

**Post-Metaphysical Faith  
in the Philosophy of Charles Taylor**

by

John Haffner

A thesis submitted to the Department of Philosophy in  
conformity with the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Arts

Queen's University

Kingston, Ontario, Canada

July, 1998

copyright © John Lawrence Haffner, July 1998



National Library  
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale  
du Canada

Acquisitions and  
Bibliographic Services

Acquisitions et  
services bibliographiques

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

*Your file Votre référence*

*Our file Notre référence*

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-31213-5

Canada

## Abstract

This thesis argues that Charles Taylor's attempted combination of post-metaphysical philosophy and religious faith is unpersuasive.

The Introduction provides a personal context for the interest of the author in the subject matter, and a detailed summary of the argument in its distinctive steps.

Chapter One establishes that Taylor is a post-metaphysical thinker by examining his anti-foundationalism, his transcendental argument for inescapable frameworks and his conception of dialogical selfhood.

Chapter Two examines Taylor's religious faith as it is manifest in scattered themes across his writings: the best account principle, the theology of affirmation, the ethics of affirmation, and the politics of affirmation. The chapter also argues that there is an interpretive difficulty in fully understanding Taylor's faith, that this difficulty is itself philosophically significant, and that there are several compelling explanations for why the difficulty exists.

Chapter Three explores specific tensions between the post-metaphysical elements of Chapter One, and the religious discussions of Chapter Two. These various tensions lead to the conclusion that Taylor cannot 'cling to both horns of the dilemma'—he needs to decide between his post-metaphysical standpoint and his religious faith.

The central argument having been demonstrated, the Conclusion attempts to place the focus of the thesis in its larger philosophical context, and tables key issues for future discussion.

## Acknowledgements

Thanks to my examiners Cliff Hospital, D.L.C. MacLachlan, and A.M. MacLeod.

Thanks to my friends Isabelle Kluge, Andy Lamey and Daniel Brandes.

Thanks to Dr. Larry Beech and my family.

And most of all, thanks to Dr. Christine Sypnowich, my supervisor: for her good humour, her firm encouragement, and her abiding philosophical spirit.

## Table of Contents

Introduction	1-5
Chapter One	6-27
Chapter Two	28-59
Chapter Three	60-81
Conclusion	82-85
Endnotes	86-97
Bibliography	98-104
Vita	105

## Introduction

This thesis explores the intersection of religious faith and post-metaphysics in the philosophical writings of Charles Taylor. It is an odd thesis topic for a contemporary philosophy department, so it might be useful for me to explain how I ended up pursuing it.

For several years, I have been confounded by the following set of propositions:

1) Contemporary philosophers of both the Anglo-American and continental varieties tend to be critical of religion, and even assume atheism as an implicit common starting point in philosophical discourse;

2) Taylor is one of the leading philosophers of the contemporary West, whose thought is held in high regard by continental and Anglo-American philosophers alike;

3) Taylor is a self-confessed, believing Christian.

As a student of philosophy who professes to be a Christian, I have a special interest in this state of affairs. I therefore hope to clarify my own position in the process of seeking to shed light on the relation between Taylor's philosophy and his religious faith.

If Taylor offers a compelling philosophical position which still preserves the integrity of his faith, then his case ought to occasion a revisiting of (1); of the tendency of philosophers to dismiss the potential contribution of religion in contemporary philosophical discussion. If Taylor has had to suppress or downplay vital elements of his religious faith in order to ensure that his position is heard, it will be worthwhile to try to see what has been obscured as part of his overall enterprise, and to reassess the extent to which his philosophy is a tribute to (3): his religious faith. On the other hand, if the coherence of Taylor's philosophy is at risk in his avowal of religious faith, then philosophers' dismissal of religion may have some warrant.

It must be acknowledged that this thesis has been pursued in spite of a certain reluctance. Taylor is a philosopher of unusual generosity of spirit; we can even say that he employs a hermeneutics of charity in his reflections on various positions and thinkers.<sup>1</sup> His insistence that believers and unbelievers share many of the same dilemmas, hope for many of the same things, and have similar moral commitments holds out the prospect of the affirmation of a rich moral life within the pluralism of modernity. And some of his generosity, his capacity to identify areas of *rapprochement* between believers and unbelievers as part of a common fate, seems to depend precisely on his willingness to downplay some of his own religious convictions. A thinker who speaks from an explicit standpoint of religious belief can quickly appear partisan, uncritical, and worse still, self-

righteous and judgemental. So forcing Taylor to develop his religious position runs the risk of obscuring his project of generosity and reconciliation.

But this reluctance is countered by another consideration: Taylor's subtlety with respect to his own position can also be obscure. His rhetoric, and his style of veiling prescriptive concerns behind descriptive passages, often leaves us uncertain as to where he really stands on a given issue. And there are certain philosophical debates in which even Taylor cannot avoid taking a stand, cannot avoid siding with one camp against another. His refusal to do so at important points, or at least his elusiveness on some defining issues, has led to considerable confusion and controversy among his commentators. These issues are as modern and pressing as abortion, and as traditional as the status of God in the philosophical search for truth. They demand a stand.

So if there is generosity in Taylor's silence at certain points, there is also confusion, perhaps as a necessary correlative. But if Taylor himself were forced to adjudicate on this issue, he would have to favour clarification over generosity. Taylor is strongly committed to a project of disclosure and to the explicit stating of ontologies. There is, therefore, a justification internal to Taylor's own position for the focus and concerns of this thesis. Or to turn the point around, this thesis enters into an immanent critique of Taylor's own avowed commitment to disclosure, and seeks to honour Taylor's commitment with respect to the role of religious faith in his philosophy.

The thesis consists of the following.

Chapter One demonstrates that Taylor's philosophy is post-metaphysical. The chapter first clarifies what this notion entails, and then proceeds to show how it is given expression through three key areas of Taylor's thought: his anti-foundationalism; his transcendental argument for inescapable frameworks; and his conception of dialogical selfhood.

Chapter Two turns to consider the role of religious faith in his philosophy. It attempts to combine his hermeneutical best account principle with theological, ethical, and political manifestations of his notion of affirmation into an overall picture of his faith. It then steps back from these particulars, examines the difficulty his faith presents to the interpreter, and argues that this difficulty is itself philosophically significant.

Chapter Three relates Taylor's post-metaphysical standpoint to his religious faith. Specifically, the following areas of tension and conflict are examined: anti-foundationalism and the best account principle; anti-foundationalism and the ethics of affirmation; transcendental frameworks and the best account principle; dialogical selfhood and the dilemma of mutilation; and non-exclusivity and the best account principle. The chapter concludes that Taylor's attempted combination of faith and post-metaphysical thought is unpersuasive.

It is possible, of course, that the thesis misrepresents or misunderstands Taylor's position in some important respects. But any such distortions (it is hoped) arise as reasonable inferences from what Taylor does say, and

underscore at least what remains to be argued out and clarified in his position. To this extent even reasonable distortions are useful, in that they make explicit the lacunae that must be filled before Taylor's position achieves internal coherence and unity.

At the end of *Sources*, Taylor acknowledges that a proper argument on the relation between his religious faith and his view of modernity "would take another book". If this thesis achieves its purpose, it will reveal the importance of that task for the legacy of Taylor's philosophy.

## Chapter One

The term metaphysics has various meanings in philosophy. For the purposes of this thesis, metaphysics should be taken in its traditional sense, as referring to that mode of philosophy which develops a conception of reality from the ground or foundation of a first principle. This chapter will show that Taylor regards this mode of philosophy as no longer possible or desirable, and we will consider the mode of philosophy he endorses in its place.

It is easy to make the mistake of assuming that Taylor is a metaphysician, given several tendencies of his writings: his ongoing work of retrieving and rediscovering the ideas of metaphysical thinkers, his capacity to identify hidden metaphysical influences on contemporary ideals and aspirations, and his adherence to religious faith, which is commonly associated with traditional metaphysics. But while these connections help establish Taylor as a thinker concerned with the metaphysical tradition, they do not make him a metaphysical thinker. The assumption here is an unwarranted inference from a recurring interest in metaphysical themes to an identification with its underlying assumptions—metaphysics by association, in other words.

A few examples will demonstrate how the mistake is easy to make. In his well-known paper “The Politics of Recognition”, Taylor comments that “[t]he politics of equal dignity is based on the idea that all humans are equally worthy of respect. It is underpinned by a notion of what in human beings commands

respect, however much we may try to shy away from this 'metaphysical' background"<sup>2</sup>. Here Taylor is pointing to the hidden metaphysical influence on a powerful contemporary idea. Similarly, in a paper entitled "Foucault on Freedom and Truth", Taylor rediscovers the traditional metaphysics of the will against Foucault's attempt to move beyond it: "Can we really step outside the identity we have developed in Western civilization to such a degree that we can repudiate all that comes to us from the Christian understanding of the will? Can we toss aside the whole tradition of Augustinian inwardness?"<sup>3</sup> Other examples are easily found<sup>4</sup>. But Taylor can provide the metaphysical background of an idea, or suggest moderns are in some way indebted to the metaphysical tradition, without thereby committing himself to the foundational or first-principle metaphysical paradigm.

So these tendencies of Taylor's thought do not make him a metaphysician, only a thinker concerned with metaphysics. This distinction can be reinforced by a stronger demonstration on the obverse side: while associative passages do not make Taylor a metaphysician, other elements of his writing clearly do establish him as a post-metaphysical thinker.

As with so many philosophers writing after the transcendental, revolutionary and linguistic critiques of traditional metaphysics, Taylor regards the first-principle approach to philosophy as no longer possible or desirable. As we will discover, this single point of difference would be enough to establish Taylor as beyond the metaphysical tradition. Yet we will also see that the case

for Taylor as a post-metaphysical thinker can be reinforced by examining his transcendental argument for inescapable frameworks in his *Sources of the Self*, and his hermeneutical conception of dialogical selfhood. His transcendental argument precludes any conception of metaphysical reality, and his conception of dialogical selfhood undercuts the metaphysical notion of human identity or essence. This chapter will establish Taylor's post-metaphysical status by examining each of these three important and related elements of his thought; as we work through them, we will also arrive at a rudimentary picture of Taylor's mature philosophical project as a whole.

### I. Anti-Foundationalism

In his paper "Overcoming Epistemology"<sup>5</sup>, Taylor vigorously opposes a mode of philosophy which he calls "foundationalism". Taylor argues that foundationalism involves the mistaken view that "knowledge is ... correct representation of an independent reality". He maintains that this understanding of knowledge fails to take account of the strong interpretive component in all human knowledge, and as such, is an "untenable construal" which must be overcome. He argues that thinkers like Hegel, Heidegger, Kant, Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty succeed in showing us that certain conditions of our experience—our situatedness, our engagement in the world, our agency as knowers—render the disengaged, foundationalist model an incoherent account of human knowledge.

Human knowledge *qua* human knowledge cannot be the correct representation of an independent reality. As Taylor writes:

The tremendous contribution of Heidegger, like that of Kant, consists in having focused the issue properly. Once this is done, we can't deny the picture that emerges. Even in our theoretical stance to the world, we are agents. Even to find out about the world and formulate disinterested pictures, we have to come to grips with it, experiment, set ourselves to observe, control conditions. But in all this, which forms the indispensable basis of theory, we are engaged as agents coping with things. It is clear that we couldn't form disinterested representations any other way. But once we take this point, then the entire epistemological position is undermined ... Foundationalism is undermined because you can't go on digging under our ordinary representations to uncover further, more basic representations. What you get underlying our representations of the world ... is not further representation but rather a certain grasp of the world that we have as agents in it.<sup>6</sup>

Notice that Taylor claims "the entire *epistemological* position" is undermined, and not the entire metaphysical position. Taylor specifically identifies the foundationalist approach with the epistemological tradition as inaugurated by Descartes and continuing to the present day; hence the title of his paper, "Overcoming Epistemology". But it is important for our purposes to recognize that Taylor's opposition to foundationalism at once amounts to a rejection of the first-principle ambitions of traditional metaphysics. Taylor writes that we have to adopt "a better and more critically defensible notion" of what it means that we are "knowing agents", and this new imperative means that we have to stop searching for "an impossible foundational justification of knowledge". If all foundational justifications for knowledge are impossible, then no first principle can serve to

ground or justify our knowledge of the world and our own role within it. Taylor insists that we have to stop “hoping to achieve total reflexive clarity about the bases of our beliefs”; the old metaphysical process of developing knowledge from the self-grounding necessity of an originary principle is uncovered as an illusion. In another passage, he puts it this way: “I certainly want to concur that our present tentativeness, *our loss of a rooted certainty, represents an epistemic gain* ... I don’t think there is such a thing as our epistemic predicament in relation to God, just sans phrase”.<sup>7</sup> Taylor is urging us past the Platonic Good, the Aristotelian unmoved mover, the Christian God, the Cartesian *cogito*, the linguistic foundationalism of Frege<sup>8</sup> and perhaps even past the feminist metaphysics of Charlotte Witt<sup>9</sup>—past all such originary or foundational justifications to a philosophical standpoint which is self-consciously beyond them.

For Taylor, a proper account of knowledge is now to be conceived in a less ambitious, more skeptical light—“as awareness about the limits and conditions of our knowing”.<sup>10</sup> Among these limits and conditions, we have to recognize that we are always already *engaged* or *situated* as historical, social, and linguistic beings in our knowledge of ourselves and the world. Taylor next describes how philosophy might progress in this new critical direction, beyond the illusions of disengagement and foundations:

... if we concentrate merely on the gain for reason in coming to understand what is illusory in the modern epistemological project and in articulating the insights about us that flow from this, then the claim to have taken the modern project of reason a little farther, and

to have understood our forebears a little better than they understood themselves, is not so unbelievable. What reflection in this direction would entail is already well known. It involves, first, conceiving reason differently, as including—alongside the familiar forms of the Enlightenment—a new department, whose excellence consists in our being able to articulate the background of our lives perspicuously. We can use the word 'disclosure' for this, following Heidegger.<sup>11</sup>

These few sentences provide us with Taylor's mature philosophical project in a nutshell. His writings disclose the background of our lives to overcome the illusions of disengagement which eclipse that background, and to make us more aware of the ontological and moral frameworks within which we deliberate and act.

We can look at virtually every element of Taylor's thought and find examples of this project of disclosure. Let us look at some examples. Turning first to his political writings, Taylor critiques doctrines of "atomic individuality", "radical doctrines of nonsituated freedom", and mainstream liberal ideas of political neutrality<sup>12</sup>. In *Hegel and Modern Society* Taylor writes:

Full freedom would be situationless ... The self which has arrived at freedom by setting aside all external obstacles and impingements is characterless, and hence without defined purpose, however much this is hidden by such seemingly positive terms as 'rationality' and 'creativity'. These are ultimately quite indeterminate as criteria for human action or mode of life. They cannot specify any content to our action outside of a situation which sets goals for us, which thus imparts a shape to rationality and provides an inspiration for creativity.<sup>13</sup>

Against this atomistic, situationless freedom, which Taylor dismisses as a “void in which nothing would be worth doing, nothing would deserve to count for anything,”<sup>14</sup> Taylor attempts to link the new project of disclosure with his communitarian emphasis on “situated freedom” and “the civic humanist tradition”. His paper “Cross Purposes: the Liberal-Communitarian Debate”, for example, invokes the civic humanist tradition against the unworkable neutrality of “procedural liberalism”.<sup>15</sup> Taylor rejects “procedural liberalism’s exclusion of a socially endorsed conception of the good” as “unrealistic” and inadvertently “ethnocentric” (manifesting a hidden secular liberal Western bias). Taylor draws on the civic humanist tradition against this model to show that patriotism “based on an identification with others in a particular common enterprise”<sup>16</sup> is both possible and desirable. And to support this line of reasoning—to return directly to the idea of disclosure—Taylor develops several important background issues; what he calls “the ontological issues of community and identity.”<sup>17</sup>

Not surprisingly, Taylor is critical of “moralities based purely on instrumental reason” like utilitarianism, and those based on a “thin” conception of the self, as with Rawls and other derivations from Kant. Taylor rejects other “atomist” and “reductive causal theories” like “vulgar Marxism” and “sociobiology”<sup>18</sup>. Taylor tries to make explicit the cultural and ontological horizons in the background to these moralities—horizons from which they are ostensibly free, and on which they depend in a hidden way. As Bernard Williams explains:

It may look sometimes as though our sense of what is valuable is described by a set of beliefs, when a system of moral philosophy or a political creed seems to sum up our outlook; but as Taylor brilliantly shows in several different connections, it is typical of such formulations that they fail to explain their own appeal.<sup>19</sup>

In the philosophy of science, Taylor offers critiques of genetic and computational models of psychology, in each case showing how a particular, reductive conception fails to capture crucial elements of our moral, interpretive nature as human beings<sup>20</sup>. In “What is Involved in a Genetic Psychology”, Taylor tries to show how concepts of “successful maturity” (in genetic psychology) “are the basis of arguments concerning how we should live”; and as such, “genetic psychology cannot avoid entering one of the domains traditionally written off by academic psychology as ‘philosophical’ ... cannot be thought of in the traditional sense as a ‘value-free’ science”.<sup>21</sup> Taylor argues that in order to adumbrate a theory of reasoning with given stages of psychological development, we must first have a general notion of the *direction* of development, and such a notion “is itself bound up with our idea of what mature human life and intelligence are ... we are operating implicitly with a concept of the *terminus ad quem* [terminus point] of human development, a concept of *successful maturity*” [italics mine].<sup>22</sup> The concept of “successful maturity” is a richly interpretive notion which has a stake in philosophical discussions concerning the good life.

In an analogous way, Taylor’s paper “Cognitive Psychology” takes aim at the attempt to explain human activity in terms of “some underlying process which resembles a computation”.<sup>23</sup> For Taylor computation cannot be an adequate

paradigm for understanding human activity, in the first place because “Wittgenstein and Polanyi have made us aware of this inescapable horizon of the *implicit* surrounding activity ... [a kind of] ‘tacit knowing’”,<sup>24</sup> but computation works according to explicit knowledge; “[t]here is nothing comparable to tacit knowledge in a machine”. Moreover, human beings are “self-interpreting animals”, meaning we cannot adequately describe a human being without incorporating the descriptions she is inclined to give of her “emotions, aspirations, desires, aversions”, etc.; in a word, her self-understanding.<sup>25</sup> A computer, by contrast—although it can *monitor* its own operations—is not similarly *constituted* by this function; we can adequately understand the operations of the computer apart from it. By disclosing crucial background features of human activity—our tacit knowledge and our self-understanding—Taylor tries to establish that the disengaged computationalist model is implausible.

Taylor’s greatest work of disclosure is his study of the human condition, *Sources of the Self*. With this example, we arrive at the second important place where Taylor’s status as a post-metaphysical thinker is reinforced: his transcendental argument for inescapable frameworks.

## II. The Transcendental Argument for Inescapable Frameworks

A transcendental argument moves from some putatively indisputable facet of human existence to an examination of the conditions which render this facet possible.<sup>26</sup> As it clarifies these conditions, the argument is able to offer insights into an important element of human existence. Before we consider the details of the transcendental argument Taylor employs in *Sources*, it will be useful to connect Taylor's support of transcendental arguments with his repudiation of metaphysics.

In his paper "On the Validity of Transcendental Arguments"<sup>27</sup>, Taylor provides a useful description of how they work:

The arguments I want to call 'transcendental' start from some feature of our experience which they claim to be indubitable and beyond cavil. They then move to a stronger conclusion, one concerning the nature of the subject or his position in the world. They make this move by a regressive argument, to the effect that this stronger conclusion must be so if the indubitable fact about experience is to be possible (and being so, it must be possible).<sup>28</sup>

Taylor identifies Kant as the originator of this form of argument, and he views thinkers like the later Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty as developing it further. It is no accident that all the thinkers who employ this mode of argument—including Taylor—regard themselves as beyond the metaphysical tradition.<sup>29</sup>

Transcendental arguments start from human experience instead of the foundation of a first principle; in this way they sidestep the realm of ontology. At the same time, transcendental arguments safeguard against a radical skepticism

which would suspend realist tendencies altogether, in that they still try to offer important insights about how human beings in fact experience and understand the world.

Transcendental arguments do not avoid the realm of ontology as a matter of distaste or strategy: the foundational approach of traditional metaphysics is *necessarily* beyond the purview of a transcendental discussion. A transcendental argument begins with some indubitable element of our own experience and infers back to the conditions of this experience. Of necessity, therefore, it can say nothing definitive about any reality which is held to be independent of our experience. Kant, Merleau-Ponty and the later Wittgenstein all acknowledge this built-in limitation of any transcendental argument. For each one, it is possible that the inescapable experience we have of the world involves a gross distortion of reality as it actually is. Even my language here is misleading, because part of the point of the transcendental approach is to show a conception of reality independent of our experience is impossible for us, since we can only know the world through our experience of it.<sup>30</sup> Or as Taylor discusses a transcendental argument in Merleau-Ponty:

... I certainly would like to argue that making clear what we are inescapably to ourselves is of relevance, even important relevance to the ontological issue. But it can't be claimed to decide it. Because the possibility remains open that what we are to ourselves may be in important ways misleading; that a deeper level explanation of the functioning of human beings might be based on quite other principles.<sup>31</sup>

By Taylor's own acknowledgment, the possibility remains that we are leading ourselves astray in a particular transcendental understanding, however inescapable. But this epistemic limitation does not render the transcendental insight invalid or trivial. It simply requires us to concede the *possibility*—as part of the overall argument—that we are “so constructed as to be subject to ... inescapable phenomenal illusions”.<sup>32</sup> Illusory or not, insight into the inescapable can illuminate other instances of explanation and understanding which conceal, deny, or overlook its role in human activity, deliberation and interpretation.

