The relevance of Louis Dupré’s works for addressing today’s challenges in Australia’s secular culture

Kevin James O’Brien
B.Th. (BCT), B.A. with First Class Honours (Griffith)

School of Arts
Faculty of Arts
Griffith University

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

November 2008
FRONTISPIECE

Emeritus Professor Louis Dupré

Phenomenologist, Philosopher,
Metaphysician, Epistemologist,
Theologian and Teacher
ABSTRACT

Eminent scholars extol Louis Dupré’s works for their relevance to spirituality. The purpose of this thesis is to show that his writings also should be recognised as providing a framework for helping Australians understand and address today’s challenges in Australia’s secular culture, and to highlight and rectify this Australian (and possibly global) oversight to demonstrate the significance of his total authorship. This requires not only an investigation of Dupré’s works in relation to the topic of this thesis, but also a demonstration of how his works can be relevant to, and can enhance the value of, the current Australian dialogue about responding to those challenges. It is necessary to take serious account of Dupré’s deep, cultural analyses of modernity, modernity’s process of construction, and his responses to its secular challenges, together with the convergences and divergences of that framework in dialogue with contemporary authors on Australian culture. Their reflections are presented in the chosen schema of this dissertation to show how to understand more easily the relevance of, and the implications in, those writers’ works, especially Dupré’s, in relation to this thesis' task.

Although this study has been completed within the School of Arts, it began under the School of Theology and continues, broadly speaking, to be a thesis in the field of theology. As such, its primary focus is on the Roman Catholic Church, while not excluding Protestant and other Churches generally.

To achieve the objectives of this thesis, firstly, an examination is made of Dupré’s Historical deconstruction of modernity from the 13th Century to the present time, to show how today’s deep, cultural worldview came about, and to highlight what options are available to take its people forward.

Secondly, further investigation demonstrates Dupré’s framework as consisting of at least two types of reflections. To facilitate this study, the first are categorised as analytical, which are deemed to be masterly reflections; examination of Dupré’s and indeed many overseas scholars’ works shows that this type of reflection provides an accurate understanding of that current worldview and its secular challenges. The second, as responsorial, are implied as being simply profound reflections — not solutions; the above examination further indicates that this type of profound reflection only can help pave the way towards solutions for addressing and overcoming those challenges. This investigatory study scrutinises Dupré’s and those overseas authors’ reflections via seven topics especially
chosen to help elucidate this thesis’ argument, with each topic depicting a different aspect, while highlighting its following challenge as assessed from Dupré’s framework, of that worldview: today’s godlessness; the sense of meaninglessness of human existence in the current immanent humanistic world; secular anthropocentrism’s dominance of the universe nowadays; the supreme reign of economic consumerism in today’s secular society; the uncertainty and loss of truth through the prevalent antagonistic forces of the dualisms of faith and reason/nature and grace; religion being no longer essential to world culture; and some of today’s Evangelical/Pentecostal-type religions perpetuating superficial ‘spirituality’.

Thereafter, an understanding of the current Australian perspective and its secular challenges is gleaned through the analyses of 10 principal and numerous other selected Australian authors, and how they address these challenges is evidenced in their responses to them. Their reflections about the above seven topics are examined, but with each topic depicting a different aspect of Australia’s current, cultural perspective. Then, these analytical and responsorial reflections are compared with Dupré’s more robust assessments of today’s worldview and its secular challenges and are classified as either ‘almost identical’, or ‘similar’, or ‘varied’, or ‘unlike’. This process demonstrates how and why Dupré’s works are relevant to the Australian context and this thesis’ purpose.

Subsequently, appropriations from Dupré’s framework and from other authors with compatible frameworks are made showing how Australians might address and overcome the secular challenge in each of the seven topics.

Finally, having narrated the specific and important functional issues played in its argument, this thesis shows and recognises that Dupré’s works have very definite relevance and implications for helping Australians understand and address Australia’s current secular challenges, and that rectifying the omission of this recognition is also necessary to give full significance to Dupré’s total writings.
STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This work has not been submitted previously for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FRONTISPIECE</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Thesis</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Origin and motivation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Thesis outline</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Chapter outlines</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1 HOW WE GOT TO WHERE WE ARE IN THE WORLD TODAY</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Blumenberg, Dupré, Moses and others</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The 13th Century</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The 14th Century</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The 15th Century</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The 16th Century</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The 17th Century</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The 18th Century</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The 19th Century</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The 20th Century and today</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Moving forward</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2 TODAY’S DEEP CULTURAL WORLDVIEW</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Methodology</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Topic 1: Today’s secular society is virtually a ‘godless’ one</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Topic 2: Life in today’s immanent humanistic world simply means the human being’s ‘will to power’ and need to survive for self-affirmation</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Topic 3: Today’s secular anthropocentrism dominates our universe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Topic 4: In our present secular society ‘economic consumerism’ reigns supreme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Topic 5: The antagonistic forces of the ‘bastard’ dualisms of faith and reason/nature and grace rule today’s immanent humanistic world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A.  <em>Faith and reason</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B.  <em>Nature and grace</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Topic 6: Religion is no longer essential in today’s secular culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Topic 7: Some of today’s modern Religious Movements, while stressing renewal of faith, define it more in terms of doing ‘feel-good’ religious practices rather than hard deeds of love, forgiveness and compassion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Moving forward</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHAPTER 3 TODAY’S AUSTRALIAN CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Topic 1: Today’s Australian secular society is virtually a ‘godless’ one</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Topic 2: Life in today’s Australian immanent humanistic culture simply means the Australian human being’s ‘will to power’ and need to survive for self-affirmation</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Topic 3: Today’s Australian secular anthropocentrism dominates our country</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Topic 4: In Australia’s present secular society ‘economic consumerism’ reigns supreme</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Topic 5: The antagonistic forces of the ‘bastard’ dualisms of faith and reason/nature and grace rule today’s Australian immanent humanistic culture</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A.  <em>Faith and reason</em></td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B.  <em>Nature and grace</em></td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Topic 6: Religion is no longer essential in today’s Australian secular culture</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Topic 7: Some of today’s modern Religious Movements in Australia, while stressing renewal of faith, define it more in terms of doing ‘feel-good’ religious practices rather than the hard deeds of love, forgiveness and compassion</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Summary — Why Dupré’s analytical and responsorial reflections in his framework in Chapters 1 and 2 are applicable to our Australian context</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4 Addressing Australia’s Secular Challenges</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Preamble leading to my appropriations from Dupré’s responsorial framework to help us address and overcome the Australian secular challenge in each of the chosen seven topics</td>
<td>263</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Challenge in Topic 1: To reverse the loss of transcendence from Australia’s secular culture</td>
<td>270</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Challenge in Topic 2: To overcome Australia’s secular notion of the meaninglessness of human existence</td>
<td>273</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Challenge in Topic 3: To transpose the Australian immanent humanistic concept of the human person being considered as only or simply individual and, thereby, make the fragmented Australian human being ‘whole’ again</td>
<td>276</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Challenge in Topic 4: To negate the current Australian view that ‘economic consumerism’ is everything</td>
<td>279</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Challenge in Topic 5: To nullify the effects of the conflicting forces of the ‘bastard’ dualisms of faith/reason and nature/grace and, thereby, bring back truth and certainty into Australian lives</td>
<td>283</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Challenge in Topic 6: To reverse the decline in Australian Church attendances by attempting to make religion capable, once more, of operating as an integrating and central function of culture</td>
<td>290</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Challenge in Topic 7: To respond to and reverse the secular challenging Situations, which exist in some of today’s modern Religious Movements in Australia, by transposing the Christian crisis (i.e., the decline in Christian spirituality)</td>
<td>294</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Summary</td>
<td>298</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion | 299

Bibliography | 303
I can think of no more apt way to describe the ambience which has surrounded me in the process of this thesis than as an ever expanding network of associations with erudite and helpful people. Various circumstances and many people whom I now warmly acknowledge have gifted my version of the proverbial ‘life’s journey’ in ways beyond my imagining. The following is an inadequate acknowledgement which I extend to some named, and many unnamed people, without whom this thesis would never had been conceived, let alone written and submitted. Nevertheless, its contents are my responsibility alone.

To Rev’d. Dr. Greg Moses I am particularly indebted. His teaching and conversations during my earlier degrees provided the catalyst for my undertaking this project. Moreover, he introduced me to the works and person of Louis Dupré. As my second supervisor, his insightful comments opened up areas that have strengthened this thesis. During my study visits to Herberton in North Queensland, he gave me much of his precious time and valuable academic assistance, and his keen sense of humour has cleared away many a hard day’s grind for me. I express my deepest gratitude for his careful reading of my work and his helpful suggestions from time to time.

For the progression from a B.A., with 1st Class Honours and a proposed Ph.D., to this thesis, I am also greatly indebted to Rev’d. Dr. Orm Rush. He continually nurtured my confidence and, as my principal supervisor, extended me exemplary supervision within a framework of respect for my way of working.

During studies preparatory to this thesis, especially in the USA late in 2005, I am especially grateful to Emeritus Professor Louis Dupré, whose thought provoking conversations spurred me on and encouraged me to produce this thesis. Also, I am greatly indebted to him for giving me so much of his personal time amidst his busy work schedule and providing me with office space and library access while I was in Connecticut, USA. Further, I am indebted to Rev’d. Robert L. Beloin, Ph.D., Chaplain at Yale University for his thoughtful comments and advice.
At various stages in the production of this thesis, Associate Professor R.L. (Leon) Hughes and Fr. Kevin O'Shea C.Ss.R., graciously assisted me with proof-reading, constructive criticisms and, particularly, encouragement. I am most appreciative of their unselfish efforts and learned comments.

The presentation of the text of this thesis has been greatly enhanced by the expertise of Dr. Helen Jeays, who provided editorial assistance.

And most importantly, my wife Sylvia, who with love, interest and not a little amusement was my constant ‘back-up’ as typist and confidante. I extend my deepest thanks to her for her patience and always being ‘there’ to help me in the fullest sense of that word. To her, I shall be ever grateful.
INTRODUCTION

1. Thesis

This thesis argues that, while Louis Dupré’s works are known worldwide, among other things, for their relevance to spirituality, his writings also should be recognised as providing a framework for helping Australians understand and address today’s challenges in Australia’s secular culture, with a view to highlighting and rectifying this Australian (and possibly global) oversight to recognise the significance of his total body of writings. This thesis investigates and shows how and why Dupré’s works themselves are relevant to the topic, and how they can be introduced into, and enhance, the current Australian dialogue about responding to those challenges. This dissertation proposes particular terms to simplify the categorisation of two types of reflections in Dupré’s framework. The first type, analytical, deemed to be masterly reflections, enables Australians to understand accurately the current worldview as well as the Australian perspective, and the secular challenges in both vistas. The second type, responsorial, implied as being simply profound reflections — not solutions, only can help pave the way towards Australian solutions for addressing and overcoming today’s challenges in Australia’s secular culture. This process enables the thesis to demonstrate that Dupré’s framework provides the evidence for the sought recognition and rectification of its oversight.

2. Origin and motivation

Louis Dupré was born, and later graduated, in Belgium. He emigrated to the United States in 1958 to take up a teaching position at Georgetown University. In 1973, he was appointed T. Lawson Riggs Professor in Religious Studies at Yale University, where he still works in an emeritus capacity. He has written 14 books, and contributed many articles for various publications and lectures.

On being introduced to Louis Dupré’s works some years ago as part of my theological studies, I learned that, for most of his adult life, part of the core of his thoughts consisted in grappling with and writing about the very matter which, for only a short time in my life had been, and still is, my constant passion. This driving force in me centres around how, in the passage to modernity, the gradual erosion of transcendence brought about today’s fragmented world, and how this situation can be
reversed so that God is reintegrated into peoples’ lives in the current secular universe and especially in Australia.

Hence, I became an avid reader of Dupré’s works, from which I learned, that he: 1) clearly depicts the current fragmented worldview; 2) highlights what the present cultural situation seems to imply and what it may need but does not, of itself, imply (especially about transcendence); 3) shows, through a Historical deconstruction of modernity, how today’s deep cultural world perspective came about, and stresses that such a task is necessary to help its people advance into the future; 4) clarifies the relationship and distinction between philosophy and theology; and 5) offers both masterly and profound reflections in his notions about matters, all of which are concerned, in some way, with today’s fragmented society, its gradual loss of transcendence over the years, and the possibility of reintegrating the transcendent into the present secular world and into its peoples’ lives. The importance of these aspects were reaffirmed during his 2004 Australian lecture tour and again during my personal visit in 2005 to confer with him in the USA.

There are many reasons why I chose Louis Dupré’s works to be the basis of this thesis. I studied the writings of other authors such as James Alberione, Barbara Bowe, Paul Levesque, Karl Rahner, Charles Taylor, David Tracy and James Wiseman; their works are similar in several respects to, and in certain areas maybe even better than, Dupré’s. However, I believe the main inspirational factor, which constantly shines through his thoughts and erudite writings over so many years, is his constant, enthusiastic, positive and real desire to elucidate and highlight the crisis confronting people in today’s fragmented secular world — its loss of genuine transcendence, and how this situation can be reversed. How he grappled with these matters has become an absorbing study and interest for me. Moreover, as Philip Chmielewski suggests, Dupré’s work, which seeks ‘future, integral form in society (personal and communal) and culture, without giving any future vision (lest one run the dangers either of determinism or wish fulfilment), enables trajectories to be plotted’.1

---

In addition, as David Hart postulates, Dupré’s work (and especially in his nine essays in *Religious Mystery and Rational Reflection*) ‘has a remarkably suggestive force: it carries about it a kind of mysterious surfeit of meaning, and implies many more questions that need to be asked, and opens up numerous and unexpected perspectives upon those it directly engages’. With Hart, I believe that Dupré’s work ‘is characterised at once by the rigor of its thought and the limpid prose of its expression’, while at the same time presenting a realistic vision of the complexity of modern belief. Yet, Dupré offers no panacea to restore the damage incurred by modernity’s fragmentation of spiritual life through the loss of transcendence. His efforts provide both warnings of inadvertent errors and clarification of the age’s focal desires. Nonetheless, his objective is a social ethic (in which life, labour and language mediate the achievement of the common good), where norms, virtues, patterns and ideals — all activities he develops and advocates throughout his extensive publications — remain integrated in the community, both expressively as well as interpretably, and dynamic over the course of social changes.

Further, his objective is also a disclosure of the transcendent. After decades of study he, as a philosopher, phenomenologist, metaphysician, epistemologist, theologian and teacher, still sees the same crisis, and yet has confidence in the internal dynamics of a humanistic, liberal education, with its attention in historical erudition and moral education. He insists that, while having continuing, open and genuine dialogue with the non-Christian members of society, Christian education must be shaped by Christian belief.

Also, many learned authors postulate that, and as I believe, his reflections present Christians with enormous spiritual insights, which provide the evidence of the possibility of the reintegration of the transcendent into their lives in today’s secular world, and can lead them to act and amend their attitudes and, by their example, the attitudes of others within their society and, so, take everybody forward, together, into the future.

---

Dupré promotes his thoughts on Christian spirituality as a means towards helping achieve his desire for reintegration of the transcendent, which he suggests can be done via a combination of metaphysics and culture. While pondering over his works, I recognised them as being capable of providing a framework for helping Australians understand, via his masterly analytical reflections, the secular challenges in today’s Australian perspective. However, that realisation required me keeping in mind that his responsorial reflections are implied as being simply profound reflections — not solutions; the profound reflections only can help pave the way towards solutions for addressing and overcoming those challenges. Therefore, I deemed it necessary to appropriate and shape the responsorial reflections from his framework to help Australians address and hopefully overcome those challenges. Strangely, this recognition appears to have been overlooked by many people over the years and, as such, due significance has not been rendered to the totality of Dupré’s works.

As a result, with this thesis’ theological emphasis, and its primary focus on the Roman Catholic Church, while not excluding Protestant and other Churches generally, I decided to draw upon and utilise that part of Dupré’s framework that I recognised as having been overlooked by many people over the years, and demonstrate its relevance for addressing today’s challenges in Australia’s secular culture — the purpose of this dissertation. In so doing, I proposed to enjoin, in dialogue with Dupré’s framework, the convergences and divergences of contemporary non-Australian and local authors on Australian culture.

3. Thesis outline

The following elements comprise the key understandings which are expanded to argue this thesis.

1. Over the years, Dupré’s works have been extolled for their relevance to spirituality and, in today’s secular world, where there is a current upsurge towards finding genuine spirituality in Australian lives, Churches and society, many people are looking towards his works, more than ever, to

---


4 Caroline Miley, The Suicidal Church: Can the Anglican Church be Saved? (Annandale: Pluto Press Australia, 2002), 50, (hereafter ‘Miley, Suicidal Church’).
enhance their spiritual development. It is argued in this study that this could be a major reason why many of his other great concepts have simply remained reflections, and have not been recognised and/or used for other purposes (e.g., as providing a framework for helping Australians understand and address Australia's current secular challenges).

2. To achieve the purpose of this thesis, it is also argued that the study needs not only to investigate and show how and why Dupré's works themselves are relevant to the topic, but also to demonstrate some of that relevance by introducing it into, and highlighting its important enhancing value for, the current Australian dialogue about responding to today's challenges in Australia's secular culture.

3. It is proposed that Dupré's framework consists of at least two types of categorised reflections — analytical and responsorial. The first are deemed to be masterly reflections which provide an accurate understanding of the current worldview and its secular challenges. The second are implied as being simply profound reflections — not solutions; the profound reflections can only help pave the way towards solutions for addressing and overcoming those challenges.

4. Understood this way, Dupré's deep cultural analytical reflections about modernity, when dialogued with Australian authors, evidence how the origins, developments and cultural views of the United States of America and Europe can equally apply to the Australian cultural perspective and its secular challenges. Therefore, these writers' analytical reflections can enable Australians to understand more deeply the Australian perspective and its secular challenges.

5. In addition, Dupré's responsorial reflections, which are much more robust and culturally deeper than those of the Australian writers, can help pave the way towards redirecting Australians' foci and, so, assist Australians in addressing and hopefully overcoming those Australian humanistic challenges.

6. Because Dupré's responsorial reflections offer no panacea to restore the damage incurred by modernity's fragmentation of spiritual life, the overlooked part of his framework, together with an abundance of coherence

---

with it from other authors, needs to be recognised, appropriated and shaped to help complete the task of this theoretical study.

7. Hence, I believe that Dupré’s works, particularly, and those of others, generally, need to be recognised as providing such a necessary framework. Simultaneously, efforts ought be made to highlight and rectify this Australian (and possibly global) oversight, so that full significance can be given to his total authorship.

4. Chapter outlines

In essence, this thesis aims at recognising, drawing upon and utilising that part of Dupré’s framework that has been overlooked by many people over the years. After introducing its relevance to the topic of this thesis and demonstrating some of that relevance as being invaluable for the current Australian dialogue about responding to today’s secular challenges in Australia’s cultural perspective, this approach is offered as a solution to assist Australians to understand, address and hopefully overcome those secular challenges.

Chapter 1 briefly examines some of Blumenberg’s, Dupré’s, Moses’ and others’ analyses of how the current worldview was arrived at, situating this thesis within Dupré’s Historical deconstruction of modernity from the 13th Century to the present time. It does so, firstly, to show how today’s deep cultural worldview came about and, secondly, to highlight what options are available to take its people forward into the future, especially concerning the reuniting of what modernity has separated — God, nature and humanity.

Chapter 2 contends that drawing upon Dupré’s and other authors’ analytical reflections provides an understanding of the current worldview and its secular challenges, while their responsorial reflections ought help pave the way towards addressing and hopefully overcoming those challenges. In addition, this chapter looks at that worldview through Dupré’s and other authors’ works via seven topics especially chosen to help elucidate this thesis’ argument, with each topic depicting a different aspect, while highlighting the challenge in each as assessed from Dupré’s framework, of that worldview.

An understanding of the current Australian perspective and its secular challenges is presented in Chapter 3, through examining numerous selected contemporary Australian authors’ reflective analyses of them. Again, this is effected via the chosen seven topics, but with each topic depicting a different aspect of that
Australian perspective. Also, this chapter argues that those writers’ reflective responses to the challenges provide Australians with similar results to those obtained by the authors in the previous chapter. Further, it highlights why Dupré’s reflections in Chapters 1 and 2 are applicable to the Australian context, and why his works should be recognised as providing that sought and necessary framework. This is particularly important, given Dupré’s assessment of today’s culture as being dominated by the human mind and secularisation and, thus, virtually ‘godless’. Additionally, this chapter explores and explicates how and why the chosen Australian authors’ analytical and responsorial reflections, in dialogue with Dupré’s deeper, more robust and articulated thoughts, are either ‘almost identical’, or ‘similar’, or ‘varied’. These examinations indicate an abundance of coherence with, as well as some dissention to, Dupré’s thoughts by many of those Australian authors, and highlight where and how to recognise and contemplate making appropriations from the responsorial reflections in his framework to help attain the purpose of this dissertation.

Chapter 4 demonstrates how the analytical and responsorial reflections in Dupré’s framework (including non-Australian and Australian authors’ coherence with them), as researched and explicated in this thesis, are relevant and can be recognised, appropriated and shaped to firstly understand, and then address and hopefully overcome the secular Australian challenges in those chosen seven topics. Further, this chapter’s summary evidences how the above appropriations from Dupré’s framework can be applied to understand and address the Australian secular challenge in each topic. By approaching Dupré’s works in this way, a new recognition of their relevance to, and implications in, the topic of this thesis is presented and structured on a sound theoretical basis.

The Conclusion to this thesis emphasises the relevance and very definite implications of Dupré’s works for helping Australians understand and address today’s challenges in Australia’s secular culture. It demonstrates this by summarising what the thesis set out to do, and what part each of the four chapters played towards achieving this goal. This Conclusion also stresses how the above contributes to the recognition of Dupré’s total authorship. Thus, the purpose of this thesis is fulfilled. However, the practicality of effecting these matters merits further investigation, which is beyond the scope of this theoretical study.
CHAPTER 1
HOW WE GOT TO WHERE WE ARE IN THE WORLD TODAY

1. Blumenberg, Dupré, Moses and others

In this chapter, a Historical deconstruction of how we got to today’s deep cultural world perspective will be examined, beginning with Hans Blumenberg’s analyses of that journey. Then, Louis Dupré’s in-depth study, which he did partly in response to Blumenberg’s work, shall be drawn upon. To learn more about the developments which took place in that worldview, other authors in general, as deemed appropriate, will be introduced to help in the understanding of the story’s unfolding.

Both Dupré and Blumenberg argue that modernity has its origins in developments in the late Middle Ages (1300–1453AD), well before the Renaissance (1453 AD ff), and the science revolution (1500–1700AD).

According to Hugh Kearney, there were three traditions in science in this period, three discovery producing paradigms. The ‘Organic’ paradigm, using Aristotelian concepts and those of Galen (in medicine) and Ptolemy (in astronomy) provided the basis of the established position in most European universities until about 1650 (e.g., William Harvey). The ‘Magical’ paradigm, based on Neo-Platonic ideas and influenced by the Hermetic writings and the Jewish Kabbala, included Copernicus, Bruno, William Gilbert (magnetism) (1540–1603AD), Paracelsus, Johannes Kepler, with Isaac Newton spanning this paradigm and the next one, with a foot in both. These people believed in

---


7 Cf. The Hodder Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms, eds. S.J. Grenz, D. Guretzki and C.F. Nordling (London/Sydney/Auckland: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979), 105, (hereafter ‘Hodder Dictionary’), which describes the term ‘Renaissance’ as: ‘French for rebirth (and this term Renaissance) refers to the period of time roughly between 1400 and 1600, during which there was a perceived return to or rebirth of the aesthetic and artistic values of ancient Greece and Rome. The Renaissance entailed a shift from the medieval perception of reality in spiritual terms with God occupying the central role to one in which humans were the central figures. Hence, this period is often depicted as an era of “humanism”.’
action at a distance, something which the following Mechanists found unintelligible. The ‘Magical’ paradigm was probably the most productive during the time in question. The ‘Mechanistic’ paradigm, with a background in Greek atomism and based on Archimedean principles, included Galileo, Mersenne, Gassendi (the atomist), Descartes, Hobbes and Robert Boyle. The Mechanists eventually came out on top but never totally, because of sociological, political and theological reasons, as well as the scientific. 8

In line with Gregory Moses’ and other scholars’ thoughts, science, or something continuous with present day science, was already present in medieval Christian scholarship and, before that, in Jewish and Islamic thought and practices. 9 It would also seem that the beginnings of natural sciences originate in Western Christendom already in the high Middle Ages (1210–1300AD). Richard Campbell supports this proposition, arguing that the rise of modern science (and indeed of modern philosophy) can only be explained as a result of the impact of the Christian doctrine of Creation on Greek metaphysics in the 13th and 14th Centuries. He postulates that this led to an increasing emphasis on the radical contingency of the created world, as the Middle Ages progressed. 10 Another earlier writer, A.C. Crombie, finds the origins of experimental science in the West in the 13th, rather than the 17th Century and he traces a continuity in methodological theory and inheritance of concrete contributions in the sciences from Robert Grosseteste (1168–1253AD) through to Galileo, Francis Bacon, René Descartes and Isaac Newton in the 17th Century. 11 He starts his story with Grosseteste in the 1220s and 1230s by way of a fortunate combination of three factors: the input of Greek, Arabic and Jewish science in the period 1150–1250AD; the fairly high status of the developing medieval practical arts; and the Christian (also Jewish and Islamic)

---


9 Gregory Moses, ‘Blumenberg, Dupré, Radical Orthodoxy and Gauchet: on how we got to where we are and where we go from here’ in Members Papers Vol. 25, No. 3 from the Center for Process Studies, (Claremont CA.,2005); 3. http://www.ctr4process.org (date accessed 28/04/05), (hereafter ‘Moses, Blumenberg’). In the early part of my thesis, I will be building on, with permission, some preliminary research of one of my supervisors (Rev’d. Dr. Gregory Moses), who first introduced me to the works and person of Louis Dupré.


Chapter 1: How we got to where we are in the world today

The doctrine of Creation, wherein nature is a free creation of an intelligent and compassionate God. This, for him, provided just the right worldview for stimulating empirical scientific research. Yet, apart from suggesting that most of the post-13th Century medieval scientists were Nominalists or Ockhamists, he places no special emphasis on their omnipotence of God argument. Nominalism is the theory of knowledge that denies the objective reality of universal principles, maintaining that ‘universals’ are mere concepts with no reality apart from their existence in the mind of the individual, and which arose in the late Middle Ages as a reaction to scholastic metaphysics. Ockhamism, like Nominalism, places strong emphasis on the omnipotence of God. Further, taking such authors into account, it would appear that the science revolution was the speeding-up of developments already begun in the high Middle Ages. However, it is only in the Renaissance and beyond that science starts taking on, and being carried also, by the species of human self-assertion, which characterises modernity as such, and which determines science in its specifically modern form.  

Blumenberg articulates that modernity is the second overcoming of Gnosticism, especially Gnostic dualism. He argues that the early fathers’ first overcoming (inspired by Augustinian thought) at the beginning of the Middle Ages was unsuccessful, and suggests that its failure to solve the problem of Gnostic dualism assured the latter’s return in the late Middle Ages. In presenting his case, he deals with the origin of what is bad in the world — a problem left unsolved by the ancient world. He stresses that Augustine’s solution was that ‘man’ is responsible, and therefore free, this being the condition under which it was possible for a just God to punish ‘man’ for his failings with the bad things of this world. This human freedom allowed ‘man’ to be responsible for ‘his’ own actions, just like Adam’s original guilt, which highlighted the...
greatness of that freedom — thus, God could be justified. However, Blumenberg insists that such did not appear to overcome the then difficulties with predestination, a selection, the hidden God and His inconceivable absolute sovereignty, and this returns to haunt the late Middle Ages. While insisting that his argument had been overlooked by many current theologians and philosophers, Blumenberg postulates that this problem left unsolved by the ancient world — the origin of what is bad in the world — still required solving. To further strengthen his argument, Blumenberg states that Plato’s notion of the Demiurge as having to work only by persuasion becomes, in neo-Platonism, the fall of the world soul into the prison of matter. Then, Gnosticism, and indeed also Manichaeism, go one extra step and declare that it is the Demiurge itself, the creator of the physical world, who is the principal of badness, the opponent of the transcendent God of salvation. The good versus evil debate is further exacerbated because Christianity argued that this approach leads directly to Marcion’s separation of the God of Creation/Old Testament and the God of Salvation/New Testament. The Christian response to this led to the inauguration of Christian dogma, and the insistence on the dogma (or doctrine) of Creation by one God, so that all creation, which eventually included everything, emanated out of nothing. This, for Blumenberg, makes the problem of the origin of what is bad all the more difficult to deal with.

Blumenberg additionally argues that the Nominalist influence of the late Middle Ages (1300–1453AD), which consistently promulgated its thinking about the theme of the omnipotence of God, finally destroyed the credibility of the ancient and high medieval cosmic order (re: God, nature/man, cosmos). Thus, the actual finite world becomes totally contingent (e.g., What God made is entirely dependent/contingent on God’s will, and so no longer the embodiment of the full range and variety of what is possible with human beings as microcosm in the centre, and the whole suffused by the divine as macrocosm). Likewise, ethics become contingent, wholly dependent on the will of God, as does eventually, salvation and damnation and, indeed, the whole of theology.

---

14 Blumenberg, Legitimacy, 125–129.
15 ibid., 127–129.
16 Moses, Blumenberg, 1; and Moses, Options, 2.
17 Moses, Options, 2.
As a consequence, Blumenberg claims this entitles him to argue that the modern ‘self-understanding’ (i.e., modern science, modern philosophy, modern art, individualism etc.) is a particular, and in the circumstances, ‘legitimate’ historical and cultural response to the all-determining emphasis (in theory and in practice) upon that Nominalistic theme. As an extra expansion of this argument, it seems for him that the modern ‘self-assertion’ (i.e., science, art, individualism etc.) emerges as a response, and a ‘legitimate’ one at that, to a human situation deeply determined by the emphasis on contingency, by way of the second overcoming of Gnostic dualism.\(^\text{18}\)

Continuing, Blumenberg postulates that the threshold to modernity is crossed some time in the Renaissance, with the orthodox but unusual Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464AD) on one side of this threshold while, on the other side of it, he cites the unorthodox Giordano Bruno of Nola (1548–1600AD), who had already left it behind. In these times, Blumenberg insists that the problem was with the price that had to be paid to overcome Gnostic dualism within the medieval system, the frailty of which must be understood in relation to that effect. He stresses that the massive emphasis on the sovereignty of God in the late Middle Ages led to an intolerable situation, which was impossible to live with, thus making the senselessness of human self-assertion (the immanent self-assertion of reason through the mastery and alteration of reality) all but inevitable.\(^\text{19}\) He continues his argument stating that the inner logic of the connection between self-assertion and the ‘disappearance of order’ led Nietzsche to later suggest that, ‘If the universe has no concern for us, then we want the right to scorn it’.\(^\text{20}\) This presented us with the only tolerable response to a kind of inhuman order, one intolerable or impossible to live with. ‘After all’, Nietzsche argued, ‘submission, as such, is still a condition: God is too sovereign even for that, there is nothing we can do in that direction’.\(^\text{21}\)

---


\(^{19}\) Moses, *Options*, 3; and Moses, Blumenberg, 2.


outward nor inward’.22 For him, then, ‘the ghost of this God makes a final appearance in Descartes’ genius malignus, but Descartes never quite manages to get rid of his malign genie, and his failure spells the final destruction of the medieval concept of reality’.23

The main criticism of Blumenberg, like Moses says,24 is that, in his effort to exonerate modernity, he tends to undervalue the positive role that developments in Christian theology and Christian culture played in the construction of modernity (especially in the development of modern science). For Dupré25 and Marcel Gauchet,26 this role was more than just a matter of setting up an intolerable situation, as Blumenberg articulates, and Dupré’s correction of this attitude will be referred to later.

While taking over from Blumenberg’s work, Dupré not only includes much more detail and several corrections (where he deems them necessary) but also adds a particular emphasis peculiar to his own line of thinking. As Moses says:

This turns out to be rather crucial to understanding the present situation of both theology and religion, namely, that the very conception of the positivistic supernatural and the split between purely natural in our sense and supernatural, with concomitant splits between faith and reason, nature and grace, and such, are all late medieval constructions.27

To examine in more detail how we got to where we are today, Dupré’s analyses of the way modernity’s deep culture developed from its origins to the present day will be investigated. In doing so, his suggested, easy to follow, chronological sequence from the 13th Century and onwards, as highlighted by him during his 2004 Australian tour and reinforced in our 2005 USA conferences, will be used.28

22 Blumenberg, Legitimacy, 188.
23 ibid., 185–187.
24 Moses, Blumenberg, 2.
25 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 3, 93, 97 and 112; and cf. Moses, Options, 4–6.
27 Moses, Blumenberg, 3.
28 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 9, 10 and 145.
Chapter 1: How we got to where we are in the world today

2 The 13th Century

In the early 13th Century, theologians understood that, in the medieval synthesis of Christian theology and Aristotelian philosophy and science (the universe of St. Thomas Aquinas [1224–1274AD] and Dante Alighieri [1265–1321AD]), the world was a complex, qualitatively differentiated universe, a ‘great chain of being’ with God at the apex (for Aquinas, God is a First Cause, the Divine Being — who is pure act or activity, is infinite, and whose existence and essence coincide) and human beings, a kind of microcosm, in the centre. For Aquinas and Dante, theirs was a neat imaginative world view in which human beings, in spite of their problems, felt pretty much at home. People had not yet developed an alienation from the natural world. Moreover, neither the Greeks nor the Romans recognised the opposition between nature and culture. They thought of humanisation as the organic development of a ‘given’ nature, and stressed the need to harmonise erudition and education with the demands of an established, social nature — in short, their culture could be defined as a process of cultivating a ‘given’ nature.

Dante, by highlighting the workers’ ‘act of rebellion’ during the erection of the Tower of Babel (i.e., the workers’ decision to surpass one’s allotted nature, which stands at the birth of the new concept of nature), remarkably anticipated the link between the division of labour and cultural diversity, which was later established by Karl Marx. Thus, as Dupré says, ‘we note the autonomous character which the idea of culture here suddenly acquires’.

Further, Dupré postulates that the intense awareness of the exclusive lordship of Yahweh in the Old Testament led to a different appreciation of the world from that of the Greeks and most other contemporary civilisations. The principle, ‘if God alone is

29 Dupré, Modern Idea, 8 and 9; and cf. Blumenberg, Legitimacy, 131-154; and also Aligheri Danté, De Vulgari Eloquentia, trans by Marianne Shapiro, (Lincoln USA: University of Nebraska, 1990), wherein he attributes the origin of vernacular languages, the source of national cultures, to a technical enterprise undertaken in defiance of a divinely established order. The construction of the Tower of Babel made the assigned tasks so specialized that the workers ceased to know the names of each other’s tools. This led to Danté’s ‘act of rebellion’.

30 Louis Dupré, Marx’s Social Critique of Culture, (New Haven: Yale University Press,1983), 1, (hereafter ‘Dupré, Marx’s Social Critique’).

31 Dupré, Modern Idea, 2 and 3; and Dupré, Marx’s Social Critique, 1.
holy, then nothing else is’, laid the first basis for a desacralisation of the real. This, in a
sense, gave ‘man’ a dimension over the earth that the sacred cosmos of the Greeks
would never have tolerated.\(^{32}\) Christianity, in another way, resacralised the world in its
dogma of the incarnation. Yet, that divine humanism, in turn, created the possibility for
a ‘secular humanism’, which began to emerge at the end of, and developed further in,
the next century through theologians beginning to distinguish human nature, endowed
with an intrinsic law of its own, from the ‘added’ order of grace. This distinction, by
which Aquinas and his followers legitimated a sphere of understanding independent of
revelation, was to lead to a later division of thought about the mysteriousness of the
relation between being and beings.\(^{33}\)

Dupré argues that the story begins already with Aquinas, whose distinction
between philosophy (based on reason) and theology (based on divine revelation),
wherein he recognised the autonomy and integrity of each — yet both coming from
God, was the beginning of thought(s) which led to a more serious split.\(^ {34}\) However, for
Aquinas himself, philosophy, including human science, is taken up into the very heart
of theology for the sake of the achievement of its goal, namely, the salvation of human
beings (Cf. the same theme in preaching). But, this does help sow the seeds for that
split.\(^ {35}\) Moses, too, comments about that distinction which suggests that, while it was
not yet in St. Bonaventure’s (1221–1274AD) thoughts,

something like such a distinction perhaps became almost inevitable in the
light of the flood of apparently pagan, extra-revelational mostly
Aristotelian wisdom together with medieval Islamic and Jewish
scholarship into Latin Christendom in the period 1150–1250. This faced
the medieval Christians with a problem the ancients never had: though
playing for a different, indeed superior team the ancients could at least
conceive of themselves as playing in the same league as their non-
Christian Platonic, Stoic and even Epicurean colleagues, tapping into the
same market, the provision of rest and peace of soul which for them
could be achieved only through God in Christ. But now it seems there
might be two different leagues, in Aquinas still held together in one
competition, one feeding into the other, but soon each to go its own way.

\(^ {32}\) Dupré, Modern Idea, 13.

\(^ {33}\) Ibid.; and refer ibid., 12, wherein he describes the new phenomenon of ‘secularization’ as an original ‘self-assertion’
of the Blumenberg type; and Dupré, Metaphysics & Culture, 59; and also Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 63.

\(^ {34}\) Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 171.

\(^ {35}\) Blumenberg, Legitimacy, i–xxxi; and cf. Moses, Blumenberg, 3.
A continuation of Patristic and early Medieval Christian and Medieval Islam and Jewish theories of prophecy relying either on neo-platonic doctrines of illumination as in Augustine or in a neo-platonic or later averroistic version of Aristotle’s nous poetikos might have enabled a kind of continuity. But Aquinas has already given up on the doctrine of illumination, with Bonaventure the last great medieval theologian to hold to it, and Aquinas has also re-inserted the nous poetikos or intellectus agens back into the human soul.36

Although Aquinas was opposed to Bonaventure and the Latin Averroists (1210–1300AD), he, also like them, grappled with the problem of how to reconcile the ancient learning with the Christian faith. In spite of the differences, for Aquinas himself, ‘nature’ is still no more than a remainder concept, a purely theoretical entity, in the way of a counter-to-fact speculation which never existed, what would have been if God had not called us, from the beginning, to intimacy with God-self. The word ‘nature’, in the natural desire for the vision of God, is as in Augustine — human nature as it really is, human nature in the concrete, the only nature that is, we ourselves as we experience ourselves. Healing and intimacy with God require the divine grace, but it is a grace which is very much in touch with nature as it really is. Humans are called to intimacy with God and, for Aquinas, this depended on God’s grace. Grace heals nature, restores it to its true integrity, rather than grace building on nature.37 Also for Aquinas, as with the Fathers, ‘Supernature’ is another name for God, the ‘Super-Natural’ source of the ‘Natural’ rather than as a realm within our world, built on top of the natural, the second layer of a ‘two-layered cake’, as it were.38 But, it is interesting to note that, according to Dupré, ‘the term "supernatural" did not begin to refer to a separate order until some 16th Century theologians clearly distinguished a natural human end from humankind’s revealed destiny’.39

Further, Aquinas expounded the Arabic discovered work of Aristotle, utilising the latter’s idea of ethics/morality, but emphasising the need for God. Aquinas drew on the Christian idea (from Augustine in the 5th Century) of nature and grace and, so, added to Aristotle’s work (which contained the four cardinal virtues of

36 Blumenberg, Legitimacy, Chapters 1 and 2; and cf. Moses, Blumenberg, 3.
37 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 93–119; and cf. Moses, Blumenberg, 3; and also cf. Moses, Options, 4.
38 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 171; and cf. Moses, Options, 4.
39 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 171.
wisdom/prudence, justice, temperance and courage/fortitude) the three divine virtues (faith, hope and charity), as he claimed they were necessary to complete it. He argued that, while we can have ethics without religion, we need God’s love to elevate them.\(^{40}\)

Dupré’s story continues with John Duns Scotus (1265/6–1309AD), with his theology of the incarnation, including his invention of a notion of human nature neutral between being taken up by a divine person or a human person called to grace, a kind of natural nature to which something then gets added.

In addition, Dupré lays out a critically important story of the way the modern self came to envision its role within the total order of being. The story involves a ‘strange reversal’ in the meaning of ‘subject’. It originally meant ‘what lies under’, the most elementary level of being. However, Duns Scotus induced a turn. He attributed a distinct mental reality to the known (i.e., things known in the mind acquired an ‘objective’ being because they were in the mind, they were ‘ideal’). The subject, whose mind contained the ideal objects, came to be thought of as ‘real’. Dupré explains the turn as follows:

> Once this mental subject (i.e., the human mind) came to be regarded as the source of the ideal qualities previously considered inherent in all other supposita, it bound them to itself as objects, that is, as being for-the-subject. It thereby took on the Promethean task of reconstructing the entire order of reality in ideal terms. Paradoxically, in the process of doing so the self increasingly lost its own substantial content to the all-absorbing cognitive and volitive functions it exercised.\(^{41}\)

This turn sowed the seeds for thought, which eventually took us from microcosmos to subject.\(^{42}\)

As Charles Taylor postulates, the above situation followed on from the teachings of St. Francis of Assisi. He diverted devotion to the human Christ, the suffering Christ, from the Christ of judgement (e.g., as reflected in the Pantocrator). His stress on the human suffering obviously fitted (and still fits) with the aspiration to bring Christ to the suffering humans of his (our) time. They are two facets of the same leading idea, that Christ is our brother, our neighbour, is among us.\(^{43}\)

\(^{40}\) Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, 93–111.

\(^{41}\) Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, 112; and also according to the *Readers Digest Universal Dictionary*, (London, New York, Sydney, Cape Town, Montreal: The Readers Digest Association Limited, 1988); 1232, Promethean means pertaining to or suggestive of Prometheus (a Titan of Greek mythology who stole fire from the gods to give to mankind); boldly creative, life-bringing.


was to demonstrate that it was not so much the kind of vision of God’s power “out there”, but the heightened power of love itself which God opened to us (i.e., the participation in God’s love). In line with St. Francis’ thoughts, John Duns Scotus, a later Franciscan, extolled that God did not just make us so that we could live according to the laws of his creation, but to participate in his love. In attempting to bring Christ to the world, Francis’ spirituality, on the one side, involved a new vision of nature in animate and inanimate things which surround us; on another side, it brought ordinary people, in their individuality, into focus. Hence, the intense concentration on the person of Jesus Christ. This devotion, as Taylor and Dupré argue, ends up opening “a new perspective on the unique particularity of the person” — the Franciscan particularity.

On the intellectual level, this was as highlighted in the works of Duns Scotus but, over time, it ends up giving a new status to the particular, as something more than a mere instantiation of the universal. Perfect knowledge will mean now grasping the ‘individual form’, the haecceitas, in Scotus’ language.

This, in hindsight, was a major turning point in the history of Western civilization, and was an important step towards that primacy of the individual which defines our nature. But it was significant because it was more than a mere intellectual shift, reflected in the invention of new unpronounceable scholastic terms. It was primarily a revolution in devotion, in the focus of prayer and love; the paradigm human individual, the God-man, in relation to whom alone the humanity of all others can be truly known. Thus, there were two spiritual motives for the renewed interest in nature as autonomous: devotion to God as the Creator of an ordered Cosmos: and a new evangelical turning to the world, to bring Christ among the people.

3 The 14th Century

During this epoch, further fuel was added to the simmering coals of the fire which gave birth to the transition from medieval to modern culture, and they are highlighted in the following paragraphs.

44 Taylor, A Secular Age, 764.
45 ibid.
46 ibid., 94 and 144; also cf. Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 36.–41.
47 ibid.
48 ibid.
49 ibid.
Dante’s thoughts continued to be pondered early in the 14th Century.

In late medieval thought, apart from Aquinas, Duns Scotus was one of two other towering figures, the other being William of Ockham (1285–1349AD). Continuing on from the last century, Duns Scotus, a Franciscan, thought of himself as carrying on the Franciscan tradition, harking back to Augustine. However, he was an original thinker, who created a synthesis different from, but comparable with, that created by Aquinas. Yet, he was less close to Aristotle, was more Platonist, and owed more to Avicenna. For Duns Scotus, the primary object of the intellect is being, and the task of the metaphysician is to explore this concept. He also considered that being must be thought of as a term which can apply equally to transcendent reality, namely God, and the contents of the material world. He did not think there was a difference in the meaning of ‘being’ as between the two levels. Rather, he considered that the univocal character of the expression is necessary if we are to have any metaphysical knowledge of the Divine Being at all. For him, those who argued for the opposite doctrine which promoted two separate levels of being — God and humans — were utterly equivocal and surely wrong. He was confident that one could come to understandings of various terms, which could be asserted univocally of God and creatures. Also, he was particularly interested in those categories which he called ‘disjunct’ — such as finite or infinite, contingent or necessary, and considered such metaphysical arguments (e.g., in his supposed ‘proofs’ of God’s existence) to be probative, as opposed to arguments drawn from the physical world. For him, disjunct categories are such that they apply disjunctively to all beings. Hence, not every being is contingent (for instance, God is not contingent), but every being is either contingent, or, necessary, and so on with others. Further, he was critical of Aquinas’ argument for the demonstration of the immortality of the soul as begging the question, for it begins from the theory that the soul is a form subsisting by itself, which is the point to be proved. Duns Scotus believed that revealed theology had to be brought into this type of discussion, like those concerning God’s omnipotence and mercy. Thus, his line of thought created much interest and debate in this century.

St. Bonaventure’s thoughts of the previous century also provided great inspiration for 14th Century thinkers. Indeed, Heiko Oberman argues that Bonaventure and the Franciscan tradition were more important than Aquinas’ system in the sharing
of medieval thought in this era, and that Bonaventure, above all, ‘determines the questions asked and the answers given’.  

In this century there was also much religious conflict in medieval England, out of which developed the early roots of the Reformation, that eventually led to the break launched in the 16th Century by Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin, with medieval Roman Catholicism. They protested against what they perceived as the overall degeneracy of the Roman Church and its departure from what the Reformers saw as the faith of the Apostles and early Church Fathers.

Johannes (Meister) Eckhart (1260–1357AD), a Dominican, was a mystical writer in this period. He appears to have held, what may be called, a ‘double-decker’ theory of God. At the higher level, God is ‘Deitas’ or Godhead, from which emanates the personalised God, ‘Deus’ of the Trinity. The Godhead is the ground of the divine and is ineffable. The Three Persons emanate from it. Out of God there issues the universe and, here, some of Eckhart’s language suggests the idea of emanation rather than a time-bound act of creation. Also, his statements about the mystical experience aroused much hostility. In stating that the highest mystical experience comes when the individual realises the essential identity of his underlying self with the divine reality, Eckhart’s parallel appears suggestive, and it reinforces the theory that the primary reason for his then worldview lies in a tension between his everyday sacramental and pious view of the universe, as ruled over by a personal Creator or Deus, and his mystical awareness of the disappearance of the subject–object distinction. He could resolve the tension by his double-decker view of the Divine Being, but not completely. This, obviously, led to much debate. Yet, as a mystic, he was important in that mystics stretched the concept of experience and, to some extent, the experientialism of the mystics was encouraged by the initial flow of Ockhamism.

Chapter 1: How we got to where we are in the world today

The work of William of Ockham (1285–1349AD), as we saw earlier in both Dupré’s and Blumenberg’s analyses, is critical — almost the turning point from late medieval times into modernity. As Dupré highlighted, Nominalist theology in the Middle Ages had, in a one-sided emphasis on divine omnipotence, ruptured the bond of analogy that had linked the Creator and creature. This changed the relation between reason and revelation in a manner that caused endless controversies and eventually broke up the unity of Christendom altogether. 51 By the end of the Middle Ages, Nominalist theology, with its deep scepticism with regard to the theological possibilities of knowing, had effectively removed God from creation, 52 and this removal of transcendence fundamentally affected the conveyance of meaning and, so, the human mind came to determine all meaning/reality. 53 This was the start of medieval rationalism, which brought about a great cultural change 54 and, as a result, the concept of Christendom began to steadily disintegrate during this, and especially the next, century.

Moreover, Ockham’s dissolvent influence on the rift between the Papacy and the Bavarian Emperor of the time (which also involved him deeply in arguments concerning the ‘infallibility of the Pope’ and finally contributed to his excommunication from the Catholic Church — his case was being reconsidered by Rome at the time of his death) 55, plus his ‘terminist’ school, which he founded on previous ways of medieval thought, were immense and lasting. As Ivo Thomas states, much of his writing was political in purpose, but his logic (in a wide sense), developed at Oxford, was always basic and operative. However, his formal logic displayed some idea of material implication and a preference for propositional logic, which he understood to be more basic than the syllogistic. Yet, at the same time, we have to deal with texts which show that his ideal of demonstration was explicitly syllogistic. 56 In his epistemology, Ockham

51 Dupré, Intellectual Sources, 1.
52 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 3.
53 ibid.
54 ibid., 6.
propounded an intuitive knowledge of material singulars, which he held to act directly, naturally and infallibly on the mind to produce a total impression of themselves. Theories of abstraction or of illumination are thus discarded. Direct and immediate, this intuition yet issues in concepts which are signs and representatives of their source, representatives with plenary powers so that their marshalling and analysis is a faithful presentation of their original. Here, the by now grammatical and logical treatises on modes of signification and the properties of terms, metaphysically neutral in the hands of earlier writers, acquire a definitely conceptualist tinge. It cannot be said that Ockham himself neglected the intuitive approach to singular reality but many of his followers surrendered themselves to technicalities of this conceptual reflection and, as a result, logic and Nominalism have been, and still are, often identified as by definition. In his ontology, for Ockham, the singular object of intuition was often composite indeed, but always irreducibly singular. There was no common or universal nature to be discovered in it, no distinction of essence and existence, no principles of change on the Aristotelian pattern and, above all, no relations. Matter and form he admitted, but conceived of as no less absolute and singular than the singulars composed of them. He applied his principle, known as ‘Ockham’s razor’ (i.e., ‘Plurality is never to be posited without need’) frequently and diligently in his works and thoughts. For him, change is a mere reshuffling of the singulars, and their origin in creation is a simple positing by God, who remains wholly exterior to them. Unlike Aquinas, Ockham denies that the causality of the first cause permeates their being and operations without exception. Moreover, he argued that this atomistic theory of knowledge and being is faithfully reflected in the moral order. The obligatory law of right reason is in the last analysis imposed by an inexplicable divine command, in no way rooted in the nature of God or the world. He says that, with regard to it, every human will has the fullest autonomy, as indeed has God himself. For Ockham, the will is not essentially a power of choosing between goods, with which as goods it has a natural affinity, but a power of self-determination in face of isolated beings in respect of which it has been given some arbitrary rights and duties, such as it can further establish for itself.57

---

57 Thomas, Encyclopedia, 326.
Ockham is often attributed the title of ‘father’ of Nominalism, but Dupré argues that:

... recent studies of Ockham ... have shown how unjustified it is to call him the ‘father of theological nominalism’, but there is no doubt that his position prepared the concept of nature as a self-sufficient reality.58

Ockham’s strong emphasis on the doctrine of the omnipotence of God and his much clearer distinction between philosophy and theology, as opposed to that espoused by Aquinas, was of great importance to thinkers in this century, as their culture moved towards, and into, modernity.

Moreover, Aquinas’ 13th Century concepts about nature and grace provoked much discussion, and it was left to this century’s Thomists to push these concepts into a distinction between the two levels of being — supernature and nature.59 In his exegesis, which plumbs deeply the changes in classical and medieval antecedents wrought by earlier moderns, Dupré places these momentous changes in the period from near the end of the 14th Century to the end of the next century.60

This age also experienced the great debate that took place in the Byzantine Empire between secular Hellenism and Christian orthodoxy. St. Gregory Palamas (1296–1359AD), a prominent writer on Christian mysticism, was the chief theoretician of the mystical movement known as Hesychasm (from the Greek word ‘hesyche’ meaning ‘peace’ or ‘quiet’), which involved the use of the Jesus prayer and a breathing technique. The path of the Hesychast was deemed to culminate in the vision of the uncreated Light. This emanated from God but was not itself the divine essence, which is unknowable. Critics of the movement at the time, and also later, argued that Palamas brought a division into the Godhead, and had therefore fallen into something like polytheism. This aroused considerable debate.

59 ibid., 93–111 and 171.
60 ibid., 2 and 3.
2. The 15th Century

With the ‘transition fire’ hotting up at this time, the beginnings of the earlier mentioned momentous changes in culture emerged more strongly, as evidenced in the following paragraphs.

In the early Italian Renaissance, Dupré postulates:

The task of fostering and developing an existing potential started giving way to the desire for unlimited ‘self-assertion’. From that point on, man began to regard the entire socialization process as a contribution of his own free will and insight. Only by surpassing his given humanity would he grow fully human.61

In short, modernity’s culture could be defined as one of creating a new, second nature. These two opposed definitions of culture divide the ancients from the moderns.62

Dante was a traditional figure in many respects loyal to the medieval world. He attributed the origin of vernacular languages — the source of natural cultures — to a technical enterprise undertaken in defiance of a divinely established order,63 and increasingly in the following centuries, because of the shift of God from the centre of reality to humans (i.e., the era of humanism, wherein nature and culture were treated as being different from each other). After Dante, culture came to consist of a refusal to accept nature as given.64 The term ‘humanitas’ itself articulated an ideal, an invitation to lift oneself above ordinary humankind. What had once been a means of accomplishing one’s assigned task, now became an independent end in itself, an ideology.65 As Dupré continues,

61 Dupré, Marx’s Social Critique, 1 and 2; and cf. Blumenberg, Legitimacy, Part III.
62 Dupré, Marx’s Social Critique, 1 and 2.
63 Dupré, Modern Idea, 2 and 3; and Dupré, Marx’s Social Critique, 1.
64 Dupré, Marx’s Social Critique, 1 and 2; and Dupré, Modern Idea, 1 and 2 and 3.
65 Dupré, Marx’s Social Critique, 2.
in acquiring ‘humanitas’ man as the new creator of his nature rivals his
divine Maker. Henceforth the rebel Prometheus, the thief of heaven’s fire,
replaced the loyal Hercules as principal hero in the myth of culture. The
unpleasant final episode of Pandora’s Box, in which the Greeks
expressed their deep suspicion of god-daring exploits, was prudently
omitted.66

Dupré’s story gains momentum via post Ockhamist Nominalism with its
theological voluntarism and its overpowering emphasis on the omnipotence of God —
as in Blumenberg. The relation between God and creation is now reduced to no more
than a contingent, increasingly external relationship of efficient causality, and the
human being ceases to be a kind of microcosm at the heart of the real and now
becomes its human, increasingly objectifying interpreter and actor. Finally, this is
combined with Renaissance human self-assertion for an explosive mixture, which
eventually gives rise to modernity in spite of various late medieval and Renaissance
attempts to keep it all together.67

This Nominalist theology effectively removed God from creation. Ineffable in
being and inscrutable in his designs, God withdrew from the original synthesis
altogether. The divine became relegated to a supernatural sphere separate from
nature, with which it retained no more than a causal, external link. This removal of
transcendence fundamentally affected the conveyance of meaning. Whereas
previously, meaning had been established in the very act of creation by a wise God, it
now fell upon the human mind to interpret a cosmos, the structure of which had ceased
to be given as intelligible. Instead of being an integral part of the cosmos, the person
became its source of meaning. Mental life separated from cosmic being: as meaning-
giving ‘subject’, the mind became the spiritual substratum of all reality. Only what is
objectively constituted would count as real. This, as Dupré states, is ‘reality split into
two separate spheres: that of the mind which contained all intellectual determinations
and that of all other being, which received them’.68

---

66 Dupré, Marx’s Social Critique, 2.
67 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 60–63 and 65–92; and cf. Moses, Blumenberg, 4.
68 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 3.
Also, as post 14th Century Nominalism emphasised the breakdown of nature in terms of rationality,⁶⁹ the idea of an ‘intrinsically’ rational world order disintegrated. Once the subject became the sole source of rationality, thought ceased to be contemplation and, instead, turned into a method of categorical construction. More and more, an imperious subject came to bestow upon an amorphous world its own rationality. Hence, the method of the physical sciences, which were to flourish later, when unrestrictedly applied, would transform the very concept of reason.⁷⁰

Further, Nominalist philosophy and early humanism contributed toward this epoch’s awareness of the symbolism inherent in all language and, when Nominalist thinkers detached words from concepts and early humanists regarded language itself as creative of meaning, they undermined the then assumption that language merely mirrors a reality internalised by the mind. Only when each mode of symbolic perception creates its own unique meaning and combines with other modes do they jointly constitute that meaningful totality, which in the West we call culture.⁷¹

Additionally, out of the Renaissance’s effect at this time, Dupré highlights the beginnings of the spiritual revolution and the mercantile revolution of this century and their continuing into the next.⁷²

For Dupré, the threshold to modernity was crossed sometime in the early Renaissance.⁷³ Therefore, for him, it had its origins, more than anything else, in a ‘fateful separation’ towards the end of the Middle Ages between what we nowadays call the supernatural and the natural, with the latter itself splitting up into the knowing and acting, meaning-constituting autonomous human subject on the one hand, and the totally objectified, desacralised natural world on the other. Clearly, for him, the passage to modernity helped to define the present difficult situation (brought about through the

---

⁶⁹ Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 93–111.
⁷⁰ Dupré, Modern Idea, 6 and 7.
⁷¹ Dupré, Metaphysics & Culture, 6–9.
⁷³ Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 7.
gradual erosion of transcendence) for Christian spirituality and the life it entails in this secular age.\textsuperscript{74} As such, the advent of modernity coincided with the beginning fragmentation of culture.\textsuperscript{75} Hence, as Dupré states, ‘…modernity is an event that has transformed the relation between the cosmos, its transcendent source, and its human interpreter’.\textsuperscript{76} Therefore, for him, ‘modern’ has become the predicate of a unified world culture.\textsuperscript{77}

In situating the rise of modernism in the late Middle Ages, Dupré represents the changes wrought by earliest moderns in the previous century, in three broad areas of Western thought. In the first change, people abandoned the sense of an integrated cosmos and began to see nature as an object apart from themselves. In the second change, people abandoned the sense of themselves as microcosms of a universal order and began to think of themselves as separate objects. And in the third change, people abandoned their belief that nature was deified and began to think that supernatural grace functioned apart from objective nature. What led Dupré to raise up the aforesaid period of earliest modernity was the convergence then of ‘an early humanist notion of human creativity’ and ‘the negative conclusions of Nominalist theology’.\textsuperscript{78} He considers this convergence as a cultural explosion that had a massive effect — its impact shattered the organic unity of the Western view of the real. This explosive change destroyed the harmony of the whole, which prevailed from classical through medieval times. The consequence was modernity, which he describes as follows:

The Divine became relegated to a supernatural sphere separate from nature....This removal of transcendence fundamentally affected the conveyance of meaning. Whereas previously meaning had been established in the very act of creation by a wise God, it now fell upon the human mind to interpret a cosmos, the structure of which had ceased to be given as intelligible. Instead of being an integral part of the cosmos, the person became its source of meaning. Mental life separated from cosmic being: as meaning-giving ‘subject’, the mind became the spiritual

\textsuperscript{74} Dupré, \textit{Passage to Modernity}, 167 and 189; and Dupré, \textit{Religious Mystery}, 131–143.
\textsuperscript{75} Dupré, \textit{Metaphysics & Culture}, 56.
\textsuperscript{76} Dupré, \textit{Passage to Modernity}, 249.
\textsuperscript{77} ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} ibid., 3.
substratum of all reality. Only what it objectively constituted would count as real. Thus reality split into two separate spheres: that of the mind, which contained all intellectual determinations, and that of all other being, which received them.\textsuperscript{79}

Dupré believes that the modern ‘split’ had a permanent effect on ‘the very essence of reality’ and, so, started in this century the rethinking of the idea of transcendence, even as that of self and cosmos.\textsuperscript{80} He insists that ‘being must not be conceived as a substance unmoved by thought. Cultural changes leave a different reality in their wake’.\textsuperscript{81}

Moreover, Dupré’s correction of Blumenberg’s erroneous idea (that Nicholas of Cusa and Giordano Bruno were on either side of the threshold of modernity) now interprets the early Renaissance religious naturalist pan-en-theistic visions of them as rather being final attempts to prevent the ‘split’ occurring.\textsuperscript{82}

Thus, the combination of late medieval theology and early Italian humanism shattered the traditional synthesis that had united cosmic, human and transcendent components in a comprehensive idea of nature. Also, this early Italian humanism transformed the traditional worldview by its unprecedented synthesis on human creativity. The person emerged as the sole source of meaning, while nature was reduced to an object, and transcendence withdrew into a supernatural realm.

5. The 16th Century

The following paragraphs depict ongoing factors in the transition during this era.

The mercantile revolution and economic development continued.

\textsuperscript{79} Dupré, \textit{Passage to Modernity}, 3.
\textsuperscript{80} ibid., 6 and 252.
\textsuperscript{81} ibid., 10.
Chapter 1: How we got to where we are in the world today

The science revolution carried on through this century to the 19th Century and speeded up developments already begun in the high Middle Ages. It highlighted another difference that separated the ancient from the modern interpretation of basic rationalism (which today pervades all of Western culture and to it we owe the unique character of objectivity that connects the dawn of our civilisation with modern thought): for the ancients, a rational Logos, variously interpreted, ‘inhered’ in the ‘given’ nature of reality — it did not emerge from a human mind imposing its own categories upon a world devoid of a rational necessity of its own. After the former immanent rationality had been shaken, the great astronomers Copernicus, Galileo and Kepler arrived at the conclusion that the rationality of the universe consists in those mathematical structures that are obvious in the mind’s operation but hidden behind the appearances of ‘primary qualities’ in the physical world. As a result of this new attitude, nature is subjected to an ontological reduction whereby it becomes accessible to exhaustive quantification. Thus, nature has ceased to reveal itself as a reality that must be taken on its own terms, and now has become a controllable, calculable and predictable force. Becoming a truncated reality, its intrinsic meaningfulness, previously articulated in the principle of final causality, vanishes and, so, nature becomes mute, while its inner teleology is transformed to that other all-determining segment of the real, res cogitans.83

Dupré’s earlier cited ‘more primitive cultural layer’ of the earliest modernity, and the momentous changes that ensued, supported the later Renaissance in the north of Italy during this century.84

In addition to Nicholas of Cusa’s and Giordano Bruno’s final attempts to keep the ancient synthesis of God, human beings and cosmos together, the Renaissance humanist religion (e.g., that of Erasmus) and the early Reformation and Jansenist theologians of this epoch provided three major attempts to overcome the theological dualism modern culture inherited from late medieval thought.85

Moreover, following on from the previous century’s distinction made between the two levels of being — supernature and nature — Thomists, in this era, went further and made a separation (as opposed to a distinction) of these two levels, and this, according to Dupré, was the forerunner of atheism.86

83 Dupré, Modern Idea, 4 and 5.
84 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 2.
85 Moses, Blumenberg, 4.
86 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 93–111; and Dupré, Modern Idea, ix and 13.
Dupré also argues that the breakdown of nature in terms of rationality, as emphasised by post 14th Century Nominalism, was overcome in this century by French mathematics, wherein there was a unity of nature in terms of rationality (i.e., of the mind — not of God, not of nature).87

Also, at this time, the Protestant Reformation (with Zwingli, Calvin and Luther particularly) began in earnest from 1517AD ff, and it and Martin Luther both argued that the dualistic system of thought about nature and grace was wrong. This created more controversy.88 However, Dupré insists that Soren Kierkegaard, in the later 19th Century, advanced a most valuable contribution to the Catholic–Protestant dialogue concerning the Reformation by providing a deeper insight into the religious impact of one of the basic principles of the Reformation: the principle of subjectivity — an insight which is sadly lacking among non-Protestants. Further, and even more important, is the fact that, for Kierkegaard, Christianity is a vital matter of the individual conscience and not a social institution concerned primarily with respectability. Yet, while Protestants and Catholics object to his religious individualism, Dupré argues that one of Kierkegaard’s most significant conclusions is the recognition of the role which freedom plays in the acceptance of faith and grace. Anxious to preserve God’s transcendence against man’s self-sufficiency, reformers in this century had all but eliminated this element, even though it is directly concerned with the very principle of subjectivity. Dupré also insists that, in the Reformation dispute over ‘faith and good works’, Kierkegaard was able to restore the theology of ‘merit’ (including the necessity of ‘good works’) of the Christian tradition to the Reformation.89

In his analyses of the transition from cosmos to nature,90 Dupré introduces Giordano Bruno, who led toward modernism by rejecting the idea of God altogether. He reintroduced the ‘world soul’. This neo-Platonic concept allowed him to propagate Copernicus’s heliocentric world-system in a way that Copernicus himself did not. The traditional view was that, in a world-centred created universe, everything had a

87 Moses, Blumenberg, 4 and 5.
88 Dupré, Modern Idea, 13.
89 Louis K. Dupré, Kierkegaard as Theologian (London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), x and xi, (hereafter ‘Dupré, Kierkegaard’).
90 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 15–92.
naturally assigned place (by God). Bruno perceived that ‘once the earth had been removed from its central position, any ground for considering the universe centered at all disappeared’.  

91 Further, he understood that ‘once we abandon the ancient idea of a circular motion of the heavens (in a finite universe) the need for considering the cosmos finite disappears’.  

92 Bruno, like Nicholas of Cusa, perceived that ‘if the universe is infinite, then … the idea of a fixed centre had itself become meaningless’.  

93 In the infinite universe that Bruno imagined, as distinct from Nicholas of Cusa, then, ‘the world soul would guarantee the order and coherence that the theory of the locus naturalis had once secured in a centred cosmos. Thus, it was Bruno, and not Copernicus, who first envisioned a totally ‘open cosmology’.  

94 This led Bruno to his particular conception of God. If the universe were infinite — and it now was deemed to be by Bruno — then God had to be totally revealed and expressed. To withhold any possible manifestation would be ‘invidious’ on God’s part and hence incompatible with divine perfection. Precisely because his expression is total and necessary, God is as entirely immanent in the unfolded being of the universe as he is in himself.  

95 God ‘actualizes all his possibilities in cosmic self-expression’.  

96 ‘The world is grounded in God’s essence, not in his will’ (i.e., he is not a Prime Mover standing apart from his creation).  

97 However, this is not a pantheistic view, because Bruno’s God ‘transcends the manifold universe’.  

98 The infinity of the universe does not coincide with God’s infinity, ‘even though both of them are divine’.  

99 As Bruno says,
God unfolds himself in the universe, and yet the unfolding contrives to differ from his enfolded nature. Through the world soul God mediates his transcendent unity with the endless multiplicity of his cosmos.\(^{100}\)

According to Bruno, the world soul is therefore ‘the form of all things’.\(^{101}\) With Bruno’s God immanent in nature as a first principle, this gives matter a divine status. ‘Matter, then, ultimately coincides with nature as principle of generation.’\(^{102}\) This creative function of matter was, surprisingly, made possible by the Christian dogma that God had directly created matter as well as form, while in Greek thought, matter owed its reality entirely to form.\(^{103}\) Dupré calls Bruno’s thought ‘noncreationist panentheism’, which was followed by Spinoza.\(^{104}\) However, Dupré postulates that Bruno’s redivinised nature was overshadowed by the purely mechanistic theory of Descartes and Newton. But once the divinely started clockwork world was accepted as self-supporting and self-moving, ‘nature attained a transcendence of its own’.\(^{105}\) That opened the way for Diderot and other French naturalists, influenced by Spinoza, to take support from Bruno’s earlier thought.\(^{106}\)

6. **The 17th Century**

Five particular carryover factors affected the transition in this age.

The science revolution, more like a revival from past centuries, continues on during this epoch into the next century, but the Magical tradition of science seems to stop about 1603AD and the Organic tradition about 1650AD, leaving the Mechanistic tradition surviving and supreme.\(^{107}\)

---

100 Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, 62.
101 ibid.
102 ibid., 63.
103 ibid.
104 ibid.
105 ibid., 64. (‘Panentheism’ is the doctrine that God includes the world as a part though not the whole of his being; by contrast, ‘pantheism’ is the doctrine that the universe conceived of as a whole is God: there is no God but the combined forces and laws manifested in the existing universe).
106 ibid.
107 ibid.
Dupré’s ‘more primitive culture layer’ of the earliest modernity and the momentous changes that ensued added further support — this time to the ‘century of genii’, the era of the giants of modern science, Galileo, Descartes and Newton.108

The conflict between freedom and necessity is still very severe from early in this 17th Century, with disputes on predestination growing worse as the implications of an idea of creation, conceived exclusively in terms of efficient causality, became fully evident.109

Dupré articulated that the 16th Century carry-over from the French influence on the emergence of mathematics and René Descartes, who espoused ‘the substance that thinks’ (i.e., the mind) and ‘the aid to thinking (i.e., mathematics) being the extension of the mind’, led to rationality not coming from God but from the human mind. Hence, today, the mind is the centre of everything.110

Dupré also discussed John Locke (1632–1704) who, following on from the great English influence in the emergence of modern science, wanted to show that Gospel interpretations based on reason alone were not contradictory of revelation, as revelation itself was reasonable. Locke did not say (as his opponents, and especially Matthew Tindall,111 inferred, and on which they based their own arguments) that reason alone is the basis of revelation and, as such, God is therefore not necessary.

As Moses articulates, in relation to the transition from medieval to modern,

...when you compare the beginning and the end of the story, the world of intellectuals in the late 13th Century with that of equivalent intellectuals in the mid 17th Century, it does become appropriate to talk of a revolution. In this sense, Modern Philosophy is the philosophical part of a genuine, rather general revolution in human thinking, in respect of the global picture, in the thinking of intelligent and educated people and after a time

108 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 2.


110 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 3; and ibid., 118; and Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 10, wherein he says, ‘Being must not be conceived as a substance unmoved by thought. Cultural changes leave a different reality in their wake’. Dupré also highlighted a similar change by looking at the meaning of the word ‘theory’: in early times it referred to contemplation, but today it refers to the imposing of a pattern that comes from the mind and needs to be expressed in mathematical language (i.e., as in Kantian thought, the mind dictates, similar to the judge compelling/leading the witness to answer), cf. Dupré, Religious Mystery, viii; and also Dupré, Dubious Heritage, 1.

111 Matthew Tindall, Christianity as Old as the Creation, (1730), (hereafter ‘Tindall, Christianity’).
lag even of everybody, about Nature, and about the place of human beings in regard to both Nature and the Divine.\footnote{Moses, Blumenberg, 4 and 5.}

Moses further argues about the change in nature affected by the intellectuals of this century:

In the universe of 17th Century intellectuals, the world is imaginatively large. The earth, just another planet, goes around the sun, which is just another star. There is no longer a fundamental difference between earthly and heavenly bodies, no privileged place to which all bodies tend. Nature is now considered one big mechanism, a huge clockwork, this now the root metaphor. Colour, sound, taste, smell are not real, they are only ‘secondary qualities’ (Galileo, Descartes, Locke). The only things that count as real are those which can be clearly and distinctly known (Descartes), that is to say the geometrical properties of bodies, extension, figure and motion. Even the human body, is just another machine, albeit a very complicated one — thus also Descartes. The heart = a pump — thus Harvey. All animals apart from human beings are machines in toto, according to Descartes. So there is nothing wrong with vivisection. The world may be God’s creation and even show forth the divine wisdom, as the creation of a subtle Mathematician. But it is not as if God is present in it, it is no longer a divine epiphany. God is the Architect of the Universe, the Clockmaker; the Universe is just a colossal machine. In this picture, Nature, God and Human Beings are all different.\footnote{ibid., 4, 5 and 6.}

Dupré builds on the earlier 13th Century’s mention of Duns Scotus’ ‘turn’, in relation to ‘the self as subject’, to show how the doubt at the heart of this modern reconfiguration of ‘subject’ and ‘objective’ nature drove Descartes, the pole around whom our very understanding of modernity evolves. Dupré holds that Descartes strove to ‘restore the foundations of human knowledge by converting moral uncertainty into philosophical doubt, and doubt itself into a method for attaining certainty’.\footnote{Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 115.} In this way, Dupré presents a philosophical method for remaking sense of the world-become-object. He ends his momentous changes discussion with a final observation of the modern ‘self’, which helps us understand the dilemma of the modern ‘self-subject’. He argues that Descartes identified ‘self’ with ‘mental substance’, which was the opposite of ‘bodily substance’. Stressing that Descartes did not specify what mental substance
Chapter 1: How we got to where we are in the world today

contained, Dupré says that ‘this disconcerting emptiness of the foundational self announces its primarily functional future in modern thought’. That function was purely to be the source of meaning and value. The self’s function came to be to make itself through self-expression, and also the world and God. We see Dupré’s fullness of meaning

… in becoming pure project, the modern self has become severed from those sources (i.e., in a divinized nature) that once provided its content. The metaphysics of the ego isolates the self. It narrows selfhood to individual solitude and reduces the other to the status of object.

The Westphalian Agreement of the 17th Century really got atheism rolling. Simultaneously, a concept was promoted emphasising that, as we all have a common nature, let’s draw a new philosophy (not a theology, which talks of revelation) accepting God but stressing that, at the same time, in order to reach/facilitate a consensus, we should put God aside and base this philosophy on reason alone. What followed was a split in religion — one line of thought based on nature/reason alone (e.g., by those who rejected revelation — some deists), and the other based on revelation (e.g., Christianity). This division led to atheism which, in turn, brought about the erosion of transcendence in our culture — the present Christian spiritual crisis. In short, the split in religion started late-modern atheism and the decline in Christian spirituality.

Following these attempts of the 16th Century to retain the relationship between God, human beings and nature, Dupré explains how three movements in the early modern period held such a possibility. One was the ‘devout humanism’ of Ignatius of Loyola and of Francis de Sales. Another relevant movement was the ‘religion of the heart’ of the Reformation. Finally, the cultural movement of ‘the Baroque’ which, for Dupré, represented the ‘last comprehensive synthesis’, as he points to the culture of Europe from about 1600AD to about 1650AD. In defence of his claim he says,


despite tensions and inconsistencies, a comprehensive spiritual vision united Baroque culture. At the center of it stands the person, confident in the ability to give form and structure to a nascent world. But ... that center remains vertically linked to a transcendent source from which, via a descending scale of mediating bodies, the human creator draws his power. This dual center — human and divine — distinguishes the

---

115 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 118.

