2018

The changing face of Australia: From secular to post-secular identity

Saskia Ebejer

The University of Notre Dame Australia

THE CHANGING FACE OF AUSTRALIA: FROM SECULAR TO POST-SECULAR IDENTITY

Saskia Ebejer

School of Philosophy and Theology

The University of Notre Dame Australia

A thesis submitted to the University of Notre Dame for the examination of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2018

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis which I now submit for examination for the award of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

This thesis was prepared according to the regulations for postgraduate study by research of the University of Notre Dame Australia and has not been submitted in whole or in part for another award in any institution.

The work reported on in this thesis conforms to the principles and requirements of the UNDA's guidelines for ethics in research. The Institute has my permission to keep, or lend or to copy this thesis in whole or in part, on condition that any such use of the material or the thesis be duly acknowledged.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisors, Angus Brook and Susanna Rizzo. Your support has been phenomenal over the extended period of time that this PhD took to complete. Angus, your patience has been extraordinary! From the start of our collaboration, I was utterly confident in your support and your words of advice. Susanna and Angus, you are wonderful academics and you have been such brilliant role models for me.

I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who encouraged me along the way, especially my colleagues at the University of Wollongong, Batemans Bay Campus. Jaimey, Nicky, Troy, Kerryn and Maria, and so many others, you are the best! You have all been there for me over the years. You inspired me to keep going, especially during the tough times. My deepest thanks to you all. Thanks also to my many students who continue to inspire me every day.

During the years it has taken me to complete this PhD, so much happened. I think that's why PhDs are so tough; they span a huge amount of time in which so many life circumstances occur. Life is about joys and sorrows and moving between these times with patience and gratitude. I have become an Oma during this time and now have four wonderful grandchildren. Also, my sister passed away from cancer. This happened in 2016 and its impact is still felt in my life. Vikki, I dedicate this work to you.

I would also like to thank my parents, Hans and Coby, such special people. They have always believed in me and always encouraged me to do my best. Blessings to you both, you are beautiful people. Special thanks to my son and daughter, Ben and Annaliese, you have always been there for me. My biggest thanks, however, goes to David, my husband of 32 years. There are no words that can express my gratitude to you. You gave me strength when I was weak, courage when I was fearful, endurance when I was about to give up. Finally, a prayer of thanks to my heavenly family, my invisible supports who held me up me during this time, especially Edith Stein, a woman of grace and towering intellect.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

ABSTRACT

The secularisation thesis, originally developed in the 1960s and touted as a seminal sociological theory, has over the last few decades been called into question. In particular, claims regarding the displacement of religion in the public square and, ultimately, the waning or disappearance *tout court* of religion from the lives of individuals have come under scrutiny. The advent of the secular paradigm has no doubt had lasting effects, both publicly and privately, but, far from consisting merely in the extinction of religion, theorists have been drawing attention to the recent proliferation, spawned by the crisis of or dissatisfaction with the 'secular experience', of new forms of spirituality or the persistence or revival or spread of traditional forms of religion in some areas of the world. Scholars such as Jürgen Habermas and Charles Taylor have been at the forefront of providing a critical academic response on the presumed revival of religion in the public sphere and in the private lives of individuals, alongside Peter Berger. Significantly Berger was one of the founding fathers of the secularisation thesis and his recantation of the theory in 1999 has had a substantial impact on the academic debate ever since.

The revision of the Secular paradigm and the consequent falsification of the Secularisation Thesis in light of the resurgence of religion have engendered a new paradigm conventionally referred to as the 'Postsecular'. Because of the conflicting views in regard to the new paradigm, which has been described as inaugurating a new era by some theorists, and by others as an overstatement of current social change, it was deemed warranted that an investigation of the phenomenon be undertaken in order to determine whether and to which extent the postsecular paradigm is applicable to understanding the political and social reality of contemporary Australia. The catalyst for this research was that so few studies have been

undertaken in Australia regarding not only of the role of religion, but also of the secular and, more recently, of the postsecular in the lives of the Australians in particular, and in Australian society in general. The research methodology identified as being appropriate for the task is hermeneutic phenomenology. This methodology would in fact facilitate an approach that was simultaneously reflective and descriptive, opening up understandings that may have been previously hidden or merely overlooked. The methodology required the use of interviews in order to identify recurring understandings and it was decided that interviews with key academics in Australia would be useful in identifying emerging postsecular discourses and narratives concerning religion in Australia, in particular with those academics who have been at the forefront of discussions and publications on the state of religion in Australia over the last decade or so. Using a minimum of open-ended questions, the participants discussed significant areas of change that focused on the topics of the secular, the post-secular, the secularisation thesis, religion and spirituality. These themes are the focus of this research and are examined by using reflective techniques and theoretical analysis to construct their essence.

Some of the key research findings include the co-dependency of the secular and the post-secular and the demise of the secularisation thesis; and the changes to the experience of religion and spirituality in individuals' lives in contemporary Australia, as people develop new ways of expressing spiritual, emotional and experiential meanings in their lives. The research, in fact, indicates that a diverse field of religious and spiritual expressions has emerged to challenge traditional secular understandings. These findings do not signify that Australia has entered a post-secular era, but they do denote the existence of a growing awareness of a deep process of change affecting structures of meaning in Australian society. This research wishes to contribute to the understanding of this growing awareness from a

particular theoretical and methodological perspective and assess whether postsecular understandings of religion and society are an effective lens to cast light on the presence and experience of religion in Australia.

INTRODUCTION

The influence and understanding of religion, in both public and private spheres, have altered considerably in recent times. Charles Taylor acknowledges that these changes mean that an individual engaged in the public sphere may not encounter God there, while in the private sphere belief has become one lifestyle option among many.[1] But, far from witnessing the demise of religion, theorists, such as Jürgen Habermas, argue that the contemporary changes to religion, described as 'post-secular' in the literature, are indicative of changes within society, signifying an evolving relationship between society, religion and the individual.[2] This dissertation explores this recent stream of scholarship along with the changing role of religion in the public and private sphere, with a particular focus on the changes affecting Australian society since the turn of the twenty-first century, as noted by Gary Bouma in his seminal work *Australian Soul*. The overall aim of the research is to investigate the impact of the post-secular in Australia and ask the question – What is the nature and extent of post-secular changes in Australia?

To answer this question, an investigation of the current renewed interest in the role of religion in society and in the lives of individuals is undertaken. The latter is preceded by an analysis of the influence of the secularisation theory.[3] Originally theorised as a means of marginalising or excluding religion from the public square, and as a herald of the demise of religion, recent responses to this theory are more critical of its initial stance. Emerging from the field of sociology, the secularisation theory gained momentum and widespread popularity in the 1960s, and has since continued to influence contemporary discussions in the sociology

---

[1] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (London: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 1–3.
[2] Taylor, *A Secular Age*; Jurgen Habermas, 'Notes on Post-Secular Society', *New Perspectives Quarterly,* 25/4 (2008), 17-29, Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (London: Harvard University Press, 2007), Peter Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World : Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Washington, D.C. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Ethics and Public Policy Center ;, 1999).
[3] The secularisation theory is also referred to as the secularisation thesis. Both terms are used interchangeably throughout this research.

of religion. It was primarily the work of sociologists, such as Peter Berger[4] and Bryan Wilson[5], who brought the theory to prominence, but it was also influenced by philosophers such as John Rawls[6]. Their work questioned the endurance and relevance of religion in a rapidly modernising society.

The historical roots of the secularisation theory go back even earlier, to the work of Marx in *Capital,* Weber in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* and Durkheim in the *Sociology of Religion*.[7] It is based on a view of secularisation that assumes the inevitability of the diminishing presence, and ultimately the disappearance, of religion, rather than the coexistence of religion with secular understandings of the world of experience.[8] Alongside this, particular understandings of the secular, secularisation and secularism have also developed. This research refers to the secular as an 'institutional divide' often referred to in public spaces such as education and politics where the influence of religion has been disconnected[9], but also the presence of the secular in private spaces. Secularisation refers to the processes involved in advancing secular notions, and secularism to the ideological presence of the secular in society. Within these changing paradigms, religion has come to be associated with such negative connotations as diminished attendance and affiliation, antiquated ritual and obligatory adherence, while science often offers more accepted truths.[10] The presence of secular thought, philosophies, institutions and movements was to keep religion in check, limiting if not voiding its power in the public sphere, however these did not provide a satisfactory response to human needs.[11] Nonetheless, and contrary to the prophetic

---

[4] Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy : Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (1st edn.; Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1967).
[5] B.R. Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society* (Penguin, 1969).
[6] Based on his earlier work Rawl's 1993 book is regarded as seminal in this field.J. Rawls and P.J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (Columbia University Press, 1993).
[7] See Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
[8] John Caputo, *On Religion* (Thinking in Action; London: Routledge, 2001). p. 43.
[9] Taylor, *A Secular Age*. p. 1.
[10] Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*. p. 4.
[11] William E. Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). p. 4.

vision intrinsic to secularisation theory, religion has not died out. Indeed, according to contemporary literature it is undergoing resurgence.[12] Though the literature may describe this resurgence of religion as a 'return', some scholars argue that religion never really disappeared and, thus, that talk of resurgence is more a theoretical construct that recognises the resurgence in scholarly interest in the phenomenon of religion, and a recognition that the theory of secularisation has not played out as expected, delegating the secular to a subject of academic and political discourse. [13]

Prominent theorist Jürgen Habermas is at the forefront of discussion of the post-secular revival of religion. Habermas's previous work on the public sphere, in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, bases his writing on the notion of the post-secular, as he explores social change and the blurring of boundaries between public and private spaces, the latter regarded as a necessary precursor to the rise of the post-secular. In his more recent *Notes on Post-Secular Society*, Habermas has noted that there are a number of countries experiencing post-secular resurgence, – in particular in Europe and North America, but also Australia.[14] Although there is a significant body of literature on the European and North American experience, very little has been produced regarding the postsecular revival of religion in the Australian context. This thesis wishes to contribute to extant research examining the post-secular phenomenon within an Australia.

The Australian context provides fertile grounds for analysis, insofar as there is a pervading sense, and often generalised perception, of the highly secularised nature of society. Not only is this a significant generalisation, but it also omits those who consider that Australia has

---

[12].Habermas, 'Notes on Post-Secular Society', (, Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World : Resurgent Religion and World Politics*.
[13]Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*.p. 2.
[14]Habermas, 'Notes on Post-Secular Society', (p. 17.

never been a secular country.[15] In part, this position is due to the presence of various spiritual and religious movements that continue to emerge and develop in Australia, as well as the history of sectarianism that plagued nineteenth-century Australia.[16] Problematically, studies on the presence or lack of the presence of religion in contemporary Australian society often rely on official statistical data provided by government surveys or censuses.[17] These sources obscure the existence and impact of religion and its evolution on more personal levels as post-secular discussions indicate. This research, in fact, is based on the recognition that religion is a far more complex phenomenon than an analysis of statistics can provide, and impacts individual lives in deep and constantly evolving ways.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to address an area of study that has been overlooked and under-theorised in Australia. Although there has been some reference in recent literature to the phenomenon of the post-secular, there has by no means been an in-depth exploration of what this may mean in the Australian context. A more recent reference to post-secular from a human geographer's perspective is made in the 2010 article 'Religious Belief across 'Post-Secular' Sydney'. In this article the researchers draw on census data to investigate changing patterns of religious belief and identification in Sydney.[18] As these researchers indicate, this type of study can give only a superficial sense of religiosity, as it can say nothing about strength of belief and what impact religion has on everyday life.[19] Like other researchers, however, they do indicate that more in-depth investigation needs to be undertaken in this field. Gary Bouma and Tom Frame have been two of the most prominent recent

---

[15]Gary Bouma, *Australian Soul : Religion and Spirituality in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). p. 5.

[16]Stephen Blyth, 'A Historical Overview of Australian Religious Sectarianism Accompanied by a Survey of Factors Contributing to Its Dissolution', *Journal of Australian Church History,* Vol 1 (2012 2012), 81-110.

[17] For example, ABS census data often dominates discussions on the growth or decline of religion in Australia.

[18]Deborah Stevenson et al., 'Religious Belief across 'Post-Secular' Sydney: The Multiple Trends in (De)Secularisation', *Australian Geographer,* 41/3 (2010), 323 - 50.

[19]Ibid.p.324.

commentators in the Australian context, with a significant use of statistical data in both writers' work.[20] David Tacey has been one of the most prolific writers of interest with his work on the more recent reawakening of various forms of spirituality in Australia. As the field of religion is dominated by discussions of its decline, these writers have induced to question the meaning of post-secular on a deeper level of inquiry and to question this decline. In this thesis, I have adopted a theoretical and methodological orientation which involves a series of interviews with experts in this field. Hermeneutic phenomenology has therefore been deemed as the appropriate methodological and interpretative framework for this project.

The hermeneutic phenomenological methodology has allowed for reflecting on the complex phenomenon of religion and the post-secular:

- without suspending my own ideas and experiences, and

- by considering the subjective experiences of others as valid in the journey towards the discovery of the phenomenon.

This allows me as the researcher to become attuned to understandings on a number of levels, as I seek meaning in both obvious and seemingly less significant details. Hermeneutic phenomenology offers a philosophical framework without dictating a rigid step-by-step approach, permitting the research and interpretative process to 'emerge' through and 'merge' with my experiences.

The purpose of this inquiry is to analyse understandings about the phenomenon of the post-secular, as understood by those who are involved in the discussion of religion in contemporary Australia. The participants in this research were chosen due to their ongoing interest, work and publications in this area. These academic writers, researchers and

---

[20]Including Bouma, *Australian Soul : Religion and Spirituality in the Twenty-First Century.*; Tom Frame, *Losing My Religion : Unbelief in Australia* (Sydney :: UNSW Press, 2009a).

commentators are immersed in the ongoing dialogue of the place of religion in Australia and, as such, live the experiences and knowledge I wish to tap into.

This research begins with an investigation of the Australian context and theoretical developments of conceptions of the secular, neo-secular and post-secular. It then examines how these theoretical perspectives apply to the Australian context, and how they manifest in Australian society, through the opportunities for reflection the interview process provides. The interviews, in fact, provide to be an effective tool as they allowed for a Gadamerian 'fusion of horizons'[21] of the researcher/interviewer with the participants as they shared their understandings, meanings and reflections. During the interviews, I discovered that understanding happens when the present understanding or horizon shifts or 'translates' to a new horizon through discussion. Thus, the process of understanding is inherently a fusion of horizons. The old and the new horizon combine into something which has an intrinsic and common value.[22]

The questions I asked the participants in the interviews developed from my initial reading of the literature and the perceived gaps I noted. The questions are:

1. How do they understand the term post-secular?

2. How does their understanding of post-secular apply to the Australian context?

I then examine the current shifts in this context with the inclusion of case studies. As religion is an evolving phenomenon in Australia, I found it necessary to be attentive to the movements that have shaped the past, while understanding present and future directions and influences. The auspicated goal was to uncover the interconnectedness of secular and post-secular positions and explore the dynamics of these two phenomena as one of co-dependency.

---

[21]Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer & Donald Marshall (2nd Revised edn.; New York: Continuum, 1999).
[22]Ibid. pp. 306–07.

Given the lack of research on the post-secular in the Australian context, this study is in itself significant for it being seminal in this particular field of inquiry. It provides novel insights into the phenomenon of the post-secular and the changing role of religion in Australia. Contrary to the apparent findings of statistical analysis, in fact, this dissertation argues that religion and spirituality remain vital forces in Australia and will continue to shape the nature of Australian society. Even though some argue the use of the term 'resurgence' may be overstated, investigation of what I view as a 'post-secular undercurrent' challenges the dominance of secular thinking and expression. These challenges occur in a number of ways as this research will demonstrate. One of the first and most significant findings of this research is the discovery that the secular is a shifting concept.

Context

In line with Gadamer's philosophic approach, which collapses the subject–object divide in research, my story is an important part of this entire research process. The context that I bring to this inquiry includes my own personal story and involvement with religion in Australia. This is coupled with an acute interest in the Australian context informed by previous study in both theology and Australian Studies, outlined below. As a hermeneutic phenomenological study requires an ongoing interrogation of my own pre-understandings, it is appropriate that I continuously examine my background and the influence this has on my current perspectives. My background includes experiences with a number of Christian organisations in Australia, all of which have impacted my current religious understandings. As a Dutch migrant and committed and practising Roman Catholic, I continue to be interested in the tradition of my faith and have often thought about the changes to faith and belief occurring in my country of origin.

As migrants to Australia, my family followed the faith tradition of their ancestry. My parents were raised as Dutch Catholics, and in the village from which they came Catholicism was an integral part of community life. What was then a divided country in terms of religious identification (the north viewed as predominantly Protestant, the south Catholic), their marriage in 1960 coincided with the decline in religious practice in Holland, which has recently been considered at the high water mark of secularism.[23] Despite this, there is also discussion of the reawakening of religion in Holland, even though it is also claimed that religion never really disappeared.[24] It is indeed remarkable, and somewhat ironic, that my family came to Australia, again seen as a highly secularised society, and were reawakened to the faith of their birth here. This occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with various experiences in non-denominational Pentecostal movements and the growing Charismatic movements of the time. As an obedient child, my faith life was fostered in these environments and took on many characteristics of those movements.

On return to our Catholic faith heritage, around the time of my mid-teenage years, a deep desire or need of belonging prompted us to engage with our ancestral faith again. This belonging grew as our newly found love of the Church grew. This faith became, in turn, an important part of my identity and that of my own family, and continues to play a vital part in who I am today. The experiences I have gone through over the years with various religious organisations have not always been positive. I have also experienced many challenging and disappointing moments that have impacted my faith in different ways. Religious experience did not preclude negative or difficult moments; more often than not, however, they have been integral to the experience and have shaped who I am now.

---

[23]Joshua Livestro, 'Holland's Post-Secular Future', *The Weekly Standard,* January 1-8 2007. 26.
[24]Sophie Van Bijsterveld, 'Religion and the Secular State in the Netherlands', *Religion and the Secular State: National Reports* (2010). p. 523.

My faith is a strongly lived experience for me; it is not simply an identifier, a box I tick at census time, but a daily reality. I continue to engage with various issues that involve my faith, particularly ethical and moral challenges that have become more frequent in recent times, and look to my faith for guidance in these matters.

Alongside this growth and faith journey I began my undergraduate studies at a secular university. From the outset, I was concerned with how I could take part in an intellectual life and remain a faith-filled person seeing how marginalised faith was in my educational experience at university. I need not have been concerned, as I have been guided by outstanding models of this, both living and deceased, who combined their dedication to the faith with their knowledge seeking. As I began to learn about history, society and culture in Australia, I could see how little I knew about the country of which I had become a citizen. These studies opened my eyes to a level of inquiry based on genuine interest. In particular, my interest in Indigenous Australia grew and I have had the privilege of teaching in this field for a number of years now. Through my work in this field, I began to see how the classification of Australia as firmly founded on secular principles erases the impact of Indigenous belief and knowledge systems so foundational to this nation as their beliefs continue to shape the contours of the nation, both geographically and culturally. As the Indigenous writer Charles Harris said, 'God was already here and with the people before invasion'.[25]

In my later postgraduate studies, I began to take a deeper interest and observe that religion in Australia was predominantly written in the past tense in the academic world. With this was also a sense of the overwhelming negativity with which religion is portrayed in some areas of the media, alongside the stereotyping of religious identity as old-fashioned, a nostalgic

---

[25]Charles Harris, 'Guidelines for So-Called Western Civilization and Western Christianity', in Anne Pattel_Gray (ed.), *Aboriginal Sprituality:Past, Present, Future Perceptions of Christianity* (Victoria: Harper Collins, 1996). p. 67.

remnant of a lost, simpler golden age, or as an obscurantist and regressive force. This was not the reality of my experience of religion. What I also began to see was the way secular and spiritual worldviews and theories often coexisted in an uneasy relationship for people. In contrast, I began to find an increasing openness to religion and spirituality in discussions with my students. Whenever it came up in the course of tutorial discussion, there was an openness and honesty to much of our discussion, as if students were trying to come to terms with something many of them had never experienced. These were particularly grace-filled moments for me. It was at this time that my research plans began to take shape and the secular environment in which I work offered me the catalyst for this research.

I came across the concept of the post-secular and began to contemplate the implications of such an idea. The last 15 years has been the backdrop to an exploration of my faith. I have questioned, argued and wrestled with changing social, religious and cultural ideas that often circulate in and cohabit the same public space. This research is my way of coming to terms with changes in me and around me that the post-secular symbolises. In this research, I align my personal reflection and experiences with the knowledge and experience of the participants and a growing list of publications on the topics of secular, and post-secular, religion and spirituality.

Why hermeneutic phenomenology?

As important as my personal journey and context are, equally important are my reasoning and choice in the use of hermeneutic phenomenology. I first discovered this approach to doing philosophy in my early research and reading. What drew me to its suitability was primarily the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer, particularly *Truth and Method.* In this work, Gadamer outlines an interpretative approach that centres my own understandings, while using them as a springboard to deeper insights. I particularly enjoyed this interrogation of myself and my

way-of-being towards my research, as it enabled me to direct the approach, rather than following a more prescribed or objective outline. Gadamer constitutes understanding as a circular process, namely an interplay between the text and the interpreter.[26] Hermeneutic phenomenology, in my use of it, posits understanding as a circular movement (illustrated in Figure 1) as, through this research, I have continually moved between self, texts, reading and writing in an ongoing interpretative process.
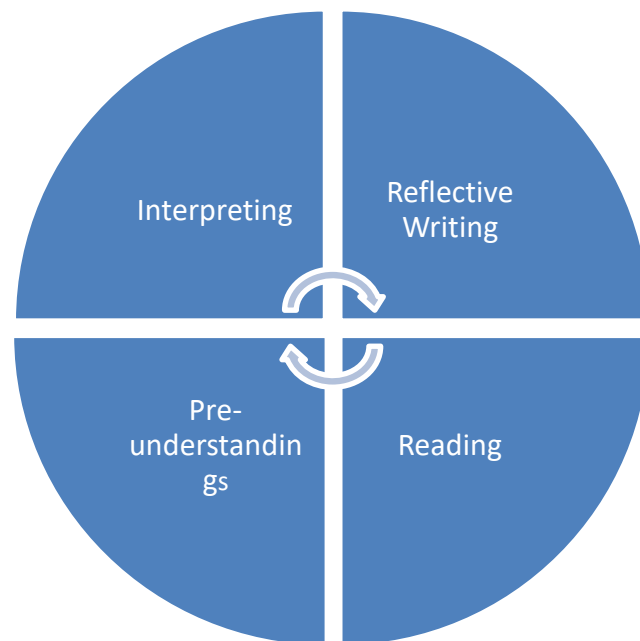
Figure 1: The hermeneutic cycle.

Quantitative analysis is already undertaken by many competent academics in this field and I had no intention of replicating their work. As I wished to explore the deeper significance of religion that is captured by the term post-secular, hermeneutic phenomenology seemed to be the most appropriate framework of analysis and interpretation. It has allowed me to explore and 'live' the phenomenon I was scrutinising, and immerse myself in the research process without the need to remain distant from the data. The personal qualities necessary for the use of this approach include openness, sensitivity and focus, making the research process intense

---

[26]Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. p. 293.

at times. Maintaining this intense focus became very challenging, particularly at times when life events took me away from the closeness necessary for a strong focus on my work.

The reflective devices I used to stay close to the research included an iterative relationship with the interviews and subsequent analysis, journaling, diarising and 'playing' with the data. I also had to wrestle with and accept the idea that my work will not be the final word on this topic. Hermeneutic phenomenology can lead to clarity of vision regarding the phenomenon, but with the realisation that this is located within a particular historicity, with new interpretations inevitably to emerge beyond this. So, although I was confident of uncovering some crucial meanings and understandings of the phenomenon, I could not be sure they would still withstand the test of time. . I understood that new interpretations can emerge and challenge currently accepted ideas, and what was required of me was openness to accept and accommodate change.

Structure of this thesis

This thesis is presented in twelve chapters, divided into four parts. Chapters 1 to 3 examine the context and theoretical underpinnings. Chapters 4 to 5 outline the qualitative method used and examine the data collected through interviews. Chapters 6 and 7 analyse further implications of the phenomena associated with the notion of the post-secular. Chapters 8, 9 and 10 offer some extended reflections on the central topics of this research including a case study in chapter 9 and a revisiting of my pre-understandings in chapter 10. Chapter 11 presents the conclusions.

Chapter outlines

This introduction sets the scene in relation to the impetus for this research, the personal context, the purpose of the research and my decision to use a phenomenological research approach.

