québécois,” Gouvernement du Québec, accessed October 4, 2013, <http://www.nosvaleurs.gouv.qc.ca/fr#ministre>.

<sup>24</sup> This argument, as well a consideration of the Quebec context, is further developed in: Jonathan Napier, “Does Quebec’s Desire to Remain ‘French’ Exclude Religious Minorities?” *Sightings* (2014) <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/sightings/does-quebecs-desire-remain-french-exclude-religious-minorities-%E2%80%94-jonathan-napier>.

<sup>25</sup> This point is discussed in: Peter Van Der Veer, *Modern Spirit of Asia: The Spiritual and the Secular in China and India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 140.

interpretive frames for what is needed for society and what constitutes human flourishing.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, McGraw demonstrates that secularism is readily associated with conflict, it rose to become the default *modus operandi* of politics through a history of “political struggles” where “secularists won out at an institutional level.”<sup>27</sup> The winner of a political struggle is not the natural state of politics, nor a neutral frame for political debates. Rather, it is an ideology with a vested interest in maintaining control and power at an institutional level through socialization and societal pressures. By undermining the justifications for secularism, McGraw opens up a space for religion to be included in all political domains. He also constructs a positive argument by pointing to the manner in which religion can and does get involved in political processes in a manner that is beneficial.

McGraw posits any rationale that regulates religion to one aspect of the political process but not another is not only based on flawed reasoning, it is also not supported by his analysis of quantitative data. This is based on a two pronged argument. The first point is that religion, phenomenologically speaking, is political. It is not that religion ought to be a part of our political processes and practices, it is that religion simply is a part of political life whether we want to acknowledge this fact or not. McGraw describes the political component of religion so that it seems an inescapable reality, if we are going to have religion in our society, we are going to have religion in our politics:

Religions have always had something to say about the way we ought to dress, what foods we should (or should not) eat, how we should raise our children and care for our elderly, how we should make and spend our money, and how we should identify and treat our neighbor. In short,

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<sup>26</sup> McGraw, *Faith in Politics*, 102.

<sup>27</sup> McGraw, *Faith in Politics*, 122-123.

religion has always had something to say not just about the life hereafter, but also about our lives in the here and now, both individually and collectively. And that makes religion inevitably and inextricably political.<sup>28</sup>

However, this kind of argument, where religion is simply a complex dimension of the human experience, can lend itself to a sense of fatalism. Simply because religion has always been political, is often described in political terms, or is regularly engaged in political activities does not do much for constructing a positive case as to why religion should be included in the public sphere. Just because religion is political does not mean it ought to be. In order to successfully argue religion should be a part of political processes one has to demonstrate why politics is better off with religion than without it.

McGraw seems to recognize this problem and he attempts to address it through several case studies that demonstrate how religion can be of merit to the public sphere. He describes how at different points in their history Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany have produced political parties that were both religious and beneficial to democracy. Firstly, McGraw points to how “Belgium's Catholic Party won a majority in the 1884 parliamentary elections, a majority it would hold until World War I.”<sup>29</sup> Secondly, the Catholic Party in the Netherlands has either had a combined government with the Calvinist Party or won through popular elections going back to 1888. It continues to come and go as a ruling party or part of a coalition to this day.<sup>30</sup> He describes the changes and iterations of the party: “The Catholic Party was in government perpetually from after 1917 until it

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<sup>28</sup> McGraw, *Faith in Politics*, 260.

<sup>29</sup> McGraw, *Faith in Politics*, 148.

<sup>30</sup> McGraw, *Faith in Politics*, 149.

combined with its Calvinist counterpart in the 1970s to form the Christian Democratic Appeal (the lead party in the Netherlands' current government).<sup>31</sup> Finally, McGraw notes that Germany benefitted from the Catholic Center Party as a significant political force throughout the 1920s.<sup>32</sup> McGraw notes that the lack of long lasting success by Germany's Catholic party was not due to its religiosity, but a political misstep as they “failed to bridge differences with their opponents.”<sup>33</sup> All of these political parties were successful and religious.

In fact, McGraw goes even further to say the presence of religion in these contexts was an advantage to their political success:

The parties in Belgium, the Netherlands, and (for a time) Germany were successful in bridging their differences with their political opponents not *in spite* of their religious commitments and identity, but *because* the strength of those commitments gave them the tools and incentives to participate in and contribute to the development and maintenance of decent democratic order.<sup>34</sup>

By looking to different democracies at different times McGraw suggests we are able to appreciate the role religion can play in political institutions at different levels. Furthermore, he argues religion understood in a certain manner is not only conducive to democratic institutions and ideals, it is advantageous as well. This portrait of religion and democracy allows McGraw to devise an argument where translation is unnecessary as it creates a hurdle for something that should be allowed and encouraged anyway.

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<sup>31</sup> McGraw, *Faith in Politics*, 149.

<sup>32</sup> McGraw, *Faith in Politics*, 150.

<sup>33</sup> McGraw, *Faith in Politics*, 150.

<sup>34</sup> McGraw, *Faith in Politics*, 160.

Throughout his analysis, though, McGraw leans too heavily on defining religion as not diametrically opposed to democracy. Also, McGraw's case studies are too limited to support his claims. For one, he carefully picks which religious parties he decides to examine and omits any examples that do not support his argument. All three cases are Christian parties (two of them are Catholic), each is European, and all are rooted in the early 1900's. As such, the historical and geographical context of these cases makes it difficult to ascertain if his arguments are applicable elsewhere. For instance, while the Netherlands used religious parties as a way to incorporate different religions in the state into their political system, it is now struggling to address the changing demographics of its increasingly complex and diverse society.<sup>35</sup>

Secondly, McGraw does not address cases where the democratic process has put into power extreme, fundamental, or undemocratic religious parties. Or what if a religion is used to pit a group or state against democratic principles? McGraw does not acknowledge these possibilities. All of his examples are limited by the parameters of his study. Thus any conclusions derived from his case studies cannot be stretched too far or be used to suggest religion should never be excluded from politics. There are many times and situations where religions try to engage politics under very different conditions than what

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<sup>35</sup> Virginie Guiraudon, Karen Phalet and Jessika ter Wal argue that the system in the Netherlands of segregation and pillarization of groups has strained to manage diverse groups and allow for full participation of minority ethnic groups in: "Monitoring Ethnic Minorities in the Netherlands," *International Science Journal* 57.183 (2005): 85. While Herman L. Beck argues that Muslims specifically are seen as "other" or "incompatible" with Netherlands Predominantly Christian Society, including political institutions, in: "Beyond Living Together in Fragments: Muslims, Religious Diversity and Religious Identity in the Netherlands," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 33.1 (2013): 119-121.

McGraw analyses. For example, Gabriel Almond, Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan argue, “Indian parliamentarism and federalism are political structures that contributed significantly to the rise of Indian 'fundamentalist' Hinduism.”<sup>36</sup> This turns McGraw's formula on its head. Instead of religion spurring commitment to democracy, democracy provided a space for fundamentalism to develop.<sup>37</sup> McGraw does argue that some religious views are better for democracy than others, but by turning to popular support (elections) as his example of successful integration between religion and democracy he does not set up a system where we can decide which religion (or religious groups and views) to incorporate into our political systems and which to avoid.<sup>38</sup> Take for example Egypt following the revolution of 2011, Mohamed Morsi was voted in after a series of riots expelled the previous president, yet he turned out to be more aligned with the Egyptian Brotherhood than the populace was comfortable with or had been able to foresee, thus sparking yet another wave of protests. His eventual removal from office and subsequent imprisonment is still an unresolved, contentious issue today.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Gabriel A. Almod, R Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan, *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms Around the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2003), 138.

<sup>37</sup> Gabriel et al., *Strong Religion*, 138.

<sup>38</sup> For other examples of actors who would be in stark contrast to the kinds of political engagement McGraw points to in his analysis but were successful in democratic states consider: William F. S. Miles' discussion of the “re-emergence of 'political Islam', as personified by the fall of the Shah of Iran,” or the militant Hindu Bharataya Janata party in northern India, and the Irish Republican Party all serve as examples of problematic religiously motivated political actors in a democracy (or pseudo democracy) in: “Political para-theology: Rethinking Religion, Politics and Democracy,” *Third World Quarterly* 17.9 (1996): 525. Religiously based parties can gain political influence through popular support yet fail to demonstrate the kinds of ideals McGraw espouses.

<sup>39</sup> For example Morsi's use of a particular interpretation of Islam as a basis for the constitution was considerably problematic, “The constitution, drafted by an Islamist-dominated assembly and approved in a referendum in December last year, was seen by Morsi's opponents as failing to guarantee human and women's rights and to reflect Egypt's diverse population” in: “Egypt set for Rewrite of Morsi Constitution,” *Al Jazeera*, September 23, 2013, accessed October 4, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/09/201392325628150598.html>.

With cases like this in mind, a more nuanced system that appreciates religion but looks for mediation between it and other worldviews becomes appealing. The relationship between religion and political processes is not as simple as McGraw makes it out to be. It is not merely the case that religion will have a positive impact on democratic institutions, although it can at times. The issue then is not merely to allow religion and politics to mix, but to find the proper balance which ensures the best outcome for society. To do so would entail a dialectic based on interpretation between religion and secularism which would encourage tolerance, equality, and an epistemic uncertainty concerning transcendence. Through translation we have access to more than a mere reproduction of one statement or text in a new context. Translation offers a gateway into diverse worldviews at large. Therefore when one translates he or she is provided an explosive analysis of a new context that plays off one's own. Translation transfers meaning, but it also explores and discovers it by making connections between worldviews. Finally, translation can offer a dialect composed of mutual comprehension to spur honest exchanges between religion and secularism.

As such, the fact that a religiously based political party can also be good for society is not strong enough evidence to argue that religion in all its forms should always be a part of every political institution. As for the Canadian context, a religious party can participate in formal elections and other formal political processes in Canada (the Canadian Heritage Party or the lobby group Institute for Canadian Values serve as examples of this). McGraw acknowledges this may happen and states having an unpopular party does not mean that

your party is “essentially undemocratic.”<sup>40</sup> They do, however, struggle to have much of an impact on political processes. But, simply being allowed in a particular space is not the point. The point is to bring religion and secularism into a dialogue with one another in the public sphere, not merely to allow religious parties into a footrace with secular parties to see who will win in an election. To have genuine interaction between otherness and difference, as I have strived to point toward in Chapters Two and Three, requires a method of interaction that goes beyond secularists and the religious competing for popularity in the same space. Instead, there is going to have to be a model of meaningful interaction. I will demonstrate how a model for interaction between worldviews benefits from translation in the remainder of this chapter.

While McGraw makes his case to justify the inclusion of religion in political institutions he ignores the discursive element to Habermas' proposal. The process of translation is not merely a bureaucratic process designed to keep religion from interactions in the public sphere, rather, it is what makes religion in the public sphere meaningful to anyone who does not adhere to a particular religious worldview. The strength of the translation proviso is not simply that religion gets to be expressed in secular terms; people can be comprehended and dialogically engage with someone who has a different interpretive frame from them. I have stressed Habermas' proposal is not without its problems, the element of fairness he puts forward places very different burdens on secularists than it does the religious. I am wary of Habermas' attempts to restrict religion to certain levels of engagement in the political sphere, however, McGraw takes issues with

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<sup>40</sup> McGraw, *Faith in Politics*, 125.



these elements to the point where he disregards the potential for meaningful dialogue to emerge from the frame Habermas has provided us. Instead of simply dropping translation from the discussion I will argue we ought to make it the focus of our analysis of religion and politics in a way even Habermas himself fails to do. For this task I will consider aspects of translation and how it is able to bridge worldviews.

#### **4.4 Translation Per Se**

Translation has different meanings in different contexts and is used in various fields. One may wonder why discuss translation at all? To answer this I would turn to Ricoeur's deft observation, "So let us start out from the plurality and diversity of languages, and let us note down a first fact: it is because men speak different languages that there is translation."<sup>41</sup> Therefore it is because there are different contexts, interpretive frames, referents, valuations, assumptions, presuppositions, and symbols that we need to translate worldviews. Since translation transfers meaning from one conceptual system to another and there is a lack of effective communication or comprehension between religion and secularism, translation is worth investigating.

Comprehension is a focal point for Donald Davidson who argues that the gap between misunderstanding and understanding is largely misrepresented in discourse concerning translation. For Davidson, making the connections between conceptual schemes is essential to translation: "We may accept the doctrine that associates having a language with having a conceptual scheme. The relation may be supposed to be this: where

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<sup>41</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *On Translation* (Routledge: New York, 2004), 11.

conceptual schemes differ, so do languages. But speakers of different languages may share a conceptual scheme provided there is a way of translating one language into the other.”<sup>42</sup> It is through translation that conceptual schemes can overlap, or pre-existing overlaps become apparent. Conceptual systems, like languages, worldviews, or exotic cultural practices may seem completely other and not relatable at first glance. Translation becomes bogged down by focussing on the gaps between conceptual schemes, exemplified by pre-existing presumptions about truth and understanding. Translation thus becomes a means of deciphering subjective falsehoods. Davidson avoids this trap by emphasizing other conceptual schemes are not necessarily formed by truth (no more than our own are anyway) but by what people believe to be true. Once we free ourselves from the distracting notion of truth independent of interpretation and context we can start to appreciate and approach different conceptual schemes much more openly and honestly.<sup>43</sup>

Ricoeur meanwhile considers a broad approach to translation which is well suited for religion and secularism. He looks beyond linguistics and rhetoric to consider cultures, worldviews, and belief structures as well. Ricoeur posits, “there are two access routes to the problem posed by the act of translating: *either* take the term 'translation' in the strict sense of the transfer of a spoken message from one language to another *or* take it in the broad sense as synonymous with the interpretation of any meaningful whole within the same speech community.”<sup>44</sup> As complicated as the public sphere is, it will become apparent that both of Ricoeur's uses for the term will be required. This is because translating from a

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<sup>42</sup> Donald Davidson, “The very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme” in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, ed. Donald Davidson (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2003), 185.

<sup>43</sup> Davidson, “The very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme,” 195.

<sup>44</sup> Ricoeur, *On Translation*, 11.

religious worldview into a secular one can at times be analogous to translating from one language to another as words, ideas, and frames of reference have to be re-examined and explained in order for one worldview to become comprehensible to another. However, the process of interpretation and examining as a meaningful whole will be essential as well. The areas where secularism and religion overlap serve as a good example of this part of our project. I suggest shared ethics and visions for society would best elucidate this point.

However, it would be folly to discuss translation without addressing what we mean here by interpretation. Umberto Eco offers a useful description of the relationship between translation and interpretation,

In order to translate one must make a series of hypotheses about the deep sense and purpose of a text, then translation is certainly a form of interpretation – at least insofar as it depends on a series of previous interpretations. However, to say that translation is a form of interpretation does not imply that interpretation is a form of translation. No logically educated mind would say so.<sup>45</sup>

Here, Eco points to the dimensions of understanding and communication. Interpretation is the understanding of a text or sentence, and this informs a translation, which is making the text or sentence meaningful to a new context. While Eco's distinction is useful in that it emphasizes the different aspects of any translation process, I will need both components to fully address the dynamics of religion, secularism, and discourse between the two.<sup>46</sup> So, while religious individuals are often talking about something different than secularists when they use the term personhood, they may share with John Stewart Mill a common conclusion, based on their faith, that people should not be used instrumentally. The next

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<sup>45</sup> Umberto Eco, *Mouse or Rat?: Translation as Negotiation* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), 124.

<sup>46</sup> I will be using both translation and interpretation interchangeably unless a specific point of analysis calls for this distinction to be brought to the forefront.

task, then, is to consider the process of translation which renders the worldviews of secularism and religion comprehensible to one another.

For Ricoeur, discourse is best understood as an event, not an abstract concept.<sup>47</sup> Language occurs in the world through an act of speaking, or writing, and this is how it exists. Therefore speaking is itself an event in which language appears. Thus, it is from an event that meaning develops, “The numinous element is not first a question of language, if it ever really becomes one, for to speak of power is to speak of something other than speech even if it implies the power of speaking. This power as efficacy *par excellence* is what does not pass over completely into the articulation of meaning.”<sup>48</sup> Here we see another element to Ricoeur's analysis – the power of an event. This is because any pronouncement produces not only words but words which have meaning, thus communication is a meaning-making endeavour.

With the ability to create meaning language serves as the basis for our understanding of the world, and also, it may challenge any pre-existing understandings. Furthermore, by allowing oneself to be heard in a space like the public sphere, one is actively reshaping the dimension and space itself:

Language is itself the process by which private experience is made public. Language is the exteriorization thanks to which an impression is transcended and becomes an expression, or, in other words, the transformation of the psychic into the noetic. Exteriorization and communicability are one and the same thing for they are nothing other than this elevation of a part of our life into the *logos* of discourse. There

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<sup>47</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: The Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 9.

<sup>48</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 60-61.

the solitude of life is for a moment anyway, illuminated by the common light of discourse.<sup>49</sup>

While language informs meaning and space, Ricoeur also raises the notion of connection. It is through discourse that we are able to reach out and experience something outside our usual frame of reference or impart one's experiences or thoughts to another. Translation facilitates this process thus providing a means for people to broaden their experiences and reshape their world and worldview. In this way translation functions by oscillation; we must constantly check and recheck translations and how they are being understood in their new context to make sure such understandings align with the original context. It is not a simple equation in which one person is translated and another benefits from knowing more than was previously possible (although, appropriation of knowledge and cultural expression can occur – this is a question I shall return to later on in my analysis).

With Ricoeur's insight in mind, we may re-examine Habermas' claim that both parties are impacted by translation. Yet, instead of focusing merely on the burden placed upon religious adherents who are to be translated we can start to appreciate the value of this process as well. Any expression is given space and power through translation as it is through translation the expression is heard in increasingly more contexts, spaces, and people. At the same time, we can consider the secularist who under Habermas' design must now tolerate views he or she previously did not have to. But this stance too can be reconsidered and broadened. Instead of merely tolerating new views, we can now appreciate the meaning-making and transformative aspect of discourse. Furthermore, vast

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<sup>49</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 19.

traditions, bodies of wisdom, and insights into the human condition privy to religious communities are now available to others, which carries with it a huge potential to enhance and deepen any discussion. The public sphere permits new worldviews via translation and translation provides the worldviews the potency to transform the public sphere. This process of mutual re-examination is at the heart of any interpretation endeavour.

Translation and interpretation are such potent concepts because of their ability to expand discourse. When considering translation, one is not simply rewording or reorganizing syntax for a new audience, rather the heart of translation brings us to question how meaning is transferred. In order to elucidate this point we may consider Hans-George Gadamer and Umberto Eco who both describe the processes, aims, and foci of translation. Gadamer describes hermeneutics as a theoretical field which provides us access to people's orientation to the world.<sup>50</sup> Therefore we are not just referring to words, sentences, or texts which need to be translated; rather how one operates, thinks, and processes their surroundings is within the domain of hermeneutics. For Gadamer, translation is a multifaceted endeavour, “understanding is always more than merely re-creating someone else's meaning.”<sup>51</sup> Recreating suggests a carbon copy, a direct, or literal replication. While translation cannot merely replicate, it has to consider the new context where an expression or concept is being presented. Translation involves a creative construction by the translator.

While it is useful to recognize the connection between an original utterance and the translation of it, translation as a process is more extensive than mere replication. Eco

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<sup>50</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Enigma of Health: The Art of Healing in a Scientific Age*, trans. Jason Gaiger and Nicholas Walker (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1996), 112.

<sup>51</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroads, 1989), 375.

discusses this when he notes translation always occurs between two bodies of knowledge, not between two symbols which represent the same word. To argue that there needs to be translation between different cultures is important for even the most basic translations, “translation is always a shift, not between two languages but between two cultures – or two encyclopaedias. A translator must take into account rules that are not strictly linguistic but, broadly speaking, cultural.”<sup>52</sup> Therefore the broader and more nuanced knowledge of the translator the better.

Consider for example the term apple is *pomme* in French. Logic and syntax can only get one so far, else one might think a *pomme de terre* is an “apple of the ground,” but that does not mean anything in English, you need a broader understanding of how the languages work to end up with the correct translation, “potato”. Eco expands this concept in *Mouse or Rat?: Translation as Negotiation* when he describes a small experiment in translation he undertook. Eco put the first chapter of Genesis into a translation programme and had it translated into either Spanish or German, then he had each of these translations returned to English.<sup>53</sup> Some mistakes made by the program were merely grammatical and easy to spot and rectify. Others came from more complex misunderstandings of what the text was saying and how to properly understand it. God was frequently translated into spirit, which makes sense, but when brought back into English it was translated as alcohol, as in the spirits one may drink. Furthermore, there was no direct translation at any stage for the expression “water of waters” and so any translation of this was nonsensical. As such, Eco

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<sup>52</sup> Eco, *Mouse or Rat?*, 82.

<sup>53</sup> Eco, *Mouse or Rat?*, 17-18.

resigns that: “in order to translate, one must know a lot of things, most of them independent of mere grammatical competence.”<sup>54</sup> There is a strong case to be made that translation is more about meaning or understanding the context and placement of an expression than simply about restating a sentence in another language. When we consider the ramifications of taking religion and putting it into a relationship of translation with secularism, the goal is not to end up with a dictionary of terms and equations which would serve as a guide throughout communications between them. Instead, the goal is broader, encyclopedic in a sense, in that different orientations toward the world are made comprehensible and communicable to one another.

#### **4.5 Interpretation and Understanding**

From the expansive, wide-ranging role Gadamer and Eco offer translation, one might be left with the impression that all anyone does is interpret. To describe one's entire means of understanding and experiencing the world through interpretation leaves very little outside of the domain of hermeneutics. This might raise the question that if all one ever does is interpret, does interpretation lose its significance? James Tully, for example, would rather leave these kinds of discussions aside. For Tully, interpretation is a red herring, a distraction from the real issues that emerge from public discourse – the need to resolve power discrepancies and material distribution.<sup>55</sup> This is why he is critical of any attempt to utilize a hermeneutic frame for politics.

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<sup>54</sup> Eco, *Mouse or Rat?*, 17-18.

<sup>55</sup> James Tully, “Struggles over Recognition and Distribution,” *Constellations Volume 7.4* (2000): 473-474.



Tully argues that there is a fundamental distinction between interpretation and understanding.<sup>56</sup> He makes his case in order to allow the freedom for one to discuss understanding and mutuality between dialogue partners without constantly needing translation to mediate between the Government and Aboriginals, for instance. Tully accuses both Taylor and Habermas of conflating interpretation and understanding so that the terms becomes inseparable and indistinguishable: “Consequently, if this were true, we would always (essentially) be involved, at least implicitly, in interpretation. This thesis is based on the widespread conflation of understanding with interpretation: that is, of treating understanding as the same as interpretation or assuming that understanding involves interpretation in some essential way.”<sup>57</sup> Interpretation to Tully is simply one form or method of understanding which is one of many facets of communication. While he does not expand upon this notion, Tully uses it as a justification for discussing dialogue and negotiation without addressing the hermeneutic implications of intercultural communication.

Tully operates under the assumption that we need not focus on interpretation in order to promote comprehension and dialogue. He makes this argument even though he utilizes hermeneutical analysis to discredit the manner in which negotiations developed between Western governments and aboriginals historically.<sup>58</sup> Replacing the concept of

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<sup>56</sup> James Tully, *Public Philosophy In a New Key: Volume 1, Democracy and Civic Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 63.

<sup>57</sup> Tully, *Public Philosophy In a New Key*, 63.

<sup>58</sup> James Tully does use a hermeneutic approach when he analyses the term “nation”. It is a European construct which has been applied to Natives instead of finding common conceptions of peoplehood and divisions between them. The European frame was simply imposed and Tully is critical of the lack of translation in this case in: *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 97.

translation with the term understanding seems to do more to obfuscate the details of intercultural communication rather than simplify or clarify them. However, to simply demonstrate that hermeneutical analysis is useful when discussing group dynamics and intercultural dialogues does not address Tully's central critique. To do this we must return to our distinction between interpretation, translation, and understanding as discussed earlier in this chapter.

Interpretation and understanding do exist in something like a spring-coiled tension. One may attempt to pull them apart, but they are connected. Yet pushing them too close together and conflating the two takes a great deal of effort as well, and it is a task which ultimately does not pay off. The best manner to describe the relationship of these terms is that interpretation is a process which results in understanding. Interpretation performs this function through two phases. First there is explication. George Steiner describes this as the preliminary step in interpretation where “Sustained grammatical analysis is necessary and cuts deep.”<sup>59</sup> Yet he notes that “glossary and syntax are only instruments.”<sup>60</sup> If we consider interpretation a process which leads us to understanding, glossary and syntax are useful to get us there. However, to consider the terminology and grammar of a piece to be translated is only the first step to interpretation.

The second step is to determine the broader meaning. Steiner describes this as moving from “not only *what* was said[...] but what was *meant* to be said.”<sup>61</sup> To grasp what

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<sup>59</sup> George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 5.

<sup>60</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, 5.

<sup>61</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, 141.

was meant to be said is a more comprehensive undertaking than mere grammatical analysis because it involves taking into account the context, intention, and expression of a phrase. Steiner describes this dynamic “the heart of the interpretive process” where one must distinguish the “tone values” or “valuations.”<sup>62</sup> To grasp what one values, where one places importance, and what one demarcates as trivial sets us up for a thorough interpretation. It is analogous to how memorizing a formula works until numbers are arranged or presented differently, then one needs to know why and how the equations work and obtain a more sophisticated understanding of mathematics. The interplay between grammar and context is very important for translation and it is through interpretation that understanding becomes viable.

While Steiner elucidates why we should be discussing interpretation and not just understanding, Eco provides justification as to why translation is useful for bringing divergent worldviews into the same space. This is because of the ability for translation to serve as the basis for a connection between differences. This is such a crucial point to Eco as he argues, “It is indisputable that human beings think (also) in terms of identity and similarity.”<sup>63</sup> The basic method of understanding is through similitude, a process imbricated with translation – which inherently seeks to bring the incomprehensible into the realm of the comprehensible. Translation, then, serves as a means to take ideas separated by dissonance, discrepancies, and misrecognition and brings them into conversation with one another.

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<sup>62</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, 6.

<sup>63</sup> Umberto Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 48.

Yet, one might argue that this is a limited approach to public discourse. For if we rely on similitude to bring diverse actors into discourse with one another, we are unavoidably halted by difference. However, Eco demonstrates it is actually the process of translation which can overcome this hurdle: “We do this because each of us has introjected into him or her as indisputable fact, namely, that *from a certain point of view everything bears relationships of analogy, contiguity and similarity to everything else.*”<sup>64</sup> It is through translation that connections are made, even if it seems as though there are none at first. This can be understood through even the most basic of translations, when one first hears a foreign language it sounds completely incomprehensible and totally un-relatable. Yet through translation the hidden common referents are exposed. Obscure and shrouded shared experiences can come into conversation with one another.

Davidson develops this point in *Radical Interpretation* where he imagines a scenario where one encounters a completely incomprehensible language such as one's first attempt to communicate with aliens from another planet. The problems seem mountainous in this kind of situation. For one, it would be difficult to establish common referents, do aliens know what water is? Or air? Or ground? We certainly would not be able to take anything for granted. Or, consider social conventions that tend to cross linguistic boundaries. It is common to offer a formal greeting when you meet someone in many cultures around the world so establishing “Hello” or something of the sort is a key first step to communicating with people who speak another language. Most languages have some similarity or historical overlap if we confine our translation to earth, but aliens could have

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<sup>64</sup> Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, 48.

developed communication through a very different process than humans. Therefore our basic assumptions or conventions for understanding are rendered useless. Yet, Davidson points to an even greater problem:

But the central difficulty is that we cannot hope to attach a sense to the attribution of finely discriminated intentions independently of interpreting speech. The reason is not that we cannot ask necessary questions, but that interpreting an agent's intentions, his beliefs and his words are parts of a single project, no part of which can be assumed to be complete before the rest is. If this is right, we cannot make the full panoply of intentions and beliefs the evidential base for a theory of radical interpretation.<sup>65</sup>

While we may not have to worry about actively trying to translate alien speech anytime soon, any over-reliance upon assumed similarities can pose a real threat to translation. Davidson argues that assuming we can understand and have easy access to another's belief system and inner thoughts is not only marked by hubris, it simply does not lend itself to a practical process for translation. Even assuming other people have access to objective truth is can be misleading. Rather, what someone believes to be true informs his or her expressions.

This brings us to the question: if we are denied access to one's beliefs and objective truth, then how can we access meaning? This is what leads Davidson to develop his theory of radical interpretation. For Davidson:

The interdependence of belief and meaning is evident in this way: a speaker holds a sentence to be true because of what the sentence (in his language) means, and because of what he believes. Knowing that he holds the sentence to be true, and knowing the meaning, we can infer his belief; given enough information about his beliefs, we could perhaps infer the meaning. But radical interpretation should rest on evidence that

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<sup>65</sup> Davidson, "Radical Interpretation," 128.

does not assume knowledge of meanings or detailed knowledge of beliefs.<sup>66</sup>

This means any progress has to be made with care. We have to infer, discover, and develop a system of interpretation between different cultures step by step (as we would an alien language). This limits some of the possibilities available to us, we cannot, for example, assume the meaning of a statement and work backwards. Also, we cannot overstate our understanding of another's inner world, we only have limited access to it. We are left with the task of painstakingly building up good translation piece by piece, working with what is provided in sentences, other forms of communication, or the event of discourse. We must remind ourselves the process of translation is not passively seeking similarities and pointing them out, it actively forges relevant connections and relationships through analysis and brings differences into connection with one another.<sup>67</sup>

#### **4.6 Translating, Mistranslation, and Relevance**

One common criticism of translation is that unavoidably something vital will be lost in the process. Jokes, puns, sayings, and even poetry are well-known for being difficult to translate. Humour, shock, cleverness, or elegance are easily and often compromised throughout translation due to their being so deeply rooted in the context in which they are created. If one were to see *aqua vitae* the words literally mean water of life. However in ancient Rome the term was used to describe a drink similar to whiskey, which could cause

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<sup>66</sup> Davidson, "Radical Interpretation," 135-136.

<sup>67</sup> Recall Ricoeur's discussion on metaphors in Chapter Two section 2.7 "Models of Multiculturalism in Metaphoric Juxtaposition" where metaphors bring together different notions and through the juxtaposition of difference new meaning is created. In turn, translation brings difference together and brings forth new understanding as well.

some confusion without context if you went to ancient Rome and ordered a drink at the bar. Sometimes this discrepancy is simply because the references have become dated or do not suit a different audience. Cicero is attributed the saying: *Cedant arma togae* (May arms yield to the toga). Even after recognizing that arms refers to weapons and not limbs there is still ambiguity about what Cicero is driving at with this statement. It is only once one makes the connection that togas were not worn by soldiers but by citizens of the city, Cicero's meaning – that peace ought to overcome violence – is discernible. Furthermore, Cicero is praising civic processes over military efforts. This demonstrates that there are cases where the referent is lost, or not easily explained, and such instances cause difficulty for translation.

It seems that we have uncovered a potential trap leading us to mistranslation – there may be a significant loss of meaning when there is an over-dependence on false equivocation. Cicero's affinity for togas is because he associates them with peaceful citizens, while today that association is not as readily made. In order to translate the meaning of Cicero's saying we may need to change the words completely and find new referents that one would associate with peace. In order to maintain Cicero's meaning and advice one may say something akin to “may weapons give way to ballots.” Or, conversely, we may abstract Cicero's meaning further: “may war yield to peace.” In each of these paraphrases the process of translation does lose some of the eloquence of the original, yet what is gained is that a new audience may appreciate the insight concerning the world by Cicero all those years ago and have it resonate today.

The concept of translating at a loss is addressed by Umberto Eco as he demonstrates why this is such a potent concern. To take his description of translation seriously means

that one has to use an encyclopedic knowledge of one culture and compare/contrast it to an encyclopedic knowledge of another.<sup>68</sup> This is a daunting task to be sure, one which may threaten to overburden a translator. In response, Eco notes translation functions at times through approximations, “In order to understand a text, or at least in order to decide how it should be translated, translators have to figure out the possible world pictured by that text. Often they can only make a hypothesis about that possible world. This means that a translation is also the result of a conjecture or a series of conjectures.”<sup>69</sup> Using this method it is clear that there is potential for a translation to miss out on vital information, or to project a possible world and get some aspect of it wrong. It is this imprecision which can make people wary of translation, especially if we are going to bring such a tool to the domain of politics. As we have seen, this process is vulnerable to false equivalency when one attributes a word's meaning too simplistically to a word in another language. However, the counterbalance to equivalency is relevancy. To further demonstrate this point I will consider Wilfred Cantwell Smith's analysis of comparison between Christian and Islamic concepts and how this helps address the issues raised of hasty equivocation.

In order to transfer meaning from one culture to another the tension between equivocation and relevance must be addressed.<sup>70</sup> As for equivalency, it can be misled by

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<sup>68</sup> This is contrasted by Donald Davidson's question as to what exactly we require in order to carry out a successful translation. Although the two positions are not mutually exclusive, they do demonstrate different points of emphasis. Davidson states simply, “What knowledge would serve for interpretation? A short answer would be, knowledge of what each meaningful expression means,” in: *Radical Interpretation*, 127.

<sup>69</sup> Eco, *Mouse or Rat?*, 20.

<sup>70</sup> Earlier in the chapter we considered the tension between equivocation and relevance and how I use these terms in relation to translation in section 4.1 “Better to Translate than to Never Communicate at All.”



external pressures which can strain translation. We will consider universalism as one pressure which threatens translation between religion and secularism. For now we shall consider where relevancy and context meet. Throughout the steps of a translation we will see that relevance can help alleviate the pressures imposed by false equivalency.

When one assess the equivalence between concepts from different cultures one is able to develop a novel understanding of them.<sup>71</sup> This process is demonstrated by Cantwell Smith when he describes a preliminary – then more sophisticated – case of comparison and interpretation between Islam and Christianity. He begins by describing the result of a simplistic comparison where one may attempt to translate key constructs from one religion to another. Unsurprisingly, the outcome of such an effort is less than satisfying:

Preliminary observations in comparing Christianity and Islam have been that for the scripture one has the Bible, the other the Qur'ān; for founder one has Jesus Christ, the other Muhammad; the one has churches, the other mosques; and so on. Such comparisons seem obvious; and yet on closer inquiry the parallels are revealed as not so close, and may indeed prove at best metaphorical and finally even misleading.<sup>72</sup>

Cantwell Smith provides us with what appears to be a fairly basic system of equivalence. There is a kind of logic to it, each religion has a text that entails myths, doctrines, lessons, and forms the basis for their particular religious worldview, thus each has a scripture. Both religions have a founder and place of worship, therefore it is tempting to think that we can translate the value systems from one religion to the next without a complicated translation process. This would lead one to believe cultural translation is fairly straightforward. But

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<sup>71</sup> J.Z. Smith takes this line of thinking even further when he notes that “in culture as in language, it is difference that generates meaning,” in: “Close Encounters of Diverse Kinds,” in *Relating Religions: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), 316.

<sup>72</sup> Wilfred Cantwell Smith, “Some Similarities and Some Differences Between Christianity and Islam”, in *Wilfred Cantwell Smith a Reader*, ed. Kenneth Cracknell (Oxford: Onewell Press, 2001), 57.

Cantwell Smith is quick to demonstrate this set up is overly simplistic and even misleading. Such can be derived from analyzing the value, placement, and role of these constructs in each tradition.

If one does not account for false equivalency one will be weighed down by oversimplification and poor translation where one gets blurred constructs as each notion is lined up with aspects of another in a different culture, but not its whole. For example, the Quran is similar to the Bible in that they both contain religious stories and teachings. Yet they are different in how they are esteemed, read, and applied in each tradition. With this in mind Cantwell Smith argues that “the Qur’ān is to Islam as the person of Jesus Christ is to Christianity.”<sup>73</sup> This comparison is apt because the Quran is understood by Muslims to be the literal words of Allah transcribed and written down for future generations. In this sense the Quran is a direct recording of revelation or even transcendence.

In the same way, Jesus is God incarnate and God's preferred method of speaking to humanity for Christians. In both traditions God (or Allah) devises a means to directly communicate with his followers, but in each tradition varies in his methodology for doing so. The Bible in the Christian tradition is the recording done by humans based on witnessed accounts or second (or third) hand knowledge of God's revelation. Therefore in Christianity there is always a mediator or an interpreter between the reader and the message from God. In Islam, no such intermediary position exists. When one reads the Quran one is reading Allah's message verbatim. Meanwhile, if we are pressed to find an equivalent for

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<sup>73</sup> Cantwell Smith, “Some Similarities,” 59.

Muhammad, Cantwell Smith opines it would be better to turn to St Paul than Jesus.<sup>74</sup> In this case both St Paul and Muhammad are people who have received special revelation from God and are placed in positions of explaining and spreading this message to others. To find an equivalent to the Bible in Islam one could turn to the Hadith, the body of writings which expand upon and interpret the Quran.<sup>75</sup>

Even a common phrase which can be found in each tradition carries different meaning in the context in which it is spoken. To continue in our analysis on Cantwell Smith's we may consider the phrase "the will of God." Cantwell Smith argues this is an important concept in each tradition: "This is the phrase 'the will of God.' Christians and Muslims both use this phrase, but refer by it to different concepts."<sup>76</sup> Cantwell Smith notes that while the term "will" can be accurately translated from Arabic to English the manner in which it is used, and its role, varies significantly. In the Christian setting it is: "To strive to do God's will is man's highest calling – and his greatest failure."<sup>77</sup> Because God has commanded people to follow his rules and guidance the 'will of God' refers to an ideal that people may live up to, or fail in their attempt. It is humankind's "greatest failure," as the doctrine of Christianity maintains that no one is perfect or without sin, so no one has been able to follow God's will completely. Thus, "God's will" serves as an ever present reminder of how one ought to live, and the fact that one is unable to fully do so.

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<sup>74</sup> Cantwell Smith, "Some Similarities," 59.

<sup>75</sup> Cantwell Smith, "Some Similarities," 59.

<sup>76</sup> Cantwell Smith, "Some Similarities," 58.

<sup>77</sup> Cantwell Smith, "Some Similarities," 58.