Having seen how a transcendental inescapability claim can never be a metaphysical claim, we are now in a position to appreciate how Taylor's transcendental argument in *Sources of the Self* reinforces his post-metaphysical position.

As he himself acknowledges, Taylor invokes all the steps of a transcendental argument in *Sources*.<sup>33</sup> Although the book is more complicated in its order, the transcendental argument within it works as follows. Taylor starts with the claim that human beings have identities—“i.e., a sense of ‘who they are’ that crucially takes the form of some orientation as to where they stand, what is more or less important to them, and so on”<sup>34</sup>. This claim is meant to serve as the starting point, the indubitable facet: “human beings can't be without identities”<sup>35</sup>.

Taylor then moves to his larger conclusion, that “what can amount for us to an orientation must involve *strong evaluation* [italics mine]”. He defines strong evaluation as “discriminations of right and wrong, better or worse, higher or

lower, which are not rendered valid by our own desires, inclinations, or choices, but rather stand independent of these and offer standards by which they can be judged".<sup>36</sup> The term *frameworks* is used interchangeably with *strong evaluation*.<sup>37</sup> In the course of the work Taylor examines the features of our strong evaluations or frameworks. To do so, he takes us back through pivotal developments in the history of the Western thought and culture.<sup>38</sup> Through his comprehensive work of retrieval Taylor wants to make an important claim about the nature of (modern) selfhood. If strong evaluations or frameworks are an inescapable facet of our lives as human beings, then we cannot be healthy human beings without them. In Taylor's words:

I want to defend the strong thesis that doing without frameworks is utterly impossible for us; otherwise put, that the horizons within which we live our lives and which make sense of them have to include these strong qualitative discriminations ... this is meant not just as a contingently true fact about human beings ... Rather the claim is that living within such strongly qualified horizons is constitutive of human agency, that stepping outside these limits would be tantamount to stepping outside what we would recognize as integral, that is, undamaged, human personhood.<sup>39</sup>

Since Taylor thinks we invariably operate within various frameworks in the course of our moral lives, it is not hard to see why he also thinks we owe it to ourselves to articulate the frameworks on which we depend. Beyond its clarifying power, Taylor supports articulation for two reasons: because it can enable us to better live by our frameworks and so empower us<sup>40</sup>, and because it could lead to a reconciliation of apparently competing goods.<sup>41</sup> Articulation consists in a retrieval

of the sources of our frameworks; retrieval clarifies by providing the original formulation and the evolutionary background to our contemporary qualitative discriminations and commitments.

Towards the end of the book, Taylor offers some personal reflections which go beyond the transcendental argument at its core, reflections which have elicited considerable scholarly discussion. Having investigated the features and sources of our frameworks, Taylor holds out the hope that this work of articulation and retrieval will help us sustain “our rather massive professed commitments to benevolence and justice”, and he acknowledges that this hope is animated by his own framework as a theist in the following much-cited passage:

I am obviously not neutral in posing these questions. Even though I have refrained (partly out of delicacy, but largely out of lack of arguments) from answering them, the reader suspects that my hunch lies towards the affirmative, that I do think naturalist humanism defective in these respects—or, perhaps better put, that great as the power of naturalist sources might be, the potential of a certain theistic perspective is incomparably greater ... But I recognize that pointed questions could be put in the other direction as well, directed at theistic views. My aim has been not to score points but to identify this range of questions which might sustain our rather massive professed commitments to benevolence and justice.

42

Commentators who assess *Sources* in the light of this concluding personal confession miss its central argument. For it is precisely in the distance between Taylor’s transcendental argument and his personal theism that we are able to see how *Sources* provides further evidence of Taylor’s post-metaphysical status.

Nowhere in Taylor's argument does he argue that God—or any other first principle—serves as the foundation or ground which explains why such frameworks are inescapable to us as human beings. Instead, in keeping with our discussion above of the difference between transcendental and metaphysical claims, the possibility must remain in Taylor's argument that such frameworks are no more than constructed illusions about the actual functioning and nature of human beings. In the language of Taylor's Merleau-Ponty paper, the idea of selfhood as involving inescapable frameworks may be no more than an obstacle to our deeper understanding of how we function.

In fact, it is precisely because Taylor's argument cannot address the metaphysical issue that he is forced to confess a personal note of hope at the end of the work. Much as Taylor hopes that Merleau-Ponty's claim for embodied agency has ontological significance in spite of the possibility of distortion, here he is equally forced to hope that his own insight into inescapable frameworks will sustain certain moral commitments instead of others. Needing a reason to account for this hope somehow, Taylor falls back on the personal and external matter of his faith.

Taylor is quite explicit in his insistence that the frameworks themselves are not meant to serve as a metaphysical ground, nor are they supported by one. In one passage, for example, Taylor takes up the question of how our forms of strong evaluation are binding on us, or to put it another way, how we justify them to ourselves. In response, he rules out both a metaphysical justification and a

purely subjective endorsement as opposite extremes, urging instead a hermeneutical justification down the middle: “there is a “third possibility” between “an extra-human ontic foundation for the good on the one hand”, and “the pure subjectivism or arbitrarily conferred significance on the other”. This third possibility is “of a good which is inseparable from our best self-interpretation”.<sup>43</sup> In Chapter Two and Three we will explore what Taylor means by endorsing this hermeneutical emphasis on self-interpretation. Our point here is simply to see that Taylor is explicit in eschewing metaphysics as the basis for frameworks. From all that we have said above about transcendental arguments, however, we should expect nothing else.

### III. Dialogical Selfhood

The final manifestation of Taylor’s post-metaphysical outlook to consider in this chapter is his conception of dialogical selfhood. In his paper “The Dialogical Self”, Taylor argues that “human beings are *constituted* in conversation [italics mine]”<sup>44</sup>. If this statement appears innocuous, in fact it involves a profound repudiation of the metaphysical notion of human identity.

Taylor’s argument for the centrality of dialogue or conversation again returns us to his critique of the disengaged construal of being and knowledge and his philosophy of disclosure. In this particular discussion, Taylor is heavily indebted to such post-metaphysical thinkers as Gadamer and Wittgenstein, from whom he accepts the linguistic displacement of the metaphysics of identity.

As Taylor acknowledges, his argument for dialogical selfhood involves a “transformed understanding of language”. This is a crucial point. What is significant in Taylor’s argument is not simply that dialogue is central within it. One can, after all, think of earlier metaphysicians for whom dialogue is integral to the *form* of the argument, such as Plato and Augustine.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, as Taylor points out, even the isolated religious hermit is engaged in a kind of dialogue with God as his interlocutor.<sup>46</sup> But Plato and Augustine do not maintain that human identity is created in dialogue—it is merely given expression through it. And undoubtedly the religious hermit understands his prayer life in a similar way: he can only engage in a dialogue with God because his identity as a spiritual creature is already given, even prior to his discovery of faith or practice of prayer.

Taylor’s transformed conception of language abandons the monological conception of the agent “primarily as the locus of representations”—recalling his opposition to foundationalism—and instead views the self as one primarily “engaged in practices, as a being who acts in and on a world”. Again Taylor is arguing that our understanding of the world is more inarticulate than articulate, more engaged than representative, more a function of practice than the manifestation of a determinate or preexisting state of affairs.

Where traditional metaphysics regards human beings as possessing an essence or identity antecedent to their particular practices, this dialogical view maintains that “our understanding resides first of all in our practices”.<sup>47</sup> In this view there is no independent essence, identity, form, monad, substratum, or

substance to human being. There is only the “interanimation of ... voices”<sup>48</sup> in conversation. Since human beings are constituted by the largely inarticulate and contingent practices of conversation, they cannot have an identity prior to or isolable from these practices. Rather their identity is shaped through these practices. As such, no foundational claim about an independent human identity or reality is possible. As the commentator Timothy O’Hagan observes in another context, the consequence of Taylor’s position is that “any existence claims expressed in propositions with truth values are banished”.<sup>49</sup>

For Gadamer and Wittgenstein, and now also for Taylor, the emphasis on practice is not accidentally opposed to the older metaphysics. It is precisely an attempt to move beyond it. As an example, the Wittgensteinian conception of practice entails that terms have meaning solely through the use of language; in other words, he liberated coherent meaning from the metaphysical attempt to identify the essence or identity underlying each meaningful term. In his own form of transcendental argument, Wittgenstein argued that meanings of words were related as family members resemble each other: difficult to say what features they all have in common, but the overall resemblance is undeniable.<sup>50</sup>

Wittgenstein’s aim was partly to silence what he regarded as the incessant and futile attempts of metaphysicians to uncover the root identity or essence which supposedly gave various objects and ideas their meaning and significance. He urged us to see instead that there is no identity or essence for an object apart

from the various meanings which evolve in practice—a strongly post-metaphysical claim.

Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* provides useful illustrations of this attempt to liberate meaning from metaphysics. The work begins with a critique of St. Augustine's systematic conception of language, in which every word has a meaning, and propositions derive their truth values from the correspondence of these words and the objects they signify. Wittgenstein argues that Augustine's conception "is the idea of a language more primitive than ours ... Augustine ... does describe a system of communication; only not everything that we call language is this system".<sup>51</sup>

In a similar way, Wittgenstein takes issue with the Hegelian-Marxist notion of *self-identity*. In Hegel's metaphysical account human beings can be alienated from or reconciled to their true nature (*self-alienation* and *self-identity*). Marx's arguments for overcoming self-alienation and estrangement might also be said to presuppose a determinate human nature, or *species being*. But Wittgenstein's transformed conception, which inverts the relation between language and identity, rejects these quaint older conceptions wholesale:

A thing is identical with itself'.—There is no finer example of a useless proposition, which is yet connected with a certain play of the imagination. It is as if in imagination we put a thing into its own shape and saw that it fitted.<sup>52</sup>

Gadamer also evinces the post-metaphysical priority of linguistic practice over identity. For him, language is much more than a mirror or tool for consciousness. It is the all-encompassing medium of human understanding, to which nothing can be prior:

Language is not one of the means by which consciousness is mediated with the world ... Language is by no means simply an instrument, a tool ... Such an analogy is false because we never find ourselves as consciousness over against the world and, as it were, grasp after a tool of understanding in a wordless condition. Rather, in all our understanding of ourselves and in all knowledge of the world, we are always already encompassed by the language that is our own. ... [It is foolish to try and] suspend in some artificial way our very enclosedness in the linguistic world in which we live.<sup>53</sup>

We can only think within language, so even metaphysical identity claims must be subsequent to our linguistic practices. It is clear that Taylor's dialogical conception owes much to Gadamer alongside Wittgenstein<sup>54</sup>. As Taylor writes in his paper 'Comparison, History, Truth':

understanding on this Gadamer view is always, in one way, from a limited perspective. When we struggle to get beyond our limited understanding we struggle not toward a liberation from this understanding as such ... but towards a wider understanding which can englobe the other undistortively. Gadamer uses the image of a conversation, where in [the] face of mutually strange reactions the interlocutors strive to come to some common mind ... Of course, in many cases the other can't talk back. But the image of a conversation conveys how the goal is to reach a common language, common human understanding, which would allow both us and them undistortively to be.<sup>55</sup>

As with Wittgenstein and Gadamer, so Taylor's views the self as constituted in dialogue: there is no identity or essence of the self apart from linguistic practice; in his words: "the self neither preexists all conversation, as in the old monological view; nor does it arise from an interjection of the interlocutor; but it *arises* within conversation [*italics mine*]"<sup>56</sup> A human being is not a human being apart from a linguistic community, nor does it make sense to try and understand ourselves through such a disengaged construal. Or as Taylor develops the point in 'The Politics of Recognition':

[A] crucial feature of human life is its fundamentally dialogical character. We become full agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence of defining our identity, through our acquisition of rich human languages of expression ... People do not acquire the languages needed for self-definition on their own. Rather, we are introduced to them through interaction with others who matter to us ... Moreover this is not just a fact about [the genesis of the human mind], which can be ignored later on ... We *define our identity* always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us [*italics mine*].<sup>57</sup>

We have been able to demonstrate how Taylor is a post-metaphysical thinker by examining some of the key ideas of his mature philosophy. In each of the three related areas we considered—his critique of foundationalism, his argument for inescapable frameworks, and his conception of dialogical selfhood—Taylor has attempted to "articulate the background of our lives perspicuously"<sup>58</sup> In each case, these articulations seek to show the indispensable role of interpretation and situatedness in our understanding of the

world. But in starting and ending with these contextual considerations, Taylor places his own thought beyond the ordinary and foundational ambitions of all traditional metaphysics.

## Chapter Two

It is well known that Taylor the individual is a Roman Catholic and a Christian, but commentators have been too hasty in identifying his writings with these personal affiliations. Judith Shklar, for example, asserts the following:

Although [*Sources*] is ecumenical to a fault, in that it tends to blur the distinctions between Jewish and Christian beliefs and between the various forms of Protestantism, it is essentially a work of *Catholic* philosophy. That is what gives it its great interest, especially for a reader who does not share a single one of Taylor's assumptions, reactions, or conclusions.<sup>59</sup>

Shklar does not substantiate her claim with a comparison of Catholic philosophy and Taylor's arguments; she is content to make the assertion by itself, presumably on the basis of what is already known about Taylor the individual. Bernard Williams similarly associates Taylor with Catholicism without ever explaining what he means: "... for [Taylor] is a Catholic, and his book is, to a significant degree, a Catholic tale: indeed, it is a *more distinctively Catholic tale*, I am going to suggest, than Taylor wants it to be".<sup>60</sup> David Braybrooke's claim is more general but equally careless: "Taylor inclines to think just one source will do: God".<sup>61</sup>

In fact the role of faith in Taylor's philosophy is a subtle, even elusive matter. Any responsible exegesis of Taylor's faith must acknowledge that his usual clarity and capacity for detail is absent here. Yet an overall picture of the

place of faith in Taylor's philosophy remains possible, as this chapter attempts to show.

The argument proceeds in two steps. First, it identifies discrete yet related hermeneutical, theological, ethical and political themes across Taylor's scattered and elliptical religious discussions. Second, and following on these circumscribed discussions, the chapter examines the interpretive difficulty that Taylor sets for readers who would understand his faith, and argues that this very elusiveness is itself possessed of philosophical significance. By examining Taylor's religious discussions in light of their elusiveness, the chapter will arrive at a picture of how his faith figures in his philosophy as a whole.

### I. The 'Best Account' Principle

Taylor invokes his "best account" principle to explain *why* he believes in God. It is not meant to serve as a defense or an argument that will persuade others to assent to the same view. The fullest explanation Taylor provides for his faith by means of the best account principle is as follows:

My account does give a kind of primacy to our moral and spiritual experiences. Someone will believe in the God of Abraham because God figures in his/her best account. I believe in God, because I sense something which I want to describe as God's love and affirmation of the world, and human beings. I see this refracted in the lives of exceptional people, whom I'll call for short saints, as well as hearing faint echoes in my own prayer life. Of course, the last few sentences are an extremely oversimplified and schematic account of the confused searching, alternation of doubt and confidence, hope and despair, which actually constitute what one

might call my spiritual life. But it may suffice to bring out certain typical features of religious faith.

What I believe in is what figures in my best account of the world, history, and my experience as a moral and spiritual being, but what figure in this account are experience-transcendent things. The God who figures in my account is not a function of my experience, although of course my belief in him, access to him, is.<sup>62</sup>

Taylor is saying here that a religious best account can avoid intellectual surrender, and that a meaningful middle exists between spiritual whimsy and rigid fundamentalism. In Taylor's view, best accounts ought to provide a space for what he calls "personally indexed visions,"<sup>63</sup> although he recognizes that the personal dimension entails that some visions will be more full-blooded and substantive than others. In general terms, fundamentalists distinguish themselves from 'modern' or 'liberal' believers in their emphasis on the transcendent, ahistorical character and sacred authority of scripture.<sup>64</sup> To such a disagreement Taylor answers that the best account is only meant to explain *why* we believe what we do, and not *what* we believe: "One mustn't confuse the epistemological level with the substantive one ... My thesis claims to be about what actually makes one's spiritual outlook plausible to one."<sup>65</sup> Taylor also recognizes that, in the ecumenical religious context, some best accounts are far more admirable than others: "Certain positions seem shallow, others bogus, others frankly evil. One sees this as one looks across the range of cults available in our society today ... But the number of spiritualities which command our profound respect is plural; of that there is little doubt".<sup>66</sup>

Taylor is drawing on the tradition of hermeneutics when he invokes the idea of the best account. A best account, in fact, may be regarded as a form of the hermeneutic idea of prejudice. If we briefly consider Gadamer's discussion of prejudice, we will better grasp what Taylor means by the best account principle.

According to Gadamer, we all have prejudices.<sup>67</sup> We only tend to associate prejudices with those groups in whom prejudging is most explicit, and the term has undoubtedly taken on a pejorative sense. For Gadamer, however, prejudice is the necessary precondition of *all* interpretation. Those who think of themselves as free of prejudice are caught in a positivist conceit that fails to recognize the way in which they think and act as interpretive beings. The idea of prejudice—and with it the best account principle—resists the idea that there can be a 'View from Nowhere'<sup>68</sup>; or to recall older notions, an Archimedean point or perspective *sub specie aeternitatis*. Just as importantly, prejudices *qua* prejudices should not be seen as negative—which is not to ignore that some prejudices are abhorrent, but they are abhorrent because they are indefensible prejudices, not because they are prejudices as such. As Gadamer explains:

Prejudices are not necessarily unjustified and erroneous, so that they inevitably distort the truth ... Prejudices are biases of our openness to the world ... The nature of the hermeneutical experience is not that something is outside and desires admission. Rather, we are possessed by something *and precisely by means of it we are opened up for the new, the different, the true.*<sup>69</sup>

Compare Gadamer's notion that "we are possessed by something" with Taylor's epistemic claim for the primacy of experience, captured by his notion of the best account. Taylor writes that "[t]he God who figures in my best account is not a function of my experience, although of course my belief in him, access to him, is".<sup>70</sup> A believer is possessed by the experience of God, and is prompted to investigate a particular religious faith more fully. Gadamer's claim that prejudices are biases of our openness to the world is captured by Taylor's insistence that

[t]here is in particular a lot of trust in anyone's spiritual life, unbelieving or believing. For instance, we are moved by the lives of what we see as exceptional people, and we find ourselves drawn to accept, in order to deepen and explore further, what they offer as *their* best accounts. Or we have a more diffuse sense that there is some wisdom, some deeper understanding of human life, in the ways of a given community, ours or some other. We join this, or remain in it, in the hope and trust that we can become more deeply rooted in this understanding. So when I speak of 'my' best account, I don't mean one that I would identify as totally self-generated. I just mean the one which in fact makes the most sense to me.<sup>71</sup>

So for Gadamer and Taylor we all have prejudices even if we do not all have the same prejudices. A belief in God is part of Taylor's prejudice as he interprets the world, history and his own experience, just as many of his philosophical colleagues will interpret the world, history and their own experiences from an atheistic bias. In a recent work, Thomas Nagel recognizes that atheism is itself a powerful prejudice of contemporary intellectual life, and he 'comes clean' on the extreme role it plays in his own intellectual life:

In speaking of the fear of religion, I don't mean to refer to the entirely reasonable hostility toward certain established religions and institutions ... I am talking about something much deeper— namely the fear of religion itself. I speak from experience, being strongly subject to this fear myself: I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that I hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that.<sup>72</sup>

Nagel proceeds to describe the situation as “ridiculous” and the fear “irrational”.<sup>73</sup>

But his position can be seen to have more integrity if it is understood as another instance of the best account principle at work: in Nagel's best account of the world, history and his experience as a moral and spiritual being, atheism seems far more compelling, more persuasive, than the claims of religion, and so he fears the less persuasive account is true. The notion that prejudice is the precondition of all interpretation restores more credibility to Nagel's position than he himself allows as one who wants to jettison it as intellectually irresponsible.

Against Nagel and with Gadamer, Taylor wants to insist that a best account does not work against our capacity to receive “the new, the different, the true”—it is rather, as we have seen, the precondition of such interpretive moments. Precisely because the superlative ‘best’ involves comparison, critical evaluation and judgement, the principle is meant to imply a form of willing and evolving belief, and not an externally legislated and “imperiously binding”<sup>74</sup> package of assumptions which is either accepted or rejected *in toto* by the subject.

## II. The Theology of Affirmation

Notwithstanding his general silence on such matters, there is one theological idea to which Taylor returns repeatedly in his writings: the idea of *affirmation*. We have already encountered one reference to this idea in his discussion of the best account principle quoted above; that Taylor believes in God because he senses something he wants to describe as “God’s love and affirmation of the world, and human beings.” In his prognosis for modernity at the end of *Sources of the Self*, Taylor writes:

There is a large element of hope. It is a hope that I see implicit in Judaeo-Christian theism (however terrible the record of its adherents in history), and in its central promise of a divine *affirmation* of the human, more total than humans can ever attain unaided.<sup>75</sup>

In another passage, Taylor repeats the theme:

The issue is: what kind of *affirmation* can one make? I don't want to prejudge this. I have a hunch that there is a scale of affirmation of humanity by God which cannot be matched by humans rejecting God. But I am far from having proof. Let's try to see.<sup>76</sup>

Leaving aside Taylor’s strange recourse to empirical verification in the last passage (or more generously, viewing it as an invitation to dialogue), it is clear that the idea of affirmation is richly suggestive and compelling for him. We will

now identify related theological, ethical and political expressions of this central idea of Taylor's faith.