116 ibid., 119.

117 ibid., 6, 112–119 and 167–189. In 6, Dupré argues that the modern ‘split’ had a permanent effect on ‘the very essence of reality’.
Chapter 1: How we got to where we are in the world today

37

Baroque world picture from the vertical one of the Middle Ages, in which reality descends from a single transcendent point, as well as from the unproblematically horizontal one of later modern culture, prefigured in some features of the Renaissance.\textsuperscript{118}

Dupré sees the baroque beginning to fall apart around 1600AD and, because it was the last bastion of this century’s attempt to bring about a synthesis of the components of transcendence, cosmos and humanity, this predicament lays open to Western culture the flat plain of modernity and, since then, the disintegrating forces have increased in strength.\textsuperscript{119}

7. The 18th Century

Five additional factors, carried over from previous centuries, affected the transition in the 18th Century.

The conflict between freedom and necessity became worse. The emancipatory philosophers of this age found it hard to accept the concept of a freedom subject to an external causal agency. As self-constricting spontaneity, for these, freedom is indeed incompatible with the kind of efficient causality early modernity introduced and never retracted. As Dupré says, ‘they were of course right’. Freedom tolerates no external intervention: it creates its own values.\textsuperscript{120}

Matthew Tindall and his followers enlivened Locke’s debate in the previous century about reason and revelation by arguing that reason alone is the basis of revelation and, as such, God is thus not necessary. At the same time, as was stated earlier, they inferred that Locke also said this — of course he did not.\textsuperscript{121}

The science revolution continues with the Mechanistic tradition supreme, and the first half of the 18th Century witnessed the breakthrough of modern science and the establishment of new scientific methods. Newton changed not only our world picture but our very perspective on reality.\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{118} Dupré, \emph{Passage to Modernity}, 240.
\textsuperscript{119} ibid., 249.
\textsuperscript{120} Dupré, \emph{Intellectual Sources}, 162.
\textsuperscript{121} Tindall, \emph{Christianity}; and Dupré, \emph{Intellectual Sources}, 3.
\textsuperscript{122} Louis K. Dupré, \emph{The Enlightenment and the Intellectual Foundations of Modern Culture}, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), xii, (hereafter ‘Dupré, \emph{Enlightenment}’).
The carryover of the Enlightenment still displays a veritable passion for ideas, inflamed by the historical works of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Gibbon and Herder and the striking and sudden emergence of major philosophers such as Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume and Kant. Dupré argues that Kant was the one who brought this period’s ideas to a synthesis and largely defined the course of philosophical reflection for the next two centuries.\(^{123}\)

The concept of ‘ideal’ culture, where culture came to consist of a refusal to accept nature as ‘given’ as articulated by the term ‘humanitas’ (in which man as the new creator of his nature rivals his Divine Maker) in the 17th Century, underwent a final, somewhat ambiguous development in the 18th Century. The meaning of ‘culture’ (now used as an independent term) changed from an individual creation — cultura animi (i.e., man-made individual culture) into the objective expression of the spirit of a whole nation. Dupré asserts that ambiguity concerns that change. Did it mark a further stage in the Promethean development of modern culture, with the national genius fulfilling individual aspirations of divine creativity? Or, should the romantic concept of organic growth be regarded rather as a return to the classical idea of a harmonious development of an existing nature? Dupré’s answer is ‘probably both’,\(^{124}\) as he insists that cultural changes leave a different reality in their wake and, applied to the present, in nature itself.\(^{125}\) Even scientists and theoreticians of science do not hesitate to speak of the nature of the universe as if it contained an ideal component. Mathematical equations, artificial intelligence, principles of determinacy or indeterminacy — all assume a real relation between the mental and the physical. Indeed, the most remarkable quality of the real, the one that supports our ability to talk about it, includes an ideal element without which it would never have given birth to mental life.\(^{126}\) Thus, Dupré argues:

\[\text{Culture, then, consists not in what humans add to the real, so to speak. It is the active component of the real itself transforming the passive one. Yet culture performs its active function inadequately if it does not adopt a listening as well as a speaking role with regard to a given nature. Ideally it displays the creative give-and-take of a good conversation: we allow our ideas, values, and customs to be shaped by a given order, in the very}\]

---

\(^{123}\) Dupré, *Enlightenment*, xii and xiii.

\(^{124}\) Dupré, *Marx’s Social Critique*, 1 and 2.

\(^{125}\) Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, 10 and 11.

\(^{126}\) ibid., 11.
process of transforming that order. Contrary to the ancients, the moderns have come to regard culture rather exclusively as an autonomous human creation.\textsuperscript{127}

Further,Duprê insists that, in the 18th Century, the idea of God ceased to be a dominant factor in Western culture,\textsuperscript{128} and, with the completion of the reduction of the real to the objective by the end of this era, the possibility of any genuine transcendence was excluded.\textsuperscript{129}

Moreover, the Enlightenment, which really gets going in the 18th Century and continues into the next, left its mark on culture.\textsuperscript{130} Duprê postulates that the Enlightenment was a Western phenomenon that defined the future of the West.\textsuperscript{131} He argues that rarely did the Enlightenment attain true greatness in the visual arts, but it displays a veritable passion for ideas. Also, the second half of the 17th Century and the first half of the 18th Century witnessed the breakthrough of modern science and the establishment of new scientific methods. He asserts that Newton changed, not only our world future, but our very perspective on reality, and historical works of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Gibbon and Herder formed a majestic entrance to modern historiography. For Duprê, equally striking was the sudden emergence of major philosophers — Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley and Hume, with Kant being the most gifted thinker of the period and the person who brought its ideas to a synthesis, and largely defined the course of philosophical reflection for the next two centuries. Duprê articulates:

The very contrast between the Enlightenment’s stunning accomplishments in history, science and philosophy and the lesser ones in the fine arts (again, with the exceptions of music and architecture) highlights its intellectual orientation. It was first and foremost a breakthrough in critical consciousness. Those who criticize its one-sidedness are unquestionably right. But they ought to remember that they

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{127} Duprê, \textit{Passage to Modernity}, 11.
  \item \textsuperscript{128} Duprê, \textit{Modern Idea}, 15.
  \item \textsuperscript{129} ibid., 14.
  \item \textsuperscript{130} \textit{Hodder Dictionary}, 46 describes the word ‘Enlightenment’ as ‘a term used to refer primarily to the philosophical mood among 17th and 18th Century Western intellectuals. During the 18th Century the philosopher Immanuel Kant defined the Enlightenment as “mankind’s coming of age”. Enlightenment thinkers rejected external authorities as a source of knowledge and instead elevated human reasoning as the best way to bring about an understanding of the world. As a result, the Enlightenment era brought with it a suspicion of the claims to authority of the Bible, the Church, the creed and any religious dogmas or doctrines’.
  \item \textsuperscript{131} Duprê, \textit{Enlightenment}, x.
\end{itemize}
attack the movement with the very weapon forged by the object of their attack: that of critical reflectiveness.  

Dupré analyses some features of the Enlightenment, in particular those that have been instrumental in shaping our own assumptions, attitudes and values. He argues that by tracing these features to their origins we may hope to gain some insight into principles we had long taken for granted but have recently come to question. The catastrophic wars fought during the 20th Century, its social upheaval, and the environmental predicaments caused by the very technology responsible for that century’s greatest triumphs force us to re-examine its moral foundations. He continues:

Because of their problematic consequences in our time, many now reject the assumptions of the Enlightenment. My own assessment will be more favourable and my critique less radical. One severely oversimplifies the nature of eighteenth-century thought in dismissing it as rationalism. The rationalist tendency did indeed exist, but so did others pointing in the opposite direction.

Therefore, he insists that one might just as well describe the Enlightenment as an era of sentimentality because, in disregarding the variety of these currents, we risk projecting our own aspirations and aversions upon a self-made image of the past. For him, ‘to understand our relation to the Enlightenment we must attempt to describe it as it understood itself, even while trying to understand its role in shaping the present’.

Dupré also articulates that the half-century that followed the end of the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648AD) was the beginning of a restructuring of Europe's political powers. He states that this period

...shaped the scientific ideas of the modern age. Thinking became simpler, more rational, and more methodic. Religion and morality continued to be primary concerns, but they became subjected to a critical examination. The year 1789, ... witnessed an event that shook the political and cultural foundations of Western Europe. The excesses of the French Revolution introduced a strong reaction against the ideals of the Enlightenment, but it did not bring the movement to an end. On the contrary, the French armies spread its ideas to the more remote parts of Europe. The ideals, however, underwent a mutation.

---

132 Dupré, *Enlightenment*, xii and xiii.
133 ibid., xiii.
134 ibid.
135 ibid.
As Dupré further argues, when the protracted religious wars of the 16th Century finally forced Europeans to search for a new spiritual unity, the compromise that emerged bore the marks of the theological meltdown of the 17th Century. The original attempts to restore religious peace still retained the theological categories of nature and grace, reason and revelation. But reason provided the basis. This signalled the birth of deism. A religious ‘deism’ had existed for a long time, longer in Islam than in Christianity. Yet, the idea of a religious universality based on reason was implicit in Aquinas and had been explicitly accepted by a number of early Renaissance thinkers such as Nicholas of Cusa, Ficino, Pico and Bodin. They asserted that the human mind ‘naturally’ longed for its divine source. This earlier deism, far from excluding revelation, had, in fact, been based upon a presumed aboriginal revelation to the entire human race that left traces in all existing religions. This primeval revelation had at all times conveyed to the religious persons of all faiths an inner experience of the divine. While vestiges of its aboriginal monotheism survived in Egyptian, Greek and Roman polytheism, as late as the 18th Century the Cambridge Platonists still regarded it as the foundation of a universal religious disposition. However, later deists promoted a different kind of universalism: reason alone, independently of ‘any’ revelation — primeval, Hebrew or Christian — establishes the necessary and sufficient principles of transcendence needed for the support of morality and the foundation of cosmology. The new deism, with its purpose being to establish a natural theology that could dispense with revelation altogether, became a rival religion. It was a rationalist abstraction of a specifically religious idea — God. This 18th Century deism subjected any conception of transcendence so exhaustively to the control of reason that the distinction between immanence and transcendence lost much of its meaning. In so doing, it inevitably paved the way to atheism. In opposition to Locke’s understanding, and using Tindall’s ‘Christianity as Old as Creation’ as their ‘Bible’, these deists understood reason as providing the sole foundation of meaning, including the one

136 Dupré, Intellectual Sources, 2.

137 Dupré, Intellectual Sources, 2; and cf. H. Lawrence Bond, Nicholas of Cusa: Selected Spiritual Writings, trans. by H. Lawrence Bond, (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1997), 19–21; and also cf. Helmet Gestrich, Guide to Nicholas of Cusa 1401–1464: His Life and Work, for Cusanus Society in Germany in a pictorial exhibition at Cusa’s birthplace in Bernkastel-Kues, Germany, 2007; Panel 37.

138 Dupré, Intellectual Sources, 2.

139 ibid.

140 ibid., 4.
concerning the idea of transcendence. That idea had to be proven and, thus, Dupré states:

The ‘arguments’ for the existence of God assumed an unprecedented importance both among believers and among deists. While earlier philosophical theology had merely ‘justified’ revelation in the light of reason, deism required that reason first established the ‘foundation’ of faith.\(^\text{141}\)

Deism had adopted the concepts of the early modern era, wherein modernity inherited from the Enlightenment the notion of reason alone as creating reality/value, and the idea of the creation of a utopian ideal order.

Continuing, Dupré says

...the deist inversion of transcendence and immanence appeared nowhere more clearly than in the reduction of religion to the domain of morals. As a result, religion had scarcely any function left but that of sanctioning morality.\(^\text{142}\)

Hence, Dupré argues:

For the deists, religion was the conclusion of an argument, rather than a ‘given’ received from an original revelation which philosophy then may attempt to justify before reason. For traditional Christian, Jewish or Muslim thinkers, philosophy ‘encounters’ the idea of God; it does not deduce it.\(^\text{143}\)

Against Aquinas’s idea that God had not been an object of metaphysics — a theological text written with the assistance of philosophical concepts — the proponents of deism claimed to deduce God’s existence as well as God’s attributes from religiously neutral premises.\(^\text{144}\) Their natural theology, though it owed its origin to the Christian idea of God, initiated a religion of reason alone.\(^\text{145}\)

\(^\text{141}\) Dupré, *Intellectual Sources*, 3.

\(^\text{142}\) ibid.

\(^\text{143}\) ibid.

\(^\text{144}\) Hodder Dictionary, 37 defines the term ‘Deism’ as ‘the belief that understands God as distant, in that God created the universe but then left it to run its course on its own, following certain “laws of nature” that God had built into the universe. An analogy often used to illustrate the deist view is that of an artisan who creates a mechanical clock, winds it up and then leaves the clock alone to “run out”. Deism became popular in the early modern era and was prevalent among several of the founding fathers of the United States of America, including George Washington, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson’.

The 18th Century also witnessed an event that shook the political and cultural foundations of Western Europe — the excesses and ideas of the French Revolution, which introduced a strong reaction against the ideals of the Enlightenment, but it did not bring the movement to an end. As Dupré asserts, ‘The ideals, however, underwent a mutation’. In addition to commenting about Immanuel Kant, Dupré takes Kant’s story further. He argues that Kant’s synthesis, wherein he employed the very contrast between the Enlightenment’s stunning accomplishments in history, science, and philosophy and the lesser ones in the fine arts (again, with the exceptions of music and architecture), highlights its intellectual orientation. It was first and foremost a breakthrough in ‘critical consciousness’, which requires critical reflectiveness. At the turn toward the subject as the source of rationality, at the beginning of the modern age, the move resulted in a rising opposition between an imperious subject and an amorphous world which it informed with its own rationality. The rational subject’s mastery of this newly forged scientific method inaugurated an unprecedented upsurge of the physical sciences. It also reduced the real to what the subject can analyse and control. This subjectification of the rational culminated in Kant. With him, thought ceased to be intuitive contemplation altogether and became entirely controlling action. Such a change reflects the momentous impact of the experimental method of science upon the very concept of reason. The immediate effect was that the ‘real’ became reduced to the ‘objective’, that is, what was constituted by an autonomous subject. Overall reason thus acquired a practical orientation, even in its theoretical activity. Its task now became to bestow form upon a formless world. The ideas of constituted objectivity and practical control entirely replaced the conception of meaning and value ‘inherent’ in a given reality. They ended the rule of contemplation and introduced that of fabrication. But even more significant in the process of exercising an unlimited instrumentalisation of the world was the instrumentalisation of reason itself.

What began as a radical subjectification of the real, ended by reducing the subject itself to the mere function of ‘constituting objectivity’ in the theoretical and the practical order. As Dupré also argues:

146 Dupré, Enlightenment, xiii.

147 ibid., xiv.
The instrumentalization of reason made industrial capitalization possible. Yet capitalization, in turn, transformed all human achievements into ‘commodities’ and, thus, subjected all aspects of culture to a more thorough objectivism.\textsuperscript{148}

Dupré postulates that the study of religion became a separate branch of philosophy after Kant.\textsuperscript{149} His analyses of Kant’s contributions to the transition are summed up in the following paragraphs.

After the spiritual revolution of the Renaissance, religion had become severed from the rest of human’s spiritual life. Faith was no longer everything, as it was in the Middle Ages, but something, and no one seemed to know exactly what. Kant’s critical philosophy clearly circumscribed its limits.\textsuperscript{150} Kant accepted religion on its own terms, and set out to overcome the malaise from which the religious consciousness had suffered ever since art, philosophy and morality had become independent of faith.\textsuperscript{151}

The priority of the subject, in Kant’s philosophy, cannot be attributed to his religious outlook. It had begun with Descartes’ thesis that mind is an entirely unique mode of being which, far from being determined by the nature of non-mental reality, imposes its own determinations upon the definition of nature. Yet, Descartes had kept mind and objective reality separate, as two different substances.\textsuperscript{152}

With Kant, subjectivity changed from a principle parallel to the objective world into a principle constitutive of objectivity. Obviously, then, a discussion of transcendence must likewise include an evaluation of the subject’s role. Moreover, since knowledge consists essentially in bringing phenomena to objectivity and, in reflecting on this process, one can no longer ‘assume’, as in pre-critical days, that the mind is adequately equipped to make positive assertions about a transphenomenal reality. Kant’s critique of knowledge discredited the traditional ‘proofs’ for the existence of God, and gave a whole new direction to the understanding of faith.\textsuperscript{153}

\textsuperscript{148} Dupré, \textit{Enlightenment}, xiii; and Dupré, \textit{Marx’s Social Critique}, 7, 8 and 9.
\textsuperscript{149} Dupré, \textit{Dubious Heritage}, 7.
\textsuperscript{150} ibid., 1.
\textsuperscript{151} ibid., 2.
\textsuperscript{152} ibid.
\textsuperscript{153} ibid.
Equally momentous was Kant's Copernican revolution in the practical order. Therein, he saw an opportunity to extend the realm of certainty beyond the rigorous limits which he had set to the domain of objective knowledge. Thus, religion's exclusion from scientific knowledge was no ground, as Hume thought, for dismissing it as unworthy of the mature mind.\textsuperscript{154}

Kant then decided to reintroduce God as a postulate of the moral imperative, and religion as a complement to ethics. This daring attempt to extend the realm of consciousness, so as to include legitimately the entire area of religion, was treated as being too narrow, and his concept of moral autonomy, on which he based his ethical system, tolerated no transcendent foundation.\textsuperscript{155}

In defining religion as the recognition of all duties as divine commands, Kant produced a dilemma — either this recognition introduces a new element into morality, and then the moral law becomes God's law, thus destroying man's autonomy, or the recognition remains extrinsic to the moral law. As Dupré asserts, Kant's proposed solutions satisfied no one and, if we believe his posthumous papers, not even himself. Nevertheless, Kant had clearly stated a problem which proved to be of vital importance to the philosophy of religion.\textsuperscript{156}

Dupré argues that Kant's pioneering work resulted in three conclusions, which affected all subsequent philosophy of religion: firstly, since reliable theoretical knowledge is restricted to the objective, phenomenal sphere, the religious consciousness can expect no direct support of its beliefs from theoretical reason; secondly, since the transcendent does not belong to the objective phenomenal sphere, it must be approached through the subject's awareness of itself rather than through that of its world; and thirdly, since the subject must be conceived as essentially autonomous, no transcendent reality can ever interfere with the exercise of human freedom.

\textsuperscript{154} Dupré, \textit{Dubious Heritage}, 2.

\textsuperscript{155} ibid.

\textsuperscript{156} ibid., 2 and 3.
Each of these conclusions contains further fundamental challenges to all subsequent speculation about religion. First, how can we restore the theoretical support of religious faith after Kant’s critique of the arguments for the existence of God? Second, how can a method be conceived for the philosophical study of religion on the basis of the experience alone? And third, how can that experience itself be legitimated within the context of human autonomy?\textsuperscript{157}

The last challenge was the first one to be met. After the question of autonomy was formulated, Schleiermacher linked the problems to the subject–object opposition of cognitive and volitional acts, and showed how feeling overcomes this opposition. Also, Kierkegaard took issue with Kant’s view of freedom and claimed that autonomous freedom is not an ultimate: it is bound to fail and, in its failure, inevitably encounters the question of transcendence.\textsuperscript{158}

Despite the fact that Kierkegaard wrote after Georg W.F. Hegel (1770–1831AD), and to a great extent against him, Dupré suggests that Kierkegaard’s attempt to legitimate the religious experience should precede Hegel’s discussion of its meaning. He does so because of the way Kierkegaard dealt with Kant’s basic problem of leaving no avenue open to the religious object but that of experience itself. Dupré argues that the latter needs to be justified before the former can properly be discussed.\textsuperscript{159}

Further, Dupré stresses the importance of reintegrating culture, which has become fragmented through modernity. A problem therein concerns that particular part of society’s intellectual and aesthetic achievements which has, since the beginning of the modern age, become isolated from all others.\textsuperscript{160} The principle that humanity must be fundamentally expressed in ‘praxis’ rather than in ‘theory’ so basically conflicts with the constant assumptions of our intellectual tradition that, until the 18th Century, hardly anyone would have seriously entertained it.\textsuperscript{161} According to Marx’s ambiguous proposition, the primacy of theory, which had dominated ancient, medieval and most of

\textsuperscript{157} Dupré, Dubious Heritage, 3.

\textsuperscript{158} ibid.

\textsuperscript{159} ibid., 4.

\textsuperscript{160} Dupré, Marx’s Social Critique, 6.

\textsuperscript{161} ibid., 6 and 7.
modern thought, should give way to a primacy of praxis. 162 From the 18th Century’s economists, Marx inherited a technical, naturalist view of man as productive agent. 163 Dupré insists that the most serious obstacle to full social and cultural integration consists not in the adoption of a particular economic system in preference to another, but in the primary abstraction whereby the economic sphere comes to dominate all others. To overcome this obstacle requires more than changing the conditions of the current systems of production and distribution. It requires eliminating what R.H. Tawney described as the ‘obsession by economic issues’. 164 The relation between economics and the rest of culture cannot be adequately understood through a model in which the former plays a more basic role than the latter. 165 The alleged priority of praxis is itself an ‘idea’, and one that has changed the practical life of the modern world. 166 Our ideal of culture comprehends all nations and individuals. 167 According to Dupré, the idea of an integrated praxis and theory in culture has still a long way to go. 168 For him, this epoch marks the end of the pre-modern era.

8. The 19th Century

After sprouting from seeds sown in the 15th Century, and growing and developing through the transitions of the three following centuries, modernity blossomed in the 19th Century and so the modern era began.

There were three matters carried over from previous centuries, that affected the transition in the 19th Century. Firstly, the conflict between freedom and necessity continued with little resolution. 169 Secondly, modern science took over the mantle from the science revolution, and the mind became everything amid the Mechanistic

162 Dupré, Marx’s Social Critique, 7.
163 Ibid., 281 and 282.
165 Dupré, Marx’s Social Critique, 284.
166 Ibid., 287.
167 Ibid., 284.
168 Ibid., 287 and 288.
169 Dupré, Intellectual Sources, 162.
Chapter 1: How we got to where we are in the world today

tradition’s supremacy. And thirdly, the French Revolution aftermath still wreaked havoc in Europe.

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834AD) was preoccupied with countering Kant’s arguments concerning the division of spheres to the spheres of the natural world, morals and aesthetics. Schleiermacher delineated the sphere of what he took to be normative religious experience, namely the feeling of absolute dependence. Partially following Blaise Pascal, and anticipating Soren Kierkegaard and Rudolf Otto as it were, he wished to create a space between metaphysics and morals for religion.170

In discussing Georg Hegel’s (1770–1831AD) treatment of determinate religion during this period, Dupré highlights the tensions and transitions therein. He concludes that no single pattern rules Hegel’s ‘typology’ but, rather, an irreducible multiplicity of ordinary principles which, in the end, all play a role in preparing the event of Christian revelation. Dupré asserts:

Some of them do so by ‘universalizing’ the particular; others by interiorizing it, and yet others by detaching religion, however particular, from its ‘natural’ state and elevating it to a level of pure (albeit wholly abstract) freedom. In Hegel’s shifting classification over the years the removal from the ‘natural’ remained the single permanent element. The more general categories used as classifying principles needed to be supplemented by more specific ones, concerning which Hegel never reached a definitive position.171

As Dupré says, this negative conclusion actually turns to Hegel’s credit, because it shows his concern for an empirical investigation of the content of each religion. Yet his mature awareness of the complexity of several faiths (e.g., Greek religion of the classical period, Roman religion, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity) caused him constantly to rearrange their order. Further, when being (cause) became separated from knowledge (ground) at the beginning of the modern era, Dupré argues, in Hegel’s ‘Symbols and Metaphysical’ presentation, the effect was increasingly conceived as extrinsic to the cause. The metaphysical search for the ultimate ground became transformed into a quest for epistemic foundations. The mechanistic concept of causality of the 17th Century annulled the traditional metaphysical questions as meaningless: being meant no more than the sum of all beings. Instead, it posited a

170 Dupré, Dubious Heritage, 4.
series of independent substances extrinsically related to each other, one of which was the First Cause. Hegel attempted to overcome this groundless substantialism through his idea of a self-expressive spirit, which becomes absolute in reassuming its expression within itself.¹⁷² As Hegel asserts:

Spirit is the movement of the self which empties itself of itself and sinks itself into its substance, and also, as subject, has gone out of that substance into itself, making the substance into an object and a content at the same time as it cancels this difference between objectivity and content.¹⁷³

Here, the metaphysical ground consists in a self-developing dialectical process of externalisation and internalisation. The modern epistemology of the subject is reintegrated with the traditional ontology of substance. The re-internalisation of the spirit’s expression is mediated through the many forms of culture, while the quest for the ground must recollect the various cultural forms in which the spirit has expressed itself.¹⁷⁴

Hence, Hegel’s philosophy attempted to synthesise two currents that had influenced Western thought for centuries — the Platonic one, according to which the absolute is intrinsically manifest, and the Christian one, prepared by the Bible, according to which the absolute has revealed itself in God’s word. In referring to the eternal Logos as consubstantial with the source of all things (e.g., ‘and the word was God’), John’s fourth Gospel set the stage for a metaphysical as well as for a religious way of thinking. It declared language to be the primeval symbol of the expressiveness of the absolute. Yet, the revelatory quality of language did not remain restricted to the words of Christian revelation. Western thought came to view language ‘itself’ as revelatory and as transforming the entire visible but mute world of appearance into a verbal metaphor. While finite realities possess their ground in the eternal word, it is the human word that, by means of its unique metaphorical capacity, retraces their forms to this divine origin.¹⁷⁵ Additionally, Dupré postulates that the task of culture is to unite the objective to the subjective in a higher union, and that there are difficulties the mind experiences in recognising itself in its objective forms, because the mind’s education occurs in a


¹⁷⁵ ibid., 4.
dialectic of moving outward and inward, but rarely does this process result in total success.\textsuperscript{176} Hegel's very description indicates this ambiguity, alternating as it does between a positive and a negative — an objectification and an alienation.\textsuperscript{177} As Hegel states:

It is therefore through culture that the individual acquires standing and actuality. His true original nature and substance is the alienation (\textit{Entfremdung}) of himself as Spirit from his \textit{Natural} being. This externalization (\textit{Entäusserung}) is therefore both the purpose and the existence of the individual.\textsuperscript{178}

To Hegel's further credit, Dupré articulates that, before Hegel, no one attempted to establish the intrinsic necessity of that higher realm of objective expression in which the social, as well as the cultural, has its roots. The model of this conception of mental life is a solitary self's dialogue with itself. Objective communication merely sealed an already completed, internal \textit{verbum mentis} (the word of the mind). From that perspective, culture, exiled from its native habitat, had to wander aimlessly between the emptiness of a pure subject and the opaqueness of an estranged objectivity.\textsuperscript{179}

Concerning Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813–1855AD), the earlier 16th Century summation highlighted much of Dupré’s thoughts on Kierkegaard’s work in relation to the Reformation (e.g., refer to ‘The principle of subjectivity’ and his theology of ‘merit’),\textsuperscript{180} and in his recognition of freedom’s role in the acceptance of faith and grace. These convey the restless vitality of Kierkegaard’s mind, which was forever trying to shape the timeless truths of Christianity to the doubts and queries of the modern mind, and addressing itself to the anguish of modern existence in the tones of Christian compassion.\textsuperscript{181}

\textsuperscript{176} Dupré, \textit{Metaphysics & Culture}, 19.
\textsuperscript{177} ibid.
\textsuperscript{178} Hegel, \textit{Phenomenology}, 297, 298.
\textsuperscript{179} Dupré, \textit{Marx’s Social Critique}, 277.
\textsuperscript{180} Refer Ch. 1, 31.
\textsuperscript{181} Dupré, \textit{Kierkegaard}, rear cover notes by Dupré, x and xi; and Dupré, \textit{Modern Idea}, 13.
In evaluating Karl Marx’s (1818–1883 AD) unique contributions to society in his analyses of the process of cultural disintegration and of proposing measures to remedy it, Dupré distinguishes him from past figures whose impacts have long been absorbed by our culture. Moreover, he claims that Marx was the first major critic of a process of cultural disintegration that began with the modern age and has continued unabated down to our time. He also points out how some of Marx’s ideas concerning culture can be adapted by drawing on his humanistic philosophy (here Marx is the humanistic philosopher), apart from his dogmas of ‘historical materialism’ (here Marx is the social reformer). With Marx as the latter, and, emphasising Marx’s early works as representing one long struggle to detach Hegel’s theological dialectical method of assessing ‘man’s’ position in culture from his idealistic system, Dupré posits how Hegel’s romantic idea of man as a dynamic being, realising himself in ethical striving within the community, led quite naturally to Marx’s concept of man as a socio-economic being dialectically related to nature and society. Dupré then argues that Marx’s scientific socialism is the ‘realistic’ solution to Hegel’s romantic problem. Dupré also asserts that the Promethean tradition culminated in Marx’s vision of man as the sole shaper of his destiny and, so, Marx remains a living partner in the socio-cultural discussions.

Marx perceptively criticized the fragmented character of modern culture and forcefully argued for reintegrating all facets of human activity (theoretical as well as practical) on the basis of man’s productive relation to nature. To this end he shifted the center of meaning from the thinking subject to social praxis. However radical, Marx’s critique and his attempt at cultural re-integration remain partly within the ideological horizon of the modern age. Sharing a common assumption of the early nineteenth century, he attributed a unique priority to social-economic activity in the overall process of culture. At the same time, in contrast to the modern emphasis on the subject as sole source of meaning, he asserted the primacy of social praxis over theory. Both positions affected the success of his project. The former unduly narrowed it. The latter, if consistently maintained (which it was not), would abolish the very possibility of disengaged reflection indispensable for the pursuit of wisdom and the good life.

---


183 Dupré, Philosophical Foundations Marxism, viii and ix.

184 Dupré, Marx’s Social Critique, 3 and 13.

185 ibid., 13.
Further, Dupré showed Marx’s dissatisfaction with Hegel’s purely ideological argument about civilisation’s repressive character, which gave rise to the 17th Century revolutionary tensions between a ‘base’ and a ‘noble’. Dupré argued that Marx linked those tensions to a specific social-economic development of the modern age — the rise of industrial capitalism. He says that while the critique remains within the parameters of a culture conceived of as a process of self-directed transformation, it fails to question the definition. As a result, he asserts that

… Marx’s attempt to restore the person to a premodern wholeness merely succeeded in constraining the human model to one of the more questionable consequences of the modern fragmentation, namely, that of the *homo faber* opposed to nature, without any transcendent mediation between them.186

Dupré also postulates that Marx and Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872AD) developed the theory of cultural alienation into a critique of a ‘particular’ kind of society — thereby historicising a condition that, in Hegel’s thought, had affected all forms of culture.

Dupré says that certain forms of alienation are indeed characteristic of some epochs and not of others, and the particular estrangement that Marx linked to capitalist society is, in fact, a cultural universal, namely the so-called ‘fetishism of commodities’.187 Dupré adds that cultural products, though intended to serve human purposes, tend to take on a life of their own, that detaches them from their original goal. Instead of assisting the incarnate mind to find its way home out of the dispersion, they end up cluttering the road to their spiritual destination. So, we find ourselves swamped in a sea of cultural objects that we can neither assimilate nor outright reject.188

Dupré posits that the fundamental principles that have determined modern culture since the last century conflict with those that have given rise to traditional theism.189 For him, some have deserted these modern principles as implicitly ‘atheistic’, and the term is not new — those who attempted to rethink the nature of transcendence have always been called atheists. Modern atheism is both more radical and more

---

187 Dupré, *Metaphysics & Culture*, 20; and Karl Marx, *Capital 1*, Ch. 1, Section 4.
189 Hodder Dictionary, 115 and 116, describes ‘Theism’ as ‘the system of belief that presupposes the reality of God as the fundamental concept informing all other beliefs. Any worldview anchored in the belief that there is a God’.
comprehensive than the earlier atheisms. It consists not in a ‘shift’ of the relation between immanence and transcendence, but in a gradual evanescence of the very idea of transcendence. Unlike those earlier atheisms, it failed to replace what it abolished and was, in fact, the final stage in an intellectual movement derived from Christian theological assumptions.190

Dupré articulates that Nietzsche’s atheism originated in the conflict between God conceived as the absolute source of value and freedom that must establish its own values. At the same time Nietzsche realised that, without an absolute foundation, freedom becomes trammelled in an unlimited competition of possibilities. For that reason he regarded the death of God as ‘the’ symbolic event of the age. This led him to state:

The greatest recent event — that ‘God is dead’, that the belief in the Christian God has ceased to be believable — is even now beginning to cast its first shadows over Europe. For the few, at least, whose eyes, whose suspicion in their eyes is strong and sensitive enough for this spectacle, some sun seems to have set just now and some ancient and profound trust has been turned into doubt …. 191

The term God refers not only to the Christian God, as we will see from Martin Heidegger (1889–1976AD) in the 20th Century, but to the entire suprasensory realm of ideals, including such secular ones as progress, science and reason, which modern times have substituted for God.192 That the entire realm of values is devalued, that, according to Nietzsche, is the essence of nihilism. Therefore, Heidegger concludes, nihilism itself is the fundamental event of Western history.193 As Dupré insists, ‘it has inescapably led that history to “atheism”’.194

190 Dupré, Intellectual Sources, 1.


193 Dupré, Intellectual Sources, 7; and Heidegger, Word of Nietzsche, 67.

194 Dupré, Intellectual Sources, 7.
The irreducibility of the human subject, reflected in freedom’s resistance to ‘external’ causality, is also what inspired modern atheism to reduce all forms of transcendence to subjective projections. In Sigmund Freud’s (1856–1939 AD) writings, religion appears as a more complex phenomenon, rooted partly in an attempt to cope with the guilt incurred in the child’s oedipal relation to the father, and partly in a wishful desire to reconquer the original wholeness. For Dupré, in opposition to Feuerbach’s projective theory, projection unquestionably plays a role in building up the phenomenal content of the religious act, but it does not answer the metaphysical question of whether the apparent givenness of human existence requires a transcendent dimension or does subjectivity, by its very nature, exclude any such dimension. Instead of arguing the question philosophically, projectionist theories mostly dismiss it as being itself projectionist.

Further, Dupré argues that all atheist theories assume that the real must be of a homogeneous nature. Their rejection of any kind of ‘absolute otherness’ reveals, in fact, the most fundamental feature of modern atheism. This indeed is the common factor that links all contemporary forms of atheism as well as all secular alternatives of religion. Neither the existence nor the operation of the cosmos requires or tolerates any reality beyond it. Freedom, viewed as a source of value, tolerates no authority beyond its own in the establishment of values. Nor does political and social activity. In all these cases ‘otherness’ has been reduced to an aspect of the mind itself. Even the idea of God, in those forms of deism that exclude revelation, serves no other than human or intra-cosmic purposes. It links transcendent otherness, and this exclusion of absolute otherness is the crucial issue that separates alternatives from religion itself, even though they share significant features with it. A coherent world view requires, beyond an absence of contradictions, a unifying factor to integrate the disparate experiences of reality within a meaningful totality.

---

196 ibid.
197 ibid.
Chapter 1: How we got to where we are in the world today

9. The 20th Century and today

The 20th Century, like earlier centuries, was also involved with problems taken over from an earlier era, and these are highlighted in the following paragraphs.

The rethinking of the idea of transcendence, even as that of self and cosmos, begun in the 15th Century, did not come to rest in the 20th Century or in current times. A continuing effort to redefine the meaning of contingency and necessity, of autonomy and dependence, has thoroughly destabilised the traditional modes of conceiving the ontological limits of the real.\(^\text{198}\)

The power of the changes mentioned earlier in this chapter still persists, and Dupré shows postmodernism, as such, well within the boundaries of a deeply rooted modernity. It is now the culture of the whole world, not just the West.\(^\text{199}\)

Dupré also acknowledges that modernity contains its ‘problem’, which seeks resolution. The problem is the very split that defines it — the disintegration of the cosmos, conscious human existence and a transcendent source. While he abhors restorationism, he argues for a change toward a different type of synthesis which, he says, is inherent in modernity itself. His provocative idea, on which to seek and base this synthesis, could be found, perhaps, in analysing and contemplating on his following statement:

\[ \text{…modernity has gained (autonomy) for the three components of culture: the spontaneity of a freedom recognized as an ontological principle; the sufficiency of a self-supporting cosmos; and the distinctness of a transcendence perceived as wholly encompassing the finite realm, while intrinsically sustaining the autonomy.} \(^\text{200}\) \]

When speaking of the 19th Century’s virulent antitheisms, Dupré insists that

\[ \text{… whilst these antitheist trends have survived into our own times, they no longer dominate the religious situation of the present. Today’s atheism mainly considers its position secure enough to have no need of defining itself through a negative relation to faith, nor does it exclude the range of religious experience — it has actually extended its territory to include the previously overlooked, but significant area of spiritual phenomena, and} \]

\(^{198}\) Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, 252.

\(^{199}\) ibid., 249.

\(^{200}\) ibid., 251.
abandoned its 19th Century ideal of a purely scientific humanism. Moreover, it no longer seeks or expects an integral worldview from science and, therefore, contemporary humanism is less polemical, and more comprehensive, but also, more thoroughly immanent than of the recent past. 201

Additionally, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud and Friedrich Nietzsche, while expressing their own personal atheistic beliefs, felt that the future of humanism was moving beyond this polematic attitude of atheism. 202 Marx, who set out as a belligerent antitheist, saw religion, like Feuerbach, as a person’s projection of his/her own nature into an ideal sphere that alienated the believer from his/her own human attributes. Later, he changed his thoughts and argued:

Atheism, as a denial of this unreality (of God), is no longer meaningful, for atheism is a negation of God and seeks to assert by this negation the existence of man. Socialism no longer requires such a roundabout method: it begins from the theoretical and practical sense perception of man and nature as essential beings. It is positive human self-consciousness; no longer a self-consciousness attained through the negation of religion. 203

Thus, the communist position rejects both theism and atheism. Marx and Engels further argued that

... communism begins where atheism begins, but atheism is at the outset, still far from being communism; indeed it is still for the most part an abstraction. The philanthropy of atheism is at first only a philosophical philanthropy, whereas that of communism is at once real and oriented action. 204

Freud insisted:

Just as no one can be forced to believe, so no one can be forced to disbelieve. But do not let us be satisfied with deceiving ourselves that arguments like these take us along the road of correct thinking. If ever there was a case of a lame excuse we have it here. Ignorance is ignorance; no right to believe anything can be derived from it. 205

201 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 131; and cf. Immanuel Kant, Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone (1793).
202 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 3–5; and Dupré, Religious Mystery, 131–133.
204 Marx–Engels, Collected Works, 3 and 297.
Thus, he argued that the pursuit of faith/religion was not a very useful task.

In addition, Nietzsche strongly argued that genuine freedom was incompatible with the idea of a ‘value-creating God’, and advocated a different and far more radical axiological humanism than Marx or Freud. Merleau-Ponty, also expressed this new attitude when he refused to be called an atheist, because he claimed atheism was still ‘an inverted act of faith’. He argued that the humanist must start, not with a denial of God, but with the affirmation of the human, the sole source of meaning.\textsuperscript{206} Yet, it was this atheism, which arose out of the split in religion and brought about the gradual erosion of transcendence, which started the spiritual crisis in today’s culture.

Moreover, these three philosophers, (Marx, Freud and Nietzsche), in abandoning their anti-religious stand for an attitude of all-comprehensive openness, have changed the perspective of our culture which has replaced religion, in what used to be its unique function of integrating all of life, with humanism. Hence, our contemporaries have resigned themselves to a fragmented worldview.

Dupré articulates that Edmund Husserl (1859–1938AD), who tried to purify introspection in order to create a phenomenological method in which the philosopher would only look at what is presented to consciousness, initiated the study of ontological significance of time to justify philosophy’s direct involvement with historical change. So the science of ultimate principles, it now appeared, could not remain indifferent to the transformation of the real that culture accomplishes in all its unpredictable ways. In fact, philosophy itself is part of this changing culture.\textsuperscript{207} As Dupré argues,

\begin{quote}
... philosophical thought always stays in tune with the culture that surrounds it (i.e., we ‘think’ within our own time). Hence, philosophy, though it transcends time, remains very much a reflection on its own time.\textsuperscript{208}
\end{quote}

For Dupré, Husserl’s general point about ‘epoche’ is very important in the social sciences — it is necessary for us to suspend our own values in trying to see what values and perceptions animate others, whether groups or individuals. Further, in analysing post-Kantian methods for making meaningful statements about the object of experience on the sole basis of the experience, Dupré says about Husserl:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{206} Maurice Merleau-Ponty, \textit{Éloge de la Philosophie}, (Paris, 1959), 59.
\item \textsuperscript{207} Dupré, \textit{Metaphysics & Culture}, 23.
\item \textsuperscript{208} ibid., 24.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Husserl’s sharp distinction between the experience and the object manifested through the experience, though primarily directed against contemporary psychological theories of logic, went, in fact, to the heart of the Kantian predicament. Husserl himself was never able to apply satisfactorily his own theory to the alleged object of religion, and the essay devoted to him contains little more than the history of his failures. Yet his successors, especially Scheler, used it to full advantage.209

With the relation between God and creation reduced to an external one of efficient causality and the human mind now creating and controlling everything and, then, both becoming combined with Renaissance human self-assertion, an explosive mixture was created. This eventually gave rise to modernity, in spite of various late medieval and Renaissance attempts to keep it all together.210 Dupré describes modernity in the following passage:

The Divine became relegated to a supernatural sphere separate from nature. ... This removal of transcendence fundamentally affected the conveyance of meaning. Whereas previously meaning had been established in the very act of creation by a wise God, it now fell upon the human mind to interpret a cosmos, the structure of which had ceased to be given as intelligible. Instead of being an integral part of the cosmos, the person became its source of meaning. Mental life separated from Cosmic being: as meaning-giving ‘subject’, the mind became the spiritual substratum of all reality. Only what it objectively constituted would count as real. Thus reality split into two separate spheres: that of the mind, which contained all intellectual determinations, and that of all other being, which received them.211

The elements of Dupré’s analyses of the consequences of modernity are summarised below.

1) Through the disintegration of culture, general autonomy was given to each of its components — human, cosmic and transcendent.212

2) A new way was presented for confronting the real — the human mind created reality and value/meaning-making. Once the subject became the sole source of rationality, thought ceased to be contemplation and, instead, turned into a method of categorical structuring — ‘just like the judge

209 Dupré, Dubious Heritage, 4.

210 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 3, 11 and 12; and cf. Moses, Blumenberg, 4.

211 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 3; and Dupré, Metaphysics & Culture, Preface.

212 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 6 and 251; and Dupré, Marx’s Social Critique, 1 and 2.
compelling a witness to answer’, and this became the process of cognition.\textsuperscript{213}

3) The change marks a new epoch in being — God is no longer important and the superman, the superego takes his place.\textsuperscript{214}

4) The erosion of transcendence from culture has presented a Christian spiritual crisis.\textsuperscript{215}

5) Additional emphasis has been put on the opposition between the sacred and the profane.\textsuperscript{216}

6) Secularisation reigns supreme.\textsuperscript{217}

Marx’s division, following on from Dante in the 15th Century, between labour and cultural diversity had a dramatic impact on society.\textsuperscript{218}

As Dupré further argues, there have been three significant transformations in modern culture brought about as follows.\textsuperscript{219}

1) Modern technology aims at taking full control over nature, even if it implies an outright confrontation with nature (i.e., rather than adjust itself to nature, culture takes it over).\textsuperscript{220} Modern technology has become a conqueror of nature on man’s own terms, without regard for its immanent processes except for the purpose of exploiting it — it has ceased to be a means. Thus, the world we inhabit has been built by technique and for technique.\textsuperscript{221}

\textsuperscript{213} Dupré, \textit{Modern Idea}, 6.

\textsuperscript{214} Dupré, \textit{Religious Mystery}, 135.

\textsuperscript{215} Dupré, \textit{Passage to Modernity}, 112–119.

\textsuperscript{216} Dupré, \textit{Religious Mystery}, 131.

\textsuperscript{217} Dupré, \textit{Modern Idea}, 12.

\textsuperscript{218} Dupré, Marx’s Social Critique, 3.

\textsuperscript{219} Dupré, \textit{Modern Idea}, 7–12.

\textsuperscript{220} ibid., 7.

\textsuperscript{221} ibid., 8.
2) The meaning and role of the self has changed dramatically. Humans began to regard the entire socialisation process as a construction of their own free will and insight. Christianity adopted the view of humanity as microcosm with God as macrocosm — modernity had the human mind take over everything, including God's role.

3) The disappearance of transcendence was largely effected by the emptying of nature and the vanishing of humans, both of which are directly connected with Nietzsche's 'death of God'. Dupré describes the phenomenon itself:

In most societies as well as in our own society in the past, religion is the integrating factor of human existence, subordinating all values by a transcendent principle. A general feeling of dependence, in a universe that dominates man more than he dominates it makes such a reference indispensable. Yet once man attains the awareness that the powers of control both over the universe and over himself are within himself, as he did in modern culture, the need to relate all aspects of existence to a transcendent principle is felt much less, if it does not disappear altogether.

Continuing, Dupré then refers to the phenomenon of 'secularisation':

Science, art, philosophy, and morality have emancipated themselves from their religious origins to the extent that apparently they can exist as well without religion as with it. The scientist is no longer puzzled by the parallelism between the laws of nature and the laws of the mind, since he knows that all laws are laws only for the mind. Economic goods are not considered any more a gift of divine largesse, but man's own response to self-created needs. What artists dimly felt in the past, they now bluntly assert, namely, that the work of art is not an imitation of nature, subject to an extrinsic code, but that it creates its own norms and reality. In his moral behaviour also man has assumed full responsibility over himself: he has no more use for a divinely imposed, unchangeable code of conduct. Even religion can be accommodated in this man-centered universe as a symbolic expression of the human mind, structured according to immanent schemas.

---

222 Dupré, Modern Idea, 2.

223 ibid; see also Louis Dupré, Religion and the Rise of Modern Culture, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 15, (hereafter 'Dupré, Religion and the Rise of Modern Culture').

224 Dupré, Modern Idea, 11 and 12; and Louis Dupré, The Other Dimension: A Search for the Meaning of Religious Attitudes (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1972), 21, (hereafter 'Dupré, Other Dimension').

225 Dupré, Modern Idea, 12.
Charles Taylor offers some very useful clarifications on this issue. For him, in earlier societies religion was everywhere, was interwoven with everything else, and in no sense constituted a separate ‘sphere’ of its own. Secularization changed all this, and he describes today’s secularity as having three senses/meanings.  

Firstly, one understanding of it is in terms of public spaces. These have been allegedly emptied of God, or of any reference to ultimate reality. Or taken from another side, as we function within various spheres of activity – economic, political, cultural, educational, professional, recreational – the norms and principles we follow, the deliberations we engage in, generally don’t refer us to God or to any religious beliefs; the considerations we act on are internal to the ‘rationality’ of each sphere – maximum gain within the economy, the greater benefit to the greatest number in the political area and so on. This is in striking contrast to earlier times, when Christian faith laid down authoritative prescriptions, often through the mouth of the clergy, which could not be easily ignored in any of these domains (e.g., the ban on usury, or the obligation to enforce orthodoxy).  

Secondly, secularity consists in the falling–off of religious belief and practice, in people turning away from God, and no longer going to Church. In this sense, the countries of Western Europe have mainly become secular – even those who retain the vestigial public reference to God in public space.  

Thirdly, closely related to the second sense, and not without connection to the first, secularity focuses on the conditions of belief. The shift to secularity in this sense consists, among other things, of a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace. In this meaning, as against the second sense, Taylor argues that at least many milieux in the USA are secularized and that the United States as a whole is. For him, clear contrast cases today would be the majority of Muslim societies, or the milieux in which the vast majority of Indians live; the big differences between these societies in what it is to believe stem from the fact that belief is an option, and in some sense an embattled option in the Christian (or ‘post–Christian’) society, and not (or not yet) in the Muslim ones. In this third sense, belief in God is no longer axiomatic. There are alternatives. It 

---

226 Taylor, A Secular Age, 2, 3and 4.  
227 ibid., 1-2, 4, 14-15, 20, 50, 192, 423 and 425.  
228 ibid., 2-4, 14-15, 20, 423, 425-426 and 503.
Chapter 1: How we got to where we are in the world today

is a matter of the whole context of understanding in which our moral, spiritual or religious experience and search takes place: thus, an age or society would be considered to be secular or not, in virtue of the conditions of experience of and search for the spiritual. Obviously, where it stood in this dimension would have a lot to do with how secular it was in the second sense, which turns on levels of belief and practice, but there is no simple correlation between the two, as the case of the US shows. As for the first sense, which concerns public space, this may be uncorrelated with both the others (as might be argued for the case of India). Hence, Taylor asserts that the shift, in the Western case, to public secularity has been part of what helped to bring a secular age in the third sense.\(^{229}\)

Following Blumenberg’s thoughts, Dupré classifies this new phenomenon of secularisation as an original ‘self-assertion’ which often continues to use religious language to express a wholly new cultural attitude.\(^{230}\)

While the idea of God ceasing to be a dominant factor of Western culture was the position in the last century, Dupré argues that it was not until the 20th Century that modern consciousness translated this absence of meaningful transcendence into a theoretical principle. Hence, he articulates:

> The secularized consciousness, no longer satisfied with a ‘de facto’ absence of any meaningful transcendence, attempted to convert its attitude into a ‘de jure’, justified one. Thus originated the virulent antitheisms of scientific positivism, sociological structuralism and axiological humanism.\(^{231}\)

Dupré highlights a new awareness, in this time, of the original significance of the arguments and attempted solutions put forward by post-Kantian philosophers to the central problem of which method allows us to make meaningful statements concerning the objectivity of the experience ‘on the sole basis of the experience’ (of course assuming the legitimacy of the religious experience itself). Prior to the 20th Century, most continental philosophers, with the exception of Hegel, ignored the issue and uncritically continued to trust the objectivity of the experience (the Catholic position in the 19th Century), or they were satisfied with a purely subjective interpretation of the experience (the liberal Protestant position at that time).\(^{232}\) Struggling with the same


\(^{231}\) Dupré, *Marx’s Social Critique*, 3.

\(^{232}\) Dupré, *Dubious Heritage*, 4.
Kantian problem, we saw Husserl and Scheler attempt to solve it in the 20th Century. Following them, Maurice Blondel primarily concentrated on establishing the objective structures of the experience itself, leaving its object largely to faith. Dupré says that Blondel proposes that philosophy of religion must reflect upon the experience in order to discover its inner logic, its structure and its proper intentionality. But, Dupré argues that the fundamental Kantian issue of the reality beyond the experience remained unsettled. Dupré continues and asserts that Henry Duméry, a French philosopher of the 20th Century, combined Blondel’s method with a late one of Husserl’s who, by means of a series of reductions, had attempted to reach, through the experience, the transcendental ground of experience. Thus, for Duméry, the transcendental reduction, stretched to the ultimate limits of its potential, contains the true solution to Kant’s dilemma, because the religious experience is concerned with the ground of all experience more than with a specific ‘object’ of experience. Agreeing with this, Dupré then postulates:

> It also offered untapped resources for justifying the religious attitude in the face of the new challenge of human autonomy presented by Marxist and existentialist philosophers. The believer can concede their claim to an exclusively human responsibility for all human values — including scientific categories, aesthetic norms and even religious symbols. For instead of constituting a threat to man’s self-determination religion should be seen as the very source of this creativity.233

Following Hegel’s previously mentioned attempt to synthesise the two currents (that had influenced Western thought for centuries — the Platonic and the Christian ones) surrounding the debate about language as being a primeval symbol of the expressiveness of the absolute, Dupré articulates that Heidegger and Ricoeur have recently reminded us that, without the ability to speak metaphorically, there would be no way to refer visible appearance to invisible ground, and hence no metaphysics.234

Dupré further argues that Heidegger also dealt the definitive blow to the subjective interpretation of time by showing how, beyond being a subjective awareness of self-duration, the intrinsic temporality of existence discloses an essential quality of ‘being’.235 He further adds that the Thomist ‘mysteriousness’ of the relation between being and beings remains a fundamental concern for Heidegger’s philosophy.236

---

233 Dupré, Dubious Heritage, 4 and 5.

234 Dupré, Metaphysics & Culture, 5; and Martin Heidegger, In der Satz vom Grund, (Pfüllingen: Gunther Neske, 1975), 89.

235 Dupré, Metaphysics & Culture, 27.

236 ibid., 59.
additionally says that Ricoeur prefers to look to a justification of the past through the present as ‘intellectual imperialism’.\textsuperscript{237}

In addition, Dupré, when discussing the modern idea (i.e., instead of certainty, contemporary thought stresses communication and often does so with an anti-metaphysical bias), criticises Richard Rorty for supporting this concept. He asserts that Rorty, in so doing, reduces the philosophical enterprise to an intellectual conversation that has given up such ‘meaningless’ universals as ‘being’ and ‘truth’. However, for others, Dupré insists that true communication leads, in the end, to a need for metaphysics.\textsuperscript{238} Hence, he clearly acknowledges the need for metaphysics, and postulates that the modern predicament is culture without metaphysics,\textsuperscript{239} and this is exacerbated by our inability to make religious symbols in such a culture.\textsuperscript{240}

To complete our learning from Dupré’s views on how modernity developed from its origins, we could do no better than recall, below, his own two paragraph summary—the first referring to his metaphysical summation, the second to his cultural summation.

The \textit{kosmos} had functioned as the integrating factor of Greek culture. It included physical nature as well as men and gods. The Christian worldview, though more strongly emphasizing divine transcendence and thereby separating the divine from the human and cosmos components, nevertheless achieved a new synthesis through the idea of creation. At the end of the Middle Ages Nominalist theology transformed this relation. The Creator appeared as an inscrutable, inaccessible God withdrawn from a nature with which only a bond of efficient causality continued to link Him. The intrinsic intelligibility of such a creation could no longer be taken for granted and the task of conveying meaning to it fell entirely upon human reason. The source of meaning became the mind, rather than the objective order of reality. Henceforth it depended exclusively on that mind to define the limits of the intelligible and even of the real.

The impact of this intellectual revolution here so briefly sketched did not fully appear until much later. The unity of the integrated culture on which Western metaphysics once rested became fragmented into isolated spheres: nature, the meaning-giving mind, the inscrutable God. The transcendent component gradually withdrew from culture. That process now appears to have become completed. It is, of course, not the case that contemporary culture \textit{denies} the existence of God or of the divine. But transcendence plays no vital role in the integration of our culture. The

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{237} Dupré, \textit{Metaphysics & Culture}, 24.
\bibitem{238} ibid., 37 and 38.
\bibitem{239} ibid., 42–60.
\end{thebibliography}
fragmentation, it ought to be noted, has not halted at the ultimate principles. Once the human subject became solely responsible for the constitution of meaning and value, tradition lost its former authority. Each group, if not each individual, eventually felt free to advance a cultural synthesis of its own, ransacking the tradition for spare parts.241

David Tracy argues that in Dupré’s Passage to Modernity, ‘Dupré persuades us to take that passage again, as not merely our fate but our destiny’.242 And modernity could become that if we would make an effort to understand its rich, complex terms, not the dogmatic terms for the modern of the 18th, 19th or 20th Centuries. Tracy believes that

Dupré helps us to see afresh an entire period yet, also, helps us to think anew the most central issues of philosophy (i.e., form, nature, culture, the self and transcendence) by rethinking our culture’s history.243

To understand Dupré’s conception of the modern situation, Levesque has deemed it imperative to comprehend Dupré’s broader worldview.244 Also, to understand the modern predicament and Dupré’s assessment of the qualities and challenges that situation presents, the aforesaid Historical deconstruction of modernity has attempted, firstly, to comprehend more completely some of the factors which gave it birth.

Further, in distinguishing modern culture from the premodern, Dupré argues, according to Levesque,245 that it is not enough to: 1) view some of its effects; and 2) simply assert that modernity began with the Renaissance. Rather, we must inquire into the basic principles operative through different periods of history. In ancient times, we saw nature as cosmic, human and transcendent — all cohesive components. Then, transcendence was torn from nature, creating the disastrous predicament of the inability to make religious symbols, the transcendent referent of which offered a permanence of meaning to premodern nature. As Levesque additionally says, in quoting Dupré,

241 Dupré, Metaphysics & Culture, 43 and 44.
243 Tracy, Hopeful Paradox, 24.
244 Levesque, Symbols of Transcendence, 188–189.
245 ibid., 197.
... the legacy that gives rise to modernity from late medieval times, inspired by Scotus, Ockham and Nominalists in general, paves the way for later claims that the source of human meaning rests in creative self-expression.\textsuperscript{246}

Thus, we learned from Dupré’s and other relevant authors’ works that modernity is the tearing of transcendence into a dimension separate from nature and the further bifurcation of the human over worldly actualities. The previous cohesive understanding of reality collapses, resulting in its separation into disunited component parts. This frames ‘the modern predicament: the inability to make religious symbols’.\textsuperscript{247}

Levesque also says that the human subject was torn from the cosmos, thereby bringing about a loss of selfhood. The primacy of the human over nature removes the human into a realm outside of nature, thus reducing nature’s significance to only its cosmic element. But, once removed from nature, the human subject loses its own meaning. With nature now considered as an object, the subject itself is reduced, as Dupré says (in quoting Max Horkheimer’s summary), ‘to the mere function of constituting objectivity in the theoretical and the practical order’.\textsuperscript{248} Severed from the world and the transcendent, the rational subject now assumes the power of establishing and defining that which previously had provided the content of the subject itself. The self is now only able to view itself in the same way it relates to everything else to which it gives meaning and value — as an object. Inevitably, again quoting Levesque, ‘as the self objectifies all reality, it becomes prey to its own design and develops into an entity lacking of content’.\textsuperscript{249}

10. Moving forward

Having observed, from Dupré’s analyses and Historical deconstruction of modernity, how we got to where we are today, we also learned of some of the options available to us for advancing into the future, especially concerning our reuniting of what modernity has separated.\textsuperscript{250} According to Dupré, this requires Christians working

\textsuperscript{246} Levesque, \textit{Symbols of Transcendence}, 212 and 213.

\textsuperscript{247} ibid., 213.

\textsuperscript{248} ibid., 208; and Dupré, \textit{Modern Idea}, 93; and also Max Horkheimer, \textit{The Eclipse of Reason} (New York: Continuum, 1947), 93, (hereafter ‘Horkheimer, Eclipse of Reason’).

\textsuperscript{249} Levesque, \textit{Symbols of Transcendence}, 211.

\textsuperscript{250} Dupré, \textit{Passage to Modernity}, 251.
together with other religious faiths\textsuperscript{251} while at the same time attempting to combine the best of the past with the best of modernity.\textsuperscript{252} As Dupré stresses:

\begin{quote}
Any interpretation of the past aims at understanding the present. Yet, in the process of doing so, it affects the future as well and, thereby, the very development of the real itself.\textsuperscript{253}
\end{quote}

All these options will be of invaluable assistance to us as we move forward and examine Dupré’s framework (both in relation to its analytical and responsorial reflections) and others’ analyses of the current worldview and their responses to its secular challenges in the next chapter and from which we can also learn about further available options.

\textsuperscript{251} Dupré, \textit{Passage to Modernity}, 10.


\textsuperscript{253} Dupré, \textit{Passage to Modernity}, 10.
CHAPTER 2
TODAY’S DEEP CULTURAL WORLDVIEW

1. Methodology

In the previous chapter, Dupré’s and others’ analyses were utilised to determine the factors which led to where we are today. In this chapter, the current worldview and its secular challenges, and particularly that of European and Western culture, will be examined. Again, it is intended to draw upon Dupré’s framework and further analyses and responses of other authors as deemed pertinent. Their reflections will be drawn upon to help in understanding the current worldview and address its secular challenges by looking at the chosen seven topics (highlighted in this Chapter 2), each depicting a different aspect of that worldview.

In employing the above approach, obviously there will be some overlapping of material and argumentation when addressing these topics and their challenges, because the dominant emphasis in Dupré’s works concerns the loss of transcendence and the need for its reintegration into our lives and society. Naturally, the latter will also have a profound effect on the challenge that each topic presents to Christian belief.

To simplify the methodology, the following format for each topic will be used. Firstly, the analytical reflections in Dupré’s framework, and the analytical thoughts of others as deemed relevant, shall be investigated to assist in understanding the current worldview and its secular challenge. Secondly, at the end of each topic, a discussion section will be presented, which will cover: 1) the Christian dilemma posed by the topic; and 2) Dupré’s responsorial framework, and the responses and recommendations of others for addressing the topic’s challenge, as well as what he and they offer as ways of going forward.
2. **Topic 1: Today’s secular society is virtually a ‘godless’ one**

According to Dupré, culture originates from a succession of decisions by which we create, refine and constantly revise a system of values, which we hand down from one generation to the next. Thus, culture’s tendency is to continue earlier trends. But the continuity should not make us lose sight of the reality of conscious innovation. Despite the presence of objectivist tendencies, the general orientation of earlier Western culture was not objective itself and remained open towards transcendence.\(^{254}\)

However, modernity brought about the erosion of transcendence from our world, and this created today’s cultural crisis — its virtual godlessness.\(^{255}\)

While Dupré does not give us a precise definition of transcendence, we can glean his understanding of genuine transcendence, and its possibility of discovery in today’s secular society, from his sharp disagreement with Karsten Harries, originating from a joint seminar they presented in 1975.\(^{256}\) The sense in Dupré’s argument reminds us that

…the important thing to remember … is that the term transcendent, so essential for religion, develops dialectically and takes various meanings in different contexts. It is always transcendent in relation to what surrounds it.\(^{257}\)

The sense in Harries’ argument suggests that transcendence is ‘what eludes our concepts and words’, implying that ‘we transcend ourselves precisely as embodied, temporal beings’, whereas Nietzsche recognised that the body should not be placed in opposition to (the) soul. With Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, Harries said he would rather say that the self, which Zarathustra calls both ‘body’ and ‘a great reason’, transports the spirit, ‘your little reason’.\(^{258}\) While Harries ‘grants that religious experience is open to transcendance’, his main questions against Dupré’s arguments revolve around how transcendence should be understood, and of its relationship to language and the


\(^{257}\) Dupré, *Other Dimension*, 16.

senses (e.g., just what is transcended? Temporal reality? Reason? Should transcendence be thought of as being in opposition to temporal reality, to sensuousness? If this transcendence is not to be understood in opposition to time and to the world, is it not a worldly or, perhaps better, an earthly transcendence?). He also finds the link of transcendence to both eternity and disembodied spirit questionable (e.g., Is the link in fact essential to Christianity?), and he postulates that, to the extent that spirit is privileged at the expense of sensuousness, it will be impossible to arrive at a full self-affirmation.259 However, Philip Chmielewski argues that the dissimilar senses in their individual uses of the word ‘transcendence’ brought about their differences of opinion, and have helped to blur what separated them. Hence, Dupré’s concept (but not Harries’) enables both Dupré and Chmielewski to say that the transcendent emerges through three main activities in life. The first is the aesthetic activity — which provides a system-inherent vantage for pressing ahead to the utopian.260 Such activity also indicates the necessity for, and the emergence of, transcendence within a culture.261 The second is the language activity — wherein assertion and affirmation both indicate an implicit desire in the mind itself. This desire signals and requires a ground that makes both language and desiring possible.262 The third is the work activity, as so aptly put by Dupré:

… leaving the aesthetic attitude out of consideration we may still assert that human activity is never purely practical. Its universal scope transcends the immediacy of the task at hand. But a truly universal activity requires purely theoretical acts. Insofar as all work is a project it presupposes distance, observation, reflection — in short, contemplation.263

---

259 Harries, Art & Sacred, 189–203.


261 Chmielewski, Free Expressivity, 335.


Clearly, creativity manifests freedom and emancipation, which, as both Karl Marx and Dupré insist, are a self-determination that is not individual but collective, and expressive creative activity emerges as a primary avenue for personal freedom that carries significance within society.\textsuperscript{264} Hence, while profoundly humanistic, Dupré’s thought resists both determinism and any isolated, capricious voluntarism. He seeks a freedom where persons are responsible alongside others and within traditions. Thus, the creation of values is always an arduous engagement in social development, while understanding the need for us to be constantly aware that the transcendent realm is constitutive of a dynamic social order. In support, Chmielewski says:

Dupré’s understanding of transcendence allows and, indeed, sustains liberty within the course of events. This transcendence is the foundation for human expressive activity. In turn, creative activity signals the presence of the transcendent dimension within a society and culture. It also shows the need for articulating this dimension within a social order that can achieve the common good.\textsuperscript{265}

This highlights why today, there are opposed attitudes to transcendence between believers and non-believers.

As we saw in the 19th Century section in Chapter 1, Dupré highlighted that, in the transformation from medieval to modern, culture took over nature and, in the process, modern culture was transformed.\textsuperscript{266} Hence, today, it is not a question of whether our culture is, or will continue to be, Christian. Dupré, during his 2004 Australian lecture tour and reiterated by him in our 2005 USA conferences, articulated that a Christian culture ceased a long time ago, because of the lost synthesis between God, cosmos and humanity.\textsuperscript{267} In addition, the phenomenon of secularisation has introduced further complications into our culture.\textsuperscript{268} Thus, some people say that this enables them to argue that if God alone is holy, leave them alone (i.e., give them nature) and they will decide for themselves what is holy. Likewise, they argue that, as humans alone, they can save themselves. This, in turn, and as Dupré asserts, has led to the desacralisation of culture and, so today, religion is no longer the integrating and

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[265] Chmielewski, \textit{Free Expressivity}, 313 and 336.
\item[266] Dupré, \textit{Modern Idea}, 3–12.
\item[267] Dupré, \textit{Religious Mystery}, 131.
\item[268] Dupré, \textit{Other Dimension}, 21.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
central function in, or essential to, our culture and ethics. It has little value or presents few values in society today. \(^{269}\) Further, while the distinction between the sacred areas of existence and the more profane ones occurred very early in our culture, Dupré postulates: ‘Yet nowhere before have profane matters become secular — that is, entirely independent of what was once their transcendent life source’. \(^{270}\)

In the decisive change of course that took place in our culture at the beginning of the modern era, philosophy did not only become increasingly object-orientated as the modern age progressed but, also, it expressed the general drift of the culture more accurately than ever before. The trend reached its natural conclusion in the deism of the 17th Century and the materialism of the 18th and 19th Centuries. Despite countercurrents reacting to the change, the unqualified idea of an objective science was to place its stamp on the entire culture. Even such intrinsically subjective experiences as despair, loneliness and stress were integrated within an objective psychology conceived on the model of psychical causality. \(^{271}\)

Today’s homogeneously objective universe is, by its very nature, valueless: it functions, but leaves no space for any transcendent support of values. While values continue to be created, they merely become reduced to historically conditioned preferences which, because of the family structure breakdown in today’s society, are often unduly influenced by self-assertive, individualistic motives rather than community ones. This historical objectiveness affects all realms of culture. Nowadays, it is almost accepted that psychology and anthropology should provide a substitute for the intrinsic coherence that philosophy used to provide. We live in a fragmented universe without support and without soul. \(^{272}\) Hence, the removal of transcendence from our culture fundamentally affected the conveyance of meaning, when shifted from God’s realm to the human mind. Thus, reality split into two spheres: that of the mind, which contained all intellectual determinations, and that of all other being, which received them. \(^{273}\)

\(^{269}\) Dupré, *Religious Mystery*, 134.

\(^{270}\) ibid., 193.

\(^{271}\) Dupré, *Intellectual Sources*, 8; and Dupré, *Metaphysics & Culture*, 24; and Dupré, *Dubious Heritage*, 4 and 5; and also, Louis Dupré, ‘Philosophy and the Religious Perspective of Life’ in *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* (1971); 7, (hereafter ‘Dupré, Philosophy & the Religious Perspective of Life’).


Today’s cultural crisis has four additional implications for Dupré, which are outlined below.

Firstly, the current prominence of play, gesture and sign points to an all-around erosion of confidence by philosophers and theologians that we can ever determine who we are essentially as persons. Much on the present scene argues in favour of accepting this intellectual malaise as normative. For example, in considering the highly problematic and much discussed notion of ‘form’, for the ancients there was no manifestation in the world that did not irradiate the essentially timeless order of things. All was form and form was all. Initially Jews, then Christians and Muslims introduced the idea that God brought form into the world in a single act of creation and, thereby, sacralised a created order that depended for its existence upon a divine principle extrinsic to the temporal realm. Modernity and the desacralisation of culture and religion changed the picture considerably and the earlier mentioned cohesion is absent. With the advent of modernity, cosmic form, as such, is no longer either a metaphysical or theological principle. The epiphany of the finite world as a symbol of divine beauty is submitted to the arbitration of a subjective principle. With modernity’s ‘discovery’ of the individual, form becomes first and foremost the human capacity to receive and order sense data and make judgements about the world and so, now, the formal quality of existence has been detached from a synthetic and felt vision of God-self-cosmos that was taken for granted before the advent of modernity. In short, today’s secular society needs to reverse what modernity has done (i.e., reduced form to a humanistic level) so that, once more, the sacralised created order can see and realise its/their dependence on God.

Secondly, as Peter Casarella asserts, perhaps Dupré’s most important contribution to Christian theology today rests upon his realistic vision of the complexity of modern belief. For Dupré, that contribution is more concrete and challenging than formulating methodological abstractions and promulgating spiritual techniques, which he has certainly left for others to attend. Out of the complexity of modern belief arose the relation of form to content which, obviously, did not exist in earlier times. Dupré teaches us that we need to understand that modern forms with ‘traditional spiritual’

274 Dupré, *Religious Mystery*, 76.
275 ibid., 134.
content recognise both modernity’s turn to the subject of experience and the concrete expression of transcendent form in traditional Christian belief. This will assist us to note that some modern forms of thought have succeeded in transforming the content of traditional Christian belief without yoking those beliefs to the atheistic presuppositions of this secular age. To avoid further spiritual fragmentation in today’s world and to develop a more integrated understanding of symbolic form and religious content, Believers need to follow Dupré’s argument when he says:

…to freeze current symbolic forms and liturgical forms into a timeless essence is not only ahistorical but also approaches a fundamentalist attitude that can only destroy the spirit.

Similarly, a theory of Christian morality which accepts the separation of symbolic form from objective, religious content will rapidly degenerate into ethical formalism or a version of moral relativism. Today, separating form and content means either an abstract Kantian type categorical imperative or an irreducible plurality of distinct forms of life with no normative vision of the truth.

Understanding Dupré’s teaching about form and content will help today’s society ponder the matter of reintegrating the transcendent into our lives and world.

Thirdly, we learned from Dupré’s thoughts about symbols and negative theology that, theologically, analogy makes possible language about God, which is based upon God’s self-mediation as Creator, Redeemer and Fulfiler. It enables humans to perceive created reality as a symbol of God, and it thereby sets them on the path of movement towards the Creator. Particularly through Christ’s incarnation, God’s innermost nature opens itself to humans and, so, makes them aware of God as an enduring mystery. Yet, the more the awareness of God’s presence increases, the more the idea of a similarity between God and the creature recedes. But, it does not follow that all creatures are virtually identical as symbols of the transcendent. Dupré argues that, ‘even humans owe their unique status as religious symbols not so much to their elevated rank in being (e.g., over animals) as to their singular awareness of the divine

278 Casarella, Modern Forms, 226 and 227.
279 ibid., 309.
280 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 31–33.
281 Casarella, Modern Forms, 309 and 310, wherein Casarella stresses that Dupré seeks to understand the very foundations of the spiritual predicament of our age (i.e., the loss of transcendence) in terms of both modern forms and traditional spiritual content.
presence both in themselves and in other beings’. Natural phenomena must pass through inner reflection in order to become religious symbols. Hence, the person most acutely aware of God’s presence has always been the most prominent symbol of the divine. Analogy is, therefore, a mode of communication that leads into the depths of the divine mystery. Analogy does not allow us to take hold of God but, rather, draws us closer to him and, so, the analogy in creation leads into the analogy of the path of belief upon which the Father leads human beings toward him through the Son in the Holy Spirit: the Son is the path, while the Spirit provides the Communion. Thus, in the space provided by modern atheism, there is the need to reflect on these matters and allow the transcendent to permeate our lives.

Fourthly, while arguably there is as much symbolism today as in the past, it is now a very diminished symbolism, which does not refer to the transcendent, because of the splintering of transcendence into a realm separate from nature. This split affects the possibility of religious symbolisation, because the relationship between the transcendent and creation is denied. With transcendence relegated to a realm outside of nature, it no longer encompasses the finite realm and is excluded from the meaning-giving process and, so, the medium for speaking of transcendence ceases to endure. Thus, the transcendent referent essential for the existence of religious symbols can no longer be articulated. As the dialectal interplay between God’s transcendence and God’s immanence is necessary for religious expression, the severing of any potentiality for God’s immanence eliminates the possibility of religious symbolism. This inability to make religious symbols is the modern predicament.

When the human subject proclaims to be the sole source and dispenser of meaning and value, all connection to a transcendentally presented or naturally endowed meaning is severed. Then, each person or group assumes permission to create symbolic relationships.

Dupré stresses that we need, with God’s help, to be able to make religious symbols again, so as to relocate transcendence to a realm inside of nature as well as

---

282 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 100.
283 ibid., 139 and 142.
284 ibid., 139.
285 Levesque, Symbols of Transcendence, 213.
286 ibid., 211.
outside of it and, thereby, re-establish the transcendent referent, so essential for the existence of those religious symbols. He asserts that we need a different kind of synthesis to overcome today’s cultural crisis, which is inherent in modernity itself.

Levesque states that Dupré also argues that, ‘symbolic universes become sovereign realms, beholden only to self-made rules’. Moreover, Dupré says that, restricted only by self-given principles, ‘innovation and diversity have resulted in an unprecedented explosion of symbolic creativity’. Hence, instead of attaining a permanence of meaning offered by the transcendent referent of religious symbols, a projected symbolic structure, in the end, appears to be no more than the contingent utterance of a contingent subject. Once the belief in a transcendent, ultimate norm weakens, symbolic creations become autonomous but, inevitably, also fragmentary. When the human subject has itself become objectified, even the meaning and value it asserts is jeopardised. Thus, Levesque agrees with Dupré when the latter argues that, ‘in becoming pure project, the modern self has become severed from those sources that once provided its content’.