PART A: THEORETICAL

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the Australian context, exploring some examples of religious change, both historical and contemporary. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature pertaining to hermeneutic phenomenology and a justification for its use in my research. The central concern is how this method offers a philosophical approach to the search for meaning and understanding while allowing me, as the researcher, to be drawn into the outcomes. Of central importance are the philosophical writings of Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Chapter 3 sets the foundation and contextualises this research by providing a historical overview of the literature on the key concepts of the secular, neo-secular and post-secular. Recent tensions and competing issues are examined, as these demands compete with the longstanding and widely accepted secularisation theory. Chapter 4 outlines my method and moves from the philosophical ideas to show how these ideas have influenced the shape of the research process. The intent of the chapter is to open the research process to scrutiny by others.

PART B: INTERVIEWS AND FINDINGS

Chapter 5 will examine the findings of the research and begin to explore the interview responses and data, aligning them with the key terms and themes that emerged in the literature review. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 will bring the findings of the research together in discussion sections and present my interpretation of the phenomena to be undertaken in this research. These chapters scrutinise the core topics and themes that have emerged through this research, analysing the essential understandings of the post-secular.

PART C: FURTHER REFLECTIONS

Chapter 9 examines the contemporary Australian context through the case studies of three religious movements. Chapter 10 revisits my pre-understandings and explores how they have developed during this research.

PART D: CONCLUSION

Chapter 11 brings together my findings for a concluding discussion and explores the implications for further research.

PART A: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Chapter 1. The Australian Context

Australia was formally established as a secular nation-state at Federation in 1901 with the official separation of church and state.[27] The dominant historical view is that Australia is a secular nation, even though conflicting viewpoints still exist about whether Australia is a inherently secular or Christian nation.[28] These perspectives are primarily based on statistical data and trends in religious affiliation and participation that most often refer to patterns of decline. In this section, I will discuss the establishment of Australia as a secular nation-state and outline the influence of the secular and the presence of religion in Australian history. Central to this discussion is the influence of sectarianism on Australian social, cultural and political life and the changing role of religion in the public and private sphere.

Prior to colonisation in 1788, Australia was not secular, with many active and strong spiritual leaders and nations present. Through the forces of colonisation, often driven by the Enlightenment tendency to experimentation, new ideas were transplanted into Australia, including religious ideas and practices in a place predominantly viewed by the early colonisers as a godless land.[29] One of the key goals of colonisation was to achieve an 'enlightened society' and consequently, there needed to be political control of the ideologies and practices that circulated within it including religion.[30]

The institutional presence of religion was strong from early colonial times, with schools and other charitable organisations contributing significantly to the social and cultural fabric of early Australia, oftentimes in partnership with governing bodies and the state. From 1788

---

[27] Stuart Piggin, 'Power and Religion in a Modern State: Desecularisation in Australian History', *Journal of Religious History,* 38/3 (09// 2014), 320-40.p. 330
[28] Graeme Innes, 'Are We Really the Secular Nation We Think We Are?', (Australian Human Rights Commision, 2009).
[29] John Harrison, 'Faith and Belief in "the Land of the Holy Spirit"', *Media Development,* 59/1 (2012), 14-18.p. 14.
[30] Kay Anderson and Colin Perrin, 'Essays Beyond Savagery', (14: Melbourne University Publishing, 2008), 146-69.

onwards, the major Christian denominations found in Britain initiated representation in Australia, with Anglicanism being the favoured denomination by the English authorities.[31] The free settlers and convicts were obligated to attend religious services and fulfil the accompanying observances, but ministers were often disappointed in the disinterest and lack of spiritual sentiment in their congregations and communities.[32] The plans for a well ordered establishment of states, aligned with the moral principles and guidelines offered by active Christian communities, struggled to eventuate, even though the institutional presence of religions grew significantly during these early stages.

As towns and settlements expanded during the 1800's, the great distances between the settlers and established churches was another barrier clergy and congregations faced. The intermittent attendance at worship services and catechetical events contributed to a culture of irreligiousness that fostered an attitude towards the established churches as allied with the gentry and wealthy landowners, isolating the working class and convict elements.[33] A culture of religious disinterest developed, alongside increasing sectarianism, which pitched mainly Irish Catholics against British Anglicans or Presbyterians, and which created significant divisions in society. The seeds of sectarianism are to be found in the historical legacy that the newly settled immigrants had experienced in Great Britain and transferred to the colony. These ongoing divisions continued to be experienced by Catholics and Protestants in Australia and were further fuelled by growing class tensions.[34]

Sectarianism played a significant role in the social fabric of Australia in the lead up to Federation. The division of the country along Catholic and Protestant lines was long-

---

[31] Frame, *Losing My Religion : Unbelief in Australia*. p. 43.
[32] Ibid. pp. 41-42.
[33] Michael Hogan, *The Sectarian Strand* (Victoria: Penguin Books, 1987). p. 20.
[34] Blyth, 'A Historical Overview of Australian Religious Sectarianism Accompanied by a Survey of Factors Contributing to Its Dissolution', (p. 83.

established and deeply entrenched. According to Hogan, sectarianism was still influential in Australia post-World War Two across all major institutions, social, political and economic.[35] Sectarianism in Australia was more than a denominational divide; it incorporated distinctly social and cultural forms. These included marriage taboos and corporate, employment and workplace favouritism, as well as an educational divide. [36] The establishment of the University of Sydney in the 1850s is one case in point. In reaction to ongoing sectarian concerns the University of Sydney was established as a secular institution that would not be dominated by any one church or denomination. Even though this was the foundational principle, residential colleges were built that housed students along denominational lines allowing for a religious and moral instruction.[37] Consequently the establishment of the first Australian university was viewed as a unique blend of formal secular teaching alongside student religious formation.[38]

Although Federation enshrined a unified approach to Australian political governance while declaring the constitutional favouritism of one religion over another was not to occur in Australia,[39] each of the states developed from distinct contexts that were often influenced by sectarian conflicts. This can be seen in the mid-nineteenth century elections in Victoria and New South Wales that saw heated debate between Catholic and Protestant representatives seeking adequate representation of their constituents, based on their historical ties to Ireland or England.[40] As Blyth states, 'Australian Sectarianism is historically rooted in the divisive

---

[35]Hogan, *The Sectarian Strand*.p. 237.
[36]Blyth, 'A Historical Overview of Australian Religious Sectarianism Accompanied by a Survey of Factors Contributing to Its Dissolution', (
[37] Julia Horne, 'Political Machinations and Sectarian Intrigue in the Making of Sydney University', *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society,* 36 (2015), 4-15. p. 9.
[38]
[39]Piggin, 'Power and Religion in a Modern State: Desecularisation in Australian History', (p. 330.
[40] Hogan, *The Sectarian Strand*. pp 64–65.

events between England and Ireland; primarily the two foundational events of this nationalistic division were the Protestant Reformation and the English conquest of Ireland'.[41]

Sectarianism has played a significant role in the development of Australia, as it affected the social, religious and political dynamics of the burgeoning nation. Socially, there was antagonism between denominational groups and individuals, with intolerance and occasional open hostility impacting social cohesion.[42] Religiously, sectarianism contributed to an anti-clerical sentiment that impacted church attendance numbers and an anti-religious sentiment that created a veneer of religiosity, with less depth and spiritual growth than was hoped for by the clergy.[43] Politically, the state and federal governments continued to financially and publically support the churches, through funding of the school system and affiliated services. Furthermore, political party lines were sometimes drawn up along denominational lines depending on the issue of the time. An example of this is the campaign around conscription during the First World War , which more often than not saw Protestant support and Catholic opposition, as reflected in political candidates of the time.[44]

Notwithstanding the secular demarcations in the political and educational fields, religious institutions continued to grow, with their influence present throughout Australian history. In particular, educational institutions, such as those founded by Mary McKillop and Fr Tennison Woods, were largely affiliated with a particular Christian denomination and predate the public school system in Australia. Political affiliations were also drawn along denominational lines.[45] The above overview of the historical context indicates that publically Australia never was a society completely dominated by the secular and has always had a relatively stable

---

[41] Blyth, 'A Historical Overview of Australian Religious Sectarianism Accompanied by a Survey of Factors Contributing to Its Dissolution', (p. 83.
[42] Ibid. p. 82.
[43] Frame, *Losing My Religion : Unbelief in Australia*. p. 44.
[44] Blyth, 'A Historical Overview of Australian Religious Sectarianism Accompanied by a Survey of Factors Contributing to Its Dissolution', (p. 90.
[45] Ibid.pp. 81–82.

institutional religious presence.[46] However, secular ideas and ideologies increasingly came to be viewed as the necessary concomitant of a progressive, non-sectarian, modern, liberal and democratic society.[47]

Australia continued to develop and retain strong intellectual, social and cultural ties with Europe and the US, where huge social and cultural changes were occurring.[48] Major events on one side of the world had ramifications across the globe and, with two world wars and the devastation these brought to many people, long-held ideas were being challenged. From this ferment, imported philosophies and ideologies began to impact on the relative isolation of Australian life.

The social and historical change that occurred after World War Two had a significant impact on Australia. Waves of migrants brought their religious beliefs and practices to the country, and alongside a conservative and relatively stable Anglo and Celtic Christian population, religion experienced what is mistakenly viewed by some as a 'golden age' of expansion and influence.[49] This was soon to be challenged by further social and cultural changes.

The 1960s presented Australia with its fair share of turmoil and social upheaval. The impact of the 1960s highlights just how closely Australia was aligned with its overseas counterparts. The western world was undergoing significant social and cultural changes, as long-held ideas and doctrines were questioned and often invalidated. In the academic world, the development of secularisation theory was at its apogee and institutional religion certainly appeared on the

---

[46]Stephen Chavura and Ian Tregenza, 'Introduction: Rethinking Secularism in Australia (and Beyond)', *Journal of Religious History,* 38/3 (09// 2014), 299-306.p. 302.
[47] Anne Aly and Lelia Green, 'Less Than Equal: Secularism, Religious Pluralism and Privilege', *2008,* 11/2 (2008-06-01 2008).
[48]Frame, *Losing My Religion : Unbelief in Australia*.p.106.
[49]Ibid. p. 64.

decline. On the other hand, spirituality, in a number of new and diverse forms, was being imported, embraced and moulded to Australian tastes.[50]

Australia followed this pattern of change for a number of years and experienced substantial diversification in belief systems. Although previously seen as an innocuous presence, the secular began to take hold in a range of fields and exert itself ever more forcefully. While the presence of militant secularism in Australia is often denied, this is not altogether accurate; in the halls of academia a war was being fought between secularists and traditionalists. Secularists saw the influence of religion on Australian society as negative and in opposition to progress.[51] Despite this, they continued to outwardly tolerate the presence of religion in the name of liberal- democratic freedom.

Even so, the secular also began to be called into question, not just in the halls of academia but also in the public square, as people reasserted their right to practice and experience spirituality and religion as an expression of their individual identity. Just as this move towards individual expression gained momentum, so too did the drive towards reasserting the secular nature of Australia. Secularists (comprising atheist, humanist, rationalist and sceptic voices)[52] gained visibility and began to exert their influence, calling for public spaces to be free of religious influence. Gaining momentum in the later part of the 20th Century, particularly within the political arena, this influence became stronger and more visible. At the same time, changes in Australian society (i.e., new waves of migrants who brought with them distinct religious traditions) appeared and new concerns and fears were raised.[53]

[50]Ibid. pp. 74–75.
[51]Ibid. p. 271.
[52]Gary Bouma et al., 'Freedom of Religion and Belief in 21st Century Australia', (Sydney: Australian Human Rights Commission, 2011). p. 25.
[53] Bouma, *Australian Soul : Religion and Spirituality in the Twenty-First Century*. p. 6-7.

From both a political and ideological viewpoint, the secular has infiltrated areas previously untouched, including religious institutions themselves. Although this was cause for concern amongst religious people, the rest of the world was experiencing similar issues and was reconsidering the role and place of religion. It is at this point that some prominent intellectuals began to question the so-called dominance of the secular worldview, and to distinguish some social changes that would mark the end of this dominance. Although Australia has remained distanced from much of this debate, these changes were noticed here by key academics and discussion began about how they might impact Australia.[54] Some considered Australia to have never been truly secular in the first place, and that religion and spirituality always remained influential, merely ebbing and flowing.[55] Others see that the secular needs re-evaluation and that although we have understood Australia as secular, the definition of this is changing.[56] Others consider the secular as a way of life, simultaneously doctrine and practice that is just as much an 'experienced' reality as religion, and it is an individual choice.[57] From this perspective, the secular has become the default position and as problematic as religion.

Some scholars question how the secular became so influential and widespread so to inhabit and appropriate the public space, and to remain undisturbed there despite social changes.[58] Hence the perception that the secular has become an ideological force, programmed and impressed into the very fabric of Australian society.[59] In tandem with this perception is the awareness or understanding that the changing views on religion and spirituality cast the post-secular as an important aspect for the future of religion and spirituality in Australia, and the

---

[54]Chavura and Tregenza, 'Introduction: Rethinking Secularism in Australia (and Beyond)', (p. 299.

[55] Bouma, *Australian Soul : Religion and Spirituality in the Twenty-First Century*. p. 5-7.

[56] Chavura and Tregenza, 'Introduction: Rethinking Secularism in Australia (and Beyond)', (p. 301.

[57]Bouma et al., 'Freedom of Religion and Belief in 21st Century Australia'. pp. 25–27.

[58] David Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution : The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality* (Sydney HarperCollins, 2003). p. 12.

[59]Bouma et al., 'Freedom of Religion and Belief in 21st Century Australia'.

wider global community. I discuss these perspectives in this thesis drawing on my research and interviews with academics who have long pondered the positions briefly outlined.

SECTARIANISM AND SECULAR EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

One area in Australia marked by secular change and sectarianism is education. This aspect of Australian history has been extensively researched by scholars, so what I offer here is a summary of the major changes to education in Australia and how these are inherently connected to a secular agenda.

Education in Australia was strongly connected to the liberal discourse of eighteenth century England. The early colonial government and religious authorities in Australia saw education as a way to ensure the moral and social harmony and cohesion of an ethnically and culturally diverse colonial population.[60] The understanding of the secular at this point in time was not the same as it is now, but encompassed a range of ideas based on moral codes predominantly founded on Christian values, rather than being divorced from them.[61] There was a drive to reduce sectarianism in schools, but there was no fundamentalist secular push to have all or any references to God excised from public schooling. The elimination of sectarianism was central to the understanding of the secular at this time. This excerpt from the Melbourne newspaper *The Argus* in 1878 highlights the understanding of the time.

> 'The great object of the department', said Ramsay, 'should be not to teach dogma, but a high moral tone'. He did not specify what type of education would produce a 'high moral tone', but fellow member of the Victorian lower house and former teacher, Mr Sergeant, gave his view. '… what was moral must be religious' declared Sergeant to the sounds of 'Hear, hear' from fellow legislators. 'If they taught the children what was right', he

---

[60] Hogan, *The Sectarian Strand*. p. 81.
[61] Remy Low, 'A Genealogy of the Religious Versus Secular Schooling Debate in New South Wales (Part Ii): Populism and Patriotism', *Journal of Religious Education,* 62/2 (07// 2014b), 53.p. 55.

argued, 'they would teach the fundamentals of religion'. Again the words 'Hear, hear' could be heard in the chamber. (*The Argus,* 18 October 1878, pp 9–10)

Historically, there was often a partnership between state and church schools, particularly before Federation. The arrival of clergymen with the First Fleet, and later arrivals in greater numbers, paved the way for the initial establishment of church-governed schools. While almost entirely Anglican in the first few decades, Catholic, Presbyterian and Methodist schools were established in the early to mid-1800s with changes to legislation that allowed for the diversification of the school system.[62] Although denominational schools were aided by the state and governed by the same authorities, the beginning of public schools grew out of opposition to denominational schools, particularly the growing Roman Catholic sector. This was coupled with an ongoing drive towards the establishment of a liberal secular state that had its sights on the elimination of religious sectarianism.[63]

The mid 1800s saw a distinct divide emerge between those who argued for 'free, compulsory and secular'[64] education and those who supported the existing denominational and private system. Between 1872 and 1893, all colonies introduced legislation for these changes.[65] The role of the state in education was hotly debated on a number of grounds, which included: the promulgation of morals and values without recourse to religion; the breaking down of the monopoly of Anglicanism in both politics and education; and the anticlerical views held by some in power.

The passing of the *Public Instruction Act 1880* (NSW) was a watershed moment in terms of consolidating this divide, as Prime Minister Henry Parkes made education compulsory while also retaining the teaching of religion in state schools. Linking government funding and

---

[62]Ibid. p. 54.
[63]Ibid. p. 58.
[64]Peter Meadmore, ''Free, Compulsory and Secular'? The Re-Invention of Australian Public Education', *Journal of Education Policy,* 16/2 (2001), 113-25.p. 114.
[65]Ibid.

agendas to secular schooling and instruction might appear to amount to bolstering the secular–religious divide, but this was not necessarily the intent of Parkes's reforms:

> Surely the Catholic religion… cannot be a thing, the teaching of which renders it necessary to separate the Catholic children from the other children of the country. They must mix in after years, and be associated with each other in all the duties of everyday life. Let them be workers, traders, men of competent means; let them go anywhere they may, into whatever groove of society they come – they must mix with persons entertaining other opinions… let us remember that we are above everything else free citizens of a free commonwealth. Whether we are Englishmen, Scotchmen, or Irishmen, or whether we are the sons of some foreign land, over and above every other consideration we ought to be Australians.[66]

Interestingly, the Australian identity Parkes is constructing here is one of religious tolerance, maybe reflecting Australia's already lukewarm approach to religion as evidenced in census data from that time, or reviving the early Enlightenment ideals which informed the colonisation of Australia. Even though Parkes appeared to offer a conciliatory hand, sectarian schooling remained a 'fighting ground' for years to come.[67] The *Public Instruction Act 1880*, far from heralding a new progressive secular age, indicates more about the place of religion in Australia at the time than anything else. It highlights the deep social rift present in education, as well as in wider Australian society. Secular schooling as a neutral meeting point of religious difference and disagreement was the prevailing idea at the time.

What the history of education in Australia points to is the problem of the secular when it is viewed as a neutral position and which in this context has been the overriding perspective. In the educational context, religious and secular schooling are positioned on opposite poles, but

---

[66] Henry Parkes as quoted in Blyth, 'A Historical Overview of Australian Religious Sectarianism Accompanied by a Survey of Factors Contributing to Its Dissolution', (p. 93.
[67]Ibid.

as Low indicates, these were understood to be different things at different historical times.[68]

What is important here is that secular schooling was viewed as progressive and for the good of the nation, while religious (often Catholic) education was retrograde and divisive.[69] Protestant education at times aligned with secular/public schooling, as there was more readiness by those in power within the Protestant denominations to concede that religious instruction can be separated from education in general and still be effective and valuable.

As Sherington and Campbell note:

> The legacy which the establishment of colonial public schools left was thus closely associated with the nineteenth century colonial liberal middle class Protestant agenda. Bureaucratically and centrally managed in the apparent interests of efficiency and good order, Australian public schools offered a secular education which was essentially a form of common Protestantism. Left out of this settlement, the Roman Catholic Church and its communities had to build schools based on local parishes and religious orders pledged to uphold the faith against the threat of the secular state. It was this sectarian divide that remained one of the legacies of colonial liberalism to Australian education.[70]

Marion Maddox has written extensively about the secular in Australia and particularly in Australian politics. Maddox contends that the oppositional status of secular and religious in Australia is not as straightforward as we are led to believe:

> Australia is often held to be an extreme case among secular societies… contrary to reputation, religious concepts retain a considerable vitality in late-twentieth-century Australia. However, their meaning has shifted. Rather than statements of shared faith, they provide a way of expressing – and, sometimes, resolving – new anxieties and preoccupations.[71]

---

[68]Remy Low, 'A Genealogy of the Secular Versus Religious Schooling Debate in New South Wales (Part I): Terror and Suspicion', *Journal of Religious Education,* 62/1 (04// 2014a), 25. p. 30.

[69]Low, 'A Genealogy of the Religious Versus Secular Schooling Debate in New South Wales (Part Ii): Populism and Patriotism', (p. 59.

[70]Craig Campbell and Geoffrey Sherington, 'Australian Liberalism, the Middle Class and Public Education from Henry Parkes to John Howard', *Education Research and Perspectives,* 31/2 (2004).p. 62.

[71]Marion Maddox, *For God and Country Religious Dynamics in Australian Federal Politics* (Canberra: Department of Parliamentary Library, 2001).p. 41.

Religion and spirituality in Australia

In the Australian context, religion has been defined by the High Court in the 1983 'Scientology case' as follows:

> (T)he criteria of religion are twofold: first, belief in a Supernatural Being, Thing or Principle; and second, the acceptance of canons of conduct in order to give effect to that belief, though canons of conduct which offend against the ordinary laws are outside the area of any immunity, privilege or right conferred on the grounds of religion.[72]

This definition is the culmination of a set of historical events that took place both internally and externally to Australian society, where a diverse range of belief communities now practice religion and spirituality. These communities exhibit many different structures of belief and practice that influence individual ways of being and their worldviews. Although in Australia there is a strong presence of monotheistic faiths, there is also a growing presence of creed systems that may not subscribe to belief in a deity or deities; rather, they may consider other principles for guidance in their life journey.

Prior to European arrival, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples lived out their beliefs as taught by oral tradition. Their complex belief systems incorporated reverence for ancestors and nature, often referred to as the Dreamtime or the Dreaming. This spiritual system is based on the interconnectedness of human and non-human entities and is lived through practices that include rituals, song and artistic expressions, alongside customary law and tradition.[73] Contact with external cultures and religions began well before settlement in the 1800s. It is now known that Aboriginal people in the north of Australia had contact with Muslim believers through trade with Indonesia over the last 500 years or so.[74] This mutual exchange

---

[72]*Church of the New Faith v Commissioner of Payroll Tax (Victoria)*(1983–84) 154 CLR 120 at 136,quoted by Australian Bureau Of Statistics, 'Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups',
<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/775012EF0058A77DCA25697E00184BDC?opendocument>
[73] Bouma, *Australian Soul : Religion and Spirituality in the Twenty-First Century*., pp. 10–11.
[74]Anthony Reid, 'Crossing the Great Divide: Australia and Eastern Indonesia', in Marshall Clark and Sally May (eds.), *Macassan History and Heritage* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2013).

of ideas and beliefs left a legacy in language and practice that continues to evolve today, showing the changing nature of religion and culture in this country.[75]

With the arrival of the Europeans came a new set of beliefs, practices and traditions that were in, some aspects, in sharp contrast to those of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The greater majority of early settlers were adherents of the Church of England, but there were also small numbers of Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists.[76] These small numbers have grown exponentially over the last 200 years and continue to be the largest denominations within what is still considered by some to be predominantly a Christian nation.[77]

Alongside Christian churches, Jewish people were also represented from these early times and remain a significant group in Australia,[78] while Chinese workers in the mid-1800s brought Buddhism with them; hence from the earliest days of the colonial era, Australia was a place in which different religious practices developed. These changes have continued right through to recent times and include the arrival of Hindus from the sub-continent seeking work opportunities and an increasing numbers of Buddhists in response to the devastation caused by the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s. Furthermore, Middle Eastern strife and instability has brought a growing number of Muslim immigrants.

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

---

[75] See P. Stephenson, *Islam Dreaming: Indigenous Muslims in Australia* (NewSouth Publishing, 2011).

[76] Henry, Nicola, Kurzak, Karolina & Sherlock, Charles (nd), 'Religion in Australia', Fact Sheet (The Australian Collaboration), accessed at <www.australiancollaboration.com.au/pdf/FactSheets/Religion-FactSheet.pdf>. pp. 1–2.

[77] Kevin Donnelly, 'We Are a Christian Nation under Threat', <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-05-21/donnelly-we-are-a-christian-nation-under-threat/6486830>

[78] The Australian Collaboration, 'Religion in Australia', <http://www.australiancollaboration.com.au/pdf/FactSheets/Religion-FactSheet.pdf>

Figures on religious affiliation, released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), provide an interesting snapshot and have largely contributed to the current understanding of the nature of religion and spirituality in the country. [79] Statistics indicate that after the initial strong increase in Christian affiliation due to migration, there has been a steady decline in affiliation since 1911 as Christian affiliation fell from 96 per cent in 1911 to 61 per cent in 2011. Two of the major denominations, Catholicism and Anglicanism, have experienced the strongest decrease, from 2001 figures of 27 per cent and 21 per cent respectively to the figures indicated in Table 1.1. There were also small increases in some Christian denominations from 2001 to 2011, including Pentecostal denominations which rose from 1 per cent to 1.1 per cent.

Table 1.0: Religious affiliations 2011.