### **Affirmation and Creation**

The first and most obvious meaning of affirmation in Taylor's sense is in God's creation of the world, which is especially significant in the Judeo-Christian theological tradition. The issue of creation as affirmation is a key dividing point between the natural reason of ancient Greek philosophy and the medieval philosophers who were forced to contend with the claims of Biblical revelation. For Plato and Aristotle, the very notion that the world could have a beginning was seen as an affront to the inherent perfection of the Good or the unmoved mover. It was regarded as such an affront because for God (in shorthand) to *begin* creation, there would have to be a time *before* creation in which it either had not occurred to God to create the world, or in which God first thought it a bad idea and subsequently changed its mind. If God could lack or change an idea, then God is a less than perfect being. The ancients identified perfection with completeness, and creation implied a deficiency, an inadequacy, a being with an imperfect understanding. To resolve the dilemma between the perfection of God and the created order, the ancients were forced to posit that creation never had a beginning—that God and creation were co-eternal.<sup>77</sup>

The Book of Genesis, however, explicitly claims that the world has a beginning<sup>78</sup>, and so made impossible this solution to the dilemma. Jewish and Christian philosophers therefore attempted to reconcile creation and God's

perfection in other ways. One such alternative solution is found in the writings of Thomas Aquinas. In a nutshell, Aquinas argued that time itself is a created good; since there was no time before creation, God did not engage in finite reflection before stumbling across the idea of creation, and therefore did not change His mind or lack an idea before He created the world. As Thomas argues against Aristotle:

... it is evident that the argument which [Aristotle presents] here to prove that time is eternal is not demonstrative. For if we suppose that at some moment time began to be, it is not necessary to assume a prior moment except in imaginary time; just as when we say that there is no body outside of the heavens, what we mean by 'outside' is merely an imaginary something. Hence, just as it is not necessary to posit some place outside of the heavens, even though 'outside' seems to signify place, so too neither is it necessary that there be a time before time began or a time after time will cease to be, even though before and after signify time.<sup>79</sup>

Yet the notion that creation had a beginning opened up another possibility for believers—one that for them revealed an important feature of God's character, and one which will help us understand the theological import of Taylor's idea of affirmation. If creation and God are not co-eternal, then creation is an act of God's will. For believers, such an act of will is revelatory of God's love of the world and human beings. By the very act of creation—a totally unnecessary act from the divine standpoint—God reveals to human beings that He is affirming the world. This affirmation is reinforced in the Book of Genesis where God, looking on creation, sees that it is "good"<sup>80</sup>. If God is perfectly self-

sufficient without the world and nevertheless wills the world and human beings into existence, then creation is a free gift from God: as Boethius would have it, it is an “ungrudging” act<sup>81</sup> of affirmation. Human beings are affirmed further by being created in the image of God, meaning that we also have free will.<sup>82</sup>

All this is directly related to Taylor’s faith as it finds expression in his philosophy. In *Sources of the Self*, Taylor repeatedly cites the passage from the Book of Genesis where God sees that the world is good, and he interprets this passage as an injunction for believers to recognize that God is affirming the world, and to imitate God in similarly seeing the good of the world:

The original Christian notion of *agape* is of a love that God has for humans which is connected with their goodness as creatures ... Human beings participate through grace in this love. There is a divine affirmation of the creature, which is captured in the repeated phrase in Genesis I about each stage of the creation, ‘and God saw that it was good’. Agape is inseparable from such a seeing good.<sup>83</sup>

Similarly, when God creates human beings, He sees that they are “very good.”<sup>84</sup> So the first instance of “affirmation” for Taylor appears in the very act of creation and then in the ongoing reality of the created order.

As for God’s affirmation of human beings beyond their creation and free will, Taylor invokes in the above passage the lives of ‘exceptional people’, and ‘faint echoes’ in his prayer life. If we ignore Taylor’s modest (or even doubting) language of “faint echoes”, he is indicating that he believes God affirms human beings by playing a continuing, integral role in their lives. This belief stands in

contrast, for example, to the Epicurean view that the gods are indifferent to lowly mortals<sup>85</sup>, or the Platonic requirement that the philosopher return to the cave after glimpsing the good<sup>86</sup>, or the Aristotelian view that interaction with the divine is a life too high for even the philosopher, who could only know it fleetingly<sup>87</sup>. Fully aware that secular humanists will find another explanation for their activity, Taylor refers to the inspired lives of such figures as Mother Theresa, Jean Vanier and Martin Luther King as revealing God's affirmation of human beings by imparting his grace to them, and transforming them through His love.<sup>88</sup>

This notion of God's affirmation of creation and human beings has more to do with Taylor's overall philosophical outlook than is evident at first, and perhaps than has hitherto been recognized by scholars. It is one of the principal reasons why Taylor rejects Hegel's metaphysics, as we shall see.

### **Affirmation and the Rejection of Hegel's Metaphysics**

Just as the Judeo-Christian claim that creation has a beginning stood as an affront to the ancient conception of God, so Hegel's conception of creation represents a transgression to many Jewish and Christian believers, including Taylor. Although the Hegelian philosophy attempts to sum up and complete earlier reflections on metaphysics and philosophy of religion, Taylor regards it as a direct affront to the central Judeo-Christian notion of God's affirmation. Forced to choose between the two, Taylor rejects the Hegelian account.<sup>89</sup>

For Hegel, the act of creation is in some sense "necessary" for God: in Hegel's language, it is a necessary moment in the divine self-explication.<sup>90</sup> There

are medieval precedents for this form of argument, but Taylor distinguishes them from Hegel's account, which he regards as singularly hubristic. Hegel attempts to explain the thinking of God before the act of creation, and argues that "Without the world God is not God."<sup>91</sup> For Taylor, the strong notion of necessity underlying Hegel's account betrays the idea of creation as affirmation—or in our earlier terms, as a free gift from a purely self-sufficient being.

In an interview,<sup>92</sup> Taylor was asked to reconsider Hegel's notion of divine self-explication as *continuing* the medieval sense of necessity, which might cast it in a different light and render it compatible with Christian theology after all.

Taylor's revealing answer is as follows:

... there's no doubt that Hegel himself thought he was doing that, but what I think is wrong is .. that it's one thing for ... a great mystic like Eckhart or Jacob Boehme to make some statement of this kind, in order to give some flash of insight about God and God's relation to human beings in the world, but in the original context in which people like Eckhart and Boehme made this, the surrounding understanding was 'we really don't understand anything about God, but these are flashes that seem to us to make clear some truths, and we put them forward in that spirit.' It's quite another thing to have this almost imperialistic conception of reason as conceptual necessity by which when you get to philosophical clarity you can show that everything unfolds in the way it absolutely has to unfold and couldn't be otherwise, and then, with this total self-clarity and self-explication of everything, to claim that that is what captures the nature of God. We now have what looks like a superficially similar claim to Eckhart put forward in this mind-bendingly imperialist, and I think presumptuous mode of having shown that by the very necessity of things, God has to be 'like this.' And I just think that that's a step outside of the entire understanding of our relation to God, our epistemic relation to God throughout the whole of Judeo-Christian, Islamic theism. Central to it is an idea that God is in the final analysis not comprehensible, and that the intellect can't

encompass it. And so he's talking about something else then, and to put it very polemically, the God of Hegel is something else than the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Like Pascal, "Le Dieu de les philosophes est non le Dieu de l'Abraham, Isaac et Jacob." I think that's my Pascalian reaction. So ... you see my claim that in spite of superficial similarity to some of these statements it's a very different speech act.<sup>93</sup>

At first blush Taylor's objection seems superficial and psychological. Taylor seems to be saying that since Hegel has a hubristic *intent* in the sheer totality and unrelenting certainty of his explanation, his argument cannot be reconciled to the humility inherent in religious reflection. To take Taylor's objection to a philosophical level, however, we could say that he is invoking a conviction that Hegel should be silent on a matter that is *a fortiori* not accessible to philosophical proposition and argument,<sup>94</sup> in which case it is irrelevant whether Taylor's objection is motivated by reverence, anti-foundationalism, or both. Either way, this second reading would be consistent with Taylor's overall project as depicted in the first chapter, in which he urges us to move away from the knowledge claims of traditional metaphysics and develop a critical reason which is aware of the "limits and conditions of our knowing." And it enables us to view the objection as an important instance in which Taylor's best account principle ties in to his philosophical reflections. Since part of Taylor's best account involves a theology of affirmation as an act of love, Taylor is invoking his prejudice of faith against a depiction which would undermine this central theological idea. The Hegelian notion of necessity cannot be reconciled to the notion of creation as a free act of love, so Taylor refers to his best account in choosing between the two.

As we have seen, Taylor clearly entertains other novel ideas as within the dialectic of faith and understanding, but here he flatly regards Hegel's argument as a "step outside" orthodox monotheism, and refuses to accept it accordingly.

Taylor also insists (in his book on Hegel) that Hegel's conception of creation betrays orthodox theism:

theism looks on the world as created by a God who is separate and independent of the universe. This makes the idea readily understandable that the world is to be seen as designed, as having a structure dictated by purpose. But this cannot be accepted by Hegel, for it violates the principle of embodiment. A God who could exist without the world, without any external embodiment is an impossibility. Thus although Hegel takes up the notion of creation, as he takes up all Christian dogmas, he re-interprets it, and speaks of the creation as necessary. To say the world was created by God is to say that it exists necessarily so that *Geist* can be. It is to say the same thing as that *Geist* posits a world ... what it cannot mean is what it means for orthodox theism, that God created the world freely, having no need to do so. <sup>95</sup>

There is a certain irony in Taylor's rejection of Hegel—the last great metaphysician—for the sake of traditional religion. While Taylor's rejection of Hegel's metaphysics is at least partly motivated by his faith, it also reminds us of his post-metaphysical outlook. In the next chapter we will critically assess Taylor attempt to combine faith with a post-metaphysical position, and ask whether faith requires metaphysics after all.

### III. The Ethics of Affirmation

The idea of affirmation also supports Taylor's ethical reflections, although once again, he does not develop this connection at any length in his writings.<sup>96</sup>

As we saw above, Taylor's notion of affirmation involves the sense that God affirms both the world and human beings. In our discussion of Taylor's rejection of Hegel's metaphysics we explored the first part, God's affirmation of the world. It is here, in Taylor's critique of naturalist ethics, that we can elaborate on the second part, God's affirmation of human beings.

In Taylor's view, forms of affirmation are at work in both the naturalistic and the theistic perspectives on the human. For all his careful diplomacy, however, he clearly regards the theistic affirmation as more complete, and therefore more deserving of our endorsement. In *Sources*, Taylor asks whether the naturalist affirmation of the human is "conditional on a vision of human nature in the fullness of its health and strength," and he expresses concern that this kind of affirmation "does not move us to extend help to the irremediably broken, such as the mentally handicapped, those dying without dignity, fetuses with genetic defects." At this point Taylor acknowledges the role of faith in this ethical concern:

... the reader suspects that my hunch lies towards the affirmative, that I do think naturalist humanism defective in these respects -- or, perhaps better put, that great as the power of naturalist sources might be, the potential of a certain theistic perspective is incomparably greater.<sup>97</sup>

So part of the significance of religious affirmation for Taylor—and this returns us to his notion of exceptional people cited above—is that it moves people to protect society's weakest members where (in his view) the naturalist affirmation does not move people to do the same, or perhaps more precisely, does not move people in the same way. Without question, Mother Theresa's affirmation of the human is exceptional.<sup>98</sup> The order which she founded had to receive a special papal dispensation to add to the usual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience the command: "unremittingly' to seek out the poor, abandoned, sick and dying".<sup>99</sup> Believers and secularists who have met her describe an energy and resolve within her that they have never encountered in any other person. But it is important to recognize that precisely in and through the depth of her faith—in going beyond the kind of affirmation that most secularists (and believers) ever expect to make—Mother Theresa also represents a challenge to some important secular orthodoxies.<sup>100</sup> In her love for the unborn she opposes abortion. In her belief in the sanctity of life she opposes euthanasia on demand. In her spiritual view of sexual intercourse she opposes artificial birth control—and so on. So her exceptional affirmation may provoke an ambivalent response on the part of some secular liberals who will regard at least part of her position as intolerant and narrow, rather than extraordinarily compassionate and a reflection of the divine spirit working within her. In Chapter Three we will return to this discussion, and ask whether the Christian affirmation of the human, as best exemplified by saintly

religious figures like Mother Theresa, can be fully accounted for within Taylor's philosophy.

#### IV. The Politics of Affirmation

While Taylor believes the religious affirmation surpasses the naturalist in its capacity to care for society's weakest members, he also concedes that religion carries with it tremendous destructive potential as a political force. This destructive danger is one side of what Taylor calls the dilemma of "mutilation."<sup>101</sup> On this side of the dilemma, the radical hope of religion, the spiritual identification and expression of radical transformative possibilities for human life, can easily turn into dangerous political agendas.<sup>102</sup> On the other side, the suppression of radical hope to safeguard against the danger constitutes a kind of mutilation in its own right, since it involves "stifling the response in us to some of the deepest and most powerful spiritual aspirations that humans have conceived"; a materialist corruption of the spiritual, in other words.<sup>103</sup>

This dilemma of mutilation—suppression or destructive transformation—constitutes for Taylor "our greatest spiritual challenge," where the challenge is to escape *both* horns of the dilemma. He regards the dilemma as a challenge instead of an "iron fate," since he thinks we can avoid both forms of mutilation. He admits, however, that his recognition of a third possibility is largely motivated by hope, a hope he sees "implicit in Judeo-Christian theism." Beyond the impetus of hope, Taylor will argue that it is a mistake to think the good of

religion is invalid just because it *can* lead to destruction. He also argues that the danger will not disappear if religion is eliminated, since the phenomenology of radical hope can also find expression in secular agendas with an equally destructive potential.<sup>104</sup>

Beyond these two arguments, Taylor offers no reason why moderns ought to regard this dilemma as “our greatest spiritual challenge.” From what we have already seen, however, we know that Taylor thinks the fullest affirmation of the human includes a recognition of our spiritual aspirations, and clearly Taylor hopes we will share in this view of affirmation. If we did not, we might not regard the suppression of radical religious hope as a “mutilation” equivalent in significance to the destructive potential of religion.

While it is honest for Taylor to admit that he cannot offer many arguments for the acceptance of this challenge beyond his own religious prejudice, this position will clearly disappoint readers on either side of the religious divide. As we will discuss in Chapter Three, the issue of whether moderns need religion in order to sustain our capacity for radical hope is simply too important to be resolved in so tentative and personal a manner.

In the Jesuit journal *Compass*, Taylor offers a slightly different perspective on the issue of destruction and religion, possibly because he feels free to elaborate more candidly on his position for a religious audience. In an article entitled “Spirituality of Life—and Its Shadow,”<sup>105</sup> Taylor makes a case for religion that goes beyond the notions of affirmation and hope he discusses in *Sources*.

The additional step he takes is an attempt to make sense of the *root* of this destructive element of our political life. Taylor offers the following revealing explanation and antidote for the danger:

I am tempted to speculate here that the perennial human susceptibility to be fascinated by death and violence is at base a manifestation of our nature as *homo religiosus*. Most historical religion has been deeply intricated with violence, from human sacrifice down to intercommunal massacres, because most historical religion remains only very imperfectly oriented to the beyond. The religious affinities of the cult of violence are indeed palpable. From the point of view of someone who acknowledges transcendence, the ... antilife stance is one of the places our aspiration to transcend most easily goes when religion fails to take us there. Perhaps the only way fully to escape the draw towards violence lies somewhere in the full-hearted love of some good beyond life.<sup>106</sup>

But here Taylor has clearly stepped beyond the bounds of his argument in *Sources*. Now religion is not only the potential source of destruction, it is also the fullest antidote to it, if we agree that religious worship is implied in the “full-hearted love of some good beyond life.” But as we will consider in chapter three, this monistic solution to our greatest spiritual challenge is not only at odds with Taylor’s endorsement of pluralism, it is also unconvincing for believers and unbelievers alike.

## V. The Interpretive Difficulty

Throughout this expository discussion we have been forced to draw on a limited, often marginal series of religious discussions across Taylor’s work. The

limits of this exegesis occasion the reflection that one of the most important features of Taylor's faith is his reluctance to furnish it with any significant content<sup>107</sup>. As this remaining part of our expository discussion will demonstrate, Taylor's reticence to develop theological arguments is an important aspect of his faith in its own right.<sup>108</sup>

Several considerations justify the view that Taylor's refusal to develop arguments around his faith is philosophically significant. First, Taylor is a philosopher noted for his strong interdisciplinary approach and capacities. His writings address such subjects as the history of philosophy, epiphanic art<sup>109</sup>, ethics, hermeneutics, cultural pluralism and philosophical anthropology<sup>110</sup>; it is unclear why a thinker so capable of detailed reflection in these areas which overlap with religion cannot offer a sustained discussion of his faith. Second, Taylor is the great philosopher of disclosure, as we saw in Chapter One. He wants people to 'come clean' on their moral ontologies—"My plea is that we all finally put our ontologies where our (rhetorical) mouths are"<sup>111</sup>—and he believes it is good for people to articulate to themselves and others their strongest commitments in a spirit of openness and dialogue.<sup>112</sup> Taylor does not follow his own advice in these respects.

Finally, Taylor's faith *qua* faith cannot be a peripheral or trivial matter for him; as he himself tells us, God figures in his best account of the world, history, and his experiences as a moral and spiritual being<sup>113</sup>. When we combine Taylor's talent for intellectual versatility, his belief in articulation, and the importance of

faith in his worldview, his reticence in the realm of faith is highly conspicuous indeed.

Before turning to consider the possible explanations for this reticence, it will be worthwhile to develop the problem in one final and crucial respect: to clarify what we mean by religious faith. After all, the allegation that Taylor does not tell us much about the philosophical content of his religious faith is only significant if such a reflective articulation is possible in the first place. And there is a popular contemporary view of faith which regards it as *opposed to* philosophical reflection, as thriving on intellectual surrender, in which case it is clear enough why Taylor does not offer a philosophical articulation of his faith. Consider, for example, Wallace I. Matson's comments on the relation between early Christianity and reason:

Jesus was not a philosopher, nor were His disciples, nor was St. Paul—who warned the faithful to ‘beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit’. Christianity was a worldview based on revealed truth. Believers did not worry about whether it was reasonable or not, if indeed the question occurred to them. But when Christians attempted to convert more educated people, it became necessary to argue. However, not all persuasion is based on rational argument; indeed, some of the apologists (as those who tried to justify Christianity to the pagans are known) frankly exhorted their hearers to abandon the entire Greek heritage as heathenish ...<sup>114</sup>

Matson's view of Augustine reveals the same level of hermeneutic sensitivity:

So Augustine has a definite worldview, and one of the most influential in history. But was he a philosopher? If we go by the definition adopted in this book, a worldview is not enough; to be philosophical it must be defended by an appeal to reason, as distinguished from authority or tradition. Augustine's thought does not in general meet this requirement.<sup>115</sup>

This view of faith—as an irrational leap<sup>116</sup>—is captured well by the final scene of the movie “The Last Crusade”. Indiana Jones leaps into a seemingly bottomless abyss, acting on the faith that something will catch his fall, only to land on a (literal) pathway to eternal life. As this image suggests, the only way to get to the other side is to make the irrational leap on faith.

But even for believers who would accept the idea of a gap between faith and reason, reason is likely more at work than they themselves recognize.<sup>117</sup> And more than irrationality is certainly at work for those who self-consciously seek to understand their faith, especially among some of the philosophers who have given intellectual expression to their faith within the Western and other traditions.<sup>118</sup> A more generous conception of faith, at odds with the currently popular view, regards it as necessarily intertwined with reason, and in a rich and multifaceted way. The claim here is simply that even if Christian faith is held to be a false position, a sympathetic hermeneutic need not view it as irrational. The generous response of an atheist might be: I understand why faith figures in your best account, but I see greater explanatory power still in the atheistic alternative. It is this hermeneutic spirit which animates contemporary ecumenical discussions

among different faiths, and it is equally applicable in principle to the differences between atheism and theism.

We will return to this important interpretive issue in Chapter Three. For now, it is important to grant the possibility that a conception of faith which affords a central place to reason is possible. This richer conception finds expression in St. Augustine's definition of faith as "the inclination of the self towards the good as understood,"<sup>119</sup> or in Simone Weil's claim that "faith is the experience that the intelligence is illuminated by love".<sup>120</sup> These philosophers identify an important and continuing role for reason in the endorsement and nurturing of faith. If the first conception is captured by Indiana Jones irrational leap, the second is perhaps best summed up by the stance depicted in St. Anselm's phrase, "fides quaerens intellectum"<sup>121</sup>—faith seeking understanding. In taking up a position of religious faith, we do not abandon ourselves to an irrational world. We believe in order to understand; or again, we incline ourselves towards the good insofar as we understand it; or we discover that our intelligence is enhanced by our experience of love. In all these depictions, faith and reason are deeply interfused.