Further, in line with Eric Springsted’s thoughts, one understands that Dupré’s nine essays (in his work “Religious Mystery and Rational Reflection” where he considers themes he deems essential to a rational understanding of the phenomenon of religion) also provide a much needed perspective on faith and religious truth, and that Dupré, in his reflections, does so in part by looking at systems of religious symbols. As Springsted says, Dupré generally avoids

… the fatuous and ethereal nature of many contemporary discussions of symbols by taking religious truth in its ancient sense, that is, as referring to being. Truth is personal and interpersonal, not distanced, propositional knowledge.

287 Levesque, Symbols of Transcendence, 213.
288 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 251.
289 Levesque, Symbols of Transcendence, 211.
290 Dupré, Metaphysics & Culture, 44.
291 Levesque, Symbols of Transcendence, 212.
292 ibid., 119.
293 Louis K. Dupré, ‘Situation Ethics and Objective Morality’ in Theological Studies 28 (1967); 250, (hereafter ‘Dupré, Situation Ethics’); and refer Dupré, Religious Mystery, which contains his nine essays.
and, by so doing, Dupré’s symbols stay rooted in the actual life we have with each other and God. Also, Chmielewski argues:

Dupré raises his central concern for symbols so that the realm of human freedom can be preserved conceptually. In addition, because symbolic interaction requires a social embeddedness, this sphere of social activity remains contiguous with the mute and semi-independent forces of society. Symbols constitute a critical means which makes possible the examination of human activity embedded within complex social structures. Symbols constitute the matrix out of which an ethics can be articulated.295

Discussion — Responding to the erosion of transcendence from our culture

The Christian dilemma in this topic is that, because God is essential to our lives and religion, we need to learn how to reverse the erosion of transcendence from our secular world and, thereby, bring God back into our lives and society.

Dupré recognises and postulates that today’s cultural crisis has to be reversed, and most of his works and the themes therein centre around this urgent and necessary matter. He emphasises that the two qualities most urgently needed with respect to reversing the loss of transcendence are clear headedness and patience. Yet, as Casarella states, he offers no panacea to restore the damage incurred by modernity’s fragmentation.296 Dupré also reminds us we must be ever mindful that scattered unity is not new in our history, and it behoves us to reflect upon this from time to time to see how it occurred and learn from our findings.297 Moreover, he abhors restorationism, and suggests we apply ourselves constantly to reunite what modernity has separated by integrating the best of modernity with the best of the past.298 Additionally, he emphasises that our present task of finding a new future synthesis may well be the humble one of exploring how the fragments we are left with may serve as building blocks for same.299

295 Chmielewski, Free Expressivity, 323.
296 Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 16; and also Casarella, Modern Forms, 276.
297 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 137.
298 Dupré, Modern Idea, 16 and 17.
299 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 7.
Furthermore, he stresses the importance of the power of prayer, which he insists will achieve, for Christians, a ‘full blown’ belief in God — a Trinitarian God of love, a God who made us to live forever so that death does not interrupt our existence, a God who gives us meaning to life both here and now and, also, in the hereafter. This line of thought is supported by James Alberione, who suggests that, in contemplative prayer, we might recall Matthew: 9–13, where Jesus says to his followers: ‘So you should pray like this’. Therein, Jesus taught Christians the Lord’s Prayer, which for Alberione, contains ‘all we must hope, desire and ask of God’. Alberione also highlights the four ends of prayer — adoration, thanksgiving, propitiation and impetration — and stresses that we need to learn and know how to pray, what to pray for, to pray often and to pray well. Further, he discusses temptations against prayer — those from the devil, those from the world and those from ourselves — and how to combat them by understanding that there is nothing more important than prayer. Also, when thinking about prayer, he says we should remember that the visit to the most Blessed Sacrament, the reading of the Gospel and the examination of conscience are three great means of avoiding sin, of avoiding purgatory, and of being admitted into paradise. One who seeks to know God in the reading of the Gospel will possess a better vision of God. Jesus will reveal himself to that person. One who purifies his soul with the examination of conscience prepares oneself for eternal possession of God, and will be satisfied in all his desires. One, who, in the visit to the most Blessed Sacrament, seeks Jesus, will find him, because: ‘he who seeks finds’ (Matthew 7:8).

Dupré’s life’s work is concerned with solving the abovementioned Christian dilemma, and for him, the circumstance indispensable to this result is his proposed synthesis between metaphysics and culture, because he claims the modern...
Chapter 2: Today’s deep cultural worldview

predicament is culture (especially modern culture, which is the impact of the intellectual revolution) without metaphysics (i.e., metaphysics can no longer ‘justify’ a cultural unity that has ceased to exist).\textsuperscript{307} For him, our aim should be towards combining metaphysics and culture by treating culture (which needs transcendence if it is to be a cohesive synthesis of its own) within the fold of metaphysical investigation, as belonging to an analysis of ultimate reality.\textsuperscript{308} To be unified, however, Dupré argues

\ldots that culture requires a comprehensive principle that transcends the subject without jeopardizing its central, meaning-giving role. The possibility of metaphysics then rests on the presence of a genuine transcendence as an essential factor operative within culture itself.\textsuperscript{309}

\ldots metaphysics can no longer ‘justify’ a cultural unity that has ceased to exist.\textsuperscript{310}

But he insists that, in the attempt to effect the synthesis, we still need to hold science/religion, reason/faith in a healthy relationship.\textsuperscript{311} He points us in the direction of two strategies, which seem at first sight to be somewhat opposed but which he himself manages to combine. On the one hand, we can accept and maintain the division, recognising and affirming the legitimate autonomy modernity has gained for the three components of culture (i.e., nature, cosmos/the meaning-giving mind, humanity/the inscrutable God, God), but trying to bring the ingredients into a better balance with each other. From this perspective, Dupré articulates:

\ldots the modern program appears not so much obsolete as unfinished. Its completion will require a more equitable recognition of the meaning-and-value-giving function of all three of the component factors than the absolute dominance of the subject has hitherto admitted. \ldots Nor ought the one-sidedness of its past realizations discourage us about its future prospects. That one-sidedness may in the end matter less than the autonomy modernity has gained for the three components of culture: the spontaneity of a freedom recognized as an ontological principle, the sufficiency of a self-supporting cosmos, and the distinctness of a transcendence perceived as wholly encompassing the finite realm while intrinsically sustaining its autonomy.\textsuperscript{312}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{307} Dupré, \textit{Metaphysics & Culture}, 42–44.
\item \textsuperscript{308} ibid., 42.
\item \textsuperscript{309} ibid., 57.
\item \textsuperscript{310} ibid., 43.
\item \textsuperscript{311} ibid., 37 and 43.
\item \textsuperscript{312} Dupré, \textit{Passage to Modernity}, 251.
\end{itemize}
On the other hand he says: ‘we can strive to develop a comprehensive vision’.\textsuperscript{313} This comprehensive synthesis will restore transcendence and overcome the split, but in a modern way following the examples of Cusanus, Telesio, Bruno and later Spinoza,\textsuperscript{314} also Erasmus and the baroque philosophers such as Pascal and Malebranche,\textsuperscript{315} and, lately, some major thinkers of recent times from Hegel to Whitehead and beyond.\textsuperscript{316} Dupré articulates that we need

\begin{quote}
... to revise the accepted idea of transcendence in a way that transformed the concept of power hierarchically transmitted from beyond into a source of power within the universe whereby God’s presence permeated all parts at once.\textsuperscript{317}
\end{quote}

This will assist us working towards the recognition of a more fundamental ‘givenness’ that includes the creative subject itself with its central, meaning-giving role,\textsuperscript{318} while also recognising that the physical cosmos contains more meaning than a reduction to pure objectivity reveals.

Alternatively, Suzie Johnston and Leslie Armour argue against Dupré’s unification of metaphysics and culture. They say that the difficulty with his hopes for this combination is that it involves a basic ambiguity — the paradox of distinguishing between totalities and infinites. Totalising cultures that ‘thematisé’ and immerse everyone in the same cultural bath produce totalitarianism, the disease which mass culture and mass communication have made central to our time. They argue that for Emmanuel Lévinas (on whom Dupré heavily relies), infinities can only be expressed through the richest possible plurality; infinity itself is the overflowing superabundance of such a plurality. In the name of solidarity, totalities repress and destroy the community they seek to solidify. Johnston and Armour postulate that the solution is to develop a social order which is open to all the modes of expression except those which repress pluralism. To do this, they insist, one must be aware that there is a paradox to be overcome — a culture built around a principle of unification threatens to become stifling and stultifying. Freedom is freedom from the One, from religious intolerance and

---

\textsuperscript{313} Dupré, \textit{Passage to Modernity}, 351, wherein he refers to this vision as ‘a comprehensive synthesis’.

\textsuperscript{314} ibid., 352.

\textsuperscript{315} Dupré, \textit{Metaphysics & Culture}, 58–59.

\textsuperscript{316} Dupré, \textit{Passage to Modernity}, 253.

\textsuperscript{317} ibid., 352.

\textsuperscript{318} Dupré, \textit{Metaphysics & Culture}, 56 and 57.
political tyranny. They argue that Dupré’s pleas for unity and Derrida’s demand for endless deconstruction fall on the two sides of the paradox. Only if one can take Lévinas’ infinity seriously does it seem that we could escape from the paralysis of paradox. For Johnston and Armour, overcoming the paradox involves shifting and transforming prevailing definitions of both culture and metaphysics. Yet, while saying that Dupré’s *Metaphysics and Culture* text ends with an oblique critique of Lévinas’ philosophy of the infinite, at the same time, they cite A.K. Min’s quote against Lévinas’ optics of infinition as supporting Dupré’s plea for unity. In stating that Dupré wants in some respects to follow, and in others to reject, Lévinas’ treatment of culture as the coming of meaning to being, or knowledge to existence, they argue that Dupré’s desired unity calls for the meaning of culture to culminate in thematised coherency, and that culture, according to Dupré, is by definition something that unifies. Further, they state that Dupré says our modern culture must be made coherent — and this for the sake of metaphysics, and that the crux of Dupré’s problem is that culture (which used to provide a coherent base from which to begin metaphysical reflections) is not coherent. They postulate that the answer may be that what makes metaphysics possible is — as Lévinas and Descartes insist — that we constantly confront the infinite. They argue that infinity can only be expressed through an infinite plurality. Seen thus, a limitless cultural plurality, which always recognises ‘the other’ without absorbing all otherness, is the only morally acceptable unity.  

Nevertheless, Dupré’s abovementioned recommendations of recombining metaphysics and culture, of affecting a recohesion between fibres of form, and form and content, and of bringing about the ability to make again religious symbols, clearly evidence the need and possibility of reintegrating the transcendent into our lives and our world. When this is done, our present cultural crisis will be reversed, and the thrust of Dupré’s life’s work achieved.

---

3. Topic 2: Life in today’s immanent humanistic world simply means the human being’s ‘will to power’ and need to survive for self-affirmation

As we saw earlier, the ancients had coherence between God, cosmos and humanity, but 19th Century modern atheism started the gradual evanescence of the very idea of transcendence.\footnote{Dupré, *Intellectual Sources*, 1.} This was a natural follow-on from the 15th Century desire for unlimited ‘self-assertion’, where the human being understood that, only by surpassing one’s given humanity, would one grow fully human.\footnote{Dupré, *Marx’s Social Critique*, 1 and 2; and cf. Blumenberg, *Legitimacy*, Part III.}

By regarding the ‘death of God’ as ‘the’ symbolic event of the age, Nietzsche postulated that, without an absolute foundation, freedom became trammelled in an unlimited competition of possibilities, and that the essence of nihilism was that the entire realm of values was devalued.\footnote{Dupré, *Intellectual Sources*, 7; and Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 447.} With life being absurd, horrible and illusory, these factors made it possible for humanity to will and, for Nietzsche, the ‘will to power’ is the ‘essence’ of the world — life simply is ‘will to power’. There is no culture or society and no individual without it.\footnote{Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (1901–6), ed. Walter Kaufmann, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1968), 7, 9 and 35, (hereafter ‘Nietzsche, *Will to Power*’); and Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), 189, (hereafter ‘Nietzsche, *Beyond Good & Evil*’); and Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887) ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson, trans. Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), BN515, (hereafter ‘Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*’); and also Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), BN52, 22, (hereafter ‘Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*’).} With Christianity needing transcendent meaning and absolute conceptions of value for humankind, humanity’s ‘will to power’ and need to survive for self-affirmation caused humans to see themselves as God, over time, and, in so doing, ‘killed God’.\footnote{Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, BN481.} Thus, with Christianity’s main concept destroyed, Nietzsche argued that life was meaningless — humans are abandoned to the void and any attempt to construct alternative sources of meaning and systems of value from within the human world is absurd. Therefore, Nietzsche asserts that the need for meaning only becomes a problem when there is no transcendent meaning to be had. His solution is to create a form of culture that no longer deals in transcendent purpose and absolute value, leaving individuals to provide their own values and, to the extent
that any residual need for it remains, their own meanings. Hence, in formulating his
aesthetic solution, his super-man/super-ego became the ideal character type.325

Sigmund Freud, like Nietzsche, believed the provision of meaning (of life) had
become ‘questionable’, something no longer possible or desirable.326 For Freud, the
idea of life having a purpose ‘stands and falls’ with religion,327 and religion is a lost
cause.328 Those of strong will resign themselves to this and to the meaninglessness of
the cosmos. For those of weak will and who are unable to do so, there is therapy,
which ideally seeks to ‘cure’ the individual of the need for meaning but, failing this, to
make her/him feel less ill in a meaningless world — in short his ‘therapeutic solution’.329
For Freud, psychoanalysis is the total solution to the problems of the West, created by
meaninglessness: as power, therapy is the ‘transformative technology of the inner life’;
as purpose, it is the realisation or, at least, the pursuit of the psychological ideal. The
problems of meaning are connected with the problem of continuing attachment to the
failed and failing belief in an illusory transcendent order. In proposing reason as a
solution to this problem, Freud was not seeking a utopia of reason, but a peculiar type
of reasonableness — a reasonableness about meaning and life, a reasonableness for
the sake of health. It is to this end that he directed his theory and practice of
psychoanalytic therapy, the aim of which was to provide and/or assist ‘psychical
maturity’ in his patients. For Freud, the object of therapy is to teach human beings to be
reasonable in the demands they make on themselves and the world, and to free
themselves of their fanaticisms, most particularly their fanaticism for meaning. In a
therapeutic culture, the whole world is transformed into a hospital to bring people to the
condition of unbelief that constitutes ‘wellbeing’ without meaning.330

(hereafter ‘Ricoeur, *Freud & Philosophy*’).

326 Freud, *Future of Illusion*, general; and Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, (1930), (hereafter ‘Freud,
*Civilization*’), general.


328 ibid., SE 21:76.


330 Freud, *Civilization*, general; and Freud, *Future of Illusion*, general; and also Sigmund Freud, *Letters of Sigmund
(hereafter ‘Freud, *Letters*’).
Chapter 2: Today’s deep cultural worldview

Nietzsche and Freud provide Richard Rorty with the two fundamental propositions of his work and, as a basis for his own solution, he draws on their solutions to meaninglessness. He elicits Nietzsche to demonstrate the impossibility of absolute truth — how it is always no more than an interpretation (conditional by the contingency of language), and the necessity of meaninglessness. For Rorty, truth is a mobile army of metaphors ‘that provides the philosophical basis from which he attempts to overthrow the worn-out metaphors of metaphysics’.331 Rorty draws on Freud to demonstrate the impossibility of a human essence, and the contingency of the self and conscience. Rorty claims that each of us is the outcome of our idiosyncratic adaptations to contingent circumstance. Thus, the individual’s psychical development is determined in response to chance encounters and traumas.332 Rorty understands Nietzsche’s and Freud’s proposition of ‘a culture of therapeutic self-creation’ as the solution to meaninglessness. Rorty’s Nietzsche demands that we abandon the search for meaning and an ultimate reality, and embrace the senseless contingency that is the ‘cause’ of our being in a way that makes it our own. His concept of overcoming entails a radical change of perspective; while acknowledging and accepting contingency, we are to redescribe it in a new language as a story of our individual ‘becomings’. By sheer strength, we are to break out of one perspective, one metaphor, into another and, so, recreate all it was into ‘thus I willed it’.333 The fully-fledged human being that self-overcoming and self-creation make possible, is one who has made her/his life into a work of art. Rorty’s Freud helps us accept this idea and put it to work, both by bringing home to us the utter contingency of everything about our individuality, and by revealing the artistic genius of the unconscious that informs the conscious existence of everyone.334 Rorty understands self-creation not as self-deification, but as a matter of making one’s life a work of art and, also, that his aesthetic solution to meaninglessness becomes in the end, a therapeutic solution, and this need not be a problem to him. He himself observes:


332 ibid, 32 and 33.

333 ibid., 103.

334 ibid 35, 37, 39–40 and 161; and Richard Rorty, Consequences of Pragmatism, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 6, (hereafter ‘Rorty, Pragmatism’); and also Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, (1889), PN 501, (hereafter ‘Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols’).
… the therapeutic solution to meaninglessness should not be underestimated, for the possibilities of ‘what we might become’ in a therapeutic world are almost without limit or end.335

In light of the above, the importance of Rorty’s work, which Dupré criticises as we shall see later,336 lies in the way he develops Nietzsche’s and Freud’s project to free Western culture from the legacy of the ‘metaphysical interpretation of the world’ — he seeks to create, by drawing on their concepts, a new ‘post-metaphysical culture,’337 which he bases on the here and now, rather than on a future to come. This represents, for him, the highpoint of human progress338 — in describing it, he highlights the emergent culture of the present, a world that is recognisably what our own may be in the process of becoming. He states that the goal of his work is to help people understand that the realisation of a post-metaphysical culture, characterised by contingency, irony and solidarity, requires the disenchantment of the world, which he conceives to be a moral purpose because it makes the world’s inhabitants more pragmatic, more tolerant, more liberal, more receptive to the appeal of instrumental rationality.339 Of course, this is Rorty’s opinion, which would seem to be true only if we continually happen to be moral. At the very least, this enchantment demands that individuals privatise the way they deal with the sense of ‘finitude’ that constitutes the experience of meaninglessness,340 and refrain from generalising whatever personal solutions they determine. Taking a disenchanted world as his foundation, Rorty hopes to build a ‘liberal utopia’, where the search for truth has been superseded by an endless, proliferating realisation of freedom,341 where lightness and play have replaced seriousness,342 and where irony has become universal.343 It would be a world where the enlightened liberated self — the self that has finally succeeded in shaping itself — has become a reality,344 and where concepts such as meaningless and relativism have

335 Rorty, Pragmatism, 6.
336 Refer this Ch.2, 90-92.
337 Rorty, Contingency, xvi.
338 ibid., 9.
340 Rorty, Contingency, 40.
341 ibid., xv – xvi.
342 ibid., 39–40.
343 ibid., xv.
344 ibid., 152.
become unintelligible, one where a highly developed sensitivity to the particular details of the pain and humiliation of others has deepened human solidarity in a way almost unimaginable, and brought humanity to the highpoint of its moral progress. His dreaming, romantic sense of grandeur (about community with freedom and progress being human goals), which simultaneously abolishes its metaphysical components and realises its humanitarian ambitions, enables him to say that his solution represents nothing less than ‘the self-cancelling and self-fulfilling triumph of the Enlightenment’. It would seem that such a utopian lifestyle of moral progress is mere speculation.

Also, Dupré postulates that, in a virtual non-Christian era and being desacralised by secularisation, religion provides no meaningfulness to human existence. Once, life was thought to be simultaneously given with meaning. Now, the main thing justifying our existence and the right to defend ‘the meaning of existence’ seems to be missing. The unified central influence of culture (religion) has lost its former prominence, and has even become non-essential in today’s society whereas, before, it comprised culture’s central objective element and gave meaningfulness to people’s lives. Nowadays, many have abandoned the search for a unified meaning of existence and have given up looking for theological solutions to life (e.g., the combining of work and faith is no longer considered essential; or where earthquakes were once part of religious thought, now they have moved out of that to seismological/scientific thought). Today, the formal quality of existence has been detached from a synthesis and felt vision of God/self/cosmos that was taken for granted before the advent of modernity, and the secular removal of transcendence from our society has effected, fundamentally, the conveyance. Meaning/value-making has been conveyed from God to the human mind.

Peter Vardy articulates that the postmodern approach to life presents many dangers for people, none greater than the denial of objective truth, and its consequent claim that all value systems and criteria, generally, are relative. As a result, none can

345 Rorty, Contingency, 190.

346 ibid., 192.

347 ibid., 57, 163–164.

348 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 131.


350 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 112–119; and Dupré, Modern Idea, 3–12; and Dupré, Religion and the Rise of Modern Culture, 114-115.
legitimately claim to have any superiority over any other, and this has far-reaching implications when examining ways to reverse this topic's current perspective and its challenge.\textsuperscript{351}

In our present world, it is generally accepted that psychology and anthropology should provide a substitute for the intrinsic coherence which philosophy used to provide so that, now, in our fragmented universe, as Dupré asserts, ‘the assertive replaces the meaningful’.\textsuperscript{352}

\textit{Discussion — Responding to the solutions postulated by Nietzsche, Freud and Rorty to the problem of the meaninglessness of human existence}

This topic highlights a Christian dilemma concerning the possibility of belief about the meaning of life in today’s secular society, especially given the current secular concept of the assertive replacing the meaningful.

Dupré’s desire is to give people a meaning to life, so that they may live and die as people of God in the image of Christ, aided by divine love and grace and the power of the Holy Spirit (i.e., they are able to live their earthly lives in accord with God’s will to love, so that they may lovingly share eternity with him in the life hereafter). The circumstance indispensable to this result is to help bring about a conversion to an attitude in which the focus is on meaning (i.e., what is the purpose of life) rather than on assertiveness (i.e., declaring that life is meaningless and proffering a solution(s) on that erroneous assumption). To effect this change, we need to decide our personal attitude towards existence based on God’s revealed love, instead of having it assertively conveyed or thrust upon us by society or simply inherited from ancestors. This conversion demands a transformation in us, and as Dupré articulates:

\begin{quote}
In an atheist culture there is nowhere to turn but inwardly and, in confronting one’s own atheism, the believer hopes to restore the vitality of one’s faith.\textsuperscript{353}
\end{quote}

Like the masters of spiritual life, who fully live through the emptiness of their own hearts, and are thus turned towards the One who is not there, the contradiction of simultaneous presence and absence has to be experienced. As in the night of St. John

\textsuperscript{351} Peter Vardy, \textit{Being Human: Fulfilling Genetic and Spiritual Potential}, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2004), reviewed by Terry Obergin in \textit{The Catholic Leader}, 23 May 2004; 18, (hereafter ‘Vardy, Being Human’); and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 71, 72, 75, 79 and 80, 84 and 85, 93 and 94 and 143. Here, Vardy’s analysis is similar to Dupré’s.

\textsuperscript{352} Dupré, \textit{Transcendent Selfhood}, 16.

\textsuperscript{353} Dupré, \textit{Religious Mystery}, 137.
of the Cross, the night of absence, so intensely experienced and accepted, becomes the meeting place between the soul and divine transcendence. Looking at the desert of modern atheism in this way, it provides the only space in which most believers are forced to encounter the transcendent. As Dupré asserts, ‘it is a desert that, in prayerful attention, may be converted into the solitude of contemplation’.  

This, Thomas Merton wrote of

... as not something outside us, not an absence of people or of sound, but an abyss opening up in the centre of the soul, an abyss created by a hunger and thirst and sorrow and poverty and desire.

Today's secular society has created an emptiness that, for the serious God seeker, attains a religious significance. The mysticism of negation provides us with an ideal model, as the affirmation of God is rarely still the centre of our search for transcendence. Dupré insists that today we

... may start from a negative experience of life lived in a secular environment, deprived of a transcendent meaning, yet, less than ever, will we remain satisfied with a negative attitude toward our worldly and social environment. Ours will rather discover a transcendent dimension in a fundamental engagement to a world and a human community perceived as totally autonomous and totally dependent.

In stressing the above, Dupré proposes a healthy balance between an individual withdrawal and a totally secular attitude in which to locate transcendence. He promotes an inward turn without denying that we do in fact live in a secular culture. It is precisely the inner life or the lived experience of one’s own subjectivity that is the condition of openness to transcendency. Neither can the role of secular culture be ignored in the attempt to restore transcendence. The religious person must blend her/his inward resolution with existence in culture. Both an inner decision and integration with society are needed, but without degenerating into individualism or assuming that culture still possesses its previous force.

By plumbing the spiritual foundations of this topic, Dupré has assayed our present situation. Our experience of total contingency (i.e., God knows why) will present us with a meaning to living, and the movement into God’s Word and Trinitarian

354 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 139.
356 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 143.
357 Levesque, Symbols of Transcendence, 249.
358 ibid., 270.
cycle (by means of entering into the darkness of the unknowing) will be made easier in this secular world. When this occurs, we will have, once again, a society in which the meaningful replaces the assertive.

Taking Rorty’s solution further, in particular, and his post-modern philosophy, in general, Dupré discusses in detail the ambiguities in Rorty’s proposition concerning postmodernity or late modernity. Against Rorty, he argues that there is discontinuity between modern and premodern and continuity between modern and postmodern, with postmodernity clearly exposing how much the traditional principles of metaphysics have come to conflict with the modern mind. Further, he asserts that postmodernity’s persisting preoccupation with those principles reminds us of Kant’s early and clear announcement of this conflict and his illustration of it in the irreducible division of the major areas of consciousness in his work. Dupré quotes Kant’s memorable statement of the continuing drive to metaphysics: ‘This demon can never be exorcized’.

After reflecting on the current perspective in this topic, it would seem that Michael Casey’s suggestion is accurate about today’s entirely new form of culture being one in which the question of meaning no longer occurs. Yet, he argues that peoples’ way of life cannot be studied or analysed without addressing, in some form or other, how it makes existence meaningful for them. To conceive of a culture in which the question of meaning does not occur, is to conceive of something utterly new: life lived without the experience of meaninglessness (i.e., if there is no meaning to human existence, we cannot experience meaninglessness). If there is a meaning to human existence, we can experience meaninglessness. As Pope John Paul II said:

Different cultures are basically different ways of facing the question of the meaning of personal existence.

and

... where modern societies and economies seem to need no one, an individual is left isolated and vulnerable in a world of utility and

359 Louis Dupré, ‘Postmodernity or Late Modernity? Ambiguities in Richard Rorty’s Thought’ in Review of Metaphysics 47 (December 1993); 277–295, (hereafter ‘Dupré, Rorty’).

360 Dupré, Rorty, 277.

361 ibid., 295.

362 ibid.

363 Casey, Meaninglessness 1.

instrumental reason, fearful and confined within her/his own immanence in an ever deepening introversion. 365

In the light of the above, Casey’s denunciation of the earlier mentioned solutions to the meaninglessness of human existence adds support to Dupré’s above claims in this topic. Casey highlights that, in looking at the solutions postulated by Nietzsche, Freud and Rorty to the problem of the meaninglessness of human existence, the cultures they propose are themselves deeply problematic. The analysis of the modern condition informing Nietzsche’s aesthetic culture and Freud’s therapeutic culture is fundamentally the same: humans’ need for meaning makes them sick. In the face of invincible meaninglessness, Freud counsels resignation for the strong and therapy for the weak. Nietzsche urges a more radical solution: the overcoming of the Christian/metaphysical interpretation, which imposes the category ‘meaningless’ upon the world, and the overcoming of the human, the creature who needs meaning, by the superman, the god who embraces meaninglessness as meaning itself. To Nietzsche, Freud’s solution would make the world a hospital and give it over, in its entirety, to the ‘last man’; whereas for Freud, Nietzsche’s solution offers, at best, a retreat into delusion, and, at worst, a headlong flight into madness and self-destruction. Because the human individual cannot truly make him or herself a god or a work of art, except in psychosis, the two solutions converge, and the aesthetic inevitably loses itself in the therapeutic. Rorty attempts to go further than his two predecessors do, not least by establishing a clear distinction between self-creation and therapy, and asserting the superiority of the aesthetic over the therapeutic. For Casey, ‘Rorty’s attempt fails and, contrary to his intentions, ends by underscoring this convergence’. 366

The key problem facing these solutions, assuming the need for meaning can be overcome, is the limitlessness of possibility and the endlessness of power. There is no limit to what may serve the purposes of self-creation and therapy, no limit in the exercise of power in their service. While Nietzsche explicitly poses this problem as his solution, Freud envisages a world ruled by therapists to make all people moderate and reasonable, but it is precisely in this sort of world that anything which might have a positive therapeutic ‘yield’ would be permitted. Rorty, aware of these problems, attempts to constrain therapeutic self-creation by effectively subordinating it to the governing principles of solidarity and irony. However, these principles cannot compel this subordination by themselves. They must be enforced and, for this to be done in the way Rorty desires, in a world where there are no grounds for moral compulsion, would

366 Casey, Meaninglessness, 116.
require the massive exercise of power by the State. The solutions of the three philosophers represent very powerful and influential attempts to theorise a culture that overcomes the need for meaning. Yet, each of these attempts, considered on its own terms, fails and must do so. Casey argues that ‘none succeeded in achieving the main object they set themselves — surmounting meaninglessness — and all conclude in a scenario of limitless power’. 367 This is because the three of them, like the postmodernists

… misunderstand the inwardness they seek to displace. They treat the unfolding of the individuals life as a ‘narrative’, a story we tell ourselves, and their solutions to meaninglessness provide different ways of ‘appropriating’ this narrative for the purposes of therapy or self-creation. 368

In this view, narrative offers liberation from older, more troublesome concepts of personhood based on fixed and irreducible character. But, in addition to the unfolding of an individual’s life and personality, Casey asserts: ‘there is his essence, comprising the human in general and everything that is personal and particular to him’. In short, there are two aspects to personhood, and in their solutions to meaningless, the aforesaid three philosophers focus on one only — the unfolding — in an attempt to deny or exclude the other — the essence. For Casey, then, this is the most problematic aspect of their approach to meaninglessness and, also, the most important. For, if they are correct in asserting that there is ‘only’ the unfolding — that there is in fact nothing inherent and inescapable within — then the worlds they envisage and desire will be realised in some form or other, with the sort of problematic consequences emanating from questions of value based on redescriptions and affecting moral decisions concerning abortion, euthanasia and unlimited power (e.g., as witnessed during World War II in some concentration camps). 369

In responding to the modern approach to life, Vardy, denying the absence of objective truth, champions the idea of a common human nature. Once this is acknowledged, he argues that the presence of moral values recognisable as appropriate to all people is forcefully explained. He then focuses on exploiting this human nature so that each of us might become the best person she or he can be, 370

367 Casey, Meaninglessness, 116.
368 ibid., 9.
369 ibid., 9 and 115–126; and cf. Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 32 and 33, where a person is comprised of individuality and personhood and not just either one of them.
370 Vardy, Being Human, 18.
and so live according to God’s will and love here on earth with a view to sharing eternity with him forever.371

4. **Topic 3: Today’s secular anthropocentrism dominates our universe**

Socrates’ precept of ‘Know thyself first’ was at the beginning of philosophical thought in relation to one’s inner presence/self, and he opened up an entirely new perspective when he invited his contemporaries to know themselves by looking inward, rather than outward. Yet, more than ever today, this principle is neglected, despite the human person’s enormous concern for her/himself, but the problem is which self? Little understanding can be gleaned from the closed circuit of everyday consciousness, and today’s philosophy generally conceives of the self as a subject of worldly experience, without taking into account those unconscious states and open-minded experiences in which everyday consciousness is left behind totally. Yet, an adequate concept of the self must include the self-surpassing states and experiences, for to be self is, as Dupré asserts, ‘by its very nature to be more than the actuality of one’s being, more than what can be described in purely immanent terms’.372

As we saw in Topic 2 of this chapter, the ‘death of God’ promoted the human person to the ‘superman’ status and, in this situation, it is asserted that the human person’s mind controls and is the centre of everything (i.e., including meaning-making, value-making and reality). It constitutes reality/objectivity so that, today, value making is ontological. Dupré argues:

> In our age, science, social structure and morality have developed into full, albeit purely immanent forms of humanism. Current society has lost virtually all need for the public support of religion. Our contemporaries, particularly the young and the educated, the ones most susceptible to cultural change, have to a large extent resigned themselves to a fragmented worldview. What Christianity regained through the Incarnation, it has lost on the human superman/ego. Today’s humanism is not Christian humanism. The human mind is the centre of everything — it constitutes reality/objectivity.373

---

371 Vardy, *Being Human*, 18; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 84–86.


In line with Cartesian thought, when the mind controls all, experienced reality is replaced by a (mathematically) reconstructed object. What is real is only what is objective, and that is the problem because, for Christians, God is not subject to objectivity. He is the beginning of objectivity, and objectivity does not sit with God, as he is subjectivity and objectivity. Objectivity is that which is made by the subject, and ‘speaking’ about God involves a reality of which we must be part. Unfortunately, today, our culture separates the cause (God) from the effect (nature/humanity).\(^{374}\) As Levesque says, confirming Dupré’s view, once the human subject was torn from the cosmos, there came about the loss of selfhood.\(^{375}\) Therefore, all that is necessary, nowadays, is a scientific view of the self, not a responsible view of the self.

Hence, today’s cultural crisis is its virtual ‘godlessness’. This is perpetuated by the person not being ‘fully human’. The concept of person (i.e., comprising individuality — objective, active, external and independent, and selfhood — subjective, passive, internal and dependent) has become disunited in our present secular world.\(^{376}\) As a result, today’s distinctive value system reigns (i.e., the individualistic system, the objective, independent one).\(^{377}\) When it was asserted that the subject became the sole source of rationality and reason, the secular attitude, where a person’s individual function is everything, took over from the religious attitude, wherein the way and purpose of life is paramount.\(^{378}\)

For Dupré, to be a person means more than to function as a person (e.g., a great deal of the present abortion debate centres around the abovementioned double meaning of person. Also, in a similar vein, Dupré argues that the main reason why commonly accepted moral principles have become uncommonly ineffective in the daily circuit of our affairs is due less to the inappropriateness of past formulations to new situations than to an almost unprecedented tendency to reduce morality to a purely immanent code of behaviour). He asserts:

By some strange law man must attend to what surpasses both what he is or can ever hope to be in order to gain true humanity.\(^{379}\) …

---

\(^{374}\) Dupré, *Religious Mystery*, 133.


\(^{376}\) Dupré, *Transcendent Selfhood*, 32 and 33.

\(^{377}\) ibid., 11.


\(^{379}\) Dupré, *Transcendent Selfhood*, vii.
Yet, in restricting his scope to what he is, he will not only fail to grow but, also, as the unhappy receiver of the one talent, he will lose what he possesses. Clearly, the ultimate paradox of a ‘good life’ is that it must be defined in terms of what is more than good.380

As the human person is fragmented today, and kept that way through secular anthropocentrism, searching for religious truth (as referring to being/disclosure) is difficult because Catholic Christians are confronted with the following two perspectives.

One, the secular perspective emphasises that the mind/reason is the creativity which defines the limits of the intelligible and even of the real (i.e., the mind constructs/objectifies reality — it constitutes meaning). As we learned earlier, Blumenberg argues, on the one hand, that the modern ‘self-understanding’ (i.e., modern science, modern philosophy, modern art, individualism and so on) is a particular, and in the circumstances, ‘legitimate’ historical and cultural response to the all determining emphasis (in theory and in practice) upon the Nominalistic theme of the omnipotence of God/rational contingency; yet, on the other hand, it seems for him that the modern ‘self-assertion’ (i.e., science, art, individualism and so forth) emerges as a response, and a ‘legitimate’ one at that, to a human situation deeply determined by the emphasis on contingency, by way of his second overcoming of Gnostic dualism. Later writers drew on Blumenberg’s thoughts about ‘self-assertion’, and broadened them to include its ability to cope with the new radical insecurity of humanity’s relation to reality and the meaninglessness of human existence.381

Two, the Christian perspective stresses that the mind participates in, is a radiation of, God. As part of the Divine Cycle (wherein we participate in the ongoing movement/Trinitarian procession of the Son from the Father in God and, then, through the Holy Spirit return to the Father), we humans come to believe God as the only One who sanctifies and, so, we are driven to action to live according to God’s will and contemplate on eternal life — the real me is the God within me. Being created in the image of God, as revealed to us, we are merely images through Jesus Christ (the Word made flesh who entered into creation) and, thus, can experience the mystery of this image through him. We cannot get to, nor are we greater than, God, but using this negative theology, we can go up to God in mysticism.382 Thus, Creation is not independent of God’s silence, and rests in the Divine Word (i.e., eternal love). In this

380 Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, vii.
381 Blumenberg, Legitimacy, 131–154.
382 Dupré Transcendent Selfhood, 32 and 33.
sense, Dupré speaks of ‘image’ meaning ‘presence’ and, while we cannot see God, we may become aware of/close to him and, as further revealed to us, the more we become intimate with God, the more we realise that we don’t know him. This Christian outlook recognises that a human person can act objectively (i.e., as an individual substance of rational nature, wherein the individual is active, external, independent and objective) and subjectively, to which the category of substance hardly applies. Here we refer to ‘selfhood’ which, as Dupré argues, means more than to function as a person. The selfhood is passive, internal, dependent and subjective.\textsuperscript{383}

\textbf{Discussion — Responding to the secular notion of the human person being only individual}

Today’s Christian dilemma in this topic is to try and reverse the immanent humanistic perspective of the human person being considered as only or simply individual and, so, fragmented.

Dupré desires to see all human beings ‘whole’ again, rather than fragmented as they are today. The circumstance indispensable to this result is to help bring about a conversion to an attitude in which our focus is on understanding a person as meaning more than just to function as a person.\textsuperscript{384} To effect this, he advocates the melding of the Christian perspective of the human mind (i.e., individual and selfhood) with the secular perspective of the human mind (i.e., individual only).\textsuperscript{385} The problem with the secular view is that, as we learned earlier from Dupré, once the human subject becomes solely responsible for the constitution of meaning, or has its functions reduced to constituted objectivity and practical control, then the rule of contemplation ends and is replaced by that of fabrication/technology: there is no content any more. Severed from the world and the transcendent, the rational subject now assumes the power of establishing that which previously had provided the content of the subject itself (God).\textsuperscript{386} The self is now only able to view itself in the same way it relates to everything else to which it gives meaning and value — as an object. Then, as Levesque says,

\textsuperscript{383} Dupré, \textit{Transcendent Selfhood}, 32.
\textsuperscript{384} ibid., 32 and 33.
\textsuperscript{385} ibid., 17 and 104.
\textsuperscript{386} Dupré, \textit{Enlightenment}, 16 and 17.
…as the self objectifies all reality, it becomes prey to its own design and develops into an entity lacking of content. In the end, the subject becomes the object and, so, the secular mind only acts objectively. 387

Drawing on the classical formulations of transcendence from the past Christian tradition is a viable response to the atheistic climate of modernity. Yet, as Dupré says, we need to amalgamate the best of both eras when formulating that response, so that the modern believer can seek transcendence beyond her/his own self-fabrication. The task of seeking transcendent selfhood can still find a foothold in the spiritual impoverishment and isolated individualism of the cultural situation in which we find ourselves. According to Casarella, this is what Dupré means by ‘holding hard to the poverty in today’s culture brought about by modernity and modern atheism’. 388

Unfortunately, today, while the word ‘God’ appears on many pages of Western philosophy, rarely do we find mentioned the inner presence out of which the idea of God grew and developed. Instead, we encounter mostly descriptions of an ultimate reality opposed to the self’s being and separated from it in a ‘supernatural’ realm of its own. In our human-oriented civilisation, our concept of the human person has been developed almost entirely in mundane terms, with the scientific resolution putting the final seal of necessity on this concept and this, in turn, has led to the cultural crisis in which this naturalism has resulted. Today, the selfhood side of the person does not enjoy great popularity (e.g., now, we talk of dependence as not so much a virtue but rather a vice). In denying passivity and dependence (i.e., selfhood), we have excluded a deeper level of existence. When reflecting on Dupré’s thoughts, which are often directed by symbols, practices and doctrines wherein the Judeo-Christian tradition has articulated the human being’s relation to the transcendent, we learn that we must never forget to question and, if necessary, criticise that tradition. This is so because it suffers from, as Dupré insists, ‘the defects of our culture, and all too often it has patterned its own symbols on objectivist models’. 389 Moreover, as Todd Breyfogle articulates in line with Dupré’s concepts, while questioning and criticising our tradition, we ought not to ignore what is already so much part of ourselves. 390 Further, Breyfogle says:

387 Levesque, Symbols of Transcendence, 211.
389 Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, ix.
390 Todd Breyfogle, ‘Review of Dupré’s Religious Mystery and Rational Reflection’ in Cross Currents (Summer, 1999); 1, (hereafter ‘Breyfogle, Review’).
Categories of rational reflection have come to define the character or even the possibility of transcendence and so foreclose the requisite openness to religious mystery. If we do so ignore the above, modern thought risks losing not only the meaning of but also the possibility of experiencing the mystery of transcendence.  

Dupré has consistently maintained that religious belief today is inextricably bound to the culture of modernity. In his view, as Casarella notes, a believer today is willy-nilly obliged to consider her/himself a modern believer. To adopt the spiritual outlook of the premodern world is neither desirable nor realistic, for that world is no longer ours to claim. Yet, it must be said that few theologians today would bind belief to modern culture uncritically, and modernity’s promise to emancipate the devout from the chains of traditional authorities has yielded very mixed results. However, as stated above, some modern forms of thought have succeeded in transforming the concept of traditional Christian belief, without yoking those beliefs to the atheistic presuppositions of today’s secular age.

Casarella also says that Dupré offers simply a studied reflection on mystical selfhood unencumbered by technical theological distinctions, and for Casarella, those reflections are just reflections (albeit magnificent ones) — not solutions; the former only pave the way for the latter. Yet, Dupré shows convincingly and movingly the crucial importance of striving towards a rediscovery of inner selfhood and, in so doing, he reopens avenues long neglected in Western philosophy. Some of these neglected avenues are: 1) the inwardness of revelation; 2) the boundary experience of mental suffering; 3) the awareness of permanence underlying the age-old belief in immortality; and 4) the consciousness of a deeper self in mystical states.

In his works, Dupré also clearly evidences the need of transcendence in our Christian lives as well as the possibility of reintegrating the transcendent into the lives of all humans in today’s secular world. However, to do so, he insists, we need to reinstate/rediscover a more complete vision of the human person in this fragmented society. We require the light of inner transcendence, and our religion must play an essential part in providing the urgent need of our culture for a truly Christian spiritual

---

391 Breyfogle, Review, 1.
392 Casarella, Modern Forms, 276.
393 ibid.
394 Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, back flap of cover.
dimension. Then, hopefully, we can look to integrating this dimension into every human
life in our secular world.

In addition, when framing the above response, we need to remember
Levesque’s earlier statement about how the loss of selfhood came about, and that,
once removed from nature, the human subject loses its own meaning. Then, as the self
objectifies all reality, it becomes prey to its own design and develops into an entity
lacking content.

5. Topic 4: In our present secular society ‘economic consumerism’ reigns supreme

As we saw in the 18th Century section of Chapter 1, Dupré’s analysis of Kant’s
contribution to the transition from the medieval to the modern era highlighted that, after
the spiritual revolution of the Renaissance, religion had become severed from the rest
of the human’s spiritual life. Likewise, in the 19th Century section, we learned that,
as a result of secularisation, economic goods are no longer considered to be a gift of
divine largesse but, rather, a human being’s own response to self-created needs.

Thus, ‘fetish’ commodities have taken over a life of their own and cluttered the road to
peoples’ spiritual destinations. In addition, because of today’s fragmented human
person being deemed only as an individual and thus, not a ‘whole’ person (i.e.,
individual and selfhood), the current distinctive value system reigns supreme (i.e., the
individualistic system, the objective, independent one), evidencing Dupré’s
emergence of objectivity.

Current cultural meanings of existence are voluminous, but mainly without
religion. Likewise, as Dupré says, in today’s virtual godless and pluralistic society,
much prevalent ‘spirituality’ is not concerned with God, especially where economic
consumerism, in our fragmented worldview, is concerned. Its narrow confines are set
for the individual by modern consumer societies with their competitiveness, self-focus,

395 Dupré, Modern Idea, 93; and also Levesque, Symbols of Transcendence, 208.
396 Dupré, Modern Idea, 477; and also Levesque, Symbols of Transcendence, 211.
397 Dupré, Dubious Heritage, 1.
398 Dupré, Modern Idea, 11 and 12; and Dupré, Other Dimension, 21.
399 Dupré, Metaphysics & Culture, 21.
400 Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 11.
401 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 65–92.
and frenetic lifestyles, and are more interested in commercial profit than in God. Thus, peoples’ relationships are concerned with human-made conceptions and values rather than with God. This ‘spirituality’ is merely a form of humanistic consumerism, which promotes instant gratification as being paramount to happiness in our earthly lives.402

Because many people nowadays have no need of transcendence in their lives or society, the current pluralistic world posits that the religious attitude of Westerners has largely become a matter of existential choice403 and, as Dupré asserts, this fits in very well with the concepts of secular economic consumerism and immanent humanism.404

Further, in today’s globalized, privatised and modern world, so ravaged by consumerism and work demands, stress and loneliness, peoples’ spirits are starving.405 Economic consumerism dictates to us what it deems as really necessary for our lifestyles, what we really need, and drives us into lonely and early graves as it induces us to want things — because we would “rather have, than be”.406 Yet, neighbourliness is far from an obsolete concern and people are thirsting for the comforts of neighbourhood and community. Individualism and economic consumerism have not assuaged their thirst. In the future, the community beyond the front door will need to be part of our lives more than ever — not just for individual wellbeing, but for society as a whole.407

Also, in the current world, ‘spirituality’ has become part of popular parlance. It gains its increased currency from a heightened need to find a satisfying meaning for life, for something to ground threatened personal identity. In earlier times, popular devotions satisfied the spiritual needs of most Catholics, except for the few who felt called to higher forms of prayer. Last century, the term ‘spirituality’ was coined to address peoples’ raised expectations for a set of beliefs to give more personal guidance to their lives. However, in current usage, the emphasis seems to be placed more on personal fulfilment, as aptly postulated by Alan Gewirth:

Spiritual values consist in ideals of moral, intellectual, and aesthetic excellence. They involve that one goes beyond one’s narrow personal

402 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 133, 137, 138, 140, 142 and 143.
403 Ibid., 142 and 143.
404 Ibid., 133; and cf. Cartesian Thought, 33–35.
405 Dupré, Metaphysics and Culture, 21.
406 Dupré Transcendent Selfhood, 16 and 17.
407 Dupré Religious Mystery, 137.
concerns of self-aggrandisement, that one in effect surrenders oneself to the pursuit of goodness, truth, and beauty as these are embodied in justice, rights, and compassion; in scientific inquiry; in artistic accomplishment and aesthetic appreciation; and in other realms of value.408

It is values such as these which, when integrated in an intelligible plan of life, are said to provide ‘spirituality’. However, immanent humanism, the norm of this secular age, has changed the perspective of spirituality. Affluence, permissiveness and several other phenomena of our contemporary social pattern also have helped to create a new atmosphere of change. In this new atmosphere, Dupré argues that ‘the having replaces the being’.409

Fortunately for the Catholic Church, the Second Vatican Council was called and addressed an enormous number of challenging issues, and ignited much needed attention to cultural changes. Yet, in addressing and finding solutions to this Topic 4, there is still a long way to go, and the Church is certainly in need of the help of the Holy Spirit to enlighten and assist it on that journey.

In the present economic climate, peoples’ relationships and activities are controlled practically, for human purposes only, by the human person’s mind rather than God. Additionally, the difficulties and tensions of contemporary affluent societies render precarious our sense of God’s presence and purpose in our lives. The loss of connectedness not only affects our relationship with others, it also extends to a loss of contact with tradition and communal meaning. In particular, both in personal and public life today, there is little space for the ‘sacred’ to appear, principally because our area of concern has been so drastically absorbed by material interests. As Frank Farrell says, modern consumer societies tend to produce a ‘self’ that is ‘ambiguous in its commitments and sceptical about global programs, mobile in its employment of vocabularies and weak in its commitments to any of them’.


409 Dupré, *Transcendent Selfhood*, 16 and 17.

Discussion — Responding to the secular view that ‘economic consumerism’ is everything

The Christian dilemma in this topic is to find a way to negate the current general acceptance of the concept that economic consumerism is everything because, therein, peoples’ spirits are being starved through this style of ‘spirituality’ without God.

Dupré desires to have people shape their lives around a Christian, rather than a secular, dimension. The circumstance indispensable to this result is to help bring about a conversion to an attitude in which our focus is on ‘the being’ (i.e., becoming fully human persons, living in the ‘image’ of Christ in today’s world and destined for eternity with God in the life hereafter), rather than on ‘the having’ (i.e., desiring and accumulating earthly capital and worldly possessions, now, because of today’s promoted needs for instant gratification and happiness, as well as simply wanting worldly goods and things for their own sake, immediately, with no thought of any life hereafter). To effect this, Dupré advocates that we change our society to one in which, once again, ‘the being replaces the having’.411 As Chmielewski affirms:

Human creativity actively fashions and moves society. Dupré realizes the inadequacy of focusing simply on economic activity or a rendering of all other social processes and artifacts to a dependence on it.412

Thus, Dupré’s sought transformation in our culture necessitates the individual finding a way to go outside the narrow confines set by today’s economic consumerism — these limitations brought about by competitiveness, self-focus, frenetic lifestyles, ambiguity, scepticism and redescription. Such a change demands that we centre peoples’ relationships around God’s love, values and purposes, rather than around current ontological values designed by humans for human purposes only.

Moreover, the present consumerist-ravaged society, with its accent on individualistic needs, highlights the problem that peoples’ spirits are starving for the security of community because, as human beings, we are not simply individuals, we are social. Nowadays, the value of community has greatly diminished, and this situation has to be reversed. To bring this about, we must recognise and stress that to belong, to be loved, to be accepted and to have someone to depend on, requires that every

411 Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 17.
person needs to have a ‘place’ where one is known and accepted for who one is. The current individualistic and consumeristic climate has not assuaged peoples’ desire for such a place. Yet, unfortunately, many are seeking fulfilment but settling for abundance, the price being the disintegration of community and of self. Our thinking must be altered — we need community and community spirit, and this can develop and grow in the most unlikely of places. Then, through this change in direction, and aided by a renewed spirituality, people will grow to understand and realise that the being is more important than the having.

Jean Vanier postulates:

Society is the place where we learn to develop our potential and become competent. Belonging, on the other hand, is the place where we can find a certain emotional security. It is the place where we learn a lot about ourselves, our fears, our blockages, and our violence, as well as our capacity to give life; it is the place where we grow to appreciate others, to live with them, to share and work together, discovering each one’s gifts and weaknesses.413

He stresses that a key aspect of building healthy communities is belonging, and he describes four critical signs of belonging: 1) an openness to the weak and needy in our own groups; 2) groups that empower others to make their own decisions; 3) remaining focused on what unites us rather than what separates us; and 4) the community’s ability to recognise its own errors and flaws and to seek help from outside the group.414 Then, to assist us develop our spirituality in today’s humanistic and economic consumerist atmosphere, he teaches us four ways of building communities through belonging. Firstly, we need to learn to forgive those who hurt or reject us. Secondly, we should learn to accept those who point out our errors and mistakes. Thirdly, we have to discover how to become close to those who are weaker, more vulnerable, sick or grieving; and fourthly, we must learn to appreciate others. This learning is both a private discourse and a public concourse.415

413 Jean Vanier, ‘Becoming Human’, NNC 2004 in The Experience Designer Network: How Do We Learn the Things We Value Most?, 1, (hereafter ‘Vanier, Becoming Human’).

414 Vanier, Becoming Human, 1 and 2.

415 ibid.
To become more spiritual, we have to leave behind our official religious selves (i.e., to leave behind the Pharisee that lurks in all of us), because Jesus told us we have to leave behind our whole self. Hence, Christian spirituality must start from conviction and commitment. Church attendance then follows, so that we can worship as a community, share in the sacramental life of the Church and receive guidance, support and encouragement. Unfortunately, in former times, some of us got this back to front and hoped that, once in Church, people would find God even though they were not committed; while making sure our Churches were not empty, we didn’t mind having empty people in them! Therefore, today, we need a spirituality based on what perhaps it always has been — that which is more central to human experience than religion. Religion flounders if it is not based on a deep spirituality. While law and duty are important, a relationship with a God of unconditional love, who is both a father and a mother to us, must come first. To develop this relationship, we need to ‘let go’ of our earthly trappings and meditate (i.e., seek God in the stillness and silence beyond words and thoughts), and this requires our commitment and patience together with the grace of the Holy Spirit.416

To this end, we should firstly promote, as human beings, and as Barbara Bowe suggests, a spirituality as being ‘the human response to the transcendent reality, regardless of how we might name or experience that reality’417 (especially with our non-Christian friends) and, then, as Christians, promote spirituality as being the dynamic term that points to a lived experience of the mystery (God) in the day-to-day. In so doing, we will show others how we live our lives in response to that Ultimate Reality. Further, Dupré insists that we need to tie in our spirituality with religion which, as John Haldane argues, ‘offers us both an explanation of, and a solution to, the meaning of history and the meaningfulness of life’.418 As Augustine, in his Confessions, said: ‘… for You have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You’. This task, as Ormond Rush postulates,

… requires us forming a sacramental imagination which will be a necessary complement to our liturgical rituals and symbols. This formation must include, as its primary art, the art of spiritual attentiveness in our daily lives. Therefore, we first must ascertain the need for a


Christian Spirituality and then re-awaken it in our culture so that it is, or becomes, a Spirituality of the ordinary.\(^{419}\)

Effecting these measures will provide us with what we need more than ever before, and that is, as Dupré insists:

Today, we need exemplars of our Christian Spirituality — people who know how to live their faith and demonstrate such, by example, within the context of the complexity of modern living; we need ‘SAINTS’.\(^ {420}\)

If Dupré’s desire in this topic is achieved, people will grow to understand that living is about what we get, whereas life is about what we give.

6. **Topic 5: The antagonistic forces of the ‘bastard’ dualisms of faith and reason/nature and grace rule today’s immanent humanistic world**

The process of cultural disintegration, that began with the modern era and has continued unabated down to today, has given us a new awareness of what has now become a cultural crisis — objectivism, subjectivism and dualism.\(^ {421}\)

In ancient times, there were accepted syntheses of the dualisms of faith and reason, and nature and grace. Later, Aquinas’ and other philosophers’ thoughts led to a re-ignition of these dualisms, inherited from medieval thought, in Christian thinking,\(^ {422}\) and so, Dupré argues that faith/revelation and reason, and nature and grace were late medieval constructions.\(^ {423}\) The Protestant Reformation and Luther, in the 16th Century, both argued against the dualistic system and its thought, and insisted that such were wrong.\(^ {424}\) Then in the 18th Century, Kant’s Copernican revolution in the practical order perceived an opportunity to extend the realm of certainty beyond the rigorous limits which he had set to the domain of objective knowledge.\(^ {425}\) Hence, in today’s

---

419 Ormond Rush, ‘How Liturgy has Changed’, an article in *The Catholic Leader*, 14/12/03, 9 (hereafter ‘Rush, Liturgy has Changed’).


424 ibid., 171.

425 Dupré, *Dubious Heritage*, 1 and 2.
fragmented culture, dominated by the human person’s mind and that mind’s objectivism, mutually opposing forces, rather than united ones, rule secular thought in relation to the aforesaid ‘bastard’ dualisms.

In the aftermath of Dupré and people like Marcel Gauchet, several options were put forward by theologians in attempts to help us to go beyond these ‘bastard’ dualisms — one such option being Radical Orthodoxy, and out of writings about it, was coined the adjective ‘bastard’. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock and Graham Ward, when talking of the option of Radical Orthodoxy, say:

And just how is it radical? Radical, first of all, in the sense of a return to patristic and medieval roots, and especially to the Augustinian version of all knowledge as divine illumination — a notion which transcends the modern bastard dualisms of faith and reason, grace and nature. Radical, second, in the sense of seeking to deploy this recovered vision systematically to criticize modern society, culture, politics, art, science and philosophy with an unprecedented boldness. But radical in yet a third sense of realizing that via such engagements we do also have to rethink the tradition.426

The result of all the above was that the antagonistic forces of these dualisms led to uncertainty and loss of truth, and these losses still prevail in today’s secular world, wherein, as Dupré asserts, ‘the controversial replaces the true’.427

Unlike Dupré, Alasdair MacIntyre, in his analysis of contemporary reactions to modernity, argues that our continued use of basic notions such as ‘good’, ‘right’ and ‘obligation’, with reference to human behaviour, becomes the equivalent of Polynesian taboos.428 Unfortunately, such controversial thinking tends to leave us with an excessively pessimistic assessment of today’s attitude to the foundations of morality and what is true.

As always in discussion, definition, or the respective debating parties’ common understanding of the matter being discussed, is paramount. Retaining these thoughts, we look at the brief histories and today’s perspectives of, and discussions about


427 Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 16; and Dupré, Religious Mystery, 19–40; and also Timothy Radcliffe, ‘Christianity in Europe’ in Faith in Europe Lecture Series, Wednesday 27 April, 2005, 2 and 4, (hereafter ‘Radcliffe, Christianity in Europe’). http://www.rcdow.org.uk/includes/dow_content_print.asp?content_ref=414 (date accessed 15/6/05).

responding to, the antagonistic forces of these two ‘bastard’ dualisms through Dupré’s, and others’, analyses of each.

A. Faith and reason

(i) A brief history, incorporating today’s perspective, of this dualism

The faith talked about in this thesis is a revealed faith, given to Christians through grace from an infinite God and, so, for the purposes of this work, pagans are deemed to have no faith. Also, when discussing human faith, it should be borne in mind that faith in humans does not always lead to the truth. Faith is our human response to our encounter with God, where, through those religious experiences of being drawn into God’s presence, we are invited to make a commitment, and so be received into his company. Thus, as Wolfgang Beinert says, we can infer that faith is humanity’s reception of God’s revelation, which is the object of faith, and that both faith and revelation are the foundations of Christian theology.\(^{429}\) Also, Roger Haight defines human faith as a human response and commitment,\(^{430}\) a form of reason,\(^{431}\) and an act and attitude of human spiritual freedom involving conscientious thought.\(^{432}\) He also insists that the power of imagination in faith plays a most important role.\(^{433}\)

Christian thinking about God has varied and brought about the shift, over time, from ‘proofs’ of God’s existence to paths or ways towards the Divine. Nowadays, we do not deal so much with logic in this matter but, rather, with classic ways towards God. Thus, the polemics previously waged against Kant in Neo-Scholasticism have largely become irrelevant, regardless of whether what is involved in proofs of the existence of God are strict ‘proofs’ or mere ‘postulates’. Clearly, on the one hand, an exact-natural-scientific-proof of God’s existence would be a contradiction, as God is not an object of empirical knowledge. On the other hand, the appeal to God as a postulate does not exactly prove the existence of God.


\(^{430}\) Roger Haight, *Dynamics of Theology*, (Mliwah/New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 218, (hereafter ‘Haight, Dynamics of Theology’).

\(^{431}\) ibid., 227.

\(^{432}\) ibid.

\(^{433}\) ibid., 24 and 25.
Aquinas, departing from the neoplatonic/Augustinian tradition of the Middle Ages without falling into the mistaken excesses of the commentator Ibn Rushd, employed rational argumentation, in general, and the metaphysical and epistemological teachings of Aristotle, in particular, to develop his synthesis of faith and reason. Harry Gensler cites three important matters about Aquinas’ argument. Firstly, he sees reason and faith as two forms of knowing. ‘Reason’ covers what we can know by experience and logic alone. From reason, we can know that there is a God and that there is only one God; these truths about God are accessible to anyone by experience and logic alone, apart from any special revelation from God. Secondly, ‘faith’ covers what we can know by God’s special revelation to us (which comes through the Bible and Christian tradition). By faith we can know that God came into the world through Jesus Christ, and that God is triune (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). These truths about God cannot be known by reason alone. Thirdly, faith builds on reason. Since faith and reason are both ways of arriving at truth — and since all truths are harmonious with each other — faith is consistent with reason. If we understand faith and reason correctly, there will be no conflict between what faith tells us and what reason tells us. In line with Aquinas’ thought, John Locke (1632–1704AD), as Dupré says, argued that Gospel interpretations based on reason alone were not contradictory of revelation.

In the late Middle Ages, contrasting with Scholasticism’s understanding of reason as being created in the image of God and so being able to grasp the divine reasons for the plan of creation and salvation, there arose a deep scepticism with regard to the theological possibilities of knowing (e.g., as in Nominalism), which also influenced the Reformation. Modern reason established itself, first of all, as the arbiter in the controversies between the confessions (religion of reason). Then, however, under the influence of the exact sciences, it came more and more into contradiction with revealed faith and with faith in God in general. As Georg Langemeyer says: ‘Reason is the human ability to think and know. It starts out with sensory perception and operates in the medium of language.’ This means that there is the need

---


435 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 131.

today to look deeply into linguistic discrepancies, because they often reflect real philosophical and theological differences; yet, we must, as well, be aware that different writers’ terminologies may simply create more apparent than real conflicts.

Nevertheless, the relationship between faith and reason, which became the central theme of theology in the 19th Century, continues on into today.

Vatican I (1869–70), took an explicit stance on the relationship between faith and reason: ‘(a) There is a difference between knowledge from faith and knowledge from reason; (b) Even the knowledge from faith cannot completely understand God’s essence and saving work; they remain a mystery; and (c) Nevertheless, ultimately there can be no contradiction between faith and reason, because God is the origin of both’. 437

Vatican II (1962–65) differed from Vatican I in that there was a basic shift from a propositionalist, intellectualist notion of faith to a personalist notion of faith concerning God’s self-communication and humanity. It approached revelation in terms of faith and history (as compared with Vatican 1 above, which approached revelation in terms of faith and reason) and, influenced by the personalist philosophies of modern times, as well as the ‘history of salvation’ approaches to the Bible, it teaches a personal and soteriological view of revelation. Aspects concerning reason were barely touched. 438

Also, the antitheist trends originating in the 19th Century have survived into our own times, yet they no longer dominate the religious situation of the present. Today’s atheism has abandoned its original ideal of a purely scientific humanism and no longer seeks or expects an integral worldview from science and, therefore, as Dupré argues: ‘Contemporary humanism is less polemical, more comprehensive, but, also, more thoroughly immanent than of the recent past’. 439

Yet, in Christian theology, there is still confusion surrounding the dualism in this topic. Langemeyer highlights the polemic:

(Today), …theology stands between two fronts. Against a scientifically oriented reason that dominates life in society, it must disclose the aporias

439 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 131.
of a concept of humanity founded upon reason alone. Against an increasingly popular irrational religiosity, it must make clear the religious openness of reason and the necessity of reasoned judgements in matters of faith and in the praxis of faith.440

Further, Marilyn McCord Adams finds Pope John Paul II’s pragmatic influence, in Fides et Ratio, (i.e. we humans have a natural tendency to seek the Truth, to ask ultimate questions, and in so doing to over-reach ourselves, to search for an answer that can be found only in a transcendent source)441 uncompelling. She says that, in this context, submission to authority sheds connotations of intellectual repression, to find its home in the process of human persons entrusting themselves to one another and to a personal God.442 Likewise, the problem of evil is exposed as one that arises for persons and demands a person(s)–to–person(s) solution.443 On the contrary, she argues that evident human incompetence can be a powerful motivator, and that the human need for God’s practical help is dire as well as metaphysically grounded. At the intellectual level, need to know and the frustration of cognitive dissonance join natural curiosity and the intrinsic desirability of the object to sustain effort, despite the fact that our goal is incommensurate with our capacities.444

(ii) Discussion — Responding to the antagonistic forces of this ‘bastard’ dualism of faith and reason

The Christian dilemma in this topic is to nullify the effects of the conflicting forces of this ‘bastard’ dualism and thereby bring back truth and certainty into our lives and world to enable us go beyond the dualism and advance into the future.

Dupré’s desire is to eliminate the uncertainty and/or the loss of truth caused by this dualism, so as to enable us to advance confidently into the future without the burdensome ‘luggage’ of antagonistic controversies. To effect this, we need a conversion to an attitude in which our focus is on what is true (i.e., living as Christians during this life, in Christ’s image and in truth, and dying

440 Langemeyer, Reason, 569.
441 Pope John Paul II, Fides et Ratio, 1, 5, 25 and 30.
442 ibid., 31-33.
443 ibid., 76.
in God’s love — the certainty of the beatific vision in the life hereafter), rather than on what is controversial (i.e., living for human-based controversial arguments and earthly gains only, amid the uncertainty and the loss of truth in today’s immanent, humanistic, secular society, and so dying without any concern for the hereafter — both situations brought about through secular driven controversies surrounding, and connected with, this dualism). In short, there is a need for a synthesis of philosophy and theology, which can be done, as Dupré postulates, by combining metaphysics and culture, as canvassed in Topic 1. Then, as Dupré asserts, once again ‘the true will replace the controversial’.446

Dupré’s analyses about faith and reason also include implications in relation to our understandings about revelation and truth. These need to be considered and addressed to help overcome the problems caused by this dualism’s antagonistic forces.

Concerning revelation, as David Hart states, Dupré considers the question of how revelation can unfold within history, within the horizons provided by the varying cultural conditions of different ages, without thereby losing its historical particularity: experience and interpretation are inseparable from one another, he argues, and both continuously develop over time.447 Dupré suggests that we speak of ‘the original revelation event’ as entailing a unity of interpretation and experience in which the ‘primary interpretation enjoys the same privileged status as the experience itself, since it forms an essential part of it’.448 Human experience, as the reflective self-understanding of the experience, does justice to the contingent cultural elements and the divine givenness of revelation alike.

Thus, Dupré argues, in his philosophical reflection on Schillebeeckx’s theology, that the latter’s strong assertion that the revelation is not a message but ‘an experience that becomes a message’, does not take sufficient account of this given, fundamental interpretation. For Dupré, since revelation has also found its way into the New Testament expression, ‘it is intrinsically, not

445 Dupré, Metaphysics & Culture, 71.
446 Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 17.
448 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 117.
secondarily, a universe of discourse, divine expression and, hence, message’. His position proposes that, while he retains Schillebeeckx’s basic insight that revelation is interpretative experience, it qualifies the latter’s occasional emphasis of experience over expression. Dupré insists that Schillebeeckx’s forms of interpretative expression (i.e., the models, concepts, ideologies, expectations) belong to the structuring rather than to the receiving of the actual experience. But, Dupré argues that the original core of revelation consists of both the experience and its given possibility (i.e., its interpretative orientation) and, given this, that primary interpretation enjoys the same privileged status as the experience itself, since it forms an essential part of it. He further asserts that the original unity between experience and primary, expressed interpretation does not entail a need for a literalist reading of Scripture, for the original revelation (his preferred terminology denoting the objective as well as the subjective element) is from the beginning both totally, culturally conditioned and God-given. He suggests that experience itself is by its very nature immanently human and, hence, as much historically conditioned as its structuring and reflective interpretation. Thus, he postulates that, on a fundamental level, interpretation and experience are one.449 While agreeing that Schillebeeckx’s masterly analysis of the various levels of revelation has given it a new direction, Dupré insists that, instead of a single, privileged Jesus experience at the beginning, he would rather posit a continuing process of interpreted experience. With respect to later generations, the first stage of this process was not completed until it was codified, long after most eyewitnesses had died, in what later became the canonical term. The process would continually pass through new experiences and interpretations, all of which remain both subjectively and objectively dependent upon the original, interpreted experience.

The above, when considered in relation to transcendence, as Hart says, seems to demand an answer as to whether religious meaning is a message or merely a construction. Hart insists that, for Dupré, religious meaning is a message, and that the great promise Dupré finds in phenomenology in its developments after Edmund Husserl is the possibility it opens up of supplanting a sterile correspondence model of truth with the more ancient model of truth as disclosure, as the radiance by which the object of reflection really shows itself — gives itself — to the subjective intention. Such a model of truth makes room for the notion of revelation, for the idea of a transcendence that declares itself,

that is Word and light and meaning, appearing gratuitously, even if it does so necessarily under the forms provided by a human creativity. Even if every religious truth comes to consciousness as a construction, a mythic, symbolic, and ritual invention, it also comes as a gift that — appearing within the elaborate architecture of the religious act — still surpasses intention, and overflows the understanding of the one who receives it.\textsuperscript{450} As Dupré further argues,

\ldots in an age when religion can no longer count on the support of the entire culture, the emphasis on experience becomes essential for its survival. To perceive the meaning of religion one must, even in the midst of one’s secular experience, find intimations of a transcendent mystery.\textsuperscript{451}

Hence, he agrees with Edward Schillebeeckx who says:

Therefore to ask people to accept the Christian revelation before they have learnt to experience it as a definition of their own life is an impossible and useless demand.\textsuperscript{452}

Concerning truth, Hart postulates that

being is an analogical and expressive medium, whose structures of meaning coincide in the ever more eminent, always openly manifest, and necessarily interdependent transcendentals of beauty, goodness, truth, and unity.\textsuperscript{453}

He states that Dupré depicts religious truth as a kind of deepening of vision, a constant conversation towards Being’s transcendent depth of truth and goodness. One is ‘in the truth’ before one can simply ‘know’ the truth; it is a way of being rather than simply a way of conceiving.\textsuperscript{454}

In addition, we learn from Todd Breyfogle’s highlighting of Dupré’s understanding of truth as disclosure and what that implies. For Breyfogle, the understanding of truth as disclosure stands over and against the modern conflation of experience and reason as separate from faith, and he insists that such a conflation has profound consequences for all religious traditions which stress the moral or ontological aspects of truth as opposed to the cognitive

\textsuperscript{450} Hart, \textit{Journal Review}, 55–57.

\textsuperscript{451} Dupré, \textit{Religious Mystery}, 107.


\textsuperscript{454} Hart, \textit{Journal Review}, 55–56.
elements. ‘Truth refers to being rather than to knowledge’. Yet, the predominant modes of understanding the truth claims of religion are decidedly cognitive. Assessing the strengths and weakness of ‘correspondence’ and ‘coherence’ theories of truth, he asserts that Dupré ultimately stresses the power of truth understood in terms of ontological disclosure. ‘Allowing things to be, to disclose themselves in the open, is the very essence of freedom’. This freedom also bears its particular authority: ‘the reality that we experience — in this case, the transcendent reality as communicated in revelation — defines the nature of the experience and endows it with its own authority — not the other way around’. Only disclosure, Dupré argues, is best suited to understanding the nature of religious truth because it is less tainted by modern subjectivism and so remains open to the experience of presence.

However, while generally in accord with Dupré’s thoughts about faith and reason, Werner Dannhauser suggests that there might be two facets of his work which could need rethinking. Firstly, ‘Dupré may underestimate the fragility of the synthesis whose break-up he chronicles’. And secondly, ‘At times, however, one must wonder whether such antitheses as faith and reason or Athens and Jerusalem, can really be synthesized. Very often what looks at first sight like a synthesis turns out to conceal the dominance of one or another element’.

Timothy Radcliffe asserts that our society has lost confidence in the power of reason, except perhaps scientific reason. Modern Europeans do not trust that through reflection and argument we can discover what is the meaning of human existence, and what is the purpose of our lives.

Over the years, many philosophers and theologians have proffered their attempts to surmount the controversies emanating from this dualism of faith and reason. We shall look at the following three.

455 Breyfogle, Review, 1 and 2.
456 ibid., 1 and 2.
457 ibid., 2.
459 ibid.
We can take up Marcel Gauchet’s challenge (i.e., between either a regulated revival of the old Western Churches or allow the present elimination/restriction of the Church’s social function to finally erode the possibility of any belief). However, while religion goes in Gauchet’s sense, the problems it was intent on solving still remain.461

Charles Taylor articulates that religion, as a species of all-embracing culture, pre-empted all those difficult questions about who we are and where we fit in and what is the meaning of things. With the end of this culture, these questions now cannot be avoided and each individual is faced with them. The need for a spirituality thus still remains, indeed is much greater if anything, with the culture no longer providing one ready-made. Taylor continues and says:

but whereas spirituality was once a by-product of religion it is now the other way around, with religion now remaining very much as a personal option and in the service of spirituality, in the service of people finding their way in a world now constituted outside religion itself.462

Indeed, Gauchet himself comments:

Furthermore, why exclude the possibility of a regulated renewal of the jaded Old World Churches which would deliver them from their demons of authority, a conversion that would give them strength and stamina by allowing them to regroup on the basis of the original collusion between Christianity’s spirit and the West’s destiny.463

However, Gauchet then continues and so leaves the question undecided when he says:

But can we imagine that in the long run the disappearance of the ‘infrastructure’ would not have any effect on the ‘superstructure’? Should not the disappearance of the basic social function of the religious provoke a slow but inexorable fading or erosion of the very possibility of a belief?464

Thus, Gauchet’s approach appears inadequate to overcome the challenge presented in this topic.465

461 Moses, Options, 10.
462 Charles Taylor in the foreword to Gauchet, Disenchantment.
463 Gauchet, Disenchantment, 164.
464 ibid.
465 Moses, Options, 11.
In looking at Radical Orthodoxy (i.e., it as being revived in a suitably retrieved, corrected and modernised form), and acknowledging that it is already operating in a post Blumenberg and post Dupré space, we learn that its members’ scholarly time is deployed in two directions. One, towards a critical recovery of the past in the tradition of the great Christian critics of the Enlightenment; and two, towards a critical, boldly and explicitly theological overcoming of the inadequacy of secular rationality in the present. Yet, in spite of the orthodoxy, or even because of it, they have no time for either Protestant Biblicism or post-tridentine Catholic positivist authoritarianism, and argue that

...both Protestant Biblicism and post-tridentine Catholic positivist authoritarianism are seen as aberrant results of theological distortions already dominant before the early modern period.466

Further, in line with Dupré’s thoughts on this Topic 5, Taylor argues that the link between nomination and the rise of mechanistic science as also being the growing force of the new instrumental stance of human agency467 He, too, postulates that nominalism contributed to the development of a clear distinction between nature and supernature, immanent order and transcendent reality, which was an essential intellectual background of modern secularity. For him, the instrumental stance, in turn, contributed to the new turn inward as a base for a triumphant grasp of the world, intellectually and practically. He asserts that all these helped generate the powerful, modern ontic dualism: Mind over against a mechanistic, meaning-shorn universe, without internal purposes such as the older cosmos had.468 Moreover, all these together — science, mechanism, the instrumental stance — contributed to disenchantment and the rise of secularity in this context.469 Therefore, we need to understand religious/spiritual life today in all its different thrusts, resistances and reactions (e.g. to discipline, homogenization), Taylor insists that to explain religion today we need both “Intellectual Deviation” (originally a move within Christian doctrine, which deals with changes in theoretical understanding, mainly among learned and related élites) and Reform Master Narrative (which deals with the thrust to complete the Axial revolution and strives to end the post–Axial equilibrium [i.e. the balance

466 Milbank, Pickstock & Ward, Radical Orthodoxy, 2.


468 Taylor, A Secular Age, 773; cf. Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 3, 6, 10 and 152; see also Milbank, Pickstock and Ward, Radical Orthodoxy, 2.