Religion	No. affiliated	Population	Proportion born overseas(a)
	'000	%	%
Christian	**13 150.6**	**61.1**	**22.9**
Catholic	5 439.2	25.3	24.0
Anglican	3 680.0	17.1	17.5
Uniting Church	1 065.8	5.0	11.4
Presbyterian and Reformed	599.5	2.8	26.3
Eastern Orthodox	563.1	2.6	43.6
Baptist	352.5	1.6	28.8
Lutheran	251.9	1.2	24.5
Pentecostal	238.0	1.1	32.6
Other Christian	960.7	4.5	31.0
Non-Christian	**1 546.3**	**7.2**	**67.0**
Buddhism	529.0	2.5	69.4
Islam	476.3	2.2	61.5
Hinduism	275.5	1.3	84.3
Judaism	97.3	0.5	48.9
Other non-Christian	168.2	0.8	57.2
No Religion	**4 796.8**	**22.3**	**22.5**
Total(b)	**21 507.7**	**100.0**	**26.1**
(a) Proportion of people reporting this religion who were born overseas.			
(b) Total includes inadequately described (supplementary codes) religions and people who did not state a religion.			

---

[79]Australian Bureau Of Statistics, 'Religious Affiliation',
<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2071.0main+features902012-2013>

Similarly in 2016 ABS census data the changes from 2011 to 2016 are evident with the most

significant growth pattern indicated in the No religion category.

Table 1.1: Religious Affiliation 2011-2016

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS, 2011 AND 2016[80]

Religious Affiliations	2011(a)		2016	
	Populations ('000)	Population (%)	Populations ('000)	Population (%)
Christian	*13 149.3*	*61.1*	*12 201.6*	*52.1*
Catholic	5 439.3	25.3	5 291.8	22.6
Anglican	3 679.9	17.1	3 101.2	13.3
Uniting Church	1 065.8	5.0	870.2	3.7
Presbyterian and Reformed	599.5	2.8	526.7	2.3
Eastern Orthodox	563.1	2.6	502.8	2.1
Other Christian	1 801.8	8.4	1 908.9	8.2
Other Religions	*1 546.3*	*7.2*	*1 920 .8*	*8.2*
Islam	476.3	2.2	604.2	2.6
Buddhism	529.0	2.5	563.7	2.4
Hinduism	275.5	1.3	440.3	1.9
Sikhism	72.3	0.3	125.9	0.5
Judaism	97.3	0.5	91.0	0.4
Other	95.9	0.4	95.7	0.4
No Religion(b)	4 804.6	22.3	7 040.7	30.1
Australia(c)	**21 507.7**	**100**	**23 401.9**	**100**

(a) 2011 data has been calculated using the 2016 definitions.
(b) No religion includes secular beliefs (e.g. Atheism) and other spiritual beliefs (e.g. New Age).
(c) As religion was an optional question, the total for Australia will not equal the sum of the items above it.

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2011 and 2016

Alongside the continuing decrease in Christian affiliation indicated from 2011 to 2016 there

has been a slow but steady increase in those reporting to have no religious affiliation. Figure

3 is a graph comparing those who declare no religion over time from a 2013 ABS summary.[81]

Although this does not include the 2016 census data the increase remains steady and

---

[80] Australian Bureau Of Statistics, 'Religious Affiliation',<
https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0~2016~Main%20Features~Religion%20Article~80
>
[81]Australian Bureau Of Statistics, 'Losing My Religion?',
<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features30Nov+2013>

substantial. There are a number of problems associated with these figures, as Gary Bouma pointed out recently:

> The problem is the 'no religion' types are certainly not all atheists. In the last census there were only 31,000 who wrote in atheist in the census… Many people who say they have no religion might say they're spiritual or engage in spiritual activities. It's a very mixed bag. The intriguing thing to me is given the rate of rise, yes we now have those declaring 'no religion' being the first category in five out of eight of our states and territories.[82]

As Bouma notes, this is not a straightforward category and the conclusions reached through a cursory analysis of statistics will not give an accurate picture of what is taking place. The 'nones' as Bouma refers to in this category are 'becoming the new "normal" in Australia. This has profound effects in ways that are only just becoming apparent'.[83]
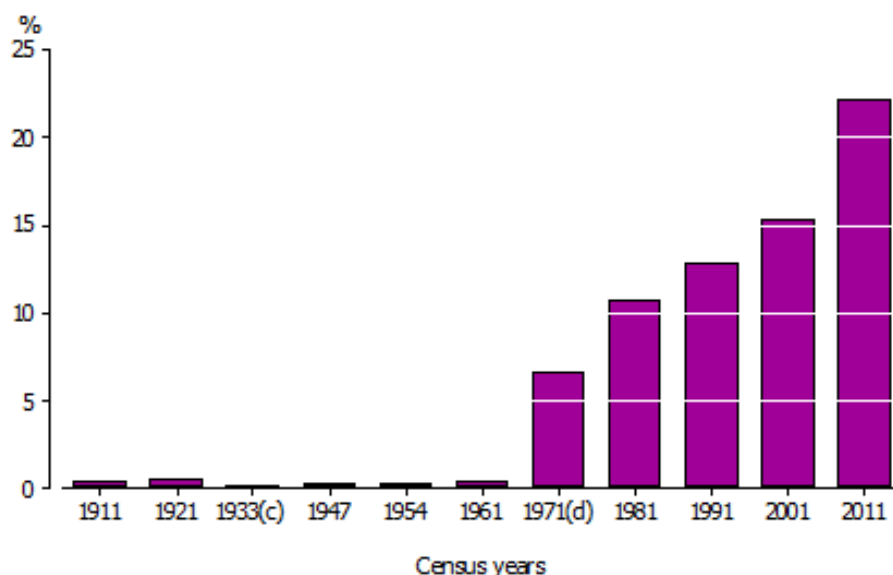
(a) Prior to 1971, people describing themselves as more than 50 per cent Aboriginal were excluded from the census
(b) Includes (variously over time) atheists, agnostics, freethinkers, socialists, rationalists, humanists and people who stated 'No denomination' and 'No religion'
(c) In the 1933 census the public was specifically informed there was no legal obligation to answer the question on religion. 'Not stated' responses increased at this point.
(d) In 1971, the instruction 'If no religion, write "none"' was introduced to the census.

Figure 2: Percentage of people reporting no religion 1911–2011.

---

[82]Gary Bouma, '2011 Census Reveals Rise of 'No Religion' ... But They're Not Atheists', in Andrew West (ed.), *Religion and Ethics Report* (ABC Online, 2012).

[83] Gary Bouma, 'Religion in Australia: What are the Implications of 'None' being the New Normal?'< https://www.abc.net.au/religion/religion-in-australia-what-are-the-implications-of-none-being-th/10094576>

Besides the information gleaned from the statistics, the legislative and constitutional protection offered to religion in Australia is indicated in section 116 of the Australian Constitution, which states that:

> The Commonwealth of Australia shall not make any law establishing any religion, or for imposing any religious observance, or for prohibiting the free exercise of any religion, and no religious test shall be required as a quantification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth.[84]

This section is reminiscent of the concerns of the founders of Federation regarding state interference in religious matters, and reflects the trend found at that time in other western nations. In Australia, there is a relatively widespread understanding that people are free to choose their religious and belief systems as long as they are respectful and law-abiding. This may be the governing idea, but this has not always proven to be the case. In recent years, in the wake of terrorist attacks overseas, domestic security measures have increased, with growing anxiety about some religious groups also increasing. The laissez faire attitude Australians were seen as holding towards religion and religious practice has, in fact, often proved to be superficial, reflecting the cultural attitudes and government policies of the time.

Furthermore changes to religious affiliation statistics, to some extent, reflect trends in other western nations including Britain and some European nations, with the United States as the exception. Surveys over the last few decades reflect the change in attitude towards religion in Australia. Below are two samples of research that paint a similar picture.

In the 1998 Australian Community Survey, 10 per cent of respondents stated that religion was the single most important category for describing who they are – and a further 11 per

---

[84]Interfaith Australia, 'Australian Discrimination Laws', <http://ic.org.au/interfaith/discrimination.html>, accessed Decemeber 11 2015

cent said that religion was 'extremely important' to their identity, while 43 per cent said it was 'not important at all'.[85]

According to Roy Morgan Research in 2014, as of late 2011 Christians outnumbered the non-religious by over two to one: 60.9 per cent of Australians over the age of 14 (= 11.4 million) said they belonged to a Christian denomination compared with 29.2 per cent (= 5.5 million) who said they had no religious affiliation. However, in the last quarter (October to December of 2013, only 52.6 per cent of Australians (= 10.2 million) were Christian, while 37.6 per cent (= 7.3 million) had no religion – halving the gap to 15 percentage points. If the recent trend continues, fewer than 50 per cent of Australians may self-identify as Christian by this time next year.[86]
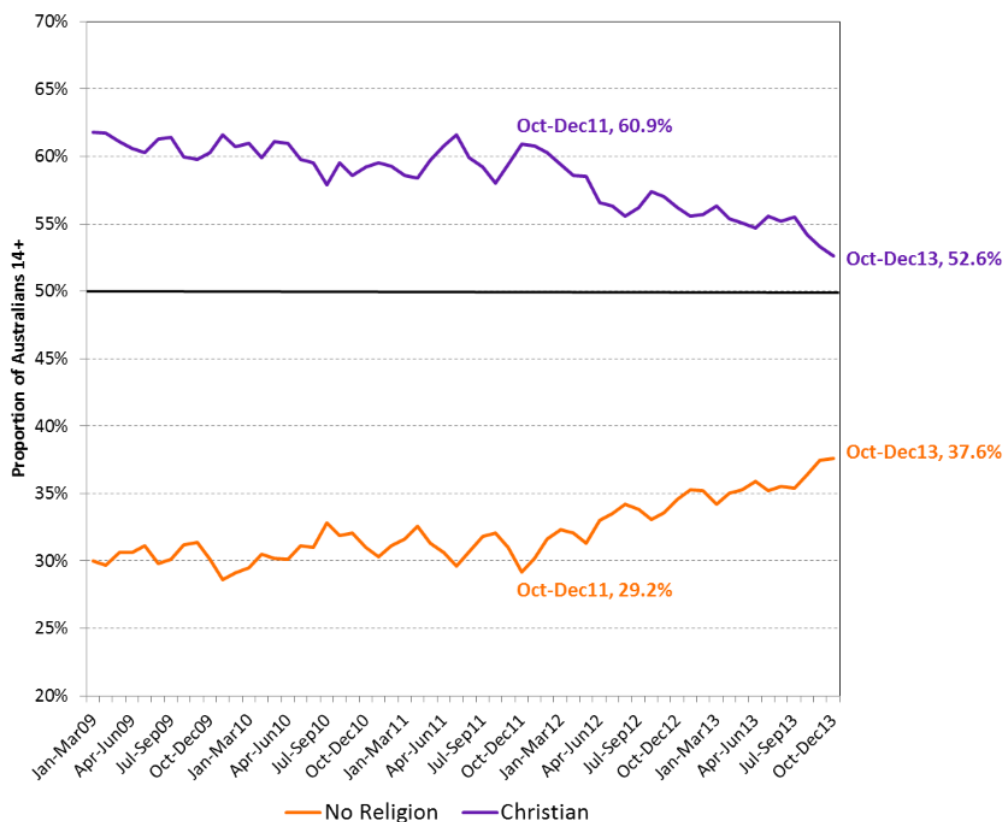
[85]Collaboration, 'Religion in Australia',

[86]Roy Morgan Research, 'Christians in Australia Nearing Minority Status as Religious Affiliation Declines Sharply since 2011 ', <http://www.roymorgan.com/findings/5541-fewer-australians-identify-as-christian-december-2013-201404152234>

Figure 3: Proportion of Australians 14+ who say they are members of a Christian denomination or No Religion. (*Source: Roy Morgan Research, January 2009 to December 2013, rolling quarters. Average quarterly sample n = 4840 Australians aged 14*)

The research and statistics reflect a change in Australian culture but gloss over a number of emerging factors, including the growth in non-traditional churches such as Hillsong, the increase in private and non-government schools, and the growing move toward interfaith dialogue. [87] The decrease in mainstream religious affiliation has become the accepted narrative of religion in Australia, while spirituality is tolerated as a culturally present and ever-changing phenomenon. The next section will discuss changes within the largest representation of Christians in one mainstream religion, The Catholic Church, with an emphasis on lay movements.

Growth in lay movements in the Catholic Church

Lay movements (also called ecclesial movements or communities) have been present in Australia from the early history of Christianity . A number of communities have more recently become popularised, particularly in the light of the new evangelisation and the recognition of the crucial role that the laity plays in the ongoing life of the Church. Some of these communities have also been the subject of media interest, contributing to a somewhat controversial status in the public's understanding. This section will discuss some examples within the Catholic Church, with some of these movements promoting ecumenism and attracting members from a range of Christian backgrounds. Additionally, these same changes – greater involvement and formation of the laity – are occurring across Christian denominational lines.

---

[87] Collaboration, 'Religion in Australia',

> Ecclesial movements, inspired by a desire to live the Gospel more intensively and to announce it to others, have always been manifest in the midst of the People of God. ... In our day and particularly during recent decades, new movements have appeared that are more independent of the structures and style of the religious life than in the past.[88]

The growth in Australia mirrors a worldwide growth in lay movements, documented by Brendan Leahy in his 2011 book *Ecclesial Movements and Communities: Origins, Significance and Issues*.[89] Leahy discusses the plethora of organisations that have arisen since the middle of the twentieth century. Leahy's book looks at some of the 122 new movements categorised in the Pontifical Council's *Directory of International Associations of the Lay Faithful*, of which a significant number are represented in Australia. Gary Bouma also lists a number of these organisations, including Opus Dei, in *Australian Soul*, claiming that these revitalised movements are characteristic of post-secularity.[90] In a sense, the term 'lay movements' is a misnomer, as these groups will also have priests and religious involvement, reflecting a whole-church perspective rather than being an exclusively lay group.

The evangelisation of the laity is the foundation of the turn towards reaching out and incorporating the laity in all aspects of parish life. The decline religious vocations has, to some degree, increased the need to build a strong lay community to retain parish services, build parish life and form parish identity. Vatican II was, in part, the catalyst for changes in the approach to the role of the laity, marking a clear shift in emphasis from 'territory to people', reflecting the biblical and theological shift from the church to the 'people of God'.[91]

The distinctly ecclesial nature of this shift to mobilising the laity is based on what is viewed as the need to evangelise the secular world. Cardinal Arinze states, 'The essential feature of

---

[88] Pope John Paul II as quoted in Dominic Cudmore, 'The Emmanuel Community', *Australasian Catholic Record,* 89/2 (2012), 186-207.p. 186.

[89] Brendan Leahy, *Ecclesial Movements and Communities: Origins, Significance and Issues* (New York: New City Press, 2011).

[90] Bouma, *Australian Soul : Religion and Spirituality in the Twenty-First Century*.p. 102.

[91] Brian Lucas, 'Building Parish Communities through Better Communication', *Australasian Catholic record,* 81/4 (10/2004, 410-30.p. 411.

the layperson's role is the vocation to bring the spirit of Christ into the arenas of secular life from within, i.e. into the family, work and profession, trade and commerce, politics and government, mass media, science and culture and national and international relations'.[92] In the face of the fear of an impending secular tide, strengthening and mobilising the laity may be seen as a necessary strategy. Below are some examples of lay movements that have impacted in Australia over the last 10 years, highlighting the growing understanding that the laity comprise 99 per cent of church membership and play a crucial role in evangelisation.

PASSIONIST COMMUNITIES

Passionist communities are made up of priests, nuns and lay people whose spirituality is based on principles of community worship, service and mutual support. These communities can be aligned with parishes, as in St Brigid's, Marrickville, one of the largest parishes in Sydney, or more contemplative and communal, such as the community of ordained and non-ordained at the Holy Cross Centre in Templestowe, Victoria. Active contemplation sums up the blend of ministry and contemplative spirituality practiced.[93] The first Passionist family groups were established in Australia in Terrey Hills Parish, Sydney, in 1973. This has since grown into an international community, primarily situated within parishes and building parish life.

Parish life revolves around support structures that connect individuals and families for the purposes of building faith and identity in an often impersonally large parish. The smaller networked groups foster a sense of belonging and ministry, while building up the entire parish through these groups.[94]These extended family-like structures are used to allay isolation

---

[92]Catholic World Report, 'Cardinal Arinze on the Role of the Laity', <http://www.catholicworldreport.com/Item/2629/cardinal_arinze_on_the_role_of_the_laity.aspx>, accessed November 11 2016.
[93]Holy Cross Centre, 'Who Are the Passionists', <http://holycrosscentre.com/p_community/>, accessed Nov 11 2016.
[94]Lucas, 'Building Parish Communities through Better Communication', (p. 417.

and encourage participation, so a spirituality of support and communion through life's struggles and joys is encouraged.[95]

OPUS DEI

Opus Dei in Australia has a relatively small membership; even so, it is considered to have a strong influence on political and social life. The Opus Dei website states it has 85,000 members worldwide, with a 2008 article stating the membership in Australia at that time was 500.[96] A significant number of these members are active in public life.

The organisation began in Australia in 1963 and is based on principles that foster holiness in everyday life and in every sphere of human endeavour. Its lay spirituality is a foundational part of the movement's vision. This lay spirituality involves an understanding of how daily life, especially work, is a path to holiness. Holiness in this context is grounded in imitation of Christ and the practice of the themes that emerged from the Vatican II which looked at the role of the laity and the universal call to holiness.[97]

The growth of Opus Dei is evident in the opening of spiritual and doctrinal centres in and around Sydney and in other Australian states; at the time of writing, Opus Dei activities are hosted by schools, educational facilities and parish facilities. One example is Harkaway Hills College, which opened in 2016 in Victoria. Like its New South Wales counterparts, the school features an educational philosophy based on the development of the whole person supported by the cultivation of the human virtues. Opus Dei is often labelled as conservative and right wing by the press, who suggest it has powerful connections, both financial and

---

[95]National Office For Evangelisation, 'Passionist Family Group Movement ', <http://www.evangeliseaustralia.com/directory/passionist-family-group-movement.html>, accessed November 11 2016.
[96]Caroline Overington, 'Opus Dei More Transparent Than Legend', *The Australian,* July 15 2008.
[97]Opus Dei, 'Frequently Asked Questions About Opus Dei', <http://www.opusdei.org/en-us/faq/#what-is-opus-dei>, accessed November 7 2016.

spiritual to the Vatican. This may be the case, but the impact that individuals experience in their lives through their involvement in the organisation is noteworthy.[98]

NEO-CATECHUMENATE

Beginning in Australia in 1977, the Neocatechumenal Way has an estimated one million members in some 40,000 parish-based communities around the world.[99] This movement focuses on a spirituality of post-baptismal formation, mission and liturgy. It is a re-envisioning of the early church to meet contemporary needs, including the role of the laity and more active participation in the liturgy and the Eucharist.

Like Opus Dei, this organisation has not been without controversy. Questions regarding the validity of some practices, the power of the organisation in parishes, and the exclusivity of its membership, have left the movement with question marks over its legitimacy.[100] Regardless of these controversies, a number of parishes and centres are in operation in Australia, including a recently opened seminary in Sydney. On the basis of service to the poor, the community-based structure of the Neocatechumenal Way attracts families and individuals to its participatory rituals and intimate settings, where all members enter into the sacred space and share knowledge and story.[101]

When Pope Paul VI met with the Neocatechumenal Communities for the first time, he stated:

> Here are the fruits of the Council! And this is something that consoles us enormously. You accomplish after baptism what the early Church once did before it: before or after is secondary. The fact that you aim at the authenticity, at the fullness, at the coherence, at the sincerity of Christian life. And this is a great merit that consoles us enormously.[102]

---

[98]Australian Broadcasting Corporation, '*An inside Look at Opus Dei* (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2005), Abc (dir.).

[99]The Record, 'Neocatechumenal Way Co-Founder Carmen Hernández Dies at 85', *The Record,* (2016).

[100]Ian Ker, 'Neocatechumenal Way: 'The Age of the Neocats'', *The Catholic Herald,* July 17 2008.

[101]Emanuela Contiero, 'Italian Catholicism and the Differentiation of Rituals: A Comparison of the Neocatechumenal Way and Renewal in the Spirit', in Giuseppe Giordan and Enzo Pace (eds.), *Mapping Religion and Spirituality in a Postsecular World* (Leiden: Brill, 2012). pp. 12–17.

[102]Leahy, *Ecclesial Movements and Communities: Origins, Significance and Issues*.p. 45.

A worldwide community of priests, religious and laity with 9000 members, the Emmanuel Community[103] has a small but global membership. Emmanuel Community spirituality is based upon the need to extend the love of Jesus as a force for renewal in the Church and beyond. With worship and praise as the basis of liturgy and the Eucharist, the Emmanuel Community has outreach branches to youth in particular, inviting commitment to mission and active participation in community. As an offshoot of the Catholic charismatic movement, Emmanuel Community is present across Australia, with a number of centres in capital cities.

Its blend of traditional practices (such as Eucharistic adoration) with contemporary activity (such as World Youth Day participation) captures what is typical of the movements discussed here. There is a reinterpretation and a reinvigoration of the early Church teaching and practice calling movements towards a participatory role in communion with others.

> Characteristic of many of the new ecclesial movements and communities was the conviction that their followers were Christian believers 'on the way together' with fraternity and fellowship as core elements of their existence. This sense of community and fraternity were deeply Christo-centric and only through and in Christ did the new initiatives consider true community and mutual fraternal like-mindedness to be possible.[104]

Growth in religious orders

Another aspect that requires mention in this section is the growth of religious vocations over the last 10 years. Predominantly viewed as on the decline, religious orders in Australia have been challenged in terms of sourcing new vocations, with a number of them experiencing a

---

[103]Emmanuel Community, 'Presenting the Emmanuel Community', <http://en.emmanuel.info/the-community/presenting-the-emmanuel-community/>, accessed November 11 2016.
[104]Cudmore, 'The Emmanuel Community', (p. 188.

sharp drop in numbers. Table 8.1, below, shows the changes in numbers from 1901 to 2009, with significant declines over the last 50 years or so.[105]

Table 1.2: Australian religious personnel 1901–2009.

Category	1901	1926	1951	1966	1976	2009
Sisters	3,622	8,141	11,245	14,622	12,619	5,927
Brothers	388	837	1,532	2,163	2,089	884
Clerical religious	195	432	1,087	2,628	2,321	1,611
Total	4,205	9,410	13,864	19,413	17,029	8,422

These figures paint a bleak picture, with the same report noting the median age of all religious in Australia in 2009 was 73 years.[106]

Nonetheless, more recent changes indicate a growth in some orders and the establishment of new orders . As noted by Dixon, although many members of orders were born in Australia, a growing percentage are now born outside of Australia and are sourced from more than 60 countries worldwide accounting for some of the growth discussed here.[107] This push to bring priests to Australia from overseas has given religious orders and parishes a global identity. An example of this is in sourcing seminarians:

> To compensate for the lack of local vocations, Australian bishops have, for several years now, increasingly sought seminarians from overseas, increasing their reliance on other churches. Since 2011, one in every two seminarians enrolled in Australia's 6 diocesan and 2 Neocatechumenal Way seminaries have been born or recruited from overseas, a pattern likely to continue.[108]

Table 1.3: Diocesan and Neocatechumenal Way (NCW) seminaries and seminarians preparing for Australian territorial dioceses, 2010–13.

---

[105]Robert Dixon, Stephen Reid, and Noel Connolly, 'See I Am Doing a New Thing: The 2009 Survey of Catholic Religious Institutes in Australia', ibid.88/3 (2011), 271-83.p. 274.
[106]Ibid.
[107] Bob Dixon, 'The Catholic Community in Australia: A Profile by Dr Bob Dixon',<
https://catholicschoolsguide.com.au/catholic-education-featured-articles/faith-and-spirituality/the-catholic-community-in-australia/>accessed 20/02/2019.
[108] Peter Wilkinson, 'Who Ministers in Australia's Parishes?', *The Swag,* (2014).

Date	Seminaries	Diocesan Seminarians	NCW Seminarians	Total Seminarians	Overseas-born (% of total)
July 2010	8	167	38	205	N/A
November 2011	8	145	35	180	100 (56%)
November 2012	8	158	34	192	86 (45%)
December 2013	8	169	37	206	106 (51%)

Australia has a diverse base of religious orders that were either established here (such as the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart), or have a branch here but are based overseas (such as the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary). A scan of the vocation directory on the Catholic Vocations Ministry Australia website gives an indication of the diversity of orders in Australia.[109] This diversity reflects the changing population and indicates an evolution in needs, both social and spiritual, within Australia. There is an indication that some orders are becoming popular in Australia and are experiencing something of a revival in vocations, although no longer-term study can be found that indicates a significant trend as yet.[110]

Australian politics and religion

Although considered a predominantly secular country, politics in Australia has also undergone a change, with a return to religion in the public square becoming more and more evident. At both federal and state level, representation of Christians in politics is high. Much has been written about this, particularly in relation to the Coalition governments of John Howard and Tony Abbott, but reference has also been made to former Labor Prime Minister

---

[109]Catholic Vocations Ministry Australia, 'Vocation Directory', <http://www.catholicozvocations.org.au/Home/Catholic-Life/Vocation-Directory>, accessed November 18 2016.
[110]Barry Coldrey, 'Australia's Seminaries Flourishing in 2015', *AD2000,* 28/3 (April 2015). Although AD2000 is not an academic journal I thought it important to include this point here to indicate a possible future direction.