Now if Taylor's faith can be understood within the former depiction, then the omission is not conspicuous. If, however, his faith is understood within the latter portrayal, and so has a developed content and reflective dimension, then the omission is philosophically significant. For all the reasons offered above—Taylor's commitment to retrieval and philosophical articulation, his versatility, and the element of judgement implied by the best account

principle—we can quite reasonably infer that his faith is of the sort which employs reason in a thoroughgoing way, and is open in principle to philosophical examination on our part.

So let us try to make sense of the omission in a philosophical light. There are various possible explanations for this general silence: rhetorical strategy, reverence, genuine befuddlement, or some combination of these various elements. It will be worthwhile to consider each explanation in turn, because each has a certain explanatory power that will help us approach Taylor's faith as it can be known.

### **Rhetorical Strategy**

There is no doubt that Taylor is a skilled and conscious practitioner of rhetoric. As a thinker located within the hermeneutical tradition, Taylor accepts its view that rhetoric is not opposed to philosophy, but rather the means by which it can be persuasive to different audiences. Gadamer recognizes Plato as the first self-conscious exemplar of this approach:

Plato, going back behind all the shallow claims put forward by the contemporary teachers of rhetoric, had discovered a genuine foundation for rhetoric that only the philosopher, the dialectician, could carry out: the task is to master the faculty of speaking in such an effectively persuasive way that the arguments brought forward are always appropriate to the specific receptivity of the souls to which they are directed.<sup>122</sup>

Taylor follows Plato in his willingness to generate arguments geared to specific audiences, and perhaps this rhetorical strategy helps explain his reticence on the sensitive subject of religious belief.<sup>123</sup>

Simply put, Taylor may believe that his own credibility as a philosopher will be called into question if he says too much about his religious beliefs. If Taylor engages theological arguments which are found wanting by a skeptical audience, his other arguments could also become more suspect, since it might be assumed by many readers that the various discussions stand or fall together as part of his overall position.

A second consideration also applies. More often than not, Taylor's arguments are meant to engage his audience as a whole; to point to the assumptive world which all modern Westerners share. Theological discussion divides Taylor's audience into distinctive camps, when a recurring theme of his writings is to show how we are all moderns together: "To see the full complexity and richness of the modern identity is to see, first, how much we are all caught up in it, for all our attempts to repudiate it; and second, how shallow and partial are the one-sided judgements we bandy around about it."<sup>124</sup> Bernard Williams<sup>125</sup> and Ronald Beiner rightly identify Hegel as in the background to Taylor's many-sided approach; Beiner calls it the "theoretical strategy of *tout compris*".<sup>126</sup>

Even Taylor's limited discussion of his personal faith in *Sources* has provoked a decisive and occasionally vitriolic opposition, as we will consider in Chapter Three. Had Taylor ventured any further in this direction, he might have

provoked his audience even further. Taylor acknowledges this strategic consideration when he confesses that part of his refusal to offer theological arguments is a matter of “delicacy.”<sup>127</sup>

And this raises a final rhetorical possibility. Connected with his Hegelian aversion to one-sidedness, Taylor’s work is clearly animated by a hermeneutics of charity or generosity, as was alluded to in the Introduction. Numerous commentators—including Ronald Beiner, Bernard Williams, Jean Bethke Elshtain, and Michael Morgan—are struck by the sympathy in Taylor’s approach.<sup>128</sup> If Ricoeur is right in opposing a hermeneutics of faith to a hermeneutics of suspicion, Taylor clearly exemplifies the former. When he criticizes other thinkers, he takes pains to point out equally his admiration for their insights and contributions.<sup>129</sup> And when other thinkers challenge his own position, he responds with a discipline of gratitude and humility.<sup>130</sup>

So much is true of Taylor, but it does not resolve the interpretive difficulty. For there is a clear distinction between employing a rhetoric of understanding and generosity, and refusing to make arguments at all. The former would be defensible as part of a hermeneutical strategy. But Taylor, in spite of his commitment to philosophical articulation, seems more comfortable with the latter when it comes to his faith.

### **Reverence**

Taylor’s reticence could also be motivated by the very reverence of his faith. If his faith is animated by strong personal intuitions, he will hesitate to offer

arguments if he thinks the arguments will compromise or even debase the power of those intuitions. Indeed, Taylor's exposure to Heidegger and Iris Murdoch may have persuaded him that his faith is a mode of being which cannot be captured by finite propositions and polemical passages. In the case of Murdoch, as Taylor quotes her, the good is "non-representable" and "indefinable"<sup>131</sup>; for Heidegger, "the boundaries of the good, as we can grasp it, are set by that space which is opened in the fact that the world is there for us, with all the meanings it has for us—what Heidegger called the clearing".<sup>132</sup> Perhaps an awareness of these limiting conditions causes a kind of reverential silence on Taylor's part. In still another passage, Taylor emphasizes that his aim is not "to score points" on behalf of faith.<sup>133</sup> In all these ways he provides a possible reverential basis for limiting his work of articulation.

In a similar way, Dostoyevsky's depictions of faith through literature seem to have awed Taylor into thinking that any philosophical articulation he might attempt will fall short of Dostoyevsky's achievement, and by extension, do a disservice to its subject matter. In the passage where Taylor acknowledges his hunch that the divine affirmation is superior to the atheistic affirmation, for example, Taylor comments: "Dostoyevsky has framed this perspective better than I ever could here."<sup>134</sup>

One interpreter of Taylor sums up this possibility of reticence as reverence in the poetic phrase that for Taylor, "love exceeds intellect,"<sup>135</sup> meaning that for Taylor, the love of God necessarily exceeds our capacity to reason and argue for

God. But Taylor, as a philosopher indebted to Wittgenstein and Heidegger, knows that love is not prior to language—it is an experience within language, so articulation is possible even here.

Just as importantly, articulation can preserve the language of mystery; it need not involve a brazen attempt to collapse all the evident challenges of faith. George Grant conveys this form of articulation well:

... what I mean by 'mysteries' are those great questions without solution that will always exist for human beings wherever they are, and these are what I have been above all interested in thinking about. It's been very much the American way to, as we say, 'face' problems, which means settle them and get on with running things. But there are some questions which I would call mysteries, and one of the great purposes of life is to spend one's life trying to enter more and more deeply into them. I think that's what philosophy is

...<sup>136</sup>

Whether or not Taylor shares this idea that mysteries can be articulated, he does explain his faith within an interpretive scheme which moves beyond intuition and experience into the realm of assessment and judgement. And there is a long religious tradition in which philosophers have a relation to faith that is both intellectual and reverent at once, and there is no reason for us to think that Taylor's case should fall outside this tradition. One could even argue that the faith of a philosopher *qua* philosopher is invariably grounded in intellect.<sup>137</sup> To the extent that a philosopher does not apply reason to the faith he or she claims to have, there is a disjunction between a refined faculty in that person and the belief he or she claims to have. If I can question my beliefs but lack the resources to

answer my own questioning (or at least find a way to make peace with them), the extent to which I can be said to believe is sorely limited. A thinker who sunders reason from faith has not inwardly digested the faith; cannot be said to be properly in possession of it.<sup>138</sup>

### **Genuine Befuddlement**

It is possible that Taylor is not sure himself about the content of his faith. He admits that his religious life involves “confused searching, alternation of doubt and confidence, hope and despair.” In fairness to Taylor, this movement describes most people’s religious lives. The issue is what role this plays within his philosophy. The possibility that Taylor is befuddled is also supported by other textual evidence. In the passage where Taylor concedes that “delicacy” is part of his motive for not addressing certain religious issues, he also admits that his larger motive is a “lack of arguments.”<sup>139</sup> Indeed, one might conclude that not just befuddlement, but lack of philosophical justification is at issue here.

Firstly, Taylor’s writings suggest he is not entirely at home with his Roman Catholic affiliation: in one place, he makes an oblique reference to a lack of sympathy on the part of the official apologist of the contemporary Roman Catholic Church, Cardinal Ratzinger<sup>140</sup>; elsewhere he appears to disagree with the Roman Catholic teaching on homosexuality.<sup>141</sup> And while *Sources of the Self* repeatedly celebrates the Protestant affirmation of ordinary life as a notable achievement of Western culture, Taylor demarcates no comparable contribution on the part of Roman Catholicism.<sup>142</sup>

Second, and more important, Taylor never offers reasons for his Christian belief; never makes the case for Christianity in particular, in all its distinctiveness from other forms of religious belief. But this omission is crucial, since there must be something about Christianity that leads Taylor to be a Christian as opposed to some other form of religious belief. The difficulty is compounded by the fact that Taylor repeatedly uses highly anthropomorphic or downright atheistic language to describe some of his central spiritual ideas.

Moreover he equivocates on crucial issues, as when he asks why, as a believer, he cannot endorse Hume's according of significance to human fulfillments in "a non-providential world".<sup>143</sup> And finally, in the one place when Taylor does address the issue of exclusivity and particularity he appears to oppose a central tenet of Christian belief: where orthodox Christians believe that Christ's act of redemption is exclusive and final, Taylor insists that we moderns, when approaching religion, "need a *radical* break with the exclusivity claims of the past" [italics mine]. Again, to be fair, Taylor makes the comment in the course of a passage where he is encouraging ecumenical generosity. Here is the context in which the statement appears:

I have to recognize that there is another relationship to God (my term), which I don't fully understand, but which I have to respect. And part of respecting it is coming as best I can to understand it. But that means precisely not trying to reduce it to some common denominator, not trying to fudge the differences with Christianity, because very often the power of this other faith resides in what differentiates it from mine. We have to come to be able to understand—and therefore also admire—spiritualities which are

nevertheless not ours. We will, of course, learn from each other, and borrow considerably. But we shouldn't delude ourselves that all the distance can be closed by such borrowing. *We need a radical break with the exclusivity claims of the past*, the claims to have got it simply right against all others, while recognising that this doesn't put us in a new, superior, synthesizing position, which in its own way would be simply right against all others. *Needless to say, this 'we' here includes the unbelievers among us as well* [italics mine].<sup>144</sup>

We may admire Taylor's hermeneutic generosity here, but the passage leaves at least two fundamental questions unresolved. While he attempts to guard against a fudging of the differences among various beliefs, nevertheless his demand that we all radically break from exclusivity is a challenge to the final, revelatory character of the Christian religion. Chapter Three will demonstrate how this opposition to exclusivity strips his best account principle of its own justification, and undermines his commitment to deep pluralism.

## VI. Conclusion

Of course, it is possible for a Christian or a Catholic to dissent from within on certain matters of the faith; many Christians would argue that such a critical process is healthy and necessary as part of the probing of faith. Moreover, successive ecumenical attempts to define the minimal and essential content of Christianity have failed, even though there is a clear family resemblance among Christian denominations.<sup>145</sup> Mindful of these considerations, and in an effort to be generous to Taylor's self-understanding, one could certainly posit that Taylor belongs to the Christian community in the broadest linguistic sense. Nevertheless

if Taylor's *best* account of the world, history, and his moral and spiritual experience is Christian, then Christianity must provide him with an explanatory power, an interpretive plausibility, that he regards as superior to all other possible accounts. Yet he gives us so little to work with here that we cannot say whether his position is a kind of indeterminate befuddlement, a calculated reticence motivated by rhetorical strategy and reverence, or a determinate blend of ascription and dissension that remains to be argued out.

In any event, we have to work with what we are given. In Chapter Three, we will try to make some sense of Taylor's position as it can be gleaned from his scattered and elliptical remarks on faith in combination with his post-metaphysical outlook.

### Chapter Three

We are now ready to explore some of the questions and tensions arising from the intersection of post-metaphysics and faith in Taylor's philosophy.

Chapter One established Taylor's post-metaphysical position by examining his anti-foundationalism, his transcendental argument for inescapable frameworks, and his conception of dialogical selfhood. Chapter Two provided a picture of Taylor's faith by examining hermeneutical, theological, ethical and political themes across his writings, combined with the interpretive difficulty his faith presents as a whole. This chapter will relate various of these moments to each other, and show how their intersection produces significant questions and tensions. While each step of our discussion will involve specific points of comparison and contrast, we will also draw on other elements of Taylor's writings and the interpretations of commentators as appropriate.

The chapter will proceed as follows. First, we will consider the tension between Taylor's anti-foundationalism and his best account principle. Second, we will consider a related tension between his anti-foundationalism and his idea of affirmation. Third, we will juxtapose Taylor's transcendental argument for frameworks with his best account principle, and ask whether these two elements of his thought can be reconciled. Fourth, we will show how Taylor's dialogical conception of selfhood is at odds with his political dilemma of mutilation. The fifth and final argument will be that Taylor's post-metaphysical break from the

exclusivity claims of traditional religions, including Christianity, strips his best account principle of its own justification, and is at odds with his avowed pluralism.

The chapter will conclude with the summary claim that Taylor's attempted combination of faith and post-metaphysical thought is unpersuasive.

### I. Anti-Foundationalism and the Best Account Principle

Taylor wants philosophy to move beyond the foundationalism he identifies with the post-Cartesian primacy of epistemology. But this critique, in its wholesale rejection of the "first principle" approach to philosophy, is necessarily a dismissal of metaphysics. And yet, for Taylor, God not only figures in his best account, but also animates his central idea of affirmation. Clearly, Taylor's rejection of foundationalism undermines these religious ideas.

Consider Taylor's claim that we have to abandon the search "for an impossible foundational justification for knowledge", as he asks us to do in his rejection of foundationalism. In a theistic account, God is the only possible justification for the believer's understanding and knowledge of the world, and this justification is foundational in precisely the sense Taylor wants to reject. A Christian for example, believes God is responsible for the creation of the world and human beings. In this view, any understanding of human beings is incomplete if the recognition of our created nature is absent. Put differently: Christians hold that accounts of human beings which deny our created character are false<sup>146</sup>. This understanding—the world is part of a created order, human

beings are creatures of God—entirely depends on the prior foundational belief in the existence of God. Or to turn the point around once again: once God is accepted as the explanatory first principle, the recognition of creation and creatures becomes indispensable to any true and complete account of the world and human beings.

Believers attempt in different ways to account for the connection between God as the foundation and the knowledge we can have of the world. That there *is* such a connection, however, is necessary for the coherence of any religious account; if the assumption is absent, the believer cannot know the content of his or her faith, or the world, in any meaningful sense. Some believers emphasize the natural capacity of reason to infer from the fact of existence back to the God which has generated it<sup>147</sup>; others claim God provides a mediating function—a true correspondence—between thinking and being.<sup>148</sup> Still other thinkers emphasize the reciprocal connection between the character of reason and the teachings of revelation.<sup>149</sup> But however much the specifics change from case to case, God invariably serves as the foundational justification for the knowledge the believer purports to have about the world.<sup>150</sup> Given the spiritual content of this knowledge, God, far from an impossible justification, is its only possible justification. But Taylor, who senses God's affirmation of the world and human beings, nevertheless wants us to abandon the foundational justification of knowledge. It is hard to see how Taylor can sense this affirmation as taking place without some foundational conception at work: if Taylor senses creation, surely he has to refer

this sense back to God as the originary principle which makes it possible. By what other means can Taylor explain how this sensing of God's affirmation is possible? If Taylor thinks this sensing is wholly explained by the human imagination, he is not providing a religious explanation—and his philosophical claim that God figures in his best account loses a critical pillar of support.

## II. Anti-Foundationalism and the Ethics of Affirmation

Taylor's opposition to foundationalism produces a similar tension when it connects with the ethical component of his principle of affirmation. As we have seen, Taylor inclines towards the theistic affirmation of human beings over the naturalist: the theistic affirmation, he intones, better motivates us to care for society's weakest members. But Taylor also admits that he has no arguments to support this inclination; no arguments he is prepared to make from within the transcendental, anti-foundationalist structure of *Sources* or by any other means.<sup>151</sup> And this admission may very well be because Taylor tacitly acknowledges the tension between his own anti-foundationalism and the theistic affirmation he ostensibly espouses.

This tension is most easily illustrated by reference to the abortion issue, which Taylor indirectly raises by asking about how we should respond to "fetuses with genetic defects". From a mainstream naturalist perspective, two insights combine to place the decision about the fate of the fetus entirely in the hands of the pregnant woman. First, naturalist science maintains that a fetus is not a

human in any meaningful sense in the first trimester. Second, women will never be social equals if they are not granted full autonomy over their own bodies. The moral good of equality combines with a naturalist account of the human to render Taylor's question a non-starter: the fate of any fetus—with genetic defects or otherwise—is exclusively a matter for the pregnant woman to decide. All ethical questions are retired in the benevolent recognition of her autonomous personhood.

For the Christian believer, by contrast, the divine affirmation of human beings from conception forward—the teleology of creation—trumps the secular affirmation of individual autonomy. Or to put it another way, individual freedom is said to be affirmed against itself; one person is protected from another. But the claim that the theistic affirmation exceeds the naturalist only makes sense on the prior assumption that human beings are endowed with a given spiritual nature from conception forward. Remove the metaphysics of creation which derives from God as the foundational principle, and the *theistic* case for safeguarding the rights of a fetus in the first trimester (or up until personhood is said to begin) disappears. Without a God-grounded metaphysics, the so-called “theistic affirmation” turns into no more than a coercive violation of the pregnant woman.

Now it is possible that a universal argument to care for society's “weakest members”, including the unborn, is equally compelling on the basis of some naturalist ontology, but then another difficulty emerges for Taylor: he no longer has any basis for privileging the theistic affirmation, since it depends on a

superiority claim in precisely this respect. In any event Taylor leaves the tension between his own inclination towards the theistic affirmation and his post-metaphysical standpoint unresolved. Indeed, it would appear that he lacks arguments here because the issue is ultimately resolvable on the level of ontology, while Taylor wants to urge us past metaphysics in the same breath as he proposes to limit our subjective choices through an unjustified recourse to a divine perspective.

### **III. Transcendental Frameworks and the Best Account**

Taylor's transcendental argument also poses problems for incorporating faith into his philosophy. Either the ontological suspension in Taylor's transcendental frameworks inveighs against his robust claim that faith is part of his best account, or his best account principle calls for a metaphysical dimension to his frameworks argument that Taylor is unwilling to countenance.

The structure of a transcendental argument starts with our own experience, and carries in its very structure the possibility that the experience in question distorts or conceals some deeper level explanation of our workings and motivations. For this reason we cannot draw an ontological conclusion from the appearance of our having inescapable frameworks; we can only register their significance in terms of who we invariably are to ourselves. It could be, for example, that human beings having inescapable frameworks originates in an evolutionary advantage which helped us build cities and move away from a more

brutish way of life. Or it could be that we are not moral agents at all, and appear to be so because of some inescapable illusion. A range of hypotheses is possible in principle, since the transcendental insight alone gives us no way to decide among them.

But this ontological uncertainty is strange in Taylor's case when we recall that faith figures in his best account. If faith is the most plausible account for Taylor, one would think that he would attempt to move beyond the transcendental structure of his argument and identify God as the origin of this inescapable aspect of human life. That Taylor is unwilling to take this additional step leads one to question how God can meaningfully figure in his best account of the world, history and his own moral and spiritual experience. Indeed, it would appear as though not God but *inescapable frameworks* figure in his best account: unlike God, frameworks are inescapable, and laden with historical and philosophical significance. By the structure of Taylor's argument, it is not a stretch to say that God is relegated to the lesser realm of a possible explanation, in the tentative and fuzzy background of what can be known and argued for.

For God to figure in Taylor's best account, he has to find the theistic explanation not just possible, but actually superior to its atheistic or agnostic alternatives. Taylor's inability to identify God as behind our frameworks, as accounting for their significance, has the curious consequence that his frameworks claim is wholly susceptible to an alternative atheistic explanation. An existentialist<sup>152</sup>, for example, could agree with Taylor in three crucial respects:

that frameworks are an inescapable aspect of human existence; that our loss of rooted certainty represents a gain, and that our notion of God is relative to our sense of moral sources. She could then complete this reflection with a shrug—by acknowledging the irony<sup>153</sup> that her own overriding framework is the view that there are no frameworks apart from those of our own imagining.<sup>154</sup> Nor, as Richard Rorty<sup>155</sup> might argue, does her ironist perspective preclude the history of moral sources that Taylor provides in *Sources*, at least not in its broad outlines and major historical figures. She could offer a very similar history, and then posit an atheistic explanation for how these frameworks came to be inescapable: they arise from our terror in the sheer face of existence. Inescapable frameworks represent unconscious, deeply acculturated attempts by human beings to conceal from ourselves the raw fact that our existence precedes our essence. Frameworks, in other words, are the means by which we cover over the abyss, our dread of existence, with an active moral life and sense of purpose. And the fact that God has been so important in the history of frameworks is easily explained: God is the most effective veil over nothingness that human beings can conjure up.

Now if Taylor favours a theistic explanation over this atheistic alternative, if theism leads him to a fuller understanding of frameworks, he never tells us why. The fact that he does not or cannot provide such an argument leads one to question how God earns such a hallowed place in his philosophical self-understanding. The matter is made more confusing when Taylor regards our

“present tentativeness, our loss of a rooted certainty” as an epistemic gain, since these principles serve precisely to diminish the interpretive significance of the divine.

Some commentators on this issue charge that Taylor wants to have his cake and eat it too: to make an argument which is meant to both draw on and remain independent of his own faith. Many of the reviews of *Sources of the Self* can be viewed as debates about how Taylor tries to remain neutral and also faithful, and whether his unusual maneuver succeeds.