However, in taking this concept and transferring it to another tradition, the meaning it denotes is very different: “In Islam the will (*mashī’ah*, *irādah*) of God is not what man should do but what God does do.”<sup>78</sup> In this sense there is no question over whether God's will will be actualized or not, there is certainty that it will come to pass. Human agency is less about deciding whether or not to follow what God has commanded, rather, God has commanded whatever it is that happens to come to pass. It is common for a Muslim to say *insha'Allah* (Allah willing) following any statement about the future, even if it is something he or she fully intends to do by him or herself. Thus one’s promises or plans will only come to fruition if they align with God's will. In this way, a supposed commonality between Christianity and Islam (they use the same phrase) ends up being very different upon inspection.

What we can take from this process of interpretation of traditions and analysis of false equivalencies is a more profound understanding of each religion. If we were to remain with a simplistic comparison and note Jesus is comparable to Mohammad we would understand that both traditions have a founder. Yet through a more sophisticated, hermeneutic analysis an appreciation for the nuances of the role of religious leaders and holy divination is brought to light. Each tradition is recognized in a deeper, more comprehensive, and more meaningful manner than was previously possible.

When interpreting Islamic concepts to Christian ones (and vice versa) a broad analysis of each worldview has to be taken into account. Hidden conceptual axioms must be brought to light. Through this process the manner in which each religion provides

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<sup>78</sup> Cantwell Smith, “Some Similarities,” 58.

valuation, uses terms, and constructs self-understanding can be elucidated and analysed. When we consider the method in which translation of worldviews provides new insights into each tradition, and their relationship to the other, it becomes clearer why translation is such a valuable asset to the public sphere. When secularism and religion enter into this kind of comparative dialectic between false-equivocation and valuation there is potential for each participant in the process to expand and add to the potency of their own expression as an event and meaning-making device – to borrow Ricoeurian terminology. Critics, however, may be concerned that any process of comparison and equivocation may result in appropriation. As we shall see, this is a real concern for religious-secular dialogue. Therefore it is the question of appropriation and meaning in translation we will turn to next.

#### **4.7 Translation and Appropriation**

A particularly compelling critique of interpretation is based on the concern that any translation process will undermine the expression being translated.<sup>79</sup> This is because an interpretation requires an expression to be transferred and altered from its original conception. As expression and meaning are transferred and altered there needs to be some assurance and safeguards to keep unfaithful translations (or translators) at bay. This is why Umberto Eco describes translation as a negotiation; this analogy demonstrates there are different actors at play with their own stakes in any given translation. However, Eco also recognizes that a negotiation can result in certain things being left out: “Negotiation is a

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<sup>79</sup> It is this issue that Davidson addresses in his analysis of charity in: “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme,” 198.

process by virtue of which, in order to get something, each party renounces something else, and at the end everybody feels satisfied since one cannot have everything.”<sup>80</sup> Like in negotiation there are multiple people involved in a translation of a text; there is the author, the publisher, the readers, and the text itself – to name a few.<sup>81</sup>

As we have seen, Tully argues that inherent in processes of negotiation is power dynamics. A negotiation between two parties where one is perceived as superior or where one holds all the power is not an equitable negotiation. When we consider dynamics of power and negotiation in translation what we working with is not influence, resources, position, or even recognition – but meaning itself. Thus the desire to address the terms of negotiation presents itself differently in translation than it does in political struggles. Eco posits the “translator is the negotiator.”<sup>82</sup> Not only is the burden of a translator to address meaning and all that entails, he or she must also negotiate between the actors involved as well as the “structure of two languages and the encyclopaedias of two cultures.”<sup>83</sup> In practice, one system of language and culture may need to make concessions in order to produce a viable translation for an interpretation to be meaningful.

These kinds of concessions can be in form, such as a terse powerful saying which requires a lengthy exposition in a new language. Or it can take the shape of joining new concepts which were not previously associated, such as devising new metaphors, allusions, or referents. However, we cannot forget these negotiations operate within the power dynamics of a given system. At times the task of the translator will call for a subversion of

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<sup>80</sup> Eco, *Mouse or Rat?*, 6.

<sup>81</sup> Eco, *Mouse or Rat?*, 6.

<sup>82</sup> Eco, *Mouse or Rat?*, 6.

<sup>83</sup> Eco, *Mouse or Rat?*, 34.

power and with regards to the religious-secular dyad, the ability to question the rigid structures of the political sphere. However, before we can further elucidate the role of the translator the issue of power dynamics and cultural translation must be further explored.

Translation entails taking what was expressed in a certain context and attempts to make it comprehensible in another. The notion of “taking” can cause some to worry. This concern may derive from fear of appropriation; the culturally significant symbol will be watered down and rephrased in a manner that loses its propensity, or it will be used to describe something different from what it was intended for.<sup>84</sup> Frequently, such fears are tied to the notion that once something is translated it will be used, abused, or taken from its intended and original context. These fears can be heightened when placed in the context of struggles against powerful influences such as globalization and universalization. One can construe the desire to make more notions more comprehensible can lead to a universalizing effect where everything is made comprehensible and accessible to everyone. This may sound ideal at first, but the cost for this utopia could very easily be the loss of particularity. Without particularity groups would be unable to draw lines concerning who is an insider and who is an outsider (the very reason groups exist in the first place often enough), or a loss of autonomy, thus there is good reason to be wary of broad translation endeavours.

Bhikhu Parekh argues against a similar but different kind of universal project: those who seek a universal morality. He claims that to seek a universal moral code as a basis for

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<sup>84</sup> The Nazi appropriation of the swastika is a well known example of this. In Eastern traditions (as well as other cultures) the swastika was used to symbolize life, power, and various other values. Yet now it has become synonymous in popular consciousness with the Nazi regime and their abhorrent actions and ideology.

meaningful cultural exchange is a foolhardy pursuit as it is not possible to account for all kinds of diverse value systems under one umbrella. “Furthermore, the values realized by different ways of life are often too disparate to be translated into a common and culturally neutral moral language, let alone measured on a single scale.”<sup>85</sup> Yet, the desire for a universal code of morality is apparent in such concepts as human rights or global law and have been the focal point for many admirable endeavours. The notion of a universal language is a familiar concept in the field of hermeneutics. In Walter Benjamin's “The Task of the Translator” he describes the lure of translation to point us toward a “pure” or “true” language which would render all other languages obsolete, something he notes may be found in the biblical scriptures.<sup>86</sup>

Dipesh Chakrabarty demonstrates how problematic current translation projects can be when they are dependent on latent presuppositions of universalism:

A proposition of radical untranslatability therefore comes as a problem to the universal categories that sustain the historian's enterprise. But it is also a false problem created by the very nature of the universal itself, which aims to function as a supervening general construction mediating between all the particulars on the ground. The secular code of historical and humanist time—that is, a time bereft gods and spirits—is one such universal.<sup>87</sup>

Chakrabarty clearly sees universalism affecting our historical narratives and concepts of time, but also our processes of translation. When translation relies on notions of universalism, the differences – which are significantly intertwined with meaning making

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<sup>85</sup> Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2000), 48.

<sup>86</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Steven Rendall (London: Cape, 1970), 80, 82.

<sup>87</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 76.



projects – become lost in the fold. Chakrabarty describes this process as, “translating into a universal language that which belongs to a field of differences.”<sup>88</sup> In order to address this disparity we have to broaden our framework for translation. We ought to consider the particularities and differences in a manner based on equality rather than have them subsume to a universal ideal.

We must be able to continue in the field of translation in a manner that does not submit difference into a hierarchical meaning making framework. Chakrabarty describes such an undertaking:

It is, in fact, to appeal to models of cross-cultural and cross-categorical translations that do not take a universal middle term for granted. The Hindi *pani* may be translated into the English “water” without having to go through the superior positivity of H<sub>2</sub>O. In this, at least in India but perhaps elsewhere as well, we have something to learn from nonmodern instances of cross-categorical translation.<sup>89</sup>

Universalism, though, may be intertwined with the translation proviso we discussed at the beginning of this chapter. This is because Habermas has a tendency to favour universalism in his theoretical frames. We will not enter a thorough investigation of any hint of universalism in Habermas' writings, instead I will focus on one area where it is most pronounced, when he discusses the legal system which for Habermas is the cornerstone of the public sphere.

Habermas understands justice as a universal concept: “For the democratic process is governed by *universal* principles of justice that are equally constitutive for every body of citizens.”<sup>90</sup> While Habermas envisions a deliberative society, it seems that he is still

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<sup>88</sup> Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 76.

<sup>89</sup> Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 83.

<sup>90</sup> Habermas, *Facts and Norms*, 306.

pulled by the lures of universalization and holds to the notion that there should be one kind of ideal dialogue, and this tendency is most transparent when he considers the legal sphere. For instance, it is through legalism that the notion of universal validity becomes possible.<sup>91</sup> Habermas notes that justification relies on truth claims properly communicated and properly understood. Because of this emphasis on a true understanding of justification he is able to apply this criteria for validity to be universal: “The universalistic meaning of the claimed validity exceeds all contexts, but only the local, binding act of acceptance enables validity claims to bear the burden of social integration for a context-bound everyday practice.”<sup>92</sup> For this process to be so far reaching Habermas does turn to translation to make this possible. In fact, Habermas regards law as the ultimate translation medium, something close to what is describe by Walter Benjamin as the true language: “ordinary language forms a universal horizon of understanding, and [law] can in principle translate everything *from* all languages.”<sup>93</sup> Because law functions through argument, validity, and rationality, it can take any expression within these parameters and utilize them in any pursuit of justice.

Habermas entwines universalism into the legal sphere through translation. However, there are those who are concerned with the concept of utilizing legalism as a basis for universalism. One concern is that the legal system is quite thoroughly based upon power structures designed to validate norms and punish deviancy. Of course this is what law is designed to do, but when deviancy becomes equated with otherness or a merely

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<sup>91</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two. Lifeworlds and Systems: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981), 260.

<sup>92</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 21.

<sup>93</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 56.

different cultural practice as it is prone to do, the legal system can stifle valuable different expressions needlessly.<sup>94</sup>

Paul Healy argues Habermas' theory is inherently flawed due to its universalistic tendencies. While Habermas does try to account for diversity in his work, in effect his communication theory does not fully take into account the actual value of diversity. This is because of Habermas' propensity toward abstraction and generalization leads to a lack of attention to the diversity that actual public deliberations are composed of:

In promoting an unqualified universalism as the basis for inclusiveness, the Habermasian discourse model cannot do justice to difference in its concrete particularity. On the contrary, we shall see, it emphasizes the homogeneity, uniformity, and hence interchangeability of participant standpoints so heavily that it cannot take account of what differentiates these and renders them distinctive.<sup>95</sup>

Healy notes that particularity is lost in Habermas' legalism. Habermas purports the advantage of universalism: all may participate in one system. However, Healy considers this system from another angle; in order to include all views in a homogenous system where they are interchangeable we end up having to conflate distinctiveness and diversity. Rather, differences should be allowed to flourish in the public sphere. It is up to translation to serve as the mediator between particularity and universalism as it fills the interstitial space between these two poles.

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<sup>94</sup> We can see this articulated: “Once cultural conflict is embedded in the language of rights and legal accommodation, by its very nature the rule of law exerts a kind of structural dominance immiscible with dialogic forms of cross-cultural encounter,” in: Pamela Klassen and Courtney Bender, *After Pluralism: Reimagining Religious Engagement* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2010), 119.

<sup>95</sup> Paul Healy, “Situated Cosmopolitanism, and the Conditions of its Possibilities: Transformative Dialogue as a Response to the Challenge of Difference,” *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* 7.2 (2011): 158.

Furthermore, there remains a broader concern that homogenization and globalization will wipe out or greatly reduce difference.<sup>96</sup> Translation can play a role in processes of homogenization, it is explicitly used to extract meaning from its original formation and restate it in a new language. If translation is simply unidirectional, one group has access to new information or insight while the original language may be considered dispensable or disposable. This is enforced by economic and social pressures which impose one way of operating in public and one way of communicating.

While translation may be an accomplice to the homogenization of universalism through appropriation, it can also serve as a counter-pressure to it. This is because the space and role of translation is more dynamic than mere unidirectional extraction. Translation oscillates between the poles of universalism and particularity. George Steiner describes the manner in which translation serves as both a catalyst and counteragent to appropriation.

In translation the dialectic of unison and of plurality is dramatically at work. In one sense, each act of translation is an endeavour to abolish multiplicity and to bring different world-pictures back into perfect congruence. In another sense, it is an attempt to reinvent the shape of meaning, to find and justify an alternate statement. The craft of the translator is, as we shall see, deeply ambivalent: it is exercised in a radical tension between impulses to facsimile and impulses to appropriate recreation.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer sums up this concern well when he describes the fear of “the world of a homogenous Westernized secular culture” in: “Introduction: Religious Ambivalence to Global Civil Society,” in: *Religion in Global Civil Society*, ed. Mark Juergensmeyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4.

<sup>97</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, 246.

Steiner, here, describes the motion of translation and the poles which it operates in between.<sup>98</sup> The aim of translation is to bring together difference, to make connections, to make comfortable that which is foreign. Through congruence difference is made palpable. Yet, this is not all that translation entails. Steiner goes further to say that translation produces a reinvention of the “shape of meaning.”<sup>99</sup> By reshaping meaning one is able to explain and rationalize something outside our regular experience. The creative, inventive aspect to translation infers we cannot regard translation as overly limited. Translation should never be stagnant. It does not merely appropriate, it takes meaning through a creative dialectic with a new context and reapplies it. The process of extraction and reapplication is further demonstrated by Steiner as he describes what an ideal translation entails. It is this issue we shall turn to in the next section.

#### **4.8 Beyond Appropriation**

In order to address the issue of appropriation more fully let us consider Steiner’s stages of translation and how he suggests we respond to the tension between translation and appropriation. To commence a translation Steiner argues that we must first begin with trust. The translator has to trust there is something meaningful to grasp and that the meaning can be transferred.<sup>100</sup> Davidson describes this stage in terms of “charity” where we do not know

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<sup>98</sup> The concept of motion in translation is explicit in Steiner’s work. In fact, he titles a chapter “The Hermeneutic Motion” in: *After Babel*.

<sup>99</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, 246.

<sup>100</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, 312.

where the translation will take us, but we must assume the Other is genuine and worth translating.<sup>101</sup>

Yet Steiner argues this trust cannot last, it will always be betrayed. There are different manners in which one can lose trust in translation; this may occur through apparent incommensurability or based on the apprehension that there is no meaning in a particular text that is worth the effort.<sup>102</sup> While one's faith may falter, and possibly as a response to this, the next step in translation is "aggression."<sup>103</sup> This is because the translator has to take the meaning out of its original context. As Steiner notes, "The translator invades, extracts, and brings home."<sup>104</sup> Extraction and invasion are a reoccurring aspect of translation. Any translator is bound to encounter mistrust in his or her attempt to transfer meaning from one context to another. Of course, Steiner does not end his discussion of the process of translation there, it is from this position of faltered trust and aggression that one may move forward toward the balancing elements of translation.

The strongest criticisms of translation are based upon valid points, such as the critique that translation requires appropriation. That being said, it is only an incomplete translation that ends with appropriation. I noted earlier that translation is a dialectical process, an oscillation between the initial statement and its new context. As such, any translation that ends in appropriation is stagnated and it has yet to be completed – either by the same or a new, future translator. In order to move from aggression and continue the

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<sup>101</sup> Davidson, "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme," 198.

<sup>102</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, 312.

<sup>103</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, 313.

<sup>104</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, 314.

movement of translation, the next stage Steiner purposes is embodiment. Embodiment means the translator comes to appropriate the message of the Other so thoroughly he or she takes on its meaning in a personal way.<sup>105</sup> This can be a perilous process where translation threatens to become overwhelming for those involved. Steiner warns, “The dialectic of embodiment entails the possibility that we may be consumed.”<sup>106</sup> Here we see one enact appropriation to the detriment of oneself.

In order to counteract such embodiment Steiner turns to the concept of fidelity. Steiner uses this concept because it guides us away from the pitfalls which threaten translation. Eco, in a similar vein refers to the obligation a translator – to be respectful of what has been written.<sup>107</sup> He frames this endeavour as more than mere reproduction of an original work, but being faithful to it.<sup>108</sup> Such an emphasis is necessary because one may, potentially, derive only part of the meaning from the original. Conversely, one may try to overcompensate for the work being translated and offer an overabundance of meaning, what Steiner refers to as a “magnification.”<sup>109</sup> For Steiner, to be faithful means to “restore the balance of forces, which his appropriative comprehension has disrupted.”<sup>110</sup> In order to complete the work of a translation mere appropriation or even embodiment is never sufficient. Instead, the act of putting oneself wholly into the translation, and then pulling

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<sup>105</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, 314.

<sup>106</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, 315.

<sup>107</sup> Eco, *Mouse or Rat?*, 3.

<sup>108</sup> Consider Eco’s analysis of the definition of faithfulness, “Among the synonyms of faithfulness the word exactitude does not exist. Instead there is loyalty, devotion, allegiance, piety,” in: Eco, *Mouse or Rat?*, 192.

<sup>109</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, 317.

<sup>110</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, 318.

back to the point where one is able to reproduce a text faithfully brings the process closer to completion.

This brings us to the final stage of translation, altruism. Steiner observes: “translation contains a paradox of altruism.”<sup>111</sup> It is only through taking someone else's expression and making it one's own that one is able to enhance or broaden the meaning of another's work. In this way, the translator needs to operate motivated by the opportunity of bringing attention to someone else's ideas. This counterbalance of altruism is why Steiner is able to refer to faithfulness as a component of translation that cannot be dismissed. In an act of faithfulness balances and restitutions are made. In translation, while the cost of being translated is to endure the initial invasion and aggression, the restitution is that the original expression gains enrichment and expansion from its original existence. In Steiner's words interpretation “recompenses most obviously by making the text alive longer to more people.”<sup>112</sup> Though translation may be used as a tool for appropriation when it is properly utilized it results in fidelity and balance. Translation properly understood brings about meaning, inclusion, and expansivity.

#### **4.9 Universalism and Particularism: Secularism and Religion**

Now that we have considered the steps of translation we can evaluate the effect and toll of translation upon translators which in turn will point us toward addressing appropriation. Yet, in order to do so we must consider which aspects are needed for a good translator. For a good translation one must be prepared to undertake an ongoing, cyclical procedure. This

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<sup>111</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, 399.

<sup>112</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, 416.



being the case, any translator may succumb to being bogged down by the process of translation. Recall the inevitable betrayal of faith Steiner describes or the task of embodiment; such burdens of translation may cause some to have difficulty enduring the demands placed upon them.

In response one may empty his or herself of any bias in order to be fair and balanced in their interpretation. This may shield one from the inevitable weight of appropriating and transferring meaning. Or, one may accumulate all knowledge possible in an attempt to skip the process of 'taking' and 'appropriating' and instead seek to adopt an entirely neutral position.<sup>113</sup> However, to be entirely neutral is simply not possible, and as we shall see, it is not even desirable. Tinu Ruparell claims translation is not a process that can come from nowhere – a translator has to work with the materials he or she is provided. This means that translation is very much built up within a particular context. As Ruparell states:

The perfect translator thus tries, and of course fails, to inhabit the view from nowhere; however, intercultural philosophy as translation is still instructive in its highlighting the piecemeal and subjective nature of its practice. The intercultural philosopher as translator is a *bricoleur* both in respect to the specificity of the elements he or she brings together in comparison as well as the “at-hand-ness” of the tools he or she brings to the job.<sup>114</sup>

Therefore a translator must be one who can function in an *ad hoc* manner and make the most of what is available to him or her. Furthermore, we cannot afford to indulge in the prospect of translation occurring at a level where all subjectivity is surpassed and complete

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<sup>113</sup> Tinu Ruparell discusses the issue of neutrality in translation when he states: “Ironically, the perfect translators of a text or tradition would have mastered the languages, cultures, and histories of the objects of comparison; yet, by that very mastery, they efface their own biases and prejudices,” in: Tinu Ruparell, “Locating Philosophy in Relation to Religion,” in *After Appropriation: Explorations In Intercultural Philosophy and Religion*, ed. Morny Joy (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2011), 49.

<sup>114</sup> Ruparell, “Locating Philosophy in Relation to Religion,” 49.

knowledge is ascertained. This is simply because no translation to date (or in the foreseeable future) can ever meet such criteria. Every translation needs to be built up from the ground. Each translation has to work with the material available.

For example the Dead Sea Scrolls are known for being partial and fragmentary, one may still derive quite valuable meaning from them.<sup>115</sup> At the same time there will always be a subjective element to translation. We should not – and in all likelihood cannot – hide the fact that translations are performed by people and as such will have a subjective dimension to them. Rather it is one’s subjectivity that becomes one of the building blocks available in the style of a *bricolage*. Instead of hiding the fact that translation is a construction we can draw attention to it, this allows translation transparency.<sup>116</sup>

Acknowledging the subjectivity or *bricolage*-like construction of translation allows us the freedom to recognize and analyse how actual processes of translation unfolds. Similarly, taking the concept of transparent subjective/*bricolage* methodology is pertinent for appeasing fears of appropriation. The fear of appropriation or aggression in translation may tempt us to turn to neutrality. While appropriation and misplaced aggression are real concerns for any translation, having the subjectivity and constructed efforts of translation apparent allows us to recognize and address them in a direct manner. Steiner notes the method in which to deal with these faults is to balance them with more steps in the translation process such as fidelity and restitution. Both fidelity and restitution in translation require transparency, honesty, and a self-awareness of one’s limitations.

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<sup>115</sup> For an example as to what such a project would look like see Daniel K. Falk, *The Parabiblical Texts: Strategies for Examining the Scriptures among the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: T&T Clark International, 2007).

<sup>116</sup> Ruparell, “Locating Philosophy in Relation to Religion,” 49.

Through embracing the subjectivity of translation we are able to get closer to an idyllic vantage point.

Now that we have looked at the role and response to appropriation in translation in the translator we can consider how to apply these themes to religion and secularism. In this dyad, it is frequently the religious who fear the particularity of their religion will be lost in a secular frame. This is the case even though many religions have universalistic aspirations and perhaps even a potent global presence. Despite the successes or popularity of a religion like Christianity, there is a persistent belief in many circles that any particular interpretation of the tradition is constantly under threat. This results in a situation where religious adherents may believe that a faithful, authentic translation is possible, yet it is the relationship with secularism that concerns them. As such, religious adherents may not be too keen to become involved in process of translation that would position them in a deeper relationship with secularism. As we have seen, secularism frequently is posited as neutral. This supposed neutrality often comes hand in hand with universalism as well.

Mark Juergensmeyer draws the link between secularism and universalism when he notes that religions throughout the world are rejecting the Western, modern, secular, nationalism as it is repeatedly imposed as a universal norm.<sup>117</sup> Charles Taylor describes the concept of secularism as multifaceted. He notes that secularism can be divided into three categories; the first is in terms of space: there are secular domains (politics, economics, and so on) and the religious sphere where one practices religion. The second is

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<sup>117</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, "Religious Antiglobalism," in *Religion in Global Civil Society*, ed. Mark Juergensmeyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 136-137.

in terms of belief: people who no longer believe in religious ideas turn to secular ones instead. This leads to thinking secularism is inevitable: in the modern age any belief in religion can no longer be considered rational, enlightened, intelligent, or even viable. The third is a kind of secularism that is not opposed to religion. It is a creative space or an overarching framework for exploring both religious and not-religious worldviews in order to construct an amalgamated, authentic self.<sup>118</sup> Through an understanding of the different functions the term secularism fulfills it then becomes clear secularism is often tied to universalism alongside modernity and determinism. Taylor argues that to understand the wide ranging and diverse usage of secularism exposes how secularization theory has come to be predominant, axiomatic, and a ubiquitous presupposition.<sup>119</sup> Secularity, he argues, forms the basis for interpreting the world, history, and our identities and as such it appears to be the natural *modus operandi* for a modern person.

Furthermore along with concepts such as naturalness, inevitability, and determinacy secularism can impact any analysis of other countries or cultures which maintain a place of prominence for religion. This comes in the form of a bias in that cultures which have not advanced to the point of an enlightened secularity can, ought, and/or will eventually. He states:

The belief that modernity comes from one single universally applicable operation imposes a falsely uniform pattern on the multiple encounters on non-Western cultures with the exigencies of science, technology, and industrialization. As long as we are bemused by the Enlightenment package, we will believe that they all *have* to undergo a range of cultural

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<sup>118</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 2-3.

<sup>119</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 550.

changes drawn from our experience – such as 'secularization' or the growth of atomistic forms of self-identification.<sup>120</sup>

The proposal that one must undergo secularization puts the cultures of the world into a hierarchical system where degrees of secularity become criteria for recognition and valuation. Thus a religious adherent could be wary of entertaining any process of translation which places his or her worldview into a valuation system which dismisses him or her altogether, or which actively seeks the end to religion, or is content merely to wait for the inevitable complete global secularity.

The universalization of secularism is further espoused because of its ability to successfully promote viewpoints on such things as morality and ideology. For example there are those who claim that secularism is tolerant while religion is intolerant.<sup>121</sup> The multiple uses of the term secularism is compounded by the imprecision in the term, all of this means that secularism can be problematic for translation. Not only is secularism tied to universalism, it also influences interpretive endeavours of many cultures. José Casanova argues that secularism purports a particular frame of the world which informs our perception of how other cultures understand secularism and religiosity: “Moreover, this particular dynamic of secularization became globalized through the process of Western colonial expansion entering into dynamic tension with many different ways in which other civilizations had drawn boundaries between 'sacred' and 'profane,' 'transcendent' and 'immanent,' 'religious' and secular.”<sup>122</sup> Therefore not only is secularism tied to

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<sup>120</sup> Charles Taylor, “Two Theories of Modernity,” *The Hastings Center Report* 25.2 (1995): 28.

<sup>121</sup> For a discussion on this point see: José Casanova, “The Secular and Secularisms,” *Social Research* 76.4 (2009): 1059.

<sup>122</sup> Casanova, “The Secular and Secularisms,” 1063.

globalization and perceived as a universal principle, it informs how we interpret the relationship between religion and non-religion in every culture. Finally, there are secularists who purport a dualistic cosmology where their view of reality is favoured over any other, the need for dynamic cross-cultural discourse can be under appreciated.<sup>123</sup>

If we recall our discussion of multiculturalism in Chapter Two, it is apparent that religious affiliation is an important aspect for many minorities' struggles for recognition. This is because religion is often a focal point for contentions between a minority group and the dominant culture. But, religion is also a key facet to political struggles because it brings a deeply personal dimension to political debates. A religious person is not considering a moral good from an objective distanced position, rather political issues are deeply interrelated to his or her identity and sense of self, tradition, family, and relation to the Other. We can have diverse worldviews, rationalities, and approaches to issues operating in tandem in the same space.

Winnifred Sullivan argues that secularism has won out in the sphere of law. This victory is so complete religion now has no place in legal framework.<sup>124</sup> The victory developed over time:

Modern secular law emerged in the modern West as the product of a deliberate effort to rid law of ecclesiastical authority and of religious ideas, languages, and goals. Modern secular law is not, however,

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<sup>123</sup> I will discuss John Rawls and Richard Audi as representatives of such a secularist stance in: Chapter Five, section 5.2 “Secularism in Competition with Religion.”

<sup>124</sup> Sullivan argues ultimately that we should not have laws particular to religion, even laws regarding religious freedom: “I will, in the end, suggest that freedom and equality are better realized, and liberty better defended, if religion *qua* religion, is not made an object of specific legal protection. The legal defense of human dignity and of life beyond the state must be honored in other ways,” in: Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 138.

indifferent to religion. Religion was seen as the problem. So, as a whole host of contemporary legal historians have explained, secular law only *appears* secular. In fact, it is replete with ideas and structures that find their origin in, and are parallel to, ideas and structures in religious traditions: crime, sin, and so forth – ideas and structures that in many instances cannot be coherently defended using simply utilitarian forms of argument. Secular law implies a subordination and submersion of religion.<sup>125</sup>

While in practice one may subordinate and subvert religion in order to promote a kind of language for law that rejects ecclesiastical authority, our legal system remains bound by its historical connection to it. Any attempt to bring about a translation between religion and secularism has to acknowledge that secularism is infused with one kind of religious thinking historically, yet it has rejected that inheritance. Not only is religion considered bad or detrimental to law and other political processes by some, often religious claims for special recognition are sparked by minority groups who are facing various kinds of institutional and social power disadvantages.

Talal Asad demonstrates another angle of this problem when discussing linguistic translation between Third World languages and Western counterparts when he notes, “they are more likely to submit to forcible transformation in the translation process than the other way around.”<sup>126</sup> This kind of thinking lends itself to models for integration which can be seen as “forcible integration” where the dominant group uses any influence at its disposal in order to coerce other worldviews and practices to align themselves to it. Translation can be one sided, where one language is interpreted into another, this process can even be

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<sup>125</sup> Sullivan, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom*, 153.

<sup>126</sup> Talal Asad, “The concept of cultural translation in British social anthropology,” in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. J. Clifford and G. E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 157-158.

necessary or practical in some situations.<sup>127</sup> Such a process is at work even within the multicultural model of Canada, the issue of language is one in which anyone whose native tongue is not English or French can be found at a disadvantage. This is evidenced in that “Ethnic cultures experience enormous struggles in trying to maintain their language beyond the first generation.”<sup>128</sup> The loss of language is one way to avoid translation, but it comes at too high a cost.

Yet, it is true that language is not merely dictated by the majority but is required in order to allow actual communication between citizens, else we would be trapped within a post tower of babel scenario where no one could effectively communicate with one another or partake in joint ventures leaving the only option to disperse and segregate. So it is true we should not overlook the fact that the dominant language is part of a wider system that sets up public participation in a manner that favours insiders over outsiders. As Tully notes:

These rules of recognition as participants include types of knowledge, standard forms of conduct and relations of power that govern the negotiations between citizens and governors. These involve such things as who is included and excluded, the language used, cultural ways affirmed or disregarded, religious holidays and practices taken into account and those ignored, genres of argumentation, times and places of political activity, overt and covert behaviour, and so on.<sup>129</sup>

The language of the majority filters into practices, values, and decisions as to who gets to participate in our ongoing social construction projects. These kinds of pressures result in

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<sup>127</sup> Sujit argues that the public sphere cannot be neutral to cultural difference because, for one, it has to choose a language in which to function in: Sujit Choudhry, “Bridging Comparative Politics and Comparative Constitutional Law” in *Constitutional Design for Divided Societies* ed. Sujit Choudhry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 11.

<sup>128</sup> Harry Hiller, *Canadian Society: A Macro Analysis. 5<sup>th</sup> ed.* (Toronto: Prentice Hall, 2006), 216.

<sup>129</sup> Tully, *Public Philosophy in a New Key*, 146.



an atmosphere where there is no negotiation or translation, but a unidirectional progression toward homogeneity.

The task of translation is not only to allow for understanding to occur between two different worldviews, but to alleviate the pressures of any superimposed dominant frame. To bring this task to the political sphere where religion does arise, we are burdened with multilayered inequalities, ranging from language, to dress, practices, norms, and worldviews, as well as socioeconomic concerns. Translation can be seen within these systemic inequalities as another device to integrate difference. To escape this trap of systemic dominance we need to understand how translation can work both in and outside of this system.

#### **4.10 Translation and the Transference of Meaning**

As it is clear universalism poses a particular problem for translation between secularism and religion, I will now consider a how a hermeneutic analysis can alleviate this tension. For this task I will turn to Paul Ricoeur's discussion concerning hermeneutics and return to the vital issue of relevance in translation. Ricoeur places translation at the very centre of the relationship between particularism and universalism.<sup>130</sup> This is because Ricoeur posits we ought to recognize the intrinsic value of diversity, especially in our projects of understanding.<sup>131</sup> Simply focusing on particularity is not a solution though, this leads to

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<sup>130</sup> Paul Ricoeur discusses the relation between universalism, particularism, and translation as such, “We stated that translation is the best way of demonstrating the universality of language (le langage) in the dispersal of languages (les langues),” in: Paul Ricoeur, *The Hermeneutics of Action*, ed. Richard Kearney (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 12.

<sup>131</sup> Diversity in this case referring to an access to different potential horizons of meaning, “the literary texts involve potential horizons of meaning, which may be actualized in different ways,” in: Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 78.

specialization, fragmentation, or jargon. Instead, Ricoeur looks to open up the space between the dichotomous poles of universalism and particularism through hermeneutic analysis. For Ricoeur, it is critical to clarify what it is that we seek to accomplish through translation.

First off, Ricoeur postulates that while an expression articulates an event, the experience of an event itself is not transferrable.<sup>132</sup> I cannot transfer the experience and feeling I had getting lost in the woods as a child. I can, however, transfer meaning. I can describe the woods to give context: there were tall, wide looming trees blotting out the sky, there was a constant rustling of leaves and other inexact but ever present sounds in the woods. Or I can describe how the experience felt to me at the time; there was a pending sense of isolation and smallness, there was a fear of not knowing where I was, there was disorientation, and the sadness and hopelessness which comes so readily when we are alone and young. And yet, one can only internalize a comprehension of these descriptors to a point – the actual memory still remains mine alone. Therefore when I say I was lost in the woods as a child the words: “woods,” “lost,” and “child” are understandable and relatable. Yet the experience remains un-transferable. In Ricoeur's words:

My experience cannot directly become your experience. An event belonging to one stream of consciousness cannot be transferred as such into another stream of consciousness. Yet, nevertheless, something passes from me to you. Something is transferred from one sphere of life to another. This something is not the experience as experienced, but its meaning. Here is the miracle.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 16.

<sup>133</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 16.

As such we can see the emerging connection between universalism/particularism and the tension between equivalence and relevance come to intersect. Ricoeur dissects what is particular, what is equivalent, what is shared, and what is important.

The experience as experienced cannot be transferred; there is no equivalence as it is particular to a time, place, and subjectivity. This is because there is no method to transfer memories or events in a direct manner. Yet if we turn to the notion of relevance we are able to gain some ground. The significance of the event can (perhaps never fully) be imparted onto another – it can be universalized (or shared) to a degree. Although, it is not simply the significance of one's experience in one's life that we desire to transfer, it is also the meaning of an expression at a very basic level. The importance of which terms are used, how the message is conveyed, and which referents one points to have to be carried over during translation. Thus the tension between relevance and equivalence serves as a crucial facet of an interpretation. However, the degree to which transference of meaning and relevance can occur remains to be examined.

In order to delve deeper into the question of transferring relevance let us consider the detective as analogous to the translator. Translation requires, as we have already considered, an encyclopedic knowledge. Once a phrase or text is understood meaning can be taken from it. Yet to fully appreciate the context in which an expression was conceived one must have at hand a mountainous amount of information and the ability to make connections between complex systems of thought.<sup>134</sup> Meanwhile, the detective cannot simply investigate the crime scene in isolation; the actual occurrence of violence or robbery

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<sup>134</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, 318.

is but one facet of his or her investigation. Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, arguably the greatest detective of all, would consider preparations for a crime, work done afterwards, the suspect's motives and relationships to others – in fact, any tiny detail may be significant for solving the puzzle.<sup>135</sup>

Yet, for Holmes, finding clues is not enough, he has to make sense of them, order them, figure out which is most important, and use those clues to bring about a proper resolution. Naturally, for a thorough investigation one must make sense of all these facts and decide which are pertinent and which will turn out to be red herrings. Holmes himself has been misled by giving too much weight to the wrong pieces of information (albeit only ever temporarily).<sup>136</sup> So it is through collecting a vast amount of information and prioritizing it which leads to Holmes' success. The central query to such an investigation then is *why*.

There is quite regularly during the denouement of a detective story where the killer is discovered and the looming question in everyone's mind is *why*? Why would someone do such a terrible thing as to commit murder?<sup>137</sup> It is through this question when one comes

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<sup>135</sup> Holmes is known to have an encyclopedic knowledge of London's geography and inhabitants. In one story he casually refers to his study of tattoos and their meaning, and he regularly makes reference to his sharp memory which picks up even the most obscure clue overlooked by the police and Watson, see: Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Red-Headed League," in *Sherlock Holmes* (New York: Knopf Publishing Group, 2006), 227.

<sup>136</sup> For example, when Holmes hears of a travelling band of gypsies passing through the same time a valuable bracelet is stolen he (mistakenly) thinks there is a connection, yet he deduces who the real culprit is by investigating (among other things) the position of a chair in the adjoining room, in: Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Speckled Band," in *Sherlock Holmes* (New York: Knopf Publishing Group, 2006), 40-41.

<sup>137</sup> Holmes tends to include the motive for the crime throughout his various, frequently long-winded, explications of how the crime was committed. Although, he has been known on occasion to leave it out, leaving Watson to query as to why the criminal acted as he did, such as in: Doyle, "The Adventure of the Empty House," in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (New York: Cosimo Inc., 2008, 1903-1904), 14.

to the point where true comprehension is able to be achieved. We may know what a murderer did and how they did it, but these details – while important to a criminal investigation – leave us unsatisfied. The reason why, the meaning behind the act compels us to understand the murder in a new light. In this way, the meaning of the event may be transferred. Again, the experience is not, as most people shall never know what it is like to come to a point where they commit such a crime, but understanding that the murderer felt betrayed, hopeless, angry, jealous, or something of the sort provides a base meaning from which actions are performed. When we discover that a woman left her baby in a department store, never intending to return, we are naturally appalled and angered. The dissonance between someone's action and what is expected, perhaps even based upon one's own experiences with children or as a child compels us to feel this action is entirely incomprehensible. Then, as the details of the incident are released – the child is colicky, the mother is too poor to provide for the child, or the mother suffers from post-partum depression – we begin to understand what happened. The act does not necessarily become justified or acceptable despite the circumstances, but it becomes comprehensible. And this is the role of translation, to carry the meaning from something that is explicitly different/foreign/Other and make it understandable.