469 Taylor, A Secular Age, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 773; cf. Dupré, Religious Mystery, 133; and cf. Dupré Religion and the Rise of Modern Culture, 114 and 115; and also cf. Dupré, Modern Idea, 12.
and complimentarity between pre- and post-Axial elements in all higher civilizations. This Reform, which demanded that everyone be a real 100 percent Christian, not only disenchants, but disciplines and re-orders life and society. Along with civility, this makes for a notion of moral order which gives a new sense to Christianity, and the demands of faith. It induces an anthropocentric shift, and hence a break-out from the monopoly of Christian faith.\textsuperscript{470}

However, it remains to be seen whether Radical Orthodoxy will be able, by itself, to overcome the current dilemma in this topic.\textsuperscript{471}

Continental philosophy postulates a recovery of a sense of transcendence with God as gift (e.g., as espoused by Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Derrida, Lévinas and Marion) and human life as poised 'in the between' (e.g., as promulgated by William Desmond and Ignace Verhack). While this option overlaps and possesses much sympathy with Radical Orthodoxy, it comes from a different direction and has no particular intention of reviving the patristic and medieval way of doing things. Despite its presence in Belgium, France, the USA and Australia, it is most difficult to follow\textsuperscript{472} and, as a result of this and because of the uncertainty attached to it, it also remains to be seen whether Continental philosophy will be able, by itself, to overcome the dualism in this topic.\textsuperscript{473}

Adams' response, to the challenge in this Topic 5, suggests that, in addressing the sceptical realism concerning faith and reason in collaboration, we need to remember, when searching for the truth (and, therefore, trying to remove the antagonistic forces in this dualism), that the spirit of God surrounds us all the while and, as such, our plight cannot be wholly desperate, because the One (truth) we seek is the One in whom we live and move and have our being.\textsuperscript{474}

Radcliffe's response is that Christianity must accompany pilgrims as they journey, seeking the good, the true and the beautiful. This clearly includes helping them overcome the antagonistic forces in the dualism of faith and reason. It is not enough just to talk about them. Otherwise our words will be

\textsuperscript{470} Taylor, \textit{A Secular Age}, 774-776.

\textsuperscript{471} Cf. Moses, \textit{Options}, 8.

\textsuperscript{472} ibid., 12.

\textsuperscript{473} ibid., 11 and 12.

\textsuperscript{474} Adams, \textit{Sceptical Reason}; 18; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 102–105, 108 and 109, 115 and 116, 122 and 125–133.
empty. We must work hard to make the Church evidently a place of abundant freedom, with a passion for truthfulness, and a delight in beauty.\textsuperscript{475}

Over the centuries, various typologies of faith and reason were proffered, and today theologians may be divided into three main categories. First, those who see faith and reason as mutually supportive (i.e., in harmony) — but even this category requires a further distinction between those who regard faith as the higher form of knowledge perfecting reason, and others who look upon faith as needing to be perfected by reason. Second, those who see them as antagonistic (i.e., conflicting) — this category also requires a further distinction between those who hold that faith should be accepted against reason, and others who prefer reason when it conflicts with faith. And third, those who see them as pertaining to separate spheres (i.e., autonomous).

Yet, such typologies are of limited value because the various theologians and authors do not share a common understanding of the meaning of either faith or reason. The various views of faith indicate, as Dulles points out, that it makes considerable difference whether faith is seen as an assent to doctrine, a unitive experience, a heartfelt trust in Christ, or a commitment to a certain style of action, especially in the light of the nature of faith as discussed earlier.\textsuperscript{476} Similarly, the various views of reason highlight how different theological schools envisage different operations: Platonists and Augustinians have in mind a kind of contemplative or intuitive reason (‘higher reason’), which makes contact with eternal truth and sees all reality in relation to that truth; the Aristotelians and positivists generally refer to discursive or inferential reason (‘lower reason’), which can be either inductive or deductive. Again, a further distinction is required within this group — some inferentialists are about demonstrating the truth of revelation before the bar of reason, while others are concerned with detecting falsehood and reconstructing Christian doctrine on the basis of right reason. Many modern scholars distinguish between ‘explicit reason’ (which consciously follows the rules of logic) and ‘informal or tacit reason’ (which is guided by the ‘reasons of the heart’), while Hegelian exponents regard reason as the mind’s ability to fathom a comprehensive synthesis of everything that becomes known in the course of the ongoing historical process, a synthesis that anticipates the final consummation of the


process itself — faith for them is a vague and approximate anticipation of the definitive system achieved by true philosophy. The variety of views of reason are further complicated by the fact that some theologians postulate different states of human existence: some understand it as a power belonging to nature in the pure state (e.g., when Thomists’ speak of reason in contrast to faith, they are primarily talking about the relation between the natural and the supernatural — for them, reason is a cipher for natural knowledge, faith is for supernatural knowledge; others understand it as a capacity of fallen nature: still others understand it as a faculty illumined and elevated by grace [e.g., when Lutherans talk of reason they are generally speaking of the cognitive capacities of fallen human nature apart from God’s word of forgiveness and grace — by faith they mean a trusting commitment to God as revealed in Jesus Christ]).

Finally, we should not feel especially bound to this or the next dualism, or indeed, as Dupré argues, resign ourselves to the current fragmented worldview, though there may well be certain parts of modernity we wish to retain.477 As he further says, quoting Blondel’s ‘necessary’ hypothesis: ‘If we have to reject something because it is necessary in conscience, we must do it’. 478

B. Nature and grace

(i) A brief history, incorporating today’s perspective, of this dualism

Dupré argues that early Greek philosophy defined the terms in which Western thought was to formulate transcendence. The Ionian search for a ground of nature beyond its appearance, as well as the Pythagorean distinction between a principle of intelligibility and the reality it renders intelligible, made the relation from the more fundamental to the less fundamental an unavoidable issue. Classical Greek philosophy eventually resolved it by means of the ‘form principle’ — the form resided within the appearing objects of which it constituted the intelligible essence. Yet, as a determining factor, it also surpassed them. Plato, in his dialogue ‘Parmenides’, presents the great metaphysician laying out the terms of a problem of virtually inextricable complexity. Forms can be neither only transcendent nor only immanent. They must be both, and Plato even

477 Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 16; and Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 3–5; and also Dupré, Religious Mystery, 131–133.

478 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 6.
criticises his own earlier attempts to meet that condition. His deep reflection set a dialectic in motion which, via Plotinus and Proclus, uninterruptedly continued for well over a thousand years.479 Dupré asserts:

One may think that Aristotle had disposed of Plato’s solution when he placed the main principle of interpretation — the ideal forms — within the real, while keeping only the ultimate justification of appearance — the unmoved mover — beyond the appearing reality. Yet, the relation between reality and its transcendent foundation is far more intimate than the unmoved mover of the ‘Metaphysics’ suggests. Even in his mature writings, Aristotle refers to a divine presence in nature. In ‘De Anima’, a divine agent intellect illuminates the mind by its active indwelling in the soul. It unites the soul with God in intellectual contemplation.480

Neoplatonic theology was introduced into the Western tradition by the converted rhetor Marcus Victorinus (285–368AD).481 Augustine, being its principal advocate, saw in it the answer to the Manichean dualism he had once embraced. For him, God’s image consisted not in a copy but in a presence, and he built his idea of the archetype on the basis of its human image. This gave his, and subsequent Western, theology a more psychological character. Yet, like the Greeks, he considered the same image to have been both created and redeemed, which in part led to his laying the groundwork for the later separation between the order of nature and that of redemption. Partially, too, this was due to the more moral and medicinal view of grace that, from the beginning, had dominated the Latin tradition.482

After the 4th Century, many Christian writers, using Platonic categories, claimed that nature owed its entire being to a free act of God. Yet, despite the Christian concern to safeguard creation’s integrity, Platonism left a clear mark on its early formulations, in so far as it located the image of God (God’s proper dwelling place) primarily in the mind. The body, though not deprived of traces of the divine, belonged to a lower level that often conflicted with the soul’s aspirations. Indeed, it soon came to be held responsible for the inclination to evil.483 Fortunately, Irenaeus (130–200AD), of the Eastern tradition, had firmly ruled out (in the struggle with Gnosticism) such an equation. He taught that whatever came out of God’s hand could not but be intrinsically good, and it had

479 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 167.
480 ibid., 167 and 168.
481 ibid., 169.
482 ibid.
483 ibid., 168.
remained so after the ‘fall’. God’s image in the person survives, for that image consists in a dynamic unfolding of human freedom. Sixth and 7th Century Platonism presented a subtler form of dualism via Maximus Confessor (580–622AD) of the Eastern tradition, with his culmination of the theology of deification as being an exchange of nature between God and ‘man’, wherein ‘man’ is and is called God by grace, while God is and is called ‘man’ by condescension. This idea of deification was never abandoned in the Christian East. According to Vladimir Lossky, as stated by Dupré, nature and grace together constitute one image of God:

Eastern Tradition knows nothing of ‘pure nature’ to which grace is added as a supernatural gift. For it, there is no natural or ‘normal’ grace, since grace is implied in the act of creation itself…. The world, created in order that it might be deified, is dynamic, tending always toward its final end.

Already during the 13th Century, the first signs of the theological dispute concerning the relationship between nature and grace appear. The original context had been epistemological. Scholastics, following Aristotle, considered the order of nature independently of its destiny in grace an adequate object of rational investigation. While Albert and Aquinas had incorporated this semi-independent but abstract field of thinking into the undivided whole of a single theological vision, Avernoist Aristotelians, in various degrees, began to detach the study of nature from that of revelation altogether.

Aquinas’ concept of nature continues to be overdetermined by the category of grace (i.e., independently of grace, nature may be a formal and abstract object of investigation, but it is not a concrete reality in its own right). His ‘nature’ refers to human nature as it concretely exists (i.e., as already integrated within the context of grace but as formally considered independently of what revelation teaches of that context), while the term ‘supernatural’ does not refer to a new order of being added to nature but to the means for attaining the one final end for which the power of nature alone does not suffice. In calling God ‘Agens Supernaturalis’ he distinguishes the order of the Creator from that of creation (in which nature and grace appear together). Nature thereby, becomes the effect of a supernatural agent.

485 ibid., 169.
486 ibid., 171.
487 ibid.
In summarising Aquinas’ thoughts, we learn that grace, this created habit inhering in the soul, is a participation in God, in the very nature of God, in the life of God himself. In this way, elevating is sanctifying.\(^{488}\) Also, as the divine life of God in human beings is not natural to them, it is not part of a person’s substantial nature and, thus, can only be something accidental and not essential to them. Hence, Aquinas stresses that grace is an accidental form in the soul,\(^ {489}\) and he highlights that this accident demonstrates strongly the real effects that God’s love for human beings has on them.\(^ {490}\) This is part of the force of the concept of created love; it becomes something real in human existence itself, even while it remains utterly gratuitous and ‘given’ and a participation in what is other, that is, God’s life.

Comparing Aquinas’ idea of grace with Augustine’s, instead of being understood according to Augustine’s understanding (as the power and force of God working in human personality, in a person’s willing and action), grace began to be thought of in the technical, metaphysical and ontological categories of nature and habit. Rather than being understood in a moral context, in relation to the sin involved in human existence, Aquinas’ grace is looked at ontologically within the context of simply being or being human. Thus, in the period of transition from Augustine to Aquinas, all of Augustine’s basic doctrines were preserved; Aquinas does not deny the working of God in human beings and, in his understanding, it is expressly provided for. This new cosmological context for understanding grace quickly subordinated the problem of human nature in Augustine, but when it was brought up again in the Reformation period, it clashed with Scholastic thoughts. Importantly, the whole language of grace shifted away from existential language (which described grace working as a force in human life and history) at that time, towards the abstract, technical and static language of being — the language of grace prescinded from religious experience.\(^ {491}\)

The 14th Century saw Ockham promote the notion that human nature tends to become an independent entity, rather than being a relational concept

---


\(^{489}\) Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1–11, 110, 2, ad 2.

\(^{490}\) ibid., 1–11, 110, 1.

\(^{491}\) Cf. Haight *Dynamics of Theology*, 57 and 58 (where he talks about the Postulate of Grace), and 58-61 (where he speaks of the Universality of Grace, Grace as God’s love and the presence of God to human existence).
as it had been for Augustine and even for Duns Scotus (whose theology postulated a neutral concept of human nature). As Dupré asserts, Ockham’s position prepared the concept of nature as a self-sufficient reality. His interpretation of the distinction between God’s potentia absoluta (his sovereign power over all creation) and his potentia ordinata (the manner in which he actually exercises that power) overshadowed the previous thoughts of the two being the same power, rather than distinct powers. This distinction also indicated how God’s omnipotence always exceeds what he actually does.492

After Ockham, Nominalist theology transformed the concept of God’s potentia absoluta in two ways. Firstly, it extended its scope beyond previously assumed moral and rational limits (i.e., God’s absolute power came to include all that implies no logical contradiction). Secondly, change occurred when later separation of the potentia absoluta from the potentia ordinata took place, which left it with two independent and successive moments in God’s power, rather than two distinct aspects of the one divine sovereignty. According to this interpretation, God, at a first time, possesses absolute power, which he, in the second, entrusts to secondary causes.493 Thus, while God’s general causality persists throughout, late Nominalism separated two moments that had previously remained united.494 This subverted any mediation in the relation between God and the creature and necessitated a new immediacy.495 In short, direct spiritual experience partly restored a sense of divine immanence that was vanishing from theology.496 Moreover, in this era, Nominalist theology caused the medieval synthesis of Nature and Grace to fall apart and this theological separation led to a naturalism that contributed to the later rise of modern atheism.497

In the 16th Century, theologians tended to take the natura pura (pure nature) to be a full reality in its own right. On the basis of Aristotle’s principle concerning the proportion of ends to means, they declared this nature incapable of any supernatural desire of God. Their theological dualism was complete but

493 ibid., 176 and 177.
494 ibid.
495 ibid., 174.
496 ibid., 176.
remained hidden behind a traditional terminology — ‘natural’ and ‘supernatural’ — whose meaning it subverted. Thus, as Dupré asserts: ‘The medicinal synthesis came to an end, and a dualism between nature and a supernatural realm (grace) solidly entrenched itself in Catholic theology for four centuries’. As a result, there were rises in both natural theology and natural philosophy (i.e., a science of God based exclusively on rational arguments), which tended to bracket all the theological and religious assumptions of the day and detach the realms of nature and faith from each other, while insisting on proving the existence of a Creator of the cosmos independently of any revelation. While natural theology began an earnest attempt to restore to a concept of nature a transcendent orientation that had been severed from it, the fundamental problem was that the new natural theology continued to argue on the basis of God’s immanent presence in nature (both human and cosmic), after having defined nature as an independent, self-sufficient entity. Hence, before the end of the 16th Century, many had lost their optimistic trust in the success of such a dubious enterprise.

Despite their lack of success, natural theologies, especially as espoused by the unorthodox Giordano Bruno and the orthodox but untraditional Nicholas of Cusa, continued their efforts to provide a ‘foundation’ to faith, and tended to form the backbone of the theological rationalism of the modern age. In addition, as the concept of nature lost its transcendent orientation, the assumptions on which natural theology came to be based contained the seeds of late–modern atheism. Instead of the expected new integration of the two kinds of nature and supernature/grace, we find religion becoming naturalised (i.e., becoming part of that closed universe which the new philosophical concepts of nature denoted).

Compared with previous naturalist philosophies (e.g., the School of Chartres), early Renaissance pantheistic and panentheistic mystical philosophies, drawing heavily on neoplatonic and Stoic sources, stressed that

498 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 178.
499 ibid., 178 and 179.
500 ibid., 179–180.
501 ibid., 181.
502 ibid., 182.
divine quality revealed its truth independently of any revelation.  

Thereafter, as Dupré asserts,

... theology lost its hold on a culture whose substance it had once shaped. It became reduced to a scenario among others, with a method and object exclusively its own. Other sciences henceforth could freely ignore it. For the most part modern thinkers readily availed themselves of the opportunity to avoid potentially hazardous and always useless theological controversies.

(ii) **Discussion — Responding to the antagonistic forces of this ‘bastard’ dualism of nature and grace**

The Christian dilemma in this topic is to nullify the effects of the conflicting forces of this ‘bastard’ dualism and, thereby, go beyond it and bring back certainty and truth into our lives and world.

Dupré’s desire is to eliminate the conflicts caused by this dualism, so as to enable us to advance confidently into the future without the burdensome ‘luggage’ of antagonistic controversies. To effect this, we need a conversion to an attitude as was set out in the discussion in the faith and reason section of that topic. This, as also explained therein, encompasses a need for a synthesis of philosophy and theology, which can be effected by Dupré’s earlier recommendation of combining metaphysics and culture. Then, once again, ‘the true will replace the controversial’. Yet, as he says, while the tendency today is to avoid potentially hazardous and always useless theological controversies, we must always be prepared to accept and address the challenges of these conflicts if we are to overcome them.

Emulating Radical Orthodoxy, which also attempts to overcome the controversies within this topic, we, as Moses argues, should try and dispense with both sides of the binary between ‘the positivistic interventionist supernatural’ on the one hand, and the ‘purely natural’ on the other. The former is the notion deployed in the 18th Century deistic definition of miracle,

---

504 Ibid., 189.
but also in a lot of thinking and speaking about faith and reason, and nature and grace. But this notion of supernatural presupposes another notion — that of the purely natural. They are true binary, mirror images; they bleed off each other and they emerged together, in Western Europe only, in the late Middle Ages. Today, there are some indications that this binary is in a process of historical deconstruction, and they seem to transcend the divisions between the learned world and mundane everyday life (e.g., there is a growing phenomenon of religious naturalism crossing the science–religious divide; there are overlapping anti-supernatural theisms; and there are the emergences of ‘spirituality’ and ‘spiritual care’ beyond the religions, particularly in Western cultures). Hence, as Moses postulates, the time has come to dispense with the binary, and ponder where we go from there.509

To assist in this dispensing, we need to address the problem of the relationship between nature and grace. For this purpose, we could draw on the thought of Eugene Te Selle, who declares that grace must be considered at three points.

First, at its origin, grace is the favour of God towards humankind — a free decision of love on their behalf.

Second, grace is the effective communication of this original divine decision to humankind, whether the emphasis falls upon historical events (e.g., as in much of today’s theology), or upon the human words the content of which is heard as revelation and so becomes the power of God for salvation (as in classical Protestantism), or upon a special influence by which God acts inwardly upon human beings (as is usual in Catholic theology). Therefore, whatever the means may be, the original divine decision is effectively communicated to humankind.

And third, considered at its goal, grace is viewed as the foundation of a new relationship of humankind with God and, irrespective of how diversely humanity’s life under grace may be understood, in every case it is looked at as the intended aim of the divine decision and its communication to humankind.510

The critical point of the distinction between nature and grace, Te Selle concludes, is that:

509 Moses, Options, 1 and 2.

Grace opens up a possibility which does not live within the scope of man’s natural powers and is not implied by his being as a man … and this distinction becomes necessary … when grace is understood as not implied by man’s humanity as such.511

This last point is the contribution of 13th Century theology as it is represented in Aquinas.

Looking from another aspect of grace, Haight mounts a strong argument for the demand and need for an indigenous theology, which he says is brought about by teaching history to indigenous people. This makes one aware of the determinants of the past and liberates the present for the future. Since all theology, for him, is an adaption of Christian faith to culture, there is an equal demand to inculturate the theology of grace into specifically modern and contemporary cultures (which includes those indigenous ones).512

Finally, Karl Rahner’s theories about nature and grace have helped us to learn the following.

One, the context for understanding grace today is no longer that of Scholasticism, and Catholic theology is enjoying a new freedom and renaissance.

Two, we can bridge an ontological understanding of grace (as in Scholasticism) and an understanding of grace in personalist terms of encounter — that bridge still remains because grace is basically God’s personal self-communication to persons by quasi-formal causality, obviously derived from Aristotle’s theory of hylomorphism (i.e., the theory of matter and form, material causality and formal causality). Rahner argues that:

If the effects of grace are real, they should be able to be described in the categories of being. It still remains to be seen whether or not a full account of grace can be achieved in phenomenological and personalist categories.513

511 Te Selle, Nature & Grace, 241.


And three, we can overcome the dualism between the natural and supernatural orders and the consequent extrinsicism of previous understandings of grace. In Rahner’s language of grace, the natural and the supernatural orders are radically one. In this sense, he uses the word supernatural to emphasise the distinction between the two orders — the gift quality of gratuitousness of grace and salvation, and the fact that God remains radically transcendent in relation to humanity.\(^{514}\)

As in the faith and reason discussion section of this topic, and in light of the above, we can in this section of the topic also attempt to think of a synthesis of the two elements in this dualism (i.e., hold them as complementary to each other, or hold them in conflict with each other, or hold them as distinct and separate, yet in creative tension). However, in so doing, as we learned from Pope John Paul II (who called his encyclical ‘Faith and Reason’ — not ‘Faith or Reason’), and as enunciated by Anthony English (the latter preferring the synthesis/complementary typology of this dualism), we need to avoid rationalism, fideism and relativism.\(^{515}\)

7. **Topic 6: Religion is no longer essential in today's secular culture**

Dupré clarifies a fundamental principle for the study of religion:

The thinker who has no firsthand acquaintance with the experience on which he reflects tends to invent what he does not know. This usually results in some brand of natural theology which religious man is seldom able to recognize as the object of his worship. It is the sterile habitat of arguments for or against the existence of God.\(^{516}\)

---


As he says: ‘religion which is shorn of its foundations in both faith and revelation becomes an impossible concept’.\textsuperscript{517} So, Dupré reiterates the \textit{a posteriori} (reasoning based on experience) character of religion and faith for the hermeneutic task of the philosophy of religion. If fundamental to each religion is its claims for a self-revealing transcendent reality, then the study of a given religion must be

\ldots in accordance with the rules of its (religion’s) specific nature. Those rules are not spelled out in dogmas or theological theories.\ldots They have to be discovered through a patient analysis of the religious phenomena \textit{as the believer experiences them}.\textsuperscript{518}

Faith and the believer constitute a realm of meaning which cannot be ‘produced’ by the philosopher, any more than any other such realm. But a caution Dupré adds — philosophy is rightfully jealous of its autonomy:

No philosopher can allow to see his science reduced to the role of a handmaid of theology. If it is one thing to have philosophy reflect upon a preexisting experience such as the religious activity; it is another thing to make it dependent upon an established system of thought.\textsuperscript{519}

When Dupré proposes two rules by which religious assertions are subject to the laws of rational discourse, he sums up the delicate balance between philosophy and faith. One, the basic possibility of a positive affirmation of the transcendent must be rationally justified. And two, no assertions concerning the transcendent are allowed to conflict with the principles of purely rational knowledge.\textsuperscript{520}

As one of today’s leading phenomenologists in religion, Dupré provides a sophisticated account of the phenomenon of religion, with particular emphasis on the role of symbols and religious experience. In all of his nine essays,\textsuperscript{521} he discusses themes that he deems central to a rational understanding of that phenomenon. Yet, he insists that


\textsuperscript{518} Louis Dupré, ‘Faith and Reason’ in \textit{The Philosophy of Brand Blanshard}, ed. Paul Schilpp (La Salle, Ill: Open Court, 1980); 997, (hereafter ‘Dupré, Philosophy of Blanshard’).

\textsuperscript{519} Dupré, \textit{Philosophy & the Religious Perspective of Life}, 7.

\textsuperscript{520} Dupré, \textit{Philosophy of Blanshard}, 1000.

\textsuperscript{521} Dupré, \textit{Religious Mystery — Nine Essays}. 
… without a reflection on what the believer himself regards as the driving motives of his faith — revelation and a divinely granted grace to accept it and to live it — phenomenology never comes to grips with the real act. All living religion centres around a nucleus that its believers consider to be transcendently given. To exclude that nucleus from phenomenological reflection means to abandon what determines the religious attitude.\textsuperscript{522}

Also, Dupré insists that Christian faith demands that we bring, among other things, several presuppositions to the discussion of the phenomenon of religion: 1) today’s secular world needs God to give meaning/value-making to our lives; 2) because of that need, we must look at the possibility of, and action required for, bringing God back into our ‘godless’ society; and 3) by our example (aided by God’s love and grace) we should try and lead others towards God. Hence, because of our faith’s need of its nucleus being transcendentally given to us (i.e., the God as revealed to us through Jesus Christ, and whose presence we experience through the ‘eyes’ of faith), we must look at the possibility of, and the necessity of, bringing the transcendent back into our lives in today’s secular world. Breyfogle stresses that in examining Dupré’s reflections and notions about revelation and religious truth, we saw that the phenomenon we call religion provides both of them to us.\textsuperscript{523}

In addressing the phenomenology\textsuperscript{524} of religious experience, Dupré admits the need for an analytic method in the philosophical study of religion. He believes that a phenomenological description of the primeval experience, as well as a critical interpretation of the nature of symbolic activity, is indispensable and often neglected. Yet, he suggests that too many people today consider the notion of truth in religion to be a simple one, and not basically different from the scientific one. As he says:

\begin{quote}

\textsuperscript{522} Dupré, \textit{Religious Mystery}, 6.

\textsuperscript{523} Breyfogle, \textit{Review}, 3. Here Breyfogle asserts that Dupré stresses ontological rather than epistemological categories of love. ‘Contemplative love transforms the soul’s virtual inexistence in the divine Logos into a living reality. Hence, Breyfogle derives from Dupré’s reflections that, ‘only in active caritas can the encounter with the divine be articulated, and only in the language of love can that encounter begin to be understood’.

\textsuperscript{524} The Editorial Staff and Special Consultants of Macquarie University, NSW, in \textit{The Macquarie Dictionary}, Second Revision, first published, 1981, (Sydney, Australia: The Macquarie Library Pty. Ltd, 1987); 1277, define the term ‘Phenomenology’ as follows:

‘Phenomenology is the science of phenomena as distinguished from ontology or the science of being. It became the school of the German philosopher Edmund Husserl, 1859–1938; this school stresses the careful description of phenomena in all domains of experience without regard to traditional epistemological questions’.
\end{quote}
This may easily lead to mistaken liberalist interpretations of the religious act (which phrase he prefers in lieu of ‘the religious experience’) and its expressions ... (and furthermore), ... the analysis of religious concepts needs to be complemented by a reflection on the religious experience.\textsuperscript{525}

As regards reflection on the religious experience, he concentrates especially on the spiritual experience which, he says, ‘plays such an essential part in the religious act that the act would not survive without it’.\textsuperscript{526}

Hart, in looking beyond reductionism, postulates that all of Dupré’s nine essays are concerned, in some fashion or another, with questions of religious experience: its form, its nature, its susceptibility (or resistance) to philosophical scrutiny, its very possibility in cultures that have (for the most part) taken leave of all their gods.\textsuperscript{527} Yet, the collection as a whole, however, derives its unity (not to mention a kind of haunting urgency) from its pervasive concern with one question in particular: how does one describe the subjective and objective elements of religious experience without reducing one to the other or reducing religious experience in general to some merely anthropological constant, devoid of any transcendent dimension?

In an age that tends to separate the objective from the subjective (e.g., interpreting the former literally and denying objective reality to the latter), Dupré postulates that the nature of the religious act/experience is intrinsically symbolic, and this understanding must be secured before philosophy can discuss religious experience without running the risk of ending in pure subjectivism.\textsuperscript{528} He assumes that the religious act comprises two essential components: objective symbolisation and subjective experience.\textsuperscript{529} He argues, on the one side, that to isolate the experience (like some romantic thinkers do) results in a loss of objective content. On the other side, restricting the religious content to a set of objective social symbols (like earlier sociologists and anthropologists used to do) leaves us nothing but the scaffolding of the living act.\textsuperscript{530} Hart supports Dupré’s thinking when he says that Dupré correctly asserts:

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{525} Dupré, \textit{Religious Mystery}, vii.
\textsuperscript{526} ibid.
\textsuperscript{527} Hart, \textit{Journal Review}, 55.
\textsuperscript{528} Dupré, \textit{Religious Mystery}, vii and viii.
\textsuperscript{529} ibid., 1–9.
\textsuperscript{530} ibid., vii and viii.
\end{flushleft}
Only when considering the two components as intrinsically united can philosophy grasp the intentionality proper to the religious act/experience. To do so, imposes certain conditions. It requires a careful phenomenological description of the act as well as a full awareness of the distinctive kind of truth the act pursues.  

Moreover, religious acts (as opposed to other ‘symbolic’ intentions) present a unique problem in that while the experience is inescapably immanent, it comprehends a transcendent object. Thus, Hart says; ‘so the question must be raised: can there really be a phenomenology of religion, in the end, that accomplishes more than a sort of clinical examination of the various extrinsic forms of religious expression?’ Dupré’s answer is there can and must be because the transcendence of the object of religious intention appears within the religious experience itself, in its very constitution and, so, no responsible or meaningful phenomenology dare ignore the degree to which, within the religious act, human symbolic creativity is provoked and saturated by an object that transcends it — or to be more precise, by an object that is intended as transcendent. No phenomenology that ignores the fundamental passivity at the heart of the religious act, the element of irreducible givenness that is experienced in the object (and so experienced as exceeding the symbolic forms that embody the subjective intention), can really be said to have disclosed the distinctively religious act within the field of its investigations.

In reflecting on his writings on the truth in religion, Dupré articulates that there exists no single religious view of truth, not even within one religious tradition. Despite their substantial differences, all religious traditions agree in stressing the ontological and moral qualities of truth over the purely cognitive ones. Truth refers to being rather than to knowledge. The nature of religious truth consists in the first place in an ontological state whereby the relation to God defines the definite link with being. That relation also secures access to the source of ultimate meaning. All ‘true’ knowing depends on a being in the truth. But the transcendent pole of the relation establishes human awareness of the relation as well as the relation itself. Truth in religion implies more than merely admitting that an ontological bond with God exists. The recognition of


532 ibid. Hart also suggests that ‘the argument at this point is delightfully lucid, and only mildly subversive: within the expansive “science” of philosophical phenomenology, which means to limit reflection to objects that appear within immanent cognition as representation or as value, the contours of an experience of transcendence as such can be glimpsed’.

Chapter 2: Today's deep cultural worldview

that bond must itself be given. Thus, truth consists in the right relation to the ultimately real, and only that transcendent reality can enlighten us concerning the nature and, even the existence, of that relation.\(^{534}\) This principle marks the constant factor in religious truth.\(^{535}\) Christianity took the doctrine that God speaks essentially and by his very nature to its farthest extreme when it proclaimed that God has become Word. In so doing, it also declared the reality grounded in God’s Being to be expressive. Being, as such, now becomes self-illuminating, self-manifesting.\(^{536}\) This religious truth, as conceived within the Judeo-Christian tradition, developed into the basis and principal analogue of all truth.\(^{537}\) Yet natural reflection gradually emancipated this truth from its religious origin until, in the modern age, an independent theory of truth, grounded in the human subject rather than in a divinely established reality, turned into a severe critic of religion.\(^{538}\)

Also, in reflecting on his works on the truth of religion, Dupré asserts that, when Nominalism undid the synthesis of faith and reason, there emerged two separate conceptions of truth: the one of reason, based on the presumed harmony between mind and nature; and the one of theology, resting on an authority beyond nature.\(^{539}\) Thus, the truth of religion, as established by philosophy, became distinct from faith’s own truth and, so, philosophy’s first task then consisted in proving the existence of God by purely rational arguments.\(^{540}\) In these arguments, modern thought reveals most clearly its attitude with respect to religious truth. It assumes there is no specifically religious truth.\(^{541}\) Truth, if still grounded to religious assertions, no longer springs from within faith but is extrinsically conveyed to faith. In the traditional view, religious truth originated in some sort of participation in the revealed mystery of the Divine Being. The human subject, now the source of truth, was then no more than a receptacle endowed with a divine potential for apprehending the truth as divinely revealed. With this


\(^{535}\) ibid.

\(^{536}\) ibid.

\(^{537}\) ibid.

\(^{538}\) ibid., 21.

\(^{539}\) ibid., 26 and 27; also refer Dupré, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Culture*, 111-115.

\(^{540}\) ibid., 27.

\(^{541}\) ibid.
separation from faith, and perhaps as a cause of it, goes a gradual separation of experience from faith.\textsuperscript{542} When addressing the matter of whether any statement can be made about the truth of religion that does not coincide with the truth in religion itself, Dupré says:

\begin{quote}
\ldots what is certain is that a critical examination, that on the basis of pure reason, independently of the religious experience proper, which attempts to establish or disestablish ‘the truth of religion’, must indeed result in distortion.\textsuperscript{543}
\end{quote}

Truth, in whatever manner envisaged, must in principle be able to adjudicate all legitimate claims of truth.\textsuperscript{544} Religion unfolds its own truth, yet it is forced to do so within the available categories of general disclosure. Revelation itself cannot be rendered intelligible unless it still proves capable of being assumed within the established patterns of speaking and thinking. However sublime and unique a message may be, in order to be expressed, it must adopt an \textit{existing} language and, thereby, integrate itself within a \textit{praxis} of discourse.\textsuperscript{545} Thus, Dupré, in considering which theory of truth is most apt for the discussion of the religious dimension of human life, concludes:

The correspondence and coherence models remain indispensable for understanding the truth of religion. But the more they came to reflect the subjective turn of modern thought, the more they became removed from what religion itself has traditionally understood to be the essence of its truth.\textsuperscript{546}

Hence, for him, the disclosure theory appears less tainted by modern subjectivism and, therefore, better suited to recognise the specific nature of \textit{religious} truth.\textsuperscript{547} Religious disclosure occurs \textit{within} a highly personal or intensely communal experience and, even when raised to the level of universal truth, retains this personal or communal quality in being \textit{a-truth-for-me} or \textit{a-truth-for-us}.\textsuperscript{548} Dupré insists that revelation discloses more about the believer than about God: in it a transcendent message interacts with an immanent experience. This tight link between the message

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{542} Dupré, \textit{Religious Mystery}, 27. \\
\textsuperscript{543} ibid., 27 and 28; and cf. Schnier, \textit{Louis Dupré’s Philosophy}, 235–238. \\
\textsuperscript{544} Dupré, \textit{Religious Mystery}, 28. \\
\textsuperscript{545} ibid., 29. \\
\textsuperscript{546} Louis Dupré, ‘Reflections on the Truth of Religion’ in \textit{Faith and Philosophy} 6 (1989); 266. \\
\textsuperscript{547} Dupré, \textit{Religious Mystery}, 34. \\
\textsuperscript{548} ibid., 39.
\end{flushright}
and the experience does not render religious disclosure a purely subjective affair. Moreover, as Schillebeeckx says,

... the reality that we experience — in this case, the transcendent reality as communicated in revelation — defines the nature of the experience and endows it with its own authority — not the other way around.549

This does not, however, imply that, in the immanence of one’s experience, the believer gains direct access to the transcendent object received by it. God never appears in the manner in which a sense object bodily presents itself. Nonetheless, faith carries an evidence of its own that, without the manifest presence of its object, illuminates the believer’s relation to it as vital to the understanding of her/himself and of all reality. The experience of revelation draws the decisive arguments for verifying its content, not from external sources but from itself. Believers assume that, what they know of the divine object, they know through that object itself. Christians have traditionally expressed this in the doctrine of the indwelling spirit, who teaches them ‘the entire faith’.550 Clearly this kind of evidence provides no support for its truth, nor does it increase our theoretical knowledge of the world. But, as Dupré says: ‘It opens up a different perspective on metaphysical insight as well as on empirical investigation, and brings with it a unique yet highly personal justification of its own truth’.551

Nowadays, religion, having been desacralised through secularisation, is no longer the integrating and central function in, or essential to, our culture. It has little value or presents few values to society.552 God plays no vital role in our fragmented culture.553 Value-making is, now, only ontological.554 As Dupré says, religion is, or should be, the most important thing in a Christian’s life, because it is an indispensable element for the reception and maintenance of faith. It must also integrate all parts of life and, if it doesn’t, it must die or just become one element/experience of life among many others — as it has become today.555 In today’s immanent humanistic society, our contemporaries (and particularly the young and the educated — the ones most

549 Schillebeeckx, Christ, 37.
550 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 40.
551 ibid.
552 ibid., 131 and 133.
553 ibid., 133.
554 ibid., 133 and 134.
555 Dupré, Other Dimension, 21; and Dupré, Religious Mystery, 142.
susceptible to cultural change) have, to a large extent, resigned themselves to a fragmented worldview. Hence, what Christianity regained through the incarnation, it has lost on the human superman/ego. Today's humanism is, thus, not Christian humanism. The human mind is the centre of everything — it constitutes reality. All we need today, is a scientific view of the self — not a responsible view of the self. As Philip Carter postulates: ‘It is not too dramatic to say that we are undergoing a crisis of faith.’ He cites Dupré as suggesting that, in this crisis, we need, ‘to decide our personal attitude toward existence instead of having it conveyed by society or inherited from ancestors’.

Hence, in our present world, science, social structure and morality have developed into full, albeit purely immanent forms of humanism. Current society has virtually lost all need for the public support of religion. In such a society, Dupré postulates that ‘the interesting replaces the lasting’.

Today, as Pope Benedict XVI says, the most disturbing features occurring in increasingly secular societies are peoples’ ‘outright refusal to believe in God’, and their more frequent plea of ‘I have more important things to do’.

The old battles between science and faith marked the final attempts to find a unified vision in which either the religious or the secular had to prevail. Many believers have now given up looking for theological solutions in all domains of life. As Dupré argues, even fundamentalist movements, which desperately attempt to isolate the secular, reveal an inability to incorporate it in some manner into the relation to the transcendent, and this inability is, itself, an entirely new phenomenon. The pre-modern opposition between the sacred and the profane did not obstruct the ability to

---

556 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 133.
557 Dupré, Metaphysics & Culture, 43 and 44.
558 Philip Carter, ‘Welcome Page’ in Directions. The Occasional Newsletter of the Julian Centre – August 2004; 1, (hereafter ‘Carter, Welcome Page’).
559 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 134; and cf. Carter, Welcome Page, 1.
560 Dupré, Other Dimension, 21.
561 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 133.
562 Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 16.
563 Pope Benedict XVI, Homily 7/11/06.
564 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 134.
relate all facets of human existence to the transcendent. This aforesaid inability, allied to the additional unprecedented phenomenon of a religion that is rapidly becoming desacralised, caused the believer in this secular age to be presented with a situation where an arbitrary choice of signs of ultimate meaning is indicative of an advanced secularism and not of a serious religious attitude as was indicated by those non-pluralistic, meaning-giving signs of the past. So, the religious attitude of Westerners has largely become what it never was before — a matter of existential choice. As Dupré postulates:

> If they do believe, they do so not because of an inherited tradition and seldom because of a direct religious experience but, rather, because of an accumulation of experiences confronting them with various choices, one of which they must make their own by a personal decision.\(^565\)

Today, even the joining of a religious community, and all that entails, has come to depend on deliberate decision and, as Dupré says, ‘Unless people are constantly replenished by a rather intensive and deliberate spiritual awareness (so often missing today), they will become empty shells’.\(^566\)

For the reasons above, and a myriad of others (e.g., uninteresting,\(^567\) boring,\(^568\) outdated,\(^569\) other more exciting activities,\(^570\) lack of seeing the connection between

---


566 ibid., 143.


God and the ceremonies performed, poor quality of ritual and homily, etcetera, many people have stopped attending Church — a major problem for all faiths today.

Discussion — Responding to the secular understanding that religion is no longer essential to today’s culture

The Christian dilemma in this topic is to reverse the decline in Church attendances by making religion, once again, the integrating and central function of culture.

Dupré desires to help all Christians reinstate their faith to its former place of prominence in their lives and world and, so, attend Church for the right reasons and worship the true God (not, as in some cases today, the Church’s god). The circumstance indispensable to this result is to bring about a conversion to an attitude in which our focus is on the lasting (i.e., God’s love for us and our love for him, ourselves and our neighbours, which includes our lives shared with Christ, now, in this world and, later, in the next life for all eternity), rather than on the interesting (i.e., all that our humanistic society highlights as being of important interest and happiness to us, now, and during our lives here on earth, with no interest in, or thought of, the hereafter).

From Dupré’s aforesaid reflections on the phenomenon of religion, the phenomenology of religious experience, the truth in religion and the truth of religion, we learned that religion is essential to faith and that transcendence is the essence of religion. Also, Dupré stresses that faith urges Christians to reflection (fides quærens intellectum), and this reflection on faith becomes part of faith, leading to new religious acts/ experiences, which, in turn, will lead to further theological reflection. However, as he says, when espousing Henry Duméry’s thoughts:

571 Radcliffe, Christianity in Europe; and Timothy Radcliffe, What is the Point of Being a Christian, (London and New York: Burns and Oates, 2005), 211.


573 Pope Benedict XVI, Homily 7/11/06.

574 Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 17.
We must learn to move beyond the mere experience without ever abandoning the philosophical critical method — we need to avoid both philosophical autonomy by making it an extension of theology (a danger which Blondel has not always escaped), and lapsing into philosophical constructivism by giving an interpretation of the religious experience which ignores that experience's self-interpretation.575

Yet, we need to keep in mind that, when adopting a philosophy of Christian faith (as does Duméry, rather than a philosophy of religion), this will undoubtedly present a limitation, but a necessary one in our reflections.576 However, we ought to remember that consciousness and the conscious object constitute one ideal unit of meaning. Things first acquire meaning and become objects under the intentional gaze of consciousness, which alone constitutes meaning and value within the conformities of rule and law.577 Also, some objective religious meaning must obviously be transmitted. Since such a meaning is not immanent in the historical events as such, it must be placed in them by a religious interpretation of the events. In Christianity, this interpretation started with Jesus and his first disciples.578 Dupré emphasises that religious experience is most important (and is difficult to find in today’s secular world) as sustaining faith, and such experience requires a need to will (i.e., we must go outside of ourselves to reflect and pray), rather than seeking the experience for its own sake (as the modern secular world advocates).579

While emphasising that the future of religion, particularly in the West, rests squarely on Christians, Dupré insists that we need to address the following three matters if we are to reinstate religion to its former central place in our benign atheistic society. In so doing, and at the same time, we will learn to understand and gain confidence through God's love for us, which will strengthen our ability and will to live our earthly lives in Christ's image.580

Firstly, we need to overcome our culture’s predicament — the absence of a centre of meaning. In today’s unprecedented multiplicity of options, we fall short of


577 ibid., Dupré’s Introduction, xxv.

578 ibid., Dupré’s Introduction, xxxiii.


finding the one needed for ‘justifying’ our existence. This requires a return to the belief that life is simultaneously given with its meaning. We need the bond of Christendom and its religion, with its doctrine, its liturgy, its social artistic and intellectual values, to form the centre of our culture once more. Today, the culture that has absorbed Christianity has itself become the real religion of our time. It offers some of the emotional benefits of religion, without exacting the high price faith demands. Hence, we must re-elevate Christianity from its present subordinate factor in our culture to its former creative centre. We have to stress and show that God does matter in our self-centred world. We must demand that overall wisdom, which holds life together.581

Secondly, and in contrast to the first, Christianity requires, and has always required, a personal conversion of the heart — religion’s need for inwardness. While doing so, we must learn to respect the various ways of humankind’s longing for God as religiously meaningful in the light of our own faith and, yet, at the same time, not allow a relativistic syncretism that entitles each person to compose her or his own religious smorgasbord. Such attitudes clearly manifest radical anthropocentrism, the chief enemy of sincere religion, that tempts believers to bring divine transcendence down to the level of human choice. To relativise faith is to subvert its fundamentally divine character. Also, as Christians, we must understand that we are responsible for the culture in which we live, however inhospitable it may be to our faith. That faith should be confident enough to render Christians capable of living a vigorous, free, and open life within a society of unlike-minded. Spiritual Christians must not be engaged in constant polemics with the surrounding secular world; since our strength comes from within, we can afford to grant society and culture their full autonomy.582

Thirdly, the spiritual emptiness of our time is a symptom of its religious poverty, but it also presents an opportunity for deepening religious life. With lives too busy to feel much absence of any kind, many people never experience any emptiness at all: yet emptiness tends to make itself felt at the occasion of painful personal experiences. To help overcome these situations in life, we need a full-bodied contemporary Christian spirituality, to enable us to have a genuine encounter with God, which summons a person to take leave of the familiar and to venture out into the desert of endless, unexplored horizons. Thus, we need, while living in today’s complex society, a spirituality of the ordinary and a mysticism of the everyday. Then, God, who is love, will

581 Dupré, Future of Religion, 1, 2 and 3.
582 ibid., 4, 5 and 6.
show us, and our neighbours, through our example, that the lasting is more important to our lives than the interesting.\footnote{Dupré, Future of Religion, 6, 7, 8 and 9; and cf. Rush, Liturgy has Changed, 9.}

Therefore, having already declared that modern consciousness translated the absence of meaningful transcendence into a theoretical principle, Dupré now stresses that, to reverse this situation, we need a religion which is not a symbolic expression of the human mind structured on immanent schemas. We need to reintegrate the transcendent into our lives and our world so that God is at the centre of them. Then, once again, the lasting will replace the interesting.\footnote{Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 17.}

In a homily the Pope said that the Eucharist makes the risen Christ constantly present: Christ who continues to give himself to us, calling us to participate in the banquet of his Body and his Blood. From this full communion with him comes every other element of the life of the Church; in the first place the communion among the faithful, the commitment to proclaim and give witness to the Gospel, the ardour of charity towards all, especially towards the poor and the smallest. Today, the Pope says that the Church must revive within herself an awareness of the task to present the world again with the voice of the One who said ‘I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life’.\footnote{Pope Benedict XVI’s First Homily, Extracts in Mission Outreach letter, Issue 20; and refer John 6:48–58, 8:51 and 9:5, in The New Jerusalem Bible.} When this is accomplished, the reasons for non-Church attendance will be replaced with the following: the ‘out of touch’ will become ‘it reminds us of the purpose of our lives’; the ‘uninteresting’ will become ‘Jesus writes afresh the new law of his love in our hearts’; and the ‘boring’ will become ‘we will live with God (love) for eternity’.

In a similar fashion to Dupré, Pope Benedict XVI postulates his answer to his earlier mentioned disturbing features in today’s secular world by saying that: ‘The problems can be resolved if God is at the centre, if He becomes the measure we use’. In suggesting that modern people refuse to believe in, or to live, their faith fully because they do not really know God, and they have never really experienced his love for them, Dupré stresses, as does the Pope, that ‘Our task is to help so that people can taste, can feel again the goodness and greatness of God’.\footnote{Pope Benedict XVI, Homily 7/11/06.}
The Pope’s above advice will also help us overcome the following three problems which have, as Bishop Giampaolo Crepaldi states, permeated our Catholic faith over the last few decades.

First, a theology of the separation between faith and politics has been alternating with a theology of direct engagement, while at the same time and almost undetected, a culture of agnosticism and relativism was advancing, becoming imposing and almost dictatorial, striking at the very heart of the Christian message and radically hindering its reception.

Second, the promotion of the notion of secularism as neutrality, thus weakening its identity, combined with an inability to understand that the issues of life and bioethics are also social and political issues.

And third, the failure to promote the Church’s social doctrine in a systematic and comprehensive manner.  

Further, to help people revert to regular Church attendances again, Arthur Baranowski, of the USA, presents a plan for restructuring the parish and renewing Catholic life. He suggests bringing parishioners together in small groups of eight to twelve adults to help them become Church at this most basic level, from which they slowly evolve to include formation, prayer and service, and the activities of the Church at the parish level. His vision foresees all parishioners experiencing their Catholic identity in these smaller basic communities, and his plan helps a parish work gradually and persistently towards that hoped-for goal. He asserts that through these small basic Christian communities, which deal with such matters as ‘Why change your parish?’, ‘A new way to be Church’, ‘From vision to reality in your parish’, ‘From small groups toward base Churches’, ‘Pastoring the “Pastors”’, ‘Being Church for the long haul’, and ‘Balancing the other 75 percent’, ordinary Catholic people can become Church rather than go to Church. In so becoming, they make an appreciable difference for others in the Church, as well as realising that they have a human and spiritual contribution to give — instead of simply receiving truth or inspiration from the programs

---


offered by the parish. For Baranowski, their lives are never the same again; neither is
the life of the parish.589

Also, when looking at initiating new members into a Catholic Church
community, Sister Sheila O’Dea argues that we need to rethink some of our policies
and practices on Church Mission, the aim of which is to connect liturgy with everyday
life. She warns initiation teams that their task is not initiating people into their particular
teams, or into the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), but rather into the
Church, the community of believers. We, and especially initiation teams, need to
remember always that people are initiated into the community, in the midst of
community, by the community. To effect this, she challenges initiation teams to move
their main focus from the catechumens (or enquirers, elect, neophytes, or candidates)
to the assembly, its members and its activities. Such a change in focus can only serve
to enhance the whole initiation process for all.590 Further, she insists that we, and our
initiation teams, should stop concentrating on the ‘extras’ (i.e., extended sessions, or
classes, or catechumenal gatherings) and get back, and keep, to the core activities of
the Church’s mission — not on our way of life. The initial central activity of the
catechumenate is the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word with the community every
Sunday of the liturgical year. By keeping our foci on the above, we will restore the
dignity and the importance of the rites that accompany the initiation process, and this
will have a tremendous effect on the faith life of the community. Undoubtedly, attention
to the above practices will bring great joy to the parish community, and a real sense of
renewal, and the affirmation of the eternal faithfulness of our God who calls each of us
to ongoing and constant conversion and new life.591 Also, she advocates that the
combining of various rites in the RCIA is not good (e.g., combining the various rites that
mark the spiritual journey of the baptised with similar rites that mark the journey of the
unbaptised). We need to continue to explore how to journey with the former — some
catechised, some uncatechised — in a way that is faithful to whom they already are as
the body of Christ.592 In so doing, we need to be compelled by the love of Christ.593

589 Baranowski, Creating Small Faith Communities, ix, x, 97 and 98.
590 Sheila O’Dea in RCIA Publication: ‘Words of Warning for Initiation Teams’ in Faith and Life October 1999, 12 and
13.
231.
Likewise, Pope John Paul II’s call to turn ‘with renewed interest to the Bible’\textsuperscript{594} is a special challenge to those who gather in small Church communities to deepen their encounter with Scriptures. He emphasises the fact that, even though small Church communities gather weekly or bi-weekly around the lectionary readings of the liturgical year, it presents no warrant for self-satisfaction. We should never be so comfortable with the Scriptures that we take them for granted. The word of God is a two-edged sword; it both judges and saves. When contemplating and sharing our engagement with God’s word, the Pope stresses that what counts is not just that we hear the word of God, but that we keep it. He calls us not only to a time of intense prayer but, also, to a fundamental solidarity with our neighbour, especially the most needy. He also wants us to work for a civilisation of love and justice. Thus, he summons us anew to a journey of authentic conversion.\textsuperscript{595}

We learn about God’s love for us, the purpose of our lives, and living in the image of Christ, from the Gospel of John.\textsuperscript{596}

Verily, as Pope Benedict XVI writes: ‘God is love’.\textsuperscript{597}

Unfortunately today, as we have seen above, the decline in the number of people who attend Church is used by some sociologists and other ‘critics’ of religion as evidence of an absolute decline in religiosity in contemporary society. This is because these sociologists and/or ‘critics’ do not understand the terms ‘spiritual’ and religion’. As Taylor says, being “spiritual but not religious” is one of the Western phenomena that usually designates a spiritual life which retains some distance from (i.e., reflects a reaction to) the disciplines and authority of religious confessions,\textsuperscript{598} and also indicates that we are in a time in which the hegemony of the mainstream master narrative of secularization is and will be, challenged more and more.\textsuperscript{599}

Bouma says that the term ‘spiritual’ refers to an experiential journey of encounter and relationship with otherness, with powers, forces and beings beyond the scope of everyday life. To be ‘spiritual’ is to be open to this ‘more than’ in life, to expect

\textsuperscript{595} ibid., 39; and cf. ‘A Reflection Booklet for Small Church Communities’ in Quest. Spring, 1997, which provides a format and topics for weekly sessions to assist in developing these communities towards achieving their good goal.
\textsuperscript{596} John 3:16, 14:20, in The New Jerusalem Bible.
\textsuperscript{598} Taylor, A Secular Age, 535 and 774-776, where he highlights his “Reform Master Narrative”, and deems it as being a necessary complementary to his “Intellectual Deviation” to explain religion today).
\textsuperscript{599} ibid., 534.
to encounter it and to expect to relate to it. Being spiritual can be done alone and often is. Yet today spirituality has also come to be associated with Movements and Groups that are not usually seen as religious, and seeing a spiritual dimension in feminist and/or male spirituality and in the efforts to protect and nurture the environment has also become increasingly popular. Further, he states that the term ‘religion’ refers to more socially organised and structured ways of being spiritual. Religions have social structures of officials to promote the practice of their forms of spirituality, to ensure proper practice and to relate to other organizations and the State. Through such organizations, religions have made available many forms of spirituality. At the same time, some people feel these structures have interfered with the very things religions are supposed to do.

Further, Bouma postulates that both spiritualities and religions have ethical dimensions governing relations with humans, with the beyond and with the environment. These reflect ideals for the shape and nature of society. He argues that the terms 'spiritual' and 'religion' are not synonymous. Since the 1990’s the term ‘spiritual’ has become popular, while the appeal of the term ‘religion’ is waning. Because of its association with formal organizations, the term ‘religion' has taken on a rather negative connotation. Yet, both are called upon to produce and maintain hope, which has been placed at the core of spirituality and religion; and to hope is a choice, not a forced option.

However, Bouma insists that it is neither helpful nor correct to consider spirituality and religion as separate worlds, even though much parlance suggests this: ‘I am spiritual but not religious’. For him, while at times spirituality seems to be a private matter and religion public, this distinction does not hold either. Neither is spirituality new and religion old. No matter how entwined the two are, using both terms sensitises the social analyst to a wider domain of activity than the currently limited word ‘religion’. Religious places may still be visited, treated as places of solace and

---


602 ibid., 15.

603 ibid., 11.

604 ibid., 10.

605 ibid., 19 and 20.

606 ibid., 26.

607 ibid., 16.
renewal, but for many their sacred space is set up in the face of the secular, their connection with the power of the universe is found in the world rather than on withdrawal from it, and their spiritual is transacted and conducted in the context of the secular.608 Around the major work of spirituality and religion to provide hope through activities, symbols, meanings and story sharing cluster such relationships as communities, organizations, identities, systems of ethics and media of communication. As these things emerge, the boundary between spirituality and religion becomes increasingly difficult to draw. 609

8. **Topic 7: Some of today’s modern Religious Movements, while stressing renewal of faith, define it more in terms of doing ‘feel-good’ religious practices rather than the hard deeds of love, forgiveness and compassion**

Today, many people experience problems in their relationships with traditional Churches concerning issues of sexuality, marriage and ministry,610 uncertainty and loss of truth,611 coping with hierarchical overbearance,612 Church attendances,613 accepting the Church’s god rather than the true God,614 and dealing with matters about transcendence.615 As Dupré postulates, when discussing the lack of transcendent ‘otherness’ by atheists and some deists:

The exclusion of absolute otherness is the crucial issue that separates secular alternatives from religion itself, even though they share significant features with it. A coherent world view requires, beyond an absence of

---

609 ibid., 27.
613 Radcliffe, *Christianity in Europe*, 1: and cf. Pope Benedict XVI, *Homily* 7/11/06, 6, wherein, at the Mass he celebrated with the Bishops of Switzerland, he said that many people didn’t attend the Eucharist because they had ‘more important things to do’.
615 ibid., 131-143; and see Dupré, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Culture*, 117; and also Dupré, *Transcendent Selfhood*, 17.
contradictions, a unifying factor to integrate the disparate experiences of reality within a meaningful totality.\textsuperscript{616}

Before the modern period, and in traditional societies even today, the idea of God, or of gods, fulfilled that integrating function. In recent thought, however, non-religious ‘ideologies’ (used here in the neutral sense of comprehensive views of the nature of the real) often replace religious ones (e.g., some atheists, following Spinoza’s thought, attribute divine predicates to nature in such a way that the whole surpasses the sum of the parts, without admitting any absolute transcendence. This, as Dupré stresses, is one atheistic, secular alternative to religious transcendence).\textsuperscript{617} Moreover, as Paul Tillich argues, not only do these atheist ideologies function as religions but they appear to play a mediating role in the contemporary dialogue among the religions themselves. As he says,

\textit{... even mutual relations of the religions proper are decisively influenced by the encounter of each of them with secularism and one or more of the quasi-religions, which are based on secularism.}\textsuperscript{618}

In addressing this Topic, and to enable the presentation of fair and balanced arguments, it is deemed important that an accurate account of the two biggest, yet quite different, Movements (Pentecostal and Evangelical) in modern, non-traditional types of Christian religious organisations be given, including their practices of spirituality amid today’s global secularisation. Those accounts are as follows:

PENTECOSTALISM

Walter Hollenweger describes the origins of Pentecostalism as complex, but are usually traced back to 1/1/1901. Charles Parham (1873–1929 AD), who launched the Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas, USA, stressed the phenomenon of ‘speaking in tongues’, which is described in Acts 2:1–4. Most Christians had taken this to be something that happened in the early Church but was no longer part of the Christian experience.\textsuperscript{619} The term ‘Pentecostalism’ began to be applied to the Movement, taking its name from the Day of Pentecost, the occasion, according to the New Testament, when the phenomenon of ‘speaking in tongues’ was first experienced by the early.

\textsuperscript{616} Duprè, \textit{Intellectual Sources}, 163.

\textsuperscript{617} ibid.


Christian disciples (Acts 2:1–4). Hence, Pentecostalism is often referred to as an experiential religion.\(^{620}\)

R. M. Anderson wrote that the Pentecostal Movement spread rapidly in America, appealing especially to the marginalised. Although Pentecostalism can be thought of as traditionalist in its Christian theology, it differs radically from other Christian groupings in the emphases which it places on speaking in tongues and in its form of worship. These are strongly experiential and involve prophesying, healings and exorcisms.\(^{621}\) Thus, he asserts that Pentecostalism pertains to any of various Christian organisations that lay emphases on charismatic experience, the absolute truth of the Bible and the possibility of direct contact with the Holy Spirit.\(^{622}\)

Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929 AD), following both the works of Joachim de Fiore (1135 – 1200 AD) who is accredited with developing the idea of the three Ages of the Church in the 12th Century, and indeed those concepts of the earlier Gregory of Nazianzus who also wrote about them,\(^{623}\) distinguishes those three Ages as historical epochs of Christianity, in which and through which God is redeeming the times.\(^{624}\)

In the Petrine Age, Rosenzweig sees the Petrine Church as the idea of Mother Church (hence the devotion to the Mother of God in the Church of Rome as well). In this Church, salvation is literally dependent upon the centralised monarchial organisation of the Church herself, which, like a Mother figure, provides the pre-requisite spiritual substance from its bosom – its sacramental system – from which the Christian must suckle, or lose eternal life.\(^{625}\)

---


624 Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans., by Barbara Galli, (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin, 2005), (hereafter ‘Rosenzweig, Star’).

625 Rosenzweig, *Star*, 296.
In the Pauline Age, Rosenzweig sees a move from a Church driven by love to a Church driven by faith, and this Age, he says, refers to the belief-led Churches of the Protestant era. Protestantism, by whatever form, defines itself by belief – but, as he argues, love is not guaranteed by faith.\(^\text{626}\)

In the Johannine Age, Rosenzweig sees a Church of the Holy Spirit, a Spirit-led Church. It is necessarily diverse and is spiritually bound rather than centrally organised or belief-based. It is so diffuse and variegated that it depends upon both the Petrine and Pauline Churches to the extent that it has even confused itself in the past with the latter. If love characterizes the Petrine Church and faith the Pauline Church, then hope characterizes the Johannine Church. For him, global Pentecostalism is third era Christianity, the Johannine Church of prophesy and hope. He argues that, in the Johannine era, “to be a Christian does not mean: to have accepted any dogmas; but to live one’s life under the rule of another life, the life of Jesus Christ and, once this has happened, then to live one’s life solely in the effect of the power flowing from there”.\(^\text{627}\)

In the USA, during the late 1960’s, it was evident that some form of renewal based on charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit (among them ‘speaking in tongues’) was gaining a hold within Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian and Catholic circles. Using the term ‘Pentecostal’ to describe this phenomenon now became problematic, as the term was used to refer to a family of Churches – such as The Assemblies of God – which placed particular emphasis on ‘speaking in tongues’. Accordingly, the term ‘charismatic’ was used to refer to Movements within the mainline Churches based upon the ideas and experiences of the Pentecostal Movement. These charismatic renewals within the mainline Churches have led to new and informal worship styles, an explosion in ‘worship songs’, a new concern for the dynamics of worship, and an increasing dislike of the traditionalism of formal liturgical worship, especially when this involves the cumbersome use of hymn books or service books. Moreover, this trend is now spreading within mainline Churches.\(^\text{628}\)

McGrath also highlights the success of Pentecostal Churches in dealing with Modern Cultures, and emphasises two factors which are used to explain

\(^{626}\)Rosenzweig, Star, 299.

\(^{627}\)ibid., 295.

\(^{628}\)McGrath, The Future of Christianity, 107.
the growing global appeal of Pentecostalism. First, Pentecostalism stresses a direct, immediate experience of God, and avoids the rather dry and cerebral forms of Christianity which many find unattractive and unintelligible today. It is thus significant that Pentecostalism has made huge inroads in working-class areas of Latin America (a former stronghold of Catholicity), in that it is able to communicate the Divine without the need for the alienating impedimenta of a bookish culture. Second, the Movement uses a language and form of communication which enables it to bridge cultural gaps highly effectively.\(^{629}\) Walter Hollenweger confirms these statements when he states:

(Pentecostalism) is an oral religion. It is not defined by the abstract language that characterises, for instance, Presbyterians or Catholics. Pentecostalism is communicated in stories, testimonies and songs. Oral language is a much more global language than that of the Universities or Church denominations. Oral tradition is flexible and can adapt itself to a variety of circumstances .....When you become a Pentecostal, you talk about how you've been healed, or how your very life has been changed. That's something that Pentecostals talk about over and over, partly because people are interested in hearing that sort of thing. Pentecostalism today addresses the whole of life, including the thinking part. More mainline forms of Christianity address the thinking part first, and that often affects the rest of life – but not always.\(^{630}\)

McGrath further insists that if ‘mainline’ is defined numerically, Pentecostalism is already the most significant Christian alternative to Roman Catholicism. It has displaced to the sidelines several Protestant groupings that once saw themselves as mainline. Harvey Cox suggests that many of these displaced groups will need to explore the fact that one of the reasons that Pentecostalism has succeeded is that mainline Protestantism has failed to meet the needs and aspirations of the marginalized and disadvantaged.\(^{631}\) For Cox, the spirituality of Pentecostalism holds the key to the 21\(^{st}\) Century. It is no longer secularism that holds the future for Christianity, but Pentecostalism – ‘a spiritual hurricane that has already touched half a billion people, and an

---


\(^{630}\) Walter Hollenweger, ‘Pentecostalism’s Global Language’, *Christian History* 17:2, (Spring, 1988), 42, (hereafter ‘Hollenweger, Pentecostalism’).

alternative vision of the human future whose impact may be only be at its earliest stages today.  

As McGrath states, Pentecostalism is poised to become an increasingly important element in the Christianity of the future in our globalized world. So is its cousin, Evangelicalism, to which I now turn.

**EVANGELICALISM**

Evangelicalism is a form of Christianity whose origins can be traced back to medieval Europe. Earlier Evangelicals belonged to those Christian bodies which emphasized the teachings and authority of the Scriptures, and were adherents of Evangelical Doctrines or members of an Evangelical Church or party, especially the Low Church party in the Church of England. The modern forms of Evangelicalism date from 18th Century Evangelical revivals in England (e.g. The Wesley brothers argued that many of their colleagues within the English National Church were but half-christians, who had no serious emotional or personal commitment to their faith. Thus, the Wesley brothers stressed that renewals of the heart and mind were required).

Emigration from Britain to the USA led to the Movement developing there, virtually achieving the status of a ‘folk religion’ in many parts of that country, particularly the Southern States. Later, however, many conservative Protestants, who were formally sympathetic to the aims of the Fundamentalist Movement prominent in their Churches (which Movement McGrath states is best understood as a deliberate and considered reaction to developments in the 20th Century, and from its outset was and still continues to be a counter-cultural Organisation, using central doctrinal affirmations as a means of defining cultural boundaries), became alienated by its belligerence, anti-intellectualism and cultural separation. Billy Graham rapidly became a figurehead of a new Movement, initially called ‘Neo-evangelicalism’ and then simply ‘Evangelicalism’, which began to emerge as a Movement of major public importance in the USA during the 1950’s, The full public recognition in America

---


634 ibid., 110.

635 ibid., 110.

As McGrath postulates, defining Evangelicalism has never been easy, partly on account of the inclination of some Evangelicals to offer definitions deliberately chosen to exclude people they did not like.\footnote{McGrath, \textit{The Future of Christianity}, 111.} However, a more reliable way of defining the Movement can be gleaned by looking at its general characteristics as presented by British scholar David Bebbington. According to him, Evangelicalism is basically a form of orthodox Christianity which possesses four distinctive hallmarks.\footnote{Bebbington, \textit{Evangelicalism in Brtitain}.}

1. \textit{Conversionism}: the belief that lives need to be changed through the personal appropriation of faith. A biblical text which is often cited in this context by Evangelical preachers, such as Billy Graham, is ‘you must be born again’ (John 3:7).

2. \textit{Activism}: the actualization of Christian faith in life, particularly in Evangelism (the preaching of the gospel to others) and other forms of Christian activity. One of the reasons that so many Evangelical Churches are so successful is that their memberships tend to be very active in outreach and discipleship programmes.

3. \textit{Biblicism}: a focus on the Bible as the most fundamental resource for Christian life and thought. Bible study is often at the heart of Evangelical spiritual life, both individual and corporate. A sure-fire indicator of this trait is the enormous number of devotional and academic works produced by Evangelical publishing houses in an attempt to meet this huge demand from their constituency.

4. \textit{Crucicentrism}: a focus on the cross of Christ and the benefits this brings to humanity. Many Evangelical hymns take the form of meditations on the cross, such as George Bennard’s ‘The Old Rugged Cross’ or Isaac Watt’s ‘When I Survey the Wondrous Cross’.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{Conversionism}: the belief that lives need to be changed through the personal appropriation of faith. A biblical text which is often cited in this context by Evangelical preachers, such as Billy Graham, is ‘you must be born again’ (John 3:7).
\item \textbf{Activism}: the actualization of Christian faith in life, particularly in Evangelism (the preaching of the gospel to others) and other forms of Christian activity. One of the reasons that so many Evangelical Churches are so successful is that their memberships tend to be very active in outreach and discipleship programmes.
\item \textbf{Biblicism}: a focus on the Bible as the most fundamental resource for Christian life and thought. Bible study is often at the heart of Evangelical spiritual life, both individual and corporate. A sure-fire indicator of this trait is the enormous number of devotional and academic works produced by Evangelical publishing houses in an attempt to meet this huge demand from their constituency.
\item \textbf{Crucicentrism}: a focus on the cross of Christ and the benefits this brings to humanity. Many Evangelical hymns take the form of meditations on the cross, such as George Bennard’s ‘The Old Rugged Cross’ or Isaac Watt’s ‘When I Survey the Wondrous Cross’.
\end{itemize}
McGrath also argues that the recent developments of Evangelicalism illustrate one more trend, which can be paralleled from virtually any element of late 20th Century Christian life; the decline of European influence in Global Christianity. Even the influence of British Evangelicalism upon its transatlantic American cousin has plummeted. Also, the erosion of European influence on Global Christianity has changed dramatically, as many seminaries are now in the process of shifting away from German-language theological resources (e.g. like Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg and Everhard Jüngel) to those of the English-language.

Yet, as McGrath further asserts, there seems to be limits to the American influence on the global development of Christianity, and Evangelicalism in particular. Evangelicalism itself is undergoing considerable change at the moment, mainly on account of its substantial expansion in South America, Africa and Asia. It is evident that the developing world has discerned that some of Evangelicalism’s traditional viewpoints are shaped, to varying extents, by the unacknowledged influence of Western culture. The continued expansion of Evangelicalism in the Non-western world is likely to involve a further critique of implicit Western assumptions within the Movement (e.g., its individualism), and the emergence of new forms of the Movement responsive to regional issues. By the end of the 21st Century, Evangelicalism will have changed, reflecting these new patterns of global action and reflection.

The above highlights why many people choose to become members of one of today’s modern Religious Movements, particularly in relation to Pentecostal and Evangelical Movements. However, other authors do not agree with some of the reasons tendered. For example, Aiden Tozer, whose works are more than forty five years old and so do not take into account the developments over that period, appears to be an ‘internal’ critic of some forms of Evangelical Christianity, and argues very harshly, both in language and criticisms, against some of the above claims, and provides his following contrary reasons: one, it is easier for some people ‘to believe in Jesus, buy a Bible and sing choruses’ (i.e., remain on and not go beyond the first


641 ibid., 114.
principles or foundations or elementary truths of their faith [e.g., repentance, faith, baptisms, laying-on of hands, resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgement]), rather than advance ‘on unto perfection’;\(^{642}\) two, some Christians, who do not hold the faith of their fathers, are admitted into some of these Movements on the basis that they are just mistaken (e.g., they hold that the resurrection has already passed,\(^ {643}\) or that God laid the sins of the world on the devil rather on Jesus, who bore them and freed us from them.\(^ {644}\) In short, their fellowship is based around a variety of things, none of which have Christ at the centre of that fellowship\(^ {645}\); and three, the current secular religious pluralism confuses many people and, to avoid its problems of “too many gods, too much religion, too much ‘churcianity’, too much institutionalism and too much, too much”,\(^ {646}\) they seek relief in the form of the religious entertainment provided in many of these Movements. Some of these Movements even promote salvation’s purpose as simply being to make us happy; just take Jesus and you will feel good inside, and have a good time for the rest of your life – the Lord won’t demand anything more from you.\(^ {647}\)

Tozer asserts that the above three situations appeal to many of today’s modern Religious Movements’ attendees, but should to be carefully scrutinized by them before the step is taken to become a member – the practices of some of these Movements may be simply tied to first principles with little or no chance of advancing ‘on unto perfection’,\(^ {648}\) or perhaps be blasphemous\(^ {649}\) or maybe even idolatrous/heretical.\(^ {650}\)

As highlighted above, in today’s secular world, many people, when seeking true ‘spirituality’, mistakenly get caught up in superficial ‘spirituality’, which is promoted by do-it-yourself beliefs, self-containment, economic consumerism, New Age and such like Religious Movements, sometimes genuinely believing that ‘God’ can be found therein. They do this either out of their ‘natural desire’ for God (i.e., life beyond knowledge itself/ the Unknown/ the Absolute, brought about because all human knowledge is never satisfied with itself but seeks something more and is enhanced when we detach


\(^{643}\) Tozer, *Success and Christian*, 122.

\(^{644}\) ibid., 124.

\(^{645}\) ibid., 128 and 129.

\(^{646}\) ibid., 123.

\(^{647}\) ibid., 128 and 129.

\(^{648}\) ibid., 1-3 and 75.

\(^{649}\) ibid., 123.

\(^{650}\) ibid., 6 and 23.
ourselves from positivistic/secular themes [e.g., science, being only one branch of knowledge, is simply a study of what it is — positivism; as such, it is prohibited from seeking beyond science itself]), or in the belief and hope that these Movements will help them overcome the earlier mentioned problems. The question then arises: Whether the Religious Movements we have been describing might sometimes promote a spirituality which, while beyond ‘superficial’, is still not deep enough? This prompts a further question: Do people attend, or accept an invitation to do so, mainly because of the initial ‘hype’ surrounding the human-centred ritual activities (e.g., music, singing, dancing, clapping, friendliness, healing services and so-called ‘spiritual’ conversions, etcetera) promoted by some of today’s modern Religious Movements? These situations enable people to have their society and their religious ‘kicks’ too, but that type of superficial ‘spirituality’ is only ‘kicks’ without religion or personal effort, and causes another question to arise: Is that type of spirituality for a lot of people mainly ‘kicks’ without true religion or personal effort — without the high price faith demands in the hard deeds of love, forgiveness and compassion and change of life and culture? Yet, despite the world’s present deep cultural crisis — and its loss of transcendence — might not some of the latter’s beliefs, with their emphases on the so-called renewal of religion, perhaps unwittingly turn religion into a consumerist item with a use-by date, as a result of secularisation and consumerist-type activities? Moreover, in so doing, would they not confuse their ‘feel-good’ religious practices with the basic intentionality of faith (if any, in some of their consumerist/‘feel-good’-type practices) and so, there would be no genuine religiosity left? For Dupré argues: ‘Concepts in religion are essential but they remain subordinate to the basic intentionality of a faith: if the intentionality loses its appeal, the religion itself dies.’