Bernard Williams tries to make sense of Taylor's approach in this way:

Taylor, if I understand him, believes two things [in making his frameworks argument]: that the aspiration for something transcending our finite wants, needs and attitudes is not baseless or delusive, even if God does not exist; but that if God does exist, then it is he that satisfies it.<sup>156</sup>

Williams finds this straddling of the two sides unconvincing, for the same reason we considered in the existentialist example: the atheistic ontology of frameworks can give rise to a very different interpretation than the theistic one. As Williams comments:

... if there is no higher consciousness, then this consciousness cannot mean what it seems to mean, and it demands another kind of account altogether ... Though [Taylor's argument] is a version of a very traditional position, it is a rather unstable one. If this aspiration does not have any relation to any God there may be, can it really be immune to damage if we come to believe there is no God? Nietzsche thought not, and supposed that the beliefs in God,

and in a Platonic good, and in many other ideals that morality has at various times collected, demand to be understood in terms that could make it clear that those beliefs could not be satisfied: that they are not and cannot be what they seem.<sup>157</sup>

The existential interpretation can lead us in an altogether different direction from where Taylor would have us remain. The existentialist is free to develop an ironic relation to the frameworks of human beings. Out of this irony, she is also free to question the significance of these very frameworks, and the extent to which they ought to have a hold on us. Taylor's ethics of affirmation, for example, has no clear purchase once we have entered existential territory, where all ethical life is no more than the contingent willing of the agents so concerned.

At the beginning of *Sources*, Taylor tries to suspend this problem. He raises and puts aside the question of whether we need God for the argument to work, convinced that his argument has a kind of independence from this nagging ontological issue:

... the issue of articulation can take another form. It is not merely formulating what people already implicitly but unproblematically acknowledge; nor is it showing what people really rely on in the teeth of their ideological denials. Rather it could only be carried forward by showing that one or another ontology is in fact the only adequate basis for our moral responses, whether we recognize this or not. A thesis of this kind was invoked by Dostoyevsky and discussed by Leszek Kolakowski in a recent work: "If God does not exist, then everything is permitted". But this level of argument, concerning what our commitments really amount to, is even more difficult than the [transcendental] one, which tries to show, in the face of naturalist suppression, what they already are. I will probably not be able to venture very far out on this terrain in the following. It would be sufficient, and very valuable, to be able to show

something about the tentative, hesitating, and fuzzy commitments that we moderns actually rely on. The map of our moral world, however full of gaps, erasures, and blurrings, is interesting enough.<sup>158</sup>

Undoubtedly Taylor's history of moral sources is interesting, and there is clearly some value in showing people the commitments they already have, especially where they would deny having such commitments. But Williams is right: Taylor never adequately explains how our frameworks are equally binding on us whether or not God exists—nor can he, because we can make sense of them in radically different ways once we decide this issue. As Williams sums up this objection: "Taylor's own explanation . . . cannot be as neutral as he hopes, for the fundamental reason that the explanation would not go deep enough unless theism itself were true".<sup>159</sup>

Taylor's attempt to suspend the ontological issue severely compromises his argument. Even if the ontological argument is "more difficult" than the transcendental one, Taylor has no choice but to rise to the challenge if he wants to claim that our frameworks are binding on us. What remains of Taylor's argument may be "valuable" as an exercise in moral disclosure, but it is not "sufficient" to convince either believers or unbelievers to retain the frameworks they already have. Even if frameworks are inescapable, they are not for that reason binding—especially if our best self-interpretation allows for an ironic stance with regard to the moral distinctions we make. Taylor's refusal to address

this glaring ontological issue leads at least one commentator to dismiss the argumentative ambitions of *Sources*. As Timothy O'Hagan comments:

Just what are Taylor's own sources of morality? What Ithaca has he reached at the end of this immense historical Odyssey? Such strident questions, such a pose of the *faux naïf*, would be out of place had the author not left such a clear trail to the point where they must be posed ... How often have we read these throw-away envois? ('But to develop that thought would take another review, article, book, life ...') But rarely does the body of the text give so little basis for taking the next step. The hidden God runs through the book, but what kind of God is it? Who might the authorities be in a Taylorite theology? Hints are scattered. Three names recur: Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Iris Murdoch. But all, if I understand them, point to a godless theology, or at least to one from which any existence claims expressed in propositions with truth values are banished. Could such a theology satisfy Taylor's question [about whether the significance of human life 'is best explained in a quite non-theistic, non-cosmic, purely immanent human fashion']? I think not. Yet there is no hint of any more traditional theology, which would both make such existence claims, and also underwrite a strong moral theology of human goods or virtues.<sup>160</sup>

#### IV. Dialogical Selfhood and the Dilemma of Mutilation

We saw in Chapter One how Taylor's conception of dialogical selfhood involves a repudiation of the metaphysical notion of human identity. The notion that human beings are constituted in conversation displaces the traditional metaphysical view that human beings have a being or substance or identity that is prior to our practices.

We also saw how Taylor believes modernity must contend with what he calls the dilemma of mutilation: on the one hand, we can stifle our nature as

*homo religious*, our desire to embrace some full-hearted good beyond life; on the other, we can affirm it, and risk the resurgence of dangerous political movements which would violate our commitment to individual security and freedom.

At first it appears as though Taylor's idea of dialogical selfhood may be a way around the Scylla of spiritual stifling and the Charybdis of religious despotism. Articulation and dialogue may be the means by which believers and unbelievers will come to see how many goods they share in common—a realization which will help safeguard against religious suppression on the part of narrow unbelievers, and evangelical zealotry on the part of believers. As we considered in Chapter One, Taylor believes that articulation is the crucial condition of any such reconciliation, and the notion of dialogical selfhood reinforces its importance by laying bare the fact that our identities are already constituted by our dialogical relations with others.

But in fact dialogical selfhood does not resolve the dilemma of mutilation—it undermines its importance by dissolving it. Modern pluralists might be willing to acknowledge that human beings thirst for radical transformative possibilities in human life; that radical hope is a vital aspect of human aspiration and expression. But the dilemma crucially depends on a privileging of religious hope in particular, a privileging which Taylor's dialogical conception of selfhood cannot support.

Now here is the crux of the issue: even if the modern pluralist accepts that there is a dilemma here between transformative hope and political danger, there

is no reason why it cannot be resolved through the affirmation of radical hope *in other forms* than the religious one. Our thirst for radical transformative possibilities can be quenched by campaigns to renew the earth; feed the hungry; house the homeless; enhance the public aesthetic; end violence against women; ban the international use of land mines; free persecuted peoples and dissident writers. One could continue at great length. All these possibilities are *radical* in the sense that they depend on fundamental social and political reforms, and it is hope as a moral imperative which drives the work of the people committed to such campaigns. Taken as a whole, they show that our desire for radical transformation can still find expression in a society which may decide, for reasons of prudence, to temper the religious forms of this desire if these are perceived to be the most dangerous and destructive. A society might decide—rightly or wrongly, it does not matter for the example to work—to restrict the subversive, coercive or inflammatory practices of certain religious zealots and still encourage the flourishing of radical hope.

If Taylor thinks the particular hope of religious transformation is hard-wired into us, and its expression is a singular good, he has to introduce a metaphysical dimension to his argument to justify this assumption, or fall back on a tenuous transcendental claim that uses past history as an indisputability claim. But if this particular hope is a contingent one—as his conception of dialogical selfhood entails—then the dilemma might pass as society evolves, and we will not be any poorer for its passing. If the self has no identity prior to dialogue, then the idea of

religious transformation could fade with our conversations over several generations (as, for example, feminists hope sexism will), nothing like mutilation will have taken place, and radical hope will find expression through other manifestations. Richard Rorty and Quentin Skinner would welcome such a societal evolution, and both of them seem to think it possible.<sup>161</sup> Skinner offers a clear summary of this position:

[Taylor's position] is that we need to believe in God if we are to appreciate the full significance of human life. But it is hard for an historian to avoid reflecting that one of the most important elements in the so-called Enlightenment project was to disabuse us of precisely that intuition. For Hume and his modern descendants there is no reason whatever to suppose that human life in its full significance cannot be appreciated in the absence of God. Not only have they argued that theism is a dangerously irrational creed; they have added that the death of God leaves us with an opportunity, perhaps even a duty, to affirm the value of our humanity more fully than ever before. Their arguments strike me as decisive, but that is not the point. The point is rather that, given the force of their claims, the task for contemporary theism must surely be to answer them. Theists need to convince us that, in spite of everything urged to the contrary for the past two centuries, the case for theism can still be rationally re-affirmed.<sup>162</sup>

The mutilation of the self is only real and important if we are fundamentally, metaphysically, *homo religiosus*, and therefore have need of this specific form of radical hope. But nothing in Taylor's position allows us to make this claim to be more than a hunch, and if it is a hunch, it is one that his post-metaphysical standpoint, his dialogical repudiation of any religious foundation, undermines. We are only contingently *homo religiosus*, or this term, as with his vague term

*spiritual*, is only meant to capture the human phenomenon of radical hope in a general way. Or to turn the point around once again: if our true nature as human beings is *homo religiosus*—which would explain why Taylor can use the strong term *mutilation*—then we are constituted by something prior to and independent of dialogue. If a certain kind of dialogical evolution can displace and therefore mutilate our spiritual nature, then our selfhood is both metaphysical and dialogical.

## V. Overcoming Exclusivity and the Best Account

Taylor wants both believers and unbelievers to make a radical break from the exclusivity claims of the past. While this demand is understandable from the standpoint of a post-metaphysical philosophy, it contradicts the internal justification of his Christian best account, and (ironically) is at odds with his commitment to deep pluralism.

The best account principle is an explanation for why we believe what we believe. If Taylor is a Christian, it follows from the best account principle that he is a Christian because he finds the claims of Christianity more believable than any alternative—in his own terms, the most plausible explanation for the world, history, and his experience as a moral and spiritual being.

The best account principle involves a superlative judgement. So as we have already considered, Christianity must provide for Taylor some revelation or interpretive key that is absent or less fully present in other accounts. He never

tells us what this key happens to be, but if we approach the issue through the self-understanding of the Christian religion, we can provide the focus for him. The central revelatory or interpretive key of Christianity, absent in other religions, is the revolutionary claim that God is incarnate in the personhood of Jesus Christ, and in Christ alone. Christians and Christians alone support this exclusive divinity claim, which is why Christ's teachings have an incomparable importance for them.

Christian belief depends on an acceptance of Christ's exclusive divinity claim for its internal coherence, so Taylor cannot have a Christian best account and simultaneously reject this claim. C.S. Lewis illustrates this point in a highly rhetorical passage that is nevertheless worth quoting at length:

... Then comes the real shock. Among these Jews there suddenly turns up a man who goes about talking as if He was God. He claims to forgive sins. He says He has always existed. He says he is coming to judge the world at the end of time. Now let us get this clear. Among Pantheists, like the Indians, anyone might say that he was a part of God, or one with God: there would be nothing very odd about it. But this man, since He was a Jew, could not mean that kind of God. God, in their language, meant the Being outside the world, who had made it and was infinitely different from anything else. And when you have grasped that, you will see that what this man said was, quite simply, the most shocking thing that has ever been uttered by human lips.

One part of the claim tends to slip past us unnoticed because we have heard it so often that we no longer see what it amounts to. I mean the claim to forgive sins: any sins. Now unless the speaker is God, this is really so preposterous as to be comic. We can all understand how a man forgives offenses against himself. You tread on my toe and I forgive you. But what should we make of a man, himself unrobbed and untrodden on, who announced that he forgave you for treading on other men's toes

and stealing other men's money? Asinine fatuity is the kindest description we should give of his conduct. Yet this is what Jesus did. He told people that their sins were forgiven, and never waited to consult all the other people whom their sins had undoubtedly injured. He unhesitatingly behaved as if He was the person chiefly concerned in all offenses. This makes sense only if He really was the God whose laws are broken and whose love is wounded in every sin. In the mouth of any speaker who is not God, these words would imply what I can only regard as a silliness and conceit unrivaled by any other character in history.

... I am trying to prevent here anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God'. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sorts of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else ... a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.<sup>163</sup>

Now Taylor might object that his exhortation to break from exclusivity was never meant to apply to the divinity of Christ. And indeed, it is possible to read Taylor's notion of the 'divine affirmation of the human' as less a generic statement about how all believers approach God (or gods), and more a veiled reference to his own latent belief in the incarnation as the supreme affirmation of human beings by the divine. Once the issue is framed in terms of how God *affirms* human beings, as opposed, say, to how God reveals his majesty or sovereignty to us, it is easy to assign signal importance to the Christian idea of God becoming a human being, as Christianity does.

But all this is no more than speculation. If Taylor wants to exempt a fundamental belief in the divinity of Christ from his call to break from exclusivity claims, he should flag it as an exception, given its importance for the coherence of his own best account, and the likelihood of misunderstanding in the absence of such a tabled exception. Yet if Taylor's exhortation does in fact exclude such a traditional exclusivity claim, it is hard to see what he is asking us to do, and especially, in what sense the break he is calling for is radical.

If we move past Christianity and apply the exhortation to other modes of belief, we can also see how Taylor's exclusivity break accomplishes the opposite of what it intends; it means to invite pluralism but in fact is at loggerheads with it. Just as Christians encounter other religions from the determinacy and particularity of their own positions, so do other kinds of believers. An atheist cannot radically break from the exclusive claim that there is no God and remain an atheist. A Moslem approaches the Qu'ran as having an incomparable revelatory power, just as a Jew cannot regard the teachings of the Upanishads as equivalent to the Talmud and the Torah. If these examples sound silly, it is reasonable to speculate on them as possible implications of Taylor's exhortation. While Taylor tries to guard against 'post-Enlightenment banalities' and a 'superior synthesizing position', his call for a radical break 'from the exclusivity claims of the past' leads us in precisely this direction. In this context we can perhaps appreciate why Judith Shklar,<sup>164</sup> for example, objects to Taylor's treatment of atheism as condescending: he appears to be asking all worldviews with exclusive

commitments to abandon the very basis on which their coherence and dignity depend. Taylor thinks that unbelievers will find inspiration in the gospels, although re-interpreted in a secular way, but Shklar insists that as an atheist, there is no reason why she would want to re-interpret and find inspiration in the Bible at all.

As a post-metaphysical thinker, who regards the loss of all rooted certainties as an epistemic gain, Taylor clearly welcomes a break from the determinacy of traditional metaphysical commitments. As a Christian, Taylor cannot welcome such a forgetting of revelation. And when he asks other types of believers—atheists, Moslems, Hindus, Jews—to make a similar break, his pluralism is compromised.

## VI. Conclusion

This chapter has focused on a number of ways in which Taylor's post-metaphysical standpoint is in tension with his faith. In all the instances we have considered, the tension arises because Taylor attempts to preserve both sides of an opposition where, in the interest of philosophical integrity and consistency, he has to come down on one side of the other. John Dunn captures well this leitmotif of Taylor's writings: "In the face of distressing choices he is apt to cling tenaciously to both horns of the dilemma, refusing, for what are often humanly excellent motives, to let either of them go".<sup>165</sup> It is possible that a resolution of the dilemma of faith and post-metaphysics is possible, and that Taylor will show us

the way to such a resolution in future writings. I have argued, however, that the relation remains unresolved in his current writings, that there are too many places where his post-metaphysical standpoint cannot be reconciled to his Christian faith.

On one side of his thought we find his Christian best account, his ethics of affirmation, his dilemma of mutilation, and the divinity of Christ. On the other side we encounter his anti-foundationalism, his transcendental argument for frameworks, his conception of dialogical selfhood, and his opposition to exclusivity. Undoubtedly both sides have emerged because of his determination to preserve all that is best in the Western tradition, coupled with his attention to modernity and all the philosophical insights it has to offer. When the issue is framed in terms of this stark opposition, it is easy to agree with Jean Bethke Elshtain when she writes that what Taylor "offers is not, as some have suggested, a full embrace of the Christian moment".<sup>166</sup>

Yet Taylor cannot simply remain in front of the dilemma, not in so rudimentary a fashion. It remains to be clarified how Taylor's faith is absorbed by his post-metaphysical philosophy, if indeed such an absorption is possible; or more likely, some consideration of how Taylor's post-metaphysics encounters a challenge in Christianity and its teachings about God, metaphysics, moral life and the self. And if, for the time being, Taylor cannot but cling to 'both horns of the dilemma', at least he can acknowledge it as such, and provide his reasons for not moving beyond it. Such an unresolved opposition would serve as a productive

departure point for other philosophers, and save his own philosophy from its taciturn treatment of an undoubtedly decisive issue.

## Conclusion

This thesis has considered how Taylor's philosophy generates an unresolved tension between faith and post-metaphysics. By way of conclusion, it will be worthwhile to place this discussion in its larger philosophical context.

The absence of a clear connection between Taylor's post-metaphysical philosophy and his faith has led to considerable scholarly confusion. In one camp are commentators like David Braybrooke, Quentin Skinner and Judith Shklar who object to Taylor's philosophy as too religious; who regard his philosophy as excessively laden with his own personal religious commitment. In the other camp are commentators like Timothy O'Hagan and Jean Bethke Elshtain, who insist that his philosophy is not religious enough, in the sense that he never properly develops his own avowal of faith as it pertains to other areas of his thought. If Taylor were to provide a thorough exposition of his faith, perhaps the two camps would remain, but at the very least their commentaries would then be based on the whole substance of his position. So the first reason why Taylor ought to address the role of faith in his philosophy is that it will enrich our understanding of his philosophy. In the interest of clarity, Taylor should 'come clean' on his ontology.

And yet much more is at issue here than the academic matter of how to interpret and understand the philosophy of Charles Taylor. Taylor should also come clean on certain points because they are too important to leave floating in such murky waters; their sheer significance demands his further attention.

Consider, for example, his claim that *our loss of a rooted certainty represents an epistemic gain*. In the course of writing this thesis I have returned to this idea repeatedly in an effort to understand how a Christian can endorse it, but so far have failed. I am not saying that a Christian *cannot* endorse this idea; I am rather saying that it is not *prima facie* evident to me *how* a Christian can endorse it, and I suspect that I am not alone in having this question. If a Christian, in the fullness of her faith, can say that the loss of a rooted certainty is a gain, then the traditional finality of religious revelation takes on a radically different meaning.

It must also be clear by now that—to borrow a phrase from Taylor—I am not neutral in posing these questions.<sup>167</sup> Having just explored several significant tensions between Taylor's post-metaphysical outlook and his faith, I am obviously skeptical about the substance and stability of a faith whose metaphysical buttresses have been taken away. Yet in fairness to Taylor it must be acknowledged that the connection between faith and metaphysics is anything but a simple matter in our time, a time in which metaphysics has been largely eschewed in mainstream philosophy following two centuries of sustained and varied critique. If there is any hope of rehabilitating traditional metaphysics—metaphysics in its foundational or originary sense—it will first have to pass through, and absorb some of the insights from, the powerful critiques of transcendental, linguistic and hermeneutic philosophy.

In this respect I agree with Taylor: we cannot escape the challenges of modernity by merely *willing* the recovery of an older metaphysics, nor should we

want to, even those of us concerned to enrich the philosophical content of contemporary faith. Thinkers like Alasdair MacIntyre<sup>168</sup> and George Grant<sup>169</sup>, finding metaphysics absent in modernity, have sought to oppose it by affirming an older metaphysics against it.<sup>170</sup> But such an opposition merely reconfigures the challenges presented by modernity along different lines. We are all caught up in modernity, as Taylor illustrates so well, no matter how much we might feel threatened by some of its intellectual currents. We must attend to what hermeneutics claims about historical situatedness; what transcendental philosophy says about the need to recognize what is indisputable in human experience; what linguistic philosophy holds about the constitutive power of language, and so on. So if Taylor's work manifests an opposition between, on the one hand, a traditional religious view and, on the other hand, contemporary insights into situatedness, contingency, language, dialogue and history, his work gives expression to a living tension experienced by all who seek to live faithfully according to traditional forms of received revelation in the contemporary world. It is a tension which can be described in many ways: the challenge of received authority against a highly subjective modern consciousness; the intuition of given realities against the awareness of contingency and accident; the belief in transcendent mysteries against the discontinuities of language, history, and culture, and so on. If metaphysics is to be rehabilitated in any meaningful sense, then, it has to begin addressing these critical challenges and eventually, offer a comprehensive response to them.

Of course, the majority of contemporary philosophers are not so engaged, and in truth would rather leave traditional metaphysics behind than think about how to rehabilitate it.<sup>171</sup> Yet I would suggest as a concluding thought that traditional metaphysics is not so easily jettisoned. For as long as (some) moderns continue to locate themselves within various religious traditions, metaphysics will assist us as we try to understand the religious assumptions governing individuals in their contributions to social and political life.

As Taylor is all too aware, there is always a danger that greater dialogue and mutual understanding between secularists and believers will only lead to even greater conflict. But philosophers should be prepared to live with such a danger, given that the alternative of two communities alienated from each other is a formula for ignorance and silence rather than reason and articulation. And needless to say, the injunction here applies equally in reverse: it is time that believers began properly educating themselves in the vast resources of the secular intellectual world and critically examined the bases for their religious faith.