As the detective demonstrates that a seemingly inexplicable crime can be clearly deduced and explained (the murder suddenly makes perfect sense or the stolen item is

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Perhaps a better example to demonstrate the dramatic reveal of why a murderer would act as he or she did would be to turn to Agatha Christie, who arguably perfected the art of a dramatic reveal at the end of a mystery. In her first published story our narrator asks Detective Poirot why the culprit murdered, or generally acted as he did, no less than nine times throughout the inspector's grand exposition, in: Agatha Christie, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (Maryland: Wildside Press, 2009), 142-155.

revealed to be in a certain man's pocket), the translator takes an expression that appears nonsensical at first glance and gives it meaning. While the event itself cannot be transferred, some of the meaning in that event can be passed from one person to another. In this way translation operates in the space between universalism and particularism. So we have seen meaning resides in a tension between what is transferable and what is not. Translation is dependent upon the articulation and transference of equivalency tampered by relevance from one context to another.

#### **4.11 Translating at a Gain**

Now that the tensions between universalism and particularism alongside equivalence and relevance have been discussed, we can finally turn to the central question of why religions should participate in translation in the public sphere at all.<sup>138</sup> It is through equivalence we discovered that translation is possible, there are connections to be made through the process of interpretation, and referents can be recognized by different cultures or individuals. Yet, it is the transference of relevance that impresses upon us why translation is such a useful tool. Not only can we refer to the same thing through different languages or expressions, meaning can be shared and simultaneously exist within different worldviews. For Ricoeur, this point is brought to light through his discussion of different imaginary worlds,

The decisive feature of hermeneutics is the capacity of world-disclosure yielded by texts. Hermeneutics is not confined to texts nor to authors of texts; its primary concern is with the worlds which these authors and texts open up. It is by an understanding of the worlds, actual and possible,

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<sup>138</sup> Recall in section 4.1 “Better the Translate than to Never Communicate at All” we defined equivocation as the initial connection between two words in a translation and relevance as the means to assess the depth and limits of this connection.

opened up by language that we may arrive at a better understanding of ourselves.<sup>139</sup>

Here, Ricoeur describes the expansiveness of translation. Throughout translation, one does not simply attempt to transfer one sentence from a language (or culture) to another because the wider context has to be taken into account. Ricoeur develops this notion and describes the actual and possible worlds which are opened up through translation as well.

Expansion, then, serves on different ends of translation; both the host work and receiving audience become exposed to new (possible and actual) worlds. Steiner describes this process as flow of energy in which each person affected by translation is opened up to a positive energy flow.<sup>140</sup> Because of this surge in creativity, expansion, and energy Steiner is able to claim: “The work translated is enhanced.”<sup>141</sup> Or that translation enriches the original piece.<sup>142</sup> When religious adherents enter into a hermeneutic relationship with secularism it not only permits them a space or voice in the public sphere, it allows them to expand their message as it is made understandable, relatable, and meaningful to a broader context than merely their own group.

However, some might argue that religious messages are simply meant for the religious anyhow, thus translation is unnecessary. While this may be true for certain revelations or doxologies; to exist, impact, and work with a broader, multicultural society religions can benefit and use the expansive proactive process of translation and become enriched by it. Furthermore, secularists are able to access and utilize bodies of knowledge

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<sup>139</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, eds. Mario Valdes (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 490.

<sup>140</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, 316.

<sup>141</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, 316.

<sup>142</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, 429.

shut off without translation, or have access to politically active and influential groups through communication based upon cultural translation. The relationship between secularism and religion will be further explored in the next chapter, but for now it is worth recognizing that there are potential benefits for both parties to seek a dialectical relationship made available through translation.

The tensions between the untranslated and the translated can never truly be alleviated in translation with any sense of finality. But it is in the elasticity between concepts like equivocation and relevance, or universalism and particularity, in which translation occurs. Translation is a method for making connections through commonality and it also transfers meaning between different languages, contexts, and cultures. As this is the case, we can ascertain translation is a process which addresses difference in a direct manner.<sup>143</sup> It puts different languages in close proximity emphasizing and juxtaposing their divergence. In translation difference remains yet meaning is transferred. In the same way, the public sphere has to account for the divergent worldviews which inhabit it in today's complex and deeply diverse societies and allow for meaningful engagement between them.

Translation does not end with an emphasis on difference; instead, it focuses on how to overcome difference through a transference of meaning. Differences are not glossed over as is found in the strongest criticisms of universalism. Instead of seeking elusive, shared values and common traits to all humanity, translation addresses diversity and makes this component an integral aspect of communication. Transliteration, or an overemphasis on

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<sup>143</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, 382.



equivocation, fails while seeking an expansive, deeper meaning to an expression is much more promising.<sup>144</sup> Yet, we cannot maintain the transference of meaning from one expression to another if we ignore equivalence completely. If we do, we would become lost in the process of appropriating meaning from another culture. The response to this appropriation is to carry translation beyond the mere “taking” from one culture to another, and to move toward mutuality where meaning and expression are expanded and enhanced for everyone.

Translation cannot properly exist if it serves only one culture, and it remains incomplete if it does not benefit all involved. As we shall see in Chapter Five, translation remains the best tool we have available to enhance the dialectic relationship between religion and secularism in the public sphere. This is because secularism and religion have so much potential to gain from a dialectic relationship with one another. Furthermore, in a pragmatic sense, religion and secularism are both popular and potent facets of our social imaginaries and public spaces, making communication between them all the more pertinent.

In the next chapter I have three objectives which all seek to apply the concept of translation and explore its application in the public sphere and the relationship between religion and secularism. First, I will consider whether translation is our best tool for public discourse and I will argue that the potential for translation far outweighs its dangers or costs. Secondly, I will analyse arguments that seek to impose a unidirectional translation relationship between religion and secularism and demonstrate how these models limit

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<sup>144</sup> Eco, *Mouse or Rat?*, 73.

themselves whether they favour a religious or secular worldview. Thirdly, I will look beyond these arguments to explore systems of thought where the dynamic and meaningful relationship between secularism and religion can develop. Through this process the role of the translator as a mediator between religion and secularism will become clearer, more developed, and further appreciated.

## Chapter Five: A Hermeneutic of Religion and Secularism

### 5.1 Rushing to Conclusions

In *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, Bhikhu Parekh analyses the “Rushdie affair” as it tested the bounds of communication between Islam and secular liberalism. While Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* garnered much praise as a literary accomplishment pertaining to the human condition, it also attracted much condemnation as a farcical, blasphemous, and an unnecessarily vitriolic portrayal of Islam. The book's content alongside a failure to gain legal concessions enraged certain people in the Muslim community in Britain and around the world following its release. This ire culminated in its most extreme iterations as violent protests, threats of violence, and finally a *fatwa* calling for Rushdie's death issued by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the President of Iran at the time. Parekh argues that this explosive outcome was the result of an aggregation of miscommunications, misunderstandings, and mistranslations.<sup>1</sup>

Parekh contends that the Rushdie affair would likely have been settled amicably and swiftly if the “unproblematic Muslim demand that the book should carry a note disavowing its historicity had been met” or if Rushdie and British society had been more understanding toward Muslim requests in general.<sup>2</sup> However, we can never know if Parekh’s speculation is correct simply because things did not work out that way. So the controversy continued and amalgamated into an infamous battle between religious

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<sup>1</sup> Parekh, Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2000), 304-305.

<sup>2</sup> Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, 304.

sensitivity and the secular right to freedom of speech. Parekh emphasizes that such a battle culminated because there was misunderstanding and miscommunication on each side:

Most conservative and liberal British writers argued that Muslims were opposed to free speech, whereas the latter were only asking why free speech should include untrue and deeply offensive remarks about religions and religious communities. Again many of them insisted that Muslims wanted to protect their religious beliefs from criticism; in fact Muslims had no objection to religious criticism and only wondered why mocking, ridiculing and lampooning religious beliefs, practices and prophets should be confused with genuine and serious criticism. For their part Muslims, too, systematically misunderstood the grounds of the liberal emphasis on free speech, the difficulties involved in restricting it, the depth of British commitment to it, and and [sic] so on.<sup>3</sup>

Here we see Parekh setting up the problem as to how the public debate unfolded. He places the blame for the poor communication on the dialogical structures at work amidst a wider context of group power relations. He rightly demonstrates the role miscommunication had in intensifying the issue. He further suggests that these misunderstandings were avoidable and that the ramifications for them were dire. However, one can make the case that freedom of speech implies one *must* be able to ridicule religion, else we are not truly free to express satirical derision toward orthodoxy.

While Parekh notes Muslims did not fully grasp the British context of free speech as a human right, it was at this level that they chose to challenge the book. Parekh explains why the outcome got to be as bad as it did, “the two groups knew very little about each other's ways of life and thought.”<sup>4</sup> From this position it would appear as though Parekh is presenting a persuasive account of the problems which can arise in intercultural translation.

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<sup>3</sup> Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, 304-305.

<sup>4</sup> Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, 305.

As we have seen, Umberto Eco describes translation as a cross-cultural device which is dependent, ideally, upon encyclopedic knowledge for success. Parekh, however, considers translation a limited solution to this scenario and offers an alternative based solely on a dialogical model instead.

Parekh justifies his use of dialogue theory due to what he sees as the limits of translation. While he acknowledges that mistranslation was a part of the problem, he does not see it as a viable solution to something like the Rushdie affair. He argues this is the case for three reasons and each of these will be addressed in this chapter. The first is that translation is too difficult a task for such a politically charged situation; the second is that translation undermines authenticity; and the third is that the processes of translation favours some interpretations over others. Parekh summarizes his understanding of the limits of translation in public discourse as:

Muslims attempted to articulate their reasons in a liberal language but found it extremely difficult to do so, both because they had few biculturally literate intellectuals and because no such conceptual translation is ever accurate. Furthermore, the reasons they advanced in public were not their real reasons, and hence they felt inauthentic and alienated or confused their followers. Not being well-versed in the liberal discourse on free speech, they also found themselves frequently wrong-footed and were invariably defeated by their liberal opponents who were naturally most at home in that tradition.<sup>5</sup>

One problem Parekh points out right away is that since translation is so rarely accurate it can be a poor device for clearing up a series of misunderstandings. As we have already discussed in Chapter Four, mistranslation is often the result of false equivocation or a poor evaluation of relevance. While translation can exaggerate inaccuracies, and may even

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<sup>5</sup> Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, 305.

progress through approximations, it does not *necessarily* compound inexactitude. Rather, translation is a useful process to make concepts become clearer, not further obfuscated or further separated from their original expression.

Translation, when done properly, allows concepts, expressions, and viewpoints to be understood by more people, not fewer. If secular liberals and Muslims were using terms such as “freedom of speech” and “blasphemy” (as in the Blasphemy law of Britain which was still in effect during the Rushdie affair) differently, then the issue is not that translation was inaccurate, but as George Steiner's theory of translation articulates, it was incomplete. Translation is not stagnant, it is an oscillation between the original expression and its interpretation, thus providing a means to move between new spheres of meaning. While I have no doubt mistranslation played a part in making the Rushdie affair worse, and translation between religious worldviews and secular ones is difficult, that does not mean we should be quick to dismiss it as a viable tool for public discourse.

Parekh's second point is that the Muslims who called for a ban of *The Satanic Verses* were forced into being inauthentic by relying on a translation of their religious concerns in the secular sphere. This is because they had to employ secular, liberal language in order to express religious concerns. This can be a serious problem for religious communities as well as the public sphere itself. If one is compelled to reframe their authentic values and desires this can lead to a limited ability to express oneself in a manner that retains one's message in a meaningful way. Yet, we know from our discussion of Charles Taylor in Chapter Three authenticity can be a very ambiguous term. Authenticity can also be a misleading term since it can be used to denote different ideas simultaneously. Taylor helpfully proposes a marker for authenticity: to identify an authentic choice we need

to decide whether a choice is flippant or meaningful by examining what is being chosen, how the choice is made, and what the implications are for the choice.<sup>6</sup> As such, the desire to express something authentically can lead us to murky waters. Is the expression flippant, meaningful, and of great consequence? If someone changes their mind and wants to rephrase what they said after a moment of reflection, does that mean that their original statement is no longer authentic? What of the ability for anyone to ever express anything authentically across linguistic barriers? Are we bound indefinitely by our native tongue? If we accept the premise that translation is possible, then it stands to reason that authentic translation is possible.

We considered many of the key difficulties in translation in Chapter Four. Yet, difficulties do not mean that the endeavour as a whole is doomed, rather, any unauthentic expressions are yet undeveloped. If Muslims had trouble framing their concepts of religious freedom and freedom of speech it is a problem that can be resolved hermeneutically. Of course, it may be the case that their translation partners were also lacking. So this situation may reflect not simply a failure to express themselves authentically, but rather they were not fully recognized by their discourse partners.<sup>7</sup> So, translation and an understanding of our duty to the other intersects at the point of misrecognition as a catalyst for mistranslation. However, meaning can be transferred from one setting to another despite such hurdles. Authenticity requires a certain kind of translator, or translation process, in order for

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<sup>6</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 478.

<sup>7</sup> Parekh himself notes the importance of a genuine effort made by each side of the debate could have had: "The debate would have been properly engaged if both parties had been sufficiently bicultural or had made a genuine effort to enter into each other's way of thinking," in: Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, 305.

meaning to be genuinely transferred from one language or context to another, that is, with a sense of integrity and mutual satisfaction.

Parekh's final critique of translation concerns the power distribution at work throughout the debate surrounding *The Satanic Verses*. He points out that those of a liberal disposition had something akin to a home court advantage. They knew the workings of the legal system and were able to progress more naturally and intuitively while their Muslim counterparts had trouble adapting. This can be seen as a problem with translation and/or as the beginning phase of a translation. As we have already considered, sayings, jokes, or a turn of phrase can be difficult to translate successfully; especially if one is trying to maintain the eloquence or impact of the original work. Native speakers are able to pick up the allusions, nuances, and subtleties of their language with relative ease. Consequently, a loss in translation may afflict whatever is being translated.

But, we have already discussed how translation may be used to counteract appropriation or the cultural dominance of one group.<sup>8</sup> This is because translation requires alterity as it operates in the space between particularity and universalism. In this way, the unique, distinct, and even marginalized can impact the dominant culture. There is also a potential power in translation, it can expose, expand, and support meaning found in contexts or cultures outside of the majority. Translation, as we have noted, is only complete if it reciprocates value to the host culture and enhances the original work by virtue of being translated. Parekh argues that the Rushdie affair was a missed opportunity in this regard,

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<sup>8</sup> See Chapter Four section, 4.8 “Translation and Appropriation.”



“British society as a whole lost the opportunity to develop a self-understanding adequate to its multicultural character.”<sup>9</sup> The relationship between religion and secularism in this case put a strain on society as a whole, which resulted in a missed opportunity for growth.

Parekh calls for a more intricate process of communication (instead of translation) to prevent similar missed opportunities in the future. He argues that a more nuanced dialogue theory is what multiculturalism needs in order to address situations of miscommunication and power discrepancies. He suggests we must recognize different forms of expression, such as public demonstrations and protests, as legitimate facets of public discourse.<sup>10</sup> More extensively, he suggests a “public forum where important issues can be patiently and dispassionately discussed by the representatives of different groups.”<sup>11</sup> While the specifics somewhat vague, Parekh considers a more formal forum for the public sphere in order to address issues of miscommunication.

This solution seems problematic at best. Parekh uses *The Satanic Verses* as an example of why we need such a space, however, this example provides plenty of reasons why such a forum could not function. Firstly, issues are argued “patiently and dispassionately” yet the very reason the Rushdie affair was so explosive was that it sparked such emotional, intense reactions from both sides of the debate. Parekh argues that one of the problems with current forms of public discourse is that certain people cannot express their views authentically because they have to posit their arguments in a liberal frame. But

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<sup>9</sup> Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, 305.

<sup>10</sup> Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, 306.

<sup>11</sup> Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, 306.

it could be just as limiting to be compelled to present a deeply emotive issue in a dispassionate manner.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, representatives are needed for this forum to function, but who gets chosen and how? In order for a useful discourse to emerge from this forum, strict guidelines as to who is invited and how they may participate would need to be enforced. This is a far cry from including the underrepresented in a manner so that his or her expressions are given a meaningful role in discourse. However, Parekh does acknowledge dialogue alone may not be the best solution. He claims reciprocal gestures would have gone a long way in the Rushdie affair and could have negated much of the ugliness that came out of this issue.<sup>13</sup> While reciprocal gestures of good will would likely add to reparations and help restore broken relationships, they still would not address the underlying problem of miscommunication – though a more sophisticated application of translation would.

The limits of Parekh's institutional forum demonstrates the difficulties involved in bridging the gap between religion and secularism. We cannot merely invent a new discursive space and expect only desirable people (who would adhere to narrow rules of

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<sup>12</sup> Parekh's own practice does not really demonstrate what such an idyllic discourse would look like when he addresses the Rushdie affair later in *Rethinking Multiculturalism*. Parekh focuses on the author and the text itself when he remarks: “the passages in question reflect bad taste and handles a great theme in a somewhat crude, abusive and offensive language. They also show poor literary judgement, for Rushdie could have easily handled the theme in a manner that did not bear such a close historical resemblance to historical Islam,” in: Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, 320.

Here we see Parekh attacking the book's crudeness and literary merit in order to add sympathy to the situation of the Muslims who were involved. Yet in doing so, he portrays a simplistic, unsubstantiated critique of the novel verging on (if not fully steeped in) an *ad hominem* attack. Parekh does not offer a thorough exploration of how and why different language would be more appropriate and still maintain the author's intent, message, and meaning in a manner that maintains an equitable impact on the reader. Certainly, Rushdie was being provocative in his novel (Rushdie is no stranger to provocation), but this does not mean his decisions were poorly thought out from a literary perspective.

<sup>13</sup> Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, 311.

conduct) to demonstrate an interest in public issues. Even if we agreed upon a participant selection process and developed fair, equitable rules for this institution, the notion that the rest of the public sphere would put off any discussion of future contentious issues and wait for them to be properly deliberated by a few choice representatives is ludicrous. Yet the Rushdie affair as a whole does demonstrate why secularism and religion should be understood dialectically and hermeneutically. With a proper model of translation representatives and expressions would not be filtered or funnelled by institutional bureaucracies; although it is true the translator would bear a heavy burden in order for interpretation to be successful. As such, there is a need for erudite and competent individuals to help overcome the gap between secularism and religion. The remainder of this chapter will address this gap and those who attempt to bridge it.

## **5.2 Secularism in Competition with Religion**

Religion and secularism are often represented as two competing ideologies battling for dominance in people's minds and in the institutions we have created. In light of this portrayal John Rawls and Robert Audi argue that religion should be severely regulated in political discourse. But they often employ a limited definition of religion, one where religion is merely a set of doctrines a person freely chooses to believe in (or not), with a focus on a God figure, ethics, and some practices which can be privatized. However, religion should not be defined in such a narrow way. Russell McCutcheon argues that a definition of religion that is personal, autonomous, and essentialized is a political strategy which privileges certain kinds of religion and disregards others to the point where we fail to see the extent to which we have manufactured our conceptions of religion, and what the

implication of this is.<sup>14</sup> Through a thorough we may uncover that to employ a limited, reductive role for religion in public discourse, as various thinkers in this chapter do, usually results from the exploitation of a simplistic definition of religion.

Jonathan Z. Smith argues that in the study of religion we have a plethora of definitions of religion, our task then is to decide which ones serve better than others. He notes, “‘Religion’ is not a native term; it is a term created by scholars for their intellectual purposes and therefore is theirs to define.”<sup>15</sup> For Smith, religion is not essentially about belief, ethical codes, or God; instead it is up to us to decide how to define religion in the face of so many different practices, beliefs, traditions, and systems we clump together as ‘religion.’ Defining religion is a notorious difficult endeavour. Some propose a definition of religion that is personal and largely about belief, then use such a definition to justify theoretical frames of the public sphere, but in doing so one ends up circuitously begging the question. Instead we need a more sophisticated, nuanced understanding of religion. We have to acknowledge that religions are formed through histories of tradition, negotiation, and communication with others. Further, religions are dynamic, fluid, and ever changing, so we cannot use one narrow, facile definition and have it refer to all religious people in a simplistic manner. Finally, religions are important meaning-making sources in a great many people’s lives and should not be disregarded and mistreated through fallacious definitions.

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<sup>14</sup> Russell T. McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 26.

<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious,” in *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion*, eds. Jonathan Z. Smith (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2004), 193-194.

The problem of defining religion aside, many see religion as merely a problem for society. For Rawls, the problem with religion is intrinsically tied to the central goal of a liberal society – to seek consensus. Consensus is the foundation for his theory of justice and he argues we ought to develop an “overlapping consensus” in the public sphere.<sup>16</sup> But, a significant potential problem for any consensus building project is the divisions caused by religion: “given the assumption of reasonable pluralism, citizens cannot agree on any moral authority, say a sacred text or a religious institution or tradition. Nor can they agree about a moral order of values of the dictates of what some view as natural law.”<sup>17</sup> A presupposed understanding of morality, such as what is afforded by natural law, divides us in a pluralistic society. In this context religion may no longer be useful or helpful for informing our policies. Thus, Rawls calls for people to abandon comprehensive doctrines (of which he includes religion) in order to form a public rationale.<sup>18</sup> He argues that without any metaphysical foundations obscuring our efforts we may be able to form a consensus on what the meaning of justice is, and from there develop a working framework for society.<sup>19</sup> Rawls then offers a solution: we bracket all impeding religious beliefs and develop theories upon which we can all agree.

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<sup>16</sup> John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 12.

<sup>17</sup> Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 15.

<sup>18</sup> Rawls states, “We leave aside comprehensive doctrines that now exist, have existed, or might exist,” in: *Justice as Fairness*, 189.

<sup>19</sup> Rawls explicitly states justice may be a point of consensus, even for people who disagree in other areas, “given the fact of reasonable pluralism, a well-ordered society in which all its members accept the same comprehensive doctrine is impossible. But democratic citizens holding different comprehensive doctrines may agree on political conceptions of justice,” in: Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 9.

Rawls calls for two general guiding premises for public discourse: reason ought to be the basis for public discussion, and religious convictions ought to be relegated to the private sphere.<sup>20</sup> Rawls' system, however, only works as a means of guiding society toward consensus while citizens bracket religious convictions. If society cannot form a consensus on whether or not one should bracket religion, Rawls' system is a non-starter. Also, Rawls does not adequately address the problems that arise if we require one segment of society to bracket an integral aspect of their identity. Specifically, the toll bracketing would take on a religious person's identity and the cost it puts on those seeking to engage in the public sphere is understated in Rawls work. Furthermore, Rawls's central premise that democracy requires consensus will be challenged later in this chapter when we consider Richard Rorty and William Connolly's arguments that a society should base its values upon different worldviews in the public sphere. For now, we will return to the justifications for separating religion and secularism.

Robert Audi, like Rawls, argues we need to keep religion out of the public sphere. He maintains that liberalism should adhere to a strict separation of Church and State, which for him means religion should be separate from political institutions and public debates (even if the religious adherents do not associate with churches). He justifies this claim largely on the basis that religion is problematic for politics.<sup>21</sup> This is because it is prone to cause division. Audi claims that despite its benefits religion can “be a divisive force in

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<sup>20</sup> John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University, 2005), 140; Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 221.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Audi, *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 3.

democratic politics.”<sup>22</sup> This is reason enough, according to Audi, to be suspicious of religion and to keep it out of politics. No doubt Audi is aware other aspects, forces, or ideologies can be divisive, yet, for him, religion is particularly problematic.<sup>23</sup>

In *Religious Commitment and Secular Reasons* Audi lists and describes the ways in which religion is especially problematic for democracy. He does so in eight sections. The first problem with religion is its “Infallible Supreme Authority,” wherein the religious adherent must obey any command given by his or her higher authority and he or she cannot question these commands.<sup>24</sup> Yet, as we well know, virtually all religions are characterized by skepticism and deep debate regarding interpretations of the supreme authority. To presume the opposite is obtuse. The books of Job and Ecclesiastes (to take only two obvious examples) expound that our deepest questions may never be fully satisfied. According to tradition the Buddha did not focus on metaphysics in his teachings. The Shia Sunni divide in Islam demonstrates a split that occurred directly following the death of Islam’s founder, the prophet Muhammad. Religions are constantly seeking to reinvent, reinvigorate, and redefine themselves as they face new challenges. To posit all religious followers dumbly and blindly follow any supreme being’s decree is a straw man argument that fails to account for actual religiosity as we encounter it. Even if some religious people

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<sup>22</sup> Audi, *Religious Commitment*, 3.

<sup>23</sup> For example, in the fall of 2013 the contentious issue of whether or not the government of the United States of America should ensure all citizens have access to health care coverage nearly brought the American government to a standstill and a default. The Republican Party was committed to halting the legislation that would ensure all citizens had access to health care coverage by using their majority seats in Congress to vote against the government’s budget, thus disallowing the government from paying their debts and theoretically could have brought about a full federal government shutdown. No religious contentious issue in a Western democracy has come so close to halting government affairs in this way in recent history.

<sup>24</sup> Audi, *Religious Commitment*, 100-101.

do fail to question the teachings of their tradition and discourse with them included proves ultimately fruitless, this does not indicate that the public discourse as a whole has to halt simply because of the mere presence of a few problematic worldviews. Ultimately, fringe movements within religion will have trouble impacting the public sphere as a whole anyways without a *defacto* systematic expulsions of religion *ad totem*.

In fact, if we follow from our critical analysis of Audi's portrayal of religious authority we can see that the rest of his descriptions of other facets of religion commit similar infelicities. Each of the eight characteristics he names fail to represent religion accurately or fail to present a case as to why religion in particular must be regulated. It is as if he wishes to imply only religious people are intolerant of other viewpoints or commit logical fallacies. Audi attributes "Condemnation Tendencies" to religious folk who become unable to recognize different worldviews.<sup>25</sup> He further suggest we are threatened by "Religious Domination" since religious people want to impose their religious practices upon every citizen, a concept he returns to later under the heading "Passionate Concern with Outsiders."<sup>26</sup> He argues religious adherents may lose their sense of autonomy, especially if they belong to a cult, or they may have an "Inflated Sense of Self-Importance" another uniquely religious trait (which I am sure could never impede a secular philosopher).<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, under "The Centrality and Delicacy of Religious Liberty," Audi posits we are left with an ultimatum; either we keep a check on religion with

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<sup>25</sup> Audi, *Religious Commitment*, 101.

<sup>26</sup> Audi, *Religious Commitment*, 101, 102.

<sup>27</sup> Audi, *Religious Commitment*, 101-102.



secularism, else we will face “destruction and death.”<sup>28</sup> And finally, there is pressure put upon the offspring of religious adherents to uphold the faith, an undue and unique pressure put upon otherwise free and rational people because they belong to a religious community.<sup>29</sup>

As such we are left with a fairly expansive list of the detrimental, insidious, or treacherous facets of religion we must be wary of in the public sphere. While Audi does recognize these characteristics are not essentially and uniquely religious he still portrays religion as intertwined with these faults to the extent that we can justify the exclusion of religion from the public sphere. In this way, any benefit, any wisdom, charity, inspiration, kindness, or goodness religion may offer society is overshadowed by its propensity to diminish reason in otherwise rational people. With his portrayal of religion, it becomes clear why Audi would not want it to play a part in our social construction or public deliberations.

Both Rawls and Audi turn to the irrationality of religion and its propensity to divide as justifications to exclude it from the public sphere – alongside arguments that religion has the ability to corrupt and undermine our democratic institutions. This offers a particularly limited view of religion (and politics for that matter). For one, political processes, both democratic and other forms, can be corrupted by both religious influences and a/anti-religious ones. Religion was not a part of the oppressive communist regimes of Russia and China. Furthermore, the Nazi party was 'democratically elected' (even if Nazis

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<sup>28</sup> Audi, *Religious Commitment*, 102-103.

<sup>29</sup> Audi, *Religious Commitment*, 103.

did abuse political processes to gain further powers), and although it used religious symbols, its ideological national socialism cannot be directly attributed to any established, mainstream religious tradition. To argue that the division which results from religious doctrine should cause us to fear religion in the political sphere is tantamount to arguing that nationalism, borders, or human interests should not be a part of politics. The conflicts the West has faced in the past century have been justified both with and without religion and they have brought about much destruction and division amongst people either way. For example the recent 'war on terror' certainly has a religious element but that does not mean we should ignore the capitalist, realpolitik, and other secular facets as well.

The logical fallacies such as appeals to authority, circular reasoning, straw man arguments, *ad hominem*, or non-falsifiability are too common philosophical mistakes to be pinned on religion alone. Especially if we look to the messy, inarticulate, and multifaceted realm of public discourse. There is nothing inherently religious about being intolerant or ignorant. Therefore we must be more precise and nuanced when describing the kind of impact religion may have on any discourse. Perhaps to counter this point Rawls and Audi do not merely describe religion as flawed, they argue we must also consider the advantages to sidelining religion in the public sphere. If we do so we shall find the advantages outweigh the costs.

Rawls argues that we must separate religion from the public sphere, including political philosophy. He does so because, for his political theory to work, reasons need to be universalized and secularized in order to be acceptable. Furthermore, Rawls is able to defend his understanding of political theory because it is based upon "true beliefs of men

in society” and if his ideas fail to reflect people's lived experiences they are to be rejected.<sup>30</sup> He maintains we do not need metaphysical justifications for argumentation and this is a guideline he attempts to adhere to throughout his writing.<sup>31</sup> Rawls then builds his political theory upon a particular view of justice, the world, and our interpretation of these things. In order to maintain the function and operation of political philosophy we should not be sidetracked by religious claims.

Rawls’ efforts to free us from metaphysical assumptions can also be a limitation. Throughout Rawls' writing there is an underlying presupposition that we can simply know what justice is by thinking about it independent of our traditions and contexts. Rawls goes further as to say we must bracket these traditions when forming any conception of justice, yet to do so would mean we have to neglect rich traditions, communities of wisdom, insight, and knowledge available to us. Essentially Rawls is arguing that we need to devise a shared, society-wide vision of justice without engaging a major facet of society, nor the roots of the shared society.<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile, Audi calls for limits on religion because limiting one's religiosity makes one a good citizen. He asserts all public argumentation should be based on secular reasoning: “*The principle of secular rationale*: Citizens in a democracy have a prima facie obligation not to advocate or support any law or public policy that restricts human conduct,

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<sup>30</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice: Revised Edition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 398.

<sup>31</sup> Rawls argues that we may not be able to devoid ourselves of all assumptions and presumptions, but we ought to try and minimize their effect as much as possible in: *A Theory of Justice*, 137-138.

<sup>32</sup> John Milbank (who we will return to in this chapter in section 5.5 “The Religious Worldview”) argues that we cannot properly understand Western liberal democracy without considering the roots and traditions that brought it about in: “The Gift of Ruling: Secularization and Political Authority,” *New Blackfriars* 85.996 (2004).

unless they have, and are willing to offer, adequate secular reason for this advocacy or support (e.g. for a vote).”<sup>33</sup> He justifies this by arguing religious claims need to be “constrained” by secularism in order to hem them.<sup>34</sup> This allows translated religiosity to play a role in public discourse in theory – but Audi is only interested in translation as a tool to keep a check on religion. This becomes evident when we consider what his definition of secular reason is: “Roughly, this is to say that a secular reason is a ground that enables one to know or have some degree of justification (roughly, evidence of some kind) for a proposition, such as a moral principle, independently of having knowledge of, or justification for believing, a religious proposition.”<sup>35</sup> Therefore one can believe in a religious proposition or not – but one cannot use this belief as the basis for any kind of argumentation presented in the public sphere. Secular reason is defined as the absence of religious conviction.

In fact, Audi elevates secular justification to the prominent position of a civic virtue and to ignore this principle would make one a bad citizen. As he notes, “If one's *only* reason for supporting vouchers is to promote the religious devotion of one's children (or of other children), then even if one is expressing a kind of religious virtue, one is not exhibiting civic virtue.”<sup>36</sup> Audi does not end there, he further argues religion cannot serve as one's motivation for presenting arguments either, instead a secular motivation must be ascertained, which he describes as “*principle of secular motivation.*”<sup>37</sup> The frame for one's

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<sup>33</sup> Robert Audi, *Democratic Authority and the Separation of Church and State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 66-67.

<sup>34</sup> Audi, *Democratic Authority*, 71.

<sup>35</sup> Audi, *Democratic Authority*, 89.

<sup>36</sup> Audi, *Democratic Authority*, 99.

<sup>37</sup> Audi, *Democratic Authority*, 96.

arguments and the motivation for one's public engagement cannot be religious else one commits the sin of being un-civic and un-virtuous.

Audi defends his rationale and motivation principles on the basis they will benefit society as a whole – as well as religious individuals. Audi argues that by adhering to his guidelines of secular discourse, religious traditions will benefit as it will allow them to be exposed to different groups' ways of thinking as well as diminish inter-religious strife.<sup>38</sup> He notes that “adherence to these principles is in some cases a burden, which may be offset by the incalculably large contribution it can make to harmony between the religious and non-religious and even among religious people whose visions of the good society are sharply different.”<sup>39</sup> Thus, while he is placing an imposition upon religious individuals, it is worth it.

While there are problems with his assessment on the religious side of the equation, Audi has not really taken into account what the cost of his system is on the *secularist* side. By dismissing religion out of hand, secularists can only be exposed to secular reasoning, wisdom, and argumentation. Now to those who subscribe to secularism this may not seem like much of a cost at all, yet when we take into account the diversity and complexity of today's societies cutting off histories and traditions of beliefs, wisdoms, and insights derived from religion diminishes public discourse considerably. Even Audi himself considers exposure to different worldviews an advantage, as we have seen he claims his

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<sup>38</sup> See: Audi, *Democratic Authority*, 96. However, Audi ignores religious solutions to these problems, such as interfaith dialogue or other multifaith endeavours such as is described in: Darrol Bryant, *Ways of the Spirit: Celebrating Dialogue, Diversity, Spirituality* (Kitchener: Pandora, 2013).

<sup>39</sup> Audi, *Democratic Authority*, 180.

system provides this opportunity for religious people.<sup>40</sup> Yet by bracketing their religiosity, religious people potentially impoverish secularists who subsequently are exposed to fewer approaches to understanding the world.

Audi also makes an ethical argument for the relegation of religion. Audi does so by tying his principle to the Golden Rule, largely recognized as a prominent ethical principle found in many religions (and non-religious ethical codes) to this day.<sup>41</sup> He suggests that limiting religion is good for any one religious person to do because it is what she or he would want other religious people with different religious/political views to do.<sup>42</sup> Yet, Audi takes a narrow and simplistic interpretation of this moral maxim and tries to apply it to any and all religious engagement in the public sphere. For example, there could be a Christian who feels that Canada is a Christian country, therefore it should follow Christian rules. A Muslim country can follow the *sharia* if it so chooses, but a Christian country ought to follow the Bible. In this way a religious adherent would be following the Golden Rule while engaging in the public sphere. Or, perhaps, a religious individual could see him or herself having access to a greater insight, morality, and wisdom than the rest of society and should therefore use this knowledge to benefit others. In this line of thinking religious insight is analogous to any specialist; if a doctor had knowledge as to how to treat a rare disease he or she should be compelled to use this knowledge to help others, even if the technical expertise as to what she or he does to cure it is lost on those afflicted by the disease. Or lastly, we may say simply that religious people would want someone else to

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<sup>40</sup> Audi, *Democratic Authority*, 96.

<sup>41</sup> Audi, *Democratic Authority*, 99.

<sup>42</sup> Audi, *Religious Commitment*, 85.

genuinely and authentically be engaged in the public sphere, and that is reason enough for them to participate in public discourse.

From this discussion it becomes clear that there are deeply problematic and troubling dimensions to both Rawls and Audi's presentation of religion and secularism in the public sphere. Such understandings of secularism lead to a line of thinking that limits the potential social constructive efforts we can undertake as a society. Tariq Modood calls this kind of thinking “ideological secularism” and equates it to fundamentalism.<sup>43</sup> He argues these kinds of arguments should have no place in reasoned discourse, instead, “We should let this evolving, moderate secularism and the spirit of compromise it represents be our guide.”<sup>44</sup> Yet, we should note the fact that both Rawls and Audi refer to translation in their theoretical works; specifically, that religious ideas can and should be presented in secular frames in public discourse. Both of these thinkers present translation as a unidirectional process where religion is translated into secularism – there is no reciprocity. As we have seen from our discussion of translation in Chapter Four, translation done in this manner is not complete and thus cannot stand. So the problem with their portrayals is twofold; they misrepresent religion on one hand, and their application of translation is deficient on the other. What is needed, then, is a more nuanced understanding of religion and what it can offer public discourse alongside a deeper appreciation for value of translation endeavours.

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<sup>43</sup> Tariq Modood, “Muslims, Religious Equality and Secularism,” in *Secularism and Multicultural Citizenship*, eds. Geoffery Brahm Levey and Tariq Modood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 185.

<sup>44</sup> Modood, “Muslims, Religious Equality and Secularism,” 185.

### 5.3 Different Conceptions of Secularism

Audi and Rawls utilize a particular understanding of secularism to justify a rigid framework for public discourse. Instead, one ought to recognize the constructed nature of frames for the public sphere, thus one has the ability to loosen the definition of things such as ‘secular,’ ‘rationality,’ and ‘political.’ This allows us to play with supposed rigidity – ultimately we could have a public sphere that maintains its function without any hegemonic overarching structure. One way to do this is to use religion as a catalyst to question, critique, and offer alternatives to a domineering secular worldview. For example, a secularist would argue that religion is a private matter that should not impact public discussions and the public sphere should be neutral toward religion. Meanwhile a religious adherent would be compelled by his or her beliefs to engage in the public sphere. Audi and Rawls present secularism as something that is cohesive and clearly defined – as they imagine the term religion, but the term secular is used in different contexts to mean different things. In Chapter Four we considered Charles Taylor’s tripartite definition of secularism: it can refer to domains and spheres in time (where we distinguish secular from religious spaces or how we divide our time spent); it can refer to a lack of religious belief; and finally it can be used to describe the replacement of religion with rationality, enlightenment, progress and modernity.<sup>45</sup> By presenting these three facets of secularism Taylor is able to account for its broad usage and for some of the conceptual contradictions surrounding debates concerning secularism.

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<sup>45</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 2-3.