**Discussion — Responding to the challenging situations in some of today’s modern Religious Movements in which faith is defined more in terms of doing ‘feel-good’ religious practices rather than the hard deeds of love, forgiveness and compassion**

The Christian dilemma in this Topic is to counter the promotion of superficial ‘spirituality’ in lieu of genuine spirituality, which exists in some of today’s modern

---

651 Levesque, *Symbols of Transcendence*, 188 and 189.


653 Dupré, *Metaphysics & Culture*, 43 and 44.


655 Dupré, *Other Dimension*, 5.
Religious Movements, by transposing the Christian crisis (i.e., that decline in Christian spirituality).

Although Dupré’s work is not overly concerned with today’s modern Religious Movements, its application and response to the secular challenging situations in this Topic (especially in American and European cultures) is particularly important because his widely known specialty – how to re-integrate the transcendent into our lives and societies through the re-implementation of a vibrant, full-bodied, contemporary Christian spirituality – will be drawn upon in responding to, and showing how to reverse the present Christian crisis. This will lead people away from superficial ‘spiritual’ practices and towards a full-bodied contemporary true Christian spirituality in their lives and cultures. The circumstance indispensable to this result is to help bring about a conversion to an attitude in which our focus is on listening to the Word of God and praying to him as dutiful followers, rather than engaging in superficial ‘spirituality’ and religious practices, simply carried out to make the individual feel better or happy within her/himself. To effect this, Dupré advocates that we need to change our society’s and its peoples’ attitudes to where, once again, they will possess a spirituality of world-affirmation; a mystique of creation that discovers a transcendent dimension in a fundamental engagement to a world and a human community perceived as totally autonomous and totally dependent.656 He asserts that modern life has many facets which develop autonomously, and what religious faith can contribute to this development is not always clear. Even religion itself has shifted its function and emphasis over time.657 He argues:

To believe in God does not enhance one’s scientific integrity, sharpen one’s business sense, or heighten one’s perception of reality, contrary to what we often hear on Sunday morning radio programs. Yet it is equally obvious that religion cannot survive as a particular aspect of life. The moment it ceases to transform all of existence, it withers away and becomes, as we now say, irrelevant.658

In developing this conversion to the sought-after attitude, Dupré warns that today’s religious attitude has largely become a matter of existential choice659 and that nothing can be gained by the blind unquestioning turn to God, which many evangelists so peremptorily demand today.660 This is the present situation in some of today’s

656 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 143.
657 Dupré, Other Dimension, 1.
658 ibid.
659 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 136, 142 and 143.
660 Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 16.
modern Religious Movements, wherein many of their followers consider Dupré’s analyses of modernity as being ‘passé’. However, heeding Dupré’s warnings could help people to work on their changes of heart correctly — through God’s love for them and their love for Him, themselves and their neighbours, as taught to them in God’s Word which, also, might lead them towards becoming and being his followers.661 But, as Dupré insists: ‘Genuine religion integrates from within rather than from without’.662

Given that Dupré has written very little about today’s modern Religious Movements, perhaps the most useful plan, at this point, is to engage seriously with his recommendation about genuine religion integrating from within. This takes us directly to Dupré’s well crafted thinking about mysticism and the ‘turn inward’. He argues that the term ‘mysticism’ possesses many meanings, most of them vague and ill-defined. Some meanings restrict the mystical to exceptional religious states; others are comprehensive enough to include mental conditions neither exceptional nor religious. He focuses on exceptional religious experiences within monotheistic faiths, and states that those experiences have a great deal in common from one faith to another — even outside monotheism. Yet, he strongly argues that, while each mystic tends to interpret her/his experience in the light of the theological or philosophical universe to which she/he belongs, and that the nature of the spiritual quest determines the interpretation one gives to its outcome, one cannot conclude therefrom that the interpretation remains extrinsic and/or amounts to denying the experience a specific, ideal content and reduces it to a purely subjective feeling. He stresses that the mystical experience is distinctly cognitive and intentionally unique.663 Concerning his concepts on the mystical element of Christianity, which he reinforced during his 2004 Australian lecture tour, we also learned that mystery is not secret, as God was revealed to us by Jesus Christ. So, for Christians, God is mystery, but not secret. As we learned earlier, Dupré stresses that Christian mysticism is based on the following three points.

First, it is deeply connected with negative theology (i.e., we know nothing about God). Yet, a consistent negative theology about God is wrong, because God has spoken and, in that light, a divine light has started (through Jesus Christ), and through Jesus’ spirit we can contemplate eternal life. The finite is affirmed, as God asserts it, in the identity of his own creative act, not as it appears in the opposition of its creaturehood. As Dupré states:

662 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 126 and 137.
663 ibid., 116.
Chapter 2: Today’s deep cultural worldview

Divine transcendence ceases to mean negation of the creature, and instead becomes its elevation. Transcendence is no longer found above creation, but in creation. The creature is in God and God is in the creature. It is as creature and not only as uncreated essence that the creature manifests transcendence: God is the ultimate dimension of the finite reality, the inaccessible in the accessible.  

Nearly all theologians would agree that no predicates can be univocally attributed to God and the creature, but the issue that divides them is whether the negation of the inherently finite leaves room for an ultimate affirmation. Eugene Long states that Dupré says, ‘in the end, the problems and solutions (if any) to this issue must be identical in the two theologies’. However, while negative theologians insist that the attributes are negated but the ascendancy movement is not and, in fact, gains the momentum precisely from the unceasing negation, Dupré asserts that the movement itself leads nowhere unless, finally, ‘the negation itself be negated’. Further, he insists that this final negation entails a new affirmation of the finite and, consequently, a new kind of analogy (e.g., once negative theology’s movement reaches the One/Absolute, it merely stops. Yet, the absolute thus attained is an empty indeterminate; unable to justify the determinate being which supposedly proceeded from it and continues to depend on it).

Second, it is concerned with the ‘presence’ of God. As Dupré argues:

Man himself owes his unique status as religious symbol, not so much to his elevated rank in being (as compared with the lower creatures of creation) as to his singular awareness of the divine presence both in (her)himself and in other beings.

Dupré continues and says:

The Trinitarian Mysticism is specifically Christian — the Father generates the Nous (Son) and the Son returns via the Holy Spirit to the Origin. We participate in this ongoing movement and, as such, are part of the Divine Cycle and, therefore, we must be driven to action to live according to God’s will.

And third, it is involved with mystical love, and Jesus Christ is the lover of us all (e.g., if God is within me, I cannot pray to him except through another [Jesus Christ]). ‘God’ in Jesus Christ becomes the ‘other’ (i.e., the new presence of God in the other).


665 Dupré, Negative Theology, 149.

666 ibid., 156.

667 ibid.
The movement of prayer is to reintegrate our lives with Christ’s life and so talk to God — via Jesus’ spirit we can talk to God. Also, through Jesus Christ, we acquire a mystical love (without desire) of creation — through his humanity, we acquire a truly human love (again without desire) of creation. But, to gain the love for the creature of Christ, we must give up love of ourselves in order to love the other (Christ). Jesus is the way to God — he is the way, the truth and the life. He is the infinite God who came into our finite world, the world he created. So as Catholic Christians, we can truly say about Jesus after the consecration at Mass: ‘through Him, with Him and in Him in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour is yours Almighty Father for ever and ever’.

Today, Dupré says, the task of the mystic is to convert the desert (created by the secular society) into an encounter with God (i.e., the mind must move outside itself into the creaturely world, and this requires the soul to turn into itself [even without the mind] and become empty/silent). The more the similarity between the human and God disappears (i.e., don’t even think or try to think of one as an image of God), the more chance there is of God manifesting himself in that silence and, then, one sees nothing in one’s inner core except God’s presence within us. This enables Christians to foster the needed spiritual/mystical dimension in their own lives and, possibly, in other peoples’ lives. By first going inside oneself (i.e., living an interior life oneself), yet within the secular world (despite the abundance of outside activities in modern life, which cause our rhythm of life to go wrong, thereby preventing us from ‘slowing down’ or ‘being quiet’ [e.g., sport on the Sabbath]), we can then help others, especially by our example. But, that example must be real and not phony, and we can, and should, develop and enhance our mystical lives greatly from religious sources of the Church.

In the transformation towards effecting the sought attitude in this Topic, Dupré’s teachings articulate that we need to develop a theistic spirituality (i.e., a religiously enhanced and traditionally enriched, contemporary spirituality) to overcome the divisions and conflicts of modernity and modern living, rather than the superficial

668 Dupré, *Negative Theology*, 155 and 156.
670 Dupré, *Transcendent Selfhood*, x.
‘spirituality’ promoted by do-it-yourself religions, which do not even consider such matters.\textsuperscript{671} He further asserts that the most important consequence of the present spiritual crisis in our secular age is the total conquest of all previous views of the real. The result is an overpowering global phenomenon escaped only by a few very isolated communities.\textsuperscript{672} This crisis, caused by a gradual erosion of genuine transcendence, leads him to reflect upon the difficulties experienced by those who seek to live integrated, fulfilling spiritual lives in the context of the overwhelming secularity of the modern age and in some of today’s modern Religious Movements. Thus, by plumbing the spiritual foundations of the present crisis, Dupré has assayed our present situation. Also, in initial and sympathetic conversation with Kant, Kierkegaard, Marx and other philosophers, Dupré has also shown how Western modernity, for all its humanistic/dialectical and technological/rational sophistication, has been systemically, and increasingly, missing the other dimensions — the truly communal/spiritual and mystical.

Drawing on Dupré’s Australian lectures (2004) about spirituality, he emphasised that we, as religious people intent on deepening our spirituality with God and being witnesses to his Word, need to attend the following seven matters: 1) we need to expand those acts which express one’s self-transcendence; 2) on choosing what faith to accept, we should join with other fellow-believers in implementing its religious ideals; 3) we ought to discover the model of one’s belief to be existentially meaningful, before trying to accept it as transcendent; 4) it is important for us to understand that the community’s role enables one to integrate one’s private spiritual life within a living communion; 5) there is a need for us to search for a deeper spiritual life, by constantly replenishing our lives by an intensive and deliberate spiritual awareness; 6) we should behold God’s presence through the eyes of faith, because it is difficult for us to see him in creation today as compared with the times of our forefathers; and 7) we have to intensify our own spirituality, because intensity of religion/faith is endemic to Christian life itself.\textsuperscript{673}

Our example will also help raise low-key religious experiences, which are characteristic of believers living in our present secular culture, as well as relocate today’s ‘spiritual care’ (which in many cases is treated as a consumerist item with a ‘use-by-date’ by some of today’s modern Religious Movements) back to their rightful

\textsuperscript{671} Dupré, \textit{Religious Mystery}, 135-142.

\textsuperscript{672} ibid., 135.

\textsuperscript{673} ibid., 131-143.
position in society. Then, in our reawakened Christian spirituality, we will again understand God as gift to us. Just as Augustine developed a new humanism (after the collapse of the Roman Empire) that reunited the fragmented culture of his day with a synthesis, so we should do likewise for our fragmented society of today. This does not mean that we ought to promote a new concoction of religions/a relativistic religion, because to relativise religion is to divert it from its primary stance. However, in developing our synthesis, there should not be conflict between an intrinsic personal life and the extrinsic secular world, and we ought to avoid polemics. Also, we need to understand, as Dupré urges, that Christians can learn from other faiths, including non-Christian ones (e.g., Buddhism’s silence can teach us to respect God), and that our Christian mysticism must not separate us from other mystics. Hence, we need to practise ecumenism.  

In today’s pluralistic society, as Dupré argues, there is much ‘spirituality without God’. Therefore, to assist us accomplish the tasks aimed at reversing the secular challenges in this Topic, and thereby enabling us to re-implement a vibrant, full-bodied and contemporary Christian spirituality into our own lives, Dupré offers the following 10 reflections. These thoughts are concerned with Christian spirituality — Dupré’s widely acknowledged specialty — and should help us effect a transformation in our attitudes and, so, regain the lost perspective. They are as follows:

1) In the past, religion exercised its integratory function mainly by means of ecclesial power or discipline, or even by means of doctrinal authority. Nowadays, ‘increasingly the basis of authority has come to lie in the personal decision to adopt a traditional doctrine and to use it for guidance and integration of the various aspects of social and private conduct’. For Dupré, an advanced secularism indicates an arbitrary choice of signs of ultimate meaning in lieu of a serious religious attitude. Yet, today, even genuine religion differs from the past in that it integrates from within rather than from without, even when it continues to uphold the commitment to a particular doctrine and/or cult. Symbols exercise their authority only after, and to the extent that, they have been personally accepted and interiorised. Thus, future spiritual peoples’ exclusiveness in their doctrinal allegiances is

---

674 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 131 and 133.

675 ibid., 131-144.

676 ibid., 136 and 137.
likely to be diminished as a result of the increasing emphasis on the personal decision.\textsuperscript{677}

2) Dupré articulates that ‘the shift toward a personal decision does not transform religion into a purely individual affair’.\textsuperscript{678} This is because the religious community enables the individual to integrate her/his private spiritual life within a living communion by providing the believer with sacraments, Scriptures, and a whole system of representations.\textsuperscript{679}

3) Dupré postulates that ‘religious men and women will continue to attribute a “sacred” quality to persons, objects and events closely associated with their relation to the transcendent’.\textsuperscript{680} What determines that which they will hold sacred ultimately rests on their decision and/or grace, more than any direct experience they have. To those people, the institutional and external elements of religion appear to have been reduced to simply an instrumental role. As a result, religion is given an eclectic, arbitrary appearance, especially by those who judge it by past objective standards.\textsuperscript{681} Today’s religious pluralism highlights a whole new way of looking at and dealing with transcendence, wherein its core base has now shifted from the objective institution to the subjective decision.

4) In advocating a new attitude by believers toward the secular actuation of religion today, Dupré strongly denies that the inevitably ‘worldly’ character of spiritual life in this age leaves us no alternative but some nondenominational religion of reason. He insists that ‘the fundamental models of traditional religion remain available and mysteriously continue to appeal to our secular contemporaries’.\textsuperscript{682} For him, the modern believer must first discover the model of her/his belief to be existentially meaningful, before being able to

\textsuperscript{677} Dupré, \textit{Religious Mystery}, 137.

\textsuperscript{678} ibid.

\textsuperscript{679} ibid., 142.

\textsuperscript{680} ibid., 136.

\textsuperscript{681} ibid., 136 and 137.

\textsuperscript{682} ibid., 137.
accept it as transcendent. Further, Dupré insists that faith will, more than ever, remain what it always was: a leap beyond experience.

5) Dupré argues that ‘theology articulates a particular vision of the transcendent’, and insists that, today, the very reality of the transcendent is at stake, more than its specific conceptualisation; even the very possibility of a relation to the transcendent has been attacked. In the past, theology could count on some direct experience of the sacred, but such an experience can no longer be taken for granted. The current religious attitude of Western women and men has become, to a great extent, a matter of existential choice — something it never was before. He further argues that ‘they will soon turn into empty shells unless they are constantly replenished by a rather intensive and deliberate spiritual awareness’. Hence, in looking for a deeper spiritual life, we will have to do more than simply effect a passing phenomenon on today’s religious scene — it is really a matter about religious survival.

6) Dupré stresses that ‘it is precisely the private and reflective nature of religion in a secularized culture that explains its inward trend, as well as the present interest in mystical literature’. For him, what attracts the modern believer to the masters of spiritual life is less affinity of disposition than the fact that, in an atheistic culture, there is nowhere to turn but inwardly. Whether a mystic wants to or not today, she/he starts the spiritual journey from within and, according to Dupré, ‘that is the only place the believer must begin’. For only after having confronted her/his own atheism, can the believer hope to restore the vitality of her/his religion. Then, as a result, the emphasis of one’s own heart, via a “sense of absence”, may turn into a powerful cry for the One who is not there — it is the contradiction of a simultaneous presence and absence.

---

683 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 137.
684 ibid., 142.
685 ibid.
686 ibid.
687 ibid.
688 ibid., 137 and 138.
689 ibid., 137. Herein, Dupré reflects on Simone Weil’s quote when she says, ‘I am quite sure that there is a God, in the sense that I am quite sure my love is not illusory. I am quite sure there is not a God, in the sense that I am quite sure nothing real can be anything like what I am able to conceive when I pronounce this word’.
this encounter with a world that has lost its divine presence. Thus, the believer learns that God is entirely beyond her/his reach, and that God is not an object but an absolute demand, and that to accept God is not to accept a ‘given’, but a giving.  

7) Dupré further insists that ‘the religious consciousness of absence has its roots in earlier spiritual traditions’. He says that the intensive encounter with God has always summoned humans to take leave of the familiar words and concepts and to venture out into a desert of unlimited and unexplored horizons. In considering the practices of mysticism, Dupré argues that, in attempting to attain the ‘nameless source’, Buddhist and Hindu mystics both start their journeys with total emptiness of the mind and in silence; in seeking ‘God’, Christian mystics, while opposing any form of atheistic piety, invariably begin their pilgrimage by leaving familiar names behind.

8) Dupré’s deep analysis of history shows us that, since the 3rd Century, the mystical tradition of Christianity has recognised a theology in which all language is reduced to silence. The mysticism of negation culminated in 14th Century Rhineland, and Eckhart wrote about the place where the soul meets with God—it is in negative silence, “because there is only unity in the Godhead and there is nothing to talk about.” It is quite clear that a negation such as Eckhart’s or that of the ‘cloud of unknowing’ did not emerge from a weakened religious consciousness. Dupré says it was quite the opposite: ‘it emerged from a more intensive awareness of a transcendent presence … and that is what is precisely missing in our contemporaries’. Here, of course, he is not comparing two entirely different mentalities, but simply showing that what was once the arduous route travelled only by religious elite is now, in many instances, the only one still open to us. Continuing, Dupré says that the desert of modern atheism provides the only space in which most of us are forced to encounter the transcendent. It is a desert that in prayerful...
attention may be converted into the solitude of contemplation. Our age has created an emptiness that, for the serious God-seeker, attains a religious significance. The mysticism of negation provides us with an ideal model. The affirmation of God is rarely still the centre of our search for transcendence.

9) Dupré nevertheless contends that unless the modern believer in some manner overcomes the pure negation, she or he has not fully surpassed the secular atheism of the age. Christian mystics have commonly admitted some kind of theological negation, but somehow they have all succeeded in moving beyond it. As a result, transcendence, rather than constituting the opposition between finite and infinite, reveals the divine essence of the finite and, with it, the emanational nature of God's Being. Thus, the final word about God is not 'otherness', but 'identity'. God is the ultimate dimension of the real.

10) Dupré articulates that, instead of the traditional distinction between sacred objects, persons and events, and profane ones, spiritual men and women in the future will regard existence increasingly as an indivisible unity, wholly worldly and self-sufficient. Yet, at the same time, they will be aware of a mysterious depth dimension that demands attention and that they allow to direct their basic attitude to their lives. They may start from the negative experience of life lived in a secular environment deprived of a transcendent meaning, yet, Dupré asserts, “that less than ever will they remain satisfied with a negative attitude toward their worldly and social environment. Theirs will rather be a spirituality of world-affirmation that discovers transcendence in this world and in the human community”.

Additionally, Dupré proffers two other recommendations to people who are dissatisfied with their traditional Churches and are contemplating joining a non-traditional Church: one, for believers, the answer to their problem, brought about mainly through secularisation, lies within her/himself, whose faith must supply the ultimate

695 Dupré, Religious Mystery, and refer Merton, Seeds of Contemplation, 51 and 52. This solitude is what Thomas Merton wrote of as ‘not something outside us, not an absence of people or of sound, but an abyss opening up in the center of the soul, an abyss created by a hunger and thirst and sorrow and poverty and desire’.

696 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 140.

697 ibid., 139 and 140.

698 ibid., 143.
meaning society cannot;meaning society cannot;699 and two, a vibrant, full-bodied Christian spirituality will teach them that God, and not superficial ‘spirituality’, must be the centre of meaning.700

Further, Ron Rolheiser offers a reflection to people who attend, or intend to go
to, some of the Evangelical/Pentecostal-type Churches (especially as there are so
many in Texas — his home state), mainly because of the increased polarisation and
 nastiness inside today’s society and, indeed, in some of their own traditional Churches.
He argues that there is a definite need to ensure that the ‘new’ Church these people
attend, on changing from their ‘old’ one, is in fact a real ‘home’ for a family/community
and not another economic consumerist, ‘feel-good’ religious practices type of
institution.701

Cardinal Murphy O’Connor, when talking of the decline in the Faith in Europe,
exhorts us to relive our roots; to be again what we are. He says, in quoting Pope John
Paul II:

We need to take stock, again, of our home, to dust off the crucifixes, to
escape for a time from the clamour and hear again the still, small voices
deep in our European souls.702

Following on from Dupré’s, Rolheiser’s and Cardinal Murphy O’Connor’s above
arguments (the Roman Catholic one) for the need of a vibrant, full-bodied, contem-
porary, Christian spirituality to overcome some of the challenging situations in this
Topic, we would do well to recall earlier lines of arguments proposed by
Hollenweger,703 Anderson,704 Rosenzweig,705 McGrath,706 and Cox,707 (the Pentecostal

699 Louis Dupré, ‘Spiritual Life and the Survival of Christianity: Reflections at the End of the Millennium’, published in
Spiritual Life & the Survival of Christianity’).
700 Louis Dupré, ‘Seeking Christian Interiority: An Interview with Louis Dupré in The Christian Century, July 16-23,
‘Dupré, Seeking Christian Interiority’).
701 Ron Rolheiser, Column in San Antonio, Texas, Newspaper, August 28, 2005; 1 and 2, (hereafter ‘Rolheiser,
Column’); Ronald Rolheiser, Seeking Spirituality: Guidelines for a Christian Spirituality for the Twenty-First Century,
(London Sydney Auckland: Hodder and Stoughton, 1998), 102, (hereafter ‘Rolheiser, Seeking Spirituality’).
http://www.rcdow.org.uk/includes/dow-content-print.asp?content-ref=433 (date accessed 15/6/05), (hereafter
‘Murphy-O’Connor, The Church in Europe’).
703 Hollenweger, Pentecostalism, 42.
704 Anderson, Pentecostalism.
705 Rosenzweig, Star.
706 McGrath, The Future of Christianity.
one). They all postulate that Pentecostalism, The Johannine Church of prophecy and hope, can help and develop the spiritual lives of people through a direct, immediate experience of God, rather than through the dry and cerebral forms of worship of many mainline Churches. This assistance especially meets the aspirations of the marginalised and the disadvantaged. Also, we learned from McGrath\(^\text{708}\) and Bebbington\(^\text{709}\) (The Evangelical argument) that the four hallmarks of Evangelicalism can offer a renewal of heart and mind to people who have no serious emotional or personal faith commitment.

However, on still another side of the argument, Tozer argues from a more critical point of view and says that when attending Church services: one, the service(s) must help us go beyond the first principles or foundations or elementary truth of our faith in order to advance on unto perfection;\(^\text{710}\) two, Christ must be the centre of our fellowship, and we need to ensure that we are not being blasphemous by denying the faith of our fathers simply to attend the service, or just attending to be happy and/or feel good inside;\(^\text{711}\) and three, we need to bear in mind the difference between worship and entertainment, because the latter can sometimes be even idolatrous and/or even heretical.\(^\text{712}\)

Finally, in responding to the challenging situations in this Topic, we could also choose to keep in mind Dupré’s thoughts: ‘today we need examples of our Christian spirituality — people who know how to live their faith and demonstrate such, by example, within the context of the complexity of modern living: we need “SAINTS”.\(^\text{713}\)

In short, his dream could be achieved, if people were able to live as both Mary and Martha (not as Mary or Martha) as expressed and taught by Jesus in the Gospel of Luke.\(^\text{714}\) Then, they would not only be listeners of God’s word with a true spirituality, but also be doers of the hard deeds of love, forgiveness and compassion.

\(^{708}\) McGrath, *The Future of Christianity*.

\(^{709}\) Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Britain*.

\(^{710}\) Tozer, *Success and Christian*, 1-3 and 75.

\(^{711}\) ibid., 122, 124, 125, 126, 128 and 129.

\(^{712}\) ibid., 6 and 23.


9. Moving forward

Considering Dupré’s analyses in his Historical deconstruction of modernity, as well as those of other authors’, we have gained an understanding of Western and European cultures and their current worldviews and the secular challenges in those views. Also, through all those writers’ responses to the secular challenge in each Topic examined, ways of addressing the secular challenges in those cultures were presented.

We now move on to learn about and understand the current Australian Cultural perspective and the secular challenges in it. Firstly, this will be done by drawing upon Australian writers’ analyses of that perspective. Then, from their responses to our secular challenges in the Topics discussed, we will learn their suggestions about ways of addressing and overcoming them.
CHAPTER 3
TODAY’S AUSTRALIAN CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

1. Methodology

In this chapter, an understanding of the current Australian cultural perspective and its secular challenges will be gleaned through contemporary Australian authors’ analyses of them. Also, how to address the secular challenges in that perspective shall be elicited from those authors’ responses to them. In effecting these two tasks, the authors’ understandings of the current Australian perspective and its secular challenges — via their analyses of their chosen Topics, each depicting a different aspect of that perspective — are dialogued with Dupré in the body of the dissertation, and then highlighted in the footnotes as being either ‘almost identical’ or ‘similar’ or ‘varied’ to Dupré’s work – one part of the object and purpose of this chapter. Then, their responses to the secular challenge in each of their chosen Topics follow in the Discussion Section of each Topic in the body of the thesis — this makes up the other part of the object and purpose of this chapter. In so doing, those analyses and responses about that Australian perspective and its challenges shall be looked at generally, from an overall outlook relating to Protestant and other Churches in Australia, and particularly, from a Roman Catholic viewpoint.

In employing the above approach, again obviously, there will be some overlapping of material and argumentation when addressing these Topics, because the over-riding factor in each of them is that the loss or erosion of transcendence from our Australian culture has directly, or indirectly, brought about the secular challenge in each to Australian Christianity.

Following this examination of the Australian authors’ works, a summary highlights why Dupré’s analyses and responses in Chapters 1 and 2 are applicable to our Australian context — the thrust of the work in this chapter.
2. **Topic 1: Today’s Australian secular society is virtually a ‘godless’ one**

_Ian Breward_, a New Zealand born, Australian-based professional historian has, through his knowledge, writings and lectures, enabled Australians to see (with a degree of detachment because of his background) much about our cultural heritage and, especially, the history of the Christian Churches in Australia, as well as the place of religion in Australian life. The insights he presents cover a great deal that was lacking in many former historians’ work. His review of Church history from 1788 until the present day alludes to the problems which the Churches had to face, and analyses, with both honesty and sensitivity, the presuppositions with which they faced those problems.

The first is that, from the beginning, the Churches have all had some formidable personalities in their leadership; and Church assemblies, synods and conferences have never been backward two matters stand out from his workings, and these may help us to better understand ourselves in declaring their minds on public issues. Ecclesiastical circles have never been territory in which to look for the ‘shrinking violet’. Even today the press, and perhaps the public, tend to show more interest in what bishops and moderators and synods say than in what the majority, or even a minority, of lay members of the Churches do about social questions. The second element in our history, to which he refers time and again, is the contribution made by Church members, often anonymously and not seeking praise, to civic life. This ranges from generous benefaction to the founding of ‘libraries, savings banks, temperance and benevolent societies, Mechanical Institutes … The power of creative minorities and individuals is very clear in the early history of the Australian Churches’.715 Yet today, it is still true that what Australians have to offer Australia through their professions, through initiatives taken in social welfare and through care for those at a disadvantage, is much more important than what ecclesiastical authority has to say about these things.

It might cast light on all this if we were to reflect a little more on the insight of Breward that all the British Churches in Australia had to become ‘gathered Churches by winning lay support, coaxing money out of members and adherents who knew nothing about regular giving in Churches which had hitherto been supported by the

Chapter 3: Today's Australian cultural perspective

elite, the wealthy and endowments'.

With this went a democratising of Church life. However, Breward does not appear to go far enough into this situation, which seems to open up further questions that may require answers as we Australians advance into the future (e.g., did the Churches in Australia prepare the way for the greater degree of participation in the making of decisions affecting their members' lives, as is now claimed by many groups in society? Or, have Church people forgotten to make the translation?).

As well as highlighting the fact that Australia inherited its fair share of godlessness from Britain and Europe, Breward postulates that opinion makers in our society today are very dismissive of Australia's Christian past, and have an incredible faith in education to provide what was once expected of the Church. These and the aforesaid powerful forces, combined with the removal of transcendence and the large ignoring of the community, have had a serious, debilitating effect on Australian beliefs and Church attendances in our country. He further insists that 'the frontiers of Christian culture have shrunk'. Thus, leaders have found it very difficult to uphold the historic identity of their denomination, or to provide pastoral and educational resources that keep pace with the speed of change, nationally and internationally. Therefore, Breward argues that the Christian future may be more limited than influence of the past suggests, and he states:

The number of renewal programs tried in the last 30 years has been large. Their impact on the 50% of Australians outside the churches has been small, for they have rarely appealed to sceptics or changed the committed. Yet to change nothing alters everything.

This is further evidenced (apart from the growth in Roman Catholic percentages) when we look at the top four religious affiliations in Australia, and their changes in membership from 1881–1986. Breward cites statistics for the top four religious affiliations in Australia during that period as set out below.

---

716 Breward, *Australia Godless*, 24, 97 and 98.

717 ibid., 99.

718 ibid., 89; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 70, 72 and 73. Here, Breward's analysis about this Topic 1 is similar to Dupré's.


720 Breward *History of Churches*, 232.

721 ibid., 235.
Denomination | % 1881 | % 1986
--- | --- | ---
Anglican | 40 | 25
Roman Catholic | 23 | 26
Presbyterian | 11 | 4
Uniting (Three Churches) | 12 | 9

However, one should also read survey statistics with caution because, according to Bob Dixon, some survey respondents tend to overestimate their frequency of Church attendances, while others ‘lie’ about their denomination, or belief in God, simply to avoid embarrassment in their interview with the census person.722

Clearly, according to Breward, Australian Churches are an example of growth from below, with the self-help tradition being very strong.723 Yet, the turbulence of the last 30 years has shattered many certainties which were too time-bound to survive.724 This has been disillusioning, but seeing and seizing the new opportunities that have opened up is as achievable as turning a former prison into a dynamic and democratic society. Several denominations (Catholicism, Evangelicalism and Liberalism) have contributed insights and resources towards this goal.725 Henry Lawson, in a poem he wrote in 1901, also highlighted the problematic of whether Australia was secular or ecumenical.726

Breward argues that there are powerful secularising forces in Australian society which are socially destructive and fearfully costly to the Australian taxpayers, because of the way these forces exalt private choice without reference to social responsibility. Hence, the transcendent is removed from our culture and the community is being largely ignored.727 For him, Protestants must take some responsibility for that, for it represents part of their teaching, taking into consideration the contents of the previous sentence.728 Ronald Conway supports this and exposes the limitations of Australian attitudes between secularised Protestantism (which can be seen in elements of the political left and right, who have inherited the conviction that exposure of evils and denunciation of transgressors will bring healing) and other people (who remember their

724 ibid., 233.
725 ibid.
726 Henry Lawson, ‘The Shearers’ in Ian Breward’s *Church in Australia—Intensive*, Semester 2, 2006; 34.
727 Breward, *Australia Godless*, 87; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 70, 72, 73, 86 and 87 and 100–101. Again, in analysing this Topic 1, Breward is almost identical to Dupré.
728 ibid., 87.
own sin and seek a common healing). In addition, Breward states that Colin Williams, now living in the USA, has suggested that Australia is the most secular nation on earth — it is godless. Likewise, Peter Jensen declares that modern Australia has been called ‘the world’s most secular society’. Yet, as Breward and other Australian writers argue, we need to understand that the word ‘secular’ has a cluster of meanings, some of which can be hostile to Australian Christianity, some neutral, and some friendly. Several features of Australian secularity have deep Christian roots and, so, we ought not to be mesmerised into thinking that secularism is a total enemy of the Gospel.

In Chapter 1, we saw Moses arguing that science or something continuous with present day science was present in medieval Christian scholarship and, before that, in Jewish and Islamic thoughts and practices. But it is only in the Renaissance and beyond that it starts taking on, and being carried also by, the species of human self-assertion which characterises modernity as such, and which determines science in its specifically modern form. Also, he postulates that the Nominalist influence of the late Middle Ages finally destroyed the credibility of the ancient and high medieval cosmic order. Thus, the actual, finite world becomes totally contingent, no longer the embodiment of the full range and variety of what is possible with human beings as microcosm in the centre and the whole suffused by the Divine as macrocosm. Ethics, too, become contingent, depending entirely on the Divine Will, as does, eventually, both salvation and damnation and, indeed, the whole of theology. However, he makes a strong criticism of Blumenberg and says that in his effort to exonerate modernity, Blumenberg tended to undervalue the positive role that developments in both Christian theology and culture played in the construction of modernity and, especially, in the development of modern science. Hence, Moses stresses that this positive role was much more than just a matter of setting up an intolerable situation, as argued by Blumenberg.

729 Ronald Conway, The End of Stupor (Melbourne, 1984); and Ronald Conway, Conway’s Way (Melbourne, 1988).

730 Breward, Australia Godless, 86.


733 Refer Moses in Ch. 1, 9-14, 16, 17, 26, 29-31, 35 and 60.
In the same chapter, Gregory Moses further articulates four points concerning the modern ‘split’ occurring in ‘reality’.

1) Dupré not only took over Blumenberg’s work and included much more detail and added corrections where necessary, but also added a particular emphasis peculiar to Dupré’s own thinking. For Moses, this turns out to be rather crucial to understanding the present situation of both theology and religion, namely that the very conception of the positivistic interventionist supernatural and the split between the purely natural in our sense and the supernatural, with concomitant splits between faith and reason, nature and grace etcetera, are all late medieval constructions.

2) With Dupré’s correction of Blumenberg’s erroneous idea that Cusa and Bruno were on either side of the threshold of modernity, Moses emphasises instead, that their separate efforts were, rather, final attempts to prevent the modern ‘split’ occurring in ‘reality’.

3) Moses adds to the above final attempts to prevent the ‘split’ between the Renaissance humanist religion and the early Reformation and Jansenist theologians of that epoch, saying that they provided three major efforts to overcome the theological dualism modern culture inherited from late medieval thought.

4) With the human being ceasing to be a kind of microcosm at the heart of the real, and now becoming its human increasingly objectifying interpreter and actor, Moses insists that when this was combined with Renaissance human self-assertion, an explosive mixture ensued, which eventually gave rise to modernity. 734

Today in Australia and increasingly elsewhere, according to Gary Bouma, religions and spirituality are called upon to produce and maintain hope. In the 1980’s it seemed that wealth and material ends justified and satisfied all aspirational effort. This became less clear in the 1990’s as ethical issues began to be raised in the corporate sector following major and costly collapses. But religious groups have been caught in the ethics searchlight and found wanting in their handling of the ‘stolen children’ and the reality of sexual abuse within churches. While this has driven some from the churches and made many wary of religious professionals and formally organised religion, it has not driven Australians from spirituality. Australians appear quite ready to

734 Moses, Blumenberg, 1-15; and also Moses, Options, 1-22. Herein, Moses’ analyses of this Topic 1 are almost identical to Dupré’s.
do for themselves what some had previously sought from mainstream providers of religious goods and services.\textsuperscript{735}

In current Australia, hope has been placed at the core of spirituality and religion. To the extent that meaning is sought in order to sustain hope, meaning is then less inclusive of the spiritual and religious genius than hope. While meaning has been a major feature of the religious and continues to be so today, it is only one way of producing hope.\textsuperscript{736}

*Caroline Miley*, in analysing this Topic, postulates that religious belief is now discounted in many English-speaking Western Societies, especially Australia,\textsuperscript{737} and the source of moral and ethical values and their understanding have been removed in favour of science and reason, which cannot replace these values.\textsuperscript{738} She also states that ‘this secular world of Australia’ is not interested in joining an institution (a Church) that teaches the good news of Christ.\textsuperscript{739} In short, most Australians, today, are deprived, or are depriving themselves, of an encounter with God.

In his analysis of this Topic, *John Thornhill* asserts that there are three striking characteristics of modernity’s cultural movement, which affect the possibility of the reintegration of the transcendent into our lives and world: firstly, its dynamic impact upon the whole Western tradition, including Australia, especially over the last few centuries; secondly, its resistance to criticism; and thirdly, the difficulties it is experiencing in responding to today’s present problem (i.e., the loss of transcendence), because of the lack of any fundamental agreement concerning the nature of reality.\textsuperscript{740}

*Neil Ormerod* says that multi-faith societies, in Australia and elsewhere, have a problem in the understanding promulgated by the Catholic Church, in particular, and Christianity, in general, that they are God’s chosen means of salvation. This is especially so since the former has shifted from ‘proofs’ of God to ‘paths’ to God, in


\textsuperscript{736} Bouma, *Australian Soul*, 20, 30, 48, and 85. Here, Bouma’s analysis of this Topic 1 is almost identical to Dupré’s.

\textsuperscript{737} Miley, *Suicidal Church*, 164.

\textsuperscript{738} ibid., 165.

\textsuperscript{739} ibid., 13 and refer Dupré in Ch.2, 70, 72, 73, 86-93 and 146. Here, Miley’s analysis about this Topic 1 is similar to Dupré’s.

Chapter 3: Today’s Australian cultural perspective

attempting to help its adherents find their way to God — a most difficult task in today’s Australian secular society.\(^{741}\) He postulates that

… their (Australians’) experience of multi-faith societies has increasingly called this understanding into question … and today Catholic thought has shifted on the significance of other religious faiths.\(^{742}\)

Discussion — Responding to the erosion of transcendence from our Australian culture

Breward’s response differs from Dupré’s Western thought, in this Topic, as to how we can reintegrate the transcendent into Australian culture. Breward’s understanding is more general and less specific when he says that the sought transformation requires that many Churches need to focus on their mission, while appreciating both the positive and negative features of Australia’s secularity.\(^{743}\) The mission is to spread the Word of God, so that transcendence can be brought back into our ‘godless’ Australian society. To effect this, Australian Christians will need to rediscover their heritage and interpret it more contextually if the present generation is to have the same missionary impact as did our 19th Century forebears.\(^{744}\) We also need to learn from the Aboriginal people how to be partners in this wide Redland. The racism of two centuries is still alive and well, but for the first time there are beginnings of a strong Aboriginal Christian voice, which few white Christians have heard. As he says:

Integrating a theology of land with wealth creation offers a fascinating challenge, if it is to be linked with social justice and the creation of a new kind of community, that includes equal opportunity for all Australians to discover their divine image.\(^{745}\)

In Chapter 1, we saw almost identical thought patterns between Moses and Blumenberg in relation to the origins and developments of modern day science, to the Nominalist influence which finally destroyed the credibility of the cosmic order, and to the emergence of modern ‘self-assertion’. We also noted Moses’ criticism of Blumenberg.

---


\(^{742}\) Ormerod, *Possibility of Belief*, 51; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 70, 72, 73, 86 and 87, 93 and 146. Here Ormerod’s analysis of this Topic 1 is similar to Dupré’s.


\(^{744}\) ibid.

\(^{745}\) ibid., 99.
Also, in that chapter, we observed almost identical patterns of thought between Moses and Dupré. These were in relation to understanding the present situation of both theology and religion; to recognising the final attempts to prevent the modern ‘split’ occurring in reality; to seeing the attempts to overcome modernity’s inherited theological dualism(s); to knowing the factors which gave rise to modernity; and to realising the relationship between nature and grace. These thought patterns were also concerned with acknowledging that God is the supernatural source of the natural; with accepting that the separation of supernature and nature was the forerunner of modern atheism; and with observing how 17th Century ‘intellectualism’ changed our thoughts on nature, so that, in such a picture, nature, God and human beings are all different.

Both the above paragraphs are dealing with how we got to where we are today in the Western world.

In his response to this Topic 1 about reintegration of the transcendent into our Australian lives and world today, Moses, while talking more in global terms, but at the same time cognisant of Australia’s predicament with this matter, presents two options in support of combining Dupré’s two aforesaid strategies, and as to how and why and under what circumstances they do not have the appearance of opposition. Option 1 is a neo-Humean Wittgensteinian, Strawsonian option of keeping the components apart, rejoicing in their difference and in their modern autonomy and the differentiation of their discourses, but striving to keep them or get them into better balance, with the latter usually being accomplished via a species of philosophical anthropology, which needs to be something other than just a form of fideism. Option 2 is the world-view constructive option, in order to come up with a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience might be interpreted and might be at home, including the religious interest. Moses further argues that there might be more than one way to keep science, ethics, religion, etc. in a healthy relationship, at least so far as protection from scientism is concerned. Thus he postulates that his two options, rather than being in opposition, if construed properly, can well combine and reinforce each other, namely via a deployment of a version of the second, which, by both its manner and self-conception and its content, enables us to do the first.

746 Moses, Options, 11 (Items 2.1 and 2.2).
747 ibid., 12; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 74 and 78–81.
For Bouma, the trend to self-reliance and increasing wariness of religious professionals poses a great problem for clergy, including those in Australia. He further asserts that few protestant clergy are respected for their ability to make real a sense of the presence of God. As a result of this, today’s Australians are seeking more direct encounters with the transcendent. They want to experience the numinous of the presence of God. Many forms of spirituality promise that each person can do this by themselves through meditation or some other spiritual exercise. Therefore, the role of the religious professional has to change; their service must be grounded in experiential authority.\(^{748}\) In addition, the change in the Social location of religious organisations in Australian society needs to be recognized and understood by their leaders; too many of the latter are happy to continue with structures that were established in the mid-Nineteenth Century, singing hymns of the same era and pushing agendas set long ago.\(^{749}\) These leaders urgently need to understand that many religious groups and spirituality Movements are rising to the challenge of responding to the demand for and seeking connection with the transcendent in ways that continue to engage a world they may find hard to understand but are prepared to live in and try to shape.\(^{750}\)

Miley, in responding to the challenge in this Topic 1, emphasises the need for the Christian Churches (and especially the Anglican Church) to direct their focus on their mission, if we are to achieve the desired transformation sought in this Topic 1. For her,

\[
\ldots\text{the mission of the church is expressed succinctly in the Gospels in many places. It is to bring the good news of Christ to the world, to ‘make disciples of all nations’}.\]^{751}

In focusing on this task, the Church in the West, and particularly in Australia, has tended to lose sight of this simple command, both in its simplicity and the fact that it is a command. She says that it was not given as an option for Christians, a ‘maybe if you’re into that sort of thing’. She asserts that it is at the core of Christian life, and the Churches (especially the Anglican) need desperately to rediscover that clarity of focus and to throw away everything that can impede their carrying out of this mission.\(^{752}\) This

\(^{748}\) Bouma, *Australian Soul*, 100.

\(^{749}\) Ibid., 128.

\(^{750}\) Ibid., 142; cf. Dupré in Ch.2, 70, 72, 73, 86 and 87, and 100-101. Here, Bouma’s responsive thoughts are similar to Dupré’s about this Topic 1.

\(^{751}\) Miley, *Suicidal Church*, 18.

\(^{752}\) Ibid.
would transform the care-worn tribulations of human existence, and lessen the gap between that existence and God and his Kingdom.  

In addition, she postulates the importance of ‘inclusiveness,’ which can be brought about by abandoning all discriminatory, prejudiced and racial attitudes and behaviours. Exclusion, on the other hand, is a disabling strategy, even when it is inadvertent — it is not just a case of actively rejecting people. Churches that fail to include all people meaningfully by finding ‘space’ and proper work for them are effectively excluding them. Christian Churches must truly and humbly offer themselves to love all and to accept all. If they do not, they are not modelling themselves on the self-giving and all-inclusive love of the Saviour. She highlights, when quoting John Spong, that the Churches must work

\[
\text{... to help people live fully and love wastefully, and be all they can be. ... and also to show them God and Christ in the process.} \quad \text{(754)}
\]

Further, for Miley, the Bible exists to tell us what God is like. It is not there to provide material for quibbling over words and phrases and customs. Hence, the Bible will help us reintegrate the transcendent into our lives and Australian society. The challenge that has faced the Church in the modern age is the challenge of maintaining the primary significance, indeed necessity, of the supernatural in a material age. 

In responding to the challenge in this Topic, Thornhill suggests that central to the sought transformation in our attitudes to assist with the reintegration of the transcendent into our Australian secular society, is our overcoming of the present lack of any fundamental agreement concerning the nature of reality. If the intellectual principles upon which the progress of modernity is built are no more than a shared ideology and the in-house discussions of a philosophy which has become so esoteric that it has no concern to make itself intelligible to ordinary people, then, as he says,

\[
\text{... our cultural tradition is forced to live with an emptiness at its core which breeds the boredom, frustrations and self-destructive violence which have come to be all-too-familiar problems in the Western world.} \quad \text{(758)}
\]

753 Miley, Suicidal Church, 13.


755 Miley, Suicidal Church, 7.

756 ibid., 23 and 24; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 74, and 78—82.

757 Thornhill, Modernity, ix.

758 ibid.
For him, overcoming this requires the following three actions.

Firstly, we need to recognise that, as Western thinkers sought to emancipate our civilised tradition from the cultural sclerosis of the Middle Ages, ‘ideological consensus’ was undoubtedly a fundamental factor in the emergence of modernity, and a distinctive and influential cultural movement. He describes ‘ideology’ as a cognitive perspective, which provides the effective consensus of a particular historical group. Hence, he argues that this recognition will help us understand the striking characteristics of modernity’s cultural movement, as discussed earlier. Yet, 20th Century developments and upheavals have forced the culture of modernity to look more closely at the intellectual assumptions it has long taken for granted and which, he says, ‘science and technology seemed to provide a warrant for … whilst 18th Century Romanticism was a reaction against this situation’.759 Today, these assumptions are coming under criticism from two opposing directions. On one hand, the proponents of ‘postmodernism’ stress that the project of modernity has failed and should be abandoned. They condemn it of having replaced the ‘meta-narratives’ of the mythologies and religious past culture with what were really perspectives of group (class, race and gender) interest and dominance. On the other hand, many Western thinkers now argue that the project of modernity, far from being abandoned, must be carried forward upon the basis of a critical view of the assumptions of the ‘scientific’ methodology which has so powerfully dominated its development. Thornhill promotes this second view, and insists that we must not turn away from a job half done.760 Further, he says that the recognition of the part played by ‘ideological consensus’ in the history of ideas is an important element in the reappraisal modernity must make of its assumptions, if it is to carry forward its project of accountability through a shared intellectual inquiry. He emphasises that the advocates of postmodernism have made their contribution to this reappraisal by presenting, in stark clarity, the alternative modernity faces — either destructive nihilism or some metaphysical consensus concerning the nature of reality which can provide the measure validating modernity’s genuine achievements.761

Secondly, while Romanticism’s concerns and the expected canons of critical and ‘scientific’ thought have never been reconciled and still, today, share an uneasy coexistence in the Western psyche, we must seek ways of combining metaphysics and culture. In so doing, and given the qualified nature of the proper methodology of natural

759 Thornhill, Modernity viii.

760 ibid., viii, 38–55.

761 ibid., ix.
philosophy, it behoves us not to neglect this qualified status of many of the conclusions of natural philosophy. This shortcoming of past eras has had far-reaching consequences in the development of Western thought.\textsuperscript{762}

Thirdly, we need to understand the relationship between the project of modernity and the Christian tradition, because the former replaced the latter’s authority with the accountability of a shared intellectual inquiry — an outstanding characteristic of today’s Western civilisation. He rejects any suggestion that the two are incompatible, and argues that the essential concerns of both movements are not only compatible but also in accord in ways which have far-reaching implications.\textsuperscript{763}

In arguing for ecumenism in Australia, Ormerod says that if we are to remain identifiably Christian, then the centrality of our faith in Jesus must remain. This faith might be a stumbling block to those who argue that God is not free to act in a definitive way in human history, but for others it might be an invitation to hope in the future of humanity.\textsuperscript{764} Christian identity demands that God must be in our midst and lives, and we need the help of the Holy Spirit to help us reintegrate the transcendent back into our lives and Australian secular society. The Holy Spirit will, through many paths, lead us to the one true God if we transform our attitudes by meditating on this matter.

3. Topic 2: Life in today’s Australian immanent humanistic culture simply means the Australian human being’s ‘will to power’ and need to survive for self-affirmation

\textit{Michael Casey} predominantly writes about the problems emanating from a world without meaning and, in analysing this Topic, he postulates that the unified central influence of culture (religion) has lost its former prominence, and has even become non-essential in today’s society, whereas before, it comprised culture’s central objective element and gave meaningfulness to people’s lives.\textsuperscript{765} Nowadays, many have abandoned the search for a unified meaning of existence and have given up looking for theological solutions to life (e.g., the combining of work and faith is no longer

\textsuperscript{762} Thornhill, \textit{Modernity}, vi and vii.

\textsuperscript{763} ibid., viii; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 74 and 77–81.

\textsuperscript{764} Ormerod, \textit{Possibility of Belief}, 64; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 74 and 78–81.

\textsuperscript{765} Refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 73, 74, 76, 82 and 83, 86 and 87, 95 and 96 and 146, wherein Casey’s analyses of this Topic 2 are almost identical to Dupré’s.
considered essential; or where earthquakes were once part of religious thought, now they have moved out of that to seismological/scientific thought).\(^{766}\)

In *Catherine Quinn*’s analysis of this Topic she highlights the importance of understanding what living and dying means to Australians, given our culture’s humanistic approach to both\(^ {767}\) and the complexity of the modern human condition in our society.\(^ {768}\) She says that our struggle with the issues that surround death is part of the age-old question of meaning, which is the essence of being human.\(^ {769}\) Death raises questions of meaning in many forms, yet today’s urban, cosmopolitan, globally over-exposed people tend to confront primitive fears with a need to have a watertight and scientifically proven response. Simultaneously, we know the impossibility of that.\(^ {770}\) We are used to seeing today’s certainties being demolished on page three of tomorrow’s morning paper. The search for certainty amid the present high levels of existential anxiety has led, among other outcomes, to such things as the denial of death, and all sorts of flight from consideration of the deep and meaningful.\(^ {771}\) Today, it is mostly ‘eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die’, and then all is over — after death there is nothing except, maybe, the memory of one in somebody’s thoughts from time to time.

In her analysis of this Topic, Miley says that the loss of meaning in modern life, especially in Australia, is our culture’s most serious challenge.\(^ {772}\) She asserts that the failure to teach the history of European culture, in both its European and Australian manifestations, has deprived our children of the knowledge of their roots, which is thought of as so essential to minority groups. The history, traditions and beliefs of our forebears is one of ‘the main ways we construct our identities and find a sense of place and of meaning to life’.\(^ {773}\) The question of ‘who am I?’, especially for adopted people, calls out for an answer. The deprivation of knowledge of our culture has made conceptual orphans of a whole generation of Australians. What appeared in the ‘swinging 60s’ as ‘freedom’ has become, for many young people today, little more than

---

\(^ {766}\) Casey, *Meaninglessness*, 9 and 115–126.


\(^ {768}\) Quinn, *Living & Dying*, 245.

\(^ {769}\) ibid., 247.

\(^ {770}\) ibid., 247 and 248.

\(^ {771}\) ibid., 248; and refer Dupré in Ch.2, 73, 74, 77, 81, 82, 86, 87, 95, 96 and 146, where her analysis of this Topic 2 is almost identical to Dupré’s.

\(^ {772}\) Miley, *Suicidal Church*, 37 and 160-161.

\(^ {773}\) ibid., 38.
‘freedom from meaning’. She further argues that one of the direst forms of meaningless is the loss of any sense of the meaning of life itself, and this loss seems, now, to have become endemic in some sections of our Australian society, especially among the young. This has arisen because many parents today do not take seriously the responsibility of bringing up their children as committed Christians and, for her, the best way to train a young person to become a Christian is by example. Additionally, our youth need to be trained to understand the things of God, to learn about faith, and to learn to pray and to practise their faith actively. Also, because of today’s meaninglessness of human existence, they need some substantial ideas as to the place of faith in an individual’s life.

Continuing, Miley insists that one of the two sins created by the modern age of materialism is promoting the physical as the primary locus of meaning. It enthroned the empirical as the new focus of meaning and interest, and taught people to look for meaning and fulfilment in what can be seen and held and tested.

Hugh Mackay articulates, when analysing the Australian perspective of this Topic, that in an age in which ‘we have simply lost our bearings’, ‘we have had to adapt to changes in our lives which are so significant that we are required to rethink who we are and what is the purpose of our lives (in Australia)’. He insists that Australians are being called on to think of Australian culture in a new way — we are at a ‘turning point’, we are in the midst of a significant, radical cultural shift in which old and new values, old and new attitudes, and finding ways to coexist in a genuinely pluralist society means that, possibly for the first time, we are understanding what diversity really means. He postulates that attitudes are symptoms of a society’s state of mind. They reveal our responses to the things that have happened to us and, occasionally, they offer a glimpse of the kind of future we are hoping for. Today, we

774 Miley, Suicidal Church, 38.
775 ibid., 40.
776 ibid., 32-35.
777 Miley, Suicidal Church, 42; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 73, 74, 77, 81 and 82, 86 and 87, 95 and 96 and 146. Again, Miley’s analyses about this Topic 2 in dialogue with Dupré are similar.
778 Hugh Mackay, Reinventing Australia: The Mind and Mood of Australia in the 90s (Sydney, Australia: Angus and Robertson, an imprint of Harper Collins Publishers Australia, 1993), 20, (hereafter ’Mackay, Reinventing Australia’).
779 Mackay, Reinventing Australia, 17.
780 Hugh Mackay, Turning Point: Australians Choosing Their Future, (Sydney: Pan Macmillan Australia Pty Limited, 1999), x, (hereafter ’Mackay, Turning Point’).
781 Mackay, Turning Point, xvi and xviii.
782 ibid., vii.
find ourselves swept up in the information revolution, with consequences we can scarcely imagine; and without the ability to use imagination, as Roger Haight says, both belief and natural thinking are in jeopardy. As Mackay further argues: ‘it’s not just that our attitudes are changing towards this or that, it’s that we are beginning to think in a new way, we are becoming a truly multicultural society.

When writing about this Topic, Thornhill argues that modernity’s vital concern — its quest for excellence and truth — is experiencing difficulties because modernity’s methodological assumptions are based on instrumental reason. This, in turn, creates further problems, especially in relation to the meaning of human existence in Australia’s secular culture of today, in which there is no fundamental agreement about what ‘reality’ means. Moreover, modern culture, with ‘emancipation’ as its dominant theme, distorts the various understandings of the meaning of human existence.

Discussion — Responding to the Australian secular concept of the meaninglessness of human existence

In Chapter 2, Topic 2, we observed Casey’s responses to the solutions postulated by Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud and Richard Rorty to the problem of the meaninglessness of human existence. Moreover, he insisted that we must have a meaning to human existence, if we are to experience meaningfulness. Pope John Paul II supported this claim in two of his Encyclical Letters. Now, in responding to the challenge in this Chapter 3, Topic 2, Casey displayed almost identical thought patterns to Dupré by showing us how the meaningful can, once again, replace the assertive in the world at large and, particularly, in Australia.

In her response to the secular challenge in this Topic, Quinn’s thoughts are almost identical to Dupré’s when she insists that we must go beyond the thoughts of a watertight scientific proof and the daily tabloids of human-centred elimination of certainties if we are to gain a better understanding of the question of meaning raised by death and its issues. We need to reintegrate transcendence into our lives and world. To

783 Mackay, Turning Point, xi.

784 Haight, Dynamics of Theology, 24 and 25.

785 Mackay, Turning Point, xvii; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 86 and 87, 95 and 96 and 146, wherein Mackay’s analyses about this Topic 2 are similar to Dupré’s.

786 Thornhill, Modernity, ix and x.

787 ibid., 129; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 74, 75, 77, 81–82, 86 and 87, 95 and 96 and 146. His analysis of this Topic 2 is similar to Dupré’s.

788 cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 87 and 88.
do this, we must focus on the meaning of life (i.e., the purpose of life and where death takes us, in God's view), rather than on the assertiveness of life (i.e., the humanistic technological assertive view of life and death as is thrust upon us by Australia's secularisation).  

According to Miley's response in this Topic, we need to teach the history of the cultures making up our Australian population, to help us know our roots, traditions and forebears' beliefs, because this is one of the main ways of constructing our Australian identity. Also, we need a religious education to find a sense of place and meaning to life. Australia's youth of today need to learn that, instead of a 'freedom from meaning' as was promised in the 'swinging 60s' and still carried forward to today, we need to go beyond the immanent humanistic understanding of life and its promotion of happiness to the type of life as taught by Jesus Christ and inspired by God. Miley says that the Church and Scripture contain all things necessary for salvation. We must also act to transform the care-worn tribulations of human existence, and to lessen the gap between that experience and the Kingdom of God. Moreover, we need to change from placing our hope in material components of existence and their so-called 'spirituality' to God and Christ's spirituality. Her logical answer to the problem in this topic is our need of the re-infusion of meaning into life, and that nothing can infuse meaning into life more than God. With these thoughts, she is similar to Dupré.

In his response to the challenge in this Topic, Mackay argues that, to find our 'lost' bearings in Australia's pluralistic and multicultural society, we have to think of our culture in a new way and to discover what diversity really means in our society's present state of mind. Thus, we must put our own meanings into our own lives, or they will remain meaningless. Yet, in exploring and clarifying our own individual

---

789 Quinn, Living & Dying, 248; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 86–88.
790 Miley, Suicidal Church, 38.
791 ibid., 41 and 42.
792 ibid., 7.
793 ibid., 13.
794 ibid., 22.
795 ibid., 164; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 86–88.
796 Mackay, Reinventing Australia, 20.
797 ibid., 306.
Chapter 3: Today’s Australian cultural perspective

values and purpose and sense of identity, we ought define them in terms of the community to which we belong.\textsuperscript{798} His thoughts are similar to Dupré.

Thornhill, in responding to the challenge in this Topic, argues that we need to get away from balancing things solely on instrumental reason and for self-affirmation, and endeavour to gain, in Australia, a fundamental agreement about the nature of reality and the meaning of human existence, by using ‘ideological consensus’ to help us understand the characteristics of modernity’s cultural movement. This will help us overcome the emptiness with which our cultural tradition lives.\textsuperscript{799} By avoiding ‘postmodernist’ assumptions, we can go forward from, and not abandon, the project of modernity.\textsuperscript{800} This implies our understanding of the ‘narrative’ (as discussed by Casey in Chapter 2, Topic 1), which is an important expression of modernity’s ‘turn to the subject’, and an indispensable medium for the expression of existential truth, the ultimate measure of what it means to be human.\textsuperscript{801} The ‘narrative’ component of personhood, combined with the essence of it, will give us the solution sought in this topic. To effect this, we need a renewed openness to sapiential, as opposed to instrumental, reason.\textsuperscript{802} Such a response to the challenge in this Topic indicates that his thoughts are similar to Dupré.

4. **Topic 3: Today’s Australian secular anthropocentrism dominates our country**

Breward, in analysing this Topic, insists that in Australia today there are many secular humanists who wish to reduce religion to a private concoction without any influence on social ethics.\textsuperscript{803} The modifications in the teachings of the Churches on sexuality and family law indicate the impact these humanists have had on fundamental shifts in perception, both inside and outside the Churches.

\textsuperscript{798} Mackay \textit{Reinventing Australia}, and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 86–88.

\textsuperscript{799} Thornhill, \textit{Modernity}, ix; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 86–88.

\textsuperscript{800} ibid., viii.

\textsuperscript{801} ibid., \textit{Modernity}, 121 and 128.

\textsuperscript{802} ibid., 97–108; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 86–88.

\textsuperscript{803} Breward, \textit{Australia Godless}, 87; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 72, 74, 93 and 94, 100-101, and 146. Here, Breward’s analysis of this Topic 3 is almost identical to Dupré’s.
Further, in Casey’s analysis of this Topic, he argues that, meaning/value making has been conveyed from God to the human mind\textsuperscript{804}, so today’s Australia needs moral intellectual and institutional strength to stand against the spirit of the age — the neo-pagan project.

In his analysis of this Topic, David Tacey insists that, for modernity and the Intellectual Enlightenment, progress involved withdrawing from the wider circles of expanded identity. Progress was a centripetal movement towards the self, in which the wider circles of mystery and enchantment were dissolved, a kind of inverted spiral converging on the self. Thus, modernity could be defined as a kind of psychological pirouetting around ourselves. We divorce ourselves from nature, family and friends, spiritual and cultural roots, all in a bid to find out who we really are. We set forth on ‘personal journeys’ to discover meaning, perpetuating the myth of the atomised individual, separate from others.\textsuperscript{805} In short, for him, secular anthropocentrism has taken over our Australian society.

Miley, in analysing this Topic, states that when the Anglican Church held a service for the 2000 Olympic Games, a golden opportunity was missed when the Olympic torch (the symbol of unity and community participation) was paraded past the Sydney Cathedral during the service. Instead of blessing the Church and the torch at the same time, which could have been done, the lack of so doing symbolised the total disconnection of the Church from our culture and society.\textsuperscript{806} For her, the Church lost a prime opportunity to insert a Christian dimension of thanks and praise and holiness into the moment,\textsuperscript{807} and today in our fragmented country where humanism rules, the Church is still missing the moment and holding back from engagement with contemporary society. This is mainly because of the Church’s attitudes.\textsuperscript{808}

Catherine Quinn, in analysing this Topic, emphasises the complexity of the modern human condition, with major illnesses we can now survive, where morbidity has replaced mortality, with technology that is called ‘life-saving’, and an increasingly ageing community sees us in situations which our forebears never had to face. The

\textsuperscript{804} Casey, \textit{Meaninglessness}, 126; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 72, 74, 93 and 94, 100-101 and 146. Again, Casey’s analysis of this Topic 3 is almost identical to Dupré’s.

\textsuperscript{805} David Tacey, \textit{Re-Enchantment: The New Australian Spirituality}, (Sydney: Harper Collins Publishers 2000), 183 and 184, (hereafter ‘Tacey, \textit{Re-Enchantment}’); and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 72, 74, 93–94, 100–102 and 146. Here, his analysis about this Topic 3 is almost identical to Dupré’s.

\textsuperscript{806} Miley, \textit{Suicidal Church}, 2.

\textsuperscript{807} ibid.

\textsuperscript{808} ibid.; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 72, 74, 93 and 94, 100–102 and 146. Here, her analysis about this Topic 3 is similar to Dupré’s.
people whose doctrinal statements we have inherited did not have to face the same level of complexity when they wondered about the beginning and end of life.\textsuperscript{809} In Australian secular society today, the challenge of death has been overcome with science and technology seizing significant control over life and death in the last few decades.\textsuperscript{810} This has been brought about solely by the human being’s individual perspective of the mind (the active, external, independent and objective); the human being’s selfhood perspective of the mind (i.e., the passive, internal, dependent and subjective) is not considered.

In his analysis of this Topic, Mackay says that, in our Australian society of today, ‘our consciences are pounded into submission by the heavy artillery of ambition, wealth and power’ — all human being-oriented, and used solely for human gain.\textsuperscript{811} He further insists that there is a new Australian approach to the understanding of social reality that has been emerging, at different rates, as it also has in most Western societies over the past 30 years — ‘we’re becoming more open-minded, less resistant to change and more prepared to take control of our own lives. Yet, we need to appreciate the causes and the speed of this revolution’.\textsuperscript{812}

\textit{Discussion — Responding to the Australian secular notion of the human person being only individual}

In his response to the challenge in this Topic, Breward asserts that in our deliberately secular nation, Australian Christians have to appreciate both the positive and the negative features of that secularity.\textsuperscript{813} Added to this, their experience will offer a better understanding of the rich variety of the resources on which they can draw, both locally and ecumenically, as they deal with various issues, one obviously being that of helping persons to become ‘whole’ again.\textsuperscript{814}

Further, as we saw in Chapter 2, Topic 2, Casey argued that the three philosophers’ (Nietzsche, Freud and Rorty) solutions failed to achieve the main object

\textsuperscript{809} Quinn, \textit{Living & Dying}, 245.

\textsuperscript{810} ibid.; 248; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 72, 74, 93 and 94, 100–102 and 146. Here, her analysis of this Topic 3 is similar to Dupré’s.

\textsuperscript{811} Hugh Mackay, \textit{Right & Wrong: How to Decide for Yourself}, (Australia: Hodder Headline Australia to Dupré’s. Pty. Ltd., 2005); xiv (hereafter ‘Mackay, \textit{Right & Wrong}’); and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 92–94, 100 and 101 and 146. Here, Mackay’s analyses of this Topic 3 are at variance with those of Dupré.

\textsuperscript{812} Mackay, \textit{Turning Point}, vii, xx and back cover.

\textsuperscript{813} Breward, \textit{Australia Godless}, 93.

\textsuperscript{814} ibid.; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 94–98.
they set themselves — surmounting meaninglessness — because they not only confused their arguments by using ‘redescription’ of words, but also misunderstood the inwardness they sought to replace, and all concluded in a scenario of limitless power. He stressed that, in addition to the unfolding of an individual’s life and personality, there is her/his essence, comprising the human, in general, and everything that is personal and particular to her/him. In short, there are two aspects to personhood, and in their solutions to the problem of meaningless, the three aforementioned philosophers focused on one only — the unfolding — in an attempt to deny or exclude the other — the essence.

Tacey’s response, to the challenge in this Topic, implies that, if we continue our quest for spiritual meaning to combat modernity’s type of ‘progress’, one of the first things we discover is that our ‘individuality’ is largely illusory, even something of a hoax. We are spiritually, emotionally and psychologically the products of our family, our communities, and our society. As we see through the illusion of individuality, the ancient circles of expanded identity begin to reappear. By once again becoming ‘whole’ persons, the centripetal movement of modernity comes to a halt and an expansive movement takes over. We must break down the conventional walls of the modern self, if we are to reach beyond the confines of modernity and become ‘whole’ persons once more.

In responding to the challenge in this Topic, Miley argues that we must stop holding back from engagement with contemporary society just because we do not agree with it. She asserts that we need Christ’s Gospel to show us the way forward out of our present anthropocentric society. Yet, while it is indeed desirable for a person to be whole, and it is thrilling that God can make it so through his Trinitarian power (i.e., God is the creator of all life; by his death Jesus conquered death and fear and exemplified God’s love for his people, and the Holy Spirit is at the same time Lord and Giver of Life), there is plentiful evidence of a current paradox that we need to address: the promise of positive and creative life is embedded in Christian Scripture and worship, but the Churches (especially the Anglican Church) are full of the timid, damaged and fearful people, and the Church itself is timid, damaged and fearful. Far

815 Casey, Meaninglessness, 119 and 120.
816 ibid., 9 and 116; cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 94–98.
817 Tacey, Re-Enchantment, 184; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 94–98.
818 Miley, Suicidal Church, 2 and 3.
819 ibid., 10.
from being the model and the channel of the power of God to make us whole, the Church often actively disempowers individuals within it. This occurs on both an individual and a structural level. Instead of being freed from slavery through our status as ‘Sons’ of God, we are still slaves — slaves to fear, frozen by inability, chained by depression, shackled by dependence.820 To become ‘whole’ again, we need to be freed by, and empowered through, Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.821

When responding to the challenge in this Topic, Quinn suggests that, in the complexity of the modern human condition, the so-called crisis of faith (i.e., living in a human-centred, godless society) does not have to lead to loss of faith but to a transition from the comfortable to the uncomfortable. This is where we find that faith and doubt can coexist, and that swinging out over the vast chasm of nothingness does not necessarily end in annihilation.822 We need to trust in God: the entire essence of faith is to believe in spite of all evidence to the contrary, and to hold fast to that.823 A belief in a form of continuing existence after death is central to our Christian faith. This arises, in large measure, from a series of relatedness to our Creator, and a sense that this connection is through our soul, which is at the creative core of the life-spirit of each person.824 Such trust will help us to become whole persons again, as we learn to meld the human being’s individual perspective of the mind with the human being’s selfhood perspective of the mind.

In his response to the challenge in this Topic, despite the pounding our consciences receive today, Mackay insists that people who are going to be affected by a decision have the right to be consulted before that decision is made.825 While the anthropocentric problem is already here, we, as Christians, have the right to question it and take action to remedy the dilemma. He also argues that we need to rethink our priorities, to refocus on our values and to decide what kind of life we really want to live826 (e.g., a fragmented one as in the present state of affairs, or a whole one in the future). Further, in the new approach to the understanding of social reality, Mackay asserts that we are all required to make choices about our realities, and to help in this

820 Miley, Suicidal Church, 11 and 12.
821 ibid., 11; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 94–98.
822 Quinn, Living & Dying, 252 and 253.
823 ibid., 253.
824 ibid.; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 94–98.
825 Mackay, Right & Wrong, 281.
826 Mackay, Turning Point, 293.
regard, we should look to the part of postmodernism which insists that there is an infinity of alternatives and which encourages us to explore them. This may be another way of helping us become whole persons once more.

5. Topic 4: In Australia’s present secular society ‘economic consumerism’ reigns supreme

Scott Cowdell argues that the forces of consumerism, brought about through late capitalism in the West, picks us apart as individuals and isolates us from one another. Such commodification of experience leaves late-modern Westerners impoverished in terms of stable identity and life-giving solidarity. Unfortunately, this situation suits the global economy, and the post-modern culture shadowing it, to have us uneasy in our selves, anxious, and obsessively consuming. Settled people, on the other hand, living with vision and purpose in a community of faith, yet integrally invested in the wider community, are people who have discovered a radically counter-cultural alternative vision.

Zygmunt Bauman, in analysing this Topic, suggests that the ambient anxiety abroad in the West is brought about by four contributing factors: first, the so-called ‘new world disorder’, which has replaced the dominant Cold War blocs with a world far less predictable and directional, and threatening in new ways not yet fully understood; second, there is universal deregulation of the economic markets in globalisation, with resultant job insecurity now chronic in the West; third, the widespread unravelling of family and community bonds upon which people could once rely in times of difficulty; and fourth, the post-modern relativism and ‘palimpsest identity’ — the essential

827 Mackay, Turning Point, xx.
830 Cowdell, God’s Next Big Thing, 229.
831 ibid., 3, 4, 17, 26, 97-99, 100, 103, 108 and 158-160.
832 ibid., 229.
833 ibid., 154.
indeterminacy and softness of the world — which consigns people to a trackless path through life, without moral and relational markers.\(^{834}\) It is from all this that the particular seductiveness of consumerism arises, with its world of images linked to commodities and their consumption, which has a narcotising effect.\(^{835}\) Cowdell asserts that there is more than just the narcotising effect because, in a culture destructive of identity, the search for identity is redirected and manipulated by the forces of consumption. He suggests three ways in which this happens: one, through the advertising of products that will help make up what is lacking in our lives and in our selves. (e.g., the alarming manipulation of women’s self-image and hence their identity in the West, by selling them products in response to their desire for a better self-image, which are marketed as a means to developing a confident identity); two, this confident identity is also on offer through various niche markets which are directed to and linked with the sort of person the buyer thinks she/he is. Thus, identity is identified with a way of life in which experience is commodified, mediated by certain characteristic images, products and patterns of consumption — here it is not so much narcotisation as much as desire for identity that calls the tune; and third, there is an idealising of commodities and shopping, beyond materialism in any obvious sense (e.g., television quiz shows in which material prizes are revealed and described in voiceover with effusive tones whereupon the audience applauds a product — an appliance, a car, or a plane trip). For Cowdell, this is consumption spiritualised, even fetishised.\(^{836}\)

John Carroll emphasises an escapist element in today’s economic consumerism climate in that the shopping mall is as much about cosmology as about consumption, with the undeniable narcotising, comforting dimension of consumption. He differentiates between the “Shopping World” and its retail predecessor, the large development store. The latter is still about products, while the former is about experience, reverie and the possibility of stepping out of one’s mildly alienating routine in an environment of relative autonomy (e.g., shoppers [especially women] see the frisson of alternative lives and chance encounters conjured up for the imagination by the glamour clothing and related outlets on offer).\(^{837}\)


\(^{835}\) Cowdell, *God’s Next Big Thing*, 23.

\(^{836}\) ibid., 24-26.

Bouma postulates that Australia has been transformed by the emergence of a vigorous consumer economy that is more ready to provide for the whims of the consumer than the infrastructure needs of its citizens and economy. Today, with round-the-clock openings of many significant commercial venues, sport, religion and family have lost their protected time and compete with many other activities from entertainment to shopping. Retail therapy has taken the place of a variety of other forms of leisure. Allied to this is the radical altering of familiar landscapes as suburbs are bulldozed to make room for food retail outlets and its associated building needs. With all of this our social and cultural foundations and expectations are eroded. Values of caring and compassion are eroded by competition and consumerism, changing the way we relate to each other and to organisations. This erosion of trust is not trivial as it does, and will continue to, undermine our trust in each other and in God.838

In his analysis of this Topic, Tacey highlights today’s split between religion and spirituality, which, he says, has exacerbated the problem of community in a world that has come to privilege personal spirituality above communal religion. He states:

There is a marked tendency today to assume that spirituality is ‘good,’ and religion is ‘bad’. The popular view is that religion is institutional, narrow and authoritarian, whereas spirituality is individual, expansive and liberating.839

He further states that, in our Australian context, our social ethos has lent this ‘religion-versus-spirituality’ dichotomy extra weight, since our national character has, from the beginning, been anti-institutional and anti-authoritarian (as expressed in our folk anthem Waltzing Matilda), and what is ‘good’ in life supposedly arises from ‘spirituality’ and what is ‘bad’ from ‘religion’.840 He also asserts that today’s consumerist society reinforces our shrunken, empty status. It is vitally important for capitalism that we continue to experience ourselves as empty and small, since this provides us with the desire to expand and grow, and this desire is what consumerism is based on. Consumerism assumes that we are empty but permanently unable to fulfil our spiritual urge to expand. It steps into the vacuum and offers its own version of expansion and belonging. As the circles of modern identity become ever-smaller, consumerism becomes ever-larger, to compensate for the loss of integrity and meaning.841


839 Tacey, *Re-Enchantment*, 213.

840 ibid., 213 and 214.

841 ibid., 185; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 97–101, where Tacey’s analyses of this Topic 4 are almost identical to Dupré’s.
The above five authors highlight today’s Australian society as promoting the ‘having/taking’ rather than ‘the being’. In our country, so ravaged by consumerism and work demands, stress and loneliness, the spirits of Australian people are starving for the comforts of neighbourhood and community, despite their desires for bigger homes, more cars and extra incomes to maintain the mortgage payments — all aimed towards seeking fulfilment, but settling for abundance, with the price being the disintegration of community and of self.