Kevin Rudd and, at the state level, former NSW Premier Mike Baird[111]. Under Abbott in particular, almost half of the front bench were reported to be practicing Catholics.[112] Over the last 20 years, religion in politics has come under scrutiny in often controversial ways, with claims that the Christian right has too much power in what is essentially a secular country; however, as argued by Marion Maddox,

> Secular structure has proved permeable to the sacred's destabilising residues or incursions, which, in every case, have turned out to have significant political effects. However, the effects are not uniform: religion does not (contrary to common interpretation) produce consistent leanings either to the right or to the left. Instead, each instance examined here reflects the dual tendencies of religion, at times investing the hierarchically-ordered status quo with an aura of religious legitimation, at other times challenging existing structure by a social critique from the margins.[113]

The fact that religion causes a stir in Australian public life on a regular basis in this way suggests that there are more significant tensions between religious and secularising forces in Australian culture than one would expect and, thus, that religion plays a stronger role in Australian public life than theories of secularisation (or secularists) would predict.

As a nation, political governance often uses the language of spirituality in a range of matters. As noted in previous chapters the deployment of religion spans national events such as the ANZAC Day commemorations and other national experiences. This is not accidental; it is an effective way to deploy values and communicate ideas, without which some of these strategic issues of governance would have less public impact. As Maddox notes,

> The 1998 Constitutional Convention recommended constitutional recognition of Australians' 'spiritual wealth'. Looking back over his Prime Ministership, Labor elder Paul Keating declared the tasks of the office to include 'nurturing the spirituality of the nation'. In the public soul-searching about 'national identity' which characterised the lead-

---

[111] Jonathan James, 'As Australia Becomes Less Religious, Our Parliament Becomes More So', *The Conversation* (2017).
[112] Jonathan Swan, Lisa Visentin, and 'Coalition Celebrates a Religious Easter: Eight of 19 Cabinet Members Are Catholic ', *The Sydney Morning Herald,* April 20 2014.
[113] Maddox, *For God and Country Religious Dynamics in Australian Federal Politics.* pp. 258–86.

up to the republic referendum and the Centenary of Federation, strictly secular political language seemed to strain when required to contain modern Australia's ideas of nationhood and collective experience.[114]

In addition to the messages communicated in the public square, few Australian Prime Ministers have been notable believers, being for the most part marginal or nominal.[115] That these messages regarding spirituality have emerged from what is viewed as a secular space is therefore noteworthy.

Changes that can be considered significant in the intersection of religion and politics and that have forced religion to a pristine position include the demise of sectarianism and a united Christian constituency.[116] The religious flavour of Australian politics presents a rising conservative profile that has seen a number of key politicians in recent times promoting a return to conservatism in social policy.

This chapter examined historical and contemporary aspects of the context of religion in Australia.. This discussion will continue in chapter 9 with an exploration of case study examples. The following chapter will explore hermeneutic phenomenology, and the philosophical underpinnings of this methodology.

---

[114]Ibid. p. 16.
[115]Marion Maddox, 'God under Gillard: Religion and Politics in Australia', <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2011/11/10/3360973.htm>
[116]Gregory Melleuish, 'Religion and Politics in Australia', *Political Theology,* 11/6 (12// 2010), 909-27.p. 915.

Chapter 2. Hermeneutic Phenomenology

This chapter will explore the phenomenological tradition from which hermeneutic phenomenology arose. It will outline the definition of phenomenology and the key phenomenological traditions. It will then focus on one of these traditions as a research method, and why I view it as the most appropriate method of inquiry for this dissertation. Although I will primarily rely on Max van Manen's text, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* to direct my research approach, in this section I begin by outlining the historical development of hermeneutic phenomenology to add richness to the proceeding discussion.

Phenomenology is a term that encompasses both a philosophical tradition and a basis for social research methods. There are a number of theorists who were key architects and developers of this philosophy, including Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Each of these theorists took phenomenology in a different direction, developing ideas that covered new ground. Hence, there are a range of broad schools in phenomenological thought. The branches of phenomenology developed by these theorists hold that phenomenology can penetrate deeply into human experience and trace the essence of a phenomenon, expressing it in its original form as experienced by individuals.

Ajjawi and Higgs argue that, 'the main focus of phenomenology is with pre-reflective experiences and feelings (the essence of a phenomenon)'.[117] Essence, in the sense intended by Ajjawi and Higgs, is defined by van Manen as 'the very nature of the phenomenon, for that which makes a "thing" what it is – and without which it could not be what it is'.[118] He

---

[114]R Ajjawi and J Higgs, 'Using Hermeneutic Phenomenology to Investigate How Experienced Practitioners Lear N to Communicate Clinical Reasoning', *The Qualitative Report,* 12/4 (2007).p. 616.

[118]Max Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (Albany: State University of New York, 1990).p. 10.

also notes that 'the term essence may be understood as a linguistic construction, a description of a phenomenon... so that the structure of a lived experience is revealed to us in such a fashion that we are now able to grasp the nature and significance of this experience in a hitherto unseen way'.[119]By means of this phenomenological perspective, I aim at uncovering the essence of the post-secular, and the structures that underpin and make manifest experiences of the post-secular.

The broad phenomenological traditions and key figures are recognised and introduced here. I will also discuss the historical development of hermeneutic phenomenology from its early beginnings in the work of Husserl and Heidegger, to the later work of Gadamer.

Phenomenological schools of thought

TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGY

Transcendental phenomenology originated in the thinking of Husserl with personal prejudices suspended, or 'bracketed', allowing the reality of phenomena to be known through pure consciousness.[120] In this type of research, personal opinion needs to be suspended in order to discover and describe the lived world of experience in its essence. This line of thinking positions the lived world as discoverable and knowable, as phenomena are regarded as pre-existing and unalterable.

EXISTENTIAL PHENOMENOLOGY

In contrast to transcendental phenomenology and its focus on knowing, existential phenomenology is a broad term applied to a branch of phenomenology that rejects Cartesian rationalism. Largely influenced by the work of Heidegger, it instead posits that phenomena cannot be understood from a detached perspective, and sees engagement as the key to

---

[119] Ibid.
[120] Susann Laverty, 'Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods,* 2/3 (September 2003 2003), 29.

understanding both being and essences. [121] With its focus on ontology rather than epistemology, existential phenomenology is different from other branches of phenomenology as it is situated in opposition to Husserl's idea of complete reduction. This phenomenological approach positions experiences as perceivable and describable by the individual's consciousness. Consciousness here refers to a 'co-constituted dialogue between a person and the world'.[122]

HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGY

Hermeneutic phenomenology emerges in the writings of Heidegger and presents a departure from the other branches. Moving from descriptive to interpretative, this branch of philosophy rejects the idea that personal opinions and understandings are barriers. Instead, it sees these as part of subjective experience on which to build understandings of the nature of things as experienced by the individual. The world can be known and experienced by the individual and their subjectivity. Understandings are generated that are viewed as interpretations of phenomena.[123] This process requires careful attention and an understanding that, although new meanings may arise, these are continuously'on the way' and may never be complete.

Hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry is concerned with human experiences, but not with experiences that are thought to be universal and shared by all people. The meanings uncovered in phenomena are indeterminate and incomplete, always seeking to question assumptions by returning to lived experience itself, the beginnings of phenomenological inquiry. [124] It is, however, the application of the hermeneutic approach in qualitative

---

[121]Art Sloan and Brian Bowe, 'Phenomenology and Hermeneutic Phenomenology: The Philosophy, the Methodologies, and Using Hermeneutic Phenomenology to Investigate Lecturers' Experiences of Curriculum Design', *Quality & Quantity,* 48/3 (2014), 1291-303.p. 1296.
[122]Paul Sharkey, 'Hermeneutic Phenomenology', in Robyn Barnacle (ed.), *Phenomenology* (RMIT University Press, 2001), 16-37.p. 20
[123] Laverty, 'Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations', (p. 9.
[124] Ibid. p.10

phenomenological research that underpins the process of uncovering a range of understandings and interpretations, rather than a defined set of universal truths.

Key authors

The philosophical tradition that has come to be known as hermeneutic phenomenology has developed over the last century and is influenced by the work of Husserl, Heidegger and Gadamer. These theorists each contributed aspects to the larger field of hermeneutic phenomenology developing a range of perspectives that will be explored in this section.

HUSSERL

Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) is seen as the father of modern phenomenology. His influence in this field of philosophy, as encapsulated in his maxim 'to the things themselves', is foundational.[125] Through this approach, Husserl sought to shed fresh light on experienced phenomena by changing the method of investigation from a 'natural attitude' to one that is more reflective and aware of presuppositions. This methodological device was termed 'reduction' and involved 'bracketing out' the existence of the world and, consequently, the commonsense beliefs that exist about it.[126] This allowed for prejudices and presuppositions to be reduced and phenomena to be revealed as freely as possible, without conceptual hindrances.

Husserl argues that the 'lifeworld' is understood pre-reflectively, without the need for interpretations.[127] Grasping the essential features of a phenomenon needs to be done as freely as possible, without an individual's culture and existing knowledge impacting

---

[125] Sharkey, 'Hermeneutic Phenomenology'.p. 2.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Maura Dowling, 'From Husserl to Van Manen. A Review of Different Phenomenological Approaches', *International Journal of Nursing Studies,* 44/1 (1// 2007), 131-42.p. 2.

understanding. As Moran explains, 'Explanations are not to be imposed before the phenomena have been understood from within'.[128] Understanding the phenomenology of Husserl is based on this assertion.

Husserl attempted to describe the relationship between consciousness and experience with his approach to observing phenomena. His description of 'bracketing' preconceived notions in order to view phenomena as purely as possible underpinned his focus on the essence of a phenomenon. The essence of a phenomenon is the core meaning of an individual's experience. From these earliest theorists, the purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences of a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence, 'a grasp of the very nature of the thing'.[129] Husserl believed that the essence of a thing could be seen and felt clearly once the mind was cleared of values, beliefs and ideas.

Other foundational ideas emerging from Husserl's writing include *Anschauung*, intentionality and bracketing. *Anschauung* refers to 'looking at' a phenomenon; intentionality to the process of the mind being directed towards the object of study; and bracketing to the holding back of pre-existing ideas and beliefs.[130] By bringing together mind and object, Husserl's approach focused on the recognition of the link between human perception and reality.[131] This was a critical step in the development of transcendental phenomenology, and the movement towards an acceptance of phenomenology as a scientific method.[132]

HEIDEGGER

Building on this approach, Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), as Husserl's student, redefined phenomenology by moving closer to the core question of metaphysics – the question of

---

[128]D. Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Routledge, 2000). p. 4.
[129]Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. p. 175.
[130]Laverty, 'Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations', (pp. 4–6.
[131]Ibid.
[132]Ibid.

being. He argued phenomenological questions ultimately seek to answer questions about the meaning of being, or *Dasein*. Like Husserl, Heidegger argues in his earlier work *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* for the central importance of reduction in the phenomenological method. Heidegger's individual contribution to this field of inquiry, however, moves beyond this agreement with Husserl to uncover the deeper implications of phenomenological inquiry – *Dasein*.[133] This ontological concept of the human being sees the human person as capable of self-questioning and self-reflection and as co-constituted with the world.

Dasein is a central concept of Heidegger's work as it considers the problem raised by Husserl's focus on understanding phenomena through bracketing, and situates understanding as inextricable from personhood. For Heidegger, being includes one's standpoint and background and these are inseparable from being.

> Looking at something, understanding and conceiving it, choosing, access to it – all these ways of behaving are constitutive for our inquiry, and therefore are modes of being for those particular entities which we, the inquirers, are ourselves. Thus, to work out the question of being adequately, we must make an entity – the inquirer – transparent in his own being. The very asking of this question is an entity's mode of being; and as such it gets its essential character from what is inquired about – namely, being.[134]

Heidegger's seminal work *Being and Time* focuses on the ontological problem of phenomenology and its relationship to being. Being cannot be understood as separate from human experience in the Cartesian sense; instead, it is an *a priori* of existence. For phenomenology this is a primary point, as it determines the investigation into a phenomenon through the use of some key steps. These include dispensing with the need to maintain objectivity, but also how this lack of objectivity influences understanding. Heidegger argues that human beings have the capacity to comprehend their own existence.[135] He explains that

---

[133]Ibid.p. 7.
[134]Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978).
[135]Ibid. p. 96.

Dasein allows for making sense of being-in-the-world and raises the questions of what lived experience is.[136] In order to ask these questions, Heidegger claims that the concept *Dasein* has some pre-knowledge or pre-understanding of the answers.[137] These answers come from what is already known, or has been experienced, as beings are always in the world, sharing and interacting and influenced by the social norms in which they live.

Understanding, or *Verstehen*, is another important concept, as it links to the central idea of *Dasein*. Heidegger viewed understanding as a basic form of existence[138] and argued that human experience is hermeneutically meaningful.[139] The starting point is our pre-understanding of being, and reaching these pre-understandings and uncovering a phenomenon is a phenomenological process. The inseparability of understanding and being influenced my work throughout this research as it continually offered me opportunities to reflect on my understandings, as well as those raised by the participants.

GADAMER

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002) was a student of Heidegger and further developed phenomenology within the hermeneutic approach, focusing on language as the means by which being is understood. The relationship of language to being, understanding and existence is critical, as it is linked to our tradition, our historically effected consciousness.[140] If that is the case, coming to terms with this historicity is key to a phenomenological approach, as knowing that we are historically conditioned beings says something about our being, as well as our knowing. This is why Gadamer's approach incorporates a number of ways to understand this historicity, such as through acknowledgment of prejudices and how

---

[136]Ibid. p. 49.
[137]Ibid. p. 88.
[138]Ibid. p.186.
[139]Ibid. p. 450.
[140]Laverty, 'Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations', (p. 10.

they determine our horizons, or 'range of vision'.[141] As one of my key theorists, I explore Gadamer's work further in the next section of this chapter.

Hermeneutic phenomenology: Philosophical foundations

Hermeneutic phenomenology captures two meanings integral to my research process. Firstly, hermeneutics was the discipline that exegetes used to interpret biblical texts.[142] This expanded, through the influence of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), to encompass dialogue as well as written texts.[143] As part of the interpretivist tradition, hermeneutic phenomenology emphasises the processes of revealing meaning at the place where the question of being arises for *Dasein*.[144] According to Heidegger, and later Gadamer, it is impossible to escape one's own fore-conceptions when engaged with texts; hence, the researcher is also revealed through the research process.[145]

Secondly, phenomenology is the study of essences or meanings to Heidegger, 'the science of the being of entities'.[146] Heidegger asserts the inextricability of ontology and phenomenology, placing the primary focus of philosophy on ontology. Heidegger's fusion of hermeneutics and phenomenology was developed 'in order to clarify under what conditions understanding occurs for the purposes of ontology'.[147]

Logos And Phenomena

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger describes phenomenology as being characterised by two aspects, logos and phenomenon. Logos refers to language and to Heidegger, meaning is

---

[141]Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. p. 301.
[142]Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'Classical and Philosophical Hermeneutics', *Theory, culture & society,* 23/1 (2006), 29-56.p. 29–32.
[143]Sharkey, 'Hermeneutic Phenomenology'.p .20.
[144]Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and Human Sciences : Essays on Language, Action, and Interpretation*, trans. John B. Thompson (New York Cambridge University Press, 1981). p. 54.
[145]Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. p. 397.
[146]Heidegger, *Being and Time*.p. 61.
[147]Maura Dowling, 'Hermeneutics: An Exploration', *Nurse Researcher,* 11/4 (2004), 30.p. 32.

revealed through discourse and is 'something that can be seen through speaking'.[148] In hermeneutic phenomenology, word and meaning are inseparable. 'Phenomenon' is also defined by Heidegger as signifying 'that which shows itself in itself, the manifest. Accordingly, the *phainomena* or 'phenomena' are the totality of what lies in the light of day or can be brought to light'.[149] Phenomenology, therefore, 'focuses on explaining how the primordial thing-in-itself is 'rooted' in the events of life and understanding what is signified by logos'.[150] Language imparts meaning to the phenomenon and is the vehicle that reveals the hidden aspects of the phenomenon.

FROM PHILOSOPHY TO METHODOLOGY

What began as a philosophical approach became a research method under the influence of researchers such as Max van Manen, who developed the link between the philosophy and the practice of it in the social sciences and the humanities. Van Manen identified that, in the areas of the applied human sciences, hermeneutic phenomenology provided a methodological basis to examine lifeworlds.[151] As my area of investigation in this research involves a focus on religion and changes to how it is experienced within the framework of the post-secular, it entailed entering an aspect of the lifeworld of others. Hermeneutic phenomenology allows me to enter this world and understand how experience forms a part of being. What is unique about hermeneutic phenomenology is that the researcher is engaged in the research from the inside, so to speak, not as a dispassionate observer and so the activity of researching becomes a journey entered into and lived.[152] Furthermore, hermeneutic phenomenology acknowledges that life is rich and complex and that meaning is not limited to the formations constructed by

---

[148] Heidegger, *Being and Time*.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Paul Regan, 'Hans-Georg Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics: Concepts of Reading, Understanding and Interpretation', *Meta*, 4/2 (2012), 286-303.p. 287.
[151] Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. p. 11.
[152] Ibid. p.8

the natural sciences.[153] As this research is framed by changing religious experience and contexts, the need to explore hidden meanings through interpretation is the concern. The orientation offered by hermeneutic phenomenology facilitates this search for meaning.

Heidegger's concept of *Dasein* is critical to the hermeneutic phenomenological method, as it focuses on the question of the meaning of being.[154] *Dasein* is the notion of the self 'in its being', and is what and how we are – the essential constitution of *Dasein*.[155] For hermeneutic phenomenology this concept is crucial, as it seeks meanings beneath the human sciences in an attempt to excavate the ontological construction and thus lay bare the foundations for clarification.[156] Heidegger affirms that the meaning of being must be asserted before any ontological research takes place.[157] For Heidegger, this notion is ineluctable: 'Dasein... *is* ontological'.[158] The implications of this for the field of phenomenology are striking, as Heidegger establishes *Dasein* as key to this philosophy and implicit in any considerations. This is a break from the earlier position of Husserl regarding the relationship between subject and object, and the bracketing of one's biases in order to connect to phenomena. Heidegger moves away from Husserl's epistemological orientation in favour of the hermeneutic. As Ricœur explains, Heidegger stepped beyond *being-with* to *being-in*, so that understanding is not about duplicating our subjectivity, but is essentially about the relationship of *being-in-the-world*.[159] This shifts the realm of investigation from subject/object to existence itself, its ontological forerunner.[160] What this means for my research is that it is not so much about the subject-object relationship, as it is about my own understandings and how these influence and develop over the research process.

---

[153] Ann Holroyd, 'Interpretive Hermeneutic Phenomenology: Clarifying Understanding', *The Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology,* 7/2 (September 2007), 1-12.p. 3.
[154] Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and Human Sciences : Essays on Language, Action, and Interpretation*. p. 54.
[155] Heidegger, *Being and Time*.pp.26º28; Gadamer, *Truth and Method*.p. 257.
[156] Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and Human Sciences : Essays on Language, Action, and Interpretation*.p. 54–55.
[157] Heidegger, *Being and Time*.p. 31.
[158] Ibid. p.32.
[159] Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and Human Sciences : Essays on Language, Action, and Interpretation*. p. 56.
[160] Heidegger, *Being and Time*.p. 34.

Echoing Heidegger, Gadamer regards the understanding of texts as not limited to the field of science, but belonging to the 'human experience of the world'.[161] Texts emerge out of the world of human experience and are appropriately understood within that context. To both, it was impossible to stand outside one's history and pre-understandings. Gadamer further recognised the embeddedness of being-in-the-world within language and history, extending the philosophy of understanding through his exploration of these aspects. Knowledge does not lie outside the realms of experience and existence but is intimately tied to life experience. Understanding 'is inextricably linked with one's being-in-the-world'.[162] Even though being is limited by human finitude, this is not viewed as a constraint by Gadamer; instead, it allows humanness to be fully implicated in understanding. Interpretation moves beyond a cognitive activity or random act of assigning meaning to a 'deep and genuine engagement... open to the possibility that "something else might be the case"'.[163] Gadamer draws on Heideggerian foundations, with understanding in its fullness as constitutive and characteristic of life itself.[164] Thus, hermeneutic phenomenology supports a way of uncovering meaning through interpretation, underpinned by the philosophy of understanding. Knowledge of a phenomenon is not 'out there', waiting to be predicted or identified; instead, it is part of the complex realities that emerge through the investigator's interactions with meaning making.[165] Nor is it a predefined methodological venture, but rather a 'path of experiencing'.[166] In constructing this research using Gadamer's hermeneutic phenomenology, I have found it imperative to uncover my pre-understandings, prejudices and historical embeddedness in order to be open to something new.

---

[161] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*.p.xxi.
[162] Dowling, 'Hermeneutics: An Exploration', (p. 36.
[163] Sharkey, 'Hermeneutic Phenomenology'. p. 17.
[164] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*.p. 259.
[165] Laverty, 'Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations', (p. 13.
[166] Gadamer, in Andrzej Wiercinski, 'Hans-Georg Gadamer and the Truth of Hermeneutic Experience', *Analecta Hermeneutica,* /1 (2009), 3-14.p. 8.

The work of Gadamer further resonates with my research as he calls into question the 'intellectual control' and objectiveness of the human sciences, which tend to close off the possibility of changing understandings and knowledge.[167] Relevant to this research, it can be postulated that this is what has occurred with the secularisation theory, emerging as it did from the discipline of sociology. The widespread acceptance of the theory has allowed certain claims about religion to flourish, such as that religion is a dying phenomenon and is unsustainable in the modern age. The increasing acceptance of this theory did not account for the possibility that questions would emerge about its continued applicability, or that there existed alternative positions. Further implications are that the individual experience of religion in the modern era is ultimately a negative one. As this is the result of sociological research applying scientific methodology to the study of religion, incorporating an analysis of statistics and data, the results of such studies have often facilitated the wider acceptance of the secularisation theory. In doing this, it has denied deeper insights into the role of religion and silenced many opposing voices, until the more recent rise of post-secular discussions.

In order to challenge the long-held understandings of the secularisation theory, such as the expectation of the eventual extinction of religion, it needs to be examined through what Heidegger and Gadamer call the hermeneutic circle. Heidegger described the hermeneutic circle as the anticipated movement of fore-understanding.[168] Within this circle, understanding moves beyond the use of subjective or objective interpretations. Instead, what is offered is the interplay of movement between tradition and interpretation, allowing for a questioning of 'popular conceptions'. The hermeneutic circle allows for the possibility of an evolving understanding, one that forms and reforms as different aspects come into view. The hermeneutic circle is a place I have entered into throughout this research. It has allowed me

---

[167]Charles Taylor, 'Gadamer and the Human Sciences', in Robert Dosta (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 126-42.pp.126–28.
[168]Holroyd, 'Interpretive Hermeneutic Phenomenology: Clarifying Understanding', (p. 4.

to explore a range of perspectives, positions and interpretations, questioning often long-held understandings. To Gadamer, it is the place where we must 'understand the whole in terms of the detail and the details in terms of the whole'.[169]

From Gadamer's perspective, the knowledge and understanding of the sciences is imbued with historical finitude.[170] In his use of the hermeneutic circle, this historical finitude is overcome by openness to the discovery of different perspectives and understandings and the full realisation that understandings change. According to Gadamer, finitude is tied up in recognition of the limits of language and method, calling into question the truth-claims made by scientific methods.[171] Though he did not deny the benefits of the scientific method, hermeneutic phenomenology emerged from Gadamer's concern with the limits and reductionism of the scientific method, as a corrective that could recognise finitude.