In Canada there are different models of secularism used by different political actors. At the federal level multiculturalism was designed to allow the inclusion of different religious expressions and traditions in the public sphere. While multiculturalism's attempt to make a space where any religious tradition and culture is valued is not without its difficulties, other models also struggle with issues related to religious identities.<sup>46</sup> There are also divergent regional interpretations of secularism, in Quebec the model for secularism favours *laïcité*. *Laïcité* is a mix of Taylor's latter two definitions as religion is relegated to certain domains (and is not permitted in others), while at the same time it promotes the advantages to a non-religious space in society for public decision-making and discourse. Thus, it adheres to a strong belief that religion is a private matter and religious expressions, reasons, and practices should not be a part of public life. Not only does it seek to limit religiosity to the private sphere, it also seeks “to inculcate principles of nonreligious rationality and morality.”<sup>47</sup> We see this version of secularism where religion is to be distrusted while the virtues of secularity are exalted.

The same kinds of justifications Rawls and Audi utilize take on a particular form in Quebec where its historic context plays a significant role. For Quebec, before the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s, the Catholic Church had control over the province's education system and was a powerful voice in the provincial and societal affairs. The Quiet Revolution was a deliberate effort to rid the province of its domineering, outdated, and

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<sup>46</sup> The difficulties of the multicultural model were discussed throughout Chapter Two, and specifically in section 2.4 “Critiques of Multiculturalism.”

<sup>47</sup> James A. Beckford, “‘Laïcité,’ ‘Dytopia,’ and the Reaction to New Religious Movements in France,” in *Regulating Religion: Case Studies from Around the Globe*, eds. James T. Richardson (New York: Kluwer/Plenum Publishers, 2005), 32.

archaic system where one religion controlled social programs.<sup>48</sup> It was understood at the time that the close involvement of one religious group had led to the exclusion of minority religions.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the solution to manage the relationship between religion and the state was to break dramatically from the old model and enforce a strict separation between religious and secular spheres. Following this model Quebec still finds itself today in a situation where its lower courts tend to be in favour of restricting religious practice as a solution to religious pluralism.<sup>50</sup> This is done not with a vindictive anti-religiosity necessarily, but rather, with a public consciousness that recalls relatively recent over-dependence on a religious institution in public matters as well as the oppression and limiting nature of that arrangement.

While *laïcité* may be an appropriate response to limit the power of one dominant religious tradition, it remains a problematic approach for addressing religious diversity. This is because any model based upon limiting religious expression has different effects on different religious traditions. That the Catholic Church should not be in charge of the province's education system is not the problem Quebec faces anymore, rather, it is how to create an integrated, cohesive society amidst greater religious and cultural diversity than has ever existed before. To simply push religion out of public spaces does not resolve this tension. Taylor notes that we need to shift our emphasis in terms of secularism toward this

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<sup>48</sup> Jean-Paul Desbiens, a teacher, denounces the school system in the book, *The Impertinences of Brother-Anonymous*. It was based on a series of letters he'd written to the influential newspaper, *Le Devoir*. <http://www.cbc.ca/history/EPISCONTENTSE1EP16CH1PA1LE.html>

<sup>49</sup> Pauline Côté, "Public Management of Religious Diversity in Canada: Development of Technocratic Pluralism," in *Regulating Religion: Case Studies from Around the Globe*, eds. James T. Richardson (New York: Kluwer/Plenum Publishers, 2005), 421.

<sup>50</sup> Côté, "Public Management," 436.

overarching question of pluralism: “We think that secularism (or *laïcité*) has to do with the relation of the state and religion; whereas in fact it has to do with the (correct) response of the democratic state to diversity.”<sup>51</sup> By changing our focus we are not presented with a dichotomous relationship between secularism and religion or the state and religion, rather, we are able to focus on a dynamic interchange between the overarching system of a democratic state and the diversity of which the state is constituted.

Such an exchange should be understood hermeneutically. That is, in a way which engages the plethora of worldviews as they interact with one another, wherein meaning is constructed through an ongoing, dynamic series of exchanges. This would allow us to better understand the multiple contexts and the meaning embedded within and between these constructs. What a strict adherence to *laïcité* does is limit the potential interaction and evolution of a dynamic relationship between the religious and non-religious of society. This is why Habermas has come out against any rigid privatization of religion, he argues that this kind of solution “pretends to resolve this paradox by privatizing religion entirely. But as long as religious communities play a vital role in civil society and the public sphere, deliberative politics is as much a product of the public use of reason on the part of *religious* citizens as on that of *nonreligious* citizens.”<sup>52</sup> Here, Habermas stresses the constructive effort it takes to build society and he recognizes that as a construct modern society is a joint effort between religious and non-religious citizens. Religion, then, is not merely a part of

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<sup>51</sup> Charles Taylor, “Why we Need a Radical Redefinition of Secularism,” in *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, eds. Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 36.

<sup>52</sup> Jürgen Habermas, “The Political: The Rational Meaning of a Questionable Inheritance of Political Theology,” in *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, eds. Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 24.

political processes because of its merit and value, but because political processes are made up of people, and people are both religious and not religious.

In order to incorporate Taylor and Habermas' critique of a narrow understanding of secularism any stringent definition of secularism and religion have to be revised. Instead, we must focus on the potential expansiveness of these notions and use this freedom to construct a more dynamic public sphere which maintains secularity, but secularity of a different sort. While the fact that secularism is used differently by different people may cause confusion, it also provides us an opening to explore novel manners in which the term can be employed, allowing some freedom in its definition and the role it ought to play in society. Taylor describes the constructed nature of secularism a result of a refined sense of communal values and relevancies: "The importance of these new kinds of private space, that is, the heightened sense of their significance in human life, and the growing consensus in favor of entrenching their independence in the face of state and church, bestowed in fact exceptional importance on an extrapolitical and secular domain of life."<sup>53</sup> This implies any new shift in our values must be reflected in our constructs. Religion, as a construct, need not be pigeon-holed in our political theory. Religion is not antithetical to reasoned discourse or a well-functioning public sphere. Certainly some religious adherents are difficult and outright dangerous, but this does not mean religion itself should be rejected as a result.

Meanwhile, Taylor reminds us that secularism developed as a social phenomenon when people increasingly began to understand the world in secular time (as opposed to

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<sup>53</sup> Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 101.

sacred time). Eventually people also valued secular activities – i.e. those devoid of church control – which allowed people the freedom to think, say, and do things that would not be permitted within a domineering religious sphere. Furthermore, this cognitive shift allowed for “an understanding of social and political entirely in secular time.”<sup>54</sup> But the great mistake, Taylor argues, is in reading this historical shift as necessary, natural, or inevitable. Rather we ought to recognize the move toward secularism is not the result of historical determinism, rather it is one possible outcome of many, which just happened to take place.<sup>55</sup> To do otherwise would lead us to a reductive dyadic framework of the relationship between religion and secularity, or religion and science, or religion and politics. If we recognize the contingency of secularism, it can work as a tool in our repertoire of theoretical frames for addressing religious diversity, but not as an *a priori* criterion for all discussions on any political topic. If we reframe secularism with a looser conceptual frame we would make available new opportunities to redefine the relationship between religion and secularism.

#### **5.4 New Frames for Secularism**

The task to reassess secularism and its relationship to religion becomes even more pressing when we consider certain ever-changing facets of today's complex societies. Jeffery Stout argues secularism is only a useful concept so long as it is variable and that it responds to the needs of the day.<sup>56</sup> When we consider what the needs are for today, we shall see that a

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<sup>54</sup> Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 187.

<sup>55</sup> Charles Taylor, “Two Theories of Modernity,” *The Hastings Center Report* 25.2 (1995), 27-28.

<sup>56</sup> Stout presents a history of secularism where he describes it as a response to the theological plurality in the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation in: Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, 97.

firm delineating line between religion and secularism is becoming more and more difficult to maintain. This is because of the fact that the shape and aspects of religion in Canada are changing. Secularism came out of the Christian tradition and has predominantly been defined in relation to that religion. This is not to say that secularism is inherently a Christian concept or that it cannot be expressed or utilized in other cultures. Rather secularism was developed as a social construct in order to address the political and social needs of Christian Europe following the religious wars of the 16-17<sup>th</sup> centuries and the later democratization of the political systems. The change in religious landscapes impels us to reconsider secularism.

Paul Bramadat argues that the defining question for Canadian law, policy discourse, and public discourse is, “whether or not contemporary Canadian society is prepared for the projected 2017 religious landscape” where minority religions will make up at least 10% of the population.<sup>57</sup> While projections are always suspect in their accuracy, in 2011 Statistics Canada found that religious minorities composed of 7.2% of Canada's population and Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh populations had been steadily increasing over the past decade.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, 23.9% of the population claimed no religious affiliation which was an increase of 7.4% over the past decade.<sup>59</sup> Therefore the actual composition of Canadian society with regards to secularism (in terms of secularism as a decrease in religious belief) and the religiosity of the Canadian population is shifting and changing so that any one overarching frame for describing political discourse can be problematic. The complexity of

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<sup>57</sup> Paul Bramadat, “Religion in Canada in 2017: Are We Prepared?” *Canadian Issues* (2007), 120.

<sup>58</sup> Statistics Canada, *Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity in Canada: National Household Survey, 2001* (Statistics Canada, 2001), 21.

<sup>59</sup> Statistics Canada, *Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity in Canada*, 21.

these changes, though, is not limited to changes in immigration patterns as new and larger groups of ethnicities, traditions, races, and religions are being added into the fold of Canadian society, other ways of blurring the lines between secularism and religion are unfolding.

One way the borders between religion and secularism are blurred is apparent in people who do not adhere to any traditional understanding of religion, yet they are not a-religious either. These people work against any understanding of secularism as a social phenomenon which requires a diminished religiosity. We can challenge this notion because secularization does not work in a total, all-encompassing manner, and neither does religion. Mebs Kanji and Ron Kuipers who study sociological data on religiosity in industrialized nations found: "Some aspects and dimensions of religiosity show themselves to be more resistant to secularization processes than do others."<sup>60</sup> So, any notion of an all-encompassing secularization, even one that is progressively working its way throughout society, is not supported by a rigorous study of the quantitative data. At times church attendance may lower, but people's belief in God, or some kind of transcendence, does not necessarily follow suit. What these kinds of studies have found is that secularism puts pressure on religious people, and they respond to it in various ways. Therefore "certain features of human religiosity appear to remain somewhat resilient to secular cross-pressures, a situation which complicates the secularist "subtraction story" in no small measure."<sup>61</sup> Stringent constructs of what a religious or non-religious person is supposed to

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<sup>60</sup> Mebs Kanji and Ron Kuipers, "A Complicated Story: Exploring the Contours of Secularization and Persisting Religiosity in Canada," in *Faith in Democracy? Religion and Politics in Canada*, eds. John Young and Boris DeWiel (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 31-32.

<sup>61</sup> Kanji and Kuipers, "A Complicated Story," 32.

believe in or act like are not sufficient to account for the different forms of emerging religiosities.

Meanwhile, the non-religious, those who do not attend religious services weekly or adhere to a strict doctrine of beliefs, are growing in numbers and growing in diversity. Amelia Thomson-Deveaux describes how this can pose a very real methodological dilemma for those trying to study secularity in society, “Pollsters and demographers strain to arrange the swelling numbers of nonbelievers into categories that make sense. But their rapid growth – and our lack of a language to identify their convictions – makes every hypothesis feel obsolete before it’s published.”<sup>62</sup> Such a lack of coherent language stems from utilizing obsolete dichotomized depictions of society where we have to choose between religion and atheism. People who hybridize their identity with aspects of religion and secularism find themselves in a statistical no-man's land as we have no appreciable categorical space for them in our data collection processes: “After decades of surveys that use church attendance as the primary measure of religiosity, what can we say about Americans who rarely set foot in a sanctuary but nevertheless believe in God? Or who disavow God but call themselves spiritual or say they’ve had a religious or mystical experience?”<sup>63</sup> This leads Thomson-Deveaux to conclude that “the unaffiliated are blurring the line between religion and atheism.”<sup>64</sup> With the indefinite lines between secularism and religion changing as the populace collects and expresses beliefs and worldviews in new

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<sup>62</sup> Amelia Thomson-Deveaux, “Rise of the “Nones,”” *American Prospect* (2013), <http://prospect.org/article/rise-“nones”#.UplzDUxdQSo.mailto>

<sup>63</sup> Thomson-Deveaux, “Rise of the “Nones.””

<sup>64</sup> Thomson-Deveaux, “Rise of the “Nones.””



ways, the relationship between secularism and religion cannot maintain its traditional stance of competition for control over the rules of political discourse.

With traditional lines more opaque than ever, some are attempting to offer new clarity to old questions. Ronald Dworkin undertakes an interesting endeavour for the religious “nones” who wish to maintain elements of religion and thusly cannot be defined as simply anti-religious. Dworkin, in his last work, *Religion Without God*, attempts to frame a theology of non-religion. He begins by stating the goal for his work: to produce a theology for religious-atheists. He argues this is possible because, “religion is deeper than God.”<sup>65</sup> Now, for a scholar of religious studies this assertion may seem obvious: there are forms of Buddhism, for instance, that avoid talk of any transcendent force, and certainly Buddhism at large dismisses the notion of a personal God. Hinduism may reject the notion of a personal deity as well, while many aboriginal and indigenous religions are vague or even dismissive as to the role a central god figure plays in their cosmology. However, all of these traditions are held to be religious. Furthermore, adherents from any tradition may be skeptical or outright dismissive of a Deity, using language of God as a metaphor or symbol with no ontic force. Yet, Dworkin is approaching religion from a Judeo-Christian, Western frame and his intention is not to point us toward the established religions which do not maintain a God figure as central to their doxology. Rather, he is trying to forge a new understanding of religion, atheism, and metaphysics.

As such, Dworkin attempts to describe a basic religiosity that is not from an ancient tradition or even a particularly complex cosmology. Instead he wants to affirm a looser

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<sup>65</sup> Ronald Dworkin, *Religion Without God* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 1.

type of religion. This means that metaphysical realities are present: “They express a conviction that the force and wonder they sense are real, just as real as planets or pain, that moral truth and natural wonder do not simply evoke awe but call for it.”<sup>66</sup> But to describe reality in this way is more akin to describing beauty than discovering a doxology. “For those of us who think beauty real, the scientific presumption that the universe is finally fully comprehensible is also the religious conviction that it shines with real beauty.”<sup>67</sup> His goal is that through fostering and encouraging this kind of religiosity the relationship between religions, and between religious adherent and atheists, will improve because there will no longer be a need for conflict and competition. Through the overlap and blurred lines between atheists and religious groups the distinctions can be overcome as the significance of them diminishes. Dworkin states, “Both parties may come to accept that what they now take to be a wholly unbridgeable gap is only an esoteric kind of scientific disagreement with no moral or political implications.”<sup>68</sup> Thus secularists and religious ought to work together as they are all part of the same group.

What Taylor's tripartite definition of secularism, the statistical no man's land of religious nones, and Dworkin's secular theology all demonstrate is that we do not have to adhere to any limited vision for secularism and religion. We can no longer frame secularism as a solution to the problem of religious diversity. Any sphere of society cannot remain secular as “devoid of religion,” since secularism is all too easily infused with religion. In the same way, we cannot, and should not, relegate religion to private spaces as religion has

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<sup>66</sup> Dworkin, *Religion Without God*, 3.

<sup>67</sup> Dworkin, *Religion Without God*, 104.

<sup>68</sup> Dworkin, *Religion Without God*, 147.

an impact on public discourse, hence it needs to be discussed there. Furthermore, the revised constructs of secularism as presented in the religious nones and Dworkin's secular theology provide a new space to consider the relationship between religion and secularism: a relationship where, meaning, definitions, and constructs are built up, broken down, and re-assembled in a back and forth process of engaging secular and religious worldviews. This kind of relationship will fit in well with a certain kind of public discourse, one that embraces diversity instead of trying to blanket it with consensus or one rigid form of rationality as Rawls and Audi attempt. However, before this novel, dynamic space can be fully explored the religious interpretive frame must be considered.

### **5.5 The Religious Worldview**

If we are to approach secularism as a constructed, contingent, and dynamic term what implications does this have for our understanding of religion? As with secularism, there are those who would like one, narrow frame for religion to dominate our understanding of the term and define its role in the public sphere. In the West the largest and most vocal challenges to secularism come from within Christianity. We can distinguish three groups who seek to counter secularism. The first is political theology, where traditional religious knowledge surpasses and/or can enhance secular reasoning. The second is the New Traditionalists who seek to replace secular liberalism with theology as the foundation for our political systems. And finally, Evangelicals who would like to replace secular reasoning for one which is based upon Biblical doctrines rather than godless presuppositions.

Writing in the 1960s Reinhold Niebuhr's influential public theology stated that we need a religious worldview to properly foster democracy, yet throughout his writing it is clear that Niebuhr is dismissive of any non-religious worldview. He claims secularism actually validates religiosity: "Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as secularism. An explicit denial of the sacred always contains some implied affirmation of the holy sphere."<sup>69</sup> He argues one may dismiss traditional conceptions of God but in doing so one must compensate by placing the totality of reality or human reason into God's place.<sup>70</sup> Niebuhr additionally asserts religion, specifically Christianity, provides an essential insight into the human condition: that people have the capacity for good, but are burdened with evil. "Christianity is a religion which measures the total dimension of human existence not only in terms of the final norm of human conduct, which is expressed in the law of love, but also in terms of the fact of sin."<sup>71</sup> It is this juxtaposition between good and evil found within the very essence of humanity which must inform our political theories and institutions.

Democracy, according to Niebuhr, cannot thrive without this understanding of the human condition.<sup>72</sup> This is because the role of religion is to offer meaning to people's lives; Christianity asserts that life has a purpose and ought to be aligned with God's will.<sup>73</sup> In this way, religion provides insight into the human condition which in turn ought to frame our political sphere. Of course, Niebuhr relies on a dualistic model for society where one is

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<sup>69</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *Christianity and Power Politics* (North Haven: Archon Books, 1969), 204.

<sup>70</sup> Niebuhr, *Christianity and Power Politics*, 204.

<sup>71</sup> Niebuhr, *Christianity and Power Politics*, 2.

<sup>72</sup> Niebuhr, *Christianity and Power Politics*, 84.

<sup>73</sup> Niebuhr, *Christianity and Power Politics*, 178.

either a Christian or an idol worshipper. He also argues that there is one correct understanding of human nature and flourishing which is limited of course. Yet Niebuhr's thinking has influenced many Christian public theologies that are still very active.

For example, James Smith also makes a connection between the religious worldview and the world we live in throughout his analysis of the link between this world and the kingdom of heaven. He argues that a religious worldview enhances one's understanding of the human condition and that this insight has practical and meaningful implications for our social constructions. He states,

It is the very transcendence of God – in the ascension of the Son who now reigns from heaven, and in the futurity of the coming kingdom for which we pray – that disciplines and disrupts and haunts our tendency to settle for 'this world.' It is the call of the Son from heaven, and the vision of the New Jerusalem descending from heaven, that pushes back on our illusions that *we* could figure this all out, that we could bring this about.<sup>74</sup>

To fully understand worldly actions and institutions we need to understand the religious dimension of humanity. Smith argues that to understand this religious dimension we ought to focus on the fact that people are sacred by nature. “Ultimately this axiom is rooted in a theological claim about the sorts of creatures we are: created in the image of God, we, too are incarnate in a sense. We are sacramental animals.”<sup>75</sup> To Smith there is an ongoing fusion and transfer between heaven and earth, between spiritual forces and people.<sup>76</sup> Therefore visions of justice, political theories, and concepts of human flourishing ought to be inundated with spirituality, which is a potent dimension to a person's lived experience.

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<sup>74</sup> James K. A. Smith, “Naturalizing "Shalom": Confessions of a Kuyperian Secularist,” <http://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/3993/naturalizing-shalom-confessions-of-a-kuyperian-secularist/>

<sup>75</sup> Smith, “Imagining Kingdom: How Worship Works” *Cultural Liturgies*, 101.

<sup>76</sup> Smith, “Imagining Kingdom,” 102.

As such, any secular vision for society is limited and stymied by the fact that it does not account for people's sacredness.

John Milbank and the New Traditionalists want to replace secularism with religion as the dominant frame for society. One way in which religion tries to carve out a space for itself in the public sphere is to criticize the dominant secular-liberal frame from which much of today's political theory is derived. New Traditionalists hold the position that liberalism itself is built upon a religious foundation and one ought to reject liberal democracy. They reject secular liberalism largely because it promotes a false conception of human nature.

Milbank provides a clear case for why he wants us to do away with secular liberalism. He does so on two bases. Firstly, liberalism has failed to properly understand human nature and people's experience of the world. The problem with the liberal conception of human nature is that it is merely a projection (and subsequently misaligned with reality) and a detrimental projection at that.<sup>77</sup> The fallacy of liberalism's portrayal of the human being, according to Milbank, is that it is based on counterintuitive reasoning:

The pure 'nature' of this individual is his capacity to break with any given nature, even to will against himself. Liberalism then imagines all social order to be either an artifice, the result of various contracts made between such individuals considered in the abstract (Hobbes and Locke) or else as the effect of the way such individuals through their imaginations fantastically project themselves into each other's lives (roughly the view of the Scottish Enlightenment).<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> This is articulated thusly, "Liberalism is peculiar and unlikely because it proceeds by inventing a wholly artificial human being who has never really existed, and then pretending that we are all instances of such a species," in: John Milbank, "The Gift of Ruling: Secularization and Political Authority," *New Blackfriars* 85.996 (2004): 213.

<sup>78</sup> Milbank, "The Gift of Ruling," 213.

Milbank places this misunderstanding of human nature within a historical narrative. As our flawed understanding of human nature takes hold, problems for society develop. The logic is that individualization leads to fragmentation, which leads to an inability to form meaning-making in a coherent manner, which culminates in ruining society at large. As the liberal understanding of citizens-as-individual-agents has such dire consequences, it becomes clear that secular liberalism is more than simply a misinformed theory of human nature, but it also threatens society. Without a profound understanding of the human soul, Milbank asserts we cannot develop meaningful interactions between people. “Beneath all of these woes of liberalism lurks one fundamental point: it lacks any extra-human or any extra-natural norm, and this ensures that it revolves in an empty circle.”<sup>79</sup> Thus, liberalism is impoverished by its reactionary stance toward religious metaphysical truths. Though Milbank’s critique of liberalism has some merit, we shall see that his metaphysical response to such critiques are left wanting.

Once Milbank establishes liberalism has created a false portrayal of human nature, he proceeds to demonstrate that liberalism concocts a broad, underlying worldview as well. Milbank connects this to the separation of politics and religion which is another result of misaligned projection. Once we created the false notion of the individualistic human being, we then went on to create a broader notion of secularism which has turned out to be just as detrimental. Milbank asserts that secularism is a by-product of liberalism which he calls a theology: “the invention of an autonomous secular realm is perhaps mainly the paradoxical

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<sup>79</sup> Milbank, “The Gift of Ruling”, 223.

work of a certain kind of theology.”<sup>80</sup> Here we see Milbank's rhetoric of liberalism as a theology.<sup>81</sup> Such a worldview is further exasperated when he considers the broader scope of liberalism.

Secular liberalism, as we have seen, has already misunderstood human nature, but Milbank contends that it is also ignorant of good and evil. Or rather, more specifically liberalism marches forward under false assumptions about the nature of good and evil:

Liberalism assumes the greater reality of evil over good; liberalism begins by suppressing the soul, or rather by assuming a gross psychology largely for the sake of administrative convenience. Liberalism, as the liberals Rousseau, Constant and Tocqueville further diagnosed, in practice bifurcates the soul, by ensuring that it must submit to a tyranny of mere opinion, given that no opinion is for liberalism inherently right or wrong. As a result, it is perpetually swayed away from its ‘own’ opinion which remains elusive. Furthermore, as Montesquieu gleefully pointed out, under liberalism, since only what is generally represented is publicly valid, the spectacle of representing always dominates the supposedly represented people, ensuring that what they think is always already just what they are represented as thinking.<sup>82</sup>

Milbank thus demonstrates secular liberalism has a hold over people that has spread beyond the public sphere and there are serious implications for how we conceive the role of good and evil in society. Without a proper sense of good and evil people are bound by popular opinion and have no centre, no foundation for their social constructions. Yet, Milbank has

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<sup>80</sup> Milbank, “The Gift of Ruling,” 221.

<sup>81</sup> Though, perhaps, not as condescendingly as later in the same article when he describes Thomas Hobbes and John Locke as “Christian heresiarchs,” in: Milbank, “The Gift of Ruling,” 221-222.

<sup>82</sup> Milbank, “The Gift of Ruling,” 222.



a more ambitious goal than to simply critique liberalism's stance on human nature, he wants to convince people to reject liberal democracy altogether.<sup>83</sup>

To reject liberalism may seem like a high stake in a philosophical discussion concerning human nature. Milbank justifies this stance because he sees secular liberalism and modern society as so devoid of virtue that rejection remains the only viable option.<sup>84</sup> Milbank, though, has an alternative to liberalism, a kind of nostalgic Christianity-based worldview infused with Aristotle's virtue ethics. For Milbank, virtue is the key to promoting a good society and without it we are lost to a disarray of fragmentation. While a secular democracy does not foster virtue it does impede a proper understanding of human nature. Stout summarises Milbank's notion where secularism has to be rejected because it is antithetical to human flourishing, "To restore a proper sense of God's authority over the political community, political theology must renounce the form of political community whose essence it is to deny God's authority over it."<sup>85</sup> Without God's authority, secular liberalism is a misleading ideology that can only offer a vacant morality and cannot restore the fragmentation of humanity. With this demoralizing picture in place, liberalism is deemed detrimental to humankind. As for a replacement, the New Traditionalists offer the comfort and guidance of a virtue ethics inspired by political theology.

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<sup>83</sup> Other New Traditionalists follow Milbanks' lead. Alasdair MacIntyre demonstrates a call to reject liberal democracy as well in: *Ethics and Politics: Collected Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 153.

Stanley Hauerwas too calls to "disrupt liberal politics" based on its lack of proper understanding of the world in: "Democratic Lessons Learned from Yoder and Wolin," *Cross Currents* 55.4 (2006): 546.

<sup>84</sup> The dualistic thinking in Milbank's theory is, at one point, present as a battleground: "It is for this reason that politics is likely to be from now on increasingly a battleground between naturalistic and religious ideas," in: John Milbank, "Culture and Justice," *Theory, Culture & Society* 27.6 (2010): 112.

<sup>85</sup> Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, 103.

As we have seen, the New Traditionalists present a particular relation between politics and religion. This portrayal presents liberalism as a theology, but it does so in order to discredit it. Liberalism is a *failed* theology since it is based upon misconceptions of human nature and reality. As such, we ought to reject liberalism, secularism is to be swept away by proxy, and all we are left with is genuine theology. Christianity can then perform its function, which is to provide meaning on an individual level and guide politics on a societal level. However, this kind of binary thinking where one system of thought has to be swept away and replaced by another is deficient for building a cohesive society. Instead, we ought to consider models and methods which address the struggle of a pluralistic public sphere; how to create a domain where different worldviews can constructively share the same space – this is a theme we shall return to in the next section of this chapter.

Conservative evangelicals also seek to replace secularism with an alternative religious worldview, one that is steeped in a particular form of Christian theology. Molly Worthen describes how an evangelical worldview developed in order to counter the prevailing popularity of liberalism and secularism. She considers the underlying desire for a theological worldview which can contend with, and replace, secularism:

They insist upon their own worldview as the only clear window on reality: a worldview in which the faithful Christian can revere the Enlightenment without compromising the authority of the Bible. They have joined forces with other conservative activists to discourage any talk of bipartisan compromise in favor of a vision of war between irreconcilable notions of reality.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Molly Worthen, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis for Authority in American Evangelicalism* (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2013), 253.

This kind of thinking developed and emerged from a series of exchanges between religious adherents and secularists. The problem evangelicals want to overcome is atheist (or even agnostic) presuppositions that seem ubiquitous and are all too often taken for granted.

Worthen provides an example of this: throughout a series of arguments on different interpretations of the Bible conservative evangelicals became more insular.<sup>87</sup> The problem, according to Worthen, was not that others pointed out discrepancies and contradictions in the Bible, it was that they were doing so with the perceived aim of undermining the Bible's authority and its recognition as a text inspired by God. As Worthen states, “the atheistic presuppositions that lurked beneath [biblical criticism] were the real enemy.”<sup>88</sup> Therefore evangelicals found themselves embattled not merely by a methodological criticism of their doctrines and texts, or even a rival theoretical position, but by the underlying presuppositions that inform worldviews antithetical to revealed religion. Evangelicals, savvy enough to see that the underlying dimensions of worldviews have a real impact on social construction and one's lived experiences, sought to examine, expose, and replace these presuppositions with Christian-based alternatives.

However, it is quite difficult to weed out and undermine popular presuppositions. Secular intellectuals and their reason-based rationality did not inspire evangelical ire; instead, it was the premises and conclusions surrounding God and transcendence. Worthen notes how when evangelical leaders spoke they often tried to evoke that their stance “was something more than preaching. It was a complete intellectual system that, if it did not

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<sup>87</sup> Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 54.

<sup>88</sup> Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 54.

directly answer all modern challenges to the Bible, gave the appearance of sophistication and unassailable truth.”<sup>89</sup>

Evangelicals demonstrate this in their project to fuse reason and revelation. Since this has proven to be a difficult and murky fusion at best, Worthen describes it as a “crisis of authority,” as reason and theology enter a precarious dance within evangelical circles.<sup>90</sup> Because of this difficulty, and the strident adherence to the important role of divine revelation as a viable epistemology, evangelicals are frequently understood by secularists as diametrically opposed to intellectualism. However, this presentation fails to account for the creative mixing and merging of church doctrine and the academic pursuits of knowledge, data, and theory. Worthen argues this does not mean that the blend of reason and religion turned out unproblematic. At times doctrine was used to dissuade diverging interpretations of the Bible in a harsh or crude manner.<sup>91</sup> Alternatively, it may don the “appearance of sophistication” without actually addressing the questionable dimensions of their own position.<sup>92</sup> Yet, this does not keep Worthen from describing the evangelical fusion of reason and revelation as “a kind of genius” resulting from a “confusion of authority.”<sup>93</sup>

While Worthen's account is interesting she does not go as far to define the degree to which the religious presuppositions impact the evangelical worldview as Randall J. Stephens and Karl Gibson do. For Gibson and Stephens, it is not simply sources for

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<sup>89</sup> Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 208.

<sup>90</sup> Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 2.

<sup>91</sup> Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 199.

<sup>92</sup> Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 209.

<sup>93</sup> Worthen, *Apostles of Reason*, 265, 253.

authority that have brought about deep questioning for evangelicals, instead they sought to grapple with, “how their world had spun out of control.”<sup>94</sup>

While fundamentalism and evangelicalism predate the social revolution of the 1960s, this was a time in which they felt they had lost the ability to be in touch with the core of American culture. Stephens and Gibson describe that the response to this was a revised *modi operandi* which relies on an emphasis on two main dimensions of the Christian doctrine. The first was to, “believe the Bible was essentially dictated by God and is thus without any error.”<sup>95</sup> Secondly, social problems are the result of sin.<sup>96</sup> In fact, Stephens and Gibson place argue the evangelical interpretation of society as a religious frame is even more important than their efforts to mix religion and reason. As an example of this they look to evangelical discourse concerning creationism:

The popularity of creationism did not derive from its scientific arguments. In anything, it succeeded *despite* its weak science. Moreover, while creationism was certainly attractive in the way it embraced and buttressed biblical literalism, its success cannot be located there, or it would have flourished in the early twentieth century, when the fundamentalist movement was getting under way. Creationism’s popular appeal derived largely from a powerful *social* argument, namely, that America's worrisome slide into immorality, liberalism, and unbelief was caused by the widespread acceptance of evolution and its pernicious influence in areas like education, law, sexual mores, politics, and so on.<sup>97</sup>

Here it is not a creative endeavour of mixing religious and secular sources of authority that spurs evangelical intellectual output. Instead, it is the desire to dominate the interpretive frame for addressing the human condition and the social imaginary. This helps to explain

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<sup>94</sup> Randall J. Stephens and Karl Gibson, *Anointed: Evangelical Truth in a Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 9.

<sup>95</sup> Stephens and Gibson, *Anointed*, 6.

<sup>96</sup> Stephens and Gibson, *Anointed*, 14.

<sup>97</sup> Stephens and Gibson, *Anointed*, 35.

the manner in which evangelicals fail to fully integrate mainstream intellectuals into their theology and doctrine and it accounts for the isolationism and combative nature of many public evangelical leaders' traits Stephen, Gibson, and Worthen all acknowledge.

Stephens and Gibson are able to provide valuable insight as to the appeal and internal logic of the evangelical movement because they take into account the interpretive frame of evangelicals. They state, “By connecting their objectives to the Bible, leaders draw the faithful into a larger story – the grandest story of all time.”<sup>98</sup> In this way, the religiosity of the evangelicals adds depth and gravitas to any social or political movement they undertake. Using familiar religious language, frames, tropes, sources, and stories allows pseudo-scientific presenters to appeal more trustworthy to religious adherents than the more qualified experts of the academic world.<sup>99</sup> On top of this, secularism becomes an enemy: “Secularism, instead of being a place where the religious and anti-religious might find common ground, is typically a euphemism for 'anti-God.' After all, it was secularists who are trying to get “In God we Trust” off United States currency.”<sup>100</sup> “Secular humanism” seen as the ultimate enemy, seems intelligent and derisive, yet it is subtle, clandestine, and thus is nearly paramount to Satan.<sup>101</sup> Therefore the evangelical frame is not simply a failed attempt at mixing religion and secular reason; instead, it is a competing worldview attempting to overwrite how we understand and address social ills.

The problem with evangelicalism becomes much more pronounced in Stephens and Gibson's description than in Worthen's. With Worthen we are left with an evangelical's

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<sup>98</sup> Stephens and Gibson, *Anointed*, 264.

<sup>99</sup> Stephens and Gibson, *Anointed*, 244, 248.

<sup>100</sup> Stephens and Gibson, *Anointed*, 256.

<sup>101</sup> Stephens and Gibson, *Anointed*, 259.

failed mixture of reason and revelation where a potential solution would be further integration, where communication and dialogue between fundamentalist evangelicals and secular academics might prove fruitful. Whereas with Stephen and Gibson, we have to consider the possibility that this kind of approach is neither desirable nor likely to be productive. It is worth noting, though, that the range and diversity of political, scientific, and even theological opinions within evangelicalism is quite large.<sup>102</sup> While this is certainly the case, it is prudent to consider the ramifications of an interpretive frame that is so hostile toward another. Mere dialogue will not resolve this tension.

For some evangelicals any attempt to work with secularists is perceived to be a collaboration with the enemy and a demonstration of a failure in one's own religious faith. While convincing fundamentalist evangelicals to take a more collaborative and amicable perspective on the Other may be Sisyphean, a hermeneutic approach does offer some incentive to enter into dialogical relationships. Yet it is the advantages to such hermeneutical relationships (access to new meaning-making interpretive frames while questioning and challenging one's assumptions) that are the very same reasons evangelicals are suspicious of and disengage from secular society. There are evangelicals who simply do not want to be challenged and are concerned over the amount of discord and dissent they face already. While bringing groups like this into a dialogical relationships with other worldviews may be difficult, we will consider frames for addressing agonistic relationships in the public sphere later in this chapter when we consider Richard Rorty and William Connolly's theories on public discourse.

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<sup>102</sup> Something found in Worthen and Stephens and Gibson's analyses.

As we have seen, there are religious worldviews which do not want to enter into a dialogical relationship with secularism. They would rather replace the secularity or the public sphere with some form of theology. Whether it be a public theology, a radical orthodoxy, or a new set of presuppositions we are to accept, religiosity can lead to the rejection and spurning of secularism. While these views may be repeated frequently, and do have a following, the danger of one religious worldview, one cosmology or ontology replacing the putative false neutrality of public discourse with a strict theological one is minimal. Instead, it is worth noting that within these groups there is a wide range of views on the Other and how to treat and understand people who adhere to different views.

Within the religious groups who would like to replace secularism, there is no agreement upon the best way to do so, or even the best theology with which to replace it. Therefore the counter-secular religious position is itself fragmented and constantly in need of addressing contestation from within its own circle (as well as from without). While Audi would like to present the strictest and more combative form of these theologies as reason to rid religion from the public sphere, we see that each of these views offers a critique and counterpoint to a secular, atheist, or non-religious interpretation of the human being and society. The question we *should* be asking is not how far into the private sphere we can banish these viewpoints, but rather, how can we allow different interpretive frames into the same space, even if they do not see the benefit of engaging the Other. It is this question I shall turn to next.



## **5.6 Multiple Worldviews in the Same Sphere**

Secularists and religious adherents utilize different strategies when they enter into public discourse. A hermeneutic analysis exposes the limitations of poor interpretive frames when they are applied by one group onto another. What deters us from meaningful engagement most is a desire for one interpretive frame to supersede all others. This position can be put forward (as we have seen) by either secularists or religious adherents, yet, as interpretation brings worldviews together we cannot ignore these occurrences. Instead, we ought to recognize that both secularity and religiosity have something meaningful and valuable to say about human flourishing and society building, even if what they are saying is very different.

Bringing divergent worldviews into the same space is a project for translation. As we shall see later when I discuss Richard Rorty and William Connolly this process can be understood as one laced with irony and contestation, resulting in a discourse where divergent poles play off one another and reside, in tension, in the liminal space between secularism and religion. In this way, the notion of limiting or excluding either secularism or religion becomes meaningless because we are not operating with static phenomena. Instead it is the fluidity between the positions of secularism and religion which provides us with the strongest foundation for interaction between divergent worldviews (even if the footing is unstable). To explore this kind of discourse and social project I will turn to Rorty and his use of contingency, irony, and solidarity as the basis for our social imaginary. Then I will consider how Connolly complements Rorty's public sphere with his emphasis on agonism. Before doing so, however, we should lay some groundwork by looking into the

question of how we can expand our cognitive frames for addressing difference in the same space.