Mackay, analysing this Topic, says that, in adapting to the changes and recent roller-coaster ride in Australian culture, experts highlight that, emotionally, Australians are not in good shape — insecurity is frequently identified as our *bête noir*. We are living with uncertainty and ambiguity. One symptom of this is the growing emphasis on something called *lifestyle*. Another symptom is the relentless determination to have *fun*, and to resist the angst of our parents’ lives. He states that people today talk a lot about ‘spirituality’. Consistent with the more inner-directed character of post-materialism, many of them seem less comfortable with the present materialist’s ‘out there’ God than with the idea of a personal, intimate God within. Unfortunately, some choose to explore the limits of sensory experience through drug use rather than pursue more conventional material goals. In addition, our sense of being part of a community has lost most of its force. Materialism has become the only appropriate basis for a value system. Having lost touch with each other — by becoming obsessed with privacy and security, by cocooning ourselves in our homes and cars, and by confining most of our contacts to pathways of electronically ‘mediated’ information — our moral development has been stunted. As a result, we have become a more tightly regulated society in which we accept more and more rigid rules to compensate for our lack of spontaneous social sensitivity. In such an insecure society, new elites have emerged. As Mackay says:

The more powerful people are those who control the flow of information; those who control the illicit drug trade; the ‘spin doctors’ who create the political and commercial myths and images which lull the rest of us into believing that life is ‘fun,’ that everything will somehow be all right (perhaps

---

842 cf. Dupré in Ch.2, 101-104; also Dupré, *Transcendent Selfhood*, 17. Here all the analyses of Cowdell, Bauman, Carroll and Bouma are almost identical to Dupré’s in this Topic 4.

843 Mackay, *Turning Point*, 301.

844 ibid., xxiv.

845 ibid., xxviii.

846 ibid., xxix.

847 ibid., xxxii.
because a media star said it would be), and that this week’s ‘celebrity’ is a worthy focus for our dreams of a better, more fulfilling life.848

In this nightmare scenario, Australia has become a highly stratified society, with stark and unbridgeable divisions between rich and poor.849

In addition, Mackay postulates that in the advertising and media world ‘(our) brand integrity is being eroded, and consumers are becoming more sceptical …… and that’s part of a broader culture shift’.850 Further, the invention of invisible money and credit has revolutionised our financial transactions, and the new retail environment has changed the way we shop.851 This, allied with the rapidly changing and highly technologised mass media in contemporary Australian society, demands urgent examination and control by us in order to maintain interpersonal relationships within community.852 For Mackay, the notion of communication and how it is mediated are concepts neither clearly understood nor agreed upon in academia, or our society at large.853

Further, about this Topic, Miley articulates that people once placed their hope in the supernatural and spiritual; now it is in the material components of existence.854 Today is the world of the supposed collapse of capitalist modernism. Although its monuments seem still to be with us, there has been an undeniable change of attitude, seen most forcibly and most recently in the international anti-globalisation protests. It is the age of cultural and moral relativism, where adherence to old values or any form of absolute values is derided as ‘stuck’, passé, or unforgivably doctrinaire. It is the poststructuralist era of the critique of language, of history, and of meaning itself. It is the tawdry, meretricious and mendacious world of mass media and advertising, where ‘reality’ has become a brand name. It is the era of the loss of social meaning, which is accompanied by the attempt to find that meaning within the individual. The loss of meaning in modern life is Australia’s most serious challenge and underlies the distressingly high (and rising) rates of stress and depression leading to, especially in our young people, appalling rates of drug dependence and suicide, brought about,

848 Mackay, Turning Point, xxxiii.
849 ibid.
850 ibid., 181.
851 Mackay, Reinventing Australia, 22.
852 ibid., 9, 10, 11.
853 ibid., 10; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 97–101. Here, Mackay’s analyses of this Topic 4 are similar to Dupré’s.
854 Miley, Suicidal Church, 22.
particularly, by relativism and subjectivism, and the ‘quick gratification’ of mass culture.\textsuperscript{855} She argues that the combination of meaninglessness and individualism characterises contemporary life\textsuperscript{856} and its wholesale rejection and deconstruction of broadly held social values, ethics and morals,\textsuperscript{857} and that one of the sins of Australian materialism is its accent on turning peoples’ desire towards wanting to acquire goods,\textsuperscript{858} and that another is the spiritual repression of contemporary Australian culture.\textsuperscript{859}

A further aspect of materialism is the urgency it promotes towards peoples’ gratification. On a recent Australian interstate airline was an advertisement to entice passengers to select a pay-as-you-go TV channel. It read:

Channel up and swipe your credit card to enjoy right now! You’ve nothing to lose! What are you waiting for? Get swiping immediately!

This is a typical example of instant gratification, where the cost is portrayed as being irrelevant.

In similar vein, Janiene Wilson states that the society in which we live is often described as a ‘spiritual supermarket’, with all sorts of possibilities from which to choose.\textsuperscript{860} She also argues:

The growing emphasis upon human subjectivity, that is, the individual’s own world of thought and feeling, of meaning-making, has, I believe, become the defining feature of contemporary Western culture.\textsuperscript{861}

Such human subjectivity, sponsored by economic consumerism, underlines one of Australia’s major problems — contemporary tension between the objective and the subjective.\textsuperscript{862}

Neil Ormerod presents the issue of God and politics in the Australian mix. He stresses that the second part of Pope Benedict XVI’s 2006 Encyclical was directed

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{855} Miley, \textit{Suicidal Church}, 36, 37 and 41.
\item \textsuperscript{856} ibid., 36 and 37.
\item \textsuperscript{857} ibid., 39.
\item \textsuperscript{858} ibid., 42.
\item \textsuperscript{859} ibid., 42; refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 97–101. Miley’s analyses about this Topic 4 are similar to Dupré’s.
\item \textsuperscript{861} Wilson, \textit{Is Religious Experience Enough}, 41. Here Wilson’s thought is similar to Dupré’s in this Topic 4.
\item \textsuperscript{862} Wilson, \textit{Is Religious Experience Enough}, 42.
\end{itemize}
towards the activities of Church charitable agencies and how they relate to the political realm. On the one hand, the Pope repeatedly states that the Church has no direct role in politics, and this would please the most ardent secularist:

(Church social teaching) has no intention of giving the Church power over the State….It is not the Church’s responsibility to make this teaching prevail in political life…..(The Church) cannot and must not replace the State…..A just society must be the achievement of politics, not of the Church.\(^{863}\)

On the other hand, the Pope argues that the political realm must be purified by faith, ‘since (politics) can never be completely free of the danger of a certain ethical blindness caused by the dazzling effect of power and special interests. Here faith and politics meet’.\(^{864}\)

Ormerod argues that the mix is essential in Australia because politics can, and in some cases do, control the various media outlets, and the Church does not accept a marginalisation of religion and its exclusion from the public realm, especially in relation to the government legislating on such matters as abortion, euthanasia, stem cell research and industrial relations.\(^{865}\)

**Discussion — Responding to the Australian secular view that ‘economic consumerism’ is everything**

In responding to the secular view in this Topic, the following five Australian authors are almost identical to Dupré, in that we need to consider “the being” rather than “the having/taking”.

Cowdell argues that we need to shed the straitjacket of consumerism and passivity by finding a more intentional discipleship in the way we live, work and pursue relationships. For him, there are signs that God’s “Next Big Thing” is already coming to birth. As ever in the Church’s history, the next ‘emerging Church’ will prevail. Changes will come but most from the past will not disappear. We need to keep our nerve and embrace this new thing God is doing. We need to move with the ‘emerging Church’ and its three characteristics which are concerned with the Spirit, the theological focus and the praxis of this emerging Church. Cowdell suggests that the emerging Church is and will be; mature (i.e., a Church characterised by mutuality, impatient with familiar

---


864 ibid.

865 Neil Ormerod, ‘God and Politics in the Australian Mix’ in the Catholic Leader Christmas 2006; 10, (hereafter ‘Ormerod, God & Politics’); and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 97–101. Here, Ormerod’s analysis in this Topic 4 is similar to Dupré’s.
institutional dysfunction, “for the sake of the joy set before it”); mystical (i.e., a Church that conceives the mystical goal as union with the sacred encountered in the depth of reality, rather than removed from it; and militant (i.e., a Church that is confident, intentional and assertive. It will challenge the distortions and sad inevitabilities of late-capitalist culture in the West in the name of a fuller vision of what it is to be human — the Church’s mission now and in the future, constellates around the key cultural facts of lost identity and solidarity). The way forward is to go via the three crucial modes to be provided by the emerging Church — liturgy (which needs updating via liturgical imagination), laity (which requires change to embrace lay vocations), and leadership (which demands appropriate reorganisation with strong Church leaders). In short, this emerging Church will concentrate on Jesus’ techniques — faith, hope and love.

Bauman insists that we need to address the aforesaid four contributory factors which ambient anxiety in the West brought about, if we are to overcome the particular seductiveness that has arisen in our culture from consumerism. We need to become neighbours and community, not simply isolated people linking our images to commodities and their consumption and their resultant narcotising effects.

Carroll says we need to bring balance back into our lives to overcome the escapist element in current economic consumerism which reigns supreme in Australia: Our imagination must be controlled to enable us to think clearly about glamour clothing, life-style(s) and personal appearances. Further, we need a meta-narrative — an all-encompassing vision of life’s meaning, of our place in things, of the good life, of values worth living and dying for — in our people’s lives or they will perish, because today’s decline of faith is emblematic of the current crisis of identity and solidarity in the West.

Bouma states that we need to rethink the social location of Australia’s religious organisations which have changed dramatically through being associated with the powerful, decision-making bodies and trend-setters. Churches are no longer central and pervasive, but have become more marginal and private. To offset the pace of

866 Cowdell, God’s Next Big Thing, 74-108.
867 ibid., 113-151 (liturgy), 152-190 (laity), and 191-227 (leadership).
868 ibid., 1-4, 228-230.
869 ibid., 23; Bauman, Postmodernity and its Discontents, 22-25, and 28-29, and 43.
870 Cowdell, God’s Next Big Thing, 26-27 and 35-36; and Carroll, Shopping-Consumerism, 118-135.
change, clergy training institutions and Church structures need to be updated, as do the new or different forms of spirituality that have emerged from the changing cultural context of Australia’s religious and spiritual life. Moreover, “if you want to peddle trust in God you must provide a trustworthy community”.

According to Tacey, a future reconciliation between popular spirituality and formal religion is necessary, as this would lead to the construction of a new paradigm for Western religious experience, rather than the huge archetypal paradigm shift of today’s culture. For him, religion will not regain its old power until it can face change in the same spirit as does science. Its principles may be eternal, but the expression of those principles requires continual development. What previously was regarded as written in stone must be transformed and changed. We have all sorts of theological and cultural work to do, and reversals and deconstructions to be performed, before we can separate our superimposed patriarchal ideology from the core substance of our living religion. We need to go beyond individualism to community. In addition, he insists that if we stop believing in the myth of our shrunken identity, the monster of consumerism would die, because it would no longer be nourished by our unrealised spiritual urges. Therefore, true spirituality, which punctures the bubble of the ego and leads us to the larger circles of our human and transhuman identity, is extremely subversive of the status quo. This is why the consumer society is keen to debunk or ridicule true spirituality, but anxious to promote all manner of substitutes. Established commercial interests and the intellectual forces of modernity have reason to keep the myth of the alienated self alive, and that is why the true spiritual quest is at once a protest against consumerism and a rebellion against the logic of modernity and the precepts of rationality.

The following three authors, in their responses to the secular challenge in this Topic, are similar to Dupré.

To overcome the problems of insecurity, uncertainty, ambiguity, mass media harassment and the diminishing of community values in today’s Australian materialistic civilisation, Mackay postulates that we need to understand that the moral sense is a
Chapter 3: Today’s Australian cultural perspective

Social sense. Personal relationships are both the wellspring and lifeblood of morality. Our moral sensitivity is heightened when we feel connected with the communities in which we exist (i.e., at home, in the neighbourhood, at school, and at work). When communities fragment, shared values are the first casualty.\(^\text{878}\) Once we start thinking of virtue as adaptable, or disposable, it can begin to lose its moral force.\(^\text{879}\) We need revitalised communities, a restored sense of mutual obligation, and strategies to reduce our feelings of alienation and vulnerability.\(^\text{880}\) This requires closer connections with the neighbourhood; the security of feeling ‘safe’ (both physically and emotionally); and ways of compensating for our shrinking households.\(^\text{881}\) Moreover, he argues that there is nothing wrong with a bit of material comfort and prosperity, as long as we do not expect that it, alone, will bring us happiness.\(^\text{882}\) Quoting Samuel Johnson, Mackay insists that ‘happiness is not found in self-contemplation; it is perceived only when it is reflected from another’.\(^\text{883}\) We are more likely to achieve peace of mind when we attend to the needs and wellbeing of others than when we single-mindedly pursue our own happiness at the expense of others.\(^\text{884}\) He also suggests that it would be a good idea to let our insecurities work for us.\(^\text{885}\)

In his analysis of the nature of communication itself, Mackay discusses the extent to which contemporary media can facilitate genuine communication, or whether, more commonly, they merely mediate the transference of information and data.\(^\text{886}\) For him, communication, whether it be understood as sending and receiving messages or as two processing units disturbing one another’s internal states and in the process effecting communication, is an essential social operation. He states:

Indeed it is arguably the necessity of social life. Without communication there can be no such thing as society. How communication is mediated is therefore a matter of singular social importance.\(^\text{887}\)

---

878 Mackay, Right & Wrong, 276.
879 ibid., 75.
880 Mackay, Turning Point, 251.
881 ibid., 262.
882 ibid., xxvi.
883 Mackay, Right & Wrong, 77.
884 ibid., 282.
885 ibid., 301.
886 Hugh Mackay, Media Mania: Why Our Fear of Modern Media is Misplaced, (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press Ltd., 2002), 10, (hereafter ‘Mackay, Media Mania’).
887 Mackay, Media Mania, 10.
Thus, he argues that people, and especially parents, should be encouraged to adopt a more realistic view of the role and function of the media in our lives. 888

To rectify the debilitating effects that economic consumerism and materialism have put into Australian society, Miley advocates that we need to change from placing our hope in material components of existence to God and Christ’s spirituality. 889 The challenge for us in the modern age is to maintain the primary significance, indeed necessity, of the supernatural in this material era. 890 She insists that the Church, despite its many problems, is uniquely placed to lead in this area, to re-insert meaning into our lives and community. While the (Anglican) Church, in her opinion, has not effectively done so, we must help change its attitude so that it will do so in the future. 891

Likewise, to assist us address the contemporary tension between the objective and the subjective in today’s Australian culture, Wilson suggests that we rely on the Church to help because it has set itself the task of enabling individuals to understand the religious nature of their experience, especially in our current economic consumerist society. 892 To succeed in its task, the Church, in turn, as Miley also postulates, needs to provide the people of God with an interpretative framework that embraces the materiality and impermanence that affects daily lives and enables people to begin where they are in moving towards a living faith in God, a faith which is felt, but does not rely on feeling. 893

In looking at the Australian mix of God and politics, Ormerod asserts that, in line with Pope Benedict XVI’s statements, the issue is not faith in its purely religious focus, but the purifying effects of religious faith. The Church’s social teaching argues on the basis of reason and natural law, namely, on the basis of what is in accord with the nature of every human being. This strong claim acknowledges that the social teaching of the Church is not grounded in revelation, the Bible or the great dogmas of the Church. Rather, it is arrived at ‘through rational argument’. He postulates that this appeal to rational argument should not be understood in terms of something like deductions from first principles which are evident to all. Rather, it is in the sense of engaging in dialogue, discussion and debate over key issues. Such a process unfolds

888 Mackay, Media Mania, 15; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 101–103.

889 Miley, Suicidal Church, 22.

890 ibid., 23 and 24.

891 ibid, 41; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 102 and 103.

892 Wilson, Is Religious Experience Enough, 49; and also cf. Vatican Council II, Gaudium et Spes #21.

893 Miley, Suicidal Church, 49.
over time, gaining greater insight and clarity as the debate continues. In short, he says that the Pope proposes a process whereby the Church, through the purification of reason that faith promotes, impacts on the political order. However, we need to remember that there is no straight line from religion to the political realm, but neither is there a wall between them.\footnote{Ormerod, \textit{God & Politics}, 10; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 100–102.}

6. **Topic 5: The antagonistic forces of the ‘bastard’ dualisms of faith and reason/nature and grace rule today's Australian immanent humanistic culture**

A. Faith and reason

\textit{Australian Authors’ analyses of faith and reason in our immanent humanistic culture}

In Chapter 2, we saw Moses asserting that, in ancient times, there were accepted syntheses of the dualisms of faith and reason, and nature and grace. Later, Aquinas’ and other philosophers’ thoughts led to a re-ignition of these dualisms (inherited from medieval thought) in Christian thinking. For Moses, these dualisms, though late medieval constructions, still need to be addressed today.\footnote{Moses, \textit{Options}, 18.}

According to Tacey, in this Topic, in our time, the central emphasis in spiritual change involves the overcoming of the dualism between spirit and matter (faith and reason), and the resolution of the many problems to which this dualism gives rise, including the denigration of the body, the control and manipulation of women, the demonisation of sexuality, and the abuse and desecration of nature. All of these problems are bound up in a dualism, the antagonistic forces of which prevent us from understanding the radical implications of the incarnation, and of the necessity for continuing incarnation.\footnote{Tacey, \textit{Re-Enchantment}, 231; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 103–106, 107 and 108, and 109–113. Here, Tacey’s analysis of this Topic 5 is almost identical with Dupré’s.}

For him, like in the Western world, there is also confusion in Australia surrounding the dualisms in this topic, and the three typologies of dealing with
this situation, as discussed in Topic 5 of Chapter 2, are the same here as they were for the Western and European cultures.

In his analysis of the Australian perspective of this Topic, Thornhill proposes that, despite modernity’s alleged quest for truth, it is a most difficult task given that the controversies of modernity are based on incorrect assumptions. As a result, today, we have a plethora of versions of ‘the truth’ where, in many cases, the controversial replaces the true. When looking at the Australian view of faith and reason, he postulates that the interpretation of modernity’s development as an ideological movement, inspired by a questing for excellence and truth, has long characterised the life of the Western traditions, including our Australian tradition. Thornhill argues that the failure of philosophies to provide a satisfactory rationale in support of moral principles does not necessarily indicate that these moral principles are without any satisfactory rationale in contemporary Western culture. Continuing, he argues that if, as Eric Voegelin has pointed out, the assumptions of modernity present it with an unprecedented difficulty, this does not mean that the search for truth is not essential to the project of modernity. The same logic also applies to the polemics in faith and reason — we Australians need to search for the truth to enable us to address the dialectic it contains.

Marie Farrell postulates that, with technological expertise expanding daily, many Australians find that science offers a more reasonable perspective than has been presented traditionally by religious faith. Today, in Australia, scientifically speaking, it might well be claimed that ours are ‘the best of times’. Faith-wise, in terms of Australian Christianity generally and Catholicism particularly, it might equally be claimed that ours are ‘the worst of times’. She argues that there is no denying that ours is an age of realised science fiction. Besides engaging in present speculation, science, like religion, also surmises

897 Thornhill, Modernity, ix.
898 ibid.
899 ibid., vii.
900 ibid., 72.
901 ibid., 16; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 103–106, 107 and 108 and 110–113. Herein, his analyses about this Topic 5 are almost identical to Dupré’s.
903 Farrell, Interplay of Faith & Science, 83.
Chapter 3: Today’s Australian cultural perspective

about the end of the universe.\textsuperscript{904} Science is always developed through learning and knowledge; faith is always inculturated.\textsuperscript{905} It has to be conceded that, for many people in Australia today, the God of the 21st Century has become ‘customised’ (if not ‘killed’), market-driven and drained of personhood; has been reduced to a god of the gaps offering some purely rational explanation for what may reside on the other side of the Big Bang; has, if any, relevance merely as a god of mathematical causality of the kind envisaged as a god far removed from the Creator God of Christian faith.\textsuperscript{906} Yet, some 21st Century scientists robustly defend the claims of Christianity concerning a personal Creator continuously involved in the universe.\textsuperscript{907}

Likewise, Anthony Fisher and Hayden Ramsay articulate that, for professional philosophers and theologians, one imperative is to establish the common ground. The most obvious is the shared concern for truth — though that very notion is, of course, much contested today. There is a need, therefore, for philosophers and theologians to begin almost from scratch, explaining and articulating what and why they think and believe what they do; and they will help each other enormously if they do that. But who will listen to arguments for particular truths if truth itself is ridiculed or treated with indifference, even by high profile academics or university administrators, and when argument is scorned or avoided?\textsuperscript{908}

It is clear that the uncertainty and loss of truth, brought about by the antagonistic forces of these dualisms, perpetuate the rule of these controversies in our culture today. Moreover, as Gerald Gleeson argues, whenever we reflect on the relationships in these dualisms, we must first clarify our starting point and intellectual perspective.\textsuperscript{909}

\textsuperscript{904} Farrell \textit{Interplay of Faith & Science}, 84.
\textsuperscript{905} ibid., 84 and 87.
\textsuperscript{906} ibid., 87.
\textsuperscript{907} ibid., 88; refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 103–106, 107 and 108 and 109–113. Her analyses of this Topic 5 are almost identical to Dupré’s.
John McDermott’s analysis of this Topic highlights that the paradoxical tensions in Catholicism emerge clearly in the relation of faith and reason, Faith’s truths transcend reason and cannot be deduced by it, but faith’s assent cannot be blind. Not only can reason arrive by analogy of some understanding of divine mysteries but it also can discover the ‘foundations of faith’ and recognise the most certain signs of Divine revelation. In revelation, the revealing God endowed man with reason. Indeed the incarnate Word, in whom the Church believes, spoke to people in human words. He meant to be understood in ways accessible to human reason: through His words and actions people are led to believe in Him. Moreover, only by insisting on the value of human reason can the Church uphold the value of human freedom in the work of salvation. The importance of this connection has become clear in ecumenical discussions with Protestants.

Further, as part of her analyses of Topic 5, Miley says that people in Australia today are confused about ethical issues, because the realm of morality is part of the realm of religion, not of science, and religious belief is now discounted in many English-speaking Western societies, especially Australia. Nowadays, we have ethicists drawn from the world of science and reason to try to help us understand whether scientific developments, such as human cloning and genetic engineering, are morally right. This is because, she says, the source or moral and ethical understanding, which was previously to be found in religion, has been removed, and science cannot generate these values.

As Mackay asserts, when addressing Topic 5 about the dualisms which tend to rule our secular society, today’s Australians incorporate uncertainty, the by product of the antagonistic forces of these dualisms, into their view of the

910 Vatican Council 11, D S 3004f., 3008, 3015-3017, 3035 and 3041.
911 ibid., D S 3010.
912 ibid., D S 3009f., 3019, 3033f. and 3036.
913 ibid., D S 2017.
915 Miley, Suicidal Church, 160 and 166; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 103–106, 107 and 108 and 109–113. Miley’s analyses of this Topic 5 are similar to Dupré’s.
world. The absolute is giving way to the relative; objectivity to subjectivity; and function to form. In the modern world, ‘seeing was believing’ — in Australia’s postmodern society, the reverse has taken place. The human mind has brought about dialectical situations wherein antagonistic forces abound and, particularly, in the two dualisms being discussed in this topic — nothing is certain, nothing is simple. Mackay insists that Australia, as a society, is paralysed by its own uneasiness and fearful of its future. Even the concept of God receives a changed emphasis, from the materialist’s ‘out-there’ being, to a spirit that is more intimately part of us. While these can be positive signs, nevertheless, ‘Now I’m not so sure’ is becoming the theme song for contemporary Australia.

The present culture shift is a shift towards uncertainty, a shift towards diversity, a shift towards complexity. Contradictions abound. We have adopted a ‘wait and see’ attitude and, especially among today’s Australian youth, the withholding of commitment has become an attractive means of escape, at least in the short term.

(ii) Discussion — Responding to the antagonistic forces of this ‘bastard’ dualism of faith and reason in Australia’s immanent humanistic culture

Further, looking at the Australian secular perspective in this Topic 5, in which ‘the controversial replaces the true’, we observe that, from the responses in the following three paragraphs to reverse that situation, Moses’ thought patterns, again, are almost identical to those of Dupré.

916 Mackay, Turning Point, xix.
917 ibid., xix and xx.
918 ibid., xix.
919 ibid., xii.
920 ibid., xx.
921 ibid., xxiv.
922 ibid., xiv.
923 Mackay, Reinventing Australia, 232; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 103–106, 107 and 108, and 119–123. Again, Mackay’s analyses of this Topic 5 are similar to Dupré’s.
Firstly, Moses highlights how, over the years, many philosophers and theologians have proffered their attempts to surmount the controversies emanating from the faith and reason dualism. He discounts Gauchet’s approach and those of Radical Orthodoxy and Continental philosophy as all being inadequate to overcome the challenge presented by this dualism. Similarly, in addressing the problem of the relationship between nature and grace, he says the time has come to dispense with the binary it presents and ponder where we can go from there. In looking at both of these dualisms, we can attempt to think of a synthesis of the two elements (i.e., hold them as complementary to each other), or hold them in conflict with each other, or hold them as distinct and separate, yet in creative tension while at the same time avoiding rationalism, fideism and relativism.

Secondly, in responding to the antagonistic forces of faith and reason from an Australian point of view, Moses, inspired by Jan Van der Veken’s and Andre Cloots’ distinction (i.e., what can be said about God, firstly, on the basis of generally available experience and, secondly, on the basis of particular experiences of particular people), shows us the possibility of harmony between faith and reason, with a pluralism of reasonable believing, when they become naturalised and relativised. His inspirers suggest that all that can be said, using the first concept, is that the primordial qualification of creativity or something like that is intelligent; but that this is a lure to goodness, truth and beauty, or gracious, or compassionate or holy — this can only be said by using the second concept. Their distinction highlights that faith is much more than just knowledge — it is also a trust and already a kind of love. But such entrustment brings with it certain cognitively relevant commitments, based on particular experiences of particular people, and these experiences, meanwhile, help to form, and are formed by, interpreted with the help of, and even enabled by, religious traditions of one kind or another. This constitutes religious traditions for cognitive purposes as dynamic traditions of experience and interpretation. Hence, their distinction, now embedded in a distinction between religious and scientific traditions of experience and interpretation, is affirmed, extended and deepened by recent philosophies of religion and science. When the epistemic consequences are elaborated with the hermeneutics of reasonable believing (in which reasonableness in belief is not universisable but partly a contingent matter, a function of one’s place and time and one’s history), this reasonableness does not in fact mean that it is valid for all minds — what is reasonable for one person may well be unreasonable for someone else. Moses
argues that the distinction also ends up being relativised as a result of miracles and/or ‘luck’ and, in a rather harmless sense, naturalised.\textsuperscript{925} As he says:

From the point of view of generalised or more generalised reason, for a person taken up into particular traditions of experience and interpretation, it is only to be expected that they believe as they do. Indeed, given the tradition specific criteria, it may even be reasonable for them to so believe, in a sense of particularised rationality.\textsuperscript{926}

Therefore, he declares, this entitles him to argue that the distinction between faith and reason is not that of subjective versus objective, or non-rational versus rational, or supernatural versus natural, but more like particular versus general, or even, more particular versus less particular.\textsuperscript{927}

In summarising Moses’ approach, we observe that from the viewpoint of relatively more general reason, faith, in its cognitive aspect, seems to be a version of more particularised reason. But, less particularised reason finds itself incompetent to decide, in any final fashion, in the realms of more particularised reason. On the other hand, philosophy, which lives in less particularised reason territory, can bring greater clarity, and perhaps greater charity, but it cannot make religious choices for us. In the uncertainty of today, we are still weighing up alternatives in a manner which is reasonable but not generalisable, except in a context-dependent sense. Therefore, we need to understand that mindsets and interpretative structures determine experiences, and vice versa and, in our deliberations, be prepared to acknowledge the phenomena of ‘moral,’ ‘scientific’ and ‘religious’ luck. Nevertheless, despite all that, decisions once made can be recognised as reasonable, by ourselves after the event, and they may even be made reasonable by third parties who cannot go our way.\textsuperscript{928}

The following seven authors, in their responses to the challenge of the antagonistic forces of faith and reason in this Topic 5 are all almost identical in their thoughts to Dupré.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{926} Moses, \textit{Faith & Reason}.
  \item \textsuperscript{927} ibid., 39.
  \item \textsuperscript{928} ibid., 56 & 57.
\end{itemize}
Tacey postulates that to overcome the dualism of faith and reason, we must understand that the entry of the Spirit into time, history, flesh and embodiment means that the objects and persons of this world are sanctified by this same arrival or presence of Spirit. The ‘descent of Spirit’ is the major insignia of our time, and wherever this movement is felt, the old dualisms in which Spirit has been kept apart from the realm of manifestation are exploded, collapsed or reversed. Hence, the old sacred order, which has failed to further the incarnational unity of spirit and matter, looks spurious and doubtful to those who have become inspired by the new (or perennially new) paradigm, generally known, today, as ‘spirituality’. But to the extent to which religion already possesses a spiritual foundation, it is at any moment in transition across both paradigms (i.e., the old cultural form that youth and secular culture call ‘religion,’ and the new cultural form which they generally call ‘spirituality’) and, therefore, contains both elements (old formalist and new inclusivist) at the same time. But youth and secular culture tend not to see this internal fluctuation, partly because they are not receptive to the creative dimensions within religious tradition, and partly because the spiritual, progressive, expansive aspects of tradition are not easily seen by, or clearly modelled to, the community. That is to say, if creative change is going on in religion, the majority of people know nothing about it, and the old stereotypes and limitations will stick until there is public renewal and change. Scholars and educators, therefore, have a moral responsibility to show students and the public how religion is changing, and how it is reaching beyond self-concern and self-interest, beyond dogmatic formalism, to engage with the time and the community. Love, rather than fear, is needed in today’s secular world to defeat these dualisms of faith/reason and nature/grace — we need the power of the Holy Spirit to fill us with this love.929

Thornhill insists that, in our search for truth and certainly, lost through the antagonistic forces of this dualism, the fundamental challenge faced by us Australians today, and indeed by Western society, is the reconciling of recognition of objective truth with a full acknowledgement of the vast range of subjective factors which condition our access to that truth.930 In effecting this reconciliation, we should not abandon what has been brought to light by modernity’s unprecedented awareness of human subjectivity, but work through

---


a more adequate understanding of that subjectivity.\footnote{Thornhill, Modernity, 122.} While avoiding the relativism whereby a radical historicism sees the historical process itself as the ultimate constitutive of meaning, we must accept the point of view of a de-centred subjectivity, undertaking an exploration of the boundless sea of meaningfulness which Husserl called our ‘life world’.\footnote{Ibid., 127.} Existential truth, the ultimate and comprehensive truth of human existence, must be open to what is beyond the measures of human reason; it cannot be contained in any closed system of human thought.\footnote{Ibid., 128.} He asserts that we need to be careful with ideological interpretations, produced in modernity’s quest for truth, as they will undermine modernity’s shared intellectual inquiry if they are not recognised for what they are. But, he further argues that the radical solution they propose — that all claims to possessing something of the truth should be rejected — can only lead to a relativistic nihilism which makes the search for truth meaningless.\footnote{Ibid., 120–128.}

Farrell argues that faith and science together can offer people in Australia today a more comprehensive worldview than is presented by either science or faith alone.\footnote{Farrell, Interplay of Faith & Science, 83; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 103–106, 109 and 110 and 115–118.} She purports that, for the academic community and for the scientific literate lay person, the factors distinguishing Catholic faith and scientific knowledge no longer present the controversial ‘divide’ once seen as impassable. Theology (faith seeking understanding) is entirely supportive of scientific inquiry into the physical nature of the universe, and how faith and science can be amicable partners in discovering the truth behind universal processes. At the same time, she says, we would not want to ignore the very real ways in which science and faith challenge each other, especially with regard to belief about the origins of the universe, God’s providential action within an evolving universe, and about ways of addressing concerns attendant upon the cultural effects of technological development. She postulates that the metaphor ‘interplay’ is a most apt word to suggest the contemporary faith-science relationship.\footnote{Farrell, Interplay of Faith & Science, 97–98.}
Following John Paul II, Fisher and Ramsay describe faith and reason as being like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth. But, faith and reason carry people to the truth in different ways. On the one hand, reason, according to one prominent intellectual tradition, is our nature and, so, our natural response to the world around us and to ourselves. On the other hand, faith is a divine gift. Fisher and Ramsay argue that the idea of faith independent of reason is ambiguous. If it refers to faith with no input from rationality whatsoever, then it is logically impossible: no one can have beliefs of any sort without formulating propositions, understanding and criticising propositions, endorsing reasons, and so on. If it refers to faith, the content of which is not generated by means of natural reasoning at all but only by supernatural processes (‘revelation’), then it is hard to grasp how it can mean much to us: how can we accept (or reject), integrate (or fail to integrate), and follow (or not) beliefs from an alien source that are not expressed and justified in our own language and thought systems? If it refers to faith which stands and falls not by reason but on some extra-rational authority, then it may be coherent but must nonetheless be troubling: why should rational beings accept and follow beliefs that are counter-rational, not open to canons of rational criticism, and/or rationally incommunicable to others? Fisher and Ramsay also argue that the idea of reason without faith is perplexing. If it refers to reasoning without any unargued premises, then it is, again, logically impossible. If it refers to reasoning without beliefs received on authority from others, then it may be possible but seems highly unlikely. If it refers to the pursuit of truth systematically excluding from consideration certain sorts of enduring questions or all data that are unobservable, immeasurable, uncontrollable or unusable, it is certainly possible but many would wonder, why bother?

Further, these two authors postulate that the greatest achievement of the synthesis of faith and reason is the relationship between theology and philosophy that it suggests. The latter need each other, while enjoying their

938 ibid.
939 ibid.
940 ibid., xvi.
own autonomy. Nonetheless, their relation is controversial. Yet, Fisher and Ramsay say that we could start by thinking of them as complementary.

In similar vein, Gleeson asserts that the standpoints of faith and reason are irreducible, and need to be held in a mutually enriched tension. Thus, he argues that theological activity grounded in faith should include and embrace philosophical activity, while, for its part, philosophical activity should be positively open to insights deriving from faith and revelation.

Likewise, John McDermott, argues that the relation of reason and faith reflects the more fundamental relation of natural and supernatural orders. Since mind and reality correspond in truth, reason grasps truths of the natural order and faith affirms truths of the supernatural order, mysteries hidden in God and now revealed. The (Catholic) Church insists on the mutual complementarity of the two orders despite their real diversity, for the revealing God endowed humans with reason. Indeed, the incarnate Word, in whom the Church believes, spoke to people in human words. He meant to be understood in ways accessible to human reason: through his words and actions people are led to believe in him.

The following two authors in their responses to the antagonistic forces of faith and reason in this Topic 5 are similar in their thoughts to Dupré. Miley suggests that Churches, and especially the Anglican Church, need to seize hold of the task of moral leadership, which some seem largely to have put aside at the beginning of the 20th Century. The Churches must return to a ‘will to mission’, to lead people back to God.

941 Fisher & Ramsay, Faith & Reason: Friends or Foes, xvii.
942 ibid.
945 Vatican Council II, DS3015, DS3027, DS2029.
946 ibid., DS3019.
947 ibid., DS2017.
949 McDermott, Faith, Reason and Freedom, 164, 165 and 166; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 109 and 110 and 119.
Mackay’s answer to contemporary Australia’s paralysis and its ‘Now I’m not so sure’ theme song is, also, to turn to God, who, in our thoughts and actions, needs to become more intimately part of us.\textsuperscript{950} He further insists that moral decision-making is a subjective process, but that doesn’t mean ‘anything goes’. He says that

\begin{quote}
although there might be no absolute rules to guide my every decision — no universal ‘right answers’ — there is always a right answer for me, here and now, and it is my personal responsibility to work out what it is.\textsuperscript{951}
\end{quote}

Further, he argues that symbols are assuming new importance in Australia (e.g., our flag, our independence from the British monarchy). We are torn between the desire to define our new identity and the desire to reassure ourselves about our heritage. In the same way as we must face the challenge of trying to find the balance between cultural unity and diversity, we must also face the challenge of trying to achieve a stronger sense of national identity and patriotic pride without losing our healthy disregard for the jingoistic excesses of nationalism.\textsuperscript{952}

Mackay insists that we need to effect the critical decision to take personal and individual responsibility for our lives, and not blame someone else or, worse, believe that we have to get someone else’s life under control as well — ‘if our happiness depends on someone else toeing our line, we’re sunk’.\textsuperscript{953} In doing this, we need to get our priorities straight, to work on our relationships, and to develop the art of reflective detachment. Then, we will reinvent Australia together.\textsuperscript{954}

B. Nature and grace

(i) \textit{Australian Author’s analyses of nature and grace in our immanent humanistic culture}

Following natural philosophy trends, and because of Australia’s immanent humanistic perspective, we have tended to detach the realms of nature (i.e., nature without transcendence) and grace (i.e., supernatural grace)

\footnotesize

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{950} Mackay, \textit{Turning Point}, xx.
\item \textsuperscript{951} Mackay, \textit{Right & Wrong}, 274.
\item \textsuperscript{952} Mackay, \textit{Reinventing Australia}, 291 and 292.
\item \textsuperscript{953} ibid., 299.
\item \textsuperscript{954} ibid., 306.
\end{itemize}
from each other. As Moses says, when looking at the Australian perspective of the dualism of nature and grace, we still have the binary between the positivistic interventionist supernatural on the one hand, and the purely natural on the other. Being a true binary, they bleed off each other and are mirror images. Yet he argues that today there are some indications that this binary is in a process of Historical deconstruction, with what happens next, yet to be determined.955

In chapter 1, we saw Moses articulate four points about Nature and Grace that deserve our attention:

1) Healing and intimacy with God require divine grace, but it is a grace which is very much in touch with Augustine-type nature (i.e., nature as it really is). Yet, humankind is called to intimacy with God and, for Aquinas, this depended on God’s grace. Grace heals nature and restores it to its true integrity, rather than grace building on nature.

2) Supernature is another name for God, the ‘supernatural’ source of the ‘natural’, rather than as a realm within our world built on top of the natural.

3) The 16th Century Thomists’ separation (as opposed to a distinction) of supernature and nature — the two levels of being — was the forerunner of atheism.

4) The ‘intellectualism’ of the 17th Century changed our thoughts on nature and reduced it to a colossal ‘clock-type’ machine, with God as the clockmaker and, in this picture, nature and human beings are all different.956

Again, as with the dualism of faith and reason, we tend to be confused in Australia, as elsewhere, by having the earlier mentioned three typologies to consider and deal with, as we attempt to dispense with the binary altogether, to enable us to go beyond the dualism of nature and grace confidently and with certainty into the future.

955 Moses, Options, 1; Refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 103, 104, 105, 107 and 108, 110–114 and 119–123. Again, Moses’ analyses of this Topic 5 are almost identical to Dupré’s.

956 Moses, Blumenberg, 1–15; and also Moses, Options, 1–22. Herein, Moses’ analyses of this part of Topic 5 and the earlier Topic 1 are almost identical to Dupré’s.
(ii) **Discussion — Responding to the antagonistic forces of this ‘bastard’ dualism of nature and grace in Australia’s immanent humanistic culture**

In his response to the antagonistic forces of nature and grace from an Australian perspective, Moses proposes that we dispense with both sides of the binary. To effect this, he begins with the two different strategies already implicated in the earlier-mentioned work of Dupré, but not allowing them at least the appearance of opposition. Then, Moses adds a few more options, including Radical Orthodoxy and a Continental philosophical alternative to it. These strategies are outlined in the next four paragraphs.

The first strategy is a neo-Humean, Wittgensteinian, Strawsonian option of keeping the components apart, rejoicing in their difference and in their modern autonomy and in the differentiation of their discourses, but striving to keep them in, or get them into, a better balance; this latter is usually to be accomplished via a species of philosophical anthropology (e.g., as adopted by Herman De Dijn), and offering something other than just a form of fideism (e.g., by D.Z. Phillips).

The second is the world-view constructive option (as used in Whiteheadian language) to come up with a coherent logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience might be interpreted and might be at home, including the religious interest (e.g., as espoused by Jan Van der Veken and Andre Cloots). However, other outlooks (such as those of very religious people or anti-supernaturalistic theisms, or process theisms, or open and closed religious naturalisms) would affect the result of this option.

The third is the Radical Orthodoxy option which is to revive, in a suitably corrected modernised form, the integrating vision of patristic and high medieval Christianity as it existed before the late medieval distortions eventually led to the split, and then to use this to critique modernity and overcome its deficiencies.

Finally, a Continental philosophy (e.g., of the Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Derrida, Lévinas or Marion types) recovers of a sense of transcendence, with God as gift and human life as poised ‘in the between’. This strategy overlaps with Radical Orthodoxy. They both have much sympathy for each other, but come from different directions and with no particular intention to revive the patristic and medieval ways of doing things.
Moses then mounts an argument as to why and how and under what conditions the first two strategies (options) can be combined. He also argues that there might be more than one way to keep science, ethics, religion, etc. in a healthy relationship, at least so far as protection from scientism is concerned. To effect the plan in his argument, he asserts that the first two options, rather than being in opposition, if construed properly, can well combine and reinforce each other, namely via a deployment of a version of the second which, by both its manner and self-conception and its content, enables us to do the first.

Moses, like Dupré, insists that today we ought not to feel especially bound to these modern ‘bastard’ dualisms. Yet, as we move beyond them, there may well be certain achievements of modernity that we want to keep. Moses continues and says that Radical Orthodoxy may offer one way through the thicket beyond the binary. However, he personally advocates that process theology is well equipped to offer another way and, with certain amendments, possibly even a superior way.\(^{957}\)

### 7. Topic 6: Religion is no longer essential in today's Australian secular culture

Breward, in his analyses of this Topic, postulates that theological ecumenism between Protestants and Catholics led a whole generation of 70s and 80s students, anxious to experience new styles of ministry, to break away from the tyranny of Church organisation into what seemed a more open world outside. Many found the demands of unstructured freedom more than they could cope with, especially when congregations, unwilling to change, showed little enthusiasm to fund brave new ventures. He argues that

… in part, that was a failure of vision and courage and a retreat back into the safety of the familiar. It was also a lay protest against clerical modernity, which ignored the spiritual needs of those who cherished the past, because of the enthusiasm with which some clergy surfed the waves of the future.\(^{958}\)

In this period, Protestants in particular found it very difficult to deal with these crosscurrents. At some points, these changes had close links with cherished Protestant values, such as liberty of conscience, the priority of spirit over structure, and the need

---

957 Moses, Options, 11–12 and 18.

for continuous reformation. Yet, it quickly became apparent that unless denominations kept their historic roots, change for the sake of change would be a very destructive agent of secularisation, which simply accommodated Christianity to contemporary cultures. Speaking prophetically about political issues like foreign policy could easily become a dressed-up version of views of secular analysts, rather than a genuinely critical perspective, which sprang out of costly engagement with both historic revelation and contemporary cultures. Thus, it was not surprising that a proportion of clergy, educated in the 1960s and 1970s, dropped out of ministry altogether because the Churches were reluctant to change. Some became very successful in business, professions and politics; others disappeared from the institutional Churches into the counter-culture.959 At the same time, the Roman Catholic Church often dealt sharply with those who were deemed to have moved past the line of obedience to authority. However, it found priest and religious resignations, especially with some of these people marrying, difficult to handle, plus the dramatic drop in vocations which, in turn, forced all sorts of changes in Catholic schools and staffing. Anglicans, Methodists and Presbyterians experienced a similar fall-off, though the reasons may have been different.960

Miley asserts, in her analysis of the Australian perspective in this Topic, that people are leaving the Anglican Church, and indeed other Christian Churches, because our youth is mainly and firmly anti-institutional, with ‘hangovers’ from threats of nuclear war, terrorism, conscription, and cost-of-living rises leaving them relatively powerless today. The Church is dull (i.e., members, buildings, worship and everything belonging to it), hypocritical (e.g., the Church is a hospital for sinners, not a club for saints), out-of-touch (i.e., with spiritual interest and eternal things), lacks moral leadership, democracy and ability to accept other denominations, and is irrelevant today.961 She argues that the Church (Anglican) itself is responsible for its decline in the West, because of its invention and entrenchment of attitudes and structures that are inimical to its success in its mission, and its profound resistance to the sort of change that is necessary to succeed. She says ‘the Church is not just dying, but suiciding’.962 The Church, with its inadequacy, its dissociation from the faith of the biblical and apostolic era, its inability to deal with the conditions of modern life, and the increasing

959 Breward, *Australia Godless*, 83; here Breward’s analytical thoughts about this Topic 6 are similar to Dupré’s.


962 ibid., 3.
disconnection of people of all ages, especially the young, from organised religion, is failing in its primary task, that is, to bring the gospel of Christ to all people.\textsuperscript{963} She further asserts that it is the culture of the Church, not the tenets of its faith, that makes it difficult to enter.\textsuperscript{964} Yet, the decline in attendances and the fall-off in religious belief (which are not identical) is not necessarily the fault of the Church per se — modernism is also responsible\textsuperscript{965} and, today, there appears to be a renewal of interest in spirituality which has shown cracks in modernism’s edifice.\textsuperscript{966} She insists that the Anglican Church is held back from its engagement with contemporary society by its ‘middle class’ value systems,\textsuperscript{967} structural problems in power and authority, hierarchy and dependence,\textsuperscript{968} attitudinal problems affecting racism, sexism and homophobia,\textsuperscript{969} and institutional difficulties, including matters concerning the relationship between the clergy and the laity.\textsuperscript{970}

Tacey’s analytical view in this Topic is that, when we Australians relax and are allowed to feel, our feelings are often religious, but our pronouncements are mostly secular. The split is between thought and feeling, as if in Australia you can have as many religious feelings as you like as long as you do not talk about them in religious terms or name them as ‘religious’. There is enormous fear in the Australian psyche: fear of religion, fear of the unknown, fear of an authority greater than our own. Some of this fear is well founded; many religions in the past have been tyrannical and dictatorial, and they have imposed a culture of conformity and compliance, under threat of hellfire and damnation. Australians have overwhelmingly rebelled against this style of religion. Tacey asserts that far too much of our religious tradition has been fixated upon the workings and miracles of the Divine in the ancient past, so that we have participated in a sort of cult of Jesus to the detriment of the continued workings of the Holy Spirit in the present. Thus, it is little wonder our traditional religions have been declining, for they

\textsuperscript{963} Miley, \textit{Suicidal Church}, 3.
\textsuperscript{964} ibid.
\textsuperscript{965} ibid.
\textsuperscript{966} ibid., 3 and 4.
\textsuperscript{967} ibid., 57–64.
\textsuperscript{968} ibid., 65–75.
\textsuperscript{969} ibid., 76–112.
\textsuperscript{970} ibid., 113–159; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 72, 73, 86 and 87 and 100–101. Her analyses of this Topic 6 are almost identical to Dupré’s.
have lost the spiritual vision that is needed to track the sacred in the present and to bring the Spirit into living focus.971

All the above highlights that, for some believers, because religion is becoming so confusing and stressful, they are losing faith and/or treating it as less important in their lives; for non-believers, religion is obviously not essential at all in their lives.

Tacey, who professes a Jungian belief, in an effort to subvert the conventional dualism of inner and outer reality, refers to an entity called ‘the Australian psyche’, which is an intermediate realm between interiority and society; a kind of collective interiority or imaginal place. For him the idea of a national psyche is an enabling device, a way of integrating apparently disparate materials, a notion that enables him to bring together the subtle concerns of the spirit with the raw facts of social experience.972

Neil Brown states that people are struggling to believe, especially as religious faith today is more starkly a matter of a personal decision than in previous ages, when it received much social and cultural support.973 Faith is a deeply personal reality, but its normal context is religion, and that itself can create tensions because, today, religion is many things — social, political, cultural and economic, and for a Christian it is fundamentally about faith in the mystery of life.974

Denise Desmarchelier also highlights the tension in religion today, as she argues that up until recently, women were usually treated as ‘second class’ members of the Catholic Church, and this impacted on their ability to believe.975 She highlights how the Catholic Church has been affected significantly by the changes in the situation of women in society. Developments in theology have also challenged and raised the

971 Tacey, Re-Enchantment, 240–241; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 72, 73, 86 and 87 and 100–101. Here, too, Tacey’s analysis of this Topic 6 is almost identical to Dupré’s.


974 Brown, Struggling to Believe, 16–18; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 70, 72, 73, 86 and 87, and 100–101. Brown’s analysis of this Topic 6 is almost identical with Dupré’s.

status of women (e.g., insisting on the use of inclusive language,\textsuperscript{976} and giving women chaplaincy roles).\textsuperscript{977}

In similar vein when presenting the report on their qualitative study in the Research Project On Catholics Who Have Stopped Attending Mass, which was also compared with two other quantitative surveys (i.e., the 1996 Catholic Church Life Survey,\textsuperscript{978} and the 1998 Australian Community Survey\textsuperscript{979}), Robert Dixon and Others said that there were seven Church-centred reasons why people ceased going to Mass. They were: the irrelevance of the Church to life today; the misuse of power and authority in the Church; problems with the priest(s) in the parish; lack of intellectual stimulation; concerns related to the parish as a community; a sense of being excluded by Church rules; and structural factors.\textsuperscript{980} Also, they cited three participant-centred reasons: family or household related issues; crisis of faith; and going to Mass simply not a priority.\textsuperscript{981}

Tony Kelly argues that while ‘tradition’ expresses a fundamental aspect of Catholic faith, it is often viewed with suspicion in our country — another factor in the decline of Church attendances, in particular, and a falling-away from religion, in general. He says that it is frequently lamented that in the thrall of economic imperatives, the contemporary education system is depriving Australia’s young of any sense of a nurturing tradition.\textsuperscript{982} Fortunately for Catholics, Vatican Council II’s document, ‘Dei Verbum’, clarified our thoughts on tradition and revelation by saying that, whatever tradition might mean, ‘no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of Our Lord Jesus Christ’.\textsuperscript{983} Thus, the process of tradition will add nothing different or new compared with what God has already revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Christ. Hence, tradition is the unfolding in time of the

\textsuperscript{976} Desmarchelier, Woman & Catholic, 69.

\textsuperscript{977} ibid., 71; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 70, 72, 73, 86 and 87, and 100–101. Her analysis of this Topic 6 is almost identical with Dupré’s.


\textsuperscript{979} Dixon & Others, Research Project 2007, 64–66.

\textsuperscript{980} ibid., 18–36.

\textsuperscript{981} ibid., 37–43; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 70, 72, 73, 86 and 87, and 100–101. Robert Dixon’s and Others’ analyses about this Topic 6 are almost identical to Dupré’s.


\textsuperscript{983} Kelly, Making Sense of Tradition, 123; and Vatican Council II, Dei Verbum # 4.
influence and significance of this ‘unique and unsurpassable event’, right up to the time God will bring about its cosmic and historical consummation: ‘Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again’.

Richard Lennan postulates that, in order for the Catholic Church to be a genuine community of faith, its members need a clear and shared sense of what they believe, and of how they are to live in accord with their faith: doctrine provides such a mechanism. However, it can be controversial because of its origins and its claims — hence, it also presents avenues whereby members become disenchanted and lose faith. Just as identity and its expression are critical issues in contemporary Australia, so for Christians, too, identity is inextricably linked with symbols — another obstacle impacting on Church attendances.

Gerard Moore asserts that current Australians display indifference to Christian worship, mainly because contemporary Western (including Australian) society gives enormous respect to the choices and rights of the individual. This has greatly affected peoples’ belief and practice of faith in our country, to its detriment, especially, as the relation of the individual to the whole of society has not been so well thought through; nor has the relationship of human beings, and human society, to the environment, or nature. These relationships are more in the world of the symbolic. Yet ‘modern’ society, built around the persuasiveness and success of science, technology and economics, carries an underlying distrust of the symbolic: what cannot be measured does not exist; what is not yet known is simply awaiting discovery. The strong currents of individualism and technological thinking that strongly influence our intellectual make-up cause difficulties in our understanding worship and, indeed, our religion.

984 Kelly, Making Sense of Tradition, 123; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 70, 72, 73, 86 and 87, and 100–101. His analysis of this Topic 6 is almost identical with Dupré’s.


986 Lennan, Making Sense of Doctrine, 159.


988 Moore, Making Sense of Liturgy & Ritual 106.

989 ibid., 106 and 107.

990 ibid., 107; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 70, 72, 73, 86 and 87, and 100–101. His analyses are almost identical to Dupré’s on this Topic 6.
Thea and Neil Ormerod explore the complex nature of marriage as a social, cultural and religious reality, in which they highlight the fragility of marriage in our modern Australian society, as couples deal with changing gender roles and diverse models of relationships. Our society faces an increasingly complex array of views about marriage. On the one hand, certain groups continue traditional understandings of marriage as primarily a social reality organised by the couple’s parents. On the other hand, there are calls for the legal recognition of gay and lesbian relationships as equivalent to marriages, with all the incumbent rights, such as adoption, inheritance and access to IVF. Perhaps today, more than ever, many are aware of the fragility of marriage, due to the divorce of parents, family members and friends. People still want to be in a relationship, they want companionship and want to express their sexual desires, but they fear the pain of broken commitment. Given these circumstances, many Australian people, including Catholics, question whether the Catholic view of marriage, as a permanent and exclusive commitment, still makes sense — another obstacle impacting on Australians’ belief and Church attendances.991

Joseph Sobb says that the Catholic Church, in its official statements, in its catechesis, and in its liturgy, argues for the importance of the Bible and urges Catholics to read and study it. However, the Bible itself, and how to read it, remains an enigma for many. While still the largest selling book in the world, it appears in several ways to be losing its significance for many people today — even those who might be called ‘religious’.992 It seems this is because the Old Testament writings deal with the activities of semi-mythical peoples, with wars and kings, with strange religious rites and customs and sayings. The New Testament letters often address issues or problems that seem of marginal interest now, while the Gospel stories about Jesus and his sayings come from a different, possibly irrelevant, social and religious situation.993 Our society, too, is becoming more visual and less literate, with the particular features that characterise such a culture (e.g., both the information and the entertainment industries place great emphasis on such things as a constant search for innovative, even bizarre, ways of presentation, on the speedy processing and delivery of a breadth of information, and on the apparently limitless possibilities of modern technology). In


993 Sobb, Making Sense of the Bible, 137.
contrast, the Bible is a literary text thousands of years old, written in ancient languages. Much of its world view is alien to us and even incomprehensible, and its texts and ideas frequently seem not readily responsive to our contemporary needs. As a result, diverse and divergent reactions to this situation, both positive and negative, are prevalent today. At one extreme, we have the ‘Christian Fundamentalists’ and, at the other extreme, we have the ‘rejectionists’ — both impacting on Australia’s interest and belief in the Bible and, hence, religion.994

Thornhill, in analysing this Topic, states that, modernity reacts against the elitism of past ages through ‘the affirmation of the ordinary’. An essential element of the ideology of modernity is ‘setting the ordinary man and woman at the centre of the stage of life’.995 Quoting Van Gogh, Thornhill states:

Man is not on the earth merely to be happy, nor even to be simply upright. He is here to realize great things for society, to attain nobility and to rise above the vulgarity in which almost all individuals drag out their existence.996

In short, humans are to serve humans, not God — the problem anthropocentrism presents to us Christians today. Thornhill continues and says that the culture of modernity, with ‘emancipation’ as its dominant theme, has brought about a situation where Australians, who once placed their hope in the supernatural and spiritual, now place it in the material components of existence, leaving Australia’s culture very spiritually repressed.997

In analysing the current Australian view that religion is no longer essential to our secular culture in Topic 6, Mackay postulates that one way of distinguishing religion from morality (a most confusing polemic today, which has caused a big decline in Church attendances) is to say that, in a secular society like ours, you can believe anything you like, but you can’t do anything you like: we have developed a variety of sanctions to restrain uncivilised behaviour.998 In our godless society today, religion is not essential to our culture and morality is governed by immanent humanistic concepts and ideals. For Mackay, much of today’s Australian politics is based on the means

994 Sobb, Making Sense of the Bible, 137 and 138; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 70, 72, 73, 86 and 87, and 100–101, where Sobb’s analyses are almost identical with Dupré’s about this Topic 6.

995 Thornhill, Modernity, 109.

996 ibid., 113; and see Van Gogh, His Sources, Genius and Influence, ed. Judith Ryan, (Sydney: Art Exhibitions Aust. Ltd, 1993), 16.

997 ibid., 22, 23 and 129; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 72, 73, 86 and 87 and 100–101. Here, Thornhill’s analysis of this Topic 6 is similar to Dupré’s.

998 Mackay, Right and Wrong, 49.
justifying the end, rather than the reverse (e.g., the war on Iraq was changed from destroying Saddam Hussein's mass weapons of destruction — after little evidence could be found — to 'liberation'); the harsh and inhuman treatment of illegal boat people, refugees and asylum seekers was deemed necessary to deter the influx of 'illegal immigrants' — both ploys counted for nothing, compared with the achievements of political objectives.\footnote{Mackay, \textit{Right and Wrong}, 126; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 70, 72, 74, 86 and 87 and 100–101. Herein, Mackay's analyses on this Topic 6 are similar to Dupré's.} He also cites the problems of abortion, contraception, in-vitro fertilisation, organ transplants and biotechnology as arguments for 'the end justifying the means', as well as causing some churchgoers to stop going to Church because of the personal virtue and moral issues involved.\footnote{ibid., 264 and 265.} He further suggests that, in the name of multiculturalism, Australians are redefining their cultural identity, but experiencing some pain and anxiety in the process.\footnote{Mackay, \textit{Reinventing Australia}, 23.} This, combined with the significant shift in the character of Australian politics (as mentioned earlier), which has left voters confused and cynical, adds extra impetus to the already, and growing, decline in Christian belief and Church attendances.

\textit{Gerald Gleeson}, when looking at the challenge of a credible sexual ethic and its implications towards the possibility of Christian belief in Australia, states that the development of hormonal contraception has transformed contemporary sexual practices. It has also meant that traditional Catholic teachings on sexual morality have become culturally anomalous — another cause for many Catholics turning away from this faith, while at the same time causing anxiety, doubt and loss of faith in other Christian traditions.\footnote{Gerald Gleeson, 'A Credible Sexual Ethic?' in \textit{The Possibility of Belief: The Challenges and Prospects of Catholic Faith}, ed. by Richard Lennan, (Strathfield, New South Wales: St Paul's Publications, 2004); 221, (hereafter 'Gleeson, \textit{A Credible Sexual Ethic}').} Widespread use of contraception is, arguably, the most significant among the social and cultural changes impacting on marriage and sexual practices more generally in Australia.\footnote{Gleeson, \textit{A Credible Sexual Ethic}, 221.} Pope Paul VI's Encyclical, 'Of Human Life', reaffirmed the long-standing Catholic conviction that contraception was not compatible with authentic marital sexuality.\footnote{ibid.} For most Catholics, this teaching remains a stumbling block to the Church's credibility; as a result, they have come to define their Catholicity in isolation from it.\footnote{ibid., 222.} The Pope's publication also triggered and renewed
interest in the dignity of personal conscience. To the extent that the Encyclical led to a deeper appreciation of the importance of conscience and so fostered moral maturity among Catholics, it has had a positive effect. Yet, while some welcome the fact that Catholic couples are now confident in their own decision-making capacities, and seemingly untroubled by any conflict with official Church teaching, others believe that there has been too much emphasis on freedom of conscience, and not enough emphasis on the responsibility to form one’s conscience in the light of Church teaching. All this has led to enormous problems within the faithful’s understanding of belief. Responsible parenthood decisions arguably belong to the intimacy and privacy of married life, with all its complexity. Proponents of this outlook state that it is difficult for statements of the Church’s teaching authority not to be heard as an intrusion on personal privacy and/or as guilt-engendering for those who aspire to the ideals put before them.\textsuperscript{1006} Also, the fact that the Church’s Magisterium is male and celibate does not enhance its credibility in a secular society,\textsuperscript{1007} especially when revelations of sexual abuse by some clergy have weakened the ‘moral authority’ of the Magisterium to teach on sexual matters.\textsuperscript{1008} In today’s culture, fertility is considered an optional extra that may be set aside, rather than being looked upon as essential to the meaning of a couple’s relationship.\textsuperscript{1009} The Church’s teaching, by contrast, draws the opposite inference about fertility and its control.\textsuperscript{1010}

\textit{Phil and Dan McCredden} comment on the challenges for the Church after interviews they carried out. The answers they received are in the next four paragraphs.

1) A person can be a Christian without attending Church. She/he can choose not to attend Church and still be growing, vibrant followers of Jesus, but not attending does make the journey pretty difficult because Christianity is a corporate religion with communal spiritual disciplines.

2) Sometimes people get little out of going to Church, and often it is not the most important factor in their journey.

3) Church attendance does not necessarily make a person a good Christian — it is not the be-all and end-all. It is one element. Often, Church attendance is

\textsuperscript{1006} Gleeson, \textit{A Credible Sexual Ethic}, 222.
\textsuperscript{1007} ibid., 222 and 223.
\textsuperscript{1008} ibid., 223.
\textsuperscript{1009} ibid., 236.
\textsuperscript{1010} ibid., 237; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 70, 73, 74, 86 and 87, and 100–101. Here, Gleeson’s analyses of this Topic 6 are similar to Dupré’s.
seen as a tick-the-box idea, creating the impression that every pew-sitter is by default a good Christian person. Church is but one of a variety of spiritual disciplines. Yet, some people leave or don’t go to Church (e.g., those in a state of ‘post-Church in denial’), and seek to justify their feelings of guilt by pretending that this was a decision.

4) The Church can be a perversion of its vision, and this leaves people with a lot of frustrations and issues that Christians who don’t attend Church are expressing.\textsuperscript{1011}

\emph{John Simpson} blames the decline in Church attendances on, among other things, the following: the workplace has become much more demanding, leaving the weekend as the only time to recharge and/or be with the children; employment is no longer a largely Monday to Friday enterprise; adult pressures are also being felt by younger people, with competition for tertiary places and the realities of surviving coursework extremely demanding these days; Sunday is no longer the holy day it used to be; there are factors in the congregation (e.g., a perceived lack of connection between one Sunday and the next in homilies, etc); the community life in the Church may be weak; the consumer society has invaded Church life; tensions within the Church (e.g., Church politics); Church is simply out of touch, with services unimaginative, dull and utterly predictable; and lack of follow-up on, and welcoming of, newcomers.\textsuperscript{1012}

\textbf{Discussion — Responding to the Australian secular understanding that religion is no longer essential in today’s Australian secular culture}

In his response to this Topic, according to Breward, Australian Churches need to learn from their past traditions and incorporate the best from them into a synthesis with the best from modernity. Then, the opinion makers will be shown that the Church can still provide values, virtues and ethics, which they believe only education can do. In this way, the limitations of these types of Australian and secular Protestant attitudes will be exposed.\textsuperscript{1013}

\textsuperscript{1011} Phil and Dan McCredden, ‘Why do I go to Church?’ in Signposts: Challenges for the Church, (IGTC’), posted May 12, 2003; 1–6. \url{http://www.signposts.org.au/index.php/archives/2003/05/12} (date accessed 30/08/05); (hereafter ‘McCredden, \textit{Why do I go to Church?’}); and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 70, 74, 75, 86 and 87 and 100–101, wherein their analyses of this Topic 6 are similar to Dupré’s.

\textsuperscript{1012} John Simpson, ‘Church Attendance in John Mark Ministries’, \url{http://jmm.aaa.net.au/articles_8254} (date accessed 30/08/05), (hereafter Simpson, \textit{Church Attendance’}); and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 70, 72, 73, 86 and 87, and 100–101, where Simpson’s analysis in this Topic 6 is similar to Dupré’s.

\textsuperscript{1013} Breward, \textit{Australia Godless}, 87, and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 127 and 128, 130–135, 136 and 138–140.
Further, Breward postulates that few political leaders speak of Australia as a broadly Christian society, for the migration of Jews, Muslims and Buddhists has given religion a much wider meaning. So has the recognition of Aboriginal religion. The development of Protestant individualism and the impact of Vatican II on the Catholic community since the 1960s have seriously weakened inherited patterns of Christian authority. That change, combined with the pluralism fostered during the 1960s, has made personal choice an even more important part of consensual religious authority than it was in the past. For him, religious and moral choices are more openly diverse than at any time in the history of the Australian Churches — an almost identical line of thought to Dupré’s ‘existential thought’ in Western and European cultures.1014

In her response to this Topic, Miley says that Australians, and Anglicans in particular, must go out of the Church buildings and offices into the marketplace, to meet the people and join in their lives.1015 Diversity in no way impinges on the nature of the Church or on its unity. The visible Church on earth is identifiable through its professed faith in Christ, proclamation of the Gospel, proper administration of the sacraments and Christ-like life and works — the Church must be the embodiment of the Gospels.1016 Therefore, the Church needs to change — not doctrinally but structurally; it must change its attitude and administration in favour of its purpose of mission.1017 As ‘God is us’, we must practise ecumenism,1018 study and teach Scripture, which reveals God’s will for us, especially in relation to the history of salvation and in its witness to the life and work of Christ, and exists to tell us what God is like.1019 The Church needs to cease discriminating against people of other races and creeds, against women and against homosexuals, and desist from its obsession with sexuality, and in these respects it is completely secular.1020 She postulates that it must not be forgotten that the mission of the Church is to spread the Gospel in the world. The work of the Church is in the world, and this is specifically where the work of the laity is

1014 Cf. Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 16; and Dupré, Religious Mystery, 137; and Dupré, Modern Idea, 16 and 17; and Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 7, 251, 351 and 352; and Dupré, Metaphysics and Culture, 42, 43 and 44; and also Breward, History of Australian Churches, 231 and 232.

1015 Miley, Suicidal Church, 2.

1016 ibid., 5.

1017 ibid., 4 and 7.

1018 ibid., 6.

1019 ibid., 6 and 7.

1020 ibid., 9.
located. Christians must be empowered not for their inner life or their service of the Church, but for their work in the world.\textsuperscript{1021}

The Church must move decisively and quickly to extinguish, as far as possible, the enormous rift it has constructed between clergy and laity, and return us all to being what we actually are — one people of God.\textsuperscript{1022} We need to ‘build up the saints for the ministry’.\textsuperscript{1023}

The Church needs to develop strategies that will encourage, both in individuals and in the organisation, open-mindedness, risk-taking, responsibility, fearlessness, the ability to make decisions, the ability to cope with change and, most of all, a whole-hearted love of God. These are the signs of a whole, healthy person — and a whole, healthy Church.\textsuperscript{1024}

Finally, Miley proposes a 10-point plan to assist the Anglican Church, especially, to engage the modern world. The 10 points are: become religious; love the world instead of judging it; make evangelism the top priority everywhere; make empowering all Christians for Christian life in the world the next priority; abolish discrimination (and particularly, abandon the exemption from the Equal Opportunity Act); abolish hierarchy; deinstitutionalise; abandon the Church’s obsession with sex and sexuality; abolish sectarianism; reorganise by centralising and streamlining administration, by abolishing parishes and dioceses, by basing worship and ministry on sectors, and by modernising practices and procedures.\textsuperscript{1025}

Tacey, in his response to this Topic, insists that to stop the decline in traditional religions and hence the fall in Church attendances, we need to replace fear with love — God’s greatest commandment and the pillar of the modern paradigm of spirituality.\textsuperscript{1026} We must restore the spiritual vision that is needed to track the sacred in the present, and to bring the spirit into living focus.\textsuperscript{1027} For him, fundamentalist interpretations must give way to hermeneutic complexity and fluidity.\textsuperscript{1028}

\textsuperscript{1021} Miley, \textit{Suicidal Church}, 159.
\textsuperscript{1022} ibid.
\textsuperscript{1023} ibid., 161; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 167.
\textsuperscript{1024} ibid., 163.
\textsuperscript{1025} ibid., 165; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 127–134.
\textsuperscript{1026} Tacey, \textit{Re-Enchantment}, 231.
\textsuperscript{1027} ibid., 241.
\textsuperscript{1028} ibid., 229; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 127, 131–135, 136 and 137–140, 146-147 and 155-166.
When endeavouring to situate the possibility of belief within Catholic faith today, Brown insists that Christians must express, personally, a ‘yes’ to Jesus being the proclaimed Son of God, for in him every one of God’s promises is also a ‘yes’. After all our internal debate and struggle to and fro, the ultimate question for our faith can only be whether or not we are able to entrust ourselves to that ‘yes’.

Addressing the same Topic from a woman’s perspective, Desmarchelier argues that the most important area for change identified in the Australian inquiry is involvement in decision-making. For her, there is a difference between decision-taking, which rests with appropriate authority, and decision-making, which includes all avenues of fact-finding and all stages within the process. To ask permission is to continue to give power. Women and men can take initiative in contributing to decision-making by congratulating an outcome they applaud, or by suggesting an alternative when they have a concern. Leaders empower others, and women and men can give leadership in critically confronting the identification of Church by their use of appropriate and accurate language to contribute towards bringing about the reality of Church (in which baptism is the fundamental reality), and towards modelling collaborative behaviour. To this end, women and men can maintain hope by acknowledging the stages of change, and changes as they occur.

On a per cent selection basis, Dixon and Others’ Research Project found that the reasons for people not attending Mass were: they no longer feel that being a committed Catholic requires going to Mass every week (32%); they no longer accept many Catholic beliefs (9%); they are in disagreement with the Church’s teaching on, or attitude to, personal sex issues (9%); their weekends are the only time available for being with the family (8%); there is disillusionment with the Church because of revelations of sex abuse by Church personnel (7%); the Mass holds little or no meaning to them (7%); married to a non-Catholic (4%); their weekends taken up with playing sport or taking children to activities (4%); in an irregular marriage situation (3%); they have to work on weekends (3%); for them religion is no longer necessary for meaning or security (2%); their weekends are the only time available for household chores (2%); they have been seriously offended in the past by a priest, brother, or nun (2%); the Mass is boring or the homilies irrelevant (2%); some other reason(s) (2%); they are in disagreement with the Church’s teaching on abortion (1%); they do not get

---

1029 Paul, 2 Cor 1: 19–20, in The New Jerusalem Bible.

1030 Brown, Struggling to Believe, 31; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 127, 131–135, 136–140, 146-147, and 155-166.

1031 Desmarchelier, Woman & Catholic, 79 and 80; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 127, 131–135, 136–140, 146-147 and 155-166.
on with the priest(s) in the parish (1%); they don’t know many others in the parish (1%); and the Australian Catholic Church doesn’t do enough for justice and the poor (1%) = 100%. ¹⁰³²

In addition, the commentary in the Research Project Report highlighted responses from experts in their respective disciplines: a sociologist, a theologian, a religious educator, a liturgist and a Bishop. Each person emphasised the need, in their own discipline, for us firstly to acknowledge the participants’ reasons for not attending Church and, then, urged us to address such gaps. ¹⁰³³

Tony Kelly advocates that whatever the future has in store, a limitless hope is inscribed into the essential meaning of Catholic tradition. In ‘counter-intuitive’ situations, that hope has to be lived out (i.e., when, instead of seeing the hopefulness and vigour of tradition, one might find more evident its failures and breakdown). Hope was ever thus, which is all the more reason for us to concentrate on the most radical reality defining the tradition. We must understand that today we are not simply being sent a letter from the past but, rather, that something greater than inspired information is in question. It is a matter of a living communion unfolding through time, so that it includes all who have gone before us as witnesses to faith. This communion is not merely one of human solidarity or sympathy, for it glows from the Divine Source of Life — the Father himself. ¹⁰³⁴ It invites believers into the communion of undying life in God, and true fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ¹⁰³⁵ The witness from the past reaches us in the present, and beyond us, to those who will come after. ¹⁰³⁶ As John’s Gospel says: 'We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete’. ¹⁰³⁷

Having explored the connection between doctrine and both the clarification of the Church’s faith and the manifestation of the communal reality of the Church, Lennan argues that a positive appropriation of doctrine is possible only when there is a positive relationship between the Church’s teaching authority and the sensus fidei (sense of the faith) of all the baptised. The conversion of all the members of the Church, their openness to the Spirit, who is the source of both unity and trust in the Church, is

¹⁰³³ ibid., 53–60; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 127, 131–135, 136–140, 146-147 and 155-166.
¹⁰³⁴ Kelly, Making Sense of Tradition, 134 and 135.
¹⁰³⁵ John 1: 3 b, in The New Jerusalem Bible.
¹⁰³⁶ Kelly, Making Sense of Tradition, 135; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 127, 131–135, 136–140, 146-147, and 155-166.
¹⁰³⁷ John 1: 4, in The New Jerusalem Bible.
required to enable such a relationship to emerge, grow and be preserved. For Lennan, it is crucial for us to understand that authentic doctrine does not freeze the Church in either the past or the present, but opens the way to the future by being a vehicle for an ever-deeper appreciation of God’s revelation in Jesus Christ. Doctrine is a challenge and, in today’s sceptical age, the members of the Church ought to be able to appropriate doctrine effortlessly. Yet, it is also true that the existence of Church doctrine offers us a connection to the faith of others in the present and to the faith that has shaped the Church from the start.\footnote{Lennan, Making Sense of Doctrine, 172 and 173; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 127, 131–135, 136–140, 146-147 and 155-166.}

Gerald Moore argues that active worship, neither naïve, romanticised, nor other-worldly, must engage the whole person within the body of Christ amid God’s creation. It is a living, ever-changing act of thanksgiving, including and demanding lament. Every ritual event comes from this, and returns to it. But, for him, rites are only effective when they truly engage the hearts and lives of the people, who themselves are able to participate authentically. That is what makes sense of worship and, in turn, such liturgy makes sense of the Church.\footnote{Moore, Making Sense of Liturgy & Ritual, 116; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 127, 131–135, 136–140, 146-147 and 155-166.}

Thea and Neil Ormerod argue that the Catholic view of marriage captures some of the ideal elements (e.g., the perfect expression of interpersonal love — which of course adds to the problem when things go wrong) in its claim for exclusivity and permanency, but with the more realistic stance that, without God’s grace, these claims cannot be sustained. However, they postulate that the flourishing of the Catholic view of marriage will not occur through academic treatises, nor through moral denunciation of those who find themselves unable to conform to that view, nor through hand-wringing about the sad state of society; it will only flourish through the nurturance, support and celebration of marriage within the Church community. For them, the Catholic view of marriage appeals when it is seen to make sense in the lives of married couples, who bear witness to their mutual love, to the forgiving grace of God, and to the value of marriage as a sacrament itself.\footnote{T&N Ormerod, Can Christian Marriage Survive, 218–219; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 127, 131–135, 136–140, 146-147 and 155-166.}

Joseph Sobb postulates that Catholics today are being invited to read the Bible, which is the Word of God and, also, the Word of God in human words, in ways that are both liberating and demanding. The Word is living and active because human words
can never exhaust it, and human interpretations of it can never be final. We recognise
the Bible’s distinctiveness, are open to its challenge, and stand before it with humility.
Also, we recognise our need to modify, and even discard, attitudes and positions in
which, perhaps implicitly or unconsciously, we were instructed, and with which we grew
up. In contemporary biblical study, we examine these ancient texts to discover their
theological meaning. In this journey, at times we must let go of some familiar things
and discover the unfamiliar — any fundamentalist approach which refuses to move
forward, ultimately distorts the Bible. Being a record of the relationship of God with
God’s people, we need to read the Bible as a dynamic work which depicts this
relationship in all its disappointments and sadness, as well as in its beauty and
hopefulness, and not as sterile history but, rather, as an enriching invitation to life.¹⁰⁴¹

Thornhill asserts that, in his response to the secular understanding that religion
is no longer essential to our Australian culture in Topic 6, since the Enlightenment
initiated the exploration of reality, today’s knowledge of the cultural traditions of
humanity makes it clear that, if we want to understand traditional cultures, we must
take seriously the fact that religious concerns are central to most of them.¹⁰⁴² In this
regard, he stresses the importance of ‘witness’, describing it as the only adequate
medium of existential truth.¹⁰⁴³ He argues that Jesus is the supreme witness.¹⁰⁴⁴ This
will help us interpret the authentic spirit of Catholicism and its role as reaching beyond
partisanship and extending a hospitality to existential truth — the ultimate goal of
modernity’s quest — in all its forms.¹⁰⁴⁵

In assisting us to deal with the complexities posed by the modern conceptions
of morality and religion, Mackay argues, in his response to this Topic 6, that morality is
different from religion. The latter addresses the metaphysical question (i.e., Why are
we here?), while morality tackles a more practical question (i.e., How should we live
together?). Religion does its work in the interior, spiritual realm; morality is an exterior,
social construct. Therefore, cheating, lying and exploiting other people are not wrong
because this or that religion says they are; they are wrong because societies cannot
function harmoniously unless people agree to respect each other’s rights, needs and

¹⁰⁴¹ Sobb, Making Sense of the Bible, 155–157; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 127, 131–135, 136–140, 146-147 and 155-
166.