From a phenomenological perspective, questions such as how religion is lived and experienced involve the way the world is experienced, and an understanding of what it means to be in the world.[172] In the context of this work, this means that the use of the hermeneutic phenomenological method is consistent with understanding the phenomenon of the post-secular in the context of how it is experienced. Gadamer, as one of the leading theorists of this methodology, concerns himself with 'the modes of experience that lie outside science… that cannot be verified by the methodological means proper to science'.[173] The need to explore this perspective through the use of a philosophical stance is the purpose of Gadamer's reflections in *Truth and Method*, and is an aspect that also resonated with me. I was concerned that any reflection on the topic of religion and religious experience not be limited to scientific scrutiny alone, but also allow for further reflection and interpretative possibility

---

[169] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*.p. 291.
[170] Ibid. pp. 4–5.
[171] Ibid. pp. 404, 491.
[172] Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*.p. 5.
[173] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*.p.xxii.

without limitation. [174] The purpose is thus shifted to the opening up of ideas and understanding, not to come to an objective, prescriptive result but, rather, to engage in interpretative, reflective processes that allow for genuine insights. [175] This position is underpinned primarily by Gadamer's philosophical concern with understanding. As Grondin states, 'to understand, in Gadamer's sense, is to articulate (a meaning, a feeling, an event) into words, words that are always mine, but at the same time those of what I strive to understand'. [176]

I was initially drawn to using hermeneutic phenomenology by the intersubjective manner in which the understanding of an object or question emerges. As much of the existing research in religion involves sociological methods, dependent on quantitative approaches, I was more concerned with being sensitive to the 'lived' experience of religion, which those methods are less suitable for addressing. Hermeneutic phenomenology, with its philosophical positioning, allows for this deeper interpretative stance. Additionally, I have always found my research more productive in dialogue with others; with mutual engagement a central tool of hermeneutic phenomenology, its appropriateness became more apparent to me. I decided that utilising a methodology that actively encourages this dialogue could be of great benefit to this work and could capture the changing currents that religious understandings may be undergoing. Hermeneutic phenomenology is in itself actively engaged in and continuously experienced, adding to the dimensionality of the research.

I also envisaged a dynamic engagement with subjectivity, both my own and that of those involved in the research. Subjectivity is not bracketed out, but allowed to inform and form the research itself, as it exists even before the research begins. Holroyd affirms this use of

---

[174]Ibid. p. 298.

[175]Sharkey, 'Hermeneutic Phenomenology'. pp. 16–17.

[176]Jean Grondin, 'Gadamer's Basic Understanding of Understanding', in Robert Dostal (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). p. 9.

subjective pre-understanding in the hermeneutic phenomenological method, arguing that understanding and interpretation 'can never be presuppositionless'. [177] This draws on Gadamer's discussion of fore-understanding as our entry into understanding. Understanding is always historical; 'we understand the world before we begin to think about it'. Understanding encompasses our existing perspectives and finds its basis in our historical existence. As Gadamer argues, 'the most basic of all hermeneutic preconditions remains one's own fore-understanding'.[178]

There are a number of challenges in using the hermeneutic phenomenological method, as it is understood as a philosophy rather than a methodology.[179] As a consequence, methodology is not predetermined or clearly evident on first embarking on the research.[180] In this sense each researcher creates their own methodology, allowing for a certain amount of creativity but also a corresponding uncertainty. Another challenge brought to my attention was that in the many texts I have researched on this methodology, the overwhelming majority dealt with health-related issues and educational contexts. This made me uncertain whether my choice would ultimately be a fruitful one. Nonetheless, I wanted to engage with the phenomena of religion under the influence of the post-secular, not using statistical or demographic means as is most frequently undertaken, but by moving beyond them to the essential meanings that may be harboured in post-secular notions.

Van Manen is a leading contemporary exponent of hermeneutic phenomenology, with his research situated in the area of nursing. This is exemplified in his seminal text *Researching Lived Experience.*[181] Van Manen is one of the first contemporary researchers to offer a comprehensive approach to the use of hermeneutic phenomenology as an 'engaged

---

[177] Holroyd, 'Interpretive Hermeneutic Phenomenology: Clarifying Understanding', (p. 3.
[178] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*., p. 293.
[179] Sharkey, 'Hermeneutic Phenomenology'. p. 16.
[180] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*., p 295.
[181] Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*.

philosophy'[182] and suggested six elements to reflect on and apply, as I have done in this thesis:[183]

1. The nature of lived experience.

2. Investigating experience as we live it.

3. Identifying and reflecting on essential themes.

4. The art of writing and rewriting.

5. Maintaining a strong and oriented relation to lived experience.

6. Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole.

The challenge lay in understanding how to 'uncover' rather than discover the phenomenon, while growing in the knowledge throughout this process that there may be many possible perspectives available. My perspective illuminates the research area to open up some of what may have been previously hidden, to uncover meaning and create understanding.

Ontology and epistemology in hermeneutic phenomenology

The process of engaging myself in research raises a number of issues that require discussion, particularly the questions of ontology (i.e., what is the form and nature of reality and what can be known about it)[184] and epistemology (i.e., how can the inquirer go about finding out whatever they believe can be known).[185]

ONTOLOGY

Hermeneutic phenomenology is based on Heidegger's view of the nature of reality and being-in-the-world. He erased the distinction between the individual and experience by viewing

---

[182]Narayan Kafle, 'Hermeneutic Phenomenological Research Method Simplified', *Bodhi: An Interdisciplinary Journal,* 5 (2011).p. 190.
[183]James Magrini, 'Phenomenology for Educators: Max Van Manen and "Human Science" Research', *Philosophy Scholarship,* 32 (2012). p. 4.
[184] Y. Lincoln and E. Guba in Laverty, 'Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations', (p. 12.
[185]Ibid.

them as 'co-constituting' each other and as mutually dependent.[186] The interviews for this research offer the opportunity to co-constitute understandings with others. Hermeneutic phenomenology, as an ontological position, situates understanding as 'a basic form of human existence in that understanding is not a way we know the world, but rather the way we are'.[187] The understandings that will arise in this research have the potential to offer knowledge about myself as well as the world around me.

Heidegger viewed the human person and their pre-understandings as indissoluble, determining that we cannot step outside of our historicity. In the research process, I will remain at the centre of the reflection process; my historicity is as much a part of the research as it is for the other participants in this research. As this historicity is pre-cognitive, pre-conscious and pre-understanding, it cannot be fully understood through the use of quantitative methods. Hermeneutic phenomenology, as a qualitative, method acknowledges this pre-understanding and uses it to guide the research. Gadamer further develops this and notes that this historicity plays a positive role in the search for meaning.[188]

EPISTEMOLOGY

In contrast to phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology is considered non-foundationalist, as it does not seek a valid or correct answer but looks for true meanings as they arise. Hermeneutic phenomenology is the interpretative interaction between the researcher and the texts. In contrast to how methodology is used in most research, hermeneutic phenomenological methodology is not a set of rules to follow in a linear sequence; rather, it is cyclical, personally reflective and dialectic.

---

[186]Ibid. p. 14.
[187]Ibid. p. 8.
[188]Ibid. p. 11.

Characteristics of hermeneutic phenomenology

1. All understanding is self-understanding.

In the thought of Heidegger, and as further developed by Gadamer, understanding is not something we acquire in a moment of cognition, nor are its concerns limited to the sciences. Heidegger argued that understanding was less about cognitive processes and more about the possibility of our existence.[189] For this reason, understanding cannot be approached through method; it goes deeper than that and requires an exploration of existence itself. In its fullness, understanding is '*Dasein*'s mode of being' before 'any differentiation of understanding into the various directions of... interest'.[190] Here, understanding is existential, closer to basic human experience than the ideal of the scientific method offers, as it transcends method.[191] Far beyond recognition between the knower and the known, understanding is the possibility of understanding self.[192] Gadamer insists that 'self-understanding always occurs through understanding something other than the self, and includes the unity and integrity of the other'.[193] This is fundamental to Gadamer's work, as only by seeing understanding as a human experience can I begin to appreciate how it is applied to certain kinds of meaning in my research situation.[194] This allows Gadamer's work to be appreciated as an applied approach to understanding, one that is, in a sense, more practical than Heidegger's.

As the researcher, I am not positioned autonomously outside the object of my research. Using the hermeneutic phenomenological method, I myself become a 'quasi-subject of interrogation and participation'.[195] In this respect, Gadamer was clear; examining and being aware of one's

---

[189] Grondin, 'Gadamer's Basic Understanding of Understanding'.p. 3.
[190] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*., p. 259.
[191] Wiercinski, 'Hans-Georg Gadamer and the Truth of Hermeneutic Experience', (p. 4.
[192] Grondin, 'Gadamer's Basic Understanding of Understanding'.p.3
[193] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*.p.97
[194] Grondin, 'Gadamer's Basic Understanding of Understanding'.p.4
[195] Jason Robinson, 'Practical Reasonableness, Theory, and the Science of Self-Understanding', *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms,* 13/6 (2008), 687 - 701.p. 692.

own historical finitude is not an auxiliary part of his method, it is foundational to self-understanding.

2. Understanding begins with one's own pre-understandings.

Pre-understandings, or fore-meanings, are 'the meanings or organisation of a culture that are present before we understand'.[196] Gadamer discusses how fore-meanings 'that are not borne out by the things themselves' may distract from the understanding of those things.[197] So understanding, for Gadamer, is the task of examining 'the origin and validity' of the fore-meanings we already have in our encounter with the text.[198] The implications of this are, once again, ontological. They involve an encounter and awareness of ourselves, coupled with the acceptance that meanings exist in 'fluid multiplicity'.[199] Gadamer explains that there is an expectation of meaning present due to our prior relationship with the subject matter itself.[200] Understanding is directed primarily to understand content, and secondarily to understand the other's meaning.[201] Gadamer's example of letter reading explains this further.

> On first receiving a letter we read it to understand the news therein, according to an expectation of meaning and prior relation to the writer. It is only after we discover that there may be a problem with 'peculiar opinions' or soundness that we begin to question our understanding.[202]

While it is only after initial understandings that a problem may arise, it is Gadamer's assertion that we need to be made conscious of our pre-understandings so that the awareness of our projections can assist towards revising meanings.

---

[196]Laverty, 'Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations', (p .8.
[197]Gadamer, *Truth and Method*., p. 267.
[198]Ibid.
[199]Ibid.p. 268.
[200]Ibid. p.294.
[201]Ibid.
[202]Ibid.

Related to this is Gadamer's exposition of prejudice, which is not a negative force closing off possibilities but, rather, a positive part of ourselves that allows for an opening up to further experiences of understanding.[203] If pre-understandings are what we bring to the text we are scrutinising, then these pre-understandings are bound to our historicity. As historical beings, our knowledge is situated by this position and may require revision. Gadamer hopes to rescue prejudice from its post-Enlightenment definition, as he views it as judgement rendered before all determinants of a situation have been examined.[204] Prejudice here is not necessarily a 'false judgment' but an unfounded one.[205] In the encounter with the text, these judgements can be found false or upheld, but they are always present as part of our ontological and historical consciousness. Understanding is, in fact, always at risk of misunderstanding.[206]

The problem hermeneutic phenomenology poses – in sidelining epistemology and, consequently, objectivity – for Gadamer's ontological position is that these prejudices must be dealt with. This decoupling of objectivity from knowledge raises the question of whether understandings can actually be uncovered, as prejudice is a continuous influence. Gadamer's position here attempts to move beyond the negative associations of prejudice to seeing it as a tool with which to engage with the study.[207] According to Gadamer, the only way in which these understandings can be rescued from arbitrariness or 'fancy' is the constant awareness of one's own fore-meanings and prejudices.[208]Gadamer sees these as always present as part of our historical reality, while prejudice can either facilitate or confine our understandings.

For this researcher, this has meant embarking on this research with an examination of my own pre-understandings while beginning to live the research question as central to the

---

[203]Ibid. p.270.
[204]Ibid.
[205]Ibid.
[206]Thomas A. Schwandt, 'On Understanding Understanding', *Qualitative Inquiry,* 5/4 (December 1, 1999 1999), 451-64.p.459.
[207]Laverty, 'Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations', (p. 17.
[208]Gadamer, *Truth and Method*., pp.268–69.

process of understanding itself. The examination of my prejudice is not simply one reflective moment in the entire research process, but a natural progression throughout and the catalyst that drives the search for meaning.

3. Understanding is a movement to and fro, between the world/text and the self-play.

Gadamer's reflections on play and its relationship to understanding are formed on the basis of how crucial engagement with, and response to, a phenomenon is to understanding it. He likens this engagement to the playing of a game. For the game to be played, there must be a subject playing, yet over and above this something happens while playing; the subject almost naturally engages in the play. In a sense, the player becomes 'lost' in the play.[209] The object of the play, then, is less about what one is doing and more about engagement, to the point that the line between subject and object is blurred.[210] Gadamer's view on play and its link to understanding is that the game is 'being-played-by' and is not just a 'playing with'.[211] As Sharkey notes, the outcome of genuine play is associated with 'none of the participants and all of them at the same time'.[212] This leads to the location of a 'middle space' (*Zwischen*) in which interpretation is not the result of the moment/s in which the subject interprets the text as object; rather, it is in this liminal space that common meaning is found.[213] In a way, the play surpasses the individual and the spectacle of it, and is only a part of the meaning of the whole.[214] Holroyd refers to meaning making as 'akin to a game in which a to-and-fro-movement characterises the encounter',[215] while Sharkey states that play points to the 'human capacity for engagement and responsiveness that lies at the heart of the phenomenon of

---

[209]Ibid. p. 105.
[210]Sharkey, 'Hermeneutic Phenomenology'. p. 24.
[211]Ibid. p.23.
[212]Ibid. p.24.
[213]Gadamer, *Truth and Method*., p. 292.
[214]Ibid. p.109.
[215]Holroyd, 'Interpretive Hermeneutic Phenomenology: Clarifying Understanding', (p. 4.

human understanding'. [216] So research, like play, is a dynamic encounter reliant on engagement and an awareness of the horizons that may arise.

The analogy of play relates to my research in a number of ways. First, my encounter with the object of my research – the phenomenon of the post-secular – is one in which meaning opens up in a 'playful', and hence dialogic, sense. This acknowledges that meaning is not fixed and already waiting to be discovered but instead is found in the engagement. Second, hermeneutic phenomenology seeks insights that occur in the middle space between subject and object. Hence, my interview process involves engagement between myself, the participants and their texts to uncover ongoing meanings arising from their reflections on religion in Australia and the post-secular phenomenon. Third, my role as researcher is productive when I am immersed in the process of research, not as subject viewing object, but fostered by hermeneutic phenomenology, a way-of-being-in the research.

4. Understanding is historically and culturally shaped – horizons.

Understanding is produced through encounter and interaction with others. This is explored through Gadamer's concept of horizons. Gadamer examines the concept of the horizon as marking the limit of what can be understood from our own particular position as an historical being in an historical context.[217] Hermeneutics requires an entering into other horizons of the text or life expression for the purposes of understanding. This does not mean that in transporting ourselves into another historical horizon and then reconstructing it we achieve understanding. Instead, we transport *ourselves* in the fullness of what this means, while not suspending or escaping our own horizon. Gadamer emphatically states that it is not possible

---

[216]Sharkey, 'Hermeneutic Phenomenology'. p. 23.
[217]Gadamer, *Truth and Method*., p. 302.

to disregard our own horizon.[218] He notes how horizons are never fixed points, or bounded positions; instead, they move with us. Gadamer claims that to see history as tethered to a horizon separate from our own is a mistake that separates us from our own historical consciousness and our awareness of how this determines understandings.

If an examination of the past is required, it must be acknowledged that we are implicated with it and that simply 'putting ourselves into someone else's shoes' will not be sufficient.[219] On the contrary, Gadamer notes that a *fusion* of horizons opens up understandings of value to those involved. The encounter that occurs here creates something new and valuable, not based on restating original understandings but on producing new dialogue on the phenomenon. Gadamer uses horizons to assist the range of what can be seen, through such exercises as looking beyond what is close at hand, to see it as part of a whole. Although this appears to be an idealistic vision, Gadamer's approach to understanding offers cautious reminders that our own position and that of the text are linked in a historical relationship. These interactions produce understandings that are genuine insights, shared by the researcher and the research partners.[220]

5. Understanding often arises from negative situations and experiences, requiring openness.

Gadamer writes of a hermeneutically trained consciousness, indicating the need for a certain posture towards the text. It is not a matter of accidental meanings to be found in the text; rather, the researcher needs to be prepared for the text to tell them something.[221] The researcher does not rely on their fore-meanings but requires a certain sensitivity, which is

---

[218]Ibid. p.305.
[219]Ibid. pp.303–05.
[220]Sharkey, 'Hermeneutic Phenomenology'.p. 28.
[221]Gadamer, *Truth and Method*., p. 269.

neither neutrality nor a distancing of the self. The text needs to be presented in its otherness.[222] This otherness is found not only in the text but in the experiences and people that may be encountered. Hermeneutic phenomenology requires a particular openness to this otherness. In order to find meaning, a researcher needs to hear what is being said, as meaning is not found in an arbitrary way. Gadamer notes that we must:

> remain open to the meaning of the other person or text. But this openness always includes our situating the other meaning in relation to the whole of our own meanings or ourselves in relation to it. Now, the fact is that meanings represent a fluid multiplicity of possibilities...and of what a reader can find meaningful and hence expect to find.[223]

For this to occur, the hermeneutic experience must be an open process, with the experience fulfilled in openness to new experience.[224] The person who is experienced is not characterised by the quantity of experience but by this openness.[225] If the experience runs counter to expectations, and is possibly a negative one, this is a necessary part of the search for meaning. When understanding occurs involving the other, this is an event that transforms the way we see ourselves and the other.[226] In fact, we change our mind.

6. Understanding is a participation in meaning through language.

Gadamer's emphasis on language is reinforced throughout *Truth and Method*. For him, being is understood through language.[227] His dictum 'Being that can be understood is language' is fundamental here. Additionally, phenomena have a language and it is in the relationship with beings that interpretation of meanings occurs. So language holds two significations: one of the ontological, the other of being.[228] For Gadamer, being's relationship to the world is verbal, and thereby universally understandable. This underpins his position that hermeneutics

---

[222]Ibid.
[223]Ibid. pp. 268–69.
[224]Wiercinski, 'Hans-Georg Gadamer and the Truth of Hermeneutic Experience', (p. 6.
[225]Ibid. p. 7.
[226]Ibid.
[227]Gadamer, *Truth and Method*., p. 474.
[228]Ibid.p.475.

has a fundamental basis in philosophy over and above that of a methodology.[229] If it is the common experience of being that we seek to understand and experience through language, it is entirely understandable that language is intrinsic to meaning and interpretation. Nonetheless Gadamer is not a linguist; he is a philosopher who views language as the conduit to reality, as language mediates our experiences and understandings of reality. This is why hermeneutic phenomenology is so centred on dialogue. As it is concerned with avoiding fixing meanings in history, Gadamer's preoccupation with language and meaning seeks to condition understanding as a continuous dialogue and new possibilities.[230] According to Wiercinski, Gadamer's exploration of language highlights that 'hermeneutic truth is a matter of mutual agreement between partners engaged in dialogue and seeking common understanding'.[231]

Hermeneutic phenomenology – questions

Linda Finlay poses six questions relevant to a researcher when contemplating the use of phenomenology.

> (1) How tightly or loosely should we define what counts as phenomenology? (2) Should we always aim to produce a general (normative) description of the phenomenon or is idiographic analysis a legitimate aim? (3) To what extent should interpretation be involved in our descriptions? (4) Should we set aside or bring to the foreground researcher subjectivity? (5) Should phenomenology be more science than art? (6) Is phenomenology a modernist or postmodernist project, or neither?[232]

More specifically, when considering hermeneutic phenomenology as my methodology, these questions challenged me to reflect on possible answers.

---

[229]Ibid.p.476.
[230]Wiercinski, 'Hans-Georg Gadamer and the Truth of Hermeneutic Experience', (pp. 9–11.
[231]Ibid. p.11.
[232]Linda Finlay, 'Debating Phenomenological Research Methods', *Phenomenology and Practice,* 3 (2009), 19.p. 7.

First, in terms of defining hermeneutic phenomenology, there is a consensus in the literature that it is concerned with uncovering human experience and achieving understanding.[233] At its most basic level, it seeks to both understand and interpret human experience via on ongoing historical process of dialogue. According to van Manen, '[p]henomenology becomes hermeneutical when its method is taken to be interpretative (rather than purely descriptive as in transcendental phenomenology)'.[234] According to Crotty, this type of research must be grounded in its philosophical roots. Without this grounding, it is not truly phenomenological in nature.[235]

Second, both a description and an idiographic analysis are possibilities. I aim, in fact, at uncovering some underpinning principles, but also at finding out whether more unique insights could be revealed. On embarking on this research, this question was not an either/or one.

In relation to the second question, my response was clear: this work is about interpretation. It is interpretation that my research worked towards and the interviews facilitated this process. As Finlay notes, '[i]nterpretation is not an additional procedure: it constitutes an inevitable and basic structure of our "being-in-the-world". We experience a thing as something that has already been interpreted'.[236] Coupled with this, subjectivity was foregrounded for this approach and central to my use of hermeneutic phenomenology.

As to the question of the approach to hermeneutic phenomenology as a science or art, I saw these as intertwined – again, not an either/or response. Hermeneutic phenomenology is critiqued for not being as rigorous as some quantitative methods, but for the purpose of my

---

[233]Ibid.
[234]Max Van Manen, 'Phenomenology Online', <http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/inquiry/orientations-in-phenomenology/hermeneutical-phenomenology/>
[235]Michael Crotty, 'Doing Phenomenology', in Peter Willis and Bernie Neville (eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice in Adult Education* (Victoria: David Lovell Publishing, 1996), 272-82.
[236]Finlay, 'Debating Phenomenological Research Methods', (p. 11.

research, which inherently focuses on the study human experience, I opted for the use a qualitative approach as I regarded it as more appropriate to uncovering the possible depths of such experience. This is something for which quantitative and strictly scientific approaches are of limited value.

The question of this research as modern or postmodern in origin is again a salient question. For me, it holds elements of both epochs but fails to sit neatly in either. This answer to this question is also very reliant on how modern and postmodern are defined. To assist my research process, I decided to follow Finlay's description of hermeneutic phenomenology as sitting 'beyond the modernist–postmodernist divide'.[237] In a similar fashion, Gendlin asserts that hermeneutic phenomenology is able to 'go beyond the lines drawn by both modernism and postmodernism, embracing both and neither'.[238]

Conclusion

Phenomenology is a school of philosophy that arose in the European context and has now gained popularity worldwide. It has had a significant influence on how we perceive phenomena and continues to evolve and develop further applications. It is now used across disciplines including education, science and health, where it assists in gaining intimate perspectives on a range of topics. Hermeneutic phenomenology, as a branch of this, assists in this interdisciplinary approach, as it allows engagement with a phenomenon as a central concern. For me, this engagement is the chief strength of this philosophical and methodological approach, bringing a strong focus to the topic of the research and allowing me as the researcher to discover unique perspectives.

---

[237]Ibid. p. 17.
[238]Gendlin in ibid. p. 17.

The phenomenological approach that informs this research requires the researcher to engage with its philosophical framework in order to search for meaning in the text or life expression that is at the heart of the research. The tradition of phenomenological research originally conceived by Husserl has been significantly influenced by Heidegger and, later, Gadamer. The focus on the phenomenon, which Husserl expressed through his maxim 'to the things themselves', also drove the work of both Heidegger and Gadamer. Husserl was interested in remaining focused on understanding phenomena and bracketing one's own biases to attain proper understanding of the phenomena. Heidegger emphasised ontological issues as signified by the concept *Dasein*, 'the situated meaning of a human in the world', concerning himself with how the individual is implicated in the entire search for meaning. Heidegger then brought together philosophy, phenomenology and ontology, redirecting the relationship to the object of study. The development of *Dasein* moves beyond the subject–object paradigm used in many research techniques to a retrieval of what it means to be human, a concern often neglected in post-Cartesian research. *Dasein* assumes that the world and the human person are co-constituted and that this unity is inseparable. Later, Gadamer's exposition of the processes of understanding built on the centrality of *Dasein* and moved further towards a clarification of the conditions under which understanding takes place.

Gadamer's concern is what happens to us 'over and above our wanting and doing'. For me, this concept is central, as each characteristic of hermeneutic phenomenology draws me closer to a new understanding of myself as the post-secular self I am seeking. As according to this method, 'all understanding is self-understanding', I stand to gain a unique insight into myself as the post-secular self. This has become a growing realisation for me.

Chapter 3. The Secular Age

In this chapter, I outline the literature underpinning the key concepts associated with the phenomena to be interpreted in this research: the secular, secularisation theory and the post-secular. I investigate the complexity of these notions, particularly in light of contemporary academic debate. My research question – what is the nature and extent of post-secular changes in Australia, requires me to investigate the historical and contemporary development of the post-secular as a theoretical concept, as well as how it has emerged primarily from sociological and political contexts. The post-secular expresses the relationship between the secular and religion, hence my inclusion of these topics in this section. Before I discuss the relevant literature in this section I begin with a working definition of secular, de-secularisation and post-secular to establish the contextual framework of the associated literature.