For Charles Taylor we do not need an oppositional frame for divergent worldviews in the public sphere. Instead, he suggests we turn to the cognitive options opened up by the encounters between differences. Taylor argues that because we do not have one overriding worldview to dictate the parameters of our interpretive frames, we are free to imagine what kind of secularity or religiosity we desire.<sup>103</sup> This new interpretive space exists in both personal and public spheres: “This is the new space for God in the secular world. Just as in personal life, the dissolution of the enchanted world can be compensated by devotion, a strong sense of the involvement of God in my life, so in the public world, the disappearance of an ontic dependence on something higher can be replaced by a strong presence of God in our political identity.”<sup>104</sup> Taylor notes that we do not need “ontic dependence” in order to ground the public sphere in a definitive metaphysical foundation.<sup>105</sup> God's existence, non-existence, or agnosticism on the matter are all on the table so the public sphere itself is not burdened too heavily by any one stance on the matter. However, this imaginative space is opened up by questioning and challenging dominant or narrow positions held by both secularists and the religious. How we are going to build a social construction from multiple sources, and manage the dynamic – and at times competitive – relationship between them needs to be considered. For this task I will turn to Jeffery Stout who argues we must expand our understanding of rationality.

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<sup>103</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 580.

<sup>104</sup> Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 193.

<sup>105</sup> For further details on this issue see Taylor's discussion of the public sphere as “imagined,” “common,” and “shared” in: *A Secular Age*, 186-187.

Jeffrey Stout argues that reasonableness is to be found on both sides of the religion and secularism spectrum. As such, divergent views are provided a means of interacting with one another in a way that does not call for the expulsion or derision of the other side since both have *some kind* of reason. Stout does not flat-out reject those who would like to relegate religion to the private sphere nor the New Traditionalist's claims for a revised role for public theology. He relies rather on a particular definition of recognition and toleration.<sup>106</sup> He states: “[toleration] is nourished by our recognition that much of what our neighbors believe is what any reasonable person would believe if situated in exactly the same way they are.”<sup>107</sup> Stout challenges those who disagree to seriously consider that their debate partners share with them a certain degree of reasonableness.

According to Stout, this does not mean we have to accept all arguments, but we cannot dismiss them without first looking for some kind of value in them. With an underlying assumption of reasonableness in place, Stout is able to flesh out a more developed notion of what public discourse should look like:

Democratic hopes would often be better served if we used more respectful modes of interpretation as our means of first resort. Our fellow citizens might well hold many false beliefs. We might well be justified in taking them to be in error. But in many cases we ought to be content to explain our differences with them by pointing to differences in context, allowing that they might be justified in believing what they do, and then beginning or continuing the exchange of reasons with them in a charitable and democratic spirit. If all goes well, the discussion will itself alter our respective epistemic contexts in such a way that we can

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<sup>106</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe demonstrates the limits of the term “toleration” when he argues that to tolerate someone is only the first step in accepting them. He remarks, “Toleration should, strictly speaking, only be a passing mood; it ought to lead to acknowledgement and appreciation. To tolerate a person is to affront them,” in: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Maxims and Reflections of Goethe*, trans. Bailey Saunders (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1906), 137.

<sup>107</sup> Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, 177.

overcome some of our differences, or at least learn to live with them respectfully.<sup>108</sup>

From Stout's context-based reasonableness differences do not become the fragmented, stalemate-inducing problem other theorists claim them to be. This goes back to the basic issue of how we should describe society. It is not one that needs consensus, or one overriding theology/ideology to guide it. Instead, for Stout pluralism is a given. Taking a pragmatic stance toward this fact, Stout suggests that we need not argue over the benefits or costs of diversity for the public sphere; we have no choice but to operate within a pluralistic paradigm.

As Martin Marty argues, dealing with diversity is not an extraordinary undertaking, it is commonplace. He states, "In the course of practical life we mix the religious and the rational in all that we do."<sup>109</sup> Therefore a plethora of ideas, notions, and conclusions are being drawn and are in existence within the political sphere at any given moment whether we want them there or not. Thus, to base our political discourse around recognition and an expanded sense of rationality provides us the means to promote a positive dialogue. Stout offers not merely a compromise or cherry picking of diverse argumentation for his own purposes, he instead offers a space for diversity to actually foster its differences without collapsing in on itself.

One area where Stout attempts to apply his expanded rationalism and deal with diversity in an everyday manner is with regards to the New Traditionalist's claim: liberalism is a failed theology. As we have seen, John Milbank argues that we should

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<sup>108</sup> Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, 178.

<sup>109</sup> Martin Marty, "Religio-Secular Society," *New Perspectives Quarterly* 19.1 (2002): 80.

understand secular liberalism as a theology which we would be better off replacing with a superior theology – one that fuses Greek virtue ethics with Christianity. While Stout argues we need not accept New Traditionalist arguments as a whole, he does note that the New Traditionalists offer valuable critiques for modernity. The individualistic nature of most political theory and the overbearing emphasis on material flourishing that has become commonplace is worth analysing critically, which the New Traditionalists correctly recognize. Meanwhile, John Rawls, Richard Audi, and (as we shall see) Richard Rorty claim religion should not be a part of the political process, or have as little impact as possible. However, this fails to recognize the diversity and nuance of religion, and therefore ignores its potential to infuse and work within a liberal democratic system. Such positions do offer a convincing counterpoint to the New Traditionalists and their propensity to champion one metaphysical outlook over all others. Stout, however, argues there is reasonableness and value in each side of the debate.

Stout offers a promising guideline for bringing religion and secularism into the same space. He suggests that the way to move forward is to take the best aspects of divergent views instead of seeking merely to criticize the weakest aspects of someone else's argument. From this we might infer the New Traditionalists offer a useful criticism of liberalism because liberalism does not take into account various understandings of the human being.<sup>110</sup> Or, the emphasis on virtue ethics and how they can be applied today can inform various ethical discourses. Meanwhile, secular liberals demonstrate that the public

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<sup>110</sup> Chapter Three we saw Taylor and Ricoeur's discussion of the self which is in some ways aligned with what the New Traditionalists seek, but their models are not burdened by metaphysical baggage.

sphere has to be a place that is accessible to people who do not share eschatological and metaphysical presuppositions. Also, there has to be some model and system for political discourse to take place which allows for productive, solution-bound conversations. If we are to base a political discourse on respect and recognition, we may have a method to bring diverse worldviews into the same space instead of being impeded by incongruity.

Stout's solution to expand one's conception of rationality while maintaining a respectful tone does not capture the significance and depth to having religious and secular worldviews in the same sphere. Certainly, he is correct in arguing that respect for people, even those with different worldviews than oneself, ought to be maintained. Further, it is laudable that we should look for some degree of rationality in other people's worldviews. However, to simply replace one presupposition with another is a difficult task. To merely state we should all assume reasonableness does not address the issue of how to make one position understandable and relatable to another, and this is a complex and challenging task to be sure.

Furthermore, Stout does not address what Talal Asad describes as the clashing of religion and secularism in the same space. The degree of diversity is more than simply irrational and rational which can be bridged through a simplistic expansion of our definition of rationality. Asad demonstrates this point well: "The public, however, is notoriously diverse. Modern citizens don't subscribe to a unitary moral system – moral heterogeneity is said to be one of modern society's defining characteristics (even if the modern state does

promote a particular ethical outlook).”<sup>111</sup> Asad recognizes the fact that with diversity comes the potential for upheaval, not merely an expansion of our understanding of reasonableness. As Asad states, “Thus the introduction of new discourses may result in the disruption of established assumptions structuring debates in the public sphere. More strongly: they may *have* to disrupt existing assumptions to be heard.”<sup>112</sup> Asad argues, rightfully so, that religion in the public sphere will bring about new challenges. Therefore we need to consider models for the public sphere that do not simply permit different perspectives like Stout does; we require a public discourse that accounts for conflicts that come from opposite worldviews in proximity. For this task I shall consider Rorty's irony alongside Connolly's agonism.

### **5.7 Irony and Agonism**

Rorty is a self-proclaimed pragmatist and atheist. When he describes the “ideal” liberal society his first task is to sweep away underlying metaphysical presuppositions that have served as foundations for understanding society. For Rorty, the kind of language we ought to use to describe society is, “one which revolves around notions of metaphor and self-creation.”<sup>113</sup> Metaphor, as we know, creates novelty out of juxtaposing difference. Therefore our description of society and social norms are constantly under the process of being positioned and repositioned with something different which brings about new

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<sup>111</sup> Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 186.

<sup>112</sup> Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 185.

<sup>113</sup> Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1989), 44.

descriptions. An example Rorty provides for this endeavour is passion and reason, where poetry and philosophy both serve to describe human experience.<sup>114</sup> The goal of such a process is not to pull us away from our current mores and norms to a series of constant repositioning, but to acknowledge that they are contingent.<sup>115</sup> New challenges and new contexts arise and our understandings of the self and the Other (and the relations between the two) have to face new challenges regularly. Therefore we require a process of description and understanding that accounts for this reality.

This is a creative endeavour, so while one does the describing, redescribing and juxtaposing, one can be strategic about how to proceed and develop goals, ideals, and descriptions which are worth pursuing.<sup>116</sup> Religion and secularism can enter into such a relationship where they each serve as poles of different worldviews in which the dynamic interaction between the two opens new possibilities for social construction as well as configurations of the self. Yet, before we explore the interaction between secularism and religion in this way we must consider other dimensions of diversity and irony in Rorty's system.

Rorty compels us to look to the poets and ironists for inspiration in order to reach a metaphorical framework of our foundations for social construction. Both serve the same function; to deride the metaphysical foundations of our justifications and explanations of

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<sup>114</sup> Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 47.

<sup>115</sup> Or, as Rorty puts it, everything, even selfhood, is contingent, "To see one's language, one's conscience, one's morality, and one's highest hopes as contingent products, as literalizations of what once were accidentally produced metaphors, is to adopt a self-identity which suits one for citizenship in such an ideally liberal state," in: Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 61.

<sup>116</sup> Rorty positions solidarity as one particularly meaningful and useful principle to guide us. See: Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 192, 196.



being in the world. The poet does this by demonstrating the house of cards-like structure we have built up to anchor self-understanding.

A poeticized culture would be one which would not insist we find the real wall behind the painted ones, the real touchstones of truth as opposed to touchstones which are merely cultural artifacts. It would be a culture which, precisely by appreciating that all touchstones are such artifacts, would take as its goal the creation of ever more various and multicolored artifacts.<sup>117</sup>

Again, the purpose of undermining current or well-placed ideologies is to open up new space for future creative endeavours.

For Rorty, the ironist parallels the poet in this task, but approaches it differently. Instead of turning to the fluidity of our symbols, structures, and stories we tell ourselves, ironists take our descriptions and subvert them. As Rorty elucidates:

I call people of this sort 'ironists' because their realization that anything can be made to look good or bad by being redescribed, and their renunciation of the attempt to formulate criteria of choice between final vocabularies, puts them in the position which Sartre called 'metastable': never quite able to take themselves seriously because always aware that the terms in which they describe themselves are subject to change, always aware of the contingency and fragility of their final vocabularies, and thus of their selves.<sup>118</sup>

The ironists escape the trappings of thinking things have an intrinsic nature or an essence.<sup>119</sup> Rorty then pits the ironist against the metaphysician, one who seeks clarity, coherence, and the final truth to answer all our questions. When the metaphysician confronts difference he will, “propose a distinction which will resolve the contradiction.”<sup>120</sup> Yet the ironist has no need to find one solution, or distinction to settle

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<sup>117</sup> Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 53-54.

<sup>118</sup> Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 73-74.

<sup>119</sup> Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 74.

<sup>120</sup> Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 77.

the contentious issue of divergent positions, instead, she “views the sequence of such theories – such interlocked patterns of novel distinctions – as gradual, tacit substitutions of a new vocabulary for an old one.”<sup>121</sup> This new vocabulary allows for us to realize new descriptions, new understandings, and new positions.

This is an important process even though there is an underlying recognition that at some point, in all likelihood, our new position will become old and replaced by another. Rorty notes such an outlook implies there is no end in sight, “there is no answer to a redescription save a re-re-redescription.”<sup>122</sup> While this may seem wearisome at first, it does offer endless possibilities. The advantage to poeticizing and ironizing public discourse is we do not need to find any final solution to religion and secularism in the public sphere. We do not need to find the line in the sand that clearly separates each to a different domain of human experience. Instead, the two worldviews play off one another, redescribing each other (and themselves) through metaphoric juxtaposition as well as contingent, poetic, and ironic creative endeavours.

For such an outlook we can no longer claim society is simply built from shared consensus. For Rorty, society is not held together by common beliefs, rather, “What binds societies together are common vocabularies and common hopes.”<sup>123</sup> Our common vocabularies allow us to tell shared narratives, as in history, and propagate shared institutions. History and institutions are not based upon agreed metaphysical foundations, as no such foundations exist, therefore we must acknowledge the contingent nature of them.

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<sup>121</sup> Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 77.

<sup>122</sup> Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 80.

<sup>123</sup> Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 86.

Rorty states, “I have been urging in this book that we try *not* to want something which stands beyond history and institutions. The fundamental premise of the book is that a belief can still regulate action, can still be thought worth dying for, among people who are quite aware that this belief is caused by nothing deeper than contingent historical circumstance.”<sup>124</sup> It is our recognition that at any given place and time these institutions function and maintain a way of life worth living, and therefore they are worth maintaining. Yet, while vocabulary and institutions serve as Rorty's basis for stabilizing his fluid and dynamic system, he does not envision a significant position for religion in this project, as I do.<sup>125</sup> In fact, he explicitly denounces religion as part of the problem ironists and poets need to overcome.

For Rorty the problem with religion is not primarily that it is divisive or irrational as Rawls and Audi claim, although he may agree on these points. Instead, Rorty considers religion a conversation stopper and a hurdle for the poetic and ironic task of subversion and redescription. Furthermore, religious adherents can appeal to an authority that atheists do not have access to.<sup>126</sup> Rorty turns to the Christian doctrine as a common position within religion that is opposed to diverse opinions, “This openmindedness should not be fostered because, as Scripture teaches, Truth is great and will prevail.”<sup>127</sup> And later he describes

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<sup>124</sup> Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 189.

<sup>125</sup> Rorty states this fairly explicitly here, “For in its ideal form, the culture of liberalism would be one which was enlightened, secular, through and through. It would be one in which no trace of divinity remained, either the form of a divinized world or a divinized self,” in: *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 45.

<sup>126</sup> Richard Rorty, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 31.1 (2003): 143.

<sup>127</sup> Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 52.

mainstream Christianity as deplorable and “a temptation to be avoided.”<sup>128</sup> It is worth noting, though, Rorty does point out that universal secularism is also intolerant to different ways of thinking.<sup>129</sup> However, Rorty is willing to accept secularism without its universalistic tendencies but he does not go out of his way to make the same concessions for different approaches to religion. Rorty would later concede that it is really ecclesiastical organizations that cause the most trouble for secular societies, but he still does not admit religion can offer positive and constructive dimensions to the human experience or to a liberal society.<sup>130</sup>

Rorty thus remains blind to the possibility that, like the ironist and the poet who subvert and challenge prevailing narratives, religion can play such a role in a secular society as it provides a different view on human flourishing and the good than the dominant, secular social construction. Yet, there may be some space in Rorty's theory for one to carve out a spot for religion. This spot comes from the manner in which Rorty's ideal dialogue would unfold: “Such a narrative would clarify the conditions in which the idea of truth as correspondence to reality might gradually be replaced by the idea of truth as what comes to be believed in the course of free and open encounters.”<sup>131</sup> And why should religion not be a part of such free and open encounters? Many tend to think of religion as stagnant, conservative, rigid, and confining, but there is no reason to posit religion always has to be construed in this way. If we were to go down that road, we would be essentializing religion, giving it an absolutist definition – something Rorty would be against. We can

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<sup>128</sup> Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 191.

<sup>129</sup> Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 191.

<sup>130</sup> Rorty, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” 142.

<sup>131</sup> Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 68.

redefine religion, like liberal democracy. All we need is to follow through with Rorty's suggestion (albeit in a different direction than he explicitly states) and try to redescribe religion and secularism in order to permit a more fluid, dynamic relationship between the two.

In order to redescribe the relationship between secularism and religion I shall turn to William Connolly who complements Rorty quite well. Connolly provides a similar theoretical frame to Rorty in that he too focuses on the contingent nature of our social constructs. And, like Rorty, he sees this as a positive attribute, one we should embrace and utilize to its fullest. Yet he approaches the constructive effort differently than Rorty; instead of focusing on irony Connolly looks to contestation, and while Rorty considers solidarity the binding force between society's contingencies, Connolly considers intersection and collaboration.

Connolly argues that to expand the sense of cohesion in a pluralistic society solidarity need not be our primary goal as there are more fertile grounds for engagement:

Attention to these issues seems to me, however, to refine possible lines of agonistic respect and critical responsiveness between diverse constituencies and, thereby, to multiply lines of connection through which governing assemblages can be constructed from a variety of intersecting constituencies. You do not need a wide universal “we” (a nation, a community, a singular practice of rationality, a particular monotheism) to foster democratic governance of a population. Numerous possibilities of intersection and collaboration between multiple, interdependent constituencies infused by a general ethos of critical responsiveness drawn from several sources suffice very nicely.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> William E. Connolly, *Ethos of Pluralization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), xx.

Connolly realizes that people will form groups and identities based upon socialization, exclusion, and particularization – this is (in part) why groups exist. Yet simply because I meet a person who is not wholly part of my inner circle does not mean we do not share a vision for society, or do not share some part of a vision for society. For instance, an evangelical Christian may be in favour of restrictive laws with regards to abortion, yet also volunteers at a homeless shelter. Certainly not all who work at a homeless shelter have to share his/her views on abortion, but they do not need to, their intersection revolves around a shared vision for helping the poor. Connolly argues that these kinds of intersections can be found everywhere, with multiple people spreading out in a series of matrices where we are connected in society through points where we align, and the spaces between where we do not.

Connolly argues this is enough for a democratic ethos to develop – where we recognize that even those who do not adhere to all aspects of our identity can intersect with us at some significant point for social construction. Obviously, the more intersections, the more popular and democratic the idea becomes and the more wide ranging its impact can be felt. This could be a source of overlap between Rorty and Connolly, in that solidarity could serve as a potent common intersection between people. Connolly notes, though, that this series of matrices and intersections can also function through agonistic relationships as well.<sup>133</sup>

One way Connolly describes the benefits of contestation to society is in the relationship between religion and secularism. This is because a democratic ethos

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<sup>133</sup> Connolly, *Ethos of Pluralization*, 21.

encourages an atmosphere where different understandings of metaphysics are available to people and are respected: “And it cultivates a politics of agnostic respect among multiple constituencies who respond differentially to mysteries of being while acknowledging each other to be worthy of respect partly because they are implicated in this common condition.”<sup>134</sup> The common condition is living in a complex society built upon contingent narratives and values formed out of the matrix of intersections between diverse groups and identities.

Connolly explicitly ties this open-ended system to religion when he notes discussion of the sacred will allow divergent worldviews to interact. He argues religion can fulfill this role because it is integral to the human quest for meaning: “To be human is to be inhabited by existential faith. There is no vacuum in this domain, though there might very well be by ambivalence, uncertainty, and internal plurality.”<sup>135</sup> We may turn to philosophy or other secular interpretive frames to answer these questions, but Connolly sees an important interplay between secular philosophies and religion.<sup>136</sup> As religion is important for the individual to answer important questions of meaning and validity, so too is religion important for society. Religion does, and should, exist in a continuous interplay with secularism, one that is often based on agonism. If this interplay is accompanied by the democratic ethos, secularism and religion actually benefit from agonistic engagement:

[...] in a political culture of deep pluralism – a culture in which people honor different existential faiths and final sources of morality – different images of the sacred unavoidably and repeatedly bump into each other.

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<sup>134</sup> Connolly, *Ethos of Pluralization*, 154.

<sup>135</sup> William E. Connolly, *Pluralism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 26.

<sup>136</sup> Connolly, *Pluralism*, 24-25.

What is needed today is a cautious relaxation of discourse about the sacred, one that allows us to come to terms affirmatively with the irreducible plurality of sacred objects in late modern life. With respect to sovereignty it is important to underline significance of acts by which deep conflicts are settled; but it is equally important not to elevate them to the level of the sacred.<sup>137</sup>

Plurality, then, serves as the focus for our understanding of the sacred. By recognizing that plural definitions and understandings of the sacred public discourse allow for an ebb and flow between contending positions, there is room in the public sphere for different metaphysics.

This ebb and flow is not unlike the movement of translation where meaning, definition, and redefinition flow back and forth between the cultures at play. It is not unlike ironic redescription where common narratives are challenged and subverted. Naturally there are some limits to the impact of Connolly's process; certain individuals will not endorse a pluralistic understanding of the sacred and they will remain strictly committed to a particularistic view of God and the afterlife. But the mere fact that they are in discussion, on relatively equal footing, and in the same dialectic space with multiple viewpoints means society as a whole is not committed to any narrow metaphysical worldview. Those with a broad enough perspective are allowed to appreciate the contingency and diversity of the positions at work in the public sphere, while adherents to a limited worldview and vision need not compromise or be expelled from public discourse altogether.

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<sup>137</sup> Connolly, *Pluralism*, 138-139.



In this system the advantage is that we are able to critically re-evaluate any position we take up as we are constantly being challenged and offered alternative interpretations of the world.<sup>138</sup> Connolly argues this is crucial for any political theory: “It must constantly be tested and contested by those whose hermeneutic draws supplemental sustenance from another social ontology.”<sup>139</sup> Therefore religion serves as the contest for secularism, and vice versa. A materialistic, individualistic, and instrumental understanding of the world is challenged and enhanced by doctrines of the soul, community, and divine purpose. In turn the particularism and division-inducing aspects of certain religious communities are countered by a focus on the human condition, biological understandings of personhood, and social scientific studies of social inequality. By allowing religion to enter into a hermeneutical relationship with secularism we are not surrendering to outdated cosmologies or narrow projects of social construction. Instead we are able to bring these worldviews into contention with one another as conflictual interpretations allow for a broader, deeper, ironic, and dynamic public space.

### **5.8 Religion and Secularism Redescribing One Another**

Cornel West is an example of someone who uses religious and secular constructs to play off one another regularly. He utilizes religious language to infuse politics with meaning without attempting to deride secular liberal democracy as a whole. He does not seek a sectarian theological replacement of current institutions; rather, he seeks to imbue the

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<sup>138</sup> This is similar to Taylor's description of our secular age as multiple traditions and sources are available to us for identity construction in: *A Secular Age*, 772.

<sup>139</sup> William E. Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 91.

public sphere with religiosity. He sees the challenge to democracy very differently than the New Traditionalists or other religious thinkers we have encountered so far. For him, the problem for modern democracy is in three parts. The first part of the problem is “free-market fundamentalism,” where capitalist endeavours are used to justify the oppression of the poor and maintaining socio-economic structures that favour the rich.<sup>140</sup> The second is “aggressive militarism,” where violence and aggression are the appropriate response to any problem, even the acquisition of oil.<sup>141</sup> West's final piece of the problem for democracy is “escalating authoritarianism” in that people are too quick to utilize one domineering source of authority and impose it on others.<sup>142</sup> His solution then, is also in a set of three, we need; “Socratic commitment to questioning,” the “Jewish invention of the prophetic commitment to justice,” and finally the “tragicomic commitment to hope.”<sup>143</sup> In this way he demonstrates a complex relationship between secular political theory and theology.

West sees secular traditions as both problematic and beneficial. For example, unbridled capitalism is problematic, while Greek wisdom provides a solution. In the same way, while escalating authoritarianism refers to religious fundamentalism it is juxtaposed with propheticism.<sup>144</sup> Therefore it is not that democracy needs to be replaced with an overriding political theology, but it can be inspired and kept in check by the religiosity of

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<sup>140</sup> Cornel West, *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight against Imperialism* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004), 7.

<sup>141</sup> West, *Democracy Matters*, 110.

<sup>142</sup> West, *Democracy Matters*, 8.

<sup>143</sup> West, *Democracy Matters*, 16.

<sup>144</sup> West, *Democracy Matters*, 146.

its constituents.<sup>145</sup> West calls liberals to account for injustices using religion as a guide through the murky waters of political ethics.

West regularly employs this style of mixing secular and religious sources for wisdom. An example of the interaction between the two can be seen in West's reflections upon Jane Austen, wherein he attributes the values in Austen's books reflect his appreciation for various insights into the human condition. For example, West delves into what it means to be human, and he presents two characteristics which are pivotal to understanding humanity. The first he describes as the cultivation of the self and the soul; this process of developing a genuine self is grounded in humility. "The question is whether you have a cultivation of a self, a self with a deep core, no matter how much elasticity on the periphery, a core that will allow you to endure, to prevail, to persevere. And then there's a maturation of the soul. And, again, humility is always the benchmark of deep maturity. And by humility, I'm not talking about false modesty."<sup>146</sup> West relies on a religious understanding of selfhood and the soul. The development of the soul is not equatable to developing a healthy self – we must turn to humility to mature the soul.

Yet, this is not all West has to say on the human condition, he also looks to the etymology of the term human in order to provide insight into how we should understand ourselves:

Our English word 'human' is related to the Latin word *humando*. *Humando* means 'from the earth or ground,' suggesting burying. It has to

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<sup>145</sup> In an overt response to the New Traditionalists argument that we ought to do away with liberalism West counters, "Yet they preclude a robust democratic Christian identity that builds on the legacy of prophetic Christian-led social movements," in: West, *Democracy Matters*, 163.

<sup>146</sup> Cornel West, "Power and Freedom in Jane Austen's Novels," *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal* 34 (2012): 111.

do with burial. It has to do with the fact that we are featherless, two-legged, linguistically conscious creatures born between urine and feces. That's who we are... One day our bodies will be the culinary delight of terrestrial worms.<sup>147</sup>

The physicality of the body, the relation to the earth (thus grounding his theology in biology), and the messy, grim reality of our existence is not lost on West because of his understanding of a human soul. Instead he mixes and merges theological insight of the human soul with the reality of human constructs (as in linguistic understandings of human) and practical realities. It is a humbling concept to have our sense of personhood connected to dirt, we are not so special or separate from the ground we walk on.

West fuses worldviews when he mixes prophetic legacy with philosophy. His tragicomic commitment to hope is at work here too. In an ironic, subversive manner akin to what Rorty describes, West uses stark realities of our time on earth – from the womb to the ground we are all equal – to enhance his theological insight. We need humility to cultivate the soul. Like Connolly's agonism of competing worldviews which we seek to balance, West employs contradictory worldviews and merges them into a dialectic between understandings of humanity. An even more overt example of West utilizing a religious tradition to critique and subvert secularism is in his discussion of prophetic witness.

Prophetic witness, as West describes it, is a particularly insightful notion if we are to consider contestation. According to West, it is a “Jewish invention [... that] not only put justice at the center of what it means to be chosen as a Jewish people but also made compassion to human suffering and kindness to the stranger the fundamental features of

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<sup>147</sup> West, “Power and Freedom in Jane Austen's Novels,” 111.

the most noble human calling.”<sup>148</sup> West argues this frequently presents itself as a critique of misused political power.<sup>149</sup> It is rooted in the sacred, yet focused on human conduct.<sup>150</sup> In this way, it can serve as a bridge between religious and secular contestation. Prophetic wisdom, in West's words:

[...]calls attention to the causes of unjustified suffering and unnecessary social misery and highlights personal and institutional evil, including the evil of being indifferent to personal and institutional evil. The especial aim of prophetic utterance is to shatter deliberate ignorance and willful blindness to the suffering of others and to expose the clever forms of evasion and escape we devise in order to hide and conceal injustice.<sup>151</sup>

Take for example Martin Luther King who called out the United States on its systematic discrimination and racism. Or Gandhi who challenged the immoral British control of India and its taxation of salt with “his famous Salt March to the coast at Dandi, western India, where he made salt on the sea shore in the full glare of international press publicity.”<sup>152</sup> Both challenged the explicit and complicit facets of society that perpetuate injustice. Both relied on religion as a source for their condemnation of human action and both had a significant impact on their society.

Today, in Canada, we have examples of prophetic wisdom as well, Martha Wiebe describes how certain religious groups exist primarily to critique the misuse of power:

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<sup>148</sup> West, *Democracy Matters*, 113-114.

<sup>149</sup> Or, that it is “an indictment of those who worship the idol of human power,” in: West, *Democracy Matters*, 114.

<sup>150</sup> In West's words it: “gives voice to divine compassion and justice in order to awaken human compassion and justice,” in: West, *Democracy Matters*, 114.

<sup>151</sup> West, *Democracy Matters*, 114.

<sup>152</sup> Judith Brown, “Gandhi and Civil Resistance in India, 1917-47: Key Issues,” in *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-violent Action for Gandhi to Present*, eds. Adam Roberts and Ash Garton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 51.

Kairos, a Canadian ecumenical church organization[...] has been an outspoken critic of federal governmental policies that are harmful to the environment. It has provided critical analysis based on principles of good stewardship of the earth. This organization has also supported and stood with Aboriginal peoples in their struggle for justice. Citizens for Public Justice, another Christian-based organization, has taken the lead in anti-poverty campaigns in Canada.<sup>153</sup>

So, subversion challenges the majority and questions human usage of power. This is a long standing religious tradition that is still active today. Furthermore, we have structures of power that should be critiqued, checked, and challenged – just as any healthy democracy does. Religion is not the sole source of such critique, but it is a potent one and we would impoverish ourselves if we were to neglect it. Prophetic witness is a religious tradition that makes its presence in the public sphere not only tolerable, but desirable.

## **5.9 Redescriptions**

This chapter aims to redescribe the role of religion in the public sphere. To do this I argue we should develop a dynamic, fluid, and open-ended relationship between secularism and religion. Such a relationship is dependent on translation as it provides a method to transfer meaning between worldviews. Not only can meaning be transferred, but through allowing meaning-making projects to be infused by different interpretive frames we open ourselves up to new cognitive possibilities and new understandings of old constructs. Hermeneutic analysis, though often underappreciated or overlooked, can pave the way for new exploration into our social imaginaries. The redescription, ironic subversion, agonistic

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<sup>153</sup> Martha Wiebe, “Social Work, Social Justice, and Religion,” *Canadian Social Work Review* 27.1 (2010): 140-141.

exchange, and prophetic witness can unfold in a secular space if we commit ourselves to translation in the public sphere.

As we have seen through an exploration of the pitfalls of multiculturalism religion can be problematic for political processes, nation-building, legal practices, or how to define citizenship as well as human rights. Frequently, religion lies in the centre of the tension of differences in the same space in the public sphere. The Rushdie affair demonstrates this tendency. The rights of the author were pitted against those of the Muslim community while freedom of speech and freedom of religion clashed. On the theoretical plane, in many models for public discourse one will find various limits on what a person can bring to the dialogue concerning religious beliefs. Religion is often regarded with suspicion because it can be divisive and/or deemed irrational. Furthermore, theories of political discourse which laud the value of consensus or one version of rationality often have a discernible distrust of religion. Yet, I have argued the presupposition that the inclusion of religion in the public sphere will automatically produce enough division and irrationality to undermine constructive social projects is not true. One can counter these claims in two ways: first by questioning the presuppositions that follow the secularization of political discourse and secondly by challenging the claim that religion and rationality are diametrically opposed. Furthermore, one can develop a constructive case that religion cannot and should not be ignored or expelled from public discourse.

Carving out a space for religion in the public sphere provides us with two main advantages. First, religious individuals are able to engage in politics in a more robust, meaningful, and honest manner. Secondly, while political discourse itself may face new challenges, it will gain new insights and perspectives to broaden our cognitive boundaries

for public debates. The actual perspectives and worldviews of people involved in political discussions will come to the forefront of political debates as opposed to models where theorized ideals are discussed within imagined terms of engagement that can never be actualized. Such a perspective on religion and the public sphere will allow for a re-examination of the division of public and private spaces which profoundly impacts people's identities.

When we create a space that is to be accessible to all, the success of this space can be measured by assessing how conflicting worldviews are addressed. Yet we need to consider both conflictual and harmonious relationships in the public sphere in order to fully appreciate the workings and criticisms of such a space. Rorty for instance, promotes a pragmatic understanding of politics and political discourse. He argues that it is useful to limit the kinds of arguments made in the public sphere because religious reasoning is not applicable to all citizens (while rationality, he would argue, is). Connolly demonstrates that conflict can actually be the basis for a democratic ethos. The challenge of mixing secularism and religion is not due to the fact that they may cause friction, but as Michael McGhee notes, bringing them into the same space "invites a conversation between different forms of subjectivity."<sup>154</sup> This is why hermeneutics is such a useful tool. Translation is necessarily subjective and it attempts to transcend divergent subjective worldviews while permitting and facilitating meaning to traverse between them.

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<sup>154</sup> Michael McGhee, "The Philosopher as Stranger: The Idea of Comparative Philosophy," in *After Appropriation: Explorations in Intercultural Philosophy of Religion*, eds. Morny Joy (Calgary: Calgary University Press, 2011), 32.



George Steiner claims that translation functions within both the religious and secular frames, and between them: “By simple analogy the view that translation is essential to man's spiritual progress passed from the religious to the secular domain.”<sup>155</sup> However, mere transference from one space to another is not enough. We have already discussed the advantages to having religion and secularism bounce off one another, mixing and checking one another. This fusion of differences intersecting in the same space provides us with a framework to consider someone like Cornell West who makes use of religious and secular traditions in order to creatively push the boundaries of our interpretive frames. Thus a robust space opens up between the oscillation of secularism and religion which is a new, creative place for one to explore questions of identity and social imaginaries. Yet, it is also a mediating space to address the negotiations and struggles which occur in the public space between divergent worldviews. In the following chapter I will consider cases of religion and secularism in conflict in the public sphere and how our dialect of translation and contention can provide guidance for such struggles.

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<sup>155</sup> George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 258.

## Chapter Six: **Two Cases for a Hermeneutic of Religion in the Public Sphere**

### **6.1 Differences in the Same Space**

In the following chapter I intend to explore specific cases to demonstrate how religion and secularism could benefit from a relationship based upon translation. The two cases I will focus on will reveal different facets of what a hermeneutic approach offers. In the first case, the Alberta provincial human rights legislation was revised in 2009 so that public school students could be exempt from class – by parental or guardian request – if they were going to be taught anything to do with religion or sexual orientation. Through this case the issue of incommensurability and separation will be discussed. Those who defend this legislation argue that either religion is incommensurable with secular society, or that for practical reasons we should keep them separate. While this arrangement may appear to have certain pragmatic advantages, it fails to encourage cross-cultural understanding. I will argue that the problems that this legislation attempts to resolve through exemption could be better addressed through translation. In short, this case demonstrates the limitations of trying to mitigate difference by separating people who hold diverse worldviews.

The second case pertains to the Supreme Court of Canada's ruling on whether Sikh youth should be allowed to carry their *kirpans* on public school grounds. The Court decided to allow this religious practice to continue even though some feared the ramifications of such a ruling. While the judges did choose to allow a religious practice to continue, which is a laudable decision, the legal framework for deciding important issues concerning religious identity and recognition is limited. It is limited because this framework requires a narrow form of engagement with different aspects of a community or tradition, it

inevitably enforces a reductive approach to identity, and it essentializes definitions as well as constructs that are contingent and fluid in nature. This case will allow us to consider specific and competing interpretations made by different groups and how translation across cultural boundaries allows for dynamic redescriptions and new creative, interpretive endeavours for all involved.

Before we delve too deeply into specific cases of translation, let us consider how we have established the relationship between secularism and religion thus far. In Chapter Two we considered multiculturalism as it is the overall frame for any discussion on religious diversity and secularism in the Canadian public sphere. Multiculturalism has an important historic role in Canada. It was developed to deal with various kinds of diversity in Canada and it has evolved over the past fifty years. Claims for language rights, the struggles of Aboriginal peoples, as well as demands for recognition steeped in religious and cultural diversity all fall under the umbrella of multiculturalism.<sup>1</sup> While multicultural discourse at large can develop in various directions, I engage predominantly with the facet of multiculturalism that addresses minority cultures. Pluralism, clearly, is an important issue for Canada today as is how we are to construct a public space occupied by different traditions, cultures, and people. However, it is also abundantly clear that any simplistic or formulaic response to diversity will not withstand the strain of the deep diversity of any modern, complex society. There is a prevailing concern that diversity and minority cultures will threaten social cohesion. Thus difference is seen as a problem that needs to be

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<sup>1</sup> Will Kymlicka describes how multifaceted multiculturalism must be and as a result we have various problems and solutions at work simultaneously under the notion of multiculturalism in: *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 10-11.

regulated and controlled in order to maintain a specific kind of public space and public discourse.

I argue, however, a more nuanced approach to diversity is required, as far too often discussions concerning multicultural are centered upon notions of accommodation and toleration, i.e. what the limits are as to what we can allow in society.<sup>2</sup> If we rely on a concept such as accommodation for the public sphere minorities are boxed into a framework that is constructed, imposed, and policed by the dominant society. As such, the public sphere is unable to bend, blend, or be redescribed by interactions between diverse cultures in any meaningful way. Former Liberal MP Navdeep Bains, a practicing Sikh who wears his *kirpan* at all times has this to say about accommodation: “I really think the term accommodation is a guise for some level of ignorance. I wouldn’t want anyone to accommodate or tolerate me. I want us to respect one another and even celebrate our differences.”<sup>3</sup> Before we can arrive at respect or celebration though, we need a solid framework for discourse and we need mutual understanding. Translation can enhance and benefit the discourses between minorities and the majority.

Next we considered why it is so reductive to define people as merely autonomous, rational, secular, and individualistic. In Chapter Two it became quite clear dominant power

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<sup>2</sup> My critique is informed by Lori Beaman who questions the assumptions underlying the term “accommodation” when she states: “At present, the tone of religious-freedom decisions is one of accommodation. The language of accommodation rests on an assumption of a normal or mainstream and a benevolent dispensing of special consideration for those on the margins. It builds in inequality and maintains it,” in: Lori G. Beaman, *Defining Harm: Religious Freedom and the Limits of the Law* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 146.

<sup>3</sup> John Geddes, “Q&A: Nav Bains on the kirpan controversy,” *Macleans* January 20, 2011, <http://www.macleans.ca/politics/ottawa/mp-navdeep-bains-on-talking-about-his-kirpan-with-the-bloc-wearing-it-on-capitol-hill/>

structures are set up in a way to protect minorities from the majority, yet these protections themselves are steeped in underlying assumptions that can be quite troublesome. Atomic individualism is one such assumption, as is an over-emphasis on the human being as a decision maker. In Chapter Three I analysed how imperative it is that we realize and recognize the extent to which people are formed by their relationships, interactions, traditions, cultures, communities, and even the perceptions of others. Once we do, it becomes clear that how we understand and acknowledge the Other is of great importance, as is how we make ourselves understandable to others.