¹⁰⁴² Thornhill, Modernity, 144.

¹⁰⁴³ ibid., 179.

¹⁰⁴⁴ ibid., 208.

¹⁰⁴⁵ ibid., 211, 222, 224; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 127, 131–135, 136–140, 146-147 and 155-166.
Further, he says that sexual desire creates a moral minefield, but prurient and judgmental gossip about people’s sexual activities may be more damaging — and contribute more to the sum of human pain and unhappiness — than sexual misbehaviour. Additionally, he states that lying is occasionally justifiable, but lying that deceives in order to gain an advantage over another person is always wrong. For him, the most damaging lies are those we tell ourselves.

When addressing the challenge, in this Topic 6, concerning the importance of moral development and character formation, Gerald Gleeson, using the insights of ‘virtue ethics’, proposes a contemporary rationale for Catholic teachings on sexuality, which highlights the question of whether procreation is intrinsic to the meaning and value of sexual intimacy. The prevailing cultural pressures are making it very difficult for the Church’s teaching to be taken seriously, especially as the Church is one of the few voices in our society keeping this question alive. Gleeson suggests that perhaps it will be only when the sexual liberation of recent decades has run its course and its consequences fully realised that people will be willing to entertain the possibility of a radical different way of understanding human sexuality.

When looking at the relevance of religion to Australian culture, McCredden advocates that people should develop a balanced point of view when considering changing Churches. Firstly, he argues that just because one Church is bad, it doesn’t mean that all Churches should be written off. If you have had a bad experience with a Church, it doesn’t mean that you won’t find a safe and caring environment somewhere else. Secondly, because the Christian Church as a whole has had a lot of past problems and issues which are basically indefensible (e.g., support of slavery, the Holocaust, the oppression of women, and the cover-up of clergy and religious sexual abuse matters), we shouldn’t use these things to justify the notion that there is something inherently wrong, evil or unmanageable about the Church. And thirdly, we need to have a recognition that while we might have a really bad experience at an individual Church, it doesn’t mean that individual Church is not a valuable place for others. For McCredden, a Church is a group of people intentionally and regularly gathering together for the purpose of challenging, learning, growing and keeping each

---


1047 Mackay, *Right and Wrong*, 280.

1048 ibid., 281.

other accountable in their Christian lives; it is not necessary that a Church be a part of a recognised denomination, but it must have some unity or connection of purpose.\textsuperscript{1050}

John Simpson stresses that, in thinking about improving Church attendances, we need to address the following six matters.

1) While trying to preserve the concept of Sabbath rest, radically changed working patterns and the impact of secular culture call for innovative and creative thinking. We need to offer options for those for whom Sunday attendance is genuinely difficult.

2) Nurturing and enriching the community life of the Church will help defuse conflict, reduce misunderstanding and heal some of those longstanding hurts. Christian community springs from grace, and is the stamp of the Spirit’s presence. Without prayer, confession and trust, Christian community is impossible.

3) The pastoral role should be to lead our people in renewed dedication to God, which is more important than choosing the hymns, songs and choruses, selecting some readings and preaching a good sermon, though all of these matters are important. Further, pastors need to be very cognisant in establishing expectations regarding the use of time of lay leaders, deacons and other Church members and their meetings, because most of these attendees have other jobs to attend in the day, plus families who may only see them at night or on weekends.

4) Leadership should be encouraged to reflect, review and evaluate on each experience of worship, and to seek and listen to feedback from the congregation.

5) Leadership should get alongside the half-committed persons, win their confidences and work for the long haul.

6) People of the Church should not lose heart if they are dogged with erratic attendances — they should listen, pray, respond and look for thoughtful innovation.\textsuperscript{1051}

\textsuperscript{1050} McCredden, \textit{Why do I go to Church}, 2 and 3; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 127, 131–135, 136–140, 146-147 and 155-166.

\textsuperscript{1051} Simpson, \textit{Church Attendance}, 3–5; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 127, 131–135, 136–140, 146-147 and 155-166.
8. **Topic 7: Some of today’s modern Religious Movements in Australia, while stressing renewal of faith, define it more in terms of doing ‘feel good’ religious practices rather than the hard deeds of love, forgiveness and compassion**

In *Breward*’s analyses of this Topic 7, he asserts, because so many from the 1960s on experimented with the chemical expansion of consciousness via the use of drugs, this indicated a hunger for spiritual reality which was not satisfied by the liturgies of the major Australian Churches. An even more important development of that search, during the last 20 years, has been the discovery by so many Protestants that there are depths of insight about spirituality in Roman Catholic religious orders. This has given new life to their experiences and a fresh valuation of their own religious traditions.\(^{1052}\)

Though ‘sectarianism’ has not disappeared from Australia, Breward argues that the ecumenism of the past 25 years has done much to modify stereotypes and lead to all kinds of new networks and coalitions, within and between the Churches, which have given a new meaning to the word ‘catholic’. The emergence of significant Pentecostal Churches and the survival of Evangelicalism, despite liberal prophesies of its disappearance, make the development of unity with these varieties of Protestantism, as well as with the Orthodox, an important contribution to the development of Australian Christianity. In a very real way, the tolerance that has coexisted with sectarian nastiness has been one of the foundations on which to build a nation which now contains not only many Christian variations, but also representations of most of the great religions. As a result, Christians have discovered that their common faith and humanity transcends ethnic and religious differences. Now, they have the responsibility to bear witness that such unity is possible between a new mix of cultures and religions, without diminishing the integrity of their catholic heritage.\(^{1053}\) In Australia, that aspect of religious equality, for Breward, has been one of the most important achievements of the last two centuries, even if it were not always the choice of Church leaders concerned to maintain historic identity.\(^{1054}\) Since the 1960s, the astonishing development of ecumenism has broken down many emotional and institutional walls. In part Australian in origin, in part a response to dramatic changes in Rome, Constantinople, Geneva and Canterbury, the energies released have great potential for

---

1052 Breward, *Australia Godless* 82.
1053 ibid., 78.
1054 ibid., 98.
enhancing national unity. \textsuperscript{1055} While such changes raise sharply issues of Christian identity, when that is no longer defined by rivalry, suspicion and enmity, fresh attention can be paid to the common foundations of Christian faith. \textsuperscript{1056}

In their analyses of this Topic 7, Neil Ormerod and Shane Clifton postulate that various social, political, economic and cultural commentators are presently arguing that human history is reaching a decisive stage in its development, a stage marked by increased interconnection between peoples, the compression of space and time, a sharing of ideas at unprecedented levels, global trade and finance and so on. Their shorthand word used to encompass these phenomena is ‘globalization’. \textsuperscript{1057}

Globalization uncovers the tragic and multifaceted reality of poverty, which is both an absolute and relative concept, with the poor being found in all societies. Yet, granted differences between rich and poor countries, it is still possible on the base of this broader basis to arrive at general conclusions about the way the Church needs to proceed in response to its missionary mandate. \textsuperscript{1058} They argue that one of the dilemmas that confront individuals (and local Churches) in the face of the scale and complexity of the causes and potential solutions of global poverty and environment values is a rising despair in knowing how they, personally, should respond. \textsuperscript{1059} Moreover, the effects of techno-economic globalization on family values, the mission of the Church and government need to be understood correctly, because the integrative intersubjective structures of family and friendship exist in dialectic tension with the operative structures of globalizing techno-economics and politics — there is no one answer that can be given to these challenges. \textsuperscript{1060} In addition, these authors assert that culture, in globalization, is itself expressive not only of the social infrastructure of a community, but also of the human drive towards meaning, truth and goodness. \textsuperscript{1061} Human beings are inherently social beings who live in a world of shared meanings and values, of constitutions and structures, constituting a common way of life, and

\textsuperscript{1055} Breward, \textit{Australia Godless}, 98.

\textsuperscript{1056} ibid., 99; and cf. Dupré, Ch.2, 70, 72, 73, 86 and 87, 100-101, 136-140, 146-147 and 155-166. Breward’s analytical thoughts about this Topic 7 are similar to Dupré’s.


\textsuperscript{1058} Ormerod and Clifton, \textit{Globalization}, 82 and 83.

\textsuperscript{1059} ibid., 83.

\textsuperscript{1060} ibid., 152 and 153.

\textsuperscript{1061} ibid., 182; and cf. Dupré, Ch.2, 70, 72, 73, 86 and 87, 100-101, 136-140, 146-147 and 155-166. Here, their analytical thoughts about spirituality and this part of Topic 7 are similar to Dupré’s.
globalization presents us with a new moral context, a new world, in which we must learn to act as moral agents.\textsuperscript{1062}

Again, as in Chapter 2, Item 8, Topic 7, to enable the presentation of fair and balanced arguments about Topic 7 in this Chapter, it is deemed important that the two biggest, yet quite different, Movements (Pentecostal and Evangelical) in modern, non-traditional types of Christian religious organisations be given, including their practices of spirituality amid today’s globalization and secularisation.

**PENTECOSTALISM**

Ormerod and Clifton, in arguing that the mission of the Church is first and foremost the proclamation of the religious values of the Gospel, highlight the power of religious values in the example of Pentecostalism.\textsuperscript{1063} They assert that one of the noteworthy features of the Twentieth Century has been the spread of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements of Christianity throughout the world. For them, Pentecostalism is an excellent example of the impact of globalizing processes on Christian faith, since it is constituted not by top down authorities or national structures, but as a global coalescing of the various streams of voluntarist and revivalist Christianity. On a global scale, it has no fixed ecclesial structure, no single form of doctrinal statements and no common liturgy or style but, rather, a shared vision of the charismatic spiritual life. While not easily pinned down, this vision nevertheless enables mutual recognition and provides the Movement with the capacity to transcend geographical boundaries and, at the same time, to morph its community life in ways that are thoroughly indigenized. Pentecostalism is thus shaped by the processes of globalization, but it can also be argued that the Movement reciprocates by shaping and directing those same processes.\textsuperscript{1064}

They further insist that, while Pentecostalism is not one thing, it is the case that Pentecostal Churches, springing as they sometimes have from the more theological conservative streams of Evangelical tradition, have tended to focus on the more obviously religious values than on the social and cultural spheres. Historically, Pentecostals have proclaimed what is sometimes labelled

\textsuperscript{1063} ibid., 247-249.
as the fourfold gospel, Jesus saves, Jesus heals, Jesus baptises in the Spirit, and Jesus is coming again. While this proclamation is capable of being framed in a manner that incorporates and encourages the more social aspects of ministry,\textsuperscript{1065} the Movement has been criticized for its tendency to focus on the spiritual dimension, eschewing social responsibility. This is particularly attributed to its premillennialist eschatology.\textsuperscript{1066}

For Ormerod and Clifton, what is also noteworthy is that Pentecostalism stimulates strong faith (extending to faith in physical healing and divine blessing), encourages hope (even if sometimes apocalyptically framed) and opens people to the love of God. For this reason, and notwithstanding its tendency to sidestep explicit involvement in social ministry, wherever it has been, social reforms have followed the growth of its Churches\textsuperscript{1067}

Ormerod and Clifton further postulate that, while the partnership of Catholicism (Roman) and Pentecostalism might not seem the most natural of partners for a work on the mission (i.e., the work of the Spirit)\textsuperscript{1068} of the Church, they are natural partners for a project on globalization and the Church’s mission. Both are inherently global in their reach, one as an established Church with global institutional forms reaching back to the origins of Christian faith, the other as a recently formed global ecclesial Movement which has taken root in every continent with remarkable energy and enthusiasm. Catholicism brings to the project a depth of wisdom and tradition; Pentecostalism brings a freshness and freedom in the Spirit; one draws on the past, the other looks to the future. Ormerod and Clifton say that, like the scribe trained for the kingdom, the two Churches bring to this project things both old and new, from their two ecclesial perspectives, to assist them in responding to the phenomena of globalization.\textsuperscript{1069}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{1065} Ormerod and Clifton, \textit{Globalization}, 248; and see Shane Clifton, “Preaching the Full Gospel in the context of Global Environment Crisis”, in \textit{The Spirit Renews the Face of the Earth: Pentecostals Forays in Science and Theology of Creation}, ed. by Amos Yong (Eugene, Ore: Pickworth Press, 2009), (hereafter ‘Clifton, \textit{Preaching the Full Gospel}).


\textsuperscript{1068} Ormerod and Clifton, \textit{Globalization}, 31.

\textsuperscript{1069} ibid., 3, 4 and 28.
\end{flushright}
As Peter Berger notes, in the 1950’s and 1960’s “secularization theory” presumed that modernization, with its defeat of so-called superstitious supernaturalism, necessarily led to the redundancy and decline of religion. Fifty years on, it is now becoming increasingly apparent that the globalizing trajectory of modernity has rendered secularism itself redundant, and actually stimulated global religious revivals, both as a reaction against the social and technological constraints of modern society, and as a reflexive response to the problems of meaning and identity that arise in a relentlessly changing global environment. Yet, even though religion can be a source of meaning and identity, it can also be a source of conflict and discord and, for this reason, questions about the nature of the impact of the world’s major religions upon the trajectory of global society are becoming increasingly urgent.  

Matthew Del Nevo, in analysing Pentecostalism as part of this Topic 7, asserts that the idea of the Three Ages of the Church (as presented in Chapter 2, Item 8, Topic 7) is important for Pentecostal Christians for three reasons: first, by it they may realize that their Church is as different from Protestantism as Protestantism is from Catholicism. Pentecostal Christians are epochally different from Protestants and (philosophically speaking) paradigmatically different; second, it gives each Pentecostal Church a philosophical basis which is not based on Protestant belief-led self-understanding or Evangelical theology, which, as he says, is unable to properly accommodate spiritual theology; and third, it frees Pentecostal Christians to draw from the deep wells of Catholic tradition, given that Pentecostalism is spirit-led and the Catholic Church contains immense wealth in its writings on spirituality, spiritual living, life in the Holy Spirit, practising the presence of God’s glory, ritual imagination, liturgical foundations, spiritual discernment and spiritual direction. Any and all of these may empower a Pentecostal Church with a new evangelism and spirit-led (rather than doctrinaire and ideological) self-understanding. 

Further, he postulates that metaphysics can be described many ways but says that he has followed mainstream hermeneutical tradition as taking metaphysics in the sense of a time, or period of history, that is dominated by a

1070 Ormerod and Clifton, Globalization, 250 and 251; and also refer Peter L. Berger, The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1999), 2-4.

1071 Matthew Del Nevo, Pentecostalism and the Three Ages of the Church. [http://aps.webjournals.org/articles/1/05/2007/6803.htm](http://aps.webjournals.org/articles/1/05/2007/6803.htm) (date accessed 26/5/09); and cf. Dupré, Ch.2, 70, 72, 73, 86 and 87, 100-101, 146-147 and 155-166. Here, Del Nevo’s analyses are generally at variance with those of Dupré and his concepts of spirituality in this part of Topic 7.
world view. For him, when that metaphysics breaks down, as a result of historical forces, we can see the premises or guiding ideas that upheld the whole system.

Moreover, our age is different — it is an Age of Interpretation because, for historical reasons, our stance towards metaphysics (whether Plato, Aristotle, Descartes or the Enlightenment itself) is that we can deconstruct it, and we can demythologise it, as needs be. And what we are left with is not a new whole, but an interpretation. An interpretation is weaker than a metaphysic and hardly grounds and unifies an age the way that Platonism and Aristotelianism could ground the Middle Ages, or Cartesianism could ground early Modernity or the myth of the Enlightenment could ground high Modernity as historic periods.

Del Nevo also insists that Pentecostalism grows up in an age which is already the native environment of Pentecostalism. The metaphysical presuppositions of theologians from the major denominations sound strange to a Pentecostal’s ears — the Latinate presuppositions of the Catholic; the confessional presuppositions of the Protestant. These are not the presuppositions of a Pentecostal. Latin theology may be worthy. The Westminster or Augsburg Confession may be wonderful. But for a Pentecostal, the preunderstanding is that it is not an absolute, but an interpretation. Hence the pragmatism of Pentecostalism. The pragmatism is not a philosophy, it is merely the result of being a Christian in an Age of Interpretation, without the presuppositions of the Catholic or the Protestant.

Thus, he says that if Catholicism and Protestantism are historically tied to, and to be essentially identified with, ages of metaphysics, then their theology is, in a hermeneutical sense, characteristically onto-theological. Pentecostalism, arising in an age that is ‘overcoming metaphysics’, tends to be interpretative rather than onto-theological, not unified, not representing a world view or propagating one, but pragmatic, interpretative, dialogical, able to pick-and-choose from pre-understandings as its pre-understanding and basically, from a modernist perspective, disorganised, diverse, and loose. All this from an old Christian perspective may seem a bad thing, but from a Pentecostal perspective it is the environment in which the Spirit today is at work.1072

He further postulates that, in terms of the threefold horizon of Pentecostal hermeneutics — Creation, Revelation and Redemption — the Pentecostal aesthetic (way of seeing things/art of truth) is tied to the destiny of secularism. Pentecostal aesthetics are comfortable in the secular domain, but distinguish between a prodigal and proper secularity.  

For Neil Brown, the term ‘spirituality’ in modern parlance means that the emphasis today is placed more on personal fulfilment rather than on addressing peoples’ raised expectations for a set of beliefs to give more personal guidance for their lives as was its meaning in the last century. People now look to today’s spirituality to vitalise and to inspire their day-to-day lives. Thus, a successful spirituality is thought to be one that is able to provide the ‘inner resources’ through which all of the person’s capabilities can be sustained and actualised.

Similarly, he says, it seems clear that for a spirituality to be truly effective in the post-industrial age, it must step beyond the narrow confines set for the individual by modern consumer societies with their competitiveness, self-focus and frenetic lifestyles. To effect this, we must be sure not to neglect the ‘sacred’, or a crucial dimension of our lives is lost. As religion involves the deepest levels of human desiring, the religious dimension is able to give meaning to our lives and choices at the deeper level. God is our hope for the future. It is possible to construct a spirituality without God (as some religions and our economic consumerist society have done), but it will be at the cost of severing ourselves and our relationships with others from the deepest levels of our desiring and meaning. Christian spirituality, then, finds its centre and power through its faith in God’s continuing presence in our lives.

As a result of a survey carried out on Catholics who have stopped going to Mass, which was completed in February 2007, Robert Dixon and Others in


1075 ibid.

1076 ibid., 258.

1077 ibid., 259.

1078 ibid., 260.

1079 ibid.; and cf. Dupré, Ch.2, 70, 72, 73, 86 and 87, 100-101, 146-147 and 155-166. Here, Brown’s thoughts about spirituality in this part of Topic 7 are almost identical to those of Dupré.
their Research Report said that about half of the participants spoke of their desire to develop a spiritual life that was not dependent on the Church or on Mass attendance. These forms of spirituality included: developing a new and personal relationship with Christ; demonstrating one’s religious values in daily living; making faith as an interpersonal journey lived in dialogue with one’s partner and friends; doing voluntary work in the community in both Catholic and secular institutions; teaching young people about God at school; organising funerals; conducting special family liturgies, for example at Easter, or for weddings and baptisms; expressing spirituality through art, music, sport or interaction with nature; effecting ecumenical and interfaith expressions of spirituality; and increasing private devotion, for example, prayer, meditation, personal reflection on the rosary, and use of pictures and icons. These types of proposed spirituality may cause us to ponder on the results of Vatican II’s findings about renewal and reform, and wonder, perhaps if, since the Council, all too often the reforms were attempted prematurely, without the prerequisite renewal (e.g., of our parishes and our Gospel proclamation). The aforesaid Research Project certainly provides a useful tool for reflection and pastoral planning as the Australian Church seeks to respond pastorally to the faith needs of Catholics who do not participate in Sunday Mass and who are seeking these other forms of spirituality today.1080

Tacey, too, in his response, suggests that Australia is modern and secular. Most of the recent writing on our history and society completely ignores the contour and history of Australian spirituality in our experience, while books on Australian literature and art never appear to mention spirituality. On the other hand, popular New Age books on spirituality deal only with authors’ personal experiences, without seeming to engage cultural or historical questions. Spirituality is approached by these authors in a kind of social vacuum. Outside art, literature and music, there appears to be no public discussion or social integration of the spiritual questions.1081 Tacey further argues that young Australians today feel increasingly free to announce that they are searching for spirituality. This spirituality in youth culture is open, urgent and political. Today’s government universities have a stated view, developed from an old-style liberal humanism, that spirituality is a private matter, something that should not be ‘imposed’ upon the young students by religious teachers. But our Australian

---

1080 Dixon & Others, Research Project 2007, 60; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 146–147 and 155-166. Their thoughts are almost identical to Dupré’s in this part of Topic 7.

1081 Tacey, Re-Enchantment, 236–238.
youth are increasingly finding this attitude frustrating, empty, and vacuous. It does not provide them with life-enhancing values, but merely encourages an attitude of intellectual students as in the 1960s and 1970s. While it is still a deeply internal experience, it is one that is beckoned by adventure, and they are being drawn by a force most adults do not see and therefore do not understand.\(^{1082}\) This youth spiritual experience has much to teach our culture, in general, and our religious tradition, in particular. To our mainstream secular culture, youth spiritual experience says that secularism has failed, materialism does not work and rationalism (whether of the philosophical or economic variety) is inadequate.

It also challenges society to recover its spiritual life and its religious imagination, and represents a serious challenge to both academic postmodernism (with its dread of essences and its institutionalisation of relativism and nihilism) and Western religious tradition — where organised religion no longer holds a monopoly on spirituality — a word now used freely and often without any reference to the Churches, and in which spirituality is less concerned today with an abstract faith in the afterlife than with practical concerns within this life. Young people are looking to spirituality to teach them how to live, how to be in the world, and how to know themselves in relationship to others. Today, it is a ‘care of the soul’, an understanding of life that comes closer to therapy than to theology, closer to psychology than to metaphysics. It is this psychological spirituality that our youth are craving beyond all else at present. If organised religion cannot reveal this inside dimension, it will be violently rejected by a youth culture that cares more about stemming the tide of disintegration than about preserving the traditions of theology.\(^{1083}\)

Further, Tacey articulates that many over-civilised and spiritually damaged Europeans (and indeed, Australians), when seeking to reawaken the primal vision of their religious roots into consciousness, travel to other lands to, hopefully, have life-changing experiences in countries where the religious unity of all creation is still intact. But, he warns that travel to foreign parts and immersion in foreign religious cultures are extremely parasitic tourism \textit{unless} some response is awakened in the depths of the pilgrim. If we have the courage to deepen our foreign experience so that we touch and awaken ‘foreign’ parts of our psychological being or lost dimensions of our spiritual ancestry, then a

\(^{1082}\) Tacey, \textit{Re-Enchantment}, 186 and 187.

\(^{1083}\) ibid. 209 and 210.
process develops that transforms our experience and quickens our perceptions. We are no longer trampling upon somebody else’s sacred ground; we are becoming part of, and therefore responsible to, the sacred space we are temporarily occupying. This, for him, is the perspective that is frequently lacking in contemporary ecotourism and cultural encounter programs. He argues that the same can be said about people seeking out those Churches that promote a superficial/pseudo-religious type of ‘spirituality’ in which idolatry prevails (i.e., where man has become God). If nothing awakens in our own soul, making claims and demands upon us, calling us to change the way we live, then we have been merely parasites and intruders. As Tacey asserts, the alacrity with which many ‘New Age’ travellers seek and absorb exotic religions is cause for concern, and for some, the addictive/repetitive nature of these experiences suggests that no personal deepening is taking place.  

To overcome the falsehood of idolatrous, superficial/pseudo-religious type of ‘spirituality’ and find true spirituality, Tacey says that we need to embrace our masculine image of God again as mother, nurturer and sustainer, and not only as father, judge, law-giver and authority. When God is discovered simultaneously as immanence and transcendence, nearness and distance, Mother and Father, then we will have found the right religious vision for our time and for the generations to come.  

He adds that the rejection of Western religion’s disregard for the sacredness and sanctity of nature, the body and women appears fundamental to contemporary culture’s rejection of Christianity. In this passionate rejection, youth and secular culture may be deeply inspired, not simply rebellious or heretical, for the ground of nature is itself the most visible and solid ground for spiritual activity. In our Australian context, spiritual change and political development are intimately related. We need spiritual revival before our social and political activities can move forward. For Tacey, this is the ‘edge’ upon which our society is currently poised.

1084 Tacey, Re-Enchantment, 182 and 183.
1085 ibid., 234 and 235.
1086 ibid., 235.
1087 ibid., rear cover flap; and refer Dupré in Ch.2, 146-147 and 155-166. Here, Tacey’s analytical thoughts about spirituality in this part of Topic 7 are similar to Duprés.
Mackay, in his perspective of Australian Evangelical and/or Pentecostal type Churches, asserts that at the very moment when some Australians want to complain about the decline of traditional religion and morality (and others wish the decline would accelerate), they, and especially our youth, are confronted by the evidence of a new boom in religious Fundamentalism, with its associated moral structures. Contradictions abound.\(^{1088}\) Also, he stresses that there is a growing emphasis on 'lifestyle' and personal appearance — very complicated and convoluted matters, which are exacerbated by a cavalier carelessness which Australia’s youth display towards their own possessions. Mackay says this points to another symptom of an incipient shift towards post-materialism.\(^{1089}\)

Our people talk a great deal about 'spirituality', which has many non-religious connotations in our humanistic society today.\(^{1090}\) Yet, some Australians seem to prefer the idea of a personal, intimate God within, rather than the materialist’s 'out-there' God.\(^{1091}\) Times of uncertainty — especially when linked with a half-formed sense of expectancy — have, in the past, been fertile breeding grounds for religious revivals.\(^{1092}\) Unfortunately, this yearning for spirituality often drives people towards some Churches which promote a superficial/pseudo-religious type of 'spirituality'. As Mackay argues, the social and cultural instability of the 70s and 80s undoubtedly led to a great deal of soul-searching in the 90s (and thereafter into the new millennium) and this, in turn, will create the potential for a new confidence in Australians’ view of themselves, a new self-respect and a new determination to take control of our destiny — but only the potential. Whether we actually approach that potential will be the test of our maturity.\(^{1093}\)

Additionally, he postulates that coping with life in unstable and uncertain times (as in Australia today) is the resource of our personal relationships. The thing we most need is each other. We need to communicate. But, more importantly, we need to listen, yet most times we do not.\(^{1094}\) This is mainly because: people know we don’t listen to them; our conversation is irrelevant to them; our talk

---

1088 Mackay, *Turning Point*, xiv.
1089 ibid., xxviii.
1090 ibid., xxix.
1091 ibid.
1092 ibid., 302.
1093 Mackay, *Reinventing Australia*, 296.
1094 Hugh Mackay, *Why Don’t People Listen?: Solving the Communication Problem*, (Australia: Pan Macmillian Publishers, 1994), xvii, (hereafter ‘Mackay, *Why Don’t People Listen*’); and cf. Dupré, Ch.2, 70, 72, 73, 86 and 87, 100-101 and 146-147. Here, Mackay’s analyses in this part of Topic 7 are generally at variance with Dupré’s thoughts.
represents an attack on them; we talk about ourselves and not them; we simply say what we think, and leave it at that; and people haven't learnt to trust us.\textsuperscript{1095}

In short, many of today's Australians prefer the "having/making" rather than the 'being', and this is fostered and becomes very prominent in some of today's modern Religious Movements in Australia.

For Caroline Miley, contemporary religion's great strength in Australia, as elsewhere, is its social welfare programs and outreach to those in physical need. This has been a triumph of Christian values, in their most practical form. But, this important and valuable work has, to some extent, masked the decline in faith in the community at large and, especially, within the Church. For her, the Anglican Church is to a considerable extent a social activity, and a large number of Anglicans probably have a minimal prayer life.\textsuperscript{1096} She asserts:

> Without wishing to detract in any way from the enormous effort and value of this work, it is also tempting to suggest that grappling with the material problems of society is easier than trying to deal with its huge spiritual malaise and longing. Its (the Anglican Church) lack of nerve and religious enthusiasm leaves the Church ill-equipped to do so.\textsuperscript{1097}

Again, in Australian society and in a traditional Church (especially the Anglican), Miley states that we see the doing replacing the listening, and religious activism replacing spiritual piety. She further argues that, globally, the extreme concentration today on material goods, external appearance, sexuality and lifestyle is a disease of the whole Western industrialised world. Therein, spirituality, indeed any interior state of being, is of no interest unless it can be marketed (e.g., the contemporary cult of the body is an expression of this). A person's self is defined through what they look like or what they own. Contemporary culture's obsession with sexuality is part of this, since it is one of the few areas of the human personality that has material (physical) manifestations.\textsuperscript{1098} With these matters bringing about Australia's contemporary spiritual repression, it is only natural that Australians are seeking ways of going beyond the present sense of our identity as focusing only on the external and the material, and adding an internal, spiritual dimension to it.\textsuperscript{1099} She also

\textsuperscript{1095} Mackay, \textit{Why Don't People Listen}, 327 and 328.

\textsuperscript{1096} Miley, \textit{Suicidal Church}, 104 and 105.

\textsuperscript{1097} ibid., 35.

\textsuperscript{1098} ibid., 42.

\textsuperscript{1099} ibid.
argues that nowadays Charismatics and Pentecostals of any denomination have more in common than they have with traditionalists within their own Churches. Yet, at the same time, all the denominations are still caught up in the problem of material and secular issues, attitudes and organisational structures occupying the central place on the map of the world that should be occupied by God, and looming so large in the vision that they block out the Creator from the world that the Churches are trying to create.\(^{1100}\) Again, these situations leave churchgoers (or would-be churchgoers) with an unprecedented lack of identity and sense of purpose and, so, vulnerable to the entreaties of any passing group or ideology that claims to have the answers.\(^{1101}\) Hence, the attraction of those Churches that promote a superficial/pseudo-religious type of ‘spirituality’.\(^{1102}\)

**EVANGELICALISM**

Ian Breward, in analysing this Topic 7, argues that, within the major Churches, the influence of the charismatic type of renewal has been important in the Evangelical groups who have felt excluded from leadership since the 1920s. In many cases, there has been a simple move from Evangelical enthusiasm to speaking in tongues and involvement in healing and prayer meetings, which have a striking affinity with the emotional warmth of 19th Century Primitive Methodists and Bible Christians. The claim to experience God’s presence personally has always been a powerful attraction within the Evangelical tradition in Australia and elsewhere. The weakness of exclusive reliance on such conversion led, in many congregations, to an emphasis on nurture and gradual growth in Christian understanding. There was little place for the drama of spiritual pilgrimage to be celebrated publicly, and many people had religious experience which they could not name and were too shy to share. Charismatic piety has reawakened the conversionist tradition and broken through formerly Protestant boundaries into the Roman Catholic community.\(^{1103}\) Also, he asserts that out of the cultural ambivalence of Australian religion, Evangelical Protestantism developed and, despite its cultural and religious deficiencies, it provided a framework of meaning with which many very ordinary people were comfortable. Evangelical Christian (not pseudo-Evangelical)

---

1100 Miley, *Suicidal Church*, 17 and 18.

1101 ibid., 38 and 39.

1102 Refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 146–147 and 155-166. Here, Miley’s analyses in this part of Topic 7 are generally at variance with Dupré’s thoughts.

1103 Breward, *Australia Godless*, 81 and 82.
doctrine and ethics gave many Australians a far wider purpose than the daily struggle to survive, however important that was.¹¹⁰⁴

In Mark Hutchinson’s analysis of this Topic 7, he argues that, while globalization is not to be rejected out of hand, it is essential that analysis of the process of good and evil and about its service to humanity and especially insofar as it relates to the mission of the Church, takes the fact of evil seriously. Indeed, the orientation of the Christian proclamation of the Kingdom of God is toward defeat of evil, a fact that necessarily frames the mission of the Church in the 21st Century. Hence, as Hutchinson says, the difficulty of speaking about globalization, in the light of its all encompassing scope, and Evangelicalism, is that it constitutes “a TOE” (theory of everything) type paradigm. This makes description and analysis challenging.¹¹⁰⁵

Missional ecclesiology in Australia and worldwide has at least two implications for Ormerod and Clifton as well as for Leslie Newbigin: one, a Church called to act as a sacrament and sign of the Kingdom of God is responsible to model its own global structures and culture in ways that can be said to be representative of the values constitutive of the Kingdom; and two, the Church, motivated by a biblical vision of a universal history (past, present and future) is called to participate as an instrument of the Spirit in the eschatological overcoming of globalized evil, through a praxis based proclamation of the good news of Jesus about the coming of the Kingdom of God. All three agree that the Evangelical Movement’s four distinctive hallmarks, as enunciated by David Bebbington in Ch.2, Item 8, Topic 7, enable it to overcome the above two implications in its missional ecclesiology.¹¹⁰⁶

Bouma, in his analyses of this part of Topic 7, argues that, after 19th Century renewal of the Church of England in the United Kingdom, through the work of the Tractarians (those professing a return to traditional and catholic ritual in worship) and the Evangelicals (who were concerned to proclaim their view of Christian faith through the whole world, starting at home), on coming to Australia these revitalisation Movements did not have much impact here. They

¹¹⁰⁴ Breward, *Australia Godless*, 91; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 146–147 and 155-166. Here, Breward’s analyses of this part of topic 7 are similar to Dupré’s.


were indigenous to the United Kingdom, and parallel developments occurred in the USA and Europe. But there was no such movement in the same period of Australia’s spiritual history. By the time they came to Australia these transformation Movements were largely tamed and arrived as established parties within particular denominations rather than as revitalising forces.\(^{1107}\)

Cowdell postulates, in his analyses of this part of Topic 7, that an important indicator of the \textit{deductive} approach to Christianity (that which tends to exclusion and isolation in its institutional expression, and to fundamentalism in belief and is shaped by a rationalistic agenda) is to be found in Evangelical Christianity today. Yet, this approach is beginning to be given away by Evangelicalism Movements. There is a growing post-modern sensibility in the ‘alternative worship Movement’ and in what is being called ‘post-Evangelical’ Church life. Beyond the dogmatic strictures of traditional Protestant confessionalism there is an emerging trend toward experiential and embodied worship, and a sacramental, incarnational, altogether more world-affirming religious imagination. This manifests itself in a less pietistic, earthier approach to Christian commitment among young post-Evangelical adults.\(^{1108}\)

From the above authors we learned that it appears many Australian people have now turned to some of today’s modern Religious Movements in this country because of a current revival in spirituality, brought about through tensions, disappointments and/or confusions experienced by them in their own Australian traditional Churches, plus current Australian secular society pressures. This situation leads to the following questions: one, whether these Australian Religious Movements we have had described to us might sometimes promote a spirituality, while beyond ‘superficial’, is still not deep enough?; two, do people attend any of these Australian Religious Movements or accept an invitation to do so, mainly because of the initial ‘hype’ surrounding the human-centred ritual activities promoted by some of them?; three, is the ‘superficial’ spirituality that some of these Australian Religious Movements promote simply a form of entertainment (for many of their attendees) without any true religion or personal effort — without the high price faith demands in the hard deeds of love, forgiveness, compassion and change of life and culture?; four, are some of these Australian modern Religious Movements and/or their attendees

\(^{1107}\) Bouma, \textit{Australian Soul}, 41; and cf. Dupré, Ch.2, 70, 72, 73, 86 and 87, 100-101 and 146-147. Here, Bouma’s analysis about this part of Topic 7 is at variance with Dupré’s thoughts.

\(^{1108}\) Cowdell, \textit{God’s Next Big Thing}, 93 and 94; and cf. Dupré, Ch.2, 70, 72, 73, 86 and 87, 100-101 and 146-147. Here, Cowdell’s analyses about this part of Topic 7 are at variance with Dupré’s thoughts.
unwittingly turning religion into a consumerist item as a result of secularisation and consumerist-type activities?; and five, in so doing, might not they and/or their attendees be confusing their ‘feel-good’ religious practices with the basic intentionality of faith and so risk the chance of losing genuine religiosity altogether?

Discussion — Responding to the challenging situations in some of today’s Australian modern Religious Movements in which faith is defined more in terms of doing ‘feel-good’ religious practices rather than the hard deeds of love, forgiveness and compassion

According to Breward, in his response to the challenges in this Topic 7, one of the problems today with friendly societies, insurance companies and most organisations, including some Churches, is that, over time, they inevitably develop a life of their own and do not always distinguish between what belongs to God and to Caesar.1109 This, clearly, is often the greatest problem within some of today’s modern Religious Movements in Australia where humans become the centre, not God — as such the offending Movement(s) is (are) idolatrous!

In their responses to the secular challenges in this Topic 7, Ormerod and Clifton argue that, as ministry to the poor is central to the mission of the Church in its proclamation of the good news of the Kingdom of God, the real challenge is to work out the way in which the Church should engage in this mission in the contemporary global context. For the Church to minister effectively to the poor, it needs to see empowerment rather than charity as its goal, and for this reason it needs to understand the complex issues of poverty in the context of a globalized world. Therefore, it needs to engage critically with the economic, political and technical social structures of global society and, further, with global cultural values, including values relating to inequality of class, gender and religion, that support (or undermine) the social structures that might be capable of being managed as the Church moves toward the achievement of its mission.1110

Furthermore, Ormerod and Clifton assert that to overcome the dilemmas of a rising despair in knowing how individuals (and local Churches) should respond to the potential solutions of global poverty, what needs to be grasped is that the mission of the Church, especially in the context of globalization, is a corporate responsibility before it is an individual one. It also needs to be realized that there is no simple black

1109 Breward, Australia Godless, 86 and 87; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 146–147 and 155-166.

1110 Ormerod and Clifton, Globalization, 83.
and white answer that the Church can provide for individuals in respect of how they should act in response to the crisis of poverty and the mission of the Church. Not only does the situation of poverty belie simplistic response, but faith itself is trust in the providence of God in the midst of mystery and uncertainty, not a simplistic black and white framework for life.\textsuperscript{1111}

In addition, Ormerod and Clifton say that the summation of the gospel narrative demands a departure from the current practices of those Churches which have failed to undertake the ecological (and social) responsibilities central to their mission.\textsuperscript{1112} Furthermore, they insist that it is imperative that Christians seek to understand the logic and challenges of the social structures of a globalizing world.\textsuperscript{1113} Christians also need to realize that culture is itself expressive not only of the social infrastructure of a community, but also of the human drive towards meaning, truth and goodness; the meanings and values which constitute culture are held in the hearts and minds of human beings whose quest for authenticity is their fundamental moral quest, to search of direction in the flow of life.\textsuperscript{1114} Christian faith also accepts that there is a world-transcending life which can offer us an inexhaustible source of hope, not just for this life, but for the renewal of all creation, and that its historical manifestation has been in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{1115} For Ormerod and Clifton, if the Church, in particular, understands its mission in terms of the theological values of faith, hope and love that arise from the good news of the Kingdom of God, then it will be a force for healing that is first of all intra-ecclesial, that makes friends out of religious enemies, and that mediates grace for the transformation of people, cultures and society as a whole.\textsuperscript{1116}

Clifton himself also argues that the problem for Pentecostals is that traditional formulations of baptism in the Spirit have become outdated. In the light of charismatic renewal, the official doctrine seems narrow and exclusivist. Consequently, Australian Pentecostals have tended to shy away from emphasizing baptism in the Spirit, especially the historical link between Spirit baptism and the evidential function of tongues. He argues that this is understandable, given the increasing ecumenical

\textsuperscript{1111} Ormerod and Clifton, \textit{Globalization}, 83 and 84.
\textsuperscript{1112} ibid., 93.
\textsuperscript{1113} ibid., 153.
\textsuperscript{1114} ibid., 182.
\textsuperscript{1115} ibid., 209.
\textsuperscript{1116} ibid., 251.
awareness of Pentecostal Communities. Yet, for him, the Movement is also in danger of losing a key element of its identity, and a prime motivator for its mission. What is necessary is for Pentecostals to find ways of ensuring continuity with their heritage and, at the same time, to find new ways of understanding the baptism in the Spirit in the ecumenically affirming context of the 21st Century global Church. This requires critical theological reflection and public discussion, as well as interaction with Pentecostal and ecumenical Movements globally.  

Del Nevo, in responding to the challenging situations in some of today's modern Religious Movements in Australia, stresses that the Johannine Age of the Church (the Third Age) is the Age of a Church of the Holy Spirit, a spirit-led Church. It is necessarily diverse. It is necessarily spiritually based, rather than centrally organised (like the Roman Catholic Church) or belief-based (like the Protestant Churches). The Johannine Church is so diffuse, and variegated, he argues, that it depends upon the Petrine Church and the Pauline Church and, so much so, that it has even confused itself in the past with the latter. Yet, Pentecostal Christians are epochally different from Protestants and paradigmatically different. Understanding the Three Ages of the Church frees Pentecostal Christians to draw both from the deep wells of Protestantism and the Roman Catholic tradition and so be empowered with a new evangelism and spirit-led (rather than belief-led or than doctrinaire and ideological) self-understanding.  

For Del Nevo also, Pentecostalism is a child of our Age of Interpretation. It is the timeliness of Pentecostalism, as the Christianity of today, that it builds the kind of Churches (people, not buildings) that can keep up with the times, and that want to, and that can keep in tune with the times and address the contemporary situation in contemporary terms. This sense of a Church of our time, of our unprecedented time, is not insignificant. He argues that it is the mark of a great shift from a Protestant to a Pentecostal age of the Church, equivalent to the shift from the Catholic to the Protestant, but hopefully, because of a more Enlightened time, less bloody.  

For Him, this shift, this ‘periodicity’ is to be understood typologically and only in part as historical. It certainly has a historical dimension, but actually works typologically, so that one can, in our time, find a concurrency of all Three Ages of the Church, shoulder to shoulder. With regard to the issue of violence, he says that the internecine violence of denominations against each other which has been the norm in times passed, in a secular age, is unconscionable. Religious violence is the grossest

profanation of the Name of God. The law of love and non-violence is the grounding and generative hermeneutical stance of Pentecostalism, indeed of contemporary Christianity as a whole; but it may be said of Pentecostalism in particular, as the type of Church that most belongs to an Age of Interpretation. The law of love and non-violence is not a new philosophy or theology, although doubtless it can be turned into ideology; it is not a metaphysic, but an interpretative base for a Church in the Age of Interpretation.\footnote{Matthew Del Nevo, *Pentecostalism and the Age of Interpretation*. http://aps.webjournals.org/articles/a/01/2009/7100.htm (date accessed 26/5/09).}

Additionally, Del Nevo, in his response to the challenging situations in this Topic 7, asserts that Secular humanism and Pentecostal spiritual humanism (i.e., biblical humanism) can work for peace and good will on an ethical basis. Pentecostal aesthetics upholds ethics before beliefs, which manifests in what could easily be mistaken for ‘pragmatism’. He insists that this ethics is not \textit{praxis} in the modern sense of Practical Theology, nor simply utilitarian practicality but belongs to a biblical wisdom tradition. (e.g., the meeting between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well, where Jesus emphasized that people [Samaritans and Jews] must no longer worship God on the holy mountain of the Samaritans or in the Temple in Jerusalem, but in spirit and truth). For Del Nevo, then, the Kingdom of God is not about religion and its trappings nor its geography nor its organisation – it is spiritual; it is enacted in love as was demonstrated at Jacob’s Well. He says that it is providential that the Church has Three Ages. The Age of the Mother of love of the Roman Church, the Age of Pauline belief-led Church are necessary to each other and necessary for a Third Age. It would be inconceivable without them. But the Third Age of the ‘Johannine completion’ is the Age in which, by definition, what Jesus says to the Samaritan woman at the well is a given.\footnote{Matthew Del Nevo, *Parameters of Pentecostal Aesthetics*. http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj18/nevo.html (date accessed 26/5/09).}

To reinstate a vibrant, contemporary, Catholic spirituality into our lives, Brown, in his response to the challenge in this Topic 7, suggests that we have to draw on the sources of Scripture, tradition, the Christian community and personal prayer. We have to travel a personal lifelong journey in the Holy Spirit, which reaches to the very depths of one’s existence, and impels us to embrace others with that same ‘compassion’, ‘forgiveness’, and ‘love’ that we ourselves have experienced with the Father of Jesus.\footnote{Brown, *A Catholic Spirituality*, 266.}
As Brown also asserts, the culminating point of Catholic life and worship is the Eucharist — it sums up the heart of Catholic spirituality. In the Eucharist we gather with others of faith, many of whom we may not know but who, like us, are there to celebrate the presence of God in their lives and their own struggle to put into practice what the Gospel teaches. We have our own lives joined to the offering by Christ of his own life. We are brought into communion with Christ’s own real presence in our midst, we share in the table of the Lord together, and have our lives enriched by thanksgiving. In the Eucharist, all that we are, our hopes, successes, failures and strivings, are caught up in the acceptance, reconciliation, power and joy of the Spirit of God. Ultimately, what we receive is a ‘hope’ to live by.\textsuperscript{1122}

In this time when much superficial/pseudo-religious type of ‘spirituality’ is practised, we need to restore our values, so that listening is more important than doing, being is more important than having/making, and a genuine prayerful spirituality assumes its rightful position over religious activism. The creation of a genuine, vibrant, contemporary Christian spirituality, as stated earlier, is another way of reintegrating the transcendent into our Australian society after modernity.\textsuperscript{1123}

For Brown, also, the task of formulating an effective spirituality today is complicated both because of the individualistic nature of modern society, and the kind of personal problems it tends to create. Hence, he argues that, to be effective, a contemporary spirituality must pay careful attention to the human needs manifest in peoples’ aspirations and expectations regarding the personal fulfilment of their own lives, even if it sees itself obliged, as Catholic spirituality does, to set those aspirations and expectations in a wider context.\textsuperscript{1124}

To drive home his point about overcoming the challenge in this Topic 7, Gerard Dowling writes ‘Lord I’m listening’ on one page in his book and leaves a blank page opposite. He says that the blank page is no stunt. It is there to challenge us, on this occasion, to put everything else aside and to listen to the Lord for as long as we can.\textsuperscript{1125} He explains that we should pray continually and never lose heart. This will be

\begin{enumerate}
\item Brown, \textit{A Catholic Spirituality}, 266.
\item ibid., 255; and Dupré in Ch.2, 146-147 and 155-166.
\item Brown, \textit{A Catholic Spirituality}, 257.
\end{enumerate}
of enormous help to people who are experiencing difficulties within their own religious
tradition and possibly thinking of changing from it. $^{1126}$

Similarly, Gerald Gleeson insists that we must ensure that Christian faith is truly
faith in the living God, not worship of an idol of our own philosophical (or humanistic)
construction. $^{1127}$

Bishop Gerard Holohan, in his response to the Dixon and Others’ Research
Report, stressed that to suggest that one can be a ‘good Christian’ without the
Eucharist is to hold a different idea of Christian faith from that of Jesus. After all, Jesus
made clear the centrality of the Eucharist for growth in the Christian life: ‘If you do not
eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you shall have no life in you’. $^{1128}$

In an age of multiculturalism, as in Australia today, Tacey argues that the
challenge is to achieve a shared public meaning and a unity of purpose that is clearly
absent from our present social system. $^{1129}$ In his response to this Topic 7, he says we
need a new common national image which includes, not only all men of the ANZAC
type as well as of other types, but also women, recent migrants, people from non-Anglo
countries, homosexuals and Aboriginals. Instead of only celebrating plurality, diversity
and everything that opposes and transcends our former social unities, we need to
include in our celebrations social and human reality. $^{1130}$ We need creative integration or
engagement — not simply tolerance. $^{1131}$ This new unity cannot be a conservative
backlash against our avowed diversity, but must be a further development within and
beyond our contemporary recognitions. $^{1132}$ Our true spiritual quest is, then, a rebellion
against the logic of modernity and the precepts of rationality, as well as those
‘spiritualities’ without God (especially as in some of the Evangelical/Pentecostal-type
religions with their idolatrous practices). $^{1133}$

Tacey also asserts that negotiating the spiritual path requires enormous inner
resources and intuitive abilities, and not all people have the necessary moral genius to

$^{1126}$ Dowling, Praying Continually, xi; and cf. Luke 18:1, in The New Jerusalem Bible: ‘Then he (Jesus) told them a
parable about the need to pray continually and never lose heart’; and also cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 146–147 and 155-166.

$^{1127}$ Gleeson, Response to McDermott & Hart, 275 and 276; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 146–147 and 155-166.

$^{1128}$ Dixon & Others, Research Project 2007, 58–60; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 146–147 and 155-166.

$^{1129}$ Tacey, Re-Enchantment, 243.

$^{1130}$ ibid., 243 and 244.

$^{1131}$ ibid., 245.

$^{1132}$ ibid., 246.

$^{1133}$ ibid., 185.
succeed in this task. Today’s spiritual problem urgently requires a cultural solution (i.e., a renewed religious attitude), since not all of us can embark on an individual spiritual journey. We need to learn that truth cannot be made, but only found or, at best, rediscovered. Our quest becomes no longer a bold search for new truth, but an individual search for established or perennial truth. In so doing, we must change our attitude from the notion of an individual journey as a protest against tradition so that it becomes replaced by the idea of an individual journey to renew or revitalise a tradition. To some extent, we must understand that ‘the personal spiritual journey’ is a contradiction in terms, since the great spiritual truths are collective, transpersonal — anything but personal: they are collective, ageless, transpersonal and shared. Spiritual truth is still largely an oral tradition, even today, for spirituality is best conveyed by word of mouth.  

To heal the split between spirituality and religion, between youth culture and established culture, between experience and faith, according to Tacey, will require enormous courage from those on both sides of this schizophrenic divide. He asserts that the important thing is for conversations to develop across these divides, so that each can be informed about the other side, and each can know what the other side is about, what its motivations and interests are, and what it sees as the truth. However, in addition to these important ‘interfaith’ dialogues, there is a dialogue we are not having: an open non-suspicious dialogue with our own young culture and, by extension, the wider secular or disenchanted culture in which youth culture is permanently situated. Further, it is crucial that we begin, and maintain, a dialogue with the ‘unchurched’ majority about meaning, spirituality and values. The community of believers must share the comfort of faith with the disaffected, the secular and the needy, as faith is suspiciously weak if it cannot be ‘tested’ against the claims of contemporary social experience. We must look into the ‘unbeliever’ in ourselves, so that our theological enquiry no longer merely talks to itself in a cloistered environment, but that it speaks, also, to the urgent needs of a sick, hungry and increasingly desperate society.

Mackay, in many cases, when responding to this Topic 7, only refers to us as humans, who need to plan and control our own lives and destinies solely for this world, rather than suggesting that we should use God’s plan for us while here and for our future lives with him in Heaven as well.

1134 Tacey, Re-Enchantment, 208 and 209.
1135 ibid., 210.
1136 Ibid., 211; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 146–147 and 155-166.
Mackay also says that we need to get our priorities right, our values straight, rebuild our sense of being a community, and take more control of our lives.\footnote{1137 Mackay, \textit{Reinventing Australia}, 296 and 297.} To help us achieve these objectives, we need to have regular ‘time out’, not only to restore our energy, but also to ensure that we maintain a healthy perspective on the rest of our lives. We require some form of ritual detachment (e.g., relaxation and meditation) from the stress of living, which will give us a sense of tranquillity that becomes a precious resource for dealing with the daily events of our lives.\footnote{1138 ibid., 103.} Activities which successfully create opportunities for reflective detachment appear to have two factors in common. First, they involve a physical break from the mainstream activities of daily life — we have to \textit{do} something in order to induce the detachment we require. Barracking for a football club does not qualify (and neither does flopping in front of the TV). Second, they involve a narrowing of focus (ranging from the mantra of meditation to the rhythmic breathing of controlled relaxation), which excludes any conscious concern with the wider context of our lives. Paradoxically, such narrowed foci create the opportunity to develop a healthier perspective on that wider context when we return to it. Almost without exception, successful forms of reflective detachment involve quite rigorous disciplines. In order to obtain maximum benefit, we must ‘play by the rules’ of whatever pursuit we choose.\footnote{1139 ibid., 304 and 305.} However, achieving the sense of being in control of our lives seems to depend upon creating definite periods in every week when we submit to the kind of routines and rituals — ranging from the meditative to the creative — which can take us out of ourselves and fix our attention elsewhere. Sometimes, the result of such detachment is that we are able to identify tensions in ourselves, created by gaps between our values and our behaviour. At other times, the result is that we acquire a new perspective on our circumstances which leads us to accept what previously seemed unacceptable. Further, sometimes solutions to apparently insoluble problems emerge in the moment of retreat from them. Whatever the outcome, reflective detachment is fundamental to the construction — or reconstruction — of a well-integrated ‘cage’.\footnote{1140 ibid., 305. The ‘cage’ is what we ourselves have each constructed out of our own unique life’s experience, and defines who we are. Its bars are all the things that life has taught us, and they impose their own pattern on what we see through them. Hence cages are the critical factor in the communication process - they can obscure and distort our view of each other, and limit our capacity to interpret each other’s messages.}

Continuing, Mackay says that rewards and punishments confuse our sense of right and wrong. We ought to do the right thing because it is right, not because we will...
be rewarded for doing it. If we offer rewards to children for doing the right thing, they will learn to seek rewards; doing the right thing will become a means to an end, rather than an end in itself.\textsuperscript{1141} Also, he argues that moral mindfulness is the pathway to moral clarity — a way of stoking the moral engine we call ‘conscience’. It is a habit that can be acquired by constant practice of a threefold discipline: being fully aware, moment by moment, of the ethical dimension of whatever we are doing; pondering what we have learned from previous experience in similar situations; and imagining the likely consequences for all concerned.\textsuperscript{1142} Our moral mindfulness can be stimulated by ‘tests’, such as the Rotary four-way test, the test of public exposure, the sniff test, the tell-the-children test, or perhaps a ‘super test’ (e.g., ‘would I do this if it were the one and only action by which other people were going to judge my integrity and write my epitaph?’).\textsuperscript{1143} He further asserts that guilt is an authentic human emotion that reassures us our moral machinery is in working order, but it must be dealt with properly. When it is nursed beyond its ‘use by’ date, it becomes corrosive. Guilt is usually a sign that we need to apologise to those we have wronged and seek their forgiveness.\textsuperscript{1144} We are more likely to achieve peace of mind when we attend to the needs and wellbeing of others than when we single-mindedly pursue our own happiness at the expense of others.\textsuperscript{1145}

In addressing the matter of why people don’t listen to us, Mackay uses a reverse approach by suggesting that we ponder on why they do. He proposes six such reasons: 1) when they know that we will always listen to them, and when they know that what we say is a response to our understanding of them; 2) when they sense that we are in touch with our own feelings, and when our message has the integrity of coming from someone who believes it her/himself; 3) when they can see the relevance of what we are saying to their own situation, their own values, their own aspirations, and when they feel comfortable about making a response; 4) when all the messages in what we say and how we say them are consistent with each other, and when the messages come to them through the channel of an established personal relationship; 5) when it is clear that we have taken their feelings into account, and when we don’t ask too much agreement at once; and 6) when they have learnt to trust us, and when

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1141} Mackay, \textit{Right & Wrong}, 277.
\item \textsuperscript{1142} ibid., 278.
\item \textsuperscript{1143} ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{1144} ibid., 279.
\item \textsuperscript{1145} ibid., 282.
\end{itemize}
they have the security of knowing that each encounter is a stepping stone to the next.\footnote{Mackay, \textit{Why Don’t People Listen}, 328–329; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 146–147 and 155-166.}

In his response to the challenges in this Topic 7, \textit{John Quilter} suggests that ecumenism is a most worthwhile approach to help prevent people from leaving traditional religions to seek understanding and personal satisfaction in other Churches. But, he points out that the ability to recognise, in another religion, a virtue of interpretation and belief sufficiently like one’s own to merit being understood as faith, is something we exercise \textit{in medias res} (into the middle of things), and will be a matter of controversy. Most of the best things in life are.\footnote{Quilter, \textit{Meaning, Faith & Reason}; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 146–147 and 155-166.}

To overcome the Churches’ (Anglican and others) tacit promotion of religious activism in lieu of mystical piety, Miley stresses that the Church must go back to its mission first and, after that, attend to religious social activities. God must come before everything else, and we encounter God through spiritual piety and prayer.\footnote{Miley, \textit{Suicidal Church}, 13.} Therefore, our listening must replace our doing. A traditional formulation of the Church is: ‘where Christ is, there is the Church’ — this also must be the formula for the 21st Century. The Church is a spiritual society of believers whose faith is their common bond.\footnote{ibid., 5.} Until the Church itself becomes religious again, it cannot hope to engage successfully with the main problem of the modern age, the problem which it is uniquely fitted to deal with, and which is its mission to speak of: the loss of meaning in modern life.\footnote{ibid., 35.}

To reverse the present situation in which Anglicans now officially pray — and believe — different things, and, at the same time, are experiencing a present paucity of chaplains in their schools (because of ‘alleged’ lack of funds), which has intensified sectarianism, Miley, in her response to the challenges in this Topic 7, postulates that institutional reform is required to keep any semblance of meaning embodied in the word ‘Anglican’. Characteristically, for her, this destructive force within the Church is entirely self-generated.\footnote{ibid., 129.} She also asserts that to overcome the contemporary malaise of focusing on the material and external, at the expense of spirituality, perhaps
the Church should ‘fight fire with fire’, and employ ‘professional’ marketers, rather than the present ‘amateurs,’ to lead people back to their faith in community life.\textsuperscript{1152} Today’s secular world is not interested in joining an institution, especially one which is at best old-fashioned and ineffectual. But, the secular world is actually crying out for a spiritual life, and it \textit{will} respond to the news of the amazing God that we encounter in our experiences of everyday life.\textsuperscript{1153} We need to recall, and put into practice, God’s greatest commandment — love.\textsuperscript{1154}

For Bouma, in his response to the challenging situations in this Topic 7, he argues that, as spirituality has also come to be associated with Movements and groups that are not usually seen as religious, the revitalised Church of England Evangelists in Australia need to realize that religion and spirituality is about hope, the production and maintenance of hope through actions, beliefs, practices and places that link the person and/or group to a reality or frame of reference that is both beyond the immediate perceptual and material frame and deeply imbedded within the person.\textsuperscript{1155}

Cowdell’s response to the challenging situations in this Topic 7 is that Evangelicals continue to do away with the \textit{deductive} approach to Christianity, especially by eliminating the present Evangelical confusion in relation to the roles of the priest(s) and the laity in the Eucharist. For him, the essence of priesthood is Eucharistic Presidency with the laity outworking in the world as they already preside at the altar of the world not the altar of the Church.\textsuperscript{1156}

It is patently clear, after examining The Australian authors’ (Anglican, Catholic, Evangelical, Pentecostal and others above) convergent and divergent (and even sometimes confusing) analyses and responses to this Topic 7, that we Australians need help — especially from Dupré’s framework as outlined in the “Abstract” of and discussed during this thesis — if we are to address and overcome the challenging situations presented by this Topic, through a true and genuine spirituality which will enable us to effect the hard deeds of love, forgiveness and compassion that are so necessary in the overcoming process.

\textsuperscript{1152} Miley, \textit{Suicidal Church}, 35.
\textsuperscript{1153} ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{1154} ibid., 164; and cf. Dupré in Ch. 2, 146–147 and 155-166.
\textsuperscript{1155} Bouma, \textit{Australian Soul}, 31.
\textsuperscript{1156} Cowdell, \textit{God’s Next Big Thing}, 167 and 168.
9. **Summary — Why Dupré’s analytical and responsorial reflections in his framework in Chapters 1 and 2 are applicable to our Australian context**

Both current American and Australian cultures have much in common. Although the former is about twice the age of the latter, each began in separate lands that had prior indigenous cultures for thousands of years. Both non-indigenous cultures have their origins from similar backgrounds — initially, immigrants came from Western world countries, followed later by people from lands of the East. In addition to the two countries having English as their main language, both, today, are secular, immanent humanistic societies, with Australia, however, for a variety of reasons mentioned above by some of our Australian Authors, as the more secular of the two.

Since the 1960s, the very speed of change and the scope of challenges to Christian beliefs, ethics and morality have reminded Western world and Australian Christians that a significant part of their heritage lay in being a countercultural force, contrasting eternal and temporal priorities. Those changes and challenges have also alerted many Australian people, irrespective of their religious convictions (if any), that short-term profit, based on injustice, was not a foundation for nation-building. Also, during that same period, the foundations of liberal Christianity had been shaken severely because of the widespread rejection of the rational and scientific paradigms by a considerable number of Australians. Many Protestants have been unable to agree on a replacement foundation since those tumultuous years. Unfortunately, it appears that while our Churches have shown resilient capacity to adapt to the Australian environment (e.g., response to Aborigines, women in priesthood, helping our communities and so on), they have not captured the public’s imagination. Nevertheless, as we saw earlier from Dupré, such critical investigations are needed to provide us with available options to help us to advance confidently into the future.

In light of the above, it could be argued, generally, that Dupré’s analyses of the origins, developments and deep cultural perspectives of the USA and European cultures could equally apply to our Australian perspective and its secular challenges.

However, I argue, particularly, that Dupré’s works are not only relevant to spirituality, for which they are world-renowned, but also should be recognised as providing a framework for helping us understand and address today’s secular challenges in Australia’s current humanistic culture. If this argument is proven correct and possibly accepted, Dupré’s framework, with Australian authors and indeed others in agreement with it, could assist us address, combat and hopefully overcome the prevalent secular challenges in our Australian society.
The analyses by Australian authors of today’s Australian cultural perspective via the chosen seven Topics (each depicting a different aspect of that view) and their responses to the challenging situations in each of those seven Topics, as presented above in this Chapter 3, highlight two important matters. Firstly, while the Australian authors have mostly concentrated on our Australian perspective, their analyses of it indicate that, even though displaying much sensitivity to this issue in Australian religious thinking, they do not have such an understanding of the deep Western (or indeed Australian) culture as does Dupré. His conception is more defined and deeper in its ramifications and is superior to the work of the Australian authors I have studied. Secondly, it is clear that, from the majority of their responses to the secular challenges emanating out of the seven Topics discussed, our Australian authors, generally, do not cover the Topics as thoroughly as Dupré, nor do they proffer many positive solutions to them.

Therefore, enlightened by the above dialogues between Dupré and the Australian and non-Australian authors presented in this thesis, I argue for our need to employ Dupré’s comprehensive framework and its more robust reflections to help us understand the Australian perspective and address its secular challenges. Then, provided his framework is properly drawn and administered to cover Australia’s challenging secular situations, and, if supported by our Australian authors to a greater or lesser degree, our drawing upon, and adoption of, Dupré’s reflections should enable us to find those desired solutions.

With this in mind, in Chapter 4, I make my appropriations from Dupré’s framework, and provide an abundance of coherence with it from non-Australian and Australian contemporary authors. I believe these appropriations can show us how to address and overcome today’s challenges in our Australian secular culture.
1. Preamble leading to my appropriations from Dupré’s responsorial framework to help us address and overcome the Australian secular challenge in each of the chosen seven topics

The main purpose of this chapter is to highlight that Dupré’s works, while being extolled for their relevance to spirituality, also should be recognised, rather than being overlooked as has happened mostly in the past, as providing a framework for helping us understand and address the Australian secular challenges in the above topics.

Dupré’s writings are regularly cited in works on spirituality and, in today’s secular world where there is a current upsurge towards finding genuine spirituality in our Christian lives, Churches and society, many people are looking towards his works, more than ever, to enhance their spiritual development. Perhaps, this is one reason why his other great thoughts over the years have simply remained reflections, and not been used for other purposes (e.g., as providing a framework for understanding and addressing Australia’s current secular challenges).

While Louis Dupré did not write with the Australian context specifically in mind, we saw in earlier chapters that his work certainly applies to it. Yet, there are some basic insights, as evidenced in his deep analyses of culture and today’s worldview and his responses to the secular challenges therein — all connected in some way with the loss of transcendence and its sought reintegration — that should be kept in mind when looking at how his works provide that framework.

1157 Miley, Suicidal Church, 50.
In our immanent, humanistic country, where we live without support and without soul,\textsuperscript{1158} where God plays no vital role,\textsuperscript{1159} and where man’s mind controls almost everything, including meaning/value-making and reality,\textsuperscript{1160} the time has now come when the reflections of Dupré, particularly, and others generally, need to be recognised as providing that desired and sought framework. At the same time, efforts should be made to highlight and rectify this Australian (and possibly global) oversight, to demonstrate the full significance of Dupré’s total authorship.

As earlier stated in page 5 of the Introduction, among Dupré’s reflections presented over several years, many have been deemed to be masterly. However, others are implied as being simply profound reflections — not solutions; the profound reflections only can help pave the way for solutions towards addressing and overcoming the secular challenges.\textsuperscript{1161} Therefore, because many of his reflections have been overlooked as, or not examined in the light of, providing a framework to help us understand and address the secular challenges in today’s society, I suggest that this part of his profound knowledge should now be taken seriously, as it can help pave the way for us towards those sought solutions. In time, this should enable us to be taught and understand how and why that framework can assist us address, and hopefully overcome, with the aid of divine love and grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, today’s secular challenges in our Australian society.

Further, to eliminate repetition and misconceptions when examining Dupré’s basic insights in that framework, it is important to recall some of his fundamental understandings, which are as follows.

Culture originates from a succession of decisions by which we create, refine and constantly revise a system of values, which we hand down from one generation to the next. Thus, culture’s tendency is to continue earlier trends. But the continuity should not make us lose sight of the reality of conscious innovation. While objective

\textsuperscript{1158} Dupré, \textit{Metaphysics & Culture}, 23 to 25.
\textsuperscript{1159} Dupré, \textit{Other Dimension}, 21; and Dupré, \textit{Religious Mystery}, 142.
\textsuperscript{1160} Dupré, \textit{Religious Mystery}, 133 and 134.
\textsuperscript{1161} Casarella, \textit{Modern Forms}, 276.
tendencies were present in earlier Western culture, its orientation was not objective itself and remained open towards transcendence. The beginning of the modern era changed this situation.\footnote{1162}

In the transformation from medieval to modern, culture took over nature, and so modern culture was transformed through modern technology, the meaning and role of the self, and the virtual disappearance of transcendence (through secularisation and its humanism). The modern human being’s mind now controls everything, and even creates reality/objectivity and meaning/value-making. It has taken the place of God.\footnote{1163}

As a result, nowadays, we Australians live in a fragmented culture, without support and without soul, which tolerates only ephemeral ideas and transient values and where, among other things, profane matters have become secular, life is meaningless, and anthropocentrism and economic consumerism (promoted as providing happiness) both reign supreme, amidst the antagonistic forces of dualisms (which create uncertainty and loss of truth in our society), the decline in attendances at traditional Churches, and the present upsurge of ‘spirituality’ without God.\footnote{1164}

Through the disintegration of the cosmos, conscious human existence and the transcendent source, our Australian cultural crisis has been brought about — its loss of transcendence, its virtual ‘godlessness’. Hence, our culture is not Christian. As a result, there is lack of belief in an all loving God, who created the world, who created each and every person, and who loves each and every person individually and eternally.\footnote{1165}

Metaphysics rests on the assumption that the mere appearance of things does not include their justification and that it requires a foundation. The Christian doctrine of creation changed the nature of the earlier Greek quest (i.e., not accepting that things were simply there, but that they made sense had to be justified), when it derived all beings from one free and perfect source (i.e., the primary question was no longer why things were meaningful, but why they were there at all). Metaphysical ultimacy is to

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item 1162 Dupré, Marx’s Social Critique, 1 and 2; and Dupré, Modern Idea, 2, 3, 13 and 15; and also Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 171.
\item 1163 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 2, 3, 6, 11, 12, 101, 112, 115, 118 and 252; and Dupré, Marx’s Social Critique, 1, 2, 3 and 277; and Dupré, Metaphysics & Culture, 4–9; and Dupré, Dubious Heritage, 1 and 7; and also Dupré, Religion and the Rise of Modern Culture, 15.
\item 1164 Dupré, Marx’s Social Critique, 6, 7, 281, 282, 284, 287 and 288; and Dupré, Metaphysics & Culture, 20, 21 and 24; and also Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 3–5.
\item 1165 Dupré, Modern Idea, 15; and Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 36, 112–119, 167–189, 240, 249, 251 and 252; and also Dupré, Religious Mystery, 131.
\end{itemize}
investigate the significance of symbolic intentionality beyond appearance. Each mode of symbolic perception creates its own, unique meaning, and together they constitute that meaningful totality which, in the West, we call culture. Symbols articulate meaning, yet they do so within a totality of meaningfulness that transcends them and to which they defer — their specific meaning rests on the simultaneous presence of what appears and what gives it its spiritual content. Hence, metaphysics must clarify the relation of the various forms of consciousness to an ultimate, comprehensive principle of reality.1166

Today, Australia’s modern predicament is its culture (i.e., the modern culture which is the impact of the intellectual revolution) without metaphysics (i.e., metaphysics can no longer ‘justify’ a cultural unity that has ceased to exist).1167

Philosophy did not only become increasingly object-oriented as the modern age progressed, but also expressed the general drift of the culture more accurately than ever before. The trend reached its natural conclusion in the deism of the 17th Century and the materialism of the 18th and 19th Centuries. Despite countercurrents reacting to the change, the unqualified idea of an objective science was to place its stamp on the entire culture. Even such intrinsically subjective experiences as despair, loneliness and stress were integrated within an objective psychology conceived on the model of psychical causality.1168

The term ‘transcendent’, so essential for religion, develops dialectically and takes various meanings in different contexts, and is always transcendent in relation to what surrounds it. It emerges through three main activities in life: the aesthetic activity; the language activity; and the work activity.1169

Homogeneous objectivism, which by its very nature is valueless — it functions, but leaves no space for any transcendent support of values — affects all realms of Australia’s culture. Today, it is generally accepted that psychology and anthropology

1166 Dupré, Metaphysics & Culture, 1, 9, 11, 37 and 38; and Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 119; and also cf. Casarella, Modern Forms, 310.

1167 Dupré, Metaphysics & Culture, 42–60; and Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 3, 112 to 119; and also Dupré, Religious Mystery, 135.

1168 Dupré, Intellectual Sources, 8; and Dupré, Metaphysics & Culture, 24; and Dupré, Dubious Heritage, 4 and 5; and also Dupré, Philosophy & the Religious Perspective of Life, 7.

1169 Dupré, Other Dimension, 16; and Dupré, Religious Mystery, 133; and Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 252 and 253; and Dupré, Metaphysics & Culture, 43 and 44; and also Chmielewski, Free Expressivity, 331, 335 and 336.
should provide a substitute for the intrinsic coherence that philosophy used to provide.1170

Religion has become desacralised because of secularisation, and is no longer the central, integrating function in, or essential to, Australian culture and ethics. Today, religions promoting ‘spirituality without God’ abound, because many Australians are desperately seeking spirituality to escape the problems they perceive as being associated with either their own faith tradition(s) (if any) and/or with our secular, godless, meaningless, uncertain, anthropocentric, economic consumerist, and homogeneously objective society.1171

Attitude is a way of thinking, a behaviour reflecting this. Today, the religious attitude of Westerners (and Australians) has become what it never was before — a matter of existential choice. Yet, the one thing we can change, and the only thing we have control over, is our attitude.1172

In addition, Dupré’s following seven concepts, which we learned about in earlier chapters, need to be remembered when considering his works as providing that framework which could possibly help us Australians deal with each of the seven challenges.