But perhaps I have tabled more than enough issues for future discussion. As Taylor once commented in another context: "we are still looking for a philosophy that can do justice to all this together".<sup>172</sup>

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Paul Ricoeur invokes the term ‘hermeneutics of faith’ as a category of interpretation opposite the ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’; (for a discussion of this point see John B. Thompson’s ‘Editor’s Introduction’ to Ricoeur’s *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 6). Ricoeur’s useful opposition is in the background to my use of the term ‘hermeneutics of charity’ as a description of Taylor’s approach. Ronald Beiner uses the analogous phrase ‘hermeneutical generosity’ to describe Taylor’s approach; see Beiner’s ‘Hermeneutical Generosity and Social Criticism’ in *Philosophy in a Time of Lost Spirit: Essays on Contemporary Theory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> Taylor, ‘The Politics of Recognition’, in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. by Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, ‘Foucault on Freedom and Truth’, in *Philosophical Papers 2: Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 152-184, p. 183.

<sup>4</sup> Especially within Taylor’s interpretive critique of the illusions of liberal neutrality, and his willingness to identify the Christian background to the modern state. As Taylor argues in ‘The Politics of Recognition’: “Liberalism is not a possible meeting ground for all cultures; it is the political expression of one range of cultures, and quite incompatible with other ranges. Moreover, as many Muslims are well aware, western liberalism is not so much an expression of the secular, postreligious outlook that happens to be popular among liberal *intellectuals* as it is a more organic outgrowth of Christianity—at least as seen from the alternative vantage of Islam. The division of church and state goes back to the earliest days of Christian civilization. The early forms of the separation were very different from ours, but the basis was laid for modern developments. The very term *secular* was originally part of the Christian vocabulary”; in *Multiculturalism*, p. 62. Also see his defense of the promotion of Quebec culture (including its religious traditions): “There is a certain conception of liberalism ... which demands that the state be neutral with regard to the different conceptions of the good life that its citizens might espouse ... It must be said that neutrality seems no more realistic as an ideal than ... as a description ... It is clear, at least in our society, that one cannot conceive of a Quebec state that would not be called on to defend and promote French language and *culture*, whatever the diversity of our population” [italics mine]; from ‘Institutions in National Life’: in *Reconciling the Solitudes: Essays on Canadian Federalism and Nationalism*, ed. by Guy Laforest (Quebec City: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 120-134, pp. 125-126. Taylor also makes a striking background claim in discussing the modern ideal of detached reason: “My claim is that the ideal of the modern free subject, capable of objectifying the world, and reasoning about it in a detached, instrumental way, is a novel variant of this very old aspiration to spiritual freedom. I want to say, that is, that the motive force that draws us to it is closely akin to the traditional drive to spiritual purity. This is, of course, highly paradoxical, since the modern ideal understands itself as naturalistic, and thus as quite antithetical to any religious outlook. But I believe that in this it is self-deluded. This is one place where Nietzsche had more insight than most modern philosophers; he saw the connection between the modern scientific ideal of austere truth and the spiritual traditions of self-denial that come to us from the ancients”; from ‘The Concept of a Person’ in *Philosophical Papers I*, 97-114; pp. 112-113. Other examples will be considered in Chapter Two.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Taylor, ‘Overcoming Epistemology’, *Philosophical Arguments*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995) pp. 1-19.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Overcoming Epistemology’, pp. 11-12.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989); p. 312.

<sup>8</sup> If Michael Dummett is right, Frege provides a new first principle in the analysis of language itself, which means that much of analytical philosophy also depends on a kind of foundationalism. As Dummett argues: “... Analytical philosophy is post-Fregean philosophy ... For Frege, as for all subsequent analytical philosophers, the philosophy of language is the *foundation* of all other philosophy because it is only by the analysis of language that we can analyze thought [italics mine]”; in ‘Can Analytical Philosophy be Systematic?’ in *After Philosophy: End or Transformation?* ed. Kenneth Baynes, James Bohman and

Thomas McCarthy (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1987), p. 194–195. There are, accordingly, at least three significant innovations within metaphysical foundationalism: the theistic (ancient and medieval); the epistemological (Cartesian); and the linguistic (Frege)—there are four if gender is taken as a new foundational starting point, rather than a category of linguistic analysis. In any event Taylor is urging us past all such foundations.

<sup>9</sup> As Charlotte Witt argues: “Not only is feminism not inherently anti-metaphysical, but it contributes significantly to our understanding of at least some metaphysical issues”; or again, “I take it that to undertake a reconception of basic metaphysical categories is to do metaphysics. In the end, then, feminist criticisms of male-centered metaphysical categories should motivate theoretically inclined feminists to reform or revolutionize metaphysics rather than to abandon metaphysics altogether”; from ‘Feminist Metaphysics’, in *A Mind of One’s Own: Feminist Essays on Reason & Objectivity* ed. by Louise M. Antony and Charlotte Witt (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1993) 273–288; pages 273 and 279 respectively.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Overcoming Epistemology’, p. 14.

<sup>11</sup> ‘Overcoming Epistemology’, pp. 14–15.

<sup>12</sup> ‘Overcoming Epistemology’, pp. 14–15. Also see ‘Neutrality in Political Science’; ‘Understanding and Ethnocentricity’ and ‘Atomism’, in *Philosophical Papers 2: Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, pp. 58–90; 116–133; and 187–210 respectively.

<sup>13</sup> Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); p. 157.

<sup>14</sup> *Hegel and Modern Society*, p. 157.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Taylor, “Cross Purposes: The Liberal Communitarian Debate”, *Philosophical Arguments*, 181–203; p. 187.

<sup>16</sup> “Cross Purposes”, pp. 187–188.

<sup>17</sup> “Cross Purposes”, p. 188.

<sup>18</sup> ‘Overcoming Epistemology’, p. 15. For a general critique of reductive causal theories see Taylor’s ‘Interpretation and the Sciences of Man’ in *Philosophical Papers 2*, 15–47; cf. Taylor’s critique of vulgar Marxism in his discussion of S.M. Lipset’s *Political Man*, “Neutrality in Political Science”; pp. 66–75 and his “Digression on Historical Explanation” in *Sources*, especially pp. 202–204; also cf. Taylor’s critique of sociobiology in *Sources*, pp. 5, 6, 60, and 78.

<sup>19</sup> Bernard Williams, ‘Republican and Galilean’, *New York Review of Books*, 37 (8 November 1990), 45–47; p. 45.

<sup>20</sup> Respectively, ‘What is involved in a genetic psychology’ (139–163) and ‘Cognitive psychology’ (187–212) in *Philosophical Papers 1: Human Agency and Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); also see ‘Peaceful coexistence in psychology’ (117–138) and ‘How is mechanism conceivable’ (164–186) for related critiques.

<sup>21</sup> ‘What is involved in a genetic psychology’; p. 162.

<sup>22</sup> ‘What is involved in a genetic psychology’; p. 156.

<sup>23</sup> ‘Cognitive psychology’ p. 187.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Cognitive psychology’, p. 188. We will return to Wittgenstein in the third part of this paper, the discussion of dialogical selfhood. The argument of ‘Cognitive psychology’, with its emphasis on the indispensable role of human self-understanding, also anticipates the discussion of transcendental arguments in the second part of this chapter, as will soon be evident.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Cognitive psychology’, p. 189.

<sup>26</sup> I am indebted to a directed reading seminar with D.L.C. MacLachlan at Queen’s University in Kingston (Fall 1995) for much of my understanding of transcendental arguments.

<sup>27</sup> Taylor, ‘The Validity of Transcendental Arguments’, in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. LXXIX (1978–79); 151–165.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Transcendental Arguments’, p. 151.

<sup>29</sup> Taylor also claims there is a transcendental argument at work in the early passages of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. If Taylor is right, Hegel raises the possibility that a transcendental claim can be superseded by a metaphysical one within a single philosophy. Hegel’s *Phenomenology* begins as a rejoinder to Kant and then proceeds to reconcile the Aristotelian doctrine of substance to modern subjectivity. This is a complicated book. I refer to it only because it may force me to qualify the claim that transcendental arguments are an alternative to metaphysics; in Hegel’s case, the former does not replace the latter, but rather serves as the propaedeutic to it. But I still want to insist that for Kant, Merleau-Ponty, and

Wittgenstein, and now also for Taylor, transcendental insights are a way of *avoiding* metaphysical issues at the level or moment at which they are invoked. Cf. 'The Opening Arguments of the Phenomenology' in *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays*. ed. by Alasdair MacIntyre (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 151-187.

<sup>30</sup> The original formulation of this insight is in Kant's distinction between things as they appear to us and things as they are in themselves, where the latter can be no more than an unknowable postulate for human beings. In Kant's words: "As appearances, [objects] cannot exist in themselves, but only in us. What objects may be in themselves, and apart from all this receptivity of our sensibility, remains completely unknown to us. We know nothing but our mode of perceiving them—a mode which is peculiar to us, and not necessarily shared in by every being, though, certainly, by every human being. With this alone we have any concern ..." *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith (London: MacMillan and Company Ltd., 1963); p. 82.

<sup>31</sup> Taylor, 'Embodied Agency' in *Merleau-Ponty: Critical Essays*. ed. Henry Pietersma (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1989) 1-21; p. 14.

<sup>32</sup> 'Embodied Agency', p. 15.

<sup>33</sup> As Taylor writes: "de Sousa rightly sees that I am groping here for a transcendental argument in something like Kant's sense"; 'Reply to Braybrooke and de Sousa', *Dialogue XXXIII* (1994), 125-31, p. 127.

<sup>34</sup> 'Reply', p. 127.

<sup>35</sup> 'Reply', p. 127.

<sup>36</sup> *Sources*, p. 4. In this passage Taylor footnotes his own earlier discussion of strong evaluation in 'What is Human Agency' in *Human Agency and Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). As Taylor comments in the footnote: "A good test for whether an evaluation is 'strong' in my sense is whether it can be the basis for attitudes of admiration and contempt"; *Sources*, p. 523.

<sup>37</sup> "So we have to have strong evaluation, or, as I put it in the first chapter, frameworks"; 'Reply', p. 127.

<sup>38</sup> Taylor does not confine his history to philosophical developments. As he explains in an interview: "[*Sources*] wasn't an attempt to give a snapshot of where we are today. It was an attempt to draw the sources, understand the sources. But nor was it an attempt to give an exhaustive account of the historical causation, in which case you'd have to talk about everything. So it's a very peculiar self-set task and it ... doesn't fit into disciplinary matrices easily. But the back in the past is selective, selective on the basis of just what bits of background we have to cast light on in order to understand ourselves now ... The book was very imperfect because it was meant to overarch this difference between history of ideas and what the French call *histoire des mentalités*. The *mentalités* history is something that does take account of the movement of thought, sensibility—I try to take some account of that. I freely admit the book was skewed in the sense that I'm much more at home in the history of thought, so there were certain chapters where there wasn't enough balance"; 'Interview: Charles Taylor', by John Haffner and Andy Lamey, in *Hypatia Alexandriensis* Vol. II. No. 1, (Halifax: University of King's College, February 1993), pp. 14-15.

<sup>39</sup> *Sources*, p. 27.

<sup>40</sup> "Moral sources empower. To come closer to them, to have a clearer view of them, to come to grasp what they involve, is for those who recognize them to be moved to love or respect them, and through this love/respect to be better enabled to live up to them. And articulation can bring them closer"; *Sources*, p. 96.

<sup>41</sup> "... the moral conflicts of modern culture rage within each of us. Unless, that is, our greater lucidity can help us to see our way to a reconciliation. If I may give expression to an even farther our hunch, I will say that I see this as the potential goal and fruit of articulacy. We have to search for a way in which our strongest aspirations towards hypergoods do not exact a price of self-mutilation. I believe that such a reconciliation is possible; but its essential condition is that we enable ourselves to recognize the goods to which we cannot but hold allegiance in their full range; *Sources*, p. 106-107.

<sup>42</sup> *Sources*, p. 518. We will return to consider this passage in Chapter Two.

<sup>43</sup> *Sources*, p. 312.

<sup>44</sup> Taylor, 'The Dialogical Self', in *The Interpretive Turn: Philosophy, Science, Culture*, ed. Henry Pietersma (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1989) 304-314. Taylor also gestures at the idea of dialogical selfhood in his notion of 'moral topography'. See his paper 'The Moral Topography of the Self' in *Hermeneutics and Psychological Theory: Interpretive Perspectives on Personality, Psychotherapy and Psychopathology* ed. Stanley B. Messer et al, (Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988) 300-320.

Most notably, Taylor argues there that “self-knowledge cannot mean [after Montaigne] just impersonal lore about human nature, as it could for Plato. Each of us has to discover his own form. We are not looking for the universal human nature, but each for his own being ... There is a question about ourselves—which we roughly gesture at with the term identity—that cannot be sufficiently answered with any general doctrine of human nature. The search for identity can be seen as the search for what I essentially am. But this can no longer be sufficiently defined in terms of some universal description of human agency as such, as soul, or reason, or will. There still remains a question about me, and that is why I think of myself as a self. *The world now circumscribes an area of questioning*. It designates the kind of being of which this question of identity can be asked. But it is clear that this shift, whereby the question first arises in our culture, is one that involves moral topography ...” [italics mine]; pp. 315-316.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Plato’s dialogues, and Augustine’s *Confessions*, which is written as a dialogue between God and his own soul: “Grant me, Lord, to know and understand whether a man is first to pray to you for help or to praise you, and whether he must know you before he can call you to his aid”; Book I, *Confessions* (London, England: Penguin Books, 1988); p. 21.

<sup>46</sup> “In the case of the hermit, the interlocutor is God. In the case of the solitary artist, the work itself is addressed to a future audience, perhaps still to be created by the work ... But however one feels about it, the *making and sustaining of our identity*, in the absence of a heroic effort to break out of ordinary existence, remains dialogical throughout our lives [italics mine]”; in ‘The Politics of Recognition’, *Philosophical Arguments*, p. 231.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Dialogical Self’ p. 308.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Dialogical Self’, p. 314.

<sup>49</sup> O’Hagan, ‘Charles Taylor’s Hidden God: Aristotle, Rawls and Religion through Post-Modern Eyes’; *Ratio (New Series)*, VI: 72-81.

<sup>50</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. by G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co. Inc., 1968), paragraphs 65-67, pp. 31e-32e. Wittgenstein’s discussion of the meaning of “pain” (as part of the famous anti-private language passage) can also be understood as a transcendental argument. Cf. *Philosophical Investigations*, paragraphs 243-274, pp. 88e-95e.

<sup>51</sup> *Philosophical Investigations*, paragraphs 1-3, pp. 2e-3e.

<sup>52</sup> *Philosophical Investigations*, paragraph 216, p. 84e.

<sup>53</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, ‘Man and Language (1966)’, in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. and ed. by David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 59-68, p. 63.

<sup>54</sup> The hermeneutic philosopher Hans-George Gadamer stands in the background to Taylor’s philosophy in a number of ways. For evidence of Gadamer’s influence on Taylor see *Philosophical Papers 1: Human Agency and Language*; pp. 11,45-76, 281; *Philosophical Papers 2: Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, pp. 15-57, 126; *Philosophical Arguments*, pp. 148-151, 153, 252; *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism*, p. 234. The similarities are not surprising, given the enormous debt of both philosophers to Heidegger.

<sup>55</sup> ‘Comparison, History, Truth’, *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995), 146-164; pp. 150-151. Taylor does not explicitly acknowledge his debt to Gadamer in ‘The Dialogical Self’.

<sup>56</sup> ‘The Dialogical Self’ p. 312.

<sup>57</sup> ‘The Politics of Recognition’, pp. 32-33.

<sup>58</sup> ‘Overcoming Epistemology’, p. 15.

<sup>59</sup> Judith Shklar, review of ‘Sources of the Self by Charles Taylor’ in *Political Theory*, Vol. 19 No. 1, February 1991, 105-109; p. 105.

<sup>60</sup> Williams, ‘Republican and Galilean’, p. 45.

<sup>61</sup> Braybrooke, ‘Inward and Outward with the Modern Self’ *Dialogue XXXIII* (1994), 101-8; p. 102.

<sup>62</sup> Taylor, ‘Reply and re-articulation’, *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism*, p. 226. The best account principle is also discussed in *Sources*, (cf. p. 106).

<sup>63</sup> *Sources*, p. 512.

<sup>64</sup> Terms like ‘moderns’ and ‘liberals’ are used by traditionalists to describe those who (in their view) want to revise scriptural religion until it agrees with the central assumptions of modern liberal life.

<sup>65</sup> ‘Reply’, p. 228.

<sup>66</sup> ‘Reply’, p. 229.

<sup>67</sup> No one is excluded from this claim. The relation between the 'best account' principle and the hermeneutic idea of prejudice is best understood as the former constituting an important instance of the latter. We pre-judge the world in terms of our hidden background assumptions (e.g. Western conceptions of time); our large-scale biases (e.g. atheism vs. religion); and our small-scale responses to everyday activity (e.g. what we immediately think when we hear a news story, or when we see a person dressed a certain way).

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Thomas Nagel. *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>69</sup> Hans-George Gadamer, 'The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem (1966)', in *Philosophical Hermeneutics* trans. and ed. by David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); p. 9.

<sup>70</sup> 'Reply', p. 227.

<sup>71</sup> 'Reply', p. 227.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 130.

<sup>73</sup> *The Last Word*, p. 131.

<sup>74</sup> *Sources*, p. 512.

<sup>75</sup> *Sources*, p. 521.

<sup>76</sup> 'Reply and re-articulation', p. 226.

<sup>77</sup> See, for example, Plato's *Timaeus*: "And yet there is no difficulty in seeing that the perfect number of time fulfills the perfect year when all the eight revolutions, are accomplished together and attain their completion at the same time, measured by the rotation of the same and equally moving. After this manner, and for these reasons, came into being such of the stars as in their heavenly progress received reversals of motion, to the end that the created heaven might be as like as possible to the perfect and intelligible animal, *by imitation of its eternal nature* [italics mine]"; *The Collected Dialogues of Plato Including the Letters*, ed. by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); 39d-e, p. 1168.

Aristotle's solution is found in the *Metaphysics*: "Therefore chaos or night did not exist for an infinite time but the same things have always existed (either passing through a cycle of changes or obeying some other law), since actuality is prior to potency ... Since (1) this is a possible account of the matter, and (2) if it were not true, the world would have proceeded out of night and 'all things together' and out of non-being, these difficulties may be taken as solved. There is, then, something which is always moved with an unceasing motion, which is motion in a circle; and this is plain not in theory only but in fact. Therefore the first heaven must be eternal"; *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. and with an introduction by Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941); 1072a5-20; pp. 878-879.

<sup>78</sup> Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth".

<sup>79</sup> Saint Thomas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*; trans. by John P. Rowan (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1961); p. 879.

<sup>80</sup> "And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was Good"; *Holy Bible*, Genesis 1:12.

<sup>81</sup> As Boethius writes: "... ungrudging; from a heavenly pattern You draw out all things, and being yourself most fair, A fair world in your mind you bear ..." *Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. by S. J. Tester (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990); III, ix; p. 273.

<sup>82</sup> "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion ..."; *Genesis* 1:26.

<sup>83</sup> And in his characteristic pluralism, Taylor then quickly offers: "The different, more or less secularized successor notions all incorporate something similar"; *Sources*, p. 516. Cf. pp. 448-449 and pp. 452-454.

<sup>84</sup> "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good"; *Genesis* 1:31.

<sup>85</sup> Lucretius describes the existence of the gods as "carefree", meaning free of mortal concerns; cf. Lucretius, "On the Nature of Things", in *Greek and Roman Philosophy after Aristotle* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co. Inc., 1966), p. 46. It is possible to read the Epicureans as making an exception for the possibility that (Epicurean) philosophers can know the life of the gods in some limited sense. As A.H. Armstrong: "The gods of course, take no part whatever in the affairs of the universe. They live in perfect tranquillity, neither troubling others nor being troubled themselves ... They represent in fact the ideal of human life, and the wise man who attains to perfect peace of soul will be living 'a life worthy of the gods'. In doing so he will be greatly helped by the contemplation of 'images' which the gods continually give off, very subtle images which he can only apprehend by that special faculty of 'attention' or 'apprehension by the mind'. This is Epicurean religion, the contemplation and imitation of the divine

life. And there is just a possibility of interpreting the existing evidence to mean that the gods recognize and 'receive' true philosophers and willingly grant them communion with themselves by means of the 'images' while they ignore the masses of the foolish and wicked; the philosophers, of course, remain mortal and their souls are dissolved at death like any other atomic compound. Thus the Epicurean religious ideal is not, after all, very unlike that of other Greek philosophical religions ... The Epicurean philosophers hope ... to share the life of the gods as by right and through their own efforts and not by any divine grace"; *An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy* (USA: Rowman & Littlefield, 1989); pp. 136-137.

<sup>86</sup> See Plato's *Republic*, Chapter VII (514b-520 e).

<sup>87</sup> Aristotle writes that the life of contemplation is the highest activity leading to the greatest happiness, and also that this activity is most pleasing to the gods, to the extent that they are concerned with human affairs. But humans, including philosophers, fall short of this life, because it "would be too high for man ... If reason is divine, then, in comparison with man, the life according to it is divine in comparison with human life". In Aristotle's view, the philosopher alone can know this life fleetingly and with great effort: "But we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us; for even if it be small in bulk, much more does it in power and worth surpass everything ... And that all these attributes belong most of all to the philosopher is manifest. He, therefore, is the dearest to the gods"; "Nichomachean Ethics", *The Basic Works of Aristotle* Book X Chapter 7, pp. 1105-1108.

<sup>88</sup> As Taylor comments: "An atheist friend of mine and I may both admire, say, Martin Luther King, but have a quite different account of the sources of his moral and spiritual leadership"; 'Reply and re-articulation', p. 227.