Identity construction and recognition is a dialectic endeavour as it is based upon understanding, interpretation, and interpretation. Also, it is a process laden with meaning-making opportunities – as well as potential pitfalls. One such danger is to only acknowledge people in a superficial, reductive manner steeped in instrumental thinking.<sup>4</sup> Any framework that merely recognizes people's autonomy without addressing their value system is impoverished. Therefore we are compelled to seek a process which allows for mutual recognition and communication between different worldviews.<sup>5</sup> With constructed, relational dimensions of the self at hand we may follow Taylor toward an appreciation of what it means to form an authentic self.<sup>6</sup> Only then may we arrive at a position where we can take Ricoeur's call for a philosophy of recognition with the end goal of mutuality and

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<sup>4</sup> Charles Taylor outlines his argument that individualism mixed with instrumentalism has dire consequences for political engagement in: *The Malaise of Modernity* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2003), 1-12.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Ricoeur describes mutual recognition as analogous to ceremonial gift giving in: *The Course of Recognition*, trans. David Pellauer (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 2005), 220.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Taylor argues that through human agency we may quest for, and approach, the good, in: *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 50-51.

equality seriously. The themes of difference and interpretation play a significant role in an analysis of identity and the encounters with an Other.

In Chapter Four I confront the possible pitfalls of translation as well as its merit for intercultural communication. I primarily analyse translation that occurs between cultures or worldviews. I use linguistic and textual translation to highlight aspects of interpretation that is relevant for discourse between religion and secularism. Translation is an ongoing process which allows for the oscillation of meaning between the source material and its translated form. It also promotes and provides a surplus of meaning, like a metaphoric juxtaposition. Therefore translation is a potent tool for public discourse where anyone involved in translation is provided with a deeper appreciation of new, broader horizons for his or her worldview. It is not an easy undertaking though, and it can inspire such struggle that some question whether it is worth it at all.

Umberto Eco argues that a translator requires multiple encyclopaedias of knowledge in order to have any chance of producing a good translation.<sup>7</sup> One has to have a deep and profound understanding of the host culture and the culture one is translating for to begin. Something simple like a joke, expression, saying, or colloquialism can frustrate and even stagnate translation, sometimes with no satisfactory end in sight. As such, translation always proceeds in a tentative manner; one has to guess, experiment, and try out certain strategies when translating to see if the new expression is able to capture the meaning of the original phrase. Yet through this process one is able to bring two cultures into discourse with one another. Translation allows for redescription and new insights to

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<sup>7</sup> Umberto Eco, *Mouse or Rat?: Translation as Negotiation* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), 82.

develop. This is why translation is described by oscillation, not only do we have to keep returning to the original phrase to check for hidden meaning, missed allusions, or new understandings of it – throughout the translation process our conceptual frames for understanding the world develop and change thus allowing further translation to continue. Translation, then, mirrors the dialectic at the heart of mutual recognition.

One reason translation is worthwhile even though the process is taxing is that a good translation benefits all who are involved. This is why a translation is always incomplete if it remains a tool for appropriation or oppression. While undoubtedly translation can be used nefariously by unscrupulous individuals, this is predominantly when interpretation is unidirectional and conducted without a proper dedication to the many facets of translation. Some theorists, like Habermas, have suggested that religious worldviews should be translated for a secular audience in order to take part in public discourse.<sup>8</sup> However, too frequently the burden of translation is placed solely on the religious side of the equation. Also, concerns over appropriation are a very real issue when translating between religion and secularism. This becomes abundantly clear when we take into account the perceived universalistic nature of secularism juxtaposed with the particularism of religion. Yet, translation done well requires effort from all participants, as it will also benefit everyone. It benefits those on the receiving end because they are able to understand, appreciate, and glean wisdom from new sources. New interpretive frames are opened up to them and new lifeworlds become accessible. In the same vein, being translated is beneficial because a new audience is made available.

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<sup>8</sup> Jürgen Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere," *European Journal of Philosophy* 14.1 (2006): 14.

Our next task was to bring secularism and religion into the same space in order to further explore what advantages we may reap from having differences play off one another. Be it an ironic subversion or outright contestation, different positions allow us the space to explore creative and dynamic possibilities that would otherwise be cognitively concealed. While difference often challenges us, it also propels us forward into new and exciting opportunities we cannot obtain without it. This is why certain frameworks put forward to discuss the relationship between secularism and religion are left wanting.

Both John Rawls and Robert Audi recognize that religion is able to provide a contrarian position to the dominant secular discourse, and in response they want to regulate it.<sup>9</sup> Through regulation the potency of religion to challenge and transform the public sphere is castrated. While Rawls and Audi do discuss translation, they only entertain limited interpretations. The burden of translation falls completely on the religiously motivated agent and the dialectical redescription, the surplus of meaning, and the dynamic facets of translation are all ignored in their models. Thus, this kind of translation stops well short of Steiner's altruistic translation, or Eco's deep analysis, or Ricoeur's mutual recognition. In order to develop an understanding of the public sphere that allows room to explore and benefit from religious traditions we need models of discourse that do not regulate and limit religious expression so bluntly.

In order to redescribe the relationship between religion and secularism I considered Richard Rorty's discussion of irony, contingency, and solidarity alongside Connolly's

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<sup>9</sup> John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 15.  
Robert Audi, *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 3.



agonism and democratic ethos. Both of these theorists consider the benefits of having differences in the same space and develop theories that provide room for dialectic interplay. Both Rorty and Connolly accept that our foundational narratives, values, and constructed spaces are contingent; utterly informed by time, place, and context. Rather than struggle against this, they embrace it. We are not boxed in by any particular reading of history, metaphysical reality, or ontological imperative. Furthermore, they utilize this freedom to pursue different interpretive frames, axiomatic assumptions, and competing worldviews. While Rorty and Connolly do emphasize different advantages and facets of having difference in the same space, they can be considered together in a complementary fashion nonetheless.

Finally, Cornell West can serve as an example as to what a hermeneutic relationship between secularism and religion could look like. He challenges dominant assumptions, he uses alternate worldviews to counter and question one another, and he seeks to strengthen our values and vision for society through various sources of wisdom. One key component to West's thinking is prophetic witness. Prophetic witness is a tradition developed within Judaism, but there are hints, traces, and overlaps to be found in many (if not all) of the world's religions. It is when a religious leader uses his or her connection to the sacred to question the activities of people, usually those in power.<sup>10</sup> Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi exemplify this tradition. Each challenged dominant frames and value systems, contested majority practices and beliefs, and subverted power structures. Both

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<sup>10</sup> Cornel West, *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight against Imperialism* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004), 114.

turned to religious traditions to inspire and inform their critique of society and each had a profound impact on their society and history as a whole. While religious critique may not always be so profound or have such an impact, it is important to recognize the potential of religion in the public sphere. This serves as one reason why we ought to engage in secular-religious translation.

Religion and secularism can redescribe one another like the outcome of mutual recognition or a translation endeavour. The oscillation between different worldviews inherent in any translation juxtaposes and creates something novel, and new avenues to explore for society. An example of this, as was just described, is prophetic witness. However, the engagement between religion and secularism is not limited to any one model. Secularism, too, has a long standing tradition of contestation, subversion, and can be used to challenge and question religious worldviews. Any translation between these two worldviews is a large and difficult undertaking, but one that is worthwhile.

The following section will look to apply translation between religion and secularism into two cases where incommensurability, false equivocation, unequal valuation, and miscommunication strained the cohesiveness of the public sphere. I will consider the 2009 bill the *Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Amendment Act*, which equips parents to take their children out of any class or subject area that conflicts with their religious views. Secondly, the 2002 Supreme Court ruling on whether or not Canada should allow a young Sikh, Gurbaj Singh Multani, to wear a *kirpan* in public schools. In both cases the conflicts were resolved one way or another through political processes, however, current solutions fail to adequately understand the worldviews at stake, nor leverage the opportunities a more nuanced analysis can offer. By looking into

these cases we can bring to light the potential for translation to provide a broader and deeper understanding of context. Further, translation allows meaning to be developed and understood in a manner that current processes for dialogue do not. Both religion and secularism are prominent and important forces in today's society, and both need to be able to take part in the joint construction of public and social spaces.

## **6.2 Alberta, Religion, and Schooling**

From a legal perspective the relationship between religion and education in Alberta has a complicated history. Across Canada both education and religious practice are informed by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Charter)* and by relevant rulings of the Supreme Court. Yet, legislative and legal branches manifest themselves in different ways for different contexts. For one, the public education system functions as an arm of provincial governments and as such education has to be conducted in a manner fitting any government operation. Thus, *Charter* statements concerning freedom of religion and the principles of multiculturalism must be upheld. A report by the Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre demonstrates this means everything from Provincial edicts down to how curriculum is taught is relevant: “Provincial educational aims must ensure that the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion and corollary rights such as equality and multicultural respect are met. In fact, all elements and types of education must ensure the *Charter* is being upheld, including school boards and administrators, as well as curriculum issues and the like.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore public education in Canada at any level cannot endorse

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<sup>11</sup> Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre, *Religion in Public Schools* (Calgary: The Alberta Situation, Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre, 2004), 13.

any particular religious standpoint, coerce any student to adopt a particular religious worldview, or lessen Canada's commitment to multiculturalism broadly speaking.

Of course, these guidelines do leave some ambiguity as to how they should be properly understood, this is where the courts come in. The *Charter* dictates that all Canadians have a fundamental "freedom of conscience and religion" yet that can be understood in different ways.<sup>12</sup> On one hand, the freedom of religion may imply one is able to practice his or her religion without undue interference from the state (a positive right). On the other hand, it could be interpreted that one is free from religious coercion by the state (a negative right). In effect, the courts have ruled that it is best to understand this section of the *Charter* in both the positive and negative reading as much as possible.

Essentially, the Court has said that freedom of religion in a broad sense embraces both the right to manifest one's beliefs and practices, as well as the absence of coercion. This means that, subject to such limitations as are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others, no one is forced to act in a way contrary to their religious beliefs or conscience. Thus, the essence of freedom of religion and conscience is both positive and negative.<sup>13</sup>

As both a positive and negative right the freedom of religion remains an issue where overlapping or competing rights may arise, but also different interpretations of how to apply the same right can be debated as well.

For example, if a Muslim prays silently by herself on school property that seems to be under the positive understanding of the right. Yet if a teacher attempts to lead a class in reciting the Lord's Prayer for example, then it can be argued he is coercing his students by

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<sup>12</sup> Government of Canada, *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (Ottawa: Parliament of Canada, 1982), <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/const/page-15.html>

<sup>13</sup> Alberta Civil Liberties Centre, *Religion in Public Schools*, 7-8.

way of the latter reading of the *Charter*.<sup>14</sup> Yet, what if the positive practice of one religion seems to overlap against the negative right of another? For example, some would argue that proselytization is an integral dimension of their religion, yet one on the receiving end of an enthusiastic attempt at conversion may feel as though one's negative reading of the *Charter* is being infringed upon. So, while the *Charter* and Court rulings dictate the guidelines for how we should address religion in schools, it is not always clear exactly how these notions should be best interpreted.

To further complicate the issue, Alberta and Saskatchewan have a special history with regards to the constitution and education. In 1905 these two provinces joined Canada and they signed a clause stating federal institutions shall not interfere with their separate school systems.<sup>15</sup> This was done at a time when schools taught religious instruction and recited the Lord's Prayer as common practice.<sup>16</sup> While other provinces have found reciting the Lord's Prayer unconstitutional (Ontario and Manitoba schools were specifically ruled by the Supreme Court to stop reciting the prayer), Alberta and Saskatchewan's unique clause may instill a legal justification for maintaining this practice.

While denominational schools are protected in Alberta to perform prayers, "what is less clear, though, is whether the right to provide religious instruction and exercises in public schools is also constitutionally entrenched. And if so, what the extent and scope of these rights are."<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, as a point of reference for religion in Alberta, the Lord's

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<sup>14</sup> This scenario has played out in the Supreme Court and every time the reading of the Lord's Prayer in school has been challenged the practice has been deemed untenable.

<sup>15</sup> Alberta Civil Liberties Centre, *Religion in Public Schools*, 23.

<sup>16</sup> Alberta Civil Liberties Centre, *Religion in Public Schools*, 25-27.

<sup>17</sup> Alberta Civil Liberties Centre, *Religion in Public Schools*, 32.

Prayer was recited in Saskatchewan public schools and was challenged in the Supreme Court and there it was ruled that they had to stop reciting the prayer.<sup>18</sup> Therefore it is probably most realistic to understand Alberta's special status with regards to education and the *Charter* as fairly narrow in the sense that not any religious practice would be able to withstand a Supreme Court challenge. As such, the role of religion in public schools seems to be fairly limited in that the schools cannot endorse one particular religious worldview or lead students to partake in a religious activity. What is relevant for us though, is the understanding that Alberta is a special case for religion in the public sphere and that religious convictions do have an impact on how education is conducted.

### 6.3 The Exemption Clause

Recently in 2009 the Alberta government enacted the *Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Amendment Act* which has profound implications for public education and religion. Ostensibly the amendment was designed to address the role of religion in schools and was an attempt to make space for religious worldviews in a secular public school system. Furthermore, this amendment gives schools and parents guidelines for dealing with conflicting worldviews. In short, students do not have to attend or participate in class if the content relates to religion or human sexuality.<sup>19</sup> In order to assure this

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<sup>18</sup> Alberta Civil Liberties Centre, *Religion in Public Schools*, 33.

<sup>19</sup> Government of Alberta, *Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Amendment Act* (2009): 11.1(1)  
[http://www.qp.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=2009CH26\\_UNPR.cfm&leg\\_type=Acts&isbncln=9780779744053&display=html](http://www.qp.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=2009CH26_UNPR.cfm&leg_type=Acts&isbncln=9780779744053&display=html)  
 There was a bill proposed in December 2014 to remove section 11.1 from Alberta's human rights bill, but any such action has, for the moment, been put on hold indefinitely. Although it is worth noting even if this section is removed it is unlikely this alone would lead to the tension of perceived

protection a parent or guardian must receive notice as to the kinds of content being taught in school which might have an impact on religious sensibilities.

The bill instructs schools to inform parents if there will be anything taught that is to “include subject-matter that deals primarily and explicitly with religion, human sexuality or sexual orientation.”<sup>20</sup> It is clear by the phrasing of this legislation it is open to multiple interpretations. Firstly, the term “religion” in the bill is often ambiguous and even problematic at times. As we have seen, equivocation (and false equivocation) is a serious issue when translating across boundaries. Here, the question equivocation compels us to ask is what constitutes something to be explicitly religious? If a teacher were to discuss charity, the beginning of the world, morality, myth, food, cultural norms, current events, political regimes, epistemology, a great deal of literature, or multiculturalism, any of these could pertain to religion or lead into discussions about religion. It is up to context and interpretation to decide when something is religious and when it is not, and this is not always “explicit.” As the interpretation of religion is ambiguous this places an undue burden for an educator to pick and choose when one is teaching about something that could be religious and when one is not.<sup>21</sup>

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incommensurability to be fully resolved and we would see a fully integrated process of cross-cultural hermeneutics to take its place.

<sup>20</sup> Government of Alberta, *Human Rights*, 11.1(1).

<sup>21</sup> While it was clarified by the government that “teachers would not face prosecution if they had inadvertently brought up any of the taboo subjects in the course of general instruction,” the issue of clarity and the proper interpretation of the language of the bill is not fully resolved, in: Clark Banack, “Conservative Christianity, Anti-statism, and Alberta’s Public Sphere,” in *Religion in the Public Sphere: Canadian Case Studies*, eds. Solange Lefebvre and Lori G. Beaman (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 259.

What is more, “religion” is used differently depending on the context. This point is highlighted when Pamela Dickey Young addresses Peter Beyer and Benjamin Berger’s differentiation between how lawmakers and religious people most often define religion. Legislative and court branches rely on “official religion,” which is: something individuals believe, individuals choose their religious affiliations, and it is largely a private affair.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, religious adherents tend to think in terms of “theological religion,” which is: an expression of the immanence of transcendence.<sup>23</sup> In other words, religion refers to ontological and metaphysical aspects of reality as well as an epistemological method for understanding and accessing this reality. Religions inform cultures, communities, and traditions which are expressed and actualized in a manner very different from the official definitions of religion. “Official religion” is used in court rulings and in legislation (like in *Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act*). Meanwhile these laws and rulings are meant to guide and regulate people who are by and large living under theological definitions of religion. When students encounter what they perceive as religion in schools and when parents think their children are learning religious material they can be quite disconnected from what the legal and legislative branches mean by the same term.

Next there is the issue of sexuality and sexual orientation. Sexual orientation remains a controversial topic in many education settings.<sup>24</sup> Alberta is unique in Canada as

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<sup>22</sup> Pamela Dickey Young, “Two By Two: Religion, Sexuality and Diversity in Canada,” in *Religion and Diversity in Canada*, eds. Lori G. Beaman and Peter Beyer (Boston: Brill, 2008), 107-108.

<sup>23</sup> Young, “Two By Two,” 107-108.

<sup>24</sup> For example, in: Nancy Unger, “Teaching “Straight” Gay and Lesbian History,” *The Journal of American History* 93.4 (2007): 1192-1199, Unger describes the challenges of introducing courses that deal with gay and lesbian historical figures in various colleges, public lectures, and even high schools.



there is a conservative, evangelical Christian heritage that is more vocal and widespread in the public sphere than in other provinces.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Alberta has had a history of engaging sexual orientation in legislation. In 1998 Alberta was instructed to “read in” sexual orientation into the *Alberta Individual Rights Protection Act* by the Supreme Court, as it had been omitted by lawmakers.<sup>26</sup> The issue of sexual orientation and legislation did not end there though:

Despite a rebuke from the Supreme Court on this matter, the late 1990s and early 2000s found the province leading the charge against the legal recognition of same sex partnerships in Canada. This included passage of the Marriage Act in March 2000 that reaffirmed the definition of marriage as that 'between one man and one woman' and included further provisions to utilize the notwithstanding clause should the courts attempt to impose same-sex marriage on the province.<sup>27</sup>

Even though same-sex marriages are now permitted in the province there is still concern in some corners that the provincial government is not doing all it should to protect the LBGT community in Alberta.

While Alberta did eventually add sexual orientation into the *Alberta Individual Rights Protection Act*, “praise from sexual-diversity activists was quickly muted.”<sup>28</sup> This

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While overall she would describe her courses as a success, there still remains opposition and dissent to her teachings, at times, in unexpected forms.

Or, more recently, there was a controversy in Alberta over the provincial government’s reluctance to introduce a bill guaranteeing the approval for any request for a Gay-straight alliance in public schools in 2014. Instead, the government proposed students should seek legal action if they are denied access to forming such groups. However, this bill has been put on hold indefinitely as it caused controversy within the government’s caucus. For further details see: Michelle Bellefontaine, “Gay-straight alliance bill leaves emotions raw at Alberta legislature,” *CBC* December 4, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/gay-straight-alliance-bill-leaves-emotions-raw-at-alberta-legislature-1.2856866>.

<sup>25</sup> Banak, “Conservative Christianity,” 257.

<sup>26</sup> Banak, “Conservative Christianity,” 257.

<sup>27</sup> Banak, “Conservative Christianity,” 257-258.

<sup>28</sup> Banak, “Conservative Christianity,” 258.

is because they began to consider the implications of the province's move to exempt students from education on sexual orientation. Included under the guise of “parental rights” it was felt that the state was skirting its responsibility to encourage tolerance and inclusion in its legislation. As a result, “Opposition MLAs, the provincial teachers association, sexual diversity advocates and liberal-leaning journalists erupted in a chorus of protest but to no avail.”<sup>29</sup> In fact, public protest of the bill did not last. Clark Banack argues this is because “it was the potential for well-intentioned teachers to be hauled in front of a human rights tribunal that really struck a negative chord with members of the public.”<sup>30</sup> Once this particular issue was put to rest, the opposition petered out.<sup>31</sup>

According to Banack, the real issue that brought up ire in the public sphere around this bill was the anti-statist position that the government was limiting the freedom of teachers to perform their jobs effectively, not that it stifled tolerance and inclusion in the classroom.<sup>32</sup> My critique is not so much based on the tenants of inclusion and tolerance *per se*, or anti-statism at all. Rather, I posit that the problem is best understood through the use of mutual interpretation, that the school has taken a stance in which religion and secularism are understood to be incommensurable and as a result the bill pre-emptively, and unnecessarily, rejects potential meaningful dialogues in the classroom.

One benefit to a hermeneutical approach is that both secularists and religious traditions can redescribe and reinterpret understandings of human sexuality and identity. For the secularist, it might be useful to consider human relationships as infused with

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<sup>29</sup> Banak, “Conservative Christianity,” 259.

<sup>30</sup> Banak, “Conservative Christianity,” 259.

<sup>31</sup> Banak, “Conservative Christianity,” 259.

<sup>32</sup> Banak, “Conservative Christianity,” 268.

meaning on a higher level. On the religious side, as certain religious stances are against certain kinds of sexual relationships, religion can be reinterpreted and reapplied to infuse relationships that were once taboo with new understandings of the sacred, or human nature, or human flourishing.<sup>33</sup> We may balance the positions that people of different genders and sexual orientations have to be treated equally while we can still infuse different identities and relationships with meaning at a spiritual level.

The *Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Amendment Act* clumps explicitly religious material with school subject matter pertaining to sexual practices, preferences, and identity. In some ways this makes sense. Sexuality is an area most religions have a great deal of interest in, as well as a great deal to say. However, we can critique this bill on the basis of relevance and as a concept for translation. Pamela Dickey Young notes that sexual mores and norms are important to religions generally and religion in Canada specifically: “Most religious traditions in Canada, like most of Canadian society, assume a basic division of humanity into male and female. Further, religious traditions usually place great weight on that division in terms of assigning appropriate gender roles and in terms of determining licit sexual conduct.”<sup>34</sup> Religions have traditionally played an

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<sup>33</sup> For example, the religious group, Muslims for Progressive Values, in the United States challenges traditional interpretations of human sexuality and gender roles. This was the result of internal and external forces and dramatically reinterpreting the traditional readings of the Quran and the Hadith. As a result, more activities and people with diverse identities can still be recognized as blessed by Allah, and having a close and meaningful relationship to him. For some insight into the group see: Gillian Flaccus, “Progressive U.S. Muslim movement embraces gay and interfaith marriages, female imams and mixed prayers,” *National Post*, August 2, 2014.  
<http://news.nationalpost.com/2014/08/02/progressive-u-s-muslim-movement-embraces-gay-and-interfaith-marriages-female-imams-and-mixed-prayers/>

For further information about Muslims for Progressive Values see: *MVP Principles*, 2012.

<http://mpvusa.org/mpv-principles/>

<sup>34</sup> Dickey Young, “Two By Two,” 91.

important role in defining the terms, conceptions, and taboos concerning sexuality in Canada. Religious positions have permeated society at large and have a profound impact on any discourse concerning sexuality.

Yet it is a misnomer to take the presence and impact of religion upon public discourses and assume that religion has had a monolithic and homogenous interpretation of human sexuality. Even though certain religious traditions may favour this construal, Dickey Young argues: “even a cursory example of the history of either sexuality or marriage shows that there is enormous variance.”<sup>35</sup> While religious people understand sexuality in terms of gender and sex these categories themselves are fluid.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, various sexual acts may have widely disparate interpretations. For example: “In Buddhism, sex is one of the many things that can get in the way of enlightenment. Procreation has not been seen as religiously important.”<sup>37</sup> Meanwhile in Christianity, generally speaking, either sex is undesirable or useful only in that it lends itself to procreation.<sup>38</sup> Of course the different depictions of sexuality are not confined to comparative religious studies. Dickey Young opines, “although sexuality within Judaism (especially Orthodox Judaism) is highly regulated, Judaism is usually considered a sex-positive religion.”<sup>39</sup> Thus she demonstrates there is great variance both within religious

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<sup>35</sup> Pamela Dickey Young, *Religion, Sex and Politics: Christian Churches and Same-Sex Marriage in Canada* (Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2012), 20.

<sup>36</sup> Dickey Young, *Sex and Politics*, 21.

<sup>37</sup> Dickey Young, “Two By Two,” 92.

<sup>38</sup> Dickey Young, “Two By Two,” 92.

<sup>39</sup> Dickey Young, *Sex and Politics*, 21.

traditions and between religious traditions on constructions of sexual norms and perceptions.

Christianity and its understanding of sexuality is where Dickey Young spends most of her time. This is because Christianity is the largest religion in Canada today, the most politically active, and the most vocal when it comes to public discourse.<sup>40</sup> This outspokenness has been especially apparent since the 1990's when the issue of same-sex marriage was seriously considered by Canada's legislative branch. Once a same-sex marriage bill was eventually enacted it was later challenged in a series of court cases by religious groups. Again, within Christianity there are many different responses to questions of sexual morality and overall Dickey Young notes, "Canadian churches have responded in various ways, mostly only acknowledging gay and lesbian sexuality."<sup>41</sup> Yet, overall churches have had a limited response to the expansiveness of such a broad topic as to sexual practices and orientations.

When it comes to same-sex marriage, certain Canadian churches are in favour.<sup>42</sup> However, at the same time several formidable ecumenical and interfaith alliances have publicly spoken against same-sex marriage and challenged any legislature that supports it.<sup>43</sup> One example of this is the Interfaith Coalition for Marriage which was formed in 2000 to challenge any legal recognition of same-sex marriage. This group argued that marriage,

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<sup>40</sup> Dickey Young, *Sex and Politics*, 54.

<sup>41</sup> Dickey Young, "Two By Two," 95.

<sup>42</sup> Dickey Young points to The Metropolitan Community Church, the United Church of Canada and the Canadian Unitarian Council as particularly vocal supporters of same-sex marriage throughout public debates on the matter in: *Sex and Politics*, 69.

<sup>43</sup> For a description of the different coalitions and their actions on this matter see: Dickey Young, *Sex and Politics*, 55-57.

“has been recognized by all major religious faiths and social groups as existing uniquely between a man and a woman.”<sup>44</sup> While this coalition did recognize not all religious people agreed with their stance, they did have the support from groups within Protestantism, Catholicism, and Islam – they did represent a vocal and impassioned religious position.

While I will not review the full context of religious doctrines on sexuality here, it is important to note historical and theological backdrops of Christian communities and traditions in Canada do impact public discourse on legislature and same-sex marriage. It is the church’s interpretation of meaning and sexuality that often compels them to speak out publically either for or against same-sex relations:

The more a church viewed the primary importance of sexuality as procreative, the less likely that church was to support same-sex marriage. The more churches interpreted the meaning of the creation story in Genesis as one of complementarity, the less likely it was to support same-sex marriage. This sometimes went along with a notion that natural law intended heterosexuality.<sup>45</sup>

Therefore any discussion on same-sex marriage carries with it a great deal of presuppositions and an entire interpretive frame which serves as an underpinning for the discourse in the public sphere.

This is not relegated to Christians who opposed same-sex marriage though, the same was true for Christians who came out in support of it as well.

Churches that sought to understand these passages in a larger biblical and historical context were more likely to support or at least to be open to the possibility of same-sex marriage[...] Churches that sought to understand the moral decisions they have to make in light of contemporary

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<sup>44</sup> Interfaith Coalition for Marriage, *Submission of the Intervener The Interfaith Coalition for Marriage*, Ontario Superior Court of Justice Divisional Court (Harpen v. Canada). (2002) 60 O.R. (3<sup>rd</sup>) 321 (Div Ct); Harpen et al. Court file No. 684).

<sup>45</sup> Dickey Young, *Sex and Politics*, 34.

understandings of the issues under discussion were more likely to support same-sex marriage.<sup>46</sup>

There is a constant ebb and flow between theological interpretation of the Bible and Christianity's core teachings and what that all means for society. When religious adherents enter into discussions on public goods and visions for society with secular counterparts they are required to juggle the divergent streams of thought within their own religion, as well as the people of other religions, or those with no religious backgrounds. This means any attempt to appease or arbitrate a religious position on sexuality is a daunting task.

Due to religious stances on sexuality being so varied, any one response to religion and sexuality in a specific context is going to be limited. As for the Alberta law, this is certainly the case. It makes some fairly broad misled assumptions about religion, sexuality, and how we should respond to them. It assumes that because the topic is controversial, we need to do anything we can to avoid upsetting people. However, if we recall Connolly's argument on agonism as discussed in Chapter Five, being challenged can be a good thing, if it is done in a manner that promotes new interpretations and is built upon mutual respect. We do not need to dismiss or separate viewpoints from our public school system whenever they clash against the norm, instead we need to foster a dialogue that allows for a certain kind of hermeneutic exploration to unfold.

Furthermore, to encourage a dialectic between secularism and religion could expose certain presuppositions and stagnant interpretations of human sexuality found within secular circles. Secularism, infused with legal discourse assumes all relationships

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<sup>46</sup> Dickey Young, *Sex and Politics*, 35.

are to be treated equally, however, it does not offer a means of infusing human relationships with meaning. Of course, people can undertake this project in an a-religious or anti-religious manner, but it would be short sighted to dismiss religious input into this issue *ad totem*.<sup>47</sup> If one is to argue human relationships are all equal, no matter what constitutes them (as long as they are between consenting adults) we do have a decent blueprint for legal discussions but we are severely limited in terms of authentic self-expression and identity construction. Religion then, should be a part of public debates concerning sexuality, mores, norms, and definitions, even if no one religious tradition or interpretation is able to dictate the terms for society as a whole. Participation and engagement of divergent interpretive frames hinges upon the rejection of the justifications for exemption and the notion of incommensurability, and it is these issues I shall turn to next.

#### **6.4 Exempt and Incommensurable**

While the relationship between religion and sexuality is quite complex, one may argue the *Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Amendment Act* is not trying to encourage or appease a homogenous religious approach to sexuality. Banak contends that equating any social conservative policy with an especially conservative Christian population in Alberta is an oversimplification.<sup>48</sup> He posits that the support for the bill in question was due to secularists and Christians agreeing on a position that had little to do with same-sex

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<sup>47</sup> Charles Taylor makes a similar argument in: *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 767.

<sup>48</sup> Banak, "Conservative Christianity," 268.



relations.<sup>49</sup> While Banak makes a strong case for the connection between anti-statism and Albertan policy and public discourse, this does not change the fact that the bill treats material that is “primarily and explicitly with religion” as intertwined with “human sexuality” and “sexual orientation.”<sup>50</sup> Even if the justifications and acceptance of the bill resides in a “small government” mindset, the bill itself still presents a hermeneutic problem that depends upon the presupposition that there is a strong degree of incommensurability between religion and secularism. Due to the bill’s response to different worldviews in the same space (to separate them through exemption) we are denied an opportunity to have differences play off one another in a meaningful way. This effectively cuts off the possibility for a dynamic cross-cultural exchange and dialectical relationship between diverse worldviews – and that is the problem which I shall explore further.

One may be inclined to think the bill does not pose such a problem. Perhaps the bill simply puts in place a system that recognizes sexuality is contentious for some religious families and offers them a means of protecting themselves from the dominant society’s interpretation on sexuality and sexual orientation. The amendment is worded in such a way that parents may ask to have their children leave the classroom during the instruction related to the objectionable material or remain in the classroom but not participate with no academic penalty.<sup>51</sup> Therefore parents of a student may decide for themselves what they interpret to be “primarily and explicitly” having to do with religion, human sexuality, or

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<sup>49</sup> Banak, “Conservative Christianity,” 263.

<sup>50</sup> Government of Alberta, *Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Amendment Act* (Ottawa: Library of Parliament, 2009), 11.1(1)  
[http://www.qp.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=2009CH26\\_UNPR.cfm&leg\\_type=Acts&isbncln=9780779744053&display=html](http://www.qp.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=2009CH26_UNPR.cfm&leg_type=Acts&isbncln=9780779744053&display=html)

<sup>51</sup> Government of Alberta, *Human Rights*, 11.1(1).

sexual orientation and decide whether or not they deem these things to be against their religious sensibilities. In this way it appears as though the Alberta government is treating religion in a manner that allows particularistic, diverse, and ongoing interpretive projects space in the public school system.

The problem lies, however, in the supposed solution presented in the bill. Instead of treating different interpretations of sexual orientation, sexuality, and religion as a dynamic ebb and flow between diverse worldviews this bill treats them as unable to exist in the same space. Secularity and religion are deemed incommensurable. Or, as so diametrically opposed that it is simply better to avoid issues where they overlap than to have them interact with one another at all. This problem is brought to light in the exemption clause.

The notion of an exemption clause is not new. In fact, this has been one way of addressing religious diversity in the classroom since questions pertaining to accommodation and multiculturalism began to arise. Exemptions have also played a role in court cases on religion in the public school systems. In 1980 the Ontario government's *Education Act* stipulated the Lord's Prayer should be recited to open and close each school day. This section of the bill was challenged in the Ontario Court of Appeals for being incongruent with the *Charter*. The Court ruled the bill should be altered because, "to impose Christian observances on non-Christian students in the public school violates the *Charter's* foundational commitment to protecting minority rights."<sup>52</sup> Schools could not

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<sup>52</sup> Alberta Civil Liberties Centre, *Religion in Public Schools*, 15.

promote any religious position nor coerce students on matters of religion. Having the entire school recite or listen to the Lord's Prayer daily contradicted this principle.

In response, the Ontario government argued that they were not being coercive as students were free to not participate in the prayer, in other words, they could be exempt without penalty. The Court did not accept this line of argumentation though:

The Court found such an exemption provision to be of little force and effect, noting it only appeared to confer the choice of participatory involvement; exempting oneself required non-Christian students to make a statement on religious beliefs that Christian students were not required to make and, as such, necessarily imposed a pressure to conform on non-Christian students. Further, such pressure would be compounded in a school environment, where children typically feel pressured to emulate their peers.<sup>53</sup>

While the force of the coercion may have been lessened somewhat by an exemption clause, this alone does not address the wider issue of peer pressure or unfair treatment as some students were singled out for their religious beliefs while others were not.

Exempting students from a particular activity may make sense in some cases, but to have a school policy discriminate against one group of students and then argue they can opt out of said practice does not negate all the potentially harmful aspects of the policy. To place students of a particular faith into the awkward and difficult position of leaving class should not be done lightly, also it does not protect them from being ostracized by peer pressure. Overall, exemptions from religious observances by way of an exclusion clause have been tried in other court cases in other provinces in Canada as well and ultimately this kind of clause “carries very little weight when the Court's commitment to the *Charter*

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<sup>53</sup> Alberta Civil Liberties Centre, *Religion in Public Schools*, 16.

is tested.”<sup>54</sup> While the court system has had very little to say about the incommensurability of religion and secularism it has focused on the legal definitions and applications of a student's right to freedom of religion.

What is interesting about the *Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Amendment Act* is that the exemption is not to spare non-religious students or students of minority religions from a Christian observance. As we have seen, this line of reasoning does not hold up in courts and there are good reasons to dismiss it. However, here an exclusion clause is designed to protect a religious sensibility. It is conceivable then that a group would actively seek exemption. Yet, if religious traditions are being treated unfairly by school practices, such as teaching on matters of human sexuality and sexual orientation – then an exemption does not resolve this problem.

Exemptions do not protect students from the practice itself or the pressures to conform to the majority, they only keep students from actively participating in something they or their parents oppose. The coercive force of the process remains intact, “It is clear that exemption provisions does not work constitutionally if they are seen to be in any way coercive. Because students are young and subject to peer pressure, coercion will always be seen to exist where a school sponsors an activity that the majority of students participate in.”<sup>55</sup> The school itself, furthermore, sponsors activities that are mandatory or expected of students. This means that the pressure to conform is not merely peer-pressure, but institutional and systemic as well. An exemption clause to protect students from being

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<sup>54</sup> Alberta Civil Liberties Centre, *Religion in Public Schools*, 19.

<sup>55</sup> Alberta Civil Liberties Centre, *Religion in Public Schools*, 45.

taught material that contradicts their or their parent's religious sensibilities is limited, likely ineffectual, and possibly unconstitutional. However, our concern here is not with whether or not such a clause would survive a Court challenge, rather, we seek to answer whether a hermeneutic analysis can offer insight into this disparity between secularism and religion.

In short, divergent worldviews do not need to be separated if they exist in the same space in translation. Difference is not only transgressed by the process of translation, it is necessary, for one cannot translate without it. Thus, to separate those with religious sensibilities from any class work or discussion on human sexuality denies the class a worldview that could play an integral part in a dialect. Translation, recall, does not have a fixed end point; it is a creative, expansive endeavour. If we posit that students of a particular Christian leaning can only be offended and affronted by secular positions on human sexuality we are superimposing a limited endpoint for our potentially creative cross-cultural exposure. While some students and/or parents of students may be defensive or combative when exposed to different views on human sexuality (amongst other things) we can counter this by recognizing the classroom, like any social space, is constructed and we can create an atmosphere of exploration through interpretation rather than treating exposure to difference as a threat we must avoid whenever possible.

Often questions of translation are sidestepped in bureaucratic processes. Past court condemnation of exemptions are steeped in the language of rights and power. This is understandable, rights discourse has done much to protect and create space for different practices and groups in the public sphere in Canada. Human rights are a powerful tool for courts or legislation meant to protect minorities from the majority. Yet, the fact still remains that thinking in terms of rights alone is limiting. Wendy Brown and Janet Haley

argue that rights discourse is fraught with problems ranging from bureaucratic to axiomatic:

When liberal legalism frames rights as empty, formal, procedurally rather than substantively bestowed or bestowing – when it insists that rights merely protect the potential choices of the autonomous selves we are and always have been – it nevertheless produces and orders subjectivities while according these grave rearrangements of social life the importance, on a scale of one to ten, of approximately zero.<sup>56</sup>

Rights discourse does not merely defend and champion minority practices and identity, it also evaluates and regulates them. This is very important as the frame for addressing recognition (or in this case, the commensurability of divergent worldviews) is one of winners and losers where some positions get official backing by the courts while others do not.