<u>Working definitions of key terms</u>

I draw on the work of Taylor[239] to define the secular not only as the demarcation of public spaces into religious and non-religious sectors, but also as:

- The decline of religious belief that impacts both the public world and private life of individuals

- the categorisation of religion and spirituality as separate and even oppositional entities

- the development of the master narrative of the secular that has positioned it as a powerful and ongoing presence resulting in the eventual extinction of religion.

The post-secular is characterised by its critical response to the secular and is defined by[240]:

---

[239] Taylor, *A Secular Age*.

- a multi-religious society in which the presence and vibrancy of religion in the public sphere is a significant challenge to the mainstream narrative of the secular.

- Religion as a significant aspect of individual's lives as well as being important to both sacred and civic ritual.

- Religion as both connected to mainstream historical traditions, and as an evolving and dialogic process finding new ways to connect to people's lives through spiritual practices and experiences.

- The secular remaining present and coexisting alongside religion, with this interplay and tension creating the post-secular.

In contrast to post-secular, de-secularisation refers to religious resurgence and the interplay between secularising and counter secularising forces.[241] For Berger the return of religion can be understood as a direct response to the secularisation thesis and in opposition to the secular. For the post-secular the meaning is more complex and involves the mutual relationship between modernity and the secular.[242] It also becomes apparent that the differences in the meanings of the post-secular were heavily influenced by the background of the theorist.

Both the *post*-secular and *de*-secularisation point to a significant change in understandings of the secular. The post-secular indicates a movement forward as an ongoing and evolving process. In contrast, de-secularisation refers to religious resurgence and the reversal of secular forces within society.

---

[240] K. Stoeckl and M. Rosati, *Multiple Modernities and Postsecular Societies* (Taylor & Francis, 2012). p. 3-6.
[241] Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World : Resurgent Religion and World Politics*. p. 2.
[242] M. Rosati, *The Making of a Postsecular Society: A Durkheimian Approach to Memory, Pluralism and Religion in Turkey* (Taylor & Francis, 2016).

The secular

Jose Casanova argues that 'any discussion of the secular has to begin with the recognition that it emerged first as a theological category of Western Christendom that has no equivalent in other religious traditions'.[243] The English word 'secular' is derived from the Latin *saecularis* or *saeculum* and was used in the medieval period to refer to people, activities or a period of time considered to be limited and worldly or non-religious. For example, ordinary diocesan priests who did not belong to a religious order were said to be secular priests, and festivals that were not explicitly religious were termed *saecularia*.[244] Later, in the Enlightenment period, the term secular came to signify

> the dyad, religious/secular, that served to structure the entire spatial and temporal reality of medieval Christendom into a binary system of classification separating two worlds, the religious-spiritual-sacred world of salvation and the secular-temporal-profane world.[245]

In sociological theory, understandings of the secular have been influenced by the work of Weber, Durkheim and Marx, who used the term to refer to the process by which religion is separated and kept separate from the discourse and practices of the public life of a nation-state.[246] This then gave rise to the theory of 'secularisation', in which decreasing religious affiliation, and then attendance, was interpreted as a sign that religion was slowly disappearing from industrial and post-industrial societies.[247] Bremer argues that 'secularisation' emerged in sixteenth century France and is 'the transfer of goods from the possession of the Church into that of the world', further developing into the understanding widely known today.[248]

---

[243]José Casanova, 'The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms', in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Rethinking Secularism* (New York: Oxford, 2011).p. 56.
[244]Leo F. Stelten, *Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Latin*, p. 236.
[245]Casanova, 'The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms'.p. 56.
[246]John Rex, 'Secular Substitutes for Religion in the Modern World', *The Politics and Religion Journal,* /1 (2017-01-15 2017), 3-10. p. 3-4.
[247]Casanova, 'The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms'. p. 54-55.
[248]Jan N. Bremmer, 'Secularization

Secular, secularisation and secularism

Casanova provides a discussion of the distinction between the secular, secularisation and secularism as follows. First, the secular refers to a set of realities differentiated from the religious. Second, secularisation represents the 'empirical-historical patterns of transformation and differentiation' in the religious and secular fields. These social transformations aggregate into a theory of secularisation and the process of the decline of religion. Third, to Casanova, secularism refers to both a principle of statecraft and an ideology.[249] Casanova argues that secularism may alternatively be understood as an

> epistemic knowledge regime elaborated into philosophies of history and normative-ideological state projects, into projects of modernity and cultural programs. Or, alternatively, it may be viewed as an epistemic knowledge regime that may be unreflexively held and phenomenologically assumed as the taken-for-granted normal structure of modern reality, as a modern doxa or as an 'unthought'.[250]

Calhoun et al. also distinguish between secular terms, that is, between 'processes of "secularisation", the practices of "the secular" and the political ethic of "secularism"'.[251] Additionally, Calhoun et al. argue that the link between secularism and modernisation has become a 'model of secular modernization that many newly emerged non-Western nations attempted to emulate in the latter half of the nineteenth century'.[252] They further explore the critical link between religion and the secular:

> On the one hand, the Enlightenment image of the triumph of the secular over religion required a clear notion of the "religion" that was being contained; on the other hand, it required a definition of the secular order that was assumed to be succeeding it.[253]

Notes toward a Genealogy', *Religion: Beyond a Concept* (Fordham University Press, 2008), 432-37.p. 433.

[249]Casanova, 'The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms'.

[250]Ibid. p. 1051.

[251]C. Calhoun, M. Juergensmeyer, and J. Vanantwerpen, *Rethinking Secularism* (OUP USA, 2011). p. 3.

[252]Ibid. p. 6.

[253]Ibid.

From Calhoun's discussion it can be understood that the secular, secularisation and secularism have affected religion in complex and lasting ways, shaping political and social contexts as well as individual beliefs. Critically, Jürgen Habermas has shifted the discussion of contemporary religion and its relationship with the secular by speaking of the importance of secular society and the rethinking its relationship to religion. Habermas envisions this in a way that moves beyond perceptions informed by situating religion as a relic of the past, and instead actively re-engaging with religious understandings in public life.[254]

Much of the existing relationship between secular society and religion is underpinned by notions that depict religion in reference to such concepts as outmoded ritual, tradition and belief. This situates religion as an antiquated adherence to prescribed principles and practices, without adequate reference to the many groups and individuals globally who continue to seek fulfilment through religion and its soteriological or therapeutic promises.[255] This perspective positioned the secular as an alternative worldview to religion, offering an optimistic view of secular progress in its place. In this way, secularisation assisted in separating religion from public life; as William Connolly argues, it is seen as functioning to 'chasten' religion and relegate it to the private sphere.[256]

Much of the recent research into religion has taken place in the field of sociology and situates religious participation as being on the decline, which statistical measurements of religious affiliation verify.[257] This decline would appear to confirm the effect secularisation has had on religion, suggesting that the secular influence on religion is a 'zero-sum game' leading to the eventual extinction of religion.[258] It has also separated religion into a 'discrete category of

---

[254]Jurgen Habermas, 'Faith and Knowledge', (2001).October 14, 2001 Peace Prize Speech.
[255]Taylor, *A Secular Age*., p. 429.
[256]Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist*.p. 4.
[257]Habermas, 'Notes on Post-Secular Society', (p. 19.
[258]Habermas, 'Faith and Knowledge'.

human activity', a separation that, according to William Cavanaugh, is without historical precedent.[259]

From the above discussion, it clear that there are layers of meaning to the secular, as the related terms secularisation and secularism indicate, making it necessary to discuss these meanings and the development of this term. John Caputo investigates how the term secular has come to be recast as indicative of the absence of religion.[260] As both the secular and religion are implicated in this search for meaning, they have inherited broader connotations, with religion now viewed as a standalone category in opposition to the secular. Caputo concludes that the contemporary use of secular is completely alien to its original context, which was 'someone who was not a member of a monastic order'.[261]

Likewise, the term religion was originally used to describe the active practice of religion, rather than the separated institutional presence referred to in current terminology.[262] These changes show the imprecision that stands at the heart of contemporary discussions on religion, which fail to acknowledge the historical complexities involved and refer to religion without exploring the experiences of individual adherents.[263] That these two words have come to mean something different from their original content tells us something of the nature of changes to society over this time; it is an indication of the rise of secularisation and the relegation of religion to the private sphere. Despite this change, however, religion and the secular remain bound together. As Talal Asad notes, the link between religion and the secular is strong, as the concept of religion is now bound to its 'Siamese twin, secularism'.[264]

---

[259]William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).p. 61ff.
[260] Caputo, *On Religion*. p. 47
[261]Ibid. p. 43.
[262]Ibid.
[263]Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution : The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality*.p. 122.
[264]Talal Asad, 'Reading a Modern Classic: W. C. Smith's "the Meaning and End of Religion"', *History of Religions,* 40/3 (2001), 205-22.p. 221.

Charles Taylor's epic *A Secular Age* tackles many of the questions underpinning discussions of the secular, teasing out the complex definitions, characteristics and issues that arise. In particular, his threefold explication of the secular is a useful way to view this topic. This is summarised by Bellah as follows:[265]

- Secularity 1: the expulsion of religion from sphere after sphere of public life.

- Secularity 2: the decline of religious belief and practice.

- Secularity 3: 'the conditions of experience of and search for the spiritual' that make it possible to speak of ours as a 'secular age'.

Bellah points out that '[m]any excellent books have been written on these two aspects of secularisation. But Taylor's focus in this book is on the third type of secularity'.[266]

From secular to secularisation

Berger suggests that, historically, the move towards secularisation began centuries ago, with its roots in ancient Israel and the ascendency of Israel over other local, pagan, kingdoms.[267] Taylor concurs, arguing the critical break from paganism by Israel signals a profound discontinuity that parallels the rise of a 'demythologised' worldview.[268] Israel broke away from a world in which sacred and supernatural powers pervaded all aspects of life, to one in which these powers are more selectively managed and positioned. In the light of this growing divide between the sacred and the profane, two historical movements are contained in secularisation: first, one that defined the relationship of the secular to religion by ensuring religions confinement and, second, its antecedent, that determined the level of engagement between religious and pagan society.

---

[265]Robert Bellah, Secularism of a New Kind, Social Science Research Council, 'The Immanent Frame', <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/>, accessed 18 March 2013
[266]Ibid.
[267]Berger, *The Sacred Canopy : Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*.p.113–17.
[268]Taylor, *A Secular Age*., p. 74

This level of engagement is explored in the writings of Augustine from the fourth and fifth centuries, notably *City of God*. His position on the secular indicates his interest in the intersection between the human and divine. Augustine was concerned with how believers and non-believers alike engage with one another and how, as a society, they relate to God. His writings also indicate that the secular and religion were not discrete categories at the time, nor were they set in opposition to each other. Sacred and secular originated in God's creation of the world, so Augustine viewed them as intimately bound together. [269] According to Augustine, the secular is not a disinterested attitude towards religion as more recent understandings assert. Nor is it a program of reform, similar to those instituted throughout European history to make-over society so that it conforms to certain values.[270] Augustine's support of secular rule was based on his understanding of the gap that exists between the heavenly and earthly city. [271] According to Augustine, the secular and the sacred exist concurrently and engagement between the two was not to be avoided. It also speaks to the fact that the world cannot be viewed as if in past times 'all was religious'. [272] Secular understandings have coexisted throughout history with religion, and both helped to regulate human affairs in a way that sought to enable social harmony.[273] This highlights Augustine's understanding of the coexistence of earthly authority and humanity alongside the heavenly, not in an oppositional sense, but in a cooperative one.

A further precursor to the more recent legitimisation of the divide between religion and the secular can be recognised in the influence of the Reformation.[274]Berger argues, the Protestant Reformation altered the relationship between God and humanity, restructuring the

---

[269]Robert Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).pp. 9º10.
[270]Taylor, *A Secular Age*., p. 242.
[271]Ibid. p. 243.
[272]Noah Feldman, 'Religion and the Earthly City', *Social Research,* 76/4 (2009 Winter 2009), 989+.p. 991.
[273]Ibid. pp. 990–91.
[274]Taylor, *A Secular Age*., p. 77.

relationship between the sacred and the secular.[275] The Protestant shedding of the Catholic vision of the human person led to an emphasis on a fallen humanity and fallen world and, consequently, 'shrinkage in the scope of the sacred in reality'.[276] As all human persons were equally incapacitated before God, which the abolition of certain religious vocations attested, it fell to the individual to throw themselves upon God's mercy and seek inner transformation. This could not be vitiated through human actions, but was solely dependent on grace.[277] Alongside this, the notion of a civil society outside the seemingly corrupt influence of the Church grew and positioned the secular as an antidote to the over-enthusiasm often displayed by religious power.[278]

The particular effects of this reform movement unfolded over an extended period of time, but one trajectory of interest is the inner transformation and disposition necessary for the individual to be confident in God's grace, with this requiring a disciplined and ordered existence. The drive towards organising both the individual and society under the rubrics of reform further defined this time of great change, with the implications affecting both believers and non-believers.[279] Taylor notes that this became an indicator of the translation of the secular from its previously religious context to the humanistic sphere. Attached to this concept is the deeper issue, also noted by Taylor, that the presence of the secular came to mean a decline in religion. Taylor suggests this falsified a link between disenchantment and the decline of religion, meaning that secularisation always means a decline in faith.[280]As this link between secularisation and religious decline was so widely accepted, what was formerly an active engagement between the secular and religion was gradually displaced by an

---

[275]Berger, *The Sacred Canopy : Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. p. 112.
[276]Ibid. p. 111
[277]Taylor, *A Secular Age*., p. 79.
[278]Ibid. pp. 397–98.
[279]Ibid. pp. 85-86.
[280]Ibid. pp. 427–28.

evolving attitude towards devotion and faith, one in which belief is relegated to the private concern of the individual.

Taylor explains that, far from diminishing religion, this gradually widened the conditions of belief, signifying a proliferation of belief systems, including self-sufficient humanism.[281] Taylor recognises that secular worldviews emerged from, and developed in, religious contexts, particularly in the time before the Reformation, but he sees their purpose as not necessarily to limit the influence of religion. Rather, their purpose was to assist in maintaining dialogue between religious and nonreligious contexts. The radical change that saw secularisation excluding religion, instead of engaging with it, came with the rise of the disenchanted worldview and the impetus towards modernisation, where it found its legitimation.[282] The effects of this, though profound, opened the door for explorations of religious experience and belief previously uncharted.

Secularisation is often viewed as a modern phenomenon. Jose Casanova's discussion in 'The Secular and Secularisms', in which he explores manifestations of the secular as historical moments and events, is representative of this perspective. These manifestations include the separation of church and state, the public/private divide and the establishment of nation-states, alongside other noted institutional structures.[283] These events span the last few hundred years and have emerged in different forms in different places, but are often recognised as the key characteristics of secular societies.[284] This preoccupation with more general and external renderings of secularisation positions it as an innocuous process and function of governance, largely dictating the relationship of citizens to the state while confining religious influence to the private sphere.

---

[281]Ibid. pp. 18, 20–21.
[282]Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World : Resurgent Religion and World Politics*. p. 3.
[283]Jose Casanova, 'The Secular and Secularisms. (Part 1: Origins of the Secular)', *Social Research,* 76.4/Winter (2009), 1049-67.pp. 1049–67.
[284] Grace Davie, 'Europe: The exception that proves the rule?' in Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World : Resurgent Religion and World Politics*.p. 74.

Secularisation under these terms is a paradigm designed to minimise the influence of religion in the public sphere. More importantly, secular worldviews, stripped as they are of religion, are seen by some as the apex of a progressive and enlightened society. As such, outmoded religious beliefs are discarded through a concomitant demystification and problematisation of religion.[285] Nonetheless, for the purposes of this research secularisation does not just refer to this institutional divide between public and private belief, but to the changes to the human person, or what Taylor refers to as the 'transformation of human beings', under its influence.[286] Secularisation is not just limited to geographical or organisational spaces but is an internalised process affecting individuals and their beliefs.[287]

The secular self

Emerging from the secularisation thesis, Taylor views the secular self as pivotal to an understanding of the secular age. For Taylor, the secular self refers to the reconfiguration of the human person in what he describes as the 'recreation of human identity'.[288] In order for the secular project to succeed, the human person needed to be reinvented as a 'disengaged, objectifying subject'.[289] For Berger, this meant that modernity fostered individuals who see the world without recourse to religion.[290] The secular self-proposed a self-fashioning model, a mature individual who has the capacity to face reality.[291] Believers then became subject to their belief as informed and motivated by feeling and subjectivity, associated with childish immaturity and illusion. Religion was no longer designated a rational and legitimate desire of believers, but was set in opposition to the coming of age embodied by the secular self.

---

[285]Taylor, *A Secular Age*., p. 363.
[286]Ibid. p. 430.
[287]Feldman, 'Religion and the Earthly City', (p. 989.
[288]Taylor, *A Secular Age*., p. 560.
[289]Ibid. p. 560; Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1989).pp. 462–63.
[290]Berger, *The Sacred Canopy : Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*.pp. 107–08.
[291] Charles Hirschkind, 'Is There a Secular Body?', (26: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 633-47. p. 639.

The secular mantra is that religion is an individual concern that, once relegated to the private sphere, becomes impotent in public arenas, unless those beliefs can be translated into 'secular terms'. This ignores the connection that exists between individuals and religion as, according to Bellah, 'religion retains its unique capacity for reflection on the social whole', with the awareness that this 'reflection' can take the form of public activity directed, and participated in, by private religious selves who in and through these processes manifest their belief in public ways.[292] This has proved to be a secular blind spot, as the so-called demise of religion did not occur.[293] Suggesting that, in order for the secular project to succeed, the human person needed to be reinvented as a 'disengaged' subject oversimplifies the complex processes and interactions in which humans are involved.[294]

Throughout *A Secular Age*, Taylor illuminates a number of these changes with Casanova describing this aspect of Taylor's work as 'the emergence of the self'.[295] Taylor's previous work, *Sources of the Self*, provides further understanding of the development of the secular self as 'stifling the response in us to some of the deepest and most powerful spiritual aspirations that humans have conceived'.[296] According to Taylor, the atomistic view of the human person that secular influence promotes isolates the self from wider relational sources and meanings valuable and necessary for human existence and flourishing.

This research acknowledges that the processes of secularisation have resulted in social and cultural changes, but what is more pivotal and central to this development are changes to the understanding of the nature of the human person. The secular is not a neutral position on the human person, as claimed; rather, it can be seen to operate as a critique of prior accounts of human persons. Regardless of the secular advocacy of neutral social and public spaces, at its

[292]Bellah quoted in John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006). p. 130.
[293]Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist*., p. 4.
[294]Berger, *The Sacred Canopy : Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. pp. 107–08.
[295]Jose Casanova, *Secularization* (2008) (Miroslav Volf interviews Jose Casanova at Yale University, 3 November 2008).
[296]Taylor, *Sources of the Self*., p. 520.

heart is a normative position on the human person, which is a denial of the 'basic structure of being a human person'.[297] The resultant increasing divide between humanity and God that secular influence upholds is evident in pronounced changes towards the human person within scientific, theological, philosophical and other fields of human endeavour. The secular vision that heralded this rift offers an alternate reality of the human person. The secularisation theory plays a large part in this, as it formulated an approach to religion reflected in changes to the self that occur under its influence.

The secularisation theory

The secularisation theory was proposed in the 1960s and supported by a number of well-known academics of the time, including Peter Berger in his 1967 publication *The Sacred Canopy*. It built on the work of Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, among other founding fathers of modern sociology, while also galvanising the ideas on secularisation that were then in circulation. It emerged largely from an investigation into the European situation,[298] where the theory gained momentum during the decolonisation process in former European colonies. There was an assumption that as former colonies modernised their economies and societies, they would have become secular. The driving force of this theory proposed that modernisation impacts religion on a number of fronts including:

  a. religion would become a private and individual concern and, thus, the social significance of religion would decline;[299]

  b. modernity is locked in a battle with religion, and modernity will eventually win;[300]

  c. religion will become implausible and lose credibility;[301] and, for some theorists

[297]Caputo, *On Religion.*, p. 9.
[298] Rick Phillips, 'Can *rising* rates of church participation be a consequence of secularization?' *Sociology of Religion,* 65/2 (2004), p. 140.
[299]Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, p. 147.
[300]Ibid. pp. 131–32.
[301]Ibid. pp. 127, 151.

d. an evolutionary approach towards religion involving its eventual extinction[302] (also known as 'the disappearance thesis').[303]

Modernity in this discussion refers to Taylor's definition of it as a

> historically unprecedented amalgam of new practices and institutional forms (science, technology, industrial production urbanization), of new ways of living (individualism, secularization, instrumental rationality); and of new forms of malaise (alienation, meaninglessness, a sense of impending social dissolution).[304]

Under the umbrella of modernity, secularisation is considered by Taylor as a background paradigm[305] that takes shape alongside the emergence of a new moral order; modernisation and secularisation can be seen as 'socially shared ways in which social spaces are imagined'.[306] The secularisation theory rests on the understanding that society is transformed both in the public and private sphere under the overwhelming influence of modernity.

The secularisation theory remains influential and has been referred to as a self-fulfilling prophecy.[307] Regardless of this, numerous denials of its relevance and even doubts about its validity have begun to surface.[308] There are a number of contemporary supporters of the orthodox theory of secularisation, such as Bruce and his prediction of the demise of Christianity in Britain.[309] However, the following comment from Taylor encapsulates the ambivalence that often signifies this field of study: '"modernity" (in some sense) tends to repress or reduce "religion" (in some sense)'.[310] His comment calls into question the

---

[302] Anthony Wallace, *Religion: An Anthropological View* (New York NY: Random House, 1966), pp. 264–65.

[303] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 433.

[304] C. Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Duke University Press, 2004). p. 1.

[305] H.J. Prosman, *The Postmodern Condition and the Meaning of Secularity: A Study on the Religious Dynamics of Postmodernity* (Ars Disputandi, 2011). p. 39.

[306] Charles Taylor, 'Modes of Secularism', in Rajeev Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and Its Critics* (New Dehli: Oxford University Press, 1998). p. 38.

[307] Jose Casanova, 'Beyond European and American exceptionalisms', in G. Davie, P. Heelas & L. Woodhead (eds.) *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures* (London UK: Ashgate), p. 24.

[308] Steve Bruce, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West* (Melbourne Vic: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), p. 39.

[309] Steve Bruce, 'The Demise of Christianity in Britain', in G. Davie, P. Heelas & L. Woodhead (eds.) *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures* (London UK: Ashgate, 2003), p. 62.

[310] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 429.

remarkable acceptance of the secularisation theory, which often occurred without adequate acknowledgment of the scope and variation of religious movements that continued to emerge and grow during its influence. Nevertheless, many have reconsidered their position and moved to modified, alternative and counter-models of the theory, such as the neosecular and post-secular. The most prominent is that of Peter Berger himself which I discuss in the following section.

Questioning the secularisation theory

The theories that characterise modernity as a process of secularisation can no longer provide sufficient understanding of social change. Modernity and secularity have, no doubt, intersected but this research will indicate that this has not resulted in the much-touted trajectory of the diminishing of religion. Instead, religion responded in ways that the secularisation theory did not envisage. Again, Berger is one representative of this change in view and is discussed below.[311] Taylor himself offers a modified picture of the theory, stating that there have been effects caused by industrialisation and other modern phenomena. Incidentally, the prediction of the future death of religion predates the secularisation theory's emergence in the 1960s, as well as the modernisation theories with which it is more often associated.[312] Even so, religions have proven resilient, with both changes to existing forms and new forms arising.[313]

Recent literature raises a number of objections to the secularisation theory; these are outlined below. Bruce's perspective is of particular interest, in that he declares that 'there is no one secularisation theory. Rather, there are clusters of descriptions and explanations that cohere

---

[311]Berger, 'TheDesecularization of the World', pp. 1–18.
[312] Rodney Stark, 'Secularization, R.I.P.', *Sociology of Religion*, 60/3 (1999), pp. 249–51.
[313]Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 436.

reasonably well'.[314] This obscures the intentions of a number of theorists whose objective was to dissolve religion by providing a singular and representative model of secularisation, not just to add a layer to an already existing theory.