<sup>89</sup> George Grant also ends up rejecting Hegel, and for the same reason: "... let's talk about Hegel and Christianity ... Let me put it this way: Christianity had talked about the purposes of God in history, if you want to use this modern language, but these purposes were always known as inscrutable ... There was always present in me a remembrance that what is absolutely final as far as Christianity goes is that God's purposes are inscrutable, but I fell into the temptation of thinking of life or the purposes of God in human life as too scrutable"; from David Cayley, *George Grant in Conversation* (Concord, Ontario: House of Anansi Press Ltd. 1995); p. 67. Or as Grant wrote in his notebook: "What I always feel about Hegel is that I have been gypped - is this really the only hope theology has?" (from Grant's unpublished *Notebook 4*, 1958, provided courtesy of Sheila Grant). James Doull, another Canadian philosopher, parts company with both Grant and Taylor in his view that Hegel and Christianity are compatible after all. In any event reflections on Hegel and religion constitute an important element of Canadian intellectual history; cf. Emil Fackenheim's *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967) and H.R. Harris' *Hegel's Development: Towards the Sunlight, 1770-1781* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

<sup>90</sup> As Dr. R. D. Crouse put it in a conversation arising from his Dalhousie University Medieval Philosophy Seminar: Halifax, October 1992.

<sup>91</sup> From G.W.F. Hegel's *Begriff der Religion*, ed. G. Lasson (Leipzig, 1925), p. 148, as quoted by Charles Taylor in *Hegel and Modern Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 38.

<sup>92</sup> John Haffner and Andy Lamey, 'Interview: Charles Taylor', *Hypatia Alexandriensis*, Vol. 11 No. 1 (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Hypatia Society at the University of King's College, Feb. 1993), pp. 13-25.

<sup>93</sup> 'Interview', p. 19.

<sup>94</sup> One thinks of Wittgenstein's famous seventh proposition in the *Tractatus*, which is either an earnest attempt at responsible reductionism, a statement of mystical reverence, or both.

<sup>95</sup> *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 100. Nor can Taylor resist a mocking comparison of this view: "There is something in Hegel's philosophy which is irresistibly reminiscent of Baron Munchhausen. The baron, it will be remembered, after falling from his horse in a swamp, extricated himself by seizing his own hair and heaving himself back on his horse. Hegel's God is a Munchhausen God; but it is hard to say in this difficult domain whether his exploits should be treated with the same scepticism as those of the baron", p. 101.

<sup>96</sup> Most of Taylor's ethical arguments are immanent critiques of naturalist, instrumental, proceduralist or otherwise reductionist accounts of morality, as we briefly considered in Chapter One. These arguments are made independent of his own spiritual beliefs, and are meant to be compelling to believers and unbelievers.

One need not be a Christian to accept (say) his critiques of utilitarianism and Sartre's radical choice theory (cf. 'What is Human Agency' in *Philosophical Papers I*, 15-44).

<sup>97</sup> *Sources*, pp. 517-518.

<sup>98</sup> As Christine Sypnowich points out, when Taylor privileges the exceptional lives of the saints, he might be giving short shrift to the accomplishments of heroic naturalists like Dr. Norman Bethune.

<sup>99</sup> As worded in 'Seeker of Souls' by Subir Bhaumik, Meenakshi Ganguly and Tim McGirk for *Time Magazine*, September 15, 1997, (Toronto: Time Canada Ltd.); p. 68. Mother Theresa had asked the Vatican if she and her followers could take an additional vow "to devote themselves out of abnegation to the care of the poor and needy who, crushed by want and destitution, live in conditions unworthy of human dignity;" p. 68. Rome granted her request, and formally established the Missionaries of Charity in 1950 with all four vows as prerequisites for entry into the order.

<sup>100</sup> "We think saints are soft, ethereal, pious and meek. But some saints are steamrollers, and great saints are great organizers, great operators, great combatants in the world. [Mother Theresa] was the speaker at the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington in 1995 ... [She] was introduced, and she spoke of God, of love, of families. She said we must love one another and care for another. There were great purrs of agreement. But as the speech continued it became more pointed. She asked, "Do you do enough to make sure your parents, in the old people's homes, feel your love? Do you bring them each day your joy and caring?" The baby boomers in the audience began to shift in their seats. And she continued. 'I feel that the greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion', she said, and then she told them why, in uncompromising terms ... the President and the First Lady, the Vice President and Mrs. Gore, looked like seated statues at Madame Tussaud's, glistening in the lights and moving not a muscle. She didn't stop there, either, but went on to explain why artificial birth control is bad and why Protestants who separate faith from works are making a mistake. When she was finished, there was almost no one she hadn't offended. A U.S. Senator turned to his wife and said, 'Is my jaw up yet?"; from "A Combatant in the World: Mother could be fierce in defending her beliefs"; by Peggy Noonan, *Time Magazine*, Sept. 15, 1997; p. 72.

<sup>101</sup> *Sources*, pp. 518-521.

<sup>102</sup> Unfortunately, the Christian church has many such examples in its history, with the Crusades, the Inquisition and the slaughter of the Aztec among the most notorious. More recently dangerous religious cults have received considerable media attention, including Heaven's Gate, Solar Temple and the Church of Scientology. We can expect such cults to heat up as we approach the end of the digital millennium. On a less dramatic and destructive scale, pluralists even have some cause to worry about the extreme end of certain fundamentalist movements in the United States and elsewhere—one expects, for example, that most liberals are made uneasy by Ralph Reed's 'Christian Coalition' and its growing influence in the Republican Party.

<sup>103</sup> For a related discussion, see Taylor's paper 'Marxism and Socialist Humanism' in *Out of Apathy: Voices of the New Left 30 Years On*, from Oxford University Socialist Discussion Group, ed. R. Archer et al (Verso: London 1989); pp. 69-70 and especially page 76: "The deep [spiritual] hunger exists in human beings and is never going to be stilled in them. The attempt to do without it is just like whistling in face of the wind. There are these profound aspirations in human beings which come out regularly in great programmes of reform as well. It is not an accident, it is not an excrescence; it has got to be taken to be there, and we have to come to terms with it sometime and find a human form for it. The idea of turning our backs on it would make as much sense to me as someone who says: 'Look at all the sexual hang-ups that people have in the universe, let's do without sex'. I say, good luck to you! That would be my answer to that".

<sup>104</sup> See Taylor's 'Marxism and Socialist Humanism', especially pp. 66-70 and his "Reply and re-articulation" in *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism*, p. 225.

<sup>105</sup> 'Spirituality of Life—and its Shadow', in *Compass: A Jesuit Journal* (Toronto: Jesuits of the Upper Canada Province, Society of Jesus), 10-13.

<sup>106</sup> 'Spirituality', p. 13.

<sup>107</sup> It should be obvious that I am only referring to Taylor's faith as it appears in his writings. Taylor's faith as a private individual does not concern us. Here we are only concerned with how faith fits into Taylor's philosophy—a matter of public record and consideration.

<sup>108</sup> In Chapter Three we will consider passages in which Bernard Williams and Timothy O'Hagan draw attention to this conspicuous omission in Taylor's writings.

<sup>109</sup> *Sources*, esp. pp. 456-493.

<sup>110</sup> On more than one occasion Taylor sums up his enterprise as a work of philosophical anthropology, as for example, in his 'Overcoming Epistemology', pp. 14-15. I use the term here because it captures so well Taylor's focus on the articulation and disclosure of human beliefs, and therefore makes his lack of proper religious articulation all the more conspicuous. His interest in ethics should require no evidence by now.

<sup>111</sup> From 'Reply to Braybrooke and De Sousa', in *Dialogue* XXXIII (1994), 125-131, p. 131. in *Sources* Taylor writes: "It will be my claim that there is a great deal of motivated suppression of moral ontology among our contemporaries ... So the work I am embarked upon here could be called in large degree an essay in moral retrieval"; or as another example, p. 10. As another example: "... the neo-Nietzschean theory is open to the same kind of criticism which both it, and I, level against mainstream moral philosophy: that of not coming quite clean about its own moral motivations"; *Sources*, p. 99-100.

<sup>112</sup> "... our greater lucidity can help us to see our way to a reconciliation. If I may give expression to an even farther-out hunch, I will say that I see this as the potential goal and fruit of articulacy ... I believe that such a reconciliation is possible: but its essential condition is that we enable ourselves to recognize the goods to which we cannot but hold allegiance in their full range. If articulacy is to open us, to bring us out of the cramped postures of suppression, this is partly because it will allow us to acknowledge the full range of goods we live by. It is also because it will open us to our moral sources, to release their force in our lives ... Articulacy is the crucial condition of reconciliation. Of course, if reconciliation is impossible, then articulacy will buy us much greater inner conflict ... But even in this case, we would have at least put an end to the stifling of the spirit and to the atrophy of so many of our spiritual sources which is the bane of modern naturalist culture"; *Sources*, pp. 106-107.

<sup>113</sup> Taylor, *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism*, p. 226.

<sup>114</sup> Wallace I. Matson, *A New History*, pp. 192-193.

<sup>115</sup> *A New History*, p. 196.

<sup>116</sup> Here is not the place to explain how this view of faith has become the dominant one in our culture, although in my view it has much to do with an unwitting alliance: the influence of existentialism (Kierkegaard coined the term "leap of faith"; Nietzsche's contribution is well known) in combination with the breathtaking, empirically verifiable advances in the natural sciences. Working in tandem, they have drained traditional religion of its intellectual respectability in many academic circles.

<sup>117</sup> If I follow the Ten Commandments yet insist that my faith is wholly irrational, my faith has more rational content than I realize. (We can agree there is some rational content in the Ten Commandments even if we do not abide by all of them, just as we can agree there is some merit in Kant's categorical imperative without fully endorsing it).

<sup>118</sup> To offer some random examples, one thinks of the Jewish philosophers Philo, Maimonides, Spinoza and Levinas, the Christian philosophers Augustine, Eriugena, Aquinas, and Bonhoffer, and the Moslem philosophers Avicenna and Averroes.

<sup>119</sup> This conception is offered somewhere in Augustine's *Confessions*, although I have been unable to retrieve the precise reference.

<sup>120</sup> S. Weil 'La Pesanteur et La Grace' (Paris: Plon, 1948), as translated by George Grant in 'Faith and the Multiversity', in *Technology and Justice* (Toronto: Anansi Press, 1986); p. 38.

<sup>121</sup> St. Anselm, *Proslogium*.

<sup>122</sup> Hans-George Gadamer, "On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection", *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. and ed. by David E. Linge (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), p. 21.

<sup>123</sup> Consider, for example, Taylor's willingness use of the robust term 'homo religiosus' in a Jesuit journal, in contrast with the modest language of 'faint echoes' to describe his prayer life in the context of *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism*, which (as the title suggests) is intended for a broader philosophical audience. As another example, notice how he disarms an audience of experts when he presents a paper on euthanasia: "I feel very much like an interloper on this panel because there are two kinds of expertise which you need to discuss this question—medical and legal; I have neither. What can I offer? I think nevertheless I can do something to help clarify one side of this issue, strictly from a philosophical point of view", 'The Right to Live: Philosophical Considerations', in *Justice beyond Orwell*, ed. Rosalie S. Abella and Melvin J. Rothman (Montreal: Les Editions Yvon Blais, 1985); p. 237.

<sup>124</sup> *Sources*, p. x.

<sup>125</sup> Williams remarks: “[Taylor] ... agrees with Hegel that hectoring the world has not much to do with either changing it or understanding it: if some idea or practice or attitude has come to be part of human life and helps to keep it going, then it cannot simply be a mistake; there must be something to be learned from it more interesting than that human beings are foolish or wicked”; ‘Republican and Galilean’, p. 45. Ronald Beiner’s discussion will be examined in Chapter Three and the Conclusion (cf. ‘Hermeneutical Generosity and Social Criticism’).

<sup>126</sup> Beiner, ‘Hermeneutical Generosity and Social Criticism’, p. 156. Beiner’s critique builds on that of the commentator John Dunn. Their shared critique of Taylor’s approach will be taken up in Chapter Three and the Conclusion.

<sup>127</sup> *Sources*, p. 517.

<sup>128</sup> For Beiner and Dunn see ‘Hermeneutical Generosity and Social Criticism’, for Elshtain and Morgan see their respective papers in *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism*.

<sup>129</sup> For example, in a paper where he clearly takes issue with Foucault’s central assumptions, Taylor closes with a number of significant questions, and then concludes: “These questions are hard to separate, and even harder to answer. But they are among the most fundamental raised by the admirable work of Michel Foucault”, from ‘Foucault on Freedom and Truth’; pp. 183-184. And in a public lecture in honour of George Grant, Taylor comments that he “tremendously admires” Grant’s work, even though it is clear that he profoundly disagrees with Grant’s assessment of modernity. (‘Understanding Modernity’—A Public Lecture by Charles Taylor, University of King’s College, October 1992).

<sup>130</sup> To find an example, read Taylor’s response to any of the papers in the collection *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism* (some of which are quite critical of his thought).

<sup>131</sup> “Iris Murdoch, who defends a view which has plainly drawn a great deal from Plato, stresses that the good is something which is ‘non-representable and indefinable’; *Sources*, p. 95; Taylor also invokes Murdoch in a relevant way on pages 85 and 96.

<sup>132</sup> *Sources*, pp. 257; also see p. 482.

<sup>133</sup> As Taylor writes: “... the reader suspects that my hunch lies towards the affirmative ... that great as the power of naturalist sources might be, the potential of a certain theistic perspective is incomparably greater ... But I recognize that pointed questions could be put in the other direction at well, directed at theistic views. My aim has been not to score points but to identify this range of questions around the moral sources which might sustain our rather massive professed commitments to benevolence and justice”; *Sources*, p. 518.

<sup>134</sup> *Sources*, p. 528. And in the *Hypatia* interview, Taylor argues that Dostoyevsky anticipates the radical evil of the Holocaust in his literature, where Hegel in his philosophy does not: “But when you get to Hitler and the Holocaust, there’s a kind of evil there which I think [Hegel] didn’t have a real sense of—which Dostoyevsky had a sense of, but not Hegel. So I don’t know how [Hegel] would have been able to cope with that”; ‘Interview’, p. 22.

<sup>135</sup> Dr. Kenneth Kierans, a former doctoral student of Taylor’s at Oxford, provided this phrase in a conversation, University of King’s College, October 1992.

<sup>136</sup> *George Grant in Conversation*, p. 171. Also consider, as a Christian example, the language of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer: “Because in the *Mystery* of the Word made flesh ...”; and “Almighty and everliving God, we most heartily thank thee, for that thou dost vouchsafe to feed us who have duly received these holy *mysteries* ...” [italics mine]; *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1928); pages 77 and 83.

<sup>137</sup> One thinks, for example, of John Scotus Eriugena’s comment that “No man may enter heaven except by philosophy”, by which he means each person must love wisdom as wisdom can be known to that person—for some through the immediacy of images, for others through the rational content of those images. Augustine and Hegel make similar distinctions between the faith of the philosopher and that of the ordinary person.

<sup>138</sup> Hegel somewhere uses the metaphor that the notion has to pass through the three bellies of the cow before it is inwardly digested (properly apprehended) by the subject.

<sup>139</sup> *Sources*, p. 517. To which he adds a few pages later: “How can one demonstrate this? I can’t do it here (or, to be honest, anywhere at this point)”; p. 521. Michael Morgan comments: “Taylor may not solve the paradox of universality and distinctiveness, of treating the central teachings of Judaism and Christianity as

available and appropriate to all human existence but somehow peculiar to each community ... Certainly, in [*Sources*] he does not seek to do so. But this does not mean that Taylor thinks the paradox insoluble. To address this problem, however, as well as to develop his project in the direction of religious advocacy, would be beyond his goals, which, in the present circumstances, are ambitious enough"; 'Religion, history and moral discourse', in *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism*, p. 66.

<sup>140</sup> Taylor makes the comment in a passage where he compares intolerant unbelievers to intolerant believers: "I think that it probably shows up a striking blind spot in the contemporary academy, that unbelievers can propound such crudities about the sources of belief, of a level which any educated believer would be excoriated for applying, say, to members of another confession. The paradox is that the last members of the educated community in the West who have to learn some lesson of ecumenical humility are (some) believers. When these come to talk about religion, they have all the breadth of comprehension and sympathy of a Jerry Falwell, and significantly less *even than Cardinal Ratzinger* [italics mine]. The really astonishing thing is that they even seem proud of it"; in 'Comments and Replies', *Inquiry*, 34 (1991), pp. 237-54; p. 242. Taylor's use of the word "even" here betrays his bias.

<sup>141</sup> ... when we come to issues of what is a good and fulfilling life, and we are told, for example, that 'nature' dictates one mode of sexual life and brands the others as perverse and evil, a crucial feature of modern moral experience is being denied. Of course, we may have much to learn from nature about the relative value of different forms of life and different conceptions of the good, the admirable, the worthwhile. But the on/off, good/evil, permitted/ forbidden dichotomy, so appropriate for questions of human rights, is out of place in this area"; 'Human Rights, Human Difference' in *Compass*, p. 19. (Cf. p. 198 of 'Cross-Purposes: The Liberal Communitarian Debate' in *Philosophical Arguments*).

<sup>142</sup> See especially the *Sources* chapter 'God Loveth Adverbs' (pp. 211-233), in which Taylor highlights the contribution of Protestantism to that great Western achievement, the affirmation of ordinary life.

<sup>143</sup> As Taylor writes: "At the very end of his paper, de Sousa quotes a few lines of mine on Hume. He seems rather surprised at their positive tone, and then wishes that I 'had the good sense to endorse [this position] as his own'. But who says I don't endorse it? De Sousa should have trusted more his feel for what underlay my prose, rather than the *a priori* which is operative here. Why does he believe I don't endorse it? Because I believe in God? Why is this a reason?"; 'Reply to Braybrooke and de Sousa', in *Dialogue XXIII* (1994), 125-131; p. 129.

<sup>144</sup> Taylor, 'Reply and re-articulation' in *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism*, pp. 229-230.

<sup>145</sup> As Leszek Kolakowski comments on this issue: "In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when dozens of greater and lesser sects multiplied in Europe, each of which had a monopoly on the uniquely correct interpretation of the content of Christianity and condemned all others for their misconceptions about the Holy Trinity, the Eucharist, the divinity of Jesus, irresistible grace, the role of the Church, and so on, many writers, tired and despairing of the sectarian squabbles, suggested an irenic program. Let us agree, they said, on a common minimum about which all Christians must definitely agree, and in fact do agree, and let us accept that anyone who holds to this minimum is a Christian; but in all other questions 'unnecessary for salvation', let us proclaim reciprocal tolerance. Such suggestions could not, it is clear, lead to the hoped-for religious peace: first, because there was complete disagreement about the content of the minimum and the criteria by which it should be determined; second, because the minimum could never be unambiguous, and every attempt at a more detailed interpretation immediately revived all the disputes that they hoped to avoid; and third, because if all questions lying beyond the projected minimum were acknowledged to be unimportant, no existing church or sect would have a *raison d'être* as a separate Christian grouping, and this was obviously the crucial point"; L. Kolakowski, "On the So-Called Crisis of Christianity", *Modernity on Endless Trial*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 87. Also see Stephen Sykes, *The Identity of Christianity: Theologians and the Essence of Christianity from Schleiermacher to Barth* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984). Among other things, Sykes argues that "internal doctrinal conflict may actually serve a constructive purpose in the Church"; p. 285.

<sup>146</sup> I am not suggesting here that a Christian cannot support scientific theories like the Big Bang or evolution. A Christian can believe Hawking is right so far as physics goes, and then argue God is the metaphysical explanation behind the physical explosion. Similarly, a Christian can endorse some version of evolution and still believe there is a qualitative difference between the last ape and the first man, and that the first man (Adam) is depicted poetically in the Book of Genesis. The evolution/ creation debate - which has gone a long way towards discrediting Biblical religion among intellectuals, is the result of nineteenth

and twentieth century fundamentalists reading the Book of Genesis as an empirical, scientific account instead of as an allegorical poem. So a Christian is only forced to take issue with scientific theories to the extent that they altogether deny God's role in creation, but is free to accept some synthesis of the scientific theory and the Biblical account short of this total displacement.

<sup>147</sup> Thomas Aquinas (cf. the five proofs of his *Summa Theologica*).

<sup>148</sup> St. Anselm (cf. his *Proslogium*) and Descartes (cf. his *Meditations*). I am thinking of the so-called 'ontological' argument and the first proof respectively.

<sup>149</sup> St. Augustine (cf. his *City of God*. The first ten books attempt to show how natural reason anticipates the incarnation through its highest philosophical expression—Platonism. The remaining twelve books explore the sovereign authority of scripture as it is held to supersede the highest insights of reason alone.)

<sup>150</sup> Kant, the first transcendental thinker, is the exception that proves the rule. God is not a foundational principle for Kant; he is a moral postulate within an overall schema in which self-consciousness (the transcendental unity of apperception) is the highest principle of human knowledge. But there is an important relationship between Kant's refusal to identify God as the foundational principle and his distinction between things as they appear to us and things as they are in themselves: it is because Kant is a transcendental rather than a foundational thinker that he does not purport to have direct knowledge of the world. If God were foundational, Kant could make knowledge claims about the created order directly.