Different interpretations concerning human sexuality are often perceived as a threat or a challenge in the legislative sphere. While other approaches – such as cross-cultural discourse is beneficial or that the state should encourage the cross-pollination and fertilization of diverse cultures – are overlooked. This is especially problematic when we consider the prevalence and ubiquity of rights. Wendy Brown argues rights discourse has brought us to the point where “certainly rights *appear* as that which we cannot not want.”<sup>57</sup> So treating the freedom of religion as a right leads to a false dichotomy when it comes to conflicting worldviews. The only options available to us within this frame are coercion by

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<sup>56</sup> Wendy Brown and Janet Halley, “Introduction,” in *Left Legalism/Left Critique*, eds. Wendy Brown and Janet Halley (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 18.

<sup>57</sup> Wendy Brown, “Suffering the Paradoxes of Rights,” in *Left Legalism/Left Critique*, eds. Wendy Brown and Janet Halley (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 421.

the state (via curriculum and school practices) or isolation from difference through an exclusion clause.

We ought to approach the issue of difference in the same space as a good thing, one that benefits those who adhere to a secular worldview, a religious worldview, or a hybrid between/outside of the two. When a religious person is taught something against his or her faith in school this is not a matter of winners or losers, this is an opportunity for a creative, dynamic ebb and flow between diverse worldviews. This is an opportunity for axiomatic assumptions to be challenged and new cognitive spaces to be made available to us. Of course, as there is no fixed end point to such endeavours we may encounter situations where the students, teachers, or people peripheral to the encounter become embittered or entrenched in their position. We have to allow the space in our public sphere for these kinds of encounters to take place nonetheless. If we have erudite and creative individuals take on the role of translator throughout these encounters the benefits and gains of such an endeavour will abound. This means that we must shift our thinking from mere gains and losses or negotiations and compromises to one that embraces a shared social construction that juxtaposes difference to create new conceptual frames to explore.

In *Free to Believe: Rethinking Freedom of Conscience and Religion in Canada*, Mary Waldron discusses a court case where religion, secularism, sexuality, and the legal framework for addressing these issues is challenged. Mr Chamberlain, a Kindergarten teacher in Surrey Ontario, sought approval from his school board in the early 2000s to use stories that showed children living with same-sex parents. Chamberlain is gay and was an

activist with Gay and Lesbian Educators at that time.<sup>58</sup> After receiving significant pressure from families in the area the School Board decided not to have the books in the classroom, but they would be available in the school library. Chamberlain disagreed with this decision and felt that the school board was acting in a manner that infringed upon his rights, so he took the case to court in 2002.

This case is of interest to us here because it puts the subjective criteria such as morality, mores, norms, and the definition of human sexuality into a legal system that has to privilege a certain position over another. In effect, this means that one persons' worldview is validated and another is dismissed. In order to condemn/outlaw any practices means we have to do this to a certain extent. However, the manner in which this particular case escalated means that this is not a situation where, "two groups who have, after a period of discussion and thought, come to opposite conclusions about a matter. Rather, each side, acting on its own beliefs, has taken those beliefs to their logical conclusions. But the underlying beliefs, which are often unarticulated, are fundamentally opposed."<sup>59</sup> The underlying presuppositions of each side propelled the debate to a standstill before dialogue, discourse, and understanding could begin to take place. Arguably, neither side wanted genuine discourse at this point, all seem to have been content to battle out the legality of their actions. Yet, this means that a court decision and communal actions were taken while, "those of one side may be almost incomprehensible to those of the other."<sup>60</sup> And this is not an ideal place for a community to be, or a desirable *modus operandi* for public discourse.

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<sup>58</sup> Mary Anne Waldron, *Free to Believe: Rethinking Freedom of Conscience and Religion in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 99.

<sup>59</sup> Waldron, *Free to Believe*, 99.

<sup>60</sup> Waldron, *Free to Believe*, 99.



It is true that debate can easily lead to entrenchment as opposed to reasoned, persuasiveness winning the day. As such we can rather quickly escalate to the point where: “Compromise becomes not only impossible but unthinkable and the issues themselves frequently cannot be discussed in any way that can contribute to a solution.”<sup>61</sup> With any kind of stalemate in place, or if an action taken is against one's beliefs, the court system have a responsibility to respond. In a similar manner, one could read the *Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Amendment Act* as an effort to dissuade court cases and pre-emptively protect a religious group's freedom of religion. Both Cumberland's story and the legislation in Alberta interpret beliefs as incommensurable.

Speaking of the court case in Surrey, Waldron argues: “Courts are ill equipped to deal with this kind of conflict.”<sup>62</sup> This is because, she posits, courts and legislative bodies lack the nuance necessary to deal with the axiomatic presuppositions that underlie much public discourse. Waldron, of course, does not advocate we abandon courts and government altogether. She would rather draw attention to the conceptual frameworks that inform our value systems on which law and court rulings depend. This is why Waldron advocates those in power have a responsibility to actively foster public discourse. Waldron notes both Canadian courts and legislative bodies can be complicit in undermining public discourse.<sup>63</sup> And the problem with this line of thinking is that it leads to undesirable consequences: “The implication is that there is something to be afraid of in the debate.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Waldron, *Free to Believe*, 99.

<sup>62</sup> Waldron, *Free to Believe*, 100.

<sup>63</sup> Waldron, *Free to Believe*, 126.

<sup>64</sup> Waldron, *Free to Believe*, 237.

Waldron argues we need more discourse and a wide array of positions espoused in the public sphere in order for dialogue to be authentic. If we only offer space for ideas that are already in line with mainstream or dominant styles of thinking we essentially give in to “profoundly anti-democratic” impulses.<sup>65</sup>

While individuals and groups do have what can be described as a right to disengage from the public sphere if they so desire, like all rights this has its limits. For example, people should vote and they have to pay taxes. Therefore the government should encourage voting and make it as easy on citizens as they reasonably can, meanwhile the government uses its powers to punish or fine people who do not pay taxes. Both of these cases are implicit and explicit examples of when disengagement is socially undesirable and compels a response from the government. On a related note, parents are allowed to pull their children out of class for a few days (family vacations, sick days, etc.) and could avoid undesirable teachings without a law justifying their behaviour. Alternatively, any group is legally able to form a private school (certain guidelines and policies are in place of course) or one may home school one’s children. The fact is, we cannot fully avoid disengagement in a public school system. But, that does not mean state legislation should encourage and empower these kinds of disengagements. Instead, we should actively try to create a public sphere where differences do engage in a constructive manner. Waldron also thinks the government should encourage dialogue between different groups. She claims government and legal branches in society should regulate the public sphere, but only to keep groups

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<sup>65</sup> Waldron, *Free to Believe*, 237.

from abusing power. As she puts it, “the law should have no tolerance for protecting either of us against being outvoted in public space.”<sup>66</sup> Other than that, Waldron is content to allow the public sphere enough space to incorporate divergent views and even have opposing positions compete with one another.<sup>67</sup>

Both the exemption clause in the *Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Amendment Act* and Waldron's analysis of religion and legislation make it clear that how we respond to those who do not adhere to normative, countercultural, and potentially subversive ideas is very important. Waldron posits public discourse ought to be encouraged even for those who do not agree with the majority. This aligns with our discussion of translation in Chapter Four and contestation in Chapter Five. If differences are simply regarded as problematic there is no opportunity to challenge presuppositions, ironically question ideals, and use agonism in a productive manner. Of course contestation has to be approached with some care, yet there are things we can do to mitigate the clash between opposing worldviews in a classroom setting.<sup>68</sup>

If we accept Paul Ricoeur's argument that identity is constructed through our interactions with others, we are essentially denying students a potential source for selfhood if we relegate differences in such a manner that they do not interact with one another. This can very easily lead to impoverished wells or sources of the self to borrow an expression

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<sup>66</sup> Waldron, *Free to Believe*, 237.

<sup>67</sup> Although Waldron must be aware that there are other forces that end up favouring some groups over others in the public sphere, she seems content to refrain from turning to legislation and policy to address these issues.

<sup>68</sup> For example see Tonie Stolberg and Geoff Teece who challenge teachers to guide student's through a process which allows them the question their assumptions about controversial issues without making the student feel vulnerable in: *Teaching Religion and Science* (Florence: Routledge, 2010), 69-76.

from Charles Taylor. Since religious, secularists, LGBT, and heterosexuals all form parts of groups which overlap and interact with one another they all inform each other's identity construction. With these simultaneous projects of self recognition, Other recognition, and mutual recognition all taking place at the same time we should encourage meaning-making discourse between divergent groups whenever we can. The Alberta bill in question fails to do so while a hermeneutic approach would.

It is true only so much interaction can be enforced, we should always be on the lookout for opportunities to encourage dynamic translation processes. What it comes down to, though, is that we need to accept heterogeneity as a part of the public sphere. For youth to learn that they can disengage from alterity at any point in their education inculcates the belief that it is better to avoid difference. To do so denies people potentially meaningful and valuable counter-positions accessible through translation. Perhaps a student's religious doctrines do not account for different kinds of sexual orientation or certain narratives of how the world came to be. Yet to take the overall approach that this student is unable to interact in a classroom where different positions are presented does them, and the public sphere as a whole, a disservice.

### **6.5 The *Kirpan* in Public Discourse**

Now that we have considered the question of how we approach different worldviews in the same space let us turn to the issue of competing interpretations on a single symbol. A religious symbol is attributed meaning in an ongoing dialectic with its tradition and community. Symbols in general are given meaning by a community and, in turn, they give meaning back to the community. Thus the interpretation of any given symbol is not

stagnant nor universal, and this is certainly the case with the *kirpan*. As discussions around the nature of the *kirpan* arose in Canada it frequently became referred to as a ceremonial dagger. While this is an attempt at equivocation between cultures, it is not a particularly useful comparison. Within Sikhism, followers of the Khalsa order are to wear the *kirpan* at all times and it is not merely part a ceremonial garb, or specific to a particular ritual. Further, in equating the *kirpan* to a dagger one is promoting the view that it is a weapon as opposed to a religious symbol. Therefore I will only refer to the *kirpan* as such, a religious symbol as calling it a ceremonial dagger is a mistranslation.<sup>69</sup>

The *kirpan* as a symbol has been at the centre of public debates concerning interpretation and accommodation in Canada since the early 1990's.<sup>70</sup> Whenever there is an attempt to ban the *kirpan* it is done under a larger, more general ban on weapons.<sup>71</sup> This was the case in Quebec when a School Board denied Gurbaj Singh Multani the right to

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<sup>69</sup> That being said I consider how the *kirpan* developed from a context where self-defence and the need for a weapon promotes a functional understanding of the *kirpan* in section 6.5 “The *Kirpan* in Public Discourse,” yet this does not negate that the *kirpan* has developed over time and in Canada it serves the Sikh community as a religious symbol. Also, I compare the *kirpan* to another ceremonial dagger (the *Sgian Dubhs*) in section 6.7 “Translating the *Kirpan*” but I do so to distinguish it, not to equate the two.

<sup>70</sup> In 1991, an Ontario human rights adjudicator deemed the Peel County Board must allow Sikh students and teachers to wear the *kirpan*.

As for whether a Sikh can wear the *kirpan* while serving as a witness in a court case it is up the judge's discretion. In Windsor when a Sikh was asked to remove his *kirpan* and he refused he was allowed to testify via a recording done in another building. See: Saphia Khambalia, “Sikh kirpan causes court standoff” *CBC News*, April 22, 2010 <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/windsor/sikh-kirpan-causes-court-standoff-1.955989>

Similar to pre-existing policies in Alberta and Ontario, in 2013 the Ministry of Justice declared Sikhs may wear the *kirpan* when visiting a court house in British Columbia.

Sikhs are allowed to wear the *kirpan* in the federal parliament buildings. Although, in Quebec they are not allowed to wear it in the National Assembly building.

<sup>71</sup> For example, Laura Barnette describes attempts to ban the *kirpan* and subsequent court decisions in Canada in: *Freedom of Religion and Religious Symbols in the Public Sphere* (Ottawa: Library of Parliament, 2011). All the while Barnette's discussion of the banning the *kirpan* is considered in light of “security and safety,” in: *Freedom of Religion*, 6.

wear his *kirpan* to school in 2001. This case eventually went to the Supreme Court of Canada where it was ruled that Multani could wear his *kirpan* to school following some restrictions designed to make the *kirpan* less visible and accessible.<sup>72</sup> The court proceedings took years to resolve and throughout that time Multani switched schools (and school boards) and he has since moved out of Quebec as well.

Throughout the court process, the Sikh community made a distinct effort to demonstrate that the *kirpan* is a religious symbol and non-violent by nature.<sup>73</sup> Advocacy by the Sikh community to promote their interpretation of their own faith is not a new phenomenon, Sikhism has developed a history of struggling against injustice and for human rights.<sup>74</sup> The exchange between policy makers and a religious community in this case demonstrates the dialogical process that can take place in order to assess a symbol's meaning in society at large. On top of the more practical question regarding the safety of the *kirpan* in schools, the more important question asked throughout this case is not whether the *kirpan* is a weapon or not, but whether it should be understood as such.

This question was brought to the fore when school officials became aware of the fact that Gubaj Singh Multani had been wearing his *kirpan* to school. He was baptized, and in Sikhism following a baptism young men may be initiated into the Khalsa order.<sup>75</sup> Once

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<sup>72</sup> The restrictions are that the *kirpan* must be sheathed, sealed and sewn into one's clothing and remain in his possession at all times, in: *Multani v. Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys*, [2006] 1 S.C.R. 256, 2006 SCC 6.

<sup>73</sup> The arguments presented by the Sikh community during Canada's Supreme Court delineations are outlined by Valerie Stoker in "Zero Tolerance? Sikh Swords, School Safety, and Secularism in Quebec," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75.4, (2007): 814-839.

<sup>74</sup> Kamala Elizabeth Nayar, "The Intersection of Religious Identity and Visible Minority Status: The Case of Sikh Youth in British Columbia," in *Religion in the Public Sphere: Canadian Case Studies* eds. Solange Lefebvre and Lori Beaman (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 218.

<sup>75</sup> Nayar, "The Intersection," 218.

initiated a Sikh is to don five symbols and carry with them at all times for the rest of his or her life as a demonstration of faith. These are sometimes referred to as “the five ks”; they are, “*kangha* (comb), *kara* (wristlet), *kachha* (drawers), *kirpan* (the sword), and *kesh* (long hair).”<sup>76</sup> Not all Sikhs wear these symbols, as Sikhism has followers who adopt varying interpretations of its teachings and utilize various symbols to express their religiosity, as is the case in virtually all religions.

In Canada, Sikhism has grown both in size and its ability to engage in the public sphere over the past few decades. “With the large influx of Sikh immigrants beginning in the 1970s, the Sikh community has grown in diversity, including the number of Sikhs who choose to uphold their religious identity.”<sup>77</sup> When officials at Multani’s school became aware he was carrying an object resembling a dagger on school property they deemed it a weapon. He was then banned from bringing his *kirpan* to school any longer as a matter of school safety. Multani and his family challenged the school’s decision and claimed the *kirpan* is an expression of his religion and to order him to stop wearing it was an infringement on his right to freedom of religion as stated in the *Charter*. Though this case was resolved in the Supreme Court such a contentious issue generated a lot of debate as to the nature of religious freedom and reasonable accommodations in Canada. However, it also raised an interesting hermeneutical question as to how we decide who gets to define and distinguish the meaning of a symbol.

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<sup>76</sup> Sardul Singh Caveeshar, “The Battle of Life,” in *Sikh Forms and Symbols*, eds. Mohinder Singh (New Delhi: Monohar, 2000), 36.

<sup>77</sup> Nayar, “The Intersection,” 219.

I will analyse the context and frame that shaped the dialogue of those who sought to construct an understanding of the *kirpan*. This debate can be understood as an example of a religious symbol, and by extension religious language (in the justification and explanation of the symbol), interacting with the secular state and secular groups. The courts, both provincial and federal legislative bodies, and school administrators all function under the guiding principles of secularism as it has developed in Canada. Religion cannot be endorsed or supported by public institutions and the *Charter* ensures freedom of religion for all Canadians. As a result, in the dialectic that unfolded religious symbolism was assessed and considered by a secular system. Furthermore, the strongest opposition to the *kirpan* in the public discourse that ensued was done under the guise of secularism. I have been arguing that the dissonance in addressing religion and secularism can be alleviated through a dialogical process of translating worldviews. While the Multani case does present us with some aspects of a hermeneutic exchange being successfully employed, it also demonstrates that we could benefit from adopting a more transparent and integrated role for translation in the public sphere.

## **6.6 The *Kirpan* and Religious Symbols**

The reason Multani was able to wear his *kirpan* is because it was deemed a religious symbol instead of a concealed weapon. The Supreme Court decided that the *kirpan* is a necessary and significant facet of the Sikh faith for Multani and any overarching ban would effectively disallow him from following his religion. As to the symbolic nature of the *kirpan* the Supreme Court states:



Lastly, the argument that the wearing of kirpans should be prohibited because the kirpan is a symbol of violence and because it sends the message that using force is necessary to assert rights and resolve conflict is not only contradicted by the evidence regarding the symbolic nature of the kirpan, but is also disrespectful to believers in the Sikh religion and does not take into account Canadian values based on multiculturalism... A total prohibition against wearing a kirpan to school undermines the value of this religious symbol and sends students the message that some religious practices do not merit the same protection as others.<sup>78</sup>

The court could not merely dictate the *kirpan* is not a weapon; that would amount to a Heideggerian erasure and would have left ambiguity as to what degree the court did recognize the symbolic nature of the *kirpan*. The Supreme Court makes it very clear that the *kirpan* is best understood as a religious symbol. In this way the *kirpan* is treated in a manner reminiscent of Paul Tillich's discussion on religious symbols.

For Tillich religious symbols are those which “combine the general characteristics of the symbol with the peculiar characteristics it possesses as a religious symbol.”<sup>79</sup> So, a religious symbol acts like any ordinary symbol but has the extra dimension of existing within a religious frame. Religiosity has significant implications in Tillich's writing. While symbols can refer to different levels of meaning (Tillich refers to writing as it is composed of symbols which refer to words, and words themselves are symbols of their meaning) religious symbols can refer to higher planes of reality.<sup>80</sup> For example, in Christianity: “Devotion to the crucifix is really directed to the crucifixion on Golgotha and devotion to the latter is in reality intended for the redemptive action of God, which is itself a symbolic

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<sup>78</sup> *Multani v. Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys*, [2006] 1 S.C.R. 256, 2006 SCC 6.

<sup>79</sup> Paul Tillich, “The Religious Symbol,” *Daedalus* 87.3 (1958): 3.

<sup>80</sup> Tillich, “The Religious Symbol,” 3.

expression for an experience of what concerns us ultimately.”<sup>81</sup> While the cross is a symbol of an event – the Crucifixion of Jesus – this act itself has symbolic virtue: Jesus' willingness to sacrifice himself for humanity.<sup>82</sup> Tillich describes the “what concerns us ultimately” as beyond human understanding yet at the very core of a person's religious life.<sup>83</sup>

For a Sikh, the *kirpan* can be understood in different ways. It is a symbol which represents both virtue and duty. At the same time it is a representation of the need to fight injustice. It reminds followers they may have to defend themselves and the weak. The etymology of the term *kirpan* refers to virtues important to Sikhism.<sup>84</sup> One way to understand the *kirpan* is that it is both equipment and a symbol for a faithful Sikh.<sup>85</sup> The *kirpan*, then, has both an inward focus in terms of virtue and devotion, but it also serves as a distinguishing feature as it is a visible marker of identity. In this way the *kirpan* serves as a physical reminder of distinction and as a means of expression, one has: “taken a vow to serve in the 'order of pure ones' and who have dedicated their lives to the service of God

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<sup>81</sup> Tillich, “The Religious Symbol,” 3.

<sup>82</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: The Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 61-63.

<sup>83</sup> Tillich, “The Religious Symbol,” 4.

<sup>84</sup> Neki argues that: “The word kirpan seems to have been compounded from kirpa (compassion) and an (dignity),” in: J. S. Neki, “The Five Sikh Symbols,” in *Sikh Forms and Symbols*, eds. Mohinder Singh (New Delhi: Monohar, 2000), 86.

<sup>85</sup> Consider this description of the *kipran* and the wearer of it, “Every lion-hearted soldier was required to have this weapon on him which was an outward expression of an inner virtue and to remind him of what his duty was. This sword, or emblem of the Divine Energy as he called it, was for the reformation of evil and protection of good. Brute force guided by evil hand was to be opposed with all might, but at the same time the less guided were to be helped and encouraged to prosper by all active and beneficent means,” in: Caveeshar, “The Battle of Life,” 35:

and humanity.”<sup>86</sup> Therefore as a symbol the *kirpan* refers to the transcendent, hidden aspects of reality while remaining tangible and visible.<sup>87</sup>

One of the reasons religious symbols play such an important role beyond their meaning is that they also constitute a connection to transcendence. Due to this, symbols become more than mere objects as they instill meaning into the lives of religious adherents when they carry, wear, or display this connection; it serves as an integral aspect of their identity. As such, a genuine religious symbol is never arbitrary:

Symbols do not declare their meanings unambiguously. Nor can the quest for authorial intent (originalism) describe what we do when we interpret symbols. Purpose, context, and history are essential elements of textual interpretation, and similar inquiries about symbols can yield important insights into symbolic meaning, but even these important aspects are not at the heart of symbolic interpretation.<sup>88</sup>

This becomes relevant to the Multani case as some suggested he and other Sikhs could simply replace the metal *kirpan* with a wooden or plastic substitute. The Supreme Court correctly noted that there is a problem with merely substituting one symbol for another. It was deemed that Multani “genuinely believes that he would not be complying with the requirements of his religion were he to wear a plastic or wooden kirpan.”<sup>89</sup> In other words, to present Multani with a plastic or wooden *kirpan* would be tantamount to committing a

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<sup>86</sup> Caveeshar, “The Battle of Life,” 36.

<sup>87</sup> The second characteristic of the symbol is its perceptibility. This implies that something which is intrinsically invisible, ideal, or transcendent is made perceptible in the symbol and is in this way given objectivity, in: Tillich, “The Religious Symbol,” 3.

<sup>88</sup> Brett G. Scharffs, “The Role of Judges in Determining the Meaning of Religious Symbols,” in *Studies in Religion, Secular Beliefs and Human Rights, Volume 11: Lautsi Papers: Multidisciplinary Reflections on Religious Symbols in the Public School Classroom* eds. Jeroen Temperman (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2012), 41.

<sup>89</sup> *Multani v. Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys*, [2006] 1 S.C.R. 256, 2006 SCC 6.

false equivocation.<sup>90</sup> Although we may superficially connect a wooden *kirpan* to its metal counterpart in shape and form, their history with the religious community and the meaning endowed in each item would be vastly incongruent. While some Sikhs do not have this same connection to the traditional *kirpan* and do use plastic or wooden versions of this symbol, this does not negate the interpretation or sincerity of Multani's dedication to a metal *kirpan*, or that of other Sikhs who wear a metal *kirpan*.

Although symbols are rooted in tradition, this does not mean the interpretation of religious symbols are monolithic or inherently stagnant. Even as Richard Rorty and William Connolly argue our foundational narratives are constructed and contingent, they do not assert that this negates their meaning. In the same way, we cannot simply substitute one symbol for another because symbols gain their ability to uphold value and meaning due to their connection with a tradition, community, and an individual believer. While symbols like other phenomena, may be constructed and contingent this does not mean they are without deep roots. Tillich goes further when he argues against the interchangeability of religious symbols. He does so on the basis that some symbols generate a connection to the transcendent while others do not.

Genuine symbols are not interchangeable at all, and real symbols provide no objective knowledge, but yet a true awareness. Therefore, the religious consciousness does not doubt the possibility of a true awareness of God. The criterion of the truth of a symbol naturally cannot be the comparison of it with the reality to which it refers, just because this reality is absolutely beyond human comprehension.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> We discussed a case of false equivocation between Islam and Christianity in Chapter Four, section 4.7 “Relevance and Translation.”

<sup>91</sup> Tillich, “The Religious Symbol,” 16.

Tillich goes further than Rorty and Williams ever would concerning the ontological status of a religious symbol. For Tillich, once religious symbols reach or point to transcendence they will be meaningful to adherents, not before. He posits that symbols may attain truth, or they may not. Meanwhile, we may judge whether a particular symbol is effective based on this criteria if we turn from the question of Truth itself imbedded in religious symbols and turn instead to how they are understood within a religious tradition.

In this way we may employ a certain degree of pragmatism for evaluating symbols while coopting Tillich's frame for religious symbols. For Tillich the, "truth of a symbol depends on its inner necessity for the symbol-creating consciousness. Doubts concerning its truth show a change of mentality, a new attitude toward the unconditioned transcendent. The only criterion that is at all relevant is this: that the Unconditioned is clearly grasped in its unconditionedness."<sup>92</sup> If the symbol has a certain impact or effect, then it is genuine or truthful. If the symbol does not impact its intended community in this manner it is not worth keeping. While true pragmatists would dismiss the ontic undertones of Tillich's theory, it is still important to understand why religious symbols are important to religious adherents themselves, and for this task the ontological dimension of a symbol is of utmost importance.

This holds true for the *kirpan*. On the meaning and status of the *kirpan*, Vinay Lal states: "the essential characteristic of a kirpan is that it is a religious symbol of the faith; that is indeed its ontological status, and to construe it as a weapon is to do the kirpan

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<sup>92</sup> Tillich, "The Religious Symbol," 16.

injustice, to commit an act of epistemic violence, to surreptitiously plunge the sword into the backbone of the faith.”<sup>93</sup> The *kirpan*, then, has a special status in Sikhism, one that goes so deep as to render it essential for many to live out their religion. Often we are tempted to think of religion as a set of beliefs, beliefs that can be interpreted or privatized at will. Yet much of religion manifests itself in practice, symbols, rituals, experiences, feeling, and events. In this way it is not simply that a *kirpan* represents duty, faith, valour, or the deity; the *kirpan* is an active and ongoing dimension to the life of a Khalsa Sikh. While this means the *kirpan* cannot be easily substituted or equivocated to any dagger-like object, it does not mean that the *kirpan* cannot be translated at all. To do so, like in all translations, we need to focus on relevance and equivocation and balance the tension between these two poles with care.

### **6.7 Translating the *Kirpan***

Now that we have considered the role symbols play in a religious tradition, we can turn to how translation can function as the bridge between competing religious and secular worldviews. On the surface, the court case surrounding the *kirpan* went in favour of the Sikhs. And this ruling should not be undervalued, it was a landmark case in Canada’s court system and is important for any discussion on religious accommodation.

As for the context of this case it is worth noting the Sikh community may have had an advantage over other minority groups who find themselves in similar situations. This is

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<sup>93</sup> Vinay Lal, “Sikh Kirpan in California Schools: The Social Concern of Symbols, the Cultural Politics of Identity and the Limits of Multiculturalism,” in *Sikh Forms and Symbols*, eds. Mohinder Singh (New Delhi: Monohar, 2000), 123.

because Sikhs have a history and familiarity with oppression and human rights, even within secular, legal frameworks. Nayar describes this advantage by referring to the networks, history, and strategies that are available to Sikhs for maintaining their identity and practices in different contexts:

Along with this shift towards issues concerning a 'global' diasporic Sikh identity, it is noteworthy that Sikh immigrants are familiar with secular law as practised in India and therefore they (a) are comfortable with secular legal framework under the Canadian state, (b) use the system to appeal rulings that do not accommodate their religious practices, and (c) lobby elected officials to help their cause. Given the Sikh historical experience of Mughal and British oppression, the Sikhs possess a tradition of standing up against any violation of their religious freedoms. As a result, issues around the turban (*dastar*) and *kirpan* have emerged in which Sikhs have proved to be a challenge in the Canadian public sphere.<sup>94</sup>

This foundation would prove to be a valuable asset for the Sikh community in Quebec. Such connections, networks, and experiences would allow the Sikh community to take advantage of cross-cultural translation to some extent.

Valerie Stoker recognizes how such trends were applied in the Multani case. She studied the discourse surrounding Multani analysing the arguments in support of, and in opposition to, the *kirpan* being worn in schools. While the networking and other efforts of the Sikh community were notable, they still faced many challenges. Stoker states: “even as awareness of the *kirpān's* religious significance spread, opposition to Gurjab's wearing it mounted.”<sup>95</sup> Even the recognition that a *kirpan* is a religious symbol did not sway a sizable portion of the public that it should be allowed on school grounds. Furthermore, the legal

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<sup>94</sup> Nayar, “The Intersection,” 223.

<sup>95</sup> Valerie Stoker, “Zero Tolerance?,” 815.

system is a lengthy and complex one. First there was the initial incident of the *kirpan* being discovered by school officials, followed by the initial lower court decision. Then there was the Quebec Court of Appeals. And finally the Supreme Court rulings approximately five years after the initial incident. Throughout all this and since, the *kirpan's* symbolism has been translated, mistranslated, and negotiated numerous times by different people.

Because the Sikh community in Quebec was relatively well organized and was aware with the fact that Sikh diaspora communities had dealt with litigation on the *kirpan* before, the Sikhs were already partially equipped to translate their religious symbol into a secular legal setting.<sup>96</sup> Stoker notes how the Sikh response to Multani's struggle was an informed, strategic, and in many ways, successful one:

Sikh activists worked to present a version of the *kirpān* that would be palatable to the two dominant audiences they were addressing, and thereby managed to play a large role in defining the terms of this debate and affecting its outcome. By presenting the *kirpān* as an emblem of resistance to oppression and the struggle for equality, Sikh at once distanced the *kirpān* from any martial implications it may have once had and made it coalesce not only with Canadian multiculturalism but with Quebec's social progressivism.<sup>97</sup>

The two audiences Stoker is referring to are the different ways multiculturalism and secularism are practiced in Canada. Quebec tends to favour *laïcité* where the state protects its constituents from religion. Religion is to be kept private with as little visibility as possible. Meanwhile, as we have already noted, in the *Charter* it states Canadians have freedom of religion, so expression and practice should not be limited by the state without

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<sup>96</sup> Recall earlier we discussed different Canadian institutional decisions concerning the *kirpan*. There have also been high profile cases of the legality of the *kripan* in Britain and the United States in the past couple of decades. Meanwhile, India's constitution has protected the right to wear a *kirpan* since the 1990s.

<sup>97</sup> Stoker, "Zero Tolerance?," 817.



just cause. Therefore the Sikh's presentation of the *kirpan* had to account for different secular frames at work simultaneously. In terms of addressing Quebec, Sikhs represented the *kirpan* as a symbol of struggle against the dominant group, like French Quebecois who sought, and continue to seek, French language rights. Furthermore, the *Charter* acknowledges different cultures are good for Canada and ought to be encouraged, thus, suppressing a symbol for equality would seem a very antithetical thing to do.

To translate the *kirpan* Sikhs sought out two important principles of translation, equivocation and relevance. The *kirpan* went from being an untranslated foreign object that could mean aggression and militancy to a religious symbol of equality and freedom. The process of translation does not have a fixed end point, though, and the understanding of the *kirpan* as a weapon was hard to dissuade. Even after the judges of the Supreme Court were convinced that the *kirpan* was not a threat symbolically or physically, provisions were still made to keep the *kirpan* from being used as a weapon. In terms of equivocation the *kirpan* was presented as a religious symbol – that is where it ought to resonate – not as a dagger or knife, even though it may resemble these objects superficially.

While the *kirpan* remains similar in shape or form to a knife the meaning ended in it transfers and alters its *raison d'être*. The *kirpan* points to ideals and values beyond its function. Much like the cross is a common symbol for Christianity, though it was historically used as a brutal and tortuous means of executing criminals, it is now understood to represent salvation and hope. Wearing a device constructed to cause a slow and painful death seems absurd. Yet Christianity has appropriated the symbol to mean the conquering of death and Jesus' willingness to sacrifice himself for humanity. The function of a crucifix

is overwritten by its symbolic meaning.<sup>98</sup> By equating the *kirpan* to a religious symbols we are free from any instrumental, functional, or so-called objective assessment of it.

In terms of relevance the *kirpan* was instituted by the tenth and last Guru of the Sikhs. He was in charge of the community at a time when they faced heavy persecution by the Moghul's in South Asia. He sought to make Sikhs visible, proud, and to prepare them to defend themselves against oppression. For the majority of Canadians this particular context, narrative, and history does not resonate. Sikhs used the underlying meaning of the *kirpan* and brought it into a new context to highlight the aspects of the *kirpan* that would resonate. Stoker notes how “Sikh activists worked to disseminate an understanding of the *kirpān* that was rooted in Sikh traditions but that also highlighted its compatibility with core Canadian values.”<sup>99</sup> Some of the attributes Sikhs highlighted were inclusiveness, freedom of choice, and self-sacrifice as values both inherent in Sikhism and are praiseworthy within the dominant society.

One may cynically argue that the Sikh community intentionally downplayed the militaristic dimension of their religion, and especially the *kirpan*, in order to appear friendly and to appease a secular, liberal audience.<sup>100</sup> However, to employ this reasoning really does negate the process, power, and appeal of translation. Throughout translation meaning is

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<sup>98</sup> While symbols can overwrite their functionality, their meaning can evolve as well. During the Quebec hearings on their proposed *Charter of Rights and Values* the Parti Quebecois wanted to ban all public servants from wearing any ostentatious religious symbols. Meanwhile the Quebec National Assembly has a large cross on the wall which the Parti Quebecois had no intention of removing. They justified this by saying the crucifix was a symbol of Quebec culture, not a religious symbol. Whether one can negate the years and context of a religious symbol so easily is still up for debate, but the fact that people do interpret and appropriate symbols is made quite clear.

<sup>99</sup> Stoker, “Zero Tolerance?,” 819.

<sup>100</sup> Stoker notes that this line of argumentation did manifest: “But the opposition also maintained throughout the appeals process that Canadian Sikhs have presented the *kirpān*'s religious relevance in a dishonest manner,” in: “Zero Tolerance?,” 830-831.

supposed to be appropriated, transferred, and made relatable to its intended audience. Demonstrating to the majority of Canadians why the *kirpan* is so important to Sikhs is a creative process built up in a manner of *bricolage*. So Sikhs had to work with what was available to them within their tradition and within the Canadian context. One cannot simply invent a virtue and make it meaningful and relatable to a new audience and a traditional community. Traditions, communities, and individuals are fluid and adaptable only to an extent. While the *kirpan* may have certain militaristic undertones throughout its history, this does not mean militarism is the most important (or important at all) dimension to the Sikh community in Canada. Thus, translation served as a means of making a religious symbol recognizable and esteemed to a new audience.

Not only did Sikhs translate the symbolic meaning of the *kirpan* to be relevant and relatable to a modern Canadian audience, they also positioned the *kirpan* within their own tradition in such a manner that compelled opponents into a hermeneutical discussion with Sikhism itself. Stoker notes how strategically this meant that the Sikhs actually developed an advantage in the court room by using translation in such a fashion:

Maintaining that the *kirpān* is not a weapon precisely because baptized Sikhs are forbidden by their own religious rules from using it as such, Sikh advocates privileged Sikh subjectivity in assessing the *kirpān*. Furthermore, because Sikhs were able to offer legal evidence of the *kirpān's* non-violent nature and to disseminate a version of the *kirpān's* symbolism that coalesced with many modern democratic values, opponents were forced to articulate a more abstract argument against it. This argument required opponents to engage, however self-servingly, with Sikh religious history, and thereby inadvertently exposed secularism's malleable and socially constructed nature.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Stoker, "Zero Tolerance?," 817.

Traditional power narratives were subverted as the minority culture was able to frame the discussion in such a manner as to make the majority culture uncomfortable. To frame the *kirpan* within the Sikh tradition put an onus on any who wanted to engage on its meaning to consider the tradition as a whole. This also resulted in the burden of translation being spread out between the Sikh community and their secular opposition. As a result, both parties had to enter a dialectic where meaning, relevance, and equivocation would oscillate between the poles of the discourse. While Sikhs had to translate their religious symbol for a new context and audience, their opponents had to address Sikh history and context as well which had the result of placing them in unfamiliar territory. The burden of translation was distributed, as was the potential for benefit.

In Chapter Four I argued that in order to consider a translation successful it must benefit both parties. The Supreme Court ruled that diversity is good for Canada, therefore, allowing Sikhs to don the *kirpan* and recognizing its meaning enhances and advantages Canadian society as a whole.<sup>102</sup> The Sikh community gained through this translation process the ability to wear the *kirpan* in schools, of course. But more so, they were able to gain recognition, re-evaluate their tradition, and further develop their ability to enter discussions with those outside their community. Further, they were able to carve out a space and successfully engage in the public sphere.<sup>103</sup> While religion and secularism can benefit from translation, there is also the benefit to having worldviews play off one another

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<sup>102</sup> *Multani v. Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys*, [2006] 1 S.C.R. 256, 2006 SCC 6.

<sup>103</sup> Stoker, "Zero Tolerance?," 836.

in the public sphere. In this way, the *kirpan* and Sikh interpretations of it served as an agonistic and subversive foil for certain presuppositions at work throughout this ordeal.

The Mulani case served as an opportunity for religion and secularism to enter into a dialectic similar to what William Connolly describes in his analysis of pluralism.<sup>104</sup> For Connolly one advantage to having religion and secularism interact in the public sphere is that each may serve as an agonistic foil for the other.<sup>105</sup> While secularism provides a perspective unhindered by any epistemic commitment, religion provides traditions of wisdom unique to each community. The different visions of flourishing or human nature and their implications for society amount to a dialectical space where assumptions are questioned and positions are challenged constantly. The result is that any position cannot be overly comfortable as it is challenged, reinterpreted, and redescribed on an ongoing basis. The debates and discussions surrounding the *kirpan* throughout the Multani case offer an example of this kind of contestation.

The potential to challenge common conceptions was not lost on Sikhs who argued for the *kirpan* in court. The World Sikh Organization (WSO) became very involved in representing, networking, and aiding Multani and his family throughout the court cases. It was they who argued: “the legal definition of a weapon in Canada is largely subjective because it is based upon the bearer's intent.”<sup>106</sup> This is because one may be charged with assault with a benign object, say a hammer or a baseball bat even though the object is not designed, sold, and intended as a weapon generally. In the same way, if one were to rob a

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<sup>104</sup> As discussed in Chapter Five.