De-secularisation

In the 1999 publication, *The Desecularization of the World,* Peter Berger returns to the theory that he contributed to developing. Employing the term de-secularisation to denote manifestations of worldwide resurgence of religion, Berger is one of the foremost recent objectors to the secularisation theory. Berger points to mistakes of the secularisation theory, including the secular cornerstone - that modernisation leads to a decline in religion.[315] He argues that the world is as religious as ever, and the idea that religions have had to adapt to survive modernity is false. Berger cites two examples, Islamic and Evangelical movements, as thriving despite modernity's perceived impact, and their non-adaption.[316]

For Berger, de-secularisation refers to religious resurgence and the interplay between secularising and counter secularizing forces.[317] From his sociological perspective the reentrance of religion into public discourse, and as a subject of sociological research is important. Berger notes two exceptions to de-secularisation, Western Europe and Western-style higher education institutions.[318] Despite these exceptions he predicted that the world of the twenty first century would be no less religious than the twentieth century, returning to this discussion in his 2008 article 'Secularization Falsified'. In this article he restates religion is

---

[314]Bruce, *God is Dead,* p. 2. See also Gorski, Philip & Altinordu, Ates, 'After secularization?*' Annual Review of Sociology*, 34 (2008), p. 56.
[315] Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World : Resurgent Religion and World Politics*.p. 2.
[316] Ibid. p. 7.
[317] Ibid.
[318] Ibid. p. 9-10.

not declining, and that 'Modernity is not necessarily secularizing; it is necessarily pluralizing.'[319]

Further objections to the secularisation theory that have emerged in recent years can be grouped as follows.

OBJECTION 1 – THE MYTH OF PAST PIETY

In a discussion of the 'Myth of Past Piety', Stark questions the normalised and somewhat generalised understanding that, in the past, the world was consistently pious. Taylor refers to this as a belief in a 'past golden age of religion'.[320] The assumption that faith levels were always high in the years before modernisation is problematic.[321] As the secularisation theory rests on an assumption of high levels of religiosity before the modern era, it can be seen as less reliable if doubt is cast on this idea. Stark cites numerous arguments including church attendance numbers, which cannot across all times and places be high, constant or even reliable, coupled with, at times, an apathetic attitude amongst the people that was often cloaked by religious obligation, rather than characterised by genuine fervour. This type of questioning of the genuine adherence of followers of faith is often discussed in reference to Christianity alone, with very little reference to any other religions.[322] One suspects that all religions have their share of deep believers alongside the less fervent.

---

[319] Peter Berger, 'Secularization Falsified', *First Things,* /180 (2008), 23.
[320]Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 427.
[321] Stark, 'Secularization, R.I.P.', pp. 255–60.
[322]Grace Davie, Paul Heelas & Linda Woodhead, 'Introduction', in G. Davie, P. Heelas & L. Woodhead (eds.) *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures* (London UK: Ashgate, 2003), p. 4.

OBJECTION 2 – TOO BROAD AND UNSPECIFIC

A second objection to the secularisation theory is raised by Bruce when quoting Hadden, who declares it a 'hodge-podge of loosely employed ideas rather than a systematic theory'.[323] Although Bruce states that such objections are based on a misunderstanding of the secularisation theory, there is still some foundation to Hadden's response. The secularisation theory cannot and does not adequately address the specifics of religiosity. Rather, in its original form it offers sweeping judgements leading to a monolithic understanding of religion, oblivious to the many movements and expressions present in religions. Davie also recognises the 'process should not be oversimplified; it is both complex and long term'.[324] Many of these collective and individual perspectives have been researched since, as conceded by Bruce, but in the main the secularisation theory is characterised by a broad approach that simplifies the processes involved. A salient question posed by Davie, Heelas and Woodhead is included here and is relevant in this discussion: 'Is Secularisation a universal process or one peculiar to the unique historical experience of a particular part of the globe?'[325] In recognition of recent changes, one would have to suggest the latter; as the theory itself holds one overarching limit, it was born of a time when globalisation had not begun to dominate discussions. Thus, in a very real sense it is less applicable to contemporary contexts.

OBJECTION 3 – RELIGION IS ANTIQUATED

What needs to be understood in regard to the secularisation theory is that it contained deep biases against religion from its inception. Berger declares it was in principle 'value free';[326] however, this disregards the strenuous objections to religion put forward by those who hold the honour of being the precursors to the secularisation theory, such as Auguste Comte. The

---

[323]Bruce, *God is Dead,* p. 39.
[324] Davie, 'Europe: The exception that proves the rule?', p. 74.
[325]Davie, Heelas, & Woodhead, 'Introduction', p. 6.
[326]Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World : Resurgent Religion and World Politics.*p. 3.

secular agenda predicted, and indeed sometimes hoped, that humankind would turn away from its superstitious and backward need for religion and embrace a modern era of relative stability and harmony, leaving behind the prejudice and division that religion had spawned.[327] As a convenient scapegoat for the collective evils of humanity, religion's decline would necessarily foster a concomitant increase in a humanistic interpretation of rights and rationality, which the rise of the scientific worldview embodies.[328] On the other side of the coin, this has also incited people of religion to denounce modernity as the enemy.[329] Founding the secularisation theory on such biased terms lends weight to the concern that it was based on incorrect assumptions too readily accepted by many from its inception.

OBJECTION 4 – RELIGION CANNOT ADAPT

Further criticism emerges from the secularisation theory's failure to recognise that religion is an adaptive and evolving phenomenon, even though Berger stressed that secularism leads to pluralism as it de-monopolises religious tradition.[330] Bruce states this creates an environment in which there is 'no socially significant shared religion'.[331] This appears to foster an attitude towards religion of preference rather than compulsion.[332] In addition, religion becomes a fragmented system largely approached with indifference by adherents and non-adherents alike. In fact, there is more evidence to suggest it gains vitality through this adversity in the various forms of counter-secularisation.[333] People have responded through the ages to forces antithetical to religion by presenting newly invigorated forms, such as the contemporary upsurge in Islam, the continued rise of Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism, and a renewal in Catholicism under the leadership of Pope John Paul II.[334] These upsurges are not necessarily

---

[327] Casanova, 'The secular and secularisms', pp. 1054–56.
[328] Berger, 'The desecularization of the world', p. 3.
[329] Ibid.
[330] Berger, *The Sacred Canopy,* p. 135.
[331] Bruce, *God is Dead,* p. 42.
[332] Berger, *The Sacred Canopy,* p. 134.
[333] Berger, 'The desecularization of the world', p. 6.
[334] Ibid. p. 6; Habermas, 'Notes on a Post-Secular Society', pp. 18–19.

'modern' manifestations of religion with a loosening of the apparently oppressive bonds associated with old forms of religion. They are often distinctly religiously inspired movements calling for the renewal of more conservative values. [335] In addition, this perspective lacks due recognition of the historical reality that religions have adapted and continue to adapt to the forms of secularisation that surround them. Indeed, religion is an evolving phenomenon by nature, as it has always existed side by side with institutions both supportive and antipathetic.

Defining Religion

Alongside the changes to the secular, understandings of religion and spirituality have been experiencing related effects. These will be outlined in this section, including a discussion of the definition of religion and spirituality.

The word "religion" is linked to three different words in Latin. The first one is "relegere" referring to the fact that the virtue of religion makes individuals ponder over, or read again (re-legere) the things related to the worship of God.[336] The second Latin word "religion" is often linked to the word "reeligere" which means to choose again.[337] In a certain way, religion makes individuals choose God again after having lost God through original sin. Finally, the third definition of religion is connected to the word "religare" meaning "to bind together". This last definition attempts to express the way religion binds us to the service of God.[338] The English word 'religion' has been in use since the thirteenth century, derived from the eleventh century Anglo-French *religiun*, itself based on the Latin word *religare* meaning

[335]Berger, 'The desecularization of the world', p. 6.
[336] C. Olson and P.R.S.C. Olson, *Religious Studies: The Key Concepts* (Taylor & Francis, 2010). p. 1-2.
[337] Ibid. p. 1-2
[338] Saint Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica of Saint Thomas Aquinas / Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province; Revised by Daniel J. Sullivan* (Great Books of the Western World: 20: Chicago, Ill. : Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1952., 1952). 81, 1.

'to bind'. This form suggests the relationship between the individual and the deity.[339]

Religion as a modern term emerges from the late Enlightenment, where it offered a way to assess the history and variety of religions and to critically judge its role and influence.[340]

Within sociology, a number of definitions have been influential over the last century, including Geertz's 'a set of symbolic forms and acts which relate man to the ultimate conditions of his existence,[341] and Durkheim's 'a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite in one single community called a Church, all those who adhere to them'.[342] These definitions have been argued over time and there is no consensus in the literature regarding a definition that is acceptable across times and cultures. Schilderman raises some important questions around defining religion: 'Should religion remain to be defined on the basis of denominational analysis and theological consistency, or should it be redefined in terms of more universal human functions? To what extent do theoretical notions of religion still relate to religion as it is lived in contemporary times and understood by ordinary people?'[343] Regardless of these questions, definitions of religion continue to evolve due to changes in social and cultural contexts.

The changing definition and role of religion is discussed by Charles Taylor by drawing on a definition by Steve Bruce.

> Religion for us consists of actions, beliefs and institutions predicated upon the assumption of the existence of either supernatural entities with powers of agency, or impersonal powers or processes possessed of moral purpose, which have the capacity to set the conditions of, or to intervene in, human affairs.[344]

---

[339] Olson and Olson, *Religious Studies: The Key Concepts*. p.1.
[340] Hans Schilderman, 'Religion as Concept and Measure', in Hans Schilderman (ed.), *The Concept of Religion Defining and Measuring Contemporary Beliefs and Practices* (Leiden: Brill, 2014). p. 7.
[341] Robert N. Bellah, 'Religious Evolution', *American Sociological Review,* 29/3 (1964), 358-74. p. 359.
[342] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen Fields (New York: The Free Press, 1995).p. 44.
[343] Schilderman, 'Religion as Concept and Measure'. p. 3.
[344] Taylor, *A Secular Age*. p. 429.

Taylor's preference for this definition is due to it incorporating beliefs, institutions and deities, while acknowledging the impact these have on human lives and experience. Taylor still recognises its shortcomings, including the use of the term supernatural, which is situated within the western philosophical tradition, and the problem that some religious traditions do not invoke the supernatural. Aside from this, there is merit in Taylor's discussion of this definition as he signals caution that the definition of religion not be too wide, placing a boundary on what can be considered religion.[345] But the overriding concern for Taylor is also that the definition does not become so wide as to suggest that nothing has changed.[346] It is critical to this research that the relationship between religion and the secular is examined, including changes to understandings of these terms. For my research, this definition is influenced by phenomenological aspects, which to me are important when defining religion. I also acknowledge that a one-dimensional response to defining religion is misleading and obscures many important factors that need inclusion.

In an attempt to rescue religion from a one-dimensional definition, a ten-dimensional model has recently been proposed by Vaillancourt and is included below. It is inclusive of phenomenological aspects and represents the move towards reclaiming the many dimensions of religion, even though direct reference to spirituality is notably absent.

---

[345] For a more detailed discussion of this, see Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*.chapters 1 and 2.
[346]Taylor, *A Secular Age*.p. 429.

Table 3.1: Jean-Guy Vaillancourt – The 10 Dimensions of Religion[347]

DIMENSIONS	SYNONYMS
Identity	Individuality, Interiority, Intimate Involvement
Statuses	Social Roles, Saints and Sinners, Shamans, Sorcerers, Sacred Leaders and Disciples, Priests and Laity
Affiliation	Association, Adherence, Attachment, Allegiance, Belonging
Community	Congregation, Communion, Collectivity, Confessions
Creed	Credo, Convictions, Confidence, Commitment, Beliefs, Ideology
Experience	Emotion, Ecstasy, Esoterism, Devotion, Spiritual Exercises
Practice	Public and Private Prayers, Procedures of Participation, Cult, Rituals, Ceremonial
Theology	Texts, Traditions, Theodicy, Teachings, Knowledge, Intellectual Dimension
Ethics	Expectations, Exigencies, Engagement, Equity, Consequences, Moral Codes, Rules, Commandments
Deity	Divinity, Divine Transcendence, God and Gods, The Sacred, The Holy

This exploration of the multi-dimensionality of religion is also a commentary on the changing role of religion globally, as Vaillancourt presents a more inclusive approach to the definition incorporating aspects from a number of religious heritages.

An examination of the challenges of defining religion is undertaken by William Cavanaugh in *The Myth of Religious Violence*. He, like Taylor, explores the changes religion has undergone under the influence of the secular, and also notes that religion as a standalone category for the most part did not exist throughout history.[348] He separates recent definitions into two categories: substantivist and functionalist. Substantivist definitions focus on

---

[347]Jean-Guy Vaillancourt, *From Five to Ten Dimensions of Religion: Charles Y. Glock's Dimensions of Religiosity Revisited* (2008, 2008).p.63.
[348]Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*. p. 69.

separating world religions from other phenomena based on beliefs about the nature of reality. This includes such categories as transcendentalism and supernaturalism, although he cautions that these terms harbour further complications, hence his reticence to use them. Cavanaugh also notes, like Taylor, that too wide a definition can be so inclusive as to break down the exclusivity of the category itself, while too narrow a definition would exclude clearly religious systems, making inclusion in the category too arbitrary.[349]

Inclusivity tends to be a characteristic of functionalist approaches. Functionalist definitions are not based on the 'content or substance of a belief system but on the way that such a system functions... not in terms of what is believed but in terms of how they believe it'.[350] Cavanaugh recognises that functionalist approaches tend to be based on empirical observations rather than unobservable interior states. He concludes that different things can be called religion at different times, so a transcultural, transhistorical definition is not possible.[351] He is more interested in why this occurs, which is often through the deployment of power or other political agendas.[352] Ultimately, he believes that the categorising of religion 'is part of the legitimating conceptual apparatus of the modern Western nation-state... born with a new configuration of power and authority in the West'.[353] This dissection of the rise of religion as a category is illuminating in that it offers a critical approach to the problems of definition. Cavanaugh refutes the immutability of religion as currently defined and states it is an invention of the west to facilitate 'the transfer in the modern era of the public loyalty of the citizen from Christendom to the emergent nation-state'.[354] To Cavanaugh, the evolution of religion and spirituality is indicative of wider changes to political and national histories.

---

[349]Ibid. p. 105.
[350]Ibid. pp. 105–06.
[351]Ibid. p. 121.
[352]Ibid. p. 119.
[353]Ibid. p. 120.
[354]Ibid. p.120.

Defining spirituality

Defining spirituality is a hazardous undertaking. Many definitions exist and there is no consensus in the literature.[355] Sheldrake argues this lack of consensus arises from spirituality's contemporary detachment from religion,[356] as, historically, spirituality and religion would have been used interchangeably.[357]

Bender describes spirituality as 'porous and historically variable'.[358] Previous to these contemporary changes, however, a definition of spirituality would have encompassed a number of aspects, including piety, devotional practices and experiences – but all, for the most part, within a religious tradition and knowledge framework. Spirituality has a more defined context when associated with an historic religious tradition, such as Christianity. In fact, Christianity is the original source of the word although it has now passed into other faith traditions, not least eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism.[359]

For the early Christians, spirituality referred to the presence of the spirit of God within individuals, and this for the most part was how spirituality was understood throughout the first centuries.[360] During the Middle Ages, spirituality referred more specifically to the clergy while in the seventeenth century in France it referred to the spiritual life.[361]

With the emergence of spirituality as a concept, it was possible to identify aspects of religion that can be considered spiritual and to focus on the variety of religious traditions and commonalities across them, as well as differences between them.[362] This has led to

---

[355] Courtney Bender, 'Religion and Spirituality: History, Discourse, Measurement.', *Social Science Research Council Forum: The Religious Engagements of American Undergraduates.* (2007).
[356] P. Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality* (Wiley, 2009). p. 1.
[357] Bender, 'Religion and Spirituality: History, Discourse, Measurement.'.
[358] Ibid.
[359] Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality*. p. 2.
[360] Ibid.
[361] Ibid. p. 3.
[362] Peter Van Der Veer, 'Spirituality in Modern Society', /4 (2009): 1097. p. 1106.

spirituality being viewed as a form of religiosity that escapes institutionalisation and in which the therapeutic aspects of religion are accentuated. For example, Hindu spiritualities have been adopted outside mainstream Hinduism around the world through Hatha Yoga, which is more focused on health than on salvation, and Ayur Veda, a form of homeopathy. In Christian and non-Christian religious traditions alike, spirituality has to some degree come to represent the personal experience of the divine, one not necessarily mediated by ordained authorities.[363]

In terms of contemporary understandings, spirituality connotes a number of key aspects that include experience of the transcendent, an individual's interior life, connection to life forces, harmony with the environment, self-fulfilment, non-materiality, health and healing. [364] Spirituality has also come to be understood in opposition to religion, and they are no longer regarded as synonyms.[365]

The defining of religion and spirituality as discrete categories is evident across contemporary literature. Tom Frame states, in *Losing my Religion: Unbelief in Australia*, that 'spirituality must not be confused with religion'.[366] The extrication of religion from spirituality is also referred to by Tacey, who claims that 'in the past, many of us believed that spirituality was a product of religious life... but we are having to face the fact that spirituality itself is larger, greater and much older than any organised religion'.[367] One of the problems of placing spirituality at odds with religion is it situates spirituality as the authentic form of religious practice, and as a condition free from the constraint of ritual and institution. Through this, religion comes to be seen as the negative side of spirituality. Tacey suggests that the schism

---

[363] Julia Day Howell, *The New Spiritualities, East and West: Colonial Legacies and the Global Spiritual Marketplace in Southeast Asia* (2007, 2007).p. 23.
[364] Bruce W. Speck, 'What Is Spirituality?', *New Directions for Teaching and Learning,* 2005/104 (2005), 3-13.p. 4.
[365] Bouma, *Australian Soul : Religion and Spirituality in the Twenty-First Century*. p.10.
[366]Frame, *Losing My Religion : Unbelief in Australia*.p. 25.
[367]David J. Tacey, *Reenchantment : The New Australian Spirituality* (Sydney, N.S.W.: HarperCollins, 2000).p. 26.

between religion and spirituality has also led to negative associations for the individuals who are now viewed as the remnant adherents of religion in Australia.[368]

Tacey traces the detachment of spirituality from religion back to the 1960s and 70s, a time of significant social change in Australia.[369] Quoting Sandra Schneiders, he discusses the view that spirituality has developed from indicating an interior life, to encompassing whole-of-life experience.[370] In particular, when spirituality sits outside institutions it often takes on further therapeutic characteristics, and is positioned as an activity rather than a disposition. In this way, spirituality has become the term preferred over religion. The rise of the secular has contributed to this, as spirituality is now in some ways a secularised form of its previous understanding, detached as it is from religion. This may explain the growing acceptance of spirituality; as Bender suggests, the liminal space between the religious and secular is now occupied by the spiritual.[371]

The result of these changes is that many of the definitions of terms discussed in this research take on distinct meanings under the influence of the secular. This is indicative of recent changes to religion under this influence that allow for a broader level of acceptance of ideas that previously may not have entered discussions. A notable example of this is the use of the word 'sacred' in Australia. It has been variously applied to historical and commemorative events such as Gallipoli, as well as places and natural phenomena.[372] Extricated as this is from previous understandings, sacred is one example of a term influenced by secular change.

---

[368]David Tacey, 'Spirituality in Australia Today', in Makarand R. Paranjape (ed.), *Sacred Australia: Post-Secular Considerations* (Melbourne: Clouds of Magellan, 2009a), 44-64.pp.46–47.
[369]Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution : The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality*., p. 47.
[370]Ibid. p. 45.
[371]Philip Gorski, David Kim, and John Torpey, *The Post-Secular in Question: Religion in Contemporary Society* (New York: New York University Press, 2012). p. 7.
[372] For further discussion see Stephen Muecke, 'The Sacred in History', *Humanities Research,* /1 (1999), 27-37.

Neo-secularisation

Neo-secularisation is a term first introduced by David Yamane, even though he was not the first to examine the theory that underpinned it. Neo-secular positions emerged principally from a focus on the United States.[373] Yamane suggested announcements of the death of the secularisation theory were premature and that what was needed instead was a reformulation of this theory.[374] This reformulation 'retains the core insights' of the "old' view while integrating 'new' aspects.[375] He claims that this neo-secular approach lessens the opposition between secular and post-secular paradigms. Yamane's position is centred specifically on the decline of religious authority, rather than the more generalised understanding of the decline of religious belief that underwrites the secularisation theory. Taylor also notes the changes to religion based on a diminishing of authority, with individual autonomy privileged.[376] Yamane's jettisoning of the unsubstantiated claims of the secularisation theory involves distancing himself from post-secular arguments, also rejecting positions that form the basis of post-secular theory. Nonetheless, the neo-secular position is, at the very least, an acknowledgment of profound changes to religion in society.

Yamane cites the three corollaries of the secularisation theory as changes to: the place of religion in the social order; the structure of religious organisations; and the orientation of individuals to religion.[377] He suggests that the secularisation theory has been wrongly interpreted as meaning the extinction of religion. He argues this was never the intention of the secularisation theory. Instead, drawing on the work of Chaves, whose redefinition of secularisation is 'best understood not as the decline of religion, but as the declining scope of

---

[373] Rick Phillips, 'Can *rising* rates of church participation be a consequence of secularization?' p. 140.
[374] David Yamane, 'Secularization on trial: In defense of a neosecularization paradigm', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 36,/1 (1997), p. 109.
[375] Ibid.
[376] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 429.
[377] Yamane, 'Secularization on Trial', p. 110.

religious authority', Yamane pursues this argument to a deeper level.[378] Objections to his work may suggest that these ideas held some relevance at the time of their conception with much development both in the world and the field of theory occurring since; hence the more recent preoccupation with the post-secular. What follows are the aspects of the secularisation theory that the neo-secular formulation calls attention to.

Focus On Religious Authority

The work of Chaves, emerging earlier than that of Yamane, differentiates religion from religious authority. He states this is important to secularisation on the basis of a change in focus to historical and institutional contexts resulting from political and social conflicts, rather than on the existence or otherwise of religious beliefs and ideas. He justifies this refocus by stating that secularisation is best understood this way, while arguing for an abandonment of religion as an analytical category.[379] This differentiation by Chaves may be suitable for an in-depth sociological analysis of one aspect of secularisation, but largely omits the concept of religion as a personal and social reality. One gains the impression that this avoidance may be an acknowledgement that religion overly complicates discussions, as Chaves attempts to avoid the 'theoretical cul-de-sacs' that would arise if religion were to be incorporated.[380] The controversy surrounding how to approach and engage with the secularisation theory is part of a longer and more complex problem of defining religion, religious consciousness, beliefs and identity, often from the position of an outsider unfamiliar with the complexities. By developing this particular neo-secular position, Chaves may recognise the difficulties associated with this, while noting that religious decline and resurgence are somewhat secondary to the primary concern of the influence of religion.

---

[378]Ibid. p. 115.
[379]Mark Chaves, 'Secularization as declining religious authority', *Social Forces*, 72/3 (1994), p. 750.
[380]Ibid. p. 750.

However, according to Stark, the primary concern in secularisation discussions is the decline of individual piety, as when individual piety retreats there are numerous factors that adhere to that process. Stark suggests that in the new configurations of secularisation that neo-secularisation heralds, there is an 'escape from inconvenient facts'.[381] He also points out that if secularisation were only to do with de-institutionalisation there would be no argument, as the religious institutions that once dominated society are indeed less influential than in previous eras. This may be the case, but one would add this depends on the society, the conditions of belief in these often diverse and shifting societies, the system of belief, and the strata of religious influence that is being referred to, such as clergy or lay organisation.

Shelledy continues the investigation of neo-secularisation with regard to changes to authority, suggesting it is linked to a larger crisis of authority that has permeated many areas of society, secular and non-secular.[382] He views the main thrust of neo-secularisation as religion continuing to resist being relegated to the private sphere but nonetheless diminishing in influence. This decline presents religion as lacking the primacy it once held while holding sway on matters limited to its own sphere.[383] While acknowledging this focus on authority is key, Shelledy also states that the specific issues over which religion holds sway need to be looked at, as there are some differences in influences dependent on the issues rather than a general loss of authority on all issues. Here again, as Shelledy points out, influence is context- and time-specific and variations are apparent.[384]

Rather than just dismiss the neo-secular position, as Stark does, it is necessary to examine further the work of Chaves and others who have discussed it at length. Chaves examines Weber's understanding of religious authority as a form of coercion, developed in terms of

---

[381] Stark, 'Secularization, R.I.P.', p. 251.
[382] Robert Shelledy, 'The Vatican's role in global politics', *SAIS Review*, 24/ 2 (2004), p. 149.
[383]Ibid. p. 150.
[384] Robert B. Shelledy, 'The Vatican's Role in Global Politics', *SAIS Review,* 24/2 (2004), 149-62.

supernatural legitimation, as well as reference to power and authority.[385] Through this, it can be seen that neo-secular theoretical perspectives resonate with the changing conditions of belief and the threads of meaning and definition that surround it. So, the decline of religious authority is intrinsically coupled to belief and other aspects including the deployment of power and authority. Chaves justifies his neo-secular position on the basis of an extension in definition towards the multidimensionality of religious authority. Sectioning the decline in authority into organisational, societal and individual, he notes the scope of control has declined at all three levels of analysis.[386] This is an attempt to come to terms with the definition and complexity of the subject.