1) We need to exercise clear-headedness and patience.1173

2) Our thoughts ought not be ruled by scientism, or self-assertion, or atheism.1174

3) Today’s intellectual malaise should be refused to be accepted by us as normal.1175

1170 Dupré, Intellectual Sources, 8; Dupré, Religious Mystery, 131; Dupré, Metaphysics & Culture, 43 and 44; and also Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, ix, 16 and 17.

1171 Dupré, Modern Idea, 12; Dupré, Marx’s Social Critique, 3; Dupré, Intellectual Sources, 8, and Dupré, Religious Mystery, 131, 133 and 134; and also Dupré, Religion and the Rise of Modern Culture, 15.

1172 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 134, 139, 142 and 143.

1173 Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 16; and Casarella, Modern Forms, 276.

1174 Dupré, Metaphysics & Culture, 37 and 43.

1175 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 76; and Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 3, 10, 118 and 119; and also Dupré, Dubious Heritage, 1.
4) It is important to be ever mindful that scattered unity is not new in our history, and we should reflect upon this from time to time to see how it occurred and learn from our findings.\textsuperscript{1176}

5) Restorationism should not be tolerated. We require a different kind of approach, which is inherent in modernity itself. We need to work on utilising the best of tradition and the best of modernity.\textsuperscript{1177}

6) The principle of subsidiarity requires attention, so that our religious education teachers do not arrogate to themselves functions which can be performed efficiently, after appropriate education, by lower or formerly uneducated people/societies among Christians. The aim of these teachers’ activities is to help members of the Body of the Church, not to absorb or destroy them.\textsuperscript{1178}

7) If we wish to transform and develop our attitudes (e.g., when discussing the ‘possibility’ of reintegrating the transcendent into our lives and culture), we need to bear in mind that the word ‘possible’ connotes two possibilities — one positive, the other negative.\textsuperscript{1179}

For Christians, the connotation is a positive one. Our faith (with its nucleus of transcendence) implies our need of God in our lives (who is revealed to us by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit) and so, at the same time, necessarily implies the possibility and the importance of us integrating (or reintegrating) the transcendent into our Christian lives, even while living amidst today’s secular society. In this scenario, one might say the possibility is there, but to turn that possibility into a reality requires us, as Christians, to most likely change and transform our attitudes and act in the ‘image’ of Christ, aided by God’s love and grace.

\textsuperscript{1176} Dupré, \textit{Transcendent Selfhood}, 16; and Chmielewski, \textit{Modern Forms}, 276.

\textsuperscript{1177} Dupré, \textit{Modern Idea}, 16 and 17.


\textsuperscript{1179} Dupré, \textit{Religious Mystery}, 134, 142 and 143; and Dupré, \textit{Religion and the Rise of Modern Culture}, 15.
Chapter 4: Addressing Australia’s secular challenges

For our non-believing neighbours, the connotation is a negative one. Their immanent humanistic perspective implies no need of God in their lives and, so for them, the possibility of the reintegration of the transcendent into their lives in today’s secular world is irrelevant. In this scenario, one might say there is no possibility here and, hence, no action or transformation required.

However, we Christians (by being exemplars of our faith and, thereby, living a ‘wholesome’ life in today’s secular society in that we act objectively as individuals and subjectively as selfhood) may be able to show our non-believing neighbours (who only act objectively in this fragmented world) that they, too, might have a need of God in their lives, which could enable them also to become ‘whole’ persons. If such a need of God were to become so evidenced, then, there may be the possibility of reintegrating the transcendent into all our lives in today’s secular world. If all of us worked together towards this aim, we could, hopefully, turn that possibility into a reality. In this scenario, too, it is important to direct our focus towards probably having to change our own attitudes and actions, with the help of divine love and grace and, then, by our example, help our non-believing neighbours to do likewise — not an easy task, so that together we can grow in our belief of, and need for, God. ¹¹⁸⁰

Now, bearing the purpose of my thesis in mind, I propose that if the reflections of Dupré, particularly, as well as those promulgated by other authors which are in coherence with his, generally, were to be recognised as providing a framework for helping us understand and address the current Australian secular challenges, they could assist us to redirect our focus and, thereby, hopefully overcome the following seven secular challenges in our Australian, immanent, humanistic society of today.

To assist in the recognising, shaping and drawing upon the concepts in that framework, I present, via those seven topics, my appropriations from Dupré’s reflections (because in his responsorial reflections, he offers no panacea to restore the damage incurred by modernity’s fragmentation) and those of other authors discussed in the previous three chapters. In so doing, I do not intend to imply that those other authors are coherent (or otherwise) with Dupré simply because their reflections (analytical and/or) responsorial) appear to agree (or not) with Dupré’s. Rather, in the appropriate footnotes of each of the chosen seven Topics discussed in this Chapter 4, I

¹¹⁸⁰ Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 32 and 33; Dupré, Modern Idea, 93; Dupré, Religious Mystery, 139, 142 and 143; Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 352; and cf. Luke 12:22–36; in The New Jerusalem Bible; and also Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est: On Christian Love, N. 12–18 and 40–42.
shall refer to the examinations of their works, carried out in the previous three chapters, which highlight how and why their reflections are coherent (or otherwise) with those in Dupré’s framework. These, I believe, do provide evidence to help us Australians understand the Australian cultural perspective and address its secular challenges.

2. Challenge in Topic 1: To reverse the loss of transcendence from Australia’s secular culture

In attempting to reverse Australia’s cultural crisis,1181 Dupré’s initial requirement is that we Australians acknowledge that there is a loss of transcendence from our culture.1182 To do this, we need to be fearless in the face of the pernicious ideology of secularism, the root of which, in Australia, is the attempt to promote a vision of humanity without God.1183 Then, our focus should be on bringing about a transformation in our Australian attitudes, thoughts and lives, so that we can, all together, effect the desired and sought integration or reintegration of the transcendent into our lives and society.1184

To direct our focus towards the possibility of integrating or reintegrating the transcendent into our Australian lives and culture, we learned from Dupré in Chapter 2, Topic 1, that this requires the effecting of a synthesis between metaphysics and culture,1185 because Australia’s modern predicament is culture without metaphysics. At the same time, we ought not neglect the qualified status of many of the conclusions of natural philosophy.1186 In seeking this new synthesis, we will need to exercise humility, and explore how the fragments we are left with can serve as building blocks for achieving this aim.1187 To bring about this synthesis, we must treat culture (which needs

---

1181 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 131.

1182 Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 17; and Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 252 and 253; and also Dupré, Future of Religion, 1, 2 and 3.


1184 Dupré, Modern Idea, 16 and 17; and Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 7.

1185 Dupré, Metaphysics & Culture, 43 and 44; and Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 251, 351 and 352.

1186 Dupré, Metaphysics & Culture, 42–44.

1187 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 7.
transcendence if it is to be a cohesive synthesis of its own) within the fold of metaphysical investigation, as belonging to an analysis of ultimate reality.\textsuperscript{1188} For such unification, culture requires a comprehensible principle that transcends the subject without jeopardising its central, meaning-giving role. Then, the possibility of metaphysics rests on the presence of a genuine transcendence as an essential factor operative within the culture itself.

In Chapter 2, Topic 1, we also learned of Dupré’s two strategies to effect this desired synthesis, which seemed at first sight to be somewhat opposed, but which he managed to combine.\textsuperscript{1189} But, in so doing, he insisted that we still need to hold science-religion, reason-faith in a healthy relationship.\textsuperscript{1190}

In addition, he recommended that we attend a recohesion between fibres and form and form and content, and a bringing-about of the ability to make again religious symbols, as all of these would also assist in the integration or reintegration of the transcendent into our society.\textsuperscript{1191}

Dupré further said that the revising of the accepted idea of transcendence in a way which transformed the concept of power hierarchically transmitted from ‘beyond’ into a source of power ‘within’ the universe, whereby God’s presence has permeated all parts at once, would help us in working towards the recognition of a more fundamental ‘givenss’. The latter will include the creative subject itself with its central, meaning-giving role, while at the same time recognising that the physical cosmos contains more meaning than a reduction to pure objectivity reveals.\textsuperscript{1192}

Furthermore, he argues that we Christians need to reflect on, and pray for, the desired reintegration because, if we are to remain identifiably Christian, the centrality of our faith must be Jesus. Yet, while God should be our ‘all’, we gain nothing by a blind, unquestioning ‘turn to God’.\textsuperscript{1193} We, like many people in today’s world, suffer from a

\textsuperscript{1188} Dupré, \textit{Metaphysics & Culture}, 42.
\textsuperscript{1189} Dupré, \textit{Passage to Modernity}, 251, 253, 352 and 353; and Dupré, \textit{Metaphysics & Culture}, 56–59; and also, refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 72–74 and 75–79.
\textsuperscript{1190} Dupré, \textit{Metaphysics & Culture}, 37 and 43; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 77 and 78.
\textsuperscript{1191} Refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 73–75.
\textsuperscript{1192} Dupré, \textit{Metaphysics & Culture}, 56 and 57; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 74 and 75.
\textsuperscript{1193} Dupré, \textit{Transcendent Selfhood}, 16; and Dupré, \textit{Religious Mystery}, 6.
lack of belief in God — the world’s, and Australia’s, biggest problem — and we must understand and accept that such belief is induced by God’s all pervasive grace via the Holy Spirit. Prayer will achieve, for us Christians, a ‘full-blown’ belief in God\textsuperscript{1194} — a Trinitarian God of love, a God who made us to live forever so that death does not interrupt our existence, a God who gives us meaning to life both here and now and, also, in the hereafter.\textsuperscript{1195}

Moreover, as our Christian predicament in Australia is not due just to a lack of faith but to a lack of inwardness, to simply profess a belief in God and to observe certain rules of ritual and moral conduct is not sufficient to regain our lack of inwardness. Even faith itself today is permeated by objectivism,\textsuperscript{1196} as so eloquently stated by Dupré in *Transcendent Selfhood*.\textsuperscript{1197}

In remembering Dupré’s thoughts in his framework for rediscovering our culture’s eroded transcendence, we need to understand that, for many of our contemporaries, religion has been reduced to an experience, one among others, occasionally powerful, but not sufficiently so to draw the rest of their existence into its orbit. To assist them and us correct this situation, as Dupré promotes, we should learn to contemplate on the three main activities in life, through which the transcendent emerges.\textsuperscript{1198} In so doing, we will learn that to reintegrate the transcendent into our lives and society requires the aid of God,\textsuperscript{1199} so that, once again, transcendence can play, and continue to play, a vital role in the integration of our culture.\textsuperscript{1200}

The examinations, carried out in earlier chapters, of the reflections of the following nine authors evidenced their coherence with Dupré’s framework about the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1196} Dupré, *Transcendent Selfhood*, 17.
\item \textsuperscript{1197} Refer Dupré in Ch.2, 136; and also refer Dupré, *Transcendent Selfhood*, 17.
\item \textsuperscript{1198} Refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 71 and 72, where he describes them as being the aesthetic activity, the language activity and the work activity.
\item \textsuperscript{1199} Dupré, *Religious Mystery*, 133.
\item \textsuperscript{1200} Dupré, *Metaphysics & Culture*, 44.
\end{itemize}
secular challenges in this Topic 1 — James Alberione, Gary Bouma, Peter Casarella, Philip Chmielewski, Peter Jensen, Paul Levesque, Caroline Miley, Gregory Moses, and Eric Springsted. They demonstrated that it could be possible for us to be taught how to transform our Australian attitudes and, so, focus on the desired integration or reintegration of the transcendent into our own lives and society. This could be done by utilizing my above appropriations from Dupré’s framework (which involve, inter alia, the combining of metaphysics and culture) so that, in the fullness of time, our present Australian crisis may be able to be reversed. Then, once again, God would replace humans in our immanent humanistic culture.

3. **Challenge in Topic 2: To overcome Australia’s secular notion of the meaninglessness of human existence**

In examining Dupré’s framework to understand the problem of meaninglessness in our Australian culture, we firstly learn of the need to reverse the modern conception that our culture is one in which the question of meaning does not occur. This was an idea handed down from the 15th Century desire for unlimited ‘self-assertion’ (i.e., where the human being understood that only by surpassing one’s given humanity would one grow fully human) and its natural follow-on by 19th and 20th Century philosophers (e.g., Nietzsche, Freud and Rorty) and modern atheism, all of which started the gradual evanescence of the very idea of transcendence. Today, our culture has replaced religion with aesthetics/humanism, which integrates all of life.
To overcome this present predicament, as we learned in Chapter 2, Topic 2, Dupré articulates that our experience of total contingency (i.e., God knows why) will present us with a meaning to living and, as a result, the movement into God’s Word and the Trinitarian cycle (by means of entering into the darkness of the unknowing) will be made easier in this secular world. Hence, we must not countenance a culture of therapeutic self-creation, which is tantamount to accepting radical human diminishment. Rather, we ought insist on transcendence, which is insisting on nothing less than the fully human. To this end, we must be attentive to the world in and through Jesus Christ. Only in the mystery of Christ does our own life begin to make sense. Through him, the possibility of our Catholic belief will not only be seen but it will become a reality.

Further, in today’s world, it is generally accepted that psychology and anthropology should provide a substitute for the intrinsic coherence which philosophy used to provide, so that now in our fragmented universe, as Dupré postulates, ‘the assertive replaces the meaningful’.¹²¹² This situation also applies to our current Australian culture,¹²¹³ and for us to overcome this challenge, Dupré insists that we need a conversion which demands a transformation in us to turn inwardly and, thereby, confront our own atheism and, hopefully, restore the vitality of our faith and turn towards the One who is not there — thus experiencing the contradiction of simultaneous presence and absence. As he argues, the desert of modern atheism provides the only space today in which most believers are forced to encounter the transcendent and so can, or may be, converted into the solitude of contemplation.¹²¹⁴

Dupré’s framework also helps us understand that people (and this applies especially to religious people in Australia) need to address today’s secular created emptiness that, for the serious God-seeker, attains a religious significance. He insists that the mysticism of negation provides us with an ideal model to do this, since the affirmation of God is rarely still the centre of our search for transcendence. In utilising this model, even though we may start from a negative experience of life lived in a secular environment without any transcendent meaning, we will not remain satisfied

¹²¹² Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 16.
¹²¹³ Refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 86–89.
¹²¹⁴ Refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 84–89.
with a negative attitude toward our social and worldly environment. Ours will rather
discover a transcendent dimension in a fundamental engagement to a world and a
human community perceived as totally autonomous and totally dependent. In
stressing the above, he proposes that we should maintain a healthy balance between
an individual withdrawal and a totally secular attitude in which to locate transcendence.
Thus, he promotes an inward turn without denying that we do, in fact, live in a secular
culture.

The examinations, carried out in previous chapters, of the reflections of the
following nine authors evidenced their coherence with Dupré’s framework about the secular challenges in this Topic 2 — Michael Casey, Pope John Paul II, Paul Levesque, Hugh Mackay, Thomas Merton, Caroline Miley, Catherine Quinn, John Thornhill, and Peter Vardy. They demonstrated the possibility of us effecting a conversion to an attitude in which our focus is on the true meaning/purpose of our lives rather than that simply based on human assertiveness. This can be done by utilizing my appropriations from Dupré’s framework (especially drawing upon his concepts of us ‘turning inwards’) and, so, change our attitudes towards existence based on God’s revealed love rather than that based on the promoted assertiveness of human beings.

1215 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 143.
1216 Refer Michael Casey in Ch.3, 181 and 182.
1217 Refer Pope John Paul II in Ch.2, 90 and 91.
1218 Refer Paul Levesque in Ch.2, 89.
1219 Refer Hugh Mackay in Ch.3, 183-186.
1220 Refer Thomas Merton in Ch.2, 88 and 89.
1221 Refer Caroline Miley in Ch.3, 182, 183 and 185.
1222 Refer Catherine Quinn in Ch.3, 182 and 185.
1223 Refer John Thornhill in Ch.3, 184 and 186.
1224 Refer Peter Vardy in Ch.2, 87 and 88, 92 and 93.
4. Challenge in Topic 3: To transpose the Australian immanent humanistic concept of the human person being considered as only or simply individual and, thereby, make the Australian fragmented human being ‘whole’ again

As we learned from Dupré in Chapter 2, Topic 3, today’s culture separated the cause (God) from the effect (nature/humanity) because of the human mind (not God) controlling and being the centre of everything and, so, cultural meanings of existence are now voluminous but mainly without religion (which formerly was the unifying central influence of our society), and even religion itself has become ‘desacralised’ through secularisation. Hence, today’s cultural crisis (i.e., its virtual ‘godlessness’) has brought about a current humanism which is not Christian humanism. As a result, the earlier concept of person (i.e., comprising individuality — objective, active, external and independent, and selfhood — subjective, passive, internal and dependent) has become disunited in our present secular world. Thus, today’s distinctive value system reigns (i.e., the individualistic system, the objective, the independent one). When it was asserted that the subject became the sole source of rationality and reason, the secular attitude, where a person’s individual function is everything, took over from the religious attitude, wherein the way and purpose of life is paramount. What our Christianity regained through the incarnation it has lost on the human superman/ego. Now, with the human being’s mind controlling everything, what is real is only what is objective. Therefore, the human person is fragmented today because of the two differing perspectives of the human mind — the secular where the human mind constructs reality and meaning) and the Christian (where the

1225 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 131–133; and refer Levesque, Symbols of Transcendence, 208, 212 and 213; and also refer Dupré, Religion and the Rise of Modernity, 11 and 115.

1226 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 134–143.

1227 Dupré, Modern Idea, 12; and Dupré, Religious Mystery, 133; and also Dupré, Other Dimension, 21.

1228 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 131.

1229 Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 32 and 33.

1230 ibid., 11.

1231 Dupré, Modern Idea, 6 and 7.

1232 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 112–119; and Dupré, Religious Mystery, 133.

1233 Dupré, Religious Mystery, 130; Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 11; and refer Levesque, Symbols of Transcendence, 212 and 213; and also refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 91–94.
(human mind participates in, is a radiation of, God), with secular anthropocentrism perpetuating that fragmentation. Moreover, the cultural crisis in which materialism resulted does not allow the selfhood side of a person to enjoy great popularity today.1234

Wanting to see all human beings ‘whole’ again rather than fragmented as many are today, Dupré postulates that the circumstance indispensable to this result is to help bring about a conversion to an attitude in which our focus is on understanding a person as meaning more than just to function as a person.1235 To effect this, he advocates the melding of the secular perspective of the human mind, in which a person can act objectively (i.e., as an individual substance of rational nature, in which the individual is active, external, independent and objective), with the Christian perspective of the human mind, in which a person can act objectively and subjectively — to which the category of substance hardly applies (i.e., as selfhood, in which the individual is passive, internal, dependent and subjective).1236 As we learned earlier from Dupré,1237 the problem with the secular view is that, once the human subject becomes solely responsible for the constitution of meaning, or has its functions reduced to constituted objectivity and practical control, then the rule of contemplation ends and is replaced by that of fabrication/technology: there is no content any more. Severed from the world and the transcendent, the rational subject now assumes the power of establishing that which previously had provided the content of the subject itself (God).1238 The self is now only able to view itself in the same way it relates to everything else to which it gives meaning and value — as an object. Then, as Levesque says, as the self objectifies all reality, it becomes prey to its own design and develops into an entity lacking content and, so, in the end, the subject becomes the object and thus, the secular mind only acts objectively.1239 Dupré wants an adequate concept of the self to include the self-surpassing states and experiences, for to be self is, by its very nature, to be more than the actuality of one’s being, more than what can be described in purely immanent terms.1240

1234 Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 11, 32 and 33; and Dupré, Modern Idea, 6 and 7.

1235 Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 32 and 33.

1236 Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 17 and 104.

1237 Dupré in Ch.2, 93-96.

1238 Dupré, Enlightenment, 16 and 17.

1239 Levesque, Symbols of Transcendence, 211.

1240 Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, viii.
Thus, he seeks to put the content of the subject itself (God) back into the function of the human person, so that the rule of contemplation, once more, replaces that of fabrication/technology, thereby helping the modern believer seek transcendence beyond her/his own fabrication in the isolated individualism of our modern cultural situation.\textsuperscript{1241} Yet, as Dupré says, we need to amalgamate the best of our past Christian tradition with the best of the atheistic climate of modernity when formulating that sought response.\textsuperscript{1242}

Dupré further asserts that religious belief today is inextricably bound to the culture of modernity. Religion must play its part in providing the urgent need of our culture for a truly Christian spiritual dimension, and helping us rediscover our inner selfhood. He adverts us to some neglected avenues which will help us to attain the desired rediscovery: the inwardness of revelation; the boundary experience of mental suffering; the awareness of permanence underlying the age-old belief in immortality; and the consciousness of a deeper self in mystical states.\textsuperscript{1243}

Moreover, as St. Paul states in his letter to the Galatians, and which is in similar vein to the concepts in Dupré’s framework of working towards a person’s ‘wholeness’, we, as Christians wishing to be fully human, need the Eucharist, which is the core of our Christian faith, the great treasure house of our lives. This link to Jesus, for us, is not only a commemoration of a past event but, also, a link to the future and a new belief and a new life — Jesus is the maker of the Church, which is his body (i.e., the body of Christ). Then, we will be as St. Paul says: ‘It is no longer I who lives, but Christ who lives in me’\textsuperscript{1244} and, thereby, we could realise the possibility of Catholic belief once more as we become ‘whole’ persons in the ‘image’ of Christ. Then, by our example and through God’s love and grace, we can show our non-believing neighbours how they, too, might become ‘whole’ people through God coming into their lives.

\begin{enumerate}
\item Dupré, \textit{Transcendent Selfhood}, viii; and Dupré, \textit{Enlightenment}, 16 and 17; and also cf. Levesque, \textit{Symbols of Transcendence}, 211.
\item Dupré, \textit{The Deeper Life}, 14; Dupré, \textit{Passage to Modernity}, 253; also cf. Casarella, \textit{Modern Forms}, 279 and 287.
\item Dupré, \textit{Transcendent Selfhood}, back flap of cover.
\item Cf. Paul, Galatians 2:20, in \textit{The New Jerusalem Bible}.
\end{enumerate}
The examinations carried out in previous chapters, of the reflections of the following eight authors evidenced their coherence with Dupré’s framework about the secular challenge in this Topic 3 — Ian Breward, Todd Breyfogle, Peter Casarella, Michael Casey, Paul Levesque, Caroline Miley, Catherine Quinn, and David Tacey. They demonstrated the possibility of us being helped to change our attitude towards focusing more on understanding a person as meaning more than just to function as a person. This can be done by utilizing my appropriations from Dupré’s framework (especially by bringing about the melding of the secular perspective of the human mind with that of the Christian perspective) which could assist us, even in the constrictiveness of an anthropocentric culture, to change our attitude and transpose the Australian immanent humanistic concept of the human person being considered as only or simply individual and, thereby, make the Australian fragmented human being ‘whole’ again.

5. Challenge in Topic 4: To negate the current Australian view that ‘economic consumerism’ is everything

For Dupré, the circumstance indispensable to shaping peoples’ lives around a Christian, rather than a secular, dimension is to help bring about a conversion to an attitude in which our focus is on ‘the being’ — becoming fully human persons, living in the ‘image’ of Christ in today’s secular world and destined for eternity with God in the life hereafter, more than on ‘the having’ — desiring and accumulating earthly capital and worldly possessions now, because of today’s promoted needs for instant gratification and human-made happiness, as well as simply wanting worldly goods for their own sake, immediately, with no thought of any life hereafter. This will also help

1245 Refer Ian Breward in Ch. 3, 186 and 188.
1246 Refer Todd Breyfogle in Ch.2, 97 and 98.
1247 Refer Peter Casarella in Ch.2, 98 and 99.
1248 Refer Michael Casey in Ch.3, 187 and 189.
1249 Refer Paul Levesque in Ch.2, 96 and 97.
1250 Refer Caroline Miley in Ch.3, 187, 189 and 190.
1251 Refer Catherine Quinn in Ch.3, 188 and 190.
1252 Refer David Tacey in Ch.3, 187 and 189.
1253 Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 17.
to overcome the most serious obstacle to full social and cultural integration, as this impediment consists not in the adoption of a particular economic system in preference to another, but in the primary abstraction whereby the economic sphere comes to dominate all others.\textsuperscript{1254} To effect this, and realising the inadequacy of focusing simply on economic activity or a rendering of all other social processes and artefacts to a dependence on it, he advocates that we change our society by finding a way to go outside the narrow confines set by today’s economic consumerism — these limitations brought about by competitiveness, self-focus, frenetic lifestyles, ambiguity, scepticism and redescription.\textsuperscript{1255}

Such a change demands that we centre peoples’ relationships around God’s love, values and purposes, rather than around current ontological values designed by humans for human purposes and gratification only, so that we can recover our lost freedom by detachment from the purely objective (e.g., economic consumerism). Culture requires freedom, which needs spiritual space to act. Such space is not provided by ‘fetish’ commodities which, today, have taken over a life of their own and cluttered the road to peoples’ spiritual destinations — these commodities themselves become suffocating without spiritual content. The space for freedom is created by transcendence. Therefore, we firstly need to develop an attitude in which transcendence can be recognised again in our culture. Then, we can go about effecting its reintegration into our lives and society and, thereby, negate today’s ‘spirituality’ without God.\textsuperscript{1256}

Also, in today’s immanent, humanistic, individualist, consumerist culture, which promotes instant gratification as being paramount to happiness in our earthly lives, and where peoples’ relationships are more concerned with ontological values rather than with God, Dupré argues that we urgently need to do what we can to alter our present consumer-ravaged society.\textsuperscript{1257} This is necessary due to the fact that, among other things, it has greatly diminished the value of community and, as human beings, we are simply not individuals, we are social. Our thinking requires alteration because,

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{1254} Dupré, \textit{Marx’s Social Critique}, 282.
\textsuperscript{1255} Dupré, \textit{Transcendent Selfhood}, 17; and Chmielewski, \textit{Free Expressivity}, 335.
\textsuperscript{1256} Dupré, \textit{Transcendent Selfhood}, 17.
\textsuperscript{1257} Dupré, \textit{Modern Idea}, 11 and 12; and Dupré, \textit{Other Dimension}, 21; and also Dupré, \textit{Transcendent Selfhood}, 16 and 17.
\end{flushright}
nowadays, many people are seeking fulfilment but, unfortunately, settling for abundance, the price being the disintegration of community and of self. In our current objective climate where economic consumerism reigns supreme, peoples’ spirits are starved, and continue to be starved, of the security of community. For Dupré, by providing the believer with sacraments, Scriptures, and a whole system of representations, the religious community enables the individual to integrate her/his private spiritual life with a living communion of Church. Thus, we need community and community spirit, and we ought to understand that this can develop and grow in the most unlikely of places. The change of direction must start now and, to effect it, we have to remember God’s commandment — to love him and one another. To bring him back into our lives and community, we need to acknowledge, firstly, that his presence has been greatly eroded and, then, proceed with his reintegration in accord with the above commandment of love via a more spiritual approach.

To develop this required spiritual approach, Dupré emphasises that our Christian spirituality must start from conviction and commitment. This will help us improve our Church attendances and, so, enable us to worship as a community, to share in the sacramental life of the Church, and to receive guidance, support and encouragement.

Therefore, today, we need a spirituality based on what perhaps it has always been — that which is more central to human experience than religion. Religion fails if it is not based on a deep spirituality. Before law and duty, though both important, first we must develop a relationship with a God of unconditional love, who is both father and mother to us. To effect this relationship requires us to ‘let go’ of our earthly trappings and meditate (i.e., seek God in the stillness and silence beyond words and thoughts), and this requires our commitment and patience together with the grace of the Holy Spirit.

The examinations carried out in previous chapters, of the reflections of the following sixteen authors evidenced their coherence with Dupré’s framework about the


secular challenge in this Topic 4 — Pope Benedict XVI,¹²⁶² Zygmunt Bauman,¹²⁶³ Gary Bouma,¹²⁶⁴ Barbara Bowe,¹²⁶⁵ John Carroll,¹²⁶⁶ Philip Chmielewski,¹²⁶⁷ Scott Cowdell,¹²⁶⁸ the Irish Bishops,¹²⁶⁹ Hugh Mackay,¹²⁷⁰ Caroline Miley,¹²⁷¹ Cardinal Murphy-O’Connor,¹²⁷² Neil Ormerod,¹²⁷³ Ormond Rush,¹²⁷⁴ David Tacey,¹²⁷⁵ Jean Vanier¹²⁷⁶ and Janiene Wilson.¹²⁷⁷ They demonstrated that, if we were able to be assisted to effect transformation in our thinking about, and so develop, a renewed spirituality, this would produce people who know how to live their faith and demonstrate it by example. This could be done by utilizing my appropriations from Dupré’s framework (especially by reshaping our culture so that the ‘being’ can, once again, replace the ‘having’). Then these ‘saints’, whom Dupré insists are needed in today’s world, could lead us to negate the current Australian view that economic consumerism is everything (and in which it is promoted that ‘spirituality without God’ can satisfy human wants and happiness through instant gratification) and, thereby, help us to effect the above changes in the direction of our thinking about economic consumerism and community spirit.

¹²⁶² Refer Pope Benedict XVI in Ch. 2, 136–138, 141 and 142 and 144.
¹²⁶³ Refer Zygmunt Bauman in Ch. 3, 191, 192, 194 and 198.
¹²⁶⁴ Refer Gary Bouma in Ch. 3, 193, 194 and 199.
¹²⁶⁵ Refer Barbara Bowe in Ch. 2, 104.
¹²⁶⁶ Refer John Carroll in Ch. 3, 192, 194 and 198.
¹²⁶⁷ Refer Philip Chmielewski in Ch. 2, 102 and 103.
¹²⁶⁸ Refer Scott Cowdell in Ch. 3, 191, 192, 194 and 198.
¹²⁶⁹ Refer the Irish Bishops in Ch. 2, 137 and 138; and cf. Irish Bishops’ Pastoral Letter, ‘Prosperity with a Purpose’ and reported in The Irish Family National News Section 12/11/1999; 2.
¹²⁷⁰ Refer Hugh Mackay in Ch. 3, 194, 195, 200 and 201.
¹²⁷¹ Refer Caroline Miley in Ch. 3, 195, 196 and 201.
¹²⁷² Refer Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor in Ch. 2, 137 and 138.
¹²⁷³ Refer Neil Ormerod in Ch. 3, 197 and 202.
¹²⁷⁴ Refer Ormond Rush in Ch. 2, 104–105 and 140–141.
¹²⁷⁵ Refer David Tacey in Ch. 3, 193 and 199.
¹²⁷₆ Refer Jean Vanier in Ch. 2, 103.
¹²⁷₇ Refer Janiene Wilson in Ch. 3, 196 and 201; and cf. Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, #21.
6. **Challenge in Topic 5:** To nullify the effects of the conflicting forces of the ‘bastard’ dualisms of faith/reason and nature/grace and, thereby, bring back truth and certainty into Australian lives

We learned in Chapter 2, Topic 5, that the process of cultural disintegration gave us a new awareness of what has now become our cultural crisis — objectivism, subjectivism and dualism.\(^{1278}\) Despite several attempts, over the years, to go beyond the dualisms of faith/reason and nature/grace, their antagonistic forces have left us, and are still leaving us, with uncertainty and loss of truth (both of which emanate from the loss of transcendence) in today’s fragmented culture, which is dominated by the human person’s mind and that mind’s objectivism. Thus, these mutually opposing forces, rather than united ones, rule secular thought in relation to these two ‘bastard’ dualisms.\(^{1279}\) Hence, Dupré argues that, today, in this paradoxical situation, ‘the controversial replaces the true’,\(^{1280}\) and he desires to eliminate this predicament to enable us to advance confidently into the future without the burdensome ‘luggage’ of these antagonistic controversies.

To effect this, he proposes that we need a conversion to an attitude in which our focus is on what is true — living as Christians during this life, in Christ’s image and in truth, and dying in God’s love and so with the certainty of the beatific vision in the life hereafter, rather than on what is controversial — living by and for human-based controversial arguments and earthly gains only, amid the uncertainty and loss of truth in today’s immanent humanistic society, and so dying without any concern for the hereafter — both situations brought about through secular-driven controversies surrounding, and connected with, these dualisms. Such a transformation requires a synthesis of philosophy and theology, which Dupré asserts can be done by combining metaphysics and culture, as canvassed in the challenge in Topic 1 of this chapter (‘Godlessness’).\(^{1281}\) Then, once again, the true will replace the controversial.\(^{1282}\)

---

1280 Dupré, *Transcendent Selfhood*, 16.
Chapter 4: Addressing Australia’s secular challenges

Combating the antagonistic forces of the ‘bastard’ dualism of faith and reason

In addition to his recommended synthesis to help us go beyond this dualism of faith and reason, Dupré says that there are also implications in relation to our understandings about revelation and truth which need to be considered and addressed to assist us nullify the problems caused by its antagonistic forces.

Dupré’s first concern is about revelation, and he stresses that, in reflecting on its unfolding within history, we need to keep in mind that experience and interpretation, on a fundamental level, are inseparable from one another and continuously develop over time. He suggests that we speak of ‘the original Revelation event’ as entailing a unity of interpretation and experience in which the primary revelation enjoys the same privileged status as the experience itself, since it forms an essential part of it. Human experience, as the reflective self-understanding of the experience, does justice to the contingent cultural elements and the divine givenness of revelation alike. He says that experience itself is, by its very nature, immanently human and, hence, as much historically conditioned as its structuring and reflective interpretation — so both are one. While the various levels of revelation over time have given this oneness a new direction, still, the process of interpreted experience will continually pass through new experiences and interpretations, all of which remain both subjectively and objectively dependent upon the original, interpreted experience.

Dupré, when talking about revelation, also argues that in today’s culture, where religion can no longer count on that culture’s support, the emphasis on experience becomes essential for religion’s survival. To perceive the meaning of religion one must, even in the midst of one’s secular experience, find intimations of a transcendent mystery. But, Dupré, in warning us, agrees with Schillebeeckx who says that, to ask people to accept the Christian revelation before they have learnt to experience it as a definition of their own life, is an impossible and useless demand.
Chapter 4: Addressing Australia’s secular challenges

Dupré’s second concern is about truth, and he depicts religious truth as a kind of deepening of vision, a constant conversation towards being’s transcendent depth of truth and goodness; one is in the truth before one can simply know the truth — it refers to being rather than to knowledge, it is a way of being rather than simply a way of conceiving. Dupré espouses truth as disclosure, as the radiance by which the object of reflection shows itself — gives itself — to the subjective intention. Such a model makes room for the notion of revelation, for the idea of a transcendence that declares itself, that is Word and light and meaning, appearing gratuitously, even if it does so necessarily under the forms provided by a human creativity. Also, Dupré understands truth in terms of ontological disclosure, and by allowing things to be, to disclose themselves in the open, is the very essence of freedom. This freedom also bears its particular authority: the reality that we experience — in this case, the transcendent reality as communicated in revelation — defines the nature of the experience and endows it with its own authority, not the other way around. Only as such, Dupré argues, is it best suited to understanding the nature of religious truth, because it is less tainted by modern subjectivism and, so, remains open to the experience of presence.

The examinations, carried out in previous chapters, of the reflections of the following nineteen authors evidenced their coherence with Dupré’s framework about the secular challenges in this part (Faith and Reason) of Topic 5 — Marilyn Adams, Wolfgang Beinert, Todd Breyfogle, Avery Dulles, Anthony English, Marie Farrell, Anthony Fisher, Harry Gensler, Gerald Gleeson, Roger Haight.

---

1289 Breyfogle, Review, 2.
1290 Refer Marilyn Adams in Ch. 2, 110.
1291 Refer Wolfgang Beinert in Ch. 2, 107.
1292 Refer Todd Breyfogle in Ch. 2, 113-114.
1293 Refer Avery Dulles in Ch. 2, 118 and 119.
1294 Refer Anthony English in Ch.2, 128.
1295 Refer Marie Farrell in Ch. 3, 203 and 210.
1296 Refer Anthony Fisher in Ch. 3, 204, 211 and 212.
1297 Refer Harry Gensler in Ch. 2, 108.
1298 Refer Gerald Gleeson in Ch. 3, 204 and 212.
1299 Refer Roger Haight in Ch. 2, 107.
Combating the antagonistic forces of the ‘bastard’ dualism of nature and grace

Dupré’s aforesaid recommendations to nullify the effects of the ‘bastard’ dualism of faith and reason in this topic, by effecting a synthesis of philosophy and theology through a combining of metaphysics and culture, will apply also to bring about the conversion needed in us to help combat the uncertainty and loss of truth that this dualism of nature and grace brings about. Then, once again the true will replace the controversial. Yet, while the tendency today is to avoid potentially hazardous and always useless theological controversies, Dupré insists that we must always be prepared to accept and address the challenges of these conflicts if we are to overcome them. These tasks, in this topic, will be made easier if we hold to Dupré’s notion that nature and grace together constitute one image of God.

1300 Refer David Hart in Ch. 2, 111–113.
1301 Refer Georg Langemeyer in Ch. 2, 109 and 110.
1302 Refer John McDermott in Ch. 3, 205 and 212.
1303 Refer Hugh Mackay in Ch.3, 206 and 213.
1304 Refer Caroline Miley in Ch. 3, 205.
1305 Refer Gregory Moses in Ch. 2, 115–117; and in Ch. 3, 202, 207 and 208.
1306 Refer Hayden Ramsay in Ch. 3, 204, 211 and 212.
1307 Refer David Tacey in Ch. 3, 202, 203 and 209.
1309 Dupré, Metaphysics and Culture, 71.
1310 Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 17.
1311 Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 189.
1312 ibid., 169.
Dupré argues that the Plato/Aristotle synthesis of nature and grace showed signs of a ‘fateful separation’ in the 13th Century.\textsuperscript{1313} This Thomistic synthesis was proposed by Aquinas, who postulated that Plato and Aristotle, even though coming from different directions, each had their synthesis of Grace/God and Nature/us. Platonism was based on metaphysical principles and the fundamental doctrine of participation (i.e., Grace/God in Nature/us); Aristotelianism was based on efficient causality (i.e., the notion of causality reflected an immanence of the cause [Grace/God] in its effect [Nature/us]).\textsuperscript{1314} Thus, Aquinas, after much hesitation, finally concluded that the nature of divine immanence consisted in a relation of causal dependency but, even within an Aristotelian conceptualization, participation continues to balance efficient causality in Thomas’ description of God’s presence in His creation.\textsuperscript{1315} In earlier times, Grace/God and Nature/us were merely distinguished as one level of being — not two. The ‘fateful’ separation was exacerbated during the 14th and 15th Centuries by Nominalism’s concept of unrestricted divine power which weakened the intelligibility of the relation between the Creator and creature.\textsuperscript{1316} Then in the 16th Century, the term supernatural began to refer to a separate order (as opposed to the earlier distinction of supernature and nature) when some of the epoch’s theologians clearly distinguished a natural human end from humankind’s revealed destiny.\textsuperscript{1317} Thus, the medieval synthesis came to an end and a dualism between nature and the supernatural realm solidly entrenched itself in Roman Catholic theology for the next four centuries.\textsuperscript{1318} Bruno and Nicholas of Cusa, though from different approaches, tried to reunite the theocentric and anthropocentric forces that had begun to pull the medieval synthesis apart — but in vain.\textsuperscript{1319} The immediate result of the split was twofold: one, it began the rise of a natural or philosophical theology, that is, a science of God based exclusively on rational arguments;\textsuperscript{1320} and two, this 16th Century natural theology bracketed most

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1313} Dupré, \textit{Passage to Modernity}, 170.
  \item \textsuperscript{1314} ibid., 172 and 173.
  \item \textsuperscript{1315} ibid., 173.
  \item \textsuperscript{1316} ibid., 174.
  \item \textsuperscript{1317} ibid., 171.
  \item \textsuperscript{1318} ibid., 178.
  \item \textsuperscript{1319} ibid., 182–189.
  \item \textsuperscript{1320} Dupré, \textit{Passage to Modernity}, 178.
\end{itemize}
of the earlier theological and religious assumptions and detached the realms of nature and faith from each other,\textsuperscript{1321} with its advocates insisting on proving the existence of a Creator of the cosmos independently of any revelation.\textsuperscript{1322} Yet, despite natural theology’s earnest attempt to restore to a concept of nature a transcendent orientation that had been severed from it,\textsuperscript{1323} and its constant efforts to provide a ‘foundation’ to faith,\textsuperscript{1324} the fundamental problem was that it continued to argue on the basis of God’s immanent presence in nature (both human and cosmic), after having defined nature as an independent, self-sufficient entity. Hence, as the concept of nature lost its transcendent orientation, the assumptions on which natural theology came to be based contained the seeds of late–modern atheism.\textsuperscript{1325} Instead of the expected new integration of the two levels, religion was becoming naturalised, that is, becoming part of that closed universe the new philosophical concept of nature denoted.\textsuperscript{1326} Dupré postulates that since theologians have either accepted the late scholastic view of nature and grace as independent entities or have stressed one at the expense of the other, spiritual theologians alone can succeed in recapturing in the lived experience of devotional practice the synthesis that systematic theology has lost in speculation. Now that theology has lost its hold on culture whose substance it once shaped, it has become reduced to a science among others with a method and object exclusively its own. From now on, other sciences can freely ignore it. Thus, for the most part, modern thinkers readily avail themselves of the opportunity to avoid potentially hazardous and always useless theological controversies.\textsuperscript{1327} Therefore, Dupré emphasises our urgent need to recapture a true spiritual theology via a full-bodied spirituality and belief in the transcendent\textsuperscript{1328} because, for him, Grace and Nature constitute one image of God.\textsuperscript{1329}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1321} ibid., 179.
  \item \textsuperscript{1322} Dupré, \textit{Passage to Modernity}, 179.
  \item \textsuperscript{1323} ibid., 181.
  \item \textsuperscript{1324} ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{1325} ibid., 181.
  \item \textsuperscript{1326} ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{1327} ibid., 189.
  \item \textsuperscript{1328} Dupré, \textit{Religious Mystery}, 136–143.
  \item \textsuperscript{1329} Dupré, \textit{Passage to Modernity}, 169.
\end{itemize}
To help bring this about, Dupré says that we should not feel bound by these dualisms or resign ourselves to the current fragmented worldview, though there may be certain parts of modernity we wish to retain,\textsuperscript{1330} in which, as Langemeyer asserts, modern reason has established itself as the arbiter in the controversies in these dualisms.\textsuperscript{1331} As Dupré states, if we have to reject something because it is necessary in conscience, we must do it.\textsuperscript{1332}

The examinations, carried out in previous chapters, of the reflections of the following nine authors evidenced their coherence with Dupré’s framework about the secular challenges in this part (Nature and Grace) of Topic 5 — Andre Cloots,\textsuperscript{1333} Anthony English,\textsuperscript{1334} Roger Haight,\textsuperscript{1335} Pope John Paul II,\textsuperscript{1336} Georg Langemeyer,\textsuperscript{1337} Gregory Moses,\textsuperscript{1338} Karl Rahner,\textsuperscript{1339} Eugene Te Selle\textsuperscript{1340} and Jan Van der Veken.\textsuperscript{1341} They demonstrated in similar fashion to the authors, who wrote about the previous other ‘bastard’ dualism of faith and reason, by showing us how it was possible to gain a conversion in our attitudes to overcome these challenges. This could be done by utilizing my appropriations from Dupré’s framework (again especially by us focusing more on what is true rather than on what is controversial). Such a transformation would assist in nullifying the effects of the conflicting forces of the ‘bastard’ dualism of nature and grace and, thereby, help bring back truth and certainty into our Australian lives.

\textsuperscript{1330} Dupré, \textit{Transcendent Selfhood}, 16; Dupré, \textit{Passage to Modernity}, 3–5; and also Dupré, \textit{Religious Mystery}, 131–133.

\textsuperscript{1331} Langemeyer, \textit{Reason}, 568 and 569.

\textsuperscript{1332} Dupré \textit{Religious Mystery}, 6.

\textsuperscript{1333} Refer Andre Cloots in Ch. 2, 125 and 126.

\textsuperscript{1334} Refer Anthony English in Ch. 2, 128.

\textsuperscript{1335} Refer Roger Haight in Ch. 2, 127.

\textsuperscript{1336} Refer Pope John Paul II in Ch. 2, 128.

\textsuperscript{1337} Refer Georg Langemayer in Ch. 2, 108 and 109.

\textsuperscript{1338} Refer Gregory Moses in Ch. 2, 125 and 126; and in Ch. 3, 213–216.

\textsuperscript{1339} Refer Karl Rahner in Ch. 2, 127 and 128.

\textsuperscript{1340} Refer Eugene Te Selle in Ch. 2, 126 and 127.

\textsuperscript{1341} Refer Jan Van der Veken in Ch. 2, 125 and 126.
7. Challenge in Topic 6: To reverse the decline in Australian Church attendances by attempting to make religion capable, once more, of operating as an integrating and central function of culture

Dupré desires to help all Christians reinstate their faith to its former place of prominence in their lives and world and, so, attend Church for the right reasons and worship the True God (not, as is in some cases today, the Church’s God). He argues that the necessary requirement for this to succeed is to bring about a conversion to an attitude in which our focus is on the lasting — God’s love for us and our love for him, ourselves and our neighbours, which includes our lives shared with Christ, now, in this world and, later, in the next life for all eternity, rather than on the interesting — all that our humanistic society highlights as being of important interest and happiness to us, now, and during our lives here on earth, with no interest in, or thought of, life in the hereafter.¹³⁴²

Having learned from Dupré in Chapter 2, Topic 6, that religion is essential to faith and that transcendence is the essence of religion, he then stressed that faith urges Christians to reflection, and this reflection on faith becomes part of faith leading to new religious experiences which, in turn, lead to further theological reflection. However, it is important for us to remember Dupré’s commendation of Duméry’s advice when the latter says that, in moving beyond the mere experience, we need to avoid both philosophical autonomy by making it an extension of theology, and lapsing into philosophical constructivism by giving an interpretation of the religious experience which ignores that experience’s self-interpretation.¹³⁴³ Yet, as Dupré insists, when adopting a philosophy of Christian faith, it will undoubtedly present a limitation, but a necessary one, in our reflections.¹³⁴⁴ Nevertheless, he argues that we ought to keep in mind that consciousness and the conscious object constitute one ideal unit of meaning. Things first acquire meaning and value within the conformities of rule and law.¹³⁴⁵ Also, some objective religious meaning must obviously be transmitted — this interpretation,

¹³⁴² Dupré, Transcendent Selfhood, 17.
¹³⁴³ Duméry, Faith and Reflection, Dupré’s Preface xii.
¹³⁴⁴ ibid.
¹³⁴⁵ ibid., Dupré’s Introduction xxv.
in Christianity, started with Jesus and his first disciples. Dupré emphasises that religious experience is most important (and is difficult to find in today’s secular world) as sustaining faith, and such experience requires a need to will (i.e., we must go outside of ourselves to reflect and pray), rather than seeking the experience for its own sake, as the modern world advocates. Moreover, he suggests that too many people today consider the notion of truth in religion to be a simple one, and not basically different from the scientific one; this oversimplification can easily lead to mistaken liberalist interpretations of the religious act/experience and must be guarded against.

Also, Dupré taught us in Chapter 2, Topic 6, that the following three matters need to be addressed if we are to reinstate religion to its former central place in our benign atheistic society. In so doing, and at the same time, we will learn to understand and gain confidence through God’s love for us, which will strengthen our ability and will to live our earthly lives in Christ’s image.

Firstly, we need to overcome our culture’s predicament — the absence of a centre of meaning. It is most difficult for us to find the option needed for justifying our existence amid today’s world of unprecedented multiplicity of options. This requires a return to the belief that life is simultaneously given with meaning. We need a fully-fledged religion, with its doctrine, its liturgy, its social artistic and intellectual values, to form the centre of our own culture once more. Therefore, we have to re-elevate Christianity from its present subordinate factor in our culture, to its former creative centre. We have to emphasise and show that God does matter in our self-centred world. We must demand that overall wisdom which holds life together. To reverse the current situation, in which modern consciousness translated the absence of meaningful transcendence into a theoretical principle, Dupré stresses that we now require a religion which is not a symbolic experience of the human mind structured on immanent schemas. Hence, we need to reintegrate the transcendent, once again, into our lives and world, so that God is at their centres.

1348 ibid., vii.
1350 ibid., 1, 2 and 3.
Secondly, and in contrast to the first matter, as Christians, our faith requires a personal conversion of the heart — religion’s need for inwardness. When so doing, we must learn to respect the various ways of humankind’s longing for God as religiously meaningful in the light of our own faith and, yet, at the same time, not allow a relativistic syncretism that entitles each person to compose her/his own religious smorgasbord. Further, we Christians need to understand that we are responsible for the culture in which we live, however inhospitable it may be to our faith. That faith should be confident enough to render us Christians capable of living a vigorous, free, and open life within a society of unlike-minded. We spiritual Christians must not be engaged in constant polemics with the surrounding secular world; since our strength comes from within, we can afford to grant society and culture their full autonomy.\textsuperscript{1351}

Thirdly, while the spiritual emptiness of our time is a symptom of its religious poverty, it also presents us with an opportunity to deepen our religious life. Today, many people never experience any emptiness at all because their lives are too busy to feel much absence of any kind. However, emptiness tends to make itself felt when we have painful personal experiences. To help overcome these situations in life, we need a full-bodied contemporary Christian spirituality, to enable us to have a genuine encounter with God, which summons a person to take leave of the familiar and to venture out into the desert of endless, unexplored horizons. Also, we must tie in this spirituality with religion; and this can be done through a sacramental imagination. Therefore, while living in today’s complex society, we need a spirituality of the ordinary and a mysticism of the everyday.\textsuperscript{1352} Carolyn Craft, too, supports this, and advocates that such spirituality is required for today’s passionate and rapidly changing times.\textsuperscript{1353} We need God, who is love.\textsuperscript{1354}

The examinations, carried out in previous chapters, of the reflections of the following twenty four authors evidenced their coherence with Dupré’s framework about

\begin{itemize}
\item Dupré, \textit{Future of Religion}, 4, 5 and 6.
\item Dupré, \textit{Future of Religion}, 6–9; and cf. Rush, \textit{How Liturgy has Changed}, 9.
\item Carolyn Craft, \url{http://www.crosscurrents.org/Craft.html} (accessed 20/10/2004).
\end{itemize}
Chapter 4: Addressing Australia’s secular challenges

the secular challenges in this Topic 6 – Arthur Baranowski, Pope Benedict XVI, Ian Breward, Neil Brown, Bishop Giampaolo Crepaldi, Denise Desmarchelier, Robert Dixon (and others), Gerald Gleeson, Pope John Paul II, Anthony Kelly, Richard Lennan, Phil and Dan McCredden, Hugh Mackay, Caroline Miley, Gerard Moore, Sister Sheila O’Dea, Neil Ormerod, Thea Ormerod, Timothy Radcliffe, Ormond Rush, John Simpson, Joseph Sobb, David Tacey and John Thornhill. They demonstrated that it was possible for us to gain a conversion in our attitudes to overcome these challenges. This can be done by utilizing my appropriations from

1355 Refer Arthur Baranowski in Ch. 2, 142 and 143.
1356 Refer Pope Benedict XVI in Ch. 2, 136, 138, 141, 142 and 144.
1357 Refer Ian Breward in Ch. 3, 216, 217 and 226.
1358 Refer Neil Brown in Ch. 3, 219 and 229.
1359 Refer Bishop Crepaldi in Ch. 2, 142.
1360 Refer Denise Desmarchelier in Ch. 3, 219, 220 and 229.
1361 Refer Robert Dixon and Others in Ch. 3, 220 and 230.
1362 Refer Gerald Gleeson in Ch. 3, 224, 225 and 233.
1363 Refer Pope John Paul II in Ch. 2, 144.
1364 Refer Anthony Kelly in Ch. 3, 220, 221 and 230.
1365 Refer Richard Lennan in Ch. 3, 220, 221 and 231.
1366 Refer Phil and Dan McCredden in Ch. 3, 225, 226, 233 and 234.
1367 Refer Hugh Mackay in Ch. 3, 223, 224, 232 and 233.
1368 Refer Caroline Miley in Ch. 3, 217, 218, 227 and 228.
1369 Refer Gerard Moore in Ch. 3, 221 and 231.
1370 Refer Sister Sheila O’Dea in Ch. 2, 143.
1371 Refer Neil Ormerod in Ch. 3, 222 and 231.
1372 Refer Thea Ormerod in Ch. 3, 222 and 231.
1373 Refer Timothy Radcliffe in Ch. 2, 138.
1374 Refer Ormond Rush in Ch. 2, 104–105 and 140–141.
1375 Refer John Simpson in Ch. 3, 226 and 234.
1376 Refer Joseph Sobb in Ch. 3, 222, 223, 231 and 232.
1377 Refer David Tacey in Ch. 3, 218, 219 and 228.
1378 Refer John Thornhill in Ch. 3, 223 and 232.
Dupré’s framework (especially by directing our focus towards the lasting rather than towards the interesting) and, thereby, allow religion once more to operate as an integrating and central function of our culture.

8. **Challenge in Topic 7: To respond to and reverse the secular challenging situations, which exist in some of today’s modern Religious Movements in Australia, by transposing the Christian crisis (i.e., the decline in Christian spirituality)**

Unfortunately, some of today’s modern Religious Movements in Australia have no religiosity because, with their emphasis on the so-called renewal of religion, they often turn religion into a consumerist item with a use-by date as a result of secularisation and consumerist-type activities.\(^{1379}\) Many of their evangelists peremptorily demand a blind unquestioning turn to God\(^ {1380}\) of their followers, and deem analyses of modernity, such as Dupré’s, ‘passé’.\(^ {1381}\) However, for Dupré, concepts in religion are essential but they must remain subordinate to the basic intentionality of a faith; if the intentionality loses its appeal, the religion itself dies.\(^ {1382}\)

To reverse the present Christian crisis — the decline in Christian spirituality — Dupré argues that we need to change our focus towards listening to the Word of, and praying to, God as his dutiful followers, rather than engaging in superficial ‘spiritual” religious practices, simply carried out to make the individual feel better and/or happy within her/himself and, so, have a good time for the rest of their lives without the Lord demanding anything more from them. To effect this change, Dupré advocates that we need to alter our society’s and its peoples’ attitudes to where, once again, they will possess a spirituality of world affirmation: a mystique of creation that discovers a transcendent dimension in a fundamental engagement to a world and a human community perceived as totally autonomous and totally dependent.\(^ {1383}\)

---


1380 Dupré, *Transcendent Selfhood*, 16.


1382 Dupré, *Other Dimension*, 5; and also refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 136–137, 138–139 and 155.

Therefore, in responding to this challenge, and remembering that Dupré has not written much about today’s modern Religious Movements, we need to ponder on his thoughts and try and foster a truly communal mystical and spiritual attitude. Also, as we learned from Dupré and Rush earlier, this attitude can be enhanced by us working towards developing a spirituality of the ordinary and a mysticism of the everyday. To assist us transform our attitudes and, so accomplish the above aims, Dupré offers us great reflections on, and recommendations about, developing mysticism and a vibrant contemporary Christian spirituality, both of which ought help us regain our lost perspective.\footnote{Dupré, \textit{Future of Religion}, 4–9; and cf. Rush, \textit{How Liturgy has Changed}, 9.}

In Chapter 2, Topic 7, we learned from Dupré that our Christian mysticism is based on three points, and we now need to recall these to help in improving our mystical lives and combating the challenge in this topic.

1) It is deeply connected with negative theology but, in the end, the negation itself must be negated, wherein the final negation entails a new affirmation of the finite and, consequently, a new kind of analogy (e.g., once negative theology’s movement reaches the One/Absolute, it merely stops; yet, the absolute thus attained is an empty indeterminate, unable to justify the determinate being which supposedly proceeded from it and continues to depend on it).\footnote{Dupré, \textit{Negative Theology}, 149 and 150; and refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 161–166.}

2) It is concerned with the presence of God. Humankind owes its unique status as religious symbol to the singular awareness of the divine presence both in oneself and in other beings.\footnote{ibid., 156.} Also, in participating in the Trinitarian mysticism, which is specifically Christian, we participate in the ongoing movement in which the Father generates the Son and the Son returns via the Holy Spirit to the Origin and, as such, are part of the Divine Cycle and, thus, we must be driven to action to live according to God’s will.\footnote{ibid., 149 and 156.
3) It is involved with mystical love, and Jesus Christ is the lover of all. ‘God’, in Jesus Christ, becomes the ‘other’. Also, prayer helps us to reintegrate our lives with Christ’s life and, so, talk to God and, through Jesus, we acquire a mystical love (without desire) of creation — and through his humanity, a truly human love (again without desire) of creation. Jesus is the way to God — he is the way, the truth and the life. He is the infinite God who came into our finite world, which he created.\(^{1388}\) He taught us to pray.

Hence, by converting the desert (created by the secular society) into an encounter with God (i.e., the mind must move outside itself into the creaturely world, and this requires the soul to turn into itself [even without the mind] and become empty [silent]), we Christians can foster the needed mystical dimension in our lives and, possibly, in other peoples’ lives.\(^{1389}\) However, our example to others must be real and not phony, and we can, and should, develop and enhance our mystical lives greatly from religious sources of the Church.\(^ {1390}\)

Also in Chapter 2, Topic 7, Dupré’s teachings articulated that we need to develop a theistic spirituality (i.e., a religiously enhanced and traditionally enriched, contemporary spirituality) to overcome the divisions and conflicts of modernity and modern living, rather than the superficial ‘spirituality’ promoted by do-it-yourself religions, which do not even consider such matters.\(^ {1391}\) He emphasised that, as religious people intent on deepening our spirituality with God and being witnesses to his Word, we need to attend seven important matters as referred to in Chapter 2,\(^ {1392}\) while at the same time constantly practising ecumenism.\(^ {1393}\)

Furthermore, to assist us in developing and implementing the needed, vibrant, full-bodied and contemporary Christian spirituality into our own lives, which would help us accomplish the aforesaid tasks, all aimed at reversing the secular challenge in this topic, Dupré offered us 10 positive reflections as also discussed in Chapter 2.\(^ {1394}\)

---

1388 ibid., 155 and 156.
1390 Refer Dupré in Ch. 2, 157–159.
1392 ibid., 131–143.
1393 ibid., 131 and 133; and refer Dupré in Ch.2, 159–161.
1394 Refer Dupré in Ch.2, 161–166.
Chapter 4: Addressing Australia’s secular challenges

The examinations, carried out in previous chapters, of the reflections of the following twenty authors evidenced their coherence with Dupré’s framework about the secular challenges in this Topic 7 — Peter Berger,1395 Ian Breward,1396 Neil Brown,1397 Shane Clifton,1398 Robert Dixon and Others,1399 Gerard Dowling,1400 Johannes Eckhart,1401 Gerald Gleeson,1402 Emilie Griffin,1403 Gerard Holohan,1404 Paul Levesque,1405 Thomas Merton,1406 Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor,1407 Neil Ormerod and Shane Clifton,1408 John Quilter,1409 Timothy Radcliffe,1410 Ron Rolheiser,1411 Ormond Rush,1412 David Tacey,1413 and Paul Tillich.1414 They demonstrated that to overcome the aforesaid challenges we could learn to, and should, change our attitudes in Australian secular society. This can be done by utilizing my appropriations from Dupré’s framework (especially through fostering and developing a vibrant, full–bodied, contemporary, Christian spirituality) and so convert our attitudes to where we focus on listening to the Word of God and praying to Him as dutiful followers.

1395 Refer Peter Berger in Ch.3, 239.
1396 Refer Ian Breward in Ch. 3, 235 and 236, 247, 248 and 250.
1397 Refer Neil Brown in Ch. 3, 241, 253 and 254.
1398 Refer Shane Clifton in Ch.3, 237 and 252.
1399 Refer Robert Dixon and Others in Ch. 3, 241, 242 and 255.
1400 Refer Gerard Dowling in Ch. 3, 254 and 255.
1401 Refer Johannes Eckhart in Ch. 2, 164 and 165.
1402 Refer Gerald Gleeson in Ch. 3, 255.
1403 Refer Emilie Griffin in Ch. 2, 159.
1404 Refer Gerard Holohan in Ch. 3, 255.
1405 Refer Paul Levesque in Ch. 2, 154 and 155.
1406 Refer Thomas Merton in Ch. 2, 164 and 165.
1407 Refer Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor in Ch. 2, 146 and 166.
1408 Refer Neil Ormerod and Shane Clifton in Ch.3, 236, 237, 238, 239, 250 and 251.
1409 Refer John Quilter in Ch.3, 259.
1410 Refer Timothy Radcliffe in Ch. 2, 146.
1411 Refer Ron Rolheiser in Ch. 2, 166.
1412 Refer Ormond Rush in Ch.2, 104-105 and 140-141.
1413 Refer David Tacey in Ch.3, 242, 243, 244, 255 and 256.
1414 Refer Paul Tillich in Ch. 2, 147.
rather than engaging in promoted superficial “spirituality” and religious practices, simply carried out to make the individual feel better or happy within her/himself. Then, through a genuine spirituality, our faith will not be defined in terms of doing “feel–good” religious practices but rather in terms of doing the hard deeds of love, forgiveness and compassion.

9. Summary

This chapter highlighted my appropriations from Dupré’s responsorial framework, including how and why overseas and Australian authors were in coherence (or divergence) with it, and indicated how and why those appropriations might help us address, and hopefully overcome, the Australian secular challenge in each of the chosen seven topics. Further, my appropriations demonstrated their ability to, perhaps, even help us pave the way from Dupré’s reflective response made to the secular challenge in each topic towards that challenge’s solution — thus highlighting the relevance of Dupré’s work for contemporary Australian culture.

We now move on to the Conclusion of this thesis.
CONCLUSION

This thesis focused on recognising Louis Dupré’s works of philosophy and metaphysics-epistemology as not only being known worldwide for their relevance to spirituality, but also as providing a framework for helping Australians understand and address today’s challenges in Australia’s secular culture. This study was inspired by Dupré’s constant aim, over the years, to confront the crisis in the current fragmented world — its loss of genuine transcendence and how this situation can be reversed; both matters intimately connected with the thesis’ purpose. This dissertation, with its theological emphasis, broadly speaking, and a primary focus on the Roman Catholic Church yet not excluding Protestant and others Churches generally, showed how and why Dupré promotes his thoughts on spirituality to augment his suggested synthesis of metaphysics and culture as being the means towards achieving his cherished desire of integrating or reintegrating the transcendent into our lives and world. It also argued that this dominating theme together with today’s current upsurge towards finding genuine spirituality in our Christian lives, Churches and society, are valid reasons why many of Dupré’s deep thoughts over the years have simply remained profound reflections and/or have been overlooked and/or have not been used for other purposes (such as providing a framework for helping Australians understand and address Australia’s current secular challenges).1415

In Chapter 1, this thesis indicated how Western and European cultures got to where they are today. It did this by examining Dupré’s Historical deconstruction of modernity from the 13th Century to the present time. The study evidenced that modernity mainly began with the ‘fateful separation’, which took place towards the end of the Middle Ages, between what is nowadays called the supernatural and the natural, with the latter splitting up into the knowing and acting, meaning-constituting autonomous human subject on the one hand, and the totally objectified, desacralised natural world on the other.1416 As a result, the human mind became the source of meaning and defined the limits of the intelligible and even of the real1417 — it eventually controlled everything, including God’s role.1418 Transcendence was torn into a dimension separate from nature and the occurrence of further bifurcation of the human

1415 Refer Ch. 4, 263.
1416 Refer Ch. 1, 27 and 28.
1417 Refer Ch. 1, 58–60.
1418 Refer Ch. 1, 60.
over worldly actualities. Hence, the previous cohesive understanding of reality collapsed, resulting in its separation into disunited parts. Today, with the virtual evanescence of transcendence, secularisation has taken over these cultures and they have become immanently humanistic, thus presenting many secular challenges to their people. 1419

In Chapter 2, this thesis examined the current worldview and its secular challenges, particularly as they related to those Western and European cultures. To effect this, it drew upon Dupré’s framework and further analyses and responses of other authors and applied them to seven chosen topics, each depicting a different aspect, while highlighting the challenge in each as assessed from Dupré’s framework, of that worldview. In the first section of each topic, the analytical reflections of Dupré’s framework were considered in relation to their provision of help towards understanding that worldview and its secular challenges. In the discussion section of each topic, the responsorial reflections of that framework were scrutinised carefully as to the options they presented for helping to address those challenges. In those topics, we were shown how and why some of the authors showed coherence with Dupré’s concepts, while others differed. 1420 The results from this study demonstrated that Dupré’s framework had significant relevance to, and implications for, helping the people of those cultures to understand that worldview and its secular challenges, and for providing options to address those challenges and take the people in those cultures forward. 1421

In Chapter 3, this thesis presented an understanding of the current Australian perspective and its secular challenges from many contemporary Australian authors’

1419 Refer Ch. 1, 60, 61, 63 and 66.
1420 Among some of the non-Australian dissenters’ works examined are the following authors in Topic and alphabetical order:

Topic 1 Refer Armour, Leslie and Johnston, Suzie in Ch. 2, 81 and 82.
Refer Harries, Karsten in Ch.2, 70 and 71.
Topic 2 Refer Rorty, Richard in Ch.2, 85-87 and 90.
Topic 5 Refer Dannhauser, Werner J. in Ch. 2, 114.
Refer Gauchet, Marcel in Ch. 2, 115.
Refer MacIntyre, Alasdair in Ch. 2, 106.
Refer Milbank, John and Pickstock, Catherine and Ward, Graham in Ch. 2, 106, 116.
Topic 7 Refer Anderson, R in Ch.2, 148 and 166.
Refer Bebbington, David in Ch.2, 152 and 167.
Refer Bloesch, Donald in Ch.2, 151 and 152.
Refer Cox, Harvey in Ch.2, 151.
Refer Hollenweger, Walter in Ch.2, 147, 150 and 166.
Refer McGrath, Alister in Ch.2, 148-153, 166 and 167.
Rosenzweig, Franz in Ch.2, 148, 149 and 166.
Refer Tozer, Aiden in Ch.2, 153, 154 and 167.
Refer Wells, David in Ch.2, 153.

1421 Refer Ch. 2, 167 and 168.
analyses of it. Also, it elicited from those authors’ responses various ways to address those challenges. These two tasks were effected by applying those Australian writers’ concepts to the seven chosen topics, but now with each depicting a different aspect of Australia’s current cultural view. Further, this chapter achieved one of the aims of this thesis — it showed how and why Dupré’s works themselves were relevant to the topic of this thesis, and demonstrated some of that relevance by introducing it into, and highlighting its important enhancing value for, the current Australian dialogue about responding to those Australian challenges. It revealed why and how Dupré’s superior and more robust concepts, together with those of the above authors, applied also to our Australian context, through their reflections being analysed and dialogued with Dupré’s in this Chapter 3. As a result, this Chapter highlighted coherers with, and dissenters to, Dupré’s reflections, and demonstrated that Dupré’s framework had very significant relevance to, and implications and connections with, the provision of the help needed for Australians to understand and address today’s challenges in Australia’s secular culture.

In Chapter 4, this thesis demonstrated that the sought recognition of the overlooked part of Dupré’s works was possible, especially to those Australians who study, or intend to study, Dupré’s writings in critically faith-saving and/or social ethical ways amid today’s hostile secular surroundings, and enter into dialogue with him when seeking help in understanding and addressing the secular challenges in today’s Australian society. The hypothesis was proposed that this recognition could be achieved by appropriating concepts from his framework of analytical and responsorial reflections (remembering that his responsorial ones are implied as being simply profound reflections — not solutions; the profound reflections only can help pave the way for solutions towards addressing and overcoming those secular challenges) and applying them to the seven chosen topics, with each depicting a different aspect of Australia’s current perspective. This theoretical study showed that drawing upon Dupré’s reflections, and those of other writers whose thoughts were coherent with them, was, and is, a valuable exercise: it demonstrated how and why their analytical

1422 Refer Ch. 3, 261 and 262.

1423 Among some of the Australian dissenters’ works examined are the following authors in Topic and alphabetical order:

**Topic 1** Refer John Thornhill in Ch.3, 175, 179, 180 and 181.
**Topic 3** Refer Hugh Mackay in Ch.3, 188, 190 and 191.
**Topic 7** Refer Gary Bouma in Ch.3, 249 and 260.
Refer Scott Cowdell in Ch.3, 249, 250 and 260.
Refer Matthew Del Nevo in Ch.3, 239, 240, 241, 252 and 253.
Refer Hugh Mackay in Ch. 3, 245, 246, 256, 257, 258 and 259.
Refer Caroline Miley in Ch.3, 247, 259 and 260.
reflections could enable Australians to understand that Australian view and its secular challenges, and how and why their responsorial reflections could help pave the way for Australians to address and hopefully overcome those challenges. These factors emerged, in this scenario, by means of the evidence adduced from a study of those appropriations from his framework, which not only demonstrated its relevance to the topic of this thesis, but also introduced some of that relevance into, and showed its important enhancing value for, the current Australian dialogue about responding to the secular challenges in Australia’s current cultural perspective. This evidence was appropriated and presented as part of the solution to the challenges in the seven topics, and such work formed the lynch pin of this investigation and, at the same time, justified the use of the above hypothetical proposal as a means of achieving the purpose of this dissertation.

This thesis is also the first major study acknowledging Dupré’s works as being much more than mainly referring to spirituality, and offers a new interpretative paradigm. This interpretation, which was derived from research on the overlooked part of his writings, honours the reality and totality of his authorship, in that it argues for Australians’ need to employ Dupré’s comprehensive framework and its more robust reflections to help them understand, address, appropriate and then perhaps discover the desired solutions to today’s Australian secular challenges.

This thesis is a small contribution to the ongoing scholarship and reflections needed to render due recognition of the magnitude of Dupré’s authorship. It has raised for me many more questions and directions which the exploration of his work and its implications could have pursued. The choice to pursue his reflections in detail, via the seven chosen topics, meant that other possible avenues, which also could have strengthened this thesis, were not pursued. Closer investigation to put the findings of this study into practice is needed beyond the preparatory theoretical suggestions of this thesis. Therefore, this theoretical dissertation, while presenting Australians with a case for Dupré’s works as not only being relevant to, but also providing some of that relevance as being a definite help towards, understanding and addressing Australia’s current secular challenges, invites ongoing practical pastoral critique and dialogue. Further, such action could enable creative minds to move in new directions which may also assist in the reshaping of the religious scene in Australia.
A. Dupré, Louis K.

Selected books


Journal references


Bibliography


**Electronic material**


-----. One of two Good Friday Specials 15/03/05 at 5.05pm. Discussion of Christian Spirituality and Theology, and listing of 14 books by Dupré (2 pages).

**B. Other relevant works**


Campbell, A.J. *Fifty Years of Presbyterianism*. Melbourne: Hutchinson, 1889.


-----. *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego.* 1921.

-----. *Civilization and Its Discontents.* 1930.

-----. *Analysis Terminable and Interminable.* 1937.


Harris, A. Settlers and Convicts. Melbourne: MUP, 1953.


----- *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*. 1793.


-----. *Right and Wrong: How to Decide for Yourself*. Adelaide, Australia: Griffin Press, 2005.


Marx, K. *Capital 1*.


Morgan, G.J. *The Vatican, Kremlin or Protestant Christianity*. Footscray: Franklin, 1945.


Nietzsche, F. The Birth of Tragedy. 1872.


-----. Beyond Good and Evil, 1886.

-----. Twilight of the Idols, 1889.


Bibliography


Sage, D. Memorabilia Domestica. Wick: Rae, 1889.


Tindall, M. *Christianity as Old as Creation*, 1730.


Bibliography


C. Articles from booklet and journal references

A Reflection Booklet for Small Church Communities in Quest, Spring, 1997.


Black, A.  ‘Church Union in Canada and Australia’ in *Australian–Canadian Studies*, 1983


Bibliography


D. Dictionary articles


E. Electronic material


Najman, J. ‘Marriage Ceremonies May be the Last Time Men Attend Church — Church Attendance Ends at “I Do”’. Released 19/06/02.  

http://percaretatem.blogspot.com/2006/09/part6-i-oberman-on-14th-century.html. (accessed 10/03/07)


Sydney Anglicans. ‘Youth a Key to Sydney’s Growth Rate’. pp. 1–2.  
http://www.sydneyanglicans.net/sydneystories/1239a/. (accessed 30/08/05).


The Melbourne Anglican Home. ‘Which is Better: Alpha or the Catechumenate?’ pp.1–2.  


Australian Jewish Historical Website. ‘Timeline of Australian Jewish History’.  
http://www.ajhs.info (accessed 22/05/07).


F. Church documents


Vatican Council I 1869–1890

Vatican Council II 1962–1965:

Sacrosanctum Concilium (The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy) Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church).

Dei Verbum (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation).

Dignitatis Humanae (Declaration on Religious Liberty).

Gaudium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World).

Catholic Social Teaching — Some Major Documents:

1891 Leo XIII Rerum Novarum (The Condition of Labour).

1931 Pius XI Quadragesimo Anno (After 40 Years).

1941 Pius XII Radio Broadcast of Pentecost 1941.

1961 John XXIII Mater et Magistra (Christianity and Social Progress).

1963 John XXIII Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth).


1971 Paul VI Octogesima Adveniens (A Call to Action).

1971 Synod of Bishops Iustitia in Mundo (Justice in the World).

1975 Paul VI Evangelii Nuntiandi (Evangelization in the Modern World).

1981 John Paul II Laborem Exercens (On Human Work).


1987 John Paul II Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (On Social Concern).

1991 John Paul II Centesimus Annus (On the 100th Anniversary of Rerum Novarum).


Encyclicals/Letters:-

1968 Paul VI Humanae Vitae (On the Regulations of and Homilies Birth).


1980 John Paul II Solidarity.

1981 John Paul II Centesimus Annus.

1982 John Paul II Veritatis Splendor.


1994 John Paul II Tertio Millennio Adveniente.

1998 John Paul II Dies Domini and Ad Tuendam Fidem.


2007 Benedict XVI. Sacramentum Caritatis.

G. Notes from Louis Dupré’s 2004 Australian lecture tour and conferences with him

Dupré L.K. ‘Book of Readings’ prepared by St. Paul’s Theological College (Dr. G. Moses) for Dupré’s 2004 Australian lecture tour, and my own lecture tour notes of same, plus those from special meetings with him in Brisbane, Australia (2004) and New Haven, Connecticut, USA (2005). Also, refer to Electronic Material — Dupré and Good Friday Specials.