<sup>105</sup> William E. Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 91.

<sup>106</sup> Stoker, “Zero Tolerance?,” 829.

convenience store with a water gun one could still be charged with threatening another person with a weapon because you are treating the water gun as a real weapon. Intent and interpretation do play a significant role for determining what constitutes a weapon, legally speaking.

The WSO further posited that “no object has an innate status or function.”<sup>107</sup> They dismissed the objection that a *kirpan* has to be recognized as a dagger simply because it resembles one.<sup>108</sup> The Supreme Court agreed that an object could be used to harm another is not reason enough to ban it from schools; for example, scissors, bats, chairs, and staplers could all be used to cause harm to another person if one were inclined and motivated to do so.<sup>109</sup> Even though ostensibly the *kirpan* could be used to harm another student, the burden remained on the school board to demonstrate it posed a heightened and specific threat to students, something they apparently failed to do.<sup>110</sup> In this way, the Sikh community was able to question and challenge prevailing understandings of weapons as well as offer a critique of instrumental and functional thinking.

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<sup>107</sup> Stoker, “Zero Tolerance?,” 830.

<sup>108</sup> One may counter that if a *kirpan* does not have an innate function how can it serve as an important religious symbol? Or, one may question why substitutes are not sufficient. This is because although the status of an object is not innate, it develops in a manner that is not arbitrary. Like how Taylor's discussion on authenticity means that we can make different choices, not all choices are significant in Taylor, *Malaise of Modernity*, 68.

In the same way Sikhs could have had a different symbol to represent their identity, but they did not, they chose the *kirpan* and it has resonated, remained, and represented their ideals for centuries and is therefore a potent religious symbol.

<sup>109</sup> *Multani v. Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys*, [2006] 1 S.C.R. 256, 2006 SCC 6.

<sup>110</sup> The School Board did try to present evidence of heightened fear as a reason to ban the *kirpan*, but it was anecdotal and not overly convincing. Meanwhile the Sikh community argued that there has never been violence with a *kirpan* in a school in Canada and of the three incidents where the *kirpan* was used as a weapon in Canada were the exceptions not the rule, they are very rare occurrences and should not be used to deny Multani the right to wear his in: Stoker, “Zero Tolerance?,” 833.

## 6.8 Translation in the Courts

Throughout the Multani case there certainly were successful translations and subversions, yet there were also significant struggles as well, and not all of them were overcome by the end of the trial. One of the areas where a focus on hermeneutical dialectic instead of the more rigid legal framework would be beneficial is the impact the trial had on the Sikh community. For one, the ability to compromise and negotiate is often seen as a positive attribute. It allows for the kind of give and take a translation requires. Yet compromise in the court system can be seen as either a defeat, or an indication that the religious practice is not as important as initially claimed. Stoker notes how this line of argumentation turned up in Multani's case: "while members of the opposition portrayed the Multanis as religious fundamentalists for refusing to replace the *kirpān* with a replica, it was arguably the Multanis' willingness to compromise with the School Board that proved more detrimental to their case."<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, some Sikhs were concerned that by agreeing to wrap the *kirpan* they would be giving in and promoting misunderstanding as to the importance of the *kirpan*.<sup>112</sup> This demonstrates the narrowing effect of the legal system. With such a system one must present the *kirpan* as a human rights issue – however, following this claim everything becomes framed in pre-existing categories. This can result in a group feeling pressured to present themselves as unified and consistent whereas religious groups always have degrees of difference. As a result, a group may want to hide the semantic variability of religious language and symbols within a community.

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<sup>111</sup> Stoker, "Zero Tolerance?," 824.

<sup>112</sup> Stoker, "Zero Tolerance?," 823.

We ought to avoid unnecessary rigidity being imposed on minority cultures in the public sphere. Yet, Stoker notes how rigidity is often necessary for a court scenario: “dominant communities often require religious minorities to present a given practice as non-negotiable in order to make it clear why it must be accommodated.”<sup>113</sup> One of the issues that arises from this need to present the group as unified is that Khalsa Sikhism gets to be presented, represented, and the version of Sikhism that enters into the dialectical relationship with the majority. This comes at the cost of other versions of Sikhism are sidelined.<sup>114</sup>

Another issue with our current approach is that Multani and his defenders have to present their religion and religious practices as inflexible, yet inflexibility is one of the reasons religion is often presented as a problem in the public sphere and unfit for public discourse.<sup>115</sup> This may increase the religious group's leaning toward – or the perception they lean toward – more fundamental interpretations of their own tradition.<sup>116</sup> With these kinds of dangers to the identity and interpretation of the religious group one might be tempted to think it is better to avoid the human rights discourse at all. Yet, to do so would result in the Sikh community having to acquiesce to every assumption, policy, and interpretation of their religious tradition without turning to the most authoritative public institution available. This puts Sikhs into a bind, as Stoker argues: “While such gestures of compromise can be misconstrued by dominant communities as forms of fundamentalism,

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<sup>113</sup> Stoker, “Zero Tolerance?,” 821.

<sup>114</sup> Stoker, “Zero Tolerance?,” 821.

<sup>115</sup> See discussion of Audi Chapter Five, section 5.2 “Secularism in Competition with Religion.”

<sup>116</sup> Stoker, “Zero Tolerance?,” 822.



other forms of compromise can open the door to too many requests for negotiation.”<sup>117</sup> The very ability to make concessions can weaken the position of a minority to frame their own identity, while dismissing compromise altogether has adverse ramifications as well.

When one sees a religious minority prepared to compromise on matters of faith one may be tempted to expect that everything is negotiable, and therefore religious communities are not in need of special treatment. Sonu Bedi takes this line of reasoning and argues that since religious identities are fluid and not stagnant, they are equivalent to any other choice and ought to be treated as such – not as a fundamental human right. Bedi states: “On the one hand, contemporary theory has come to see religious affiliations and practices as contingent, open-ended and freely constructed. On the other hand, in order to justify different or special treatment for such groups we must view these affiliations as unchosen, static and not freely constructed. I argue that we cannot have it both ways.”<sup>118</sup> For Bedi, the fact that religious adherents can choose to reinterpret their religious tradition means that they should not be treated as special. And, he is right to a degree, religious belief should not be placed on an altar, so to speak. Doctrines do change over time, they are constructed, and they are impacted by those around them; much like anyone's identity and sense of self. Yet, Bedi ignores the significant social cost to changing one's religion as well as the implications for self-definition in the Taylorian sense. Religion still does play a formative and crucial role for a devotee, to say that religion is nothing special is like saying someone's sense of self is meaningless, or trite, and can be disregarded.

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<sup>117</sup> Stoker, “Zero Tolerance?,” 823.

<sup>118</sup> Sonu Bedi, “What is so Special About Religion? The Dilemma of the Religious Exemption,” *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 15 (2007): 235.

As discussed in Chapter Three, Charles Taylor argues that while some choices are meaningless, the ability to choose does not make anything inherently valuable or not valuable. It is up to each person to make genuine, authentic choices. Religious people have religious traditions at their disposal to add to their authentic – though constructed – selves. In Chapter Five we saw Richard Rorty argue contingency is all we have to work with for our social constructions, but he maintains contingency does not equate to meaninglessness. For our values and institutions are very important and meaningful, even if they are constructed and contextual. Therefore when Bedi equates the turban with any other hat he is missing the point.<sup>119</sup>

On a related note, if a critic were to argue that a Sikh who chooses to wear the *kirpan* is tantamount to a boy scout who wants to bring his pocket knife to school then this would fail to properly balance the tension between equivocation and relevance. While a religious symbol may be similar to other identity markers in that they are contingent and freely chosen, that does not mean they equate other markers on the plane of relevance. As we have noted, even to equate the *kirpan* to another ceremonial dagger can be misleading. Along with a kilt and Sporrán, traditional Scottish wear also includes a *Sgian Dubhs* – a small knife. Yet the knife does not have the symbolic, transcendent meaning for a Scot a *kirpan* has for a Khalsa Sikh. The *Sporran* (pouch) is part of a traditional Scottish outfit because it had a functional role, to carrying things. In the same way the *Sgian Dubhs* was traditionally carried to be used as a knife to cut food or other material, and for protection.

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<sup>119</sup> Bedi makes this comparison quite explicitly: “In so far as the law is concerned, there is no difference between the hat-wearer and the Sikh. After all, just as I am able to alter my preferences and refrain from wearing my hat while riding a motorcycle, the Sikh can take off his turban,” in: “What is so Special about Religion?,” 240.

There is no interaction with higher ideals, inner virtue, or greater cosmology found in the *Sgian Dubh* and this differentiates it from the *kirpan* significantly. While the courts require a fairly rigid definition of a religious tradition, practice, or symbol this does not negate the fact that religions are constructed, defined, and redescribed over time and place. At the same time, the constructed dimension of religion does negate the fact that they are significant meaning making phenomena and they are both profoundly and particularly relevant and ought to be recognized as such in the public sphere. Part of this problem resides in our temptation to hang on to reductive definitions of religion in the public sphere.

### **6.9 Problems with Reductive Definitions**

In “Freedom of Religion and Canada's Commitment to Multiculturalism,” Kislowicz analyses the problematic working definition of religion for the Canadian Supreme Court.

He describes it thusly:

Defined broadly, religion typically involves a particular and comprehensive system of faith and worship. Religion also tends to involve the belief in a divine, superhuman or controlling power. In essence, religion is about freely and deeply held personal convictions or beliefs connected to an individual's spiritual faith and integrally linked to one's self-definition and spiritual fulfilment, the practices of which allow individuals to foster a connection with the divine or with the subject or object of that spiritual faith.<sup>120</sup>

The focus of the Court definition is on the individual and his or her beliefs while religious practices are simply the expression of a belief. However, for the religious practitioner, the act, ritual, or practice may be more important than the underlying belief structure. In this

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<sup>120</sup> Howard Kislowicz, “Freedom of Religion and Canada's Commitment to Multiculturalism,” *National Journal of Constitutional Law* 31 (2012): 11.

way the court definition of religion favours doxology while religious practitioners do not always operate under similar dispositions.

In a similar manner, the Court's definition focuses on the individual and their choice to follow a religion, it does not focus on the communal or emphasise tradition. Taylor and Ricoeur argue that one's identity is always formed through interaction with others, yet the legal framework for recognizing religion remains steeped in individualism.<sup>121</sup> The problem with such misplaced emphasis is that religion, which is lived in a complex, dynamic, fluid manner is reduced to beliefs and individual autonomy in Court language. As a result of this kind of reductionism, Kislowicz argues,

Members of minority groups can come to be essentialized, defined by a single trait to the exclusion of other aspects of their identities (e.g., Jews are defined by their Jewishness, members of LGBT communities by their sexuality). When a member of a minority group is reduced to a single defining trait, he or she is misrecognized in a manner inconsistent with Canada's multicultural promises.<sup>122</sup>

If the courts are unwilling to interpret a religion in different ways, they allow for perpetual misrecognition of religious identities. Stoker notes how members of the Sikh community felt throughout the Multani court proceedings, and even following the ruling, opponents did not understand the "spirit" of the *kirpan*.<sup>123</sup> Misunderstanding may be somewhat alleviated by the normalization that may follow allowing Multani and others to wear their *kirpan*. However, without a focus on translating worldviews, simply allowing a practice to continue does not equate the greater achievement of mutual understanding and transformation that comes from a successful translation.

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<sup>121</sup> For further discussion of this issue see Chapter Three.

<sup>122</sup> Kislowicz, "Freedom of Religion," 20.

<sup>123</sup> Stoker, "Zero Tolerance?," 824.

The notion of tolerance exasperates the limitation of rights discourse and the legal framework for addressing religious identities. This is because it allows translation to be cut off before the proper fruition of meaning is achieved. Kislowicz posits that cross-cultural dialogue in a legal setting is fraught with unnecessary hurdles like reductionism and misrecognition.<sup>124</sup> These hurdles also limit the power of a full translation. Kislowicz argues that the result of a limited approach to recognition and religious identities is due to the framework of tolerance: “the language of tolerance can lead to a focus on the troubling aspects of minority practices without an equal reflection on similar problematic elements of dominant practices. In the discourse of tolerance, the one tolerator is always pictured as neutral.”<sup>125</sup> So the oscillation of meaning and interpretation is clearly limited to the extent that the dominant culture is understood as neutral and unquestionable.

The ability of religious prophetic witness and other alternate worldviews are unable to perform the task of an ironic, subversive, agonistic dialogue partner. This is because the court system does not want to challenge dominant practices, assumptions, and presuppositions. After all, precedence and previous court decisions are considered very important in the court setting. However, if the rights discourse was complemented by translation endeavours, the potential for new possibilities would be augmented and the benefits of a public sphere where differences reside would put to use instead of being sidestepped in legal processes, frameworks, and language.

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<sup>124</sup> Kislowicz, “Freedom of Religion,” 20.

<sup>125</sup> Kislowicz, “Freedom of Religion,” 20.

Stoker notes that these limitations were present during the Multani case, “This rhetorical exercise reinforces their status as minorities with limited opportunities for self-determination.”<sup>126</sup> Sikhs had to present themselves as unified, consistent, and that their religious traditions were non-negotiable. Within this framework dissent, contingency, and experimentation could not be a part of Sikhism as far as the courts were concerned. While Multani and his allies were successful in gaining the right to wear a *kirpan* in school, the cost of this gain was to limit the frame for Sikhism in the Canadian public sphere.

Another manner in which court rulings make a dynamic translation process more difficult is they exude authority and finality. Of course, for courts to be effective they have to be an authority. Yet with that authority comes finality, and with finality comes an end to any discursive translation. Brett Scharffs argues that the role of the judge as an interpreter is hindered by this sense of finality, marking the judge's qualities as an interpreter very different from those described in Chapter Four where translation is an ongoing process. At the centre of this tension is the notion of finitude:

Sometimes courts create worlds by starting or continuing a conversation with citizens or other branches of government about the meaning of a text. But when courts speak, they speak with an authority and a finality that chooses which meaning among several will be given official sanction and enjoy the coercive imprimatur of the state. Most often, when the courts speak, alternate meanings are destroyed.<sup>127</sup>

Scharffs may sound overly dramatic when he describes how alternate meanings are destroyed, yet he is touching upon an important aspect of court rulings that is all too often overlooked. When considering a court decision, there is a tendency to only assess whether

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<sup>126</sup> Stoker, “Zero Tolerance?,” 836.

<sup>127</sup> Scharffs, “The Role of Judges,” 49.

the ruling was fair or agreeable, rather than consider the cognitive limitations imposed by a particular interpretation of a worldview or religious practice. This emphasis on finality is interposed with authority.

In the case of *Multani*, the Supreme Court asserted they had to interpret the meaning of the *kirpan* instead of just leaving this task up to the Sikh community. Stoker notes the “Supreme Court was reluctant to allow only Sikhs to interpret the kirpan, and needed to interpret Canadian Law.”<sup>128</sup> To have multiple interpreters working at once can cause some friction. Yet, Stoker argues: “Sikhs' did impact dominant Canada's perceptions and carve out a space for themselves in the public sphere.”<sup>129</sup> Throughout the court ruling Stoker ascertains there was both an “awareness and yet a repudiation of the kirpān's symbolic relevance.”<sup>130</sup> This is because, while the court ruling was overall more favourable to *Multani* than the School Board, “the SCC decision, much like that of the Quebec Court of Appeals, privileged a particular cultural sensibility as rightfully dominant.”<sup>131</sup> It is important to consider that a certain interpretation of Canadian multiculturalism and secularism won out. An interpretation that does limit future understandings and engagements by Sikhs in the public sphere, and one that offers a finality as to what extent the *kirpan* should be recognized in the public sphere.

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<sup>128</sup> Stoker, “Zero Tolerance?,” 828.

<sup>129</sup> Stoker, “Zero Tolerance?,” 836.

<sup>130</sup> Stoker, “Zero Tolerance?,” 824.

<sup>131</sup> Stoker, “Zero Tolerance?,” 835.

## 6.10 Why We Require a Hermeneutic of Cross-cultural Discourse in the Public Sphere

Throughout this chapter we have considered two case studies, each with a different focus on how a hermeneutic between religion and secularism would benefit the public sphere. In the first case I challenged the overall approach to religion and secularism that can be found in current legislature and certain interpretations of the *Charter*. Specifically, I considered how the *Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Amendment Act* demonstrates a desire to separate religious sensibilities from a particular secular space (the classroom) and in doing so treats religion and secularism as incommensurable. However, cross-cultural translation offers a better solution to the supposed problem of differences in the same space as it allows for a dynamic and creative flow between secular and religious worldviews which could greatly enrich identity construction projects.

Next we considered competing interpretations of the same symbol, the *kirpan* in the Canadian courts. I argued translation would greatly benefit the communities who were involved in the legal dispute as to the *kirpan's* status. One may still be tempted to look at Multani's court case pragmatically, though, outside the realm and analysis of hermeneutic inspection. On the surface, Multani was denied access to school by the School Board so long as he wore his *kirpan*. The Supreme Court ruling changed that state of affairs and deemed any Sikh could wear the *kirpan* within the restrictions imposed. The restrictions themselves seem reasonable enough especially considering Multani seemed content to agree to them. But if we deny the importance of translation and stagnate the oscillation of meaning between worldviews the results can be quite troubling. Without translation the subversive redescription of notions like instrumental reasoning and contextual



understandings of a symbol are unable to flourish. The Sikh community itself would be denied the opportunity to reflect upon how and why the *kirpan* is aligned with Canadian values. As institutions limit the propensity for these kinds of cross-cultural translations we must exude effort to encourage and maintain communication between worldviews whenever we can.

For example, let us consider a case of mistranslation and Sikhism. In the United States, in 2012, a Sikh temple was attacked by gunmen killing six and wounding three others. This tragic act of violence was attributed to a misunderstanding by the attackers; it was assumed they had intended to attack Muslims. “Though violence against Sikhs in Wisconsin was unheard of before the shooting, many in this community said they had sensed a rise in antipathy since the attacks on Sept. 11 and suspected it was because people mistake them for Muslim.”<sup>132</sup> Due to ignorance and misrecognition, Sikhs were targeted and attacked. Yet, the assumption present in this telling of the story were brought to light by Prabhjot Singh who stated: “Whatever the roots of Mr. Page’s hatred, it is wrong to assume that every attack against a Sikh is really meant for a Muslim. That assumption overlooks the long history of discrimination and hatred directed at Sikhs in America.”<sup>133</sup> Thus Singh presents a skeptical stance toward a common narrative. By doing so Singh highlighted an often overlooked dimension of the public sphere in America – the bigotry toward minority religious traditions that are often ignored by the media and popular

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<sup>132</sup> Steven Yaccino, Michael Schwartz, and Marc Santora, “Gunman Kills 6 at a Sikh Temple Near Milwaukee,” *New York Times* August 5, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/06/us/shooting-reported-at-temple-in-wisconsin.html?pagewanted=all>.

<sup>133</sup> Simran Jeet Singh and Prabhjot Singh, “How Hate Gets Counted,” *New York Times* August 24, 2012, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/24/opinion/do-american-sikhs-count.html?\\_r=2&](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/24/opinion/do-american-sikhs-count.html?_r=2&).

discourse. Thus he exposed assumptions and working definitions commonly held by those engaging in the public discourse. In 2014, a cruel irony led to Prabjot Singh himself being targeted for violence in a hate crime based on misrecognition; his attackers mistook him for a Muslim.<sup>134</sup> To ignore underlying presuppositions or to allow misrecognition and mistranslation to remain unchecked can come with a terrible cost.

Both the Multani case and the exclusion clause in the *Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Amendment Act* represent a challenge for public discourse. Furthermore, each of these issues would benefit from a hermeneutic frame to aid recognition and promote cross-cultural communication. We severely limit ourselves when we rely on legal and legislative institutions to resolve questions of recognition and (mis)understanding. Identities are treated in a reductive, narrow frame while nuance and context are all too frequently overlooked. The current bureaucratic processes for resolution do not allow the space necessary for full-fledged translation to unfold. Instead of merely turning to courts and laws to dictate the relationships between divergent worldviews, those in positions of power, and those who are not, should look to translation to enhance public discourse. Judges and legislation writers are limited in that they are not provided the space and freedom to oscillate between meaning and glean new possibilities from juxtaposed differences. Yet, to have different worldviews question, challenge, and learn from one another would benefit the public sphere as a whole, as well as dialogue participants. It is clear that hermeneutic concepts such as equivalence, relevance, and commensurability

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<sup>134</sup> Stephen Adkins, "Harlem Man Faces Hate Crime Charges for Assaulting Sikh Columbia Professor," *University Herald* April 21, 2014, <http://www.universityherald.com/articles/8947/20140421/harlem-hate-crime-beard-sikh-columbia-professor-harassment.htm>.

offer valuable critique as to the limits of frameworks based on compromise, negotiation, and accommodation. A dynamic dialectic promises a way forward toward new cognitive possibilities through translation.

## Chapter Seven: **Conclusion**

### **7.1 A Short Summary of Translation between Religion and Secularism**

Throughout this thesis I have attempted to develop a novel approach to our construction of the relationship between secularism and religion. To do so I have considered different dimensions to the central tension that arises when we have these traditions in the same space. Both religion and secularism serve as interpretive frames, sources of tradition, as a dimension to self-definition, and pivotal aspects of our social imaginary. In order to have a public sphere where each participate – both in its ongoing construction and in its day to day function – we must rely on a sophisticated model of engagement. Translation offers such a model; it is the method we can use to bring divergent poles into meaningful conversation. This is because translation does not operate on a one to one basis where a term is transliterated; instead, it gathers an expression from one worldview, transgresses its boundaries, and recreates it in a new context. Translation is an expansive and inclusive process, one that develops through oscillation between the translated and the source material. Throughout this process one is offered the opportunity to make connections between the worldviews at large, not simply find equivalent terms or expressions. Through translation religion and secularism can work to strengthen, challenge, subvert, and redescribe each other as a dynamic exchange of meaning traverses between them.

In order to redescribe the relationship between religions and secularism I considered various aspects, frames, and angles that currently define it. First, I wanted to analyse the frame for religion and secularism in the public sphere we currently utilize, namely multiculturalism. I argued that multiculturalism as it is often conceived is lacking

in that it fails to foster deep, meaningful engagements between different cultures. This is a result of several factors, multiculturalism is steeped in liberalism for many of its founding principles and justifications, yet liberalism itself brings certain limitations upon how we engage with difference. Meanwhile, in application multiculturalism has been used politically to address a plethora of issues; the French/English divide in Canada, Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations, as well as religious/ethnic minority groups and their political struggles for recognition. Having all these issues under one umbrella can be difficult to manage, and at times not cohesive. I focus on minority groups and how they relate to the dominant culture because that is the most relevant issue for religion and secularism, yet the wider frame for multiculturalism remains. Critics of multiculturalism have been able to demonstrate how it can lead to problematic thinking or practices – especially if we consider it in relation to equality and power. I argued that to address these critiques we need not disperse with multiculturalism as a whole, rather, we may redescribe multiculturalism instead.

In order to redescribe multiculturalism I first looked at the various models in place. I considered models based upon: minority struggles for recognition, integration, negotiation, and dialogue. While each model has its potential benefits and limitations I claim each does not consider the dimensions of translation adequately, and this is a serious deficiency in any model of the public sphere. This is because translation allows us to consider difference in the same space without one side consuming the other. It is a process rooted in understanding where meaning is created, carried, and reformed in a new context. Using this method I proposed an analogy for translation: the metaphoric juxtaposition. Here

models and frames for interpreting the public sphere can interact, inform, and interpret one another in a novel manner.

However, while pitting models for the public sphere off one another does allow for one to expose latent presuppositions, it does not adequately address them in and of itself. To this end I decided to rigorously consider Jürgen Habermas' communicative action. Habermas has developed a profound and in-depth model for public discourse. He has carefully considered how public discourse can relate to the exercise of power, the legal sphere, and our institutions. He has developed a sophisticated theory of what the ideal dialogue for the public sphere should look like. While there is much in Habermas' system to appreciate, he does not adequately address the issue of translating identity of both oneself and the Other in the public sphere. He fails on this account largely because he relies on notions such as strident individualism, un-examined autonomy, and a narrow definition of rationality. In order to counter these tendencies I turned to Charles Taylor and Paul Ricoeur who each have developed intricate theories of how one may relate to the Other in a meaningful manner.

Taylor does so through what he calls sources for one's self – a series of frameworks one uses to inform and construct one's identity and orientation toward the world.<sup>1</sup> Communities, traditions, and religions can imbue our process for self interpretation and interpretation of the Other. Meanwhile Ricoeur considers the ethical and hermeneutic implications of putting one's self into conversation with another person at a deep level.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 28-29.

Between these two thinkers I was able to construct an argument which calls for deep meaningful engagement between different people in the same space, and one that is heavily dependent upon translation in order to function.

Of course, having established the need for translation leaves us to consider the hurdles and challenges which arise once we do so. Translation is constantly threatened by mistranslation or the abuses of appropriation, both of these notions expose the difficulty of using interpretation in any project. However, both can be addressed as well by embracing the subjective nature of a translation, in doing so we are able to recognize that it is not a formulaic repetition of one expression into a new context. Instead, translation is a creative endeavour where meaning flows from one worldview to another, redefining and redescribing each pole as it progresses. As such, translation can account for difference, nuance, change over time, and even apparent incommensurability as it is an open-ended process where the translator, the expression, the source context, and the new audience all operate in a dynamic ebb and flow of meaning and dialogue.

The dialogue itself that emerges from translation is developed by its participants in their contexts. Our central question relates to religion and secularism so it is important to consider the specific challenges (and benefits) to that dyad. One challenge is the common understanding of secularism as something that will replace religion. In this model religion is outdated, passé, and/or detrimental to society. On the other side there are religious groups and thinkers who depict secularism as antithetical to religious worldviews and they would seek to instill widespread theological axioms into every dimension of society.

Both of these approaches seek to undermine the Other and in doing so limit the cognitive and interpretive avenues for our social imaginary. Such limitations mean we

cannot explore potential sources of meaning for individuals and they do not allow different worldviews to flourish in public spaces. Instead, religion and secularism should be understood as complicated and diverse worldviews each in their own right. When they interact it is not a matter where one ought to win out and seek to dominate or deride the other – each can benefit from a dialectic relationship. This is because different worldviews do not have to be understood as a problem but as a potential new interpretive frame to be explored. For example, Richard Rorty's irony and redescription alongside William Connolly's agonism and democratic ethos provide a promising method to understand difference in the same space as a positive opportunity. Through challenge and subversion diverse ways of thinking about the world expressed both religiously and secularly can learn and build off one another in a productive manner.

For this to happen we cannot think of religion and secularism as incommensurable. They can, and should, share the same space in order to allow dynamic exchanges to take place. That is why any legislation that compels us to separate different worldviews and treats difference in the same space as a problem ought to be avoided and critically assessed. We cannot keep religion and secularism bound to certain spheres of human experience but instead have to develop creative, insightful methods which promote productive engagements.

Another challenge to the relationship of religion and secularism is that it is regulated and often defined through legal and court systems. To an extent, this is necessary, the law has to have authority over religion or it would lose its ability to control people at large. However, when we turn to law to primarily articulate and mitigate multifaceted relationships between worldviews we are severely limiting ourselves. This is because



courts have to rely on reductive, stagnant definitions to make rulings coherent, relevant, and consistent. Yet issues of identity, culture, and how to best apply an interpretive frame cannot be adequately articulated through such definitions. Therefore we need to add to the court system a dynamic translation process to circumvent these limitations.

While these arguments highlight the need, promise, and direction for a hermeneutic of religion and secularism there are other dimensions left to consider. As one cannot consider all facets in one thesis I will merely take some time to point toward other avenues of investigation others may undertake in the future with this project serving as a foundation.

## **7.2 Further Studies**

Firstly, as with any analysis, one cannot cover every possible example or application. As such, I found it prudent to only tackle two case studies to apply my hermeneutic analysis of religion and secularism. Both Alberta's legislation and the Supreme Court ruling on religious accommodation are relevant, but two cases cannot capture the depth, development, and range of legislative and legal responses to religion in the public sphere. It would be worth considering other pivotal cases where the relationship between religion and secularism is defined by Canada's prominent institutions, not to mention current unresolved cases as well as future cases that we shall see develop over time.

Such a project could develop a comparative analysis of Canada's legal definition of religion – and the limits imposed on religious people in the legal sphere over time and place. I considered briefly the historical context for Alberta's education laws, however, I did limit myself to one area of legislation and one province. It would be especially worthwhile to compare Quebec's legislative and legal initiatives to other provinces and/or

the federal Government institutions, as they have different approaches.<sup>2</sup> In the same vein, the development and future projection of law and the role of religion in the public sphere is an interesting topic, and one that I only briefly touched upon in this thesis.

More specifically, the issue of education and religion is a fertile field for investigation. There has not been as much attention paid to religion in education in Canada as there should be and this is an area that is ripe for further rigorous analyses.<sup>3</sup> While both of my case studies did look into public education, I was not able to explore several promising dimensions of this sphere. Further projects which seek to develop a hermeneutic of religion, secularism, and education could build off the research I have done here. For one, I only looked into the secular public school system (as it is defined by secularism this was appropriate), but issues of curriculum and school policy could not be developed. How education institutions that have no public funding alongside publically funded Catholic schools, as well as partially funded, private, charter, and post-secondary education institutions address issues of religious diversity, neutrality, and secularism should be further studied. These are important issues for education and we need more clarity, debate, research, and analysis into them with the aim of developing a coherent path forward for

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<sup>2</sup> I was able to address certain aspects of Quebec throughout this thesis, however, I did not conduct a full comparison between it and other provinces or federal institutions here.

<sup>3</sup> While I am not aware of any studies which focus on religion in education in Canada using a hermeneutical analysis, some sources that consider religion in education in Canada are: Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre, *Religion in Public Schools* (Calgary: The Alberta Situation, Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre, 2004); Graham P. McDonough P., Nadeem A. Memon, and Avi I. Mintz, eds., *Discipline, Devotion, and Dissent: Jewish, Catholic, and Islamic Schooling in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University, 2013); Graham P. McDonough, *Beyond Obedience and Abandonment: Toward a Theory of Dissent in Catholic Education* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012); Daniel M. Hungerman, *The Effect of Education on Religion: Evidence from Compulsory Schooling Laws* (Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2011); Stephen Parker, *Religious Education and Freedom of Religion and Belief* (Oxford: Lang, 2012).

school systems in Canada. Often religious issues are ignored or addressed poorly, so a thoughtful study of religion and religious diversity in education is an important question for Canada today.

While the legal sphere and education in Canada are both addressed to a degree in my thesis, one area of investigation that I did not address was the sociological and ethnographic data on religion and immigration, diaspora, and integration.<sup>4</sup> These experiences are filtered through people and their stories, interpretations, and particularistic contexts. Religion and the public sphere is experienced, negotiated, and expressed by people in many different manners. How specific religious traditions, groups, communities, and individuals address the issues and questions of identity or engagement offers a practically boundless potential for study as new experiences are discovered and explored.

Finally, the relationship between religion and secularism has important implications for the public sphere and our social imaginaries at large – something I did address in my thesis, however, I was only able to develop it in a limited manner. Like any social construction, the public sphere is not a stagnant, clearly defined space. It is a conglomerate of institutions, people, mediums, and projects that are lumped together for theoretical ease and practical reasons. In doing so specific mediums and dimensions of the

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<sup>4</sup> For some studies that have this focus see: Solange Lefebvre and Lori G. Beaman, eds., *Religion in the Public Sphere: Canadian Case Studies* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014); Robert Choquette, *Canada's Religions: An Historical Introduction* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2004); Peter Beyer and Rubina Ramji, eds., *Growing Up Canadian: Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013); John S. Harding, Victor Sogen Hori, and Alexander Soucy, eds., *Flowers on the Rock: Global and Local Buddhisms in Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014); William Closson James, *God's Plenty: Religious Diversity in Kingston* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011); Paul Bramadat, *Christianity and Ethnicity in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Lori G. Beaman and Peter Beyer, *Religion and Diversity in Canada* (Boston: Brill, 2008).

public sphere have to be glossed over in order to talk about religion and secularism to avoid getting lost in a myriad of situations, specifics, and dimensions of public discourse. Specific frames for religion and secularism would benefit from further analysis and investigation such as: how religion and secularism are depicted in the media, public addresses by officials, other dimensions of discourse on multiculturalism, or online discussions.

### **7.3 Further Applications**

While there are certain fields of investigation that could build off the work I have done here, there are also specific issues, reports, or projects that could apply the guidelines I have attempted to describe in this thesis. The notion that religion and secularism should develop a relationship based upon translation and interpretation could inform recent and ongoing projects that also seek to address diversity in proximity. Firstly, the principles of translation could inform at the federal level the policies and operations of the department of Multiculturalism, Immigration and Citizenship, or Heritage as well as various local levels of government – and non-government organizations. If we were to consider immigrants and new citizens or perspective citizens as entering into a hermeneutical relationship with the wider society and other groups, this could dramatically change how we perceive and treat them. As we have noted, our perception of the Other and how the Other perceives us is a pertinent dimension to self-construction and social construction. This would greatly expand upon the legalistic, reductive frameworks in place.

Secondly, one report that has attempted to address this issue is the Bouchard Taylor Report. Bouchard and Taylor address the question of religious accommodation and

religious diversity in the public sphere, specifically in Quebec. Overall the report found that the alarmists in Quebec society were exaggerating the facts concerning the kinds of requests for accommodation being asked for as well as the frequency and seriousness of these kinds of cases.<sup>5</sup> Further, the report argues we have a workable frame for dealing with religious accommodation and only need to focus on specific cases with certain principles in mind to move forward as a society.<sup>6</sup> While I will not take the time to address or critique the report at great length here, I will suggest that the findings of the report and its proposed response to them could work quite well in congruence with the hermeneutic approach I have developed. While I am critical of certain terms and frames used in the report (such as accommodation), the aim of the Bouchard Taylor Report, which is to reframe religious diversity as a reality that we can address productively, is laudable. I believe cross-culture communication and interpretation of different worldviews moves us toward that goal.

Thirdly, the proposed Quebec Charter of Values raises interesting questions concerning the relationship between secularism and religion.<sup>7</sup> This drafted legislation ultimately did not manifest into law, however, the ideology and justifications for it are worth investigating nonetheless. The manner in which this kind of legislation defines religion, religious symbols, and secularism demonstrates the need for more cross-culture encounters as it represents a case of misrecognition. According to the bill, religious adherents who are civil servants ought to remove any ostentatious religious symbols as

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<sup>5</sup> Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor, *Building the Future: A Time for Reconciliation: Report*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2008, 18.

<sup>6</sup> Bouchard and Taylor focus on building harmonization through understanding throughout: *Building the Future*.

<sup>7</sup> I discuss this bill to an extent in Chapter Four, section 4.3 “Including Religion Without Translation.”

they are representatives of the state and the state is secular. This line of reasoning posits religion has to be kept separate from state operations in order for it to maintain its secularity. Instead, the state can recognize religious diversity in a manner and use religious traditions to enhance visions for society.

Fourthly, the principles offered in this thesis could help to guide, enhance, and aid projects such as the handbook, *United Against Terrorism: A Collaborative Effort Towards a Secure, Inclusive and Just Canada*, recently distributed at a Mosque in Winnipeg with the express aim to counter terrorism.<sup>8</sup> This document was created by three groups, the Islamic Social Services Association, the National Council of Canadian Muslims, and the RCMP. However, the RCMP pulled their support from the document as a whole claiming they were not comfortable with the adversarial tone of it.<sup>9</sup> If they had have made use of translation and mutual understanding in this project the outcome may have been much more collaborative and comfortably endorsed by all parties. Of course, not every end result of a translation is entirely unproblematic or indisputable, but I believe the tenants and principles offered in this thesis do provide helpful methods to avoid the most burdensome and problematic mistranslations.

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<sup>8</sup> Islamic Social Services Association Inc., National Council of Canadian Muslims, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, *United Against Terrorism: A Collaborative Effort Towards a Secure, Inclusive and Just Canada*. Islamic Social Services Association Inc., National Council of Canadian Muslims, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2014. [www.nccm.ca/content/uploads/2014/09/FUAT-HANDBOOK-WEB-VERSION-SEPT-27-2014.pdf&ei=rk9ZVITHKopyAT1roHoCA&usg=AFQjCNH7idXThPo3a6d6o8a\\_93b7\\_-vy7Q](http://www.nccm.ca/content/uploads/2014/09/FUAT-HANDBOOK-WEB-VERSION-SEPT-27-2014.pdf&ei=rk9ZVITHKopyAT1roHoCA&usg=AFQjCNH7idXThPo3a6d6o8a_93b7_-vy7Q).

<sup>9</sup> See: "Group stunned RCMP pulled support from anti-terrorism handbook Police force says it can't support 'adversarial tone' in parts of anti-terrorism booklet" *CBC*, Sep 30, 2014. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/group-stunned-rcmp-pulled-support-from-anti-terrorism-handbook-1.2783234>.

The arguments developed in this thesis could have wide ranging applications. How we are going to frame our responses to pluralism and religious diversity is a pressing concern for Canada today as there are many areas in which our commitment to multiculturalism is tested, and it is apparent that we require creative new responses. One of the strengths of turning to translation for these kinds of problems is that it is so adaptable. We can, theoretically, translate any expression into any new context. The potential output for translation is limitless, as are the responses it can inform to current and future problems in the public sphere.

#### **7.4 Final Thoughts**

In the Biblical story of The Tower of Babel the people of the earth all spoke one language. Due to such easy communication people were able to build a tower so tall it reached the heavens. God saw this tall tower and feared people would be able to challenge him and so he scattered the people and made them think and express themselves in different languages. Today, when we construct our public spaces and create public discourse we do not have to fear the power of people working together. Instead we ought to embrace cooperation and the dynamic flow of meaning as it is communicated across cultural and linguistic boundaries. We should promote, encourage, and develop better means for communication for people and avoid segregation, dissemination, and miscommunication. Through translation we can subvert, challenge, and redescribe old narratives. We may expose and critique latent and even clandestine presuppositions. Finally, we gain access to more sources of tradition and inspiration. It has been my aim to move us forward in this project, even if ever so slightly, through a hermeneutic of religion and secularism.

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