<sup>151</sup> As Taylor writes: "I am obviously not neutral in posing these questions. Even though I have refrained (partly out of delicacy, but largely out of lack of arguments) from answering them ..."; or in a related passage, "How can one demonstrate this? I can't do it here (or, to be honest, anywhere at this point) ..."; *Sources*, p. 517-518 and 521 respectively.

<sup>152</sup> For the sake of this discussion, I am treating the existentialist as a kind of atheist, although I am aware that some existentialists try to also be believers. I must confess to some skepticism with regard to their attempted synthesis.

<sup>153</sup> I am following Ronald de Sousa's review of *Sources* in raising the existentialism issue against Taylor's frameworks discussion.

<sup>154</sup> In response to de Sousa's review, Taylor tries to show how even Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism involves a framework: "In [Sartre's] early phase ... he was claiming that no framework holds for us as something given, it has to be chosen. It is not given by the universe that it's better, say, to be a Communist than a Catholic; one has to make it one's life project to be one or the other ... What clearly emerges from this picture, however, is that it is much better to be whatever it is in a way that acknowledges this fundamental choice (the X-way), than to collude in the illusion that the world demands this commitment (the Y-way of *l'homme serieux*). But now this superiority doesn't seem to be based on choice; it flows from the ontology of the human agent as *pour soi* in a world of *en soi*. Moreover, this is a matter of strong evaluation, as is evident from Sartre's whole language here, e.g., where he speaks of the colluder in the Y-way as guilty of 'bad faith'"; 'Taylor's Reply', p. 128. But here Taylor sidesteps the important issue of how the theist and the existentialist will differ on the *significance* of their respective frameworks.

<sup>155</sup> "If Taylor and I tried to argue about what whether one should encourage a tendency to envisage hypergoods, rather than simply arranging and balancing ordinary goods, we should probably end up talking about the details of our favourite poems and novels. For I suspect that different literary canons, and disagreement about how to read the works which appear in both our canons, lie at the bottom of our disagreements about the nature of moral experience. My reading of my canon makes me doubt Taylor's claim that we can make sense of our moral life only with 'something like a hypergood perspective'. Taylor reads his favourite authors in the light of his conviction that 'the poet, if he is serious, is pointing to something—God, the tradition—which he believes to be there for all of us'. I read some of these same writers in the light of my conviction that seriousness can, and should, swing free of any such universalistic belief"; from 'Taylor on Truth', in *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism*, p. 20. Cf. Rorty's lengthy defense of the ironist's perspective in his book *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>156</sup> Bernard Williams, 'Republican and Galilean', *The New York Review of Books*, 37 (8 November, 1990), 45-7; p. 48.

<sup>157</sup> Williams, p. 48.

<sup>158</sup> *Sources*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>159</sup> Williams, p. 48.

<sup>160</sup> Timothy O'Hagan, 'Charles Taylor's Hidden God: Aristotle, Rawls, and religion through post-modern eyes', *Ratio (New Series)* VI, 72-81, pp. 80-81.

<sup>161</sup> See, for example, Richard Rorty's discussion of secular liberalism in his book *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity*, or Quentin Skinner's paper "Modernity and disenchantment: some historical reflections", in *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism*, 37-48.

<sup>162</sup> Skinner, p. 47.

<sup>163</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1985), pp. 51-52.

<sup>164</sup> As Shklar writes: "The critical thrust of Taylor's account of the modern self is not simply that it is a flawed identity but that it is self-deluded, for deep down, we remain in touch with our moral origins ... If [Taylor's] criticisms were not so unrelentingly based on 'our' intuitions, it would not matter that he only discusses philosophical and literary images of the self with only an occasional and superficial remark about the views of ordinary people. However, since shared intuitions about morality are his reason for rejecting utilitarianism, naturalism, and individualism, he is committed to trying harder to prove that he is offering more than a personal guess. Failing to do so, finally, leads him to impute attitudes to the obdurate which they simply do not hold or to accuse them of false consciousness. What else can one say of his final conclusion that 'even non-believers, if they don't block it off, will feel a powerful appeal in the gospel, which they will interpret in a secular fashion; just as Christians, unless immured in blinkered self-sufficiency, will recognize the appalling destruction wrought in history in the name of the Faith'. I do not know about the Christians, but for a nonbeliever, the statement is both *untrue and condescending* [italics mine]. It is only a sign of Taylor's hope that classical philosophy and revealed religion are not only imperishable but are subconsciously lodged in all our minds, waiting to be rediscovered and expressed, and bound to tie us again to the cosmic order, which alone can give substance and meaning to our love of the good"; Review of 'Sources of the Self by Charles Taylor'; *Political Theory* (Vol. 19 No. 1, February 1991); 105-109.

<sup>165</sup> John Dunn, *Interpreting Political Responsibility* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 186 as quoted by Ronald Beiner in *Philosophy in a Time of Lost Spirit: Essays on Contemporary Theory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 156.

<sup>166</sup> Elstain, Jean Bethke, "The risks and responsibilities of affirming ordinary life", *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism*, 67-80, p.71.

<sup>167</sup> *Sources*, p. 517.

<sup>168</sup> See the "Postscript to the Second Edition" of Alisdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), p. 278, and his subsequent work *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), especially pp. 1-11, p. 101, p. 348, p. 388 and pp. 389-403.

<sup>169</sup> See especially Grant's *Technology and Justice*, *Technology and Empire*, and *English-Speaking Justice*.

<sup>170</sup> Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss may also belong to this category of thinkers given their defenses of ancient political philosophy, but I do not understand the role of metaphysics in their thought sufficiently to say for sure. Both thinkers are also inexorably cast under the shadow of such anti-metaphysicians as Nietzsche and Heidegger.

<sup>171</sup> Feminists like Elizabeth V. Spelman, post-modern pragmatists like Richard Rorty, post-structuralists like Derrida and Foucault, post-metaphysical critical theorists like Habermas, mainstream analytic philosophers like Margaret D. Wilson, continental philosophers like Terry Pinkard—all these thinkers and many of their colleagues are united in the assumption that traditional metaphysics is (for a variety of reasons) better left behind. Cf. Elizabeth V. Spelman, *Inessential Woman* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988); Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Foucault, "What is an Author" in *The Foucault Reader* ed. by Paul Rabinow (Pantheon Books, New York, 1984), p. 101-120; Jurgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1990); Margaret D. Wilson, 'History of Philosophy in Philosophy Today; and the Case of the Sensible Qualities', *The Philosophical Review: Centennial Issue*, January 1992, 191-243; and Terry Pinkard, "Hegel, Modernity and Habermas", in *The Monist*, 1991, 329-257.

<sup>172</sup> Taylor, "Human Rights, Human Difference" in *Compass: A Jesuit Journal* (Toronto: Jesuits of the Upper Canada Province, Society of Jesus), p. 19.

---

## Bibliography

Saint Anselm, 'Proslogion', with 'A Reply on Behalf of the Fool' by Gaunilo and 'The Author's Reply to Gaunilo'. trans. with intro. and commentary by M.J. Charlesworth. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965.

Saint Thomas Aquinas. Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle. trans. by John P. Rowan. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1961.

Aristotle. "Metaphysics". In The Basic Works of Aristotle. ed. and with an introduction by Richard McKeon. New York: Random House, 1941: 681-926.

---. "Nichomachean Ethics". In The Basic Works of Aristotle. ed. and with an introduction by Richard McKeon. New York: Random House, 1941: 927-1112.

Armstrong, Hilary. An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy. USA: Rowman and Littlefield, 1989.

Saint Augustine. Confessions. London, England: Penguin Books, 1988.

Bhaumik, Subir et al. "Seeker of Souls". In Time Magazine. Volume 150 No. 11 (September 15, 1997) Toronto: Time Canada Ltd., 66-72.

Beiner, Ronald. "Hermeneutical Generosity and Social Criticism". In Philosophy in a Time of Lost Spirit: Essays on Contemporary Theory. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997.

The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and the Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church. New York: Oxford University Press, 1928.

Braybrooke, David. "Inward and Outward with the Modern Self". In Dialogue. XXXIII (1994), 101-8.

Boethius. Consolation of Philosophy. trans. by S. J. Tester. Cambridge, Mass: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Cayley, David. George Grant in Conversation. Concord, Ontario: House of Anansi Press Ltd. 1995.

De Sousa, Ronald. "Bashing the Enlightenment: A Discussion of Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self*". In Dialogue. XXXIII (1994), 109-123.

---

Desmond, William. "Being, Determination and Dialectic: On the Sources of Metaphysical Thinking". In The Review of Metaphysics: A Philosophical Quarterly. Vol. XLVIII, No. 14 (June 1995): 731-769.

Dummett, Michael. "Can Analytical Philosophy be Systematic?". In After Philosophy: End or Transformation? ed. Kenneth Baynes, James Bohman and Thomas McCarthy. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987.

Dunn, John. Interpreting Political Responsibility. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Elstain, Jean Bethke. "The Risks and Responsibilities of Affirming Ordinary Life". In Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism: The Philosophy of Charles Taylor in Question. ed. by James Tully. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994: 67-80.

Fackenheim, Emil. The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967.

Foucault, Michel. "What is an Author". In The Foucault Reader. ed. by Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Man and Language (1966)". In Philosophical Hermeneutics. trans. and ed. by David E. Linge. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977: 59-68.

---. "On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection (1967)". In Philosophical Hermeneutics. trans. and ed. by David E. Linge. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977: 18-43.

---. "Semantics and Hermeneutics (1972)". In Philosophical Hermeneutics. trans. and ed. by David E. Linge. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977: 82-94.

---. "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem (1966)". In Philosophical Hermeneutics. trans. and ed. by David E. Linge. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977: 3-17.

Grant, George. *Notebook 4*, 1958. Unpublished, from the private collection of Mrs. Sheila Grant.

---. "Faith and the Multiversity". In Technology and Justice. Toronto: Anansi Press, 1986.

- 
- Habermas, Jurgen. Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action. trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber NicholSEN. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990.
- Harris, H.R. Hegel's Development: Towards the Sunlight, 1770-1801. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.
- Hegel, G.W.F. Begriff der Religion. ed. G. Lasson. Leipzig: 1925.
- . The Phenomenology of Spirit. trans. by A.V. Miller with foreword by J.N. Findlay. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977. (find reference for self-identity).
- The Holy Bible, King James Version. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. Critique of Pure Reason. trans. by Norman Kemp Smith. London: MacMillan and Company Ltd., 1963.
- Kolakowski, Leszek. "On the So-Called Crisis of Christianity". In Modernity on Endless Trial. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990: 86-94.
- Lewis, C.S. Mere Christianity. Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1985.
- Lucretius. "On the Nature of Things". In Greek and Roman Philosophy after Aristotle. New York: MacMillan Publishing Co. Inc., 1966: 15-46.
- MacIntyre, Alisdair. After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984.
- Matson, Wallace I. A New History of Philosophy Volume I: Ancient and Medieval. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987.
- Morgan, Michael. "Religion, History and Moral Discourse". In Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism: The Philosophy of Charles Taylor in Question. ed. by James Tully. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994: 49-66.
- Nagel, Thomas. The View from Nowhere. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- . The Last Word. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Noonan, Peggy. "A Combatant in the World". In Time Magazine. Volume 150 No. 11 (September 15, 1997) Toronto: Time Canada Ltd., 72.
- O'Hagan, Timothy. "Charles Taylor's Hidden God: Aristotle, Rawls and Religion through Post-Modern Eyes". Ratio (New Series), VI: 72-81.

---

Pinkard, Terry. "Hegel, Modernity and Habermas". The Monist, 1991, 329-357.

Plato. "Republic". In Collected Dialogues of Plato Including the Letters. ed. by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989: 575-844.

---. "Timaeus". In Collected Dialogues of Plato Including the Letters. ed. by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989: 1151-1211.

Ricoeur, Paul. Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences. ed. and trans. by John B. Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Rorty, Richard. "Taylor on Truth". In Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism: The Philosophy of Charles Taylor in Question. ed. by James Tully. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994: 20-33.

---. Rorty, Richard. Contingency, Irony, Solidarity. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Shklar, Judith. Review of 'Sources of the Self by Charles Taylor'. Political Theory. Vol. 19 No. 1, Feb. 1991: 105-109.

Skinner, Quentin. "Modernity and Disenchantment: Some Historical Reflections". In Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism: The Philosophy of Charles Taylor in Question. ed. by James Tully. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994: 37-48.

Sykes, Stephen. The Identity of Christianity: Theologians and the Essence of Christianity from Schleiermacher to Barth. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

Spelman, Elizabeth V. Inessential Woman. Boston: Beacon Press, 1988.

Taylor, Charles. "Atomism". In Philosophical Papers II: Philosophy and the Human Sciences. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985: 187-210.

---. "Comments and Replies". Inquiry. 34, 1991:237-54.

---. "Comparison, History, Truth". In Philosophical Arguments. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995: 146-164.

---. "Cognitive Psychology". In Philosophical Papers I: Human Agency and Language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985: 187-212.

---

---. "The Concept of a Person" In Philosophical Papers I: Human Agency and Language, Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1985: 97-114

---. "Cross-Purposes: The Liberal Communitarian Debate". In Philosophical Arguments. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995: 181-203.

---. "The Dialogical Self". In The Interpretive Turn: Philosophy, Science, Culture. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991.

---."Embodied Agency". In Merleau-Ponty: Critical Essays. ed. Henry Pietersma. Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1989.

---. "Foucault on Freedom and Truth". In Philosophical Papers II: Philosophy and the Human Sciences. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985: 152-184.

---. Hegel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

---. Hegel and Modern Society. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

---. "How is Mechanism Conceivable?". In Philosophical Papers I: Human Agency and Language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985: 164-186.

---. "Human Rights, Human Difference". In Compass: A Jesuit Journal. Toronto: Jesuits of the Upper Canada Province, Society of Jesus (July/August 1994): 18-19.

---. "Interview: Charles Taylor". by John Haffner and Andy Lamey. In Hypatia Alexandreas. Volume II. No. 1. Halifax: University of King's College (February 1993) 13-25.

---. The Malaise of Modernity. Toronto: Anansi, 1991.

---. "Marxism and Socialist Humanism". In Out of Apathy: Voices of the New Left 30 Years On. Oxford University Socialist Discussion Group, ed. R. Archer et al. London: Verso, 1989: 61-78.

---."The Moral Topography of the Self". In Hermeneutics and Psychological Theory: Interpretive Perspectives on Personality, Psychotherapy and Psychopathology. ed. Stanley B. Messer, Louis A. Sass and Robert L. Woolfolk. Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988: 300-320.

---. "Neutrality in Political Science". In Philosophical Papers II: Philosophy and the Human Sciences. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985: 58-90.

- 
- . "The Opening Arguments of the Phenomenology". In Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays. ed. by Alasdair MacIntyre. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976: 151-187.
- . "Our Therapeutic Age". In Compass: A Jesuit Journal. Toronto: Jesuits of the Upper Canada Province, Society of Jesus. (November 1990) 6-9.
- . "Overcoming Epistemology". In Philosophical Arguments. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995: 1-19.
- . "Peaceful Coexistence in Psychology". In Philosophical Papers I: Human Agency and Language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985: 117-138.
- . "The Politics of Recognition". In Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition. Amy Gutmann et al. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992: 25-73.
- . Reconciling the Solitudes: Essays on Canadian Federalism and Nationalism. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1993.
- . "Reply and Re-articulation". In Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism: The Philosophy of Charles Taylor in Question. ed. by James Tully. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994: 213-257.
- . "Reply to Braybrooke and de Sousa". In Dialogue. XXXIII (1994) 125-131.
- . "The Right to Live: Philosophical Considerations". In Justice Beyond Orwell. ed. Rosalie S. Abella and Melvin J. Rothman. Montreal: Les Editions Yvon Blais, 1985.
- . Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989.
- . "Spirituality of Life—and Its Shadow". In Compass: A Jesuit Journal. Toronto: Jesuits of the Upper Canada Province, Society of Jesus. (May/June 1996): 10-13.
- . "Understanding and Ethnocentricity". In Philosophical Papers II: Philosophy and the Human Sciences. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985: 116-133.
- . "The Validity of Transcendental Arguments". In Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society. Vol. LXXIX (1978-79): 151-165.

---

---. "What is Human Agency". In Human Agency and Language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985: 15-44.

---. "What is Involved in a Genetic Psychology?". In Philosophical Papers I: Human Agency and Language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985: 139-163.

Weil, Simone. La Pesanteur et La Grace. Paris: Plon, 1948.

Williams, Bernard. "Republican and Galilean". In The New York Review of Books. No. 37 (8 November, 1990) 45-7.

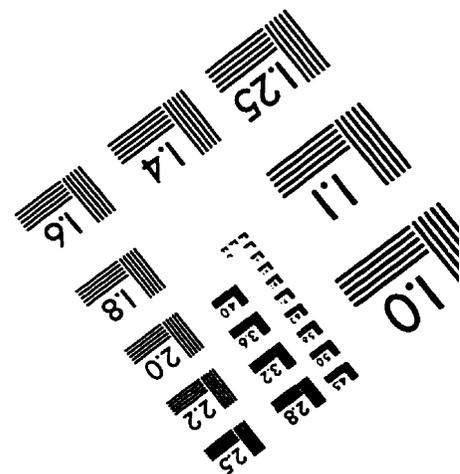
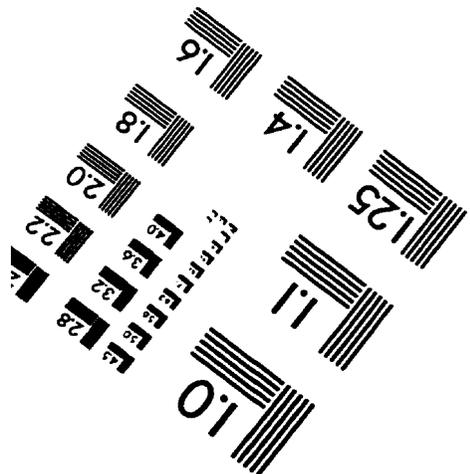
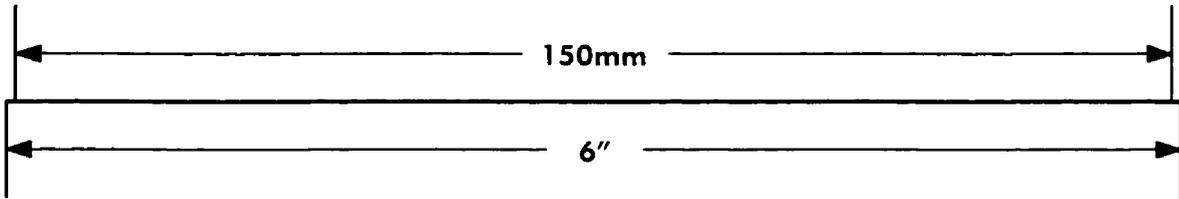
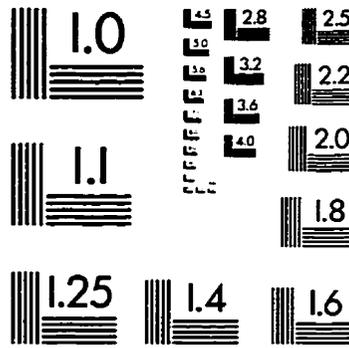
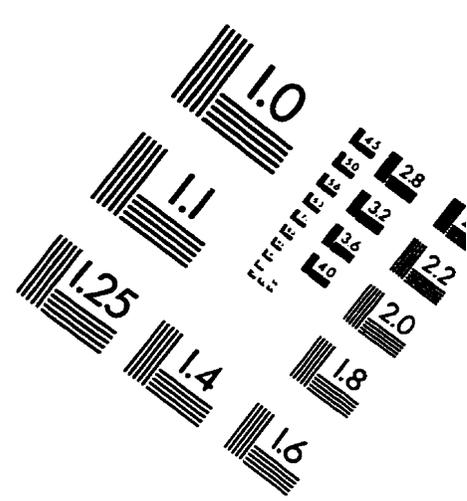
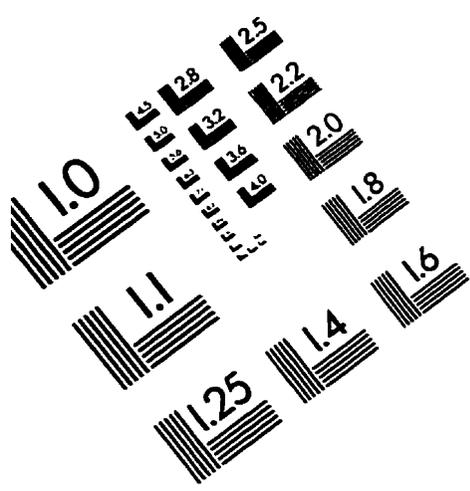
Wilson, Margaret D. "History of Philosophy in Philosophy Today; and the Case of the Sensible Qualities". The Philosophical Review: Centennial Issue, January 1992: 191-243.

Witt, Charlotte. "Feminist Metaphysics". In A Mind of One's Own: Feminist Essays on Reason & Objectivity. ed. by Louise Antony and Charlotte Witt. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1993: 273-288.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. Philosophical Investigations. English text of the third edition, trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe. New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1968.

---. Tractatus-Logico-Philosophicus. German text with trans. by D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness. London: 1961.

# IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



APPLIED IMAGE, Inc  
1653 East Main Street  
Rochester, NY 14609 USA  
Phone: 716/482-0300  
Fax: 716/288-5989

© 1993, Applied Image, Inc., All Rights Reserved