REVISITING THE SECULARISATION THEORY

There is some merit in teasing out the definitions associated with secularisation, as what has often occurred is misapplication of this theory on the basis of blanket assumptions about religion. Ironically, Bruce observes that neo-secularisation theories are formed on the basis of a misunderstanding of secularisation that, for all intents and purposes, differs very little from secularisation theories.[387] From Bruce's position, secularisation has been represented as linear and less complex than it is, allowing for misunderstanding and misrepresentation, and it is from this misrepresentation that neo-secularisation has emerged.[388] Indeed suggesting that secularisation primarily rests on the decline of religious belief is offering a narrow interpretation of its processes, which continue to influence all levels of society. Of further interest here is Phillips's more recent perspective that sees neo-secularisation as one way of investigating the various axes along which religious differentiation occurs.[389]

---

[385]Chaves, 'Secularization as declining religious authority', p. 755.
[386]Ibid. p. 757.
[387]Bruce, *God is Dead,* p. 1.
[388]Ibid. pp. 40-41.
[389]Phillips, 'Can *rising* rates of church participation be a consequence of secularization?' p. 149.

Phillips's focus is on a rejection of one of the core understandings of the secularisation theory, which is that once social structures such as government and religious institutions become secularised they lose their power and, therefore, lose adherents. [390] In his investigation of the Mormons and New England parish life, he concludes that changes spawn vitality rather than diminishing congregations.[391] Further to this, he suggests that the neo-secular position has been adopted by academics unwilling to abandon the secularisation theory.[392]Nonetheless, he points out that one of the weaknesses of the neo-secular position is that it differentiates between the relationship of the individual to religion and the relationship between religion and social structures. This is a tenuous position to take, as the aforementioned commentary on the work of Chaves notes. Structural and individual behaviours and movements are equally vital for an effective approach to the study of religion in contemporary society.

Goldstein investigates the secularisation theory through what he terms the new and old paradigms. Relevant to this, the neo-secular position rests on an attempt to reformulate the secularisation theory to account for dialectic movement, as he suggests that the secularisation theory has been misinterpreted as a linear, progressive reality.[393] By teasing out this central thread imposed on the old paradigm, he offers a perspective of it as dialectic rather than a fixed linear concept. Through investigation of the founding contributors of the secularisation theory, he notes that they did not understand it a linear process but were more concerned with it as a dialectic process. Furthermore, his position sees secularisation as intrinsically linked to 'sacralisation', in which, paradoxically, revival and rejection are parts of the one process.[394]

---

[390]Ibid. p. 139.
[391]Ibid. p. 140.
[392]Ibid.
[393] Warren Goldstein, 'Secularization patterns in the old paradigm', *Sociology of Religion*, 70/2 (2009), p. 176.
[394] Ibid.

From his perspective, any reformulation of the secularisation theory, such as the neo-secular, is unnecessary as it is based on an oversimplification of the original theories.

The suggestion that the secularisation theory has been misinterpreted and now needs re-clarification obfuscates the necessary claim that the secularisation theory may have been, for a time and in part, relevant. The need to reclaim its lost territory is now a lesser concern; what is more significant is how recent evidence such as religious revival can be accounted for.

RELIGIOUS REVIVAL

Phillips sees the neo-secularisation theory as impoverished due to its focus on religious authority to the exclusion of discussions of religious revival.[395] Casanova's suggestion here is that religious traditions are refusing to accept the marginalised role demarcated for them in modern society and are responding with renewed vigour.[396] There are two streams of thought arising here. The first is the neo-secular position, that the pluralism evident in modern society encourages religious competition and is thereby undermining religious institutions by working against the historical hold on power of these establishments.[397] The second is that religious revival continues in both traditional and more recent religious movements, with this ignored or somehow overlooked by more orthodox theorists.[398] Both aspects still point to the proliferation of religion rather than its demise. Rightly, however, Phillips acknowledges that the breakdown in authority gives rise to new transformations and expressions of belief, thus showing the immutable relationship between challenges to religion and religious revival.[399] Nonetheless, religious activity stimulates religious competition; thus, participation is not diminished but rather encouraged. Religious identity, in these competitive contexts, is detached

---

[395] Phillips, 'Can *rising* rates of church participation be a consequence of secularization?', p. 150.
[396] Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the World* (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 5.
[397] Phillips, 'Can *rising* rates of church participation be a consequence of secularization?', p. 148.
[398] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 432.
[399] Phillips, 'Can *rising* rates of church participation be a consequence of secularization?', p. 149.

from characteristics that may have previously held sway, such as class and ethnicity, and is more strongly associated with re-energised forms of participation and identity.[400]

Taylor notes that changes here could circulate around what he terms the 'transformation' and 'immanence' perspectives.[401] The transformation perspective is that prior to the eighteenth century religion was viewed primarily as a participation in supernatural life that ultimately transforms the self. With the rise and wide appeal of the immanence view, religion met a need for individual happiness, flourishing and mutual benefit situated more directly in the here and now.[402] This may seem a fine line to draw, but Taylor's explanation highlights the widening appeal of religion on this renewed basis. The transformation view still has influence; however, the appeal of the immanence view of religion offers a more explicit mutual benefit.

This can be linked to the phenomenon of religious revival, as it situated religion as working towards a more palatable modern understanding of social benefit removed from esoteric contexts. These two positions are not mutually exclusive; more than likely many believers exist on a point between them. Nevertheless, this discussion by Taylor does attempt to account for the broadening of the conditions of belief and may, therefore, account for religious revival in some instances. In the literature, the neosecular position does not engage in these more in-depth discussions, even though it does draw attention to some necessary issues by acknowledging changes to religion and society. At the very least, the neosecular view calls into question the dominance of the secularisation theory. What follows, the post-secular position, also does so albeit with a range of more specific objections.

---

[400]Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 432.
[401]Ibid. p. 431.
[402]Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 430.

The post-secular

Few academics deny the inherent ambiguities that underwrite post-secular definitions, highlighting the challenging nature of defining terms that are constantly undergoing negotiation. In a more recent discussion, Casanova regards the post-secular as ambiguous, not just because of the 'post' prefix and its problematic nature in many contemporary discussions, but because of the enduring ambiguity of the 'secular'.[403]

Adding further complexity are the number of dimensions to the term post-secular, including the political and the sociological. This also suggests that the post-secular exists along a spectrum of positions that range from an ideological response to religion, to a broader view encompassing both individual and social responses to religion. Another significant aspect of the post-secular is how and when the term is used, which often cluster around ideas of a return to, or rediscovery of religious understandings. Usage ranges from the (possibly overly) simplistic, such as Hamilton's reference to post-secular ethics as simply ethics 'without theology', to Habermas' multi-indicator method.[404]Definitions are also highly dependent on the background of the theorist in question, with the post-secular being heavily influenced by the sociological and the political.

THE POLITICAL, THE SOCIOLOGICAL AND THE POST-SECULAR

---

[403] José Casanova, 'Are We Still Secular?', in Peter Nyanas, Mika Lassander, and Terhi Utrianinen (eds.), *Post Secular Society* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2012), 27-46. p. 27.
[404] Clive Hamilton, *The Freedom Paradox: Towards a Post-Secular Ethics* (Sydney NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2008), p. xiii; Habermas, 'Notes on a Post-Secular Society', pp. 17–29.

A political interest in the post-secular emerged in the 1990s when critical engagement with the understanding of public spaces as secularised spaces came under renewed questioning.[405] The secularisation thesis positioned religion as outside of the public sphere, and more specifically outside the political sphere. In democratic societies it has long been taken for granted that the political mechanisms of law and legislation would seek to lessen the power of religion and position it as marginal to public life.[406] Within the discussion on the post-secular it is increasingly evident that considering religion as outside the political sphere is no longer sustainable, as worldwide religion is having a political impact. Increasingly countries are experiencing religious pluralism and this has contributed to changes in political life, and hence to public life. One such example of change is Turkey.

As discussed by Rosati, Turkey is an interesting laboratory of what appears to be a deeply polarised society, but one in which there is a blending of secular and religious ideas that set it apart from other European countries.[407] For Rosati, the religious and secular identities and dynamics, although historically influenced, are also continually developing. [408] This transformation of Turkish society towards a post-secular society includes political dimensions as well as sociological. The political reforms undertaken over the last 100 years have led to a unique situation in which western, secular, democratic ideas mix with traditional and religious ideas.[409]

Linda Hogan considers these changes to the political sphere to be the understanding by religious citizens that they are inescapably political citizens and therefore expect the

---

[405] Umut Parmaksız, 'Making Sense of the Postsecular', *European Journal of Social Theory,* 21/1 (2016), 98-116. p. 4.
[406] N. Biggar and L. Hogan, *Religious Voices in Public Places* (OUP Oxford, 2009). p. 1.
[407] Rosati, *The Making of a Postsecular Society: A Durkheimian Approach to Memory, Pluralism and Religion in Turkey*. p. 1-2.
[408] Ibid. p. 2.
[409] Ibid. p. 3.

opportunity to express their interest in the many and varied political processes undertaken by the state.[410] This is an increasing issue in many societies that have experienced significant social and cultural change in its mobile population. As Hogan describes, 'the present age is characterised, not by the triumph of either religious or anti-religious world-views, but rather by the fact of religious pluralism.'[411] Stoeckl notes that religious pluralism might be the 'real problem' of post-secular societies rather than the separation of church and state.[412] In response to the presence of pluralism, secular states are experiencing significant tensions as to how public life and public spaces can be reimagined to incorporate changing ideas and beliefs.

For Habermas, this political preoccupation has been central to his post-secular discussion. Drawing on the work of Rawls, and his view on laws and policies as being neutrally conceived, Habermas argues that in a

> Constitutional state . . . all subcultures, whether religious or not, are expected to free their individual members from their embrace so that these citizens can mutually recognize one another in civil society as members of one and the same political community. As democratic citizens they give themselves laws which grant them the right, as private citizens, to preserve their identity in the context of their own particular culture and worldview.[413]

The political onus, as with Rawl's, remains with the religious citizenry who are responsible for the translation and justification of their political positions to their unbelieving fellow citizens. Although encouraging of political discussion between believers and non-believers in the political arena, where all citizens have equal right to the duty of dialogue, the responsibility for translation is a problematic one. This responsibility points to the ongoing

---

[410] Biggar and Hogan, *Religious Voices in Public Places*. p. 2.
[411] Ibid. p.3.
[412] Kristina Stoeckl, 'Defining the Postsecular', *The Seminar of Professor Khoruzhij* (2011).
[413] Pope Benedict, Jürgen Habermas, and Florian Schuller, *Dialectics of Secularization : On Reason and Religion* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006). p.39.

use of normative secular understandings of liberal democracy that struggle to consider pluralism as politically beneficial. Additionally Habermas post-secular theory favours moderate-liberal religious citizens, excluding conservative religious citizens.

Even more significant than an appreciation of the diverse nature of modern societies, and the need for liberal democracies to adapt to these changes, is that central to an understanding of the post-secular directly indicating the limits of secularisation. These limits are very evident in political spheres. As discussed by Molendijk, Beaumont and Jedan:

> the label of the postsecular refers to the limits of the secularization thesis and the continuing realization of radically plural societies in terms of religions, faiths and beliefs within and between diverse urban societies. It also refers to the public role and function of religion and religious organizations in our contemporary world. And if we consider 'the postsecular' as the indication of diverse religious, humanist and secularist positionalities—and not just an assumption of complete and total secularization—it is precisely the interrelations between all of these dimensions and not just the religious aspect on its own that must be taken into account.[414]

The persistence of religion in secularised areas, including the political, points to an important aspect of the post-secular, that of its citizens reaching beyond their political actions as necessary responsibilities, towards a commitment to 'historical learning'.[415] As discussed by Cooke, historical learning involves openness to changing ideas, and a revision of long held views, a challenging educational process for post-secular societies.[416]

Just as the secularisation thesis emerged from the sociological field, so too the post-secular has become a more recent addition to sociological discourse. Although some sociologists were hesitant to accept that religion was 'reappearing' in society, the use of the term post-

---

[414] Arie Molendijk, Justin Beaumont, and Christoph Jedan, *Exploring the Postsecular : The Religious, the Political and the Urban* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2010). p. x.
[415] Maeve Cooke, 'A Secular State for a Postsecular Society? Postmetaphysical Political Theory and the Place of Religion', *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical & Democratic Theory,* 14/2 (2007), 224-38. p. 233
[416] Ibid.

secular now readily refers to a conceptual and social evolution of the relationship between modernity and religion.[417] In the words of Gräb 'modernity has started to produce religions in a new, postsecular way.'[418] In post-secular societies, five crucial aspects as outlined by Rosati and Stoeckl, have been identified as necessary qualifications:

> To sum up, in our view, Habermas's idea of the postsecular as a process of complementary learning between religious and secular worldviews and practices has to be enriched in a way that includes the five features listed above. Reflectivity of both secular modernities and religious traditions, co-existence of secular and religious worldviews and practices, de-privatization of religions, religious pluralism vs. religious monopoly, and the sacred understood (also) as a heteronomous transcendent force vs. only immanent understanding of it: these are the sociological features that add empirical thickness to the philosophical and normative idea of the complementary learning process.[419]

These five factors have been explored by Stoeckl and Rosati and applied to examples, but with the proviso that maybe not all can be applied equally or simultaneously. The exploration of Turkish society by Rosati raises some interesting points about the post-secular as a process in which modernisation, the secular and religion play equally important roles in the bringing about of a post-secular society.[420]

In a similar way Molendijk, Beaumont, and Jedan consider what a post-secular society is, outlining the below characteristics

> the label of the postsecular refers to the limits of the secularization thesis and the continuing realization of radically plural societies in terms of religions, faiths and beliefs within and between diverse urban societies. It also refers to the public role and function of religion and religious organizations in our contemporary world. And if we consider 'the postsecular' as the indication of diverse religious, humanist and secularist positionalities—and not just an assumption of complete and total secularization—it is precisely the interrelations between all

---

[417] Stoeckl and Rosati, *Multiple Modernities and Postsecular Societies*. p. 1.
[418] Wilhelm Gräb, 'Exploring the Postsecular', *The Transformation of Religious Culture within Modern Societies: From Secularization to Postsecularism* (Interactive Factory, 2010), 113.
[419] Stoeckl and Rosati, *Multiple Modernities and Postsecular Societies*. p. 6.
[420] M Rosati, 'The Turkish Laboratory: Local Modernity and the Postsecular in Turkey', in M Rosati and K. Stoeckl (eds.), *Multiple Modernitites and Postsecular Societies* (London: Routledge, 2012), 61-78. p. 61-62.

of these dimensions and not just the religious aspect on its own that must be taken into account.[421]

Post-secular as a sociological phenomenon speaks to the different forms of religion present in that society, as well as secular worldviews. Post-secular societies are also testament to the understanding that both religious traditions and secular worldviews are malleable and open to mutual interpretation.

The intersections between political and sociological understandings of the post-secular are explored by Johansen who sees Habermas' perspective as primarily focussed on secular states who must come to terms with the endurance of religion. For sociologists it means an awareness of both an increase in political relevance of religion and related aspects such as social identity, social cohesion and social benefits.[422] These aspects are central to the post-secular and its framing in both the political and the sociological sphere. Their relatedness points to the definition provided by Stoeckl and Rosati above which combines a Habermasian preoccupation with complementary learning with sociological features.

A NEW AGE?

To date, the literature on the post-secular positions it as either a new age, heralding the decline of the secular, or a stage of development of the secular. This has led to a number of effects, as explored by the literature:

1) Religion has become increasingly visible in the public sphere.

2) Religion is undergoing a resurgence.

3) Challenges and reactions to modernisation and the mainstream narrative of the secular.

---

[421] Molendijk, Beaumont, and Jedan, *Exploring the Postsecular : The Religious, the Political and the Urban*. p. x.

[422] B S Johansen, 'Post-Secular Sociology: Modes, Possibilities and Challenges', *Approaching Religion,* 3/1 (2013,), 4-15. p. 11.

4) An ambivalence towards religion.

Habermas and the Post-Secular

The claims made by Habermas in regard to the development of a post-secular society include the highly visible link between religion and global conflict that has altered public consciousness, the increasing influence of religion operating in the public sphere worldwide, and the changing demography of nations, particularly due to immigration.[423] It can be further noted that the increasing influence of technology on a globalised scale has disseminated religious ideas beyond old boundaries onto a worldwide stage, contributing to their increasing public presence. Habermas is concerned with public life and participation in public life and its intersection with the post-secular. He is particularly interested in how political structures and order facilitate the peaceful coexistence of citizens from diverse backgrounds.[424]

---
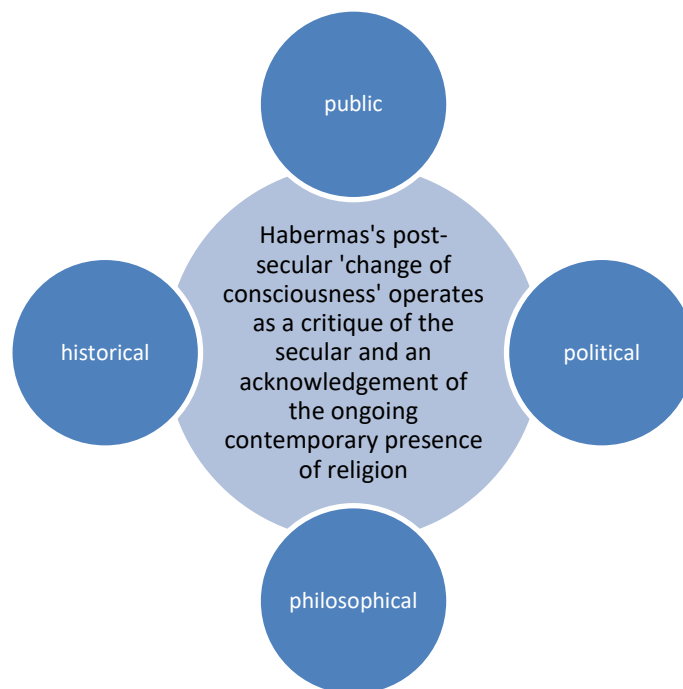
[423]Habermas, 'Notes on a Postsecular Society', p. 20.
[424] Cooke, 'A Secular State for a Postsecular Society? Postmetaphysical Political Theory and the Place of Religion', (p. 224.

Figure 4: Summary of Habermas' post-secular dimensions.

Public Dimension

One important aspect Habermas discusses is how religious and non-religious citizens can exist alongside each other, and how this relationship manifests itself in society. On the surface, it would appear that one or the other of these groups will need to compromise their principles for the sake of social harmony. However, Dillon points out that strictly dividing believing from non-believing citizens is too strong a position; there are many people who do not exist at these opposing ends but at one of a range of positions in between.[425] In contemporary history, much has been said of how these two groups cannot exist together. The present crisis and response to Islam, for example, suggests they cannot.[426] In this case, the relationship between these citizens breaks down in what is portrayed as a race to assert the rights of one over the other. Although all citizens exist in a secular society that appears to favour one side more than the other,[427] Habermas ponders the question that puts the burden of civil coexistence equally on both religious and non-religious citizens – 'how should we see ourselves as members of a post-secular society and what must we reciprocally expect from one another' to remain civil?[428]

If social harmony and remaining civil is the primary concern, how this is achieved requires far more discussion. The irony of this debate is that in secular society all people are considered included, irrespective of their backgrounds. In reality, the proviso may be as long as they remain within the confines of state-regulated identity and privately practiced beliefs. Habermas raises key points to stimulate public awareness of how civil coexistence can occur, including stating that Europe needs to adjust 'itself to the continued existence of religious

---

[425]Michele Dillon, '2009 Association for the Sociology of Religion Presidential Addresscan Post-Secular Society Tolerate Religious Differences?*1', *Sociology of Religion,* 71/2 (//Summer2010 Summer2010 2010), 139-56.p. 149.
[426]Ibid. pp. 141–42.
[427]Jurgen Habermas, 'Religion in the Public Sphere', *Holberg Prize Seminar* (Bergen, Norway, 2005).p. 14.
[428]Habermas, 'Notes on Post-Secular Society', (p. 21.

communities in an increasingly secularized environment'.[429] One of these adjustments takes the form of religious organisations and groups contributing to public discourse on relevant social matters. This remains a strong area of religious influence in a secular public space. To Habermas, a post-secular society is one in which this public influence remains present and is integrated into the whole of society's consciousness. He also notes that, as non-secular society must accept secular societies' understandings, so too the opposite must be true.[430]

For Habermas, this takes the form of a 'complementary learning process'.[431] As explored in 'Religion in the Public Sphere', religious communities have been burdened by having to translate the secular worldview and secular reason to learn and adapt to living in a secular state.[432] This fosters resentment in religious citizens, insofar as it becomes their duty to function in secular society. There are three aspects that arise for religious citizens that do not equally affect non-religious citizens.[433]

1. Religious citizens must develop an epistemic attitude toward other religions and worldviews.
2. They must develop an epistemic stance on the independence of secular from sacred knowledge.
3. They must accept the epistemic stance toward the priority of secular reason in the political arena.

Habermas notes that religious citizens and traditions need to be able to reflect on these aspects and learn their place in modern society by overcoming these 'cognitive challenges'.[434] He explains this as an additional burden placed on religious citizens from which secular citizens are largely exempt.

---

[429]Ibid. p. 19, quoting Jose Casanova.
[430]Habermas, 'Notes on Post-Secular Society', (p. 28.
[431]Ibid. p. 27.
[432]J. Habermas, 'Religion in the Public Sphere', *European Journal of Philosophy,* 14/1 (Apr 2006), 1-25.p. 14.
[433]Ibid. p. 15.
[434]Ibid. p. 16.

Looking beyond this division in society, Habermas recognises the depth of this issue, as by situating religious communities and beliefs as antiquated and obsolete, freedom of religion offers some protection for religious citizens on the road to what is viewed as inevitable extinction. This gives rise to the question as to whether it is a core secular agenda that religion disappears entirely from social, political and economic spheres. The secularisation theory does signify this eventual demise, alongside the demise of the religious citizen having a voice in the public sphere that is as valid as that of the secular citizen.

HISTORICAL DIMENSION

As the secular political system has a historical basis, the post-secular political arena has contributing events that point to a change in the secular political world order. The secular state has a distinctly historical influence as outlined by Cooke:

> For Habermas, as for many of the inhabitants of contemporary liberal democratic social orders, myself included, the secular state is a historical achievement – the result of a collective historical learning process that can be traced back to the European wars of religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[435]

Some historical precedents associated with the secular state are the establishment of the Westphalian state and the birth of western secularism in 1945. For Merlini,

> [r]eligion was in theory consigned to a marginal role by the political system of sovereign, secular states enjoying exclusive prerogative over the use of force and non-interference from outside, including churches, that came out of the 1648 Peace of Westphalia. In fact, it continued to play an important role, at least until 1945, which many consider the birthday of Western secularism.[436]

---

[435]Cooke, 'A Secular State for a Postsecular Society? Postmetaphysical Political Theory and the Place of Religion', (p. 233.
[436]Cesare Merlini, 'A Post-Secular World?', *Survival,* 53/2 (2011/04/01 2011), 117-30.p. 122.

However, the failure of the Westphalian state more recently has been noted by academics and may be seen as a precursor to the post-secular and post-Westphalian order.[437] This thinking is influenced by such events as the Iranian Revolution, the 9/11 attacks, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the development of capitalism in China, international migration, the emergence of the international system, and cross-national boundaries for organisations and global players. These historical events have significantly changed the dominance of the secular state as the necessary basis of progressive and stable social and political entities. [438] These contemporary historical events are rightly the catalyst for Habermas to reassess the largely unchallenged secular state and worldview.

Pluralism is a second concern of Habermas that raises issues around the post-secular. This is particularly heightened in his discussion of immigration and the multiculturalism that operates throughout European history. The 'value conflicts'[439] that arise due to the influx of new citizens remains a historical and social problem not easily overcome. Religious wars and confessional disputes inspired secular thinking; however, now it is pluralism that injects instability into this historical vision of Europe and the world.

Pluralism as a historical reality suggests that although secular thought has dominated – particularly in European society – the reality is that a range of people exist within its borders who do not share the same worldviews. The secular state and its mechanisms rely on civil homogeneity to ensure economic and political stability. Pluralistic views of society that are committed to inclusion and equal civil rights for all peoples are challenged by a secular nation state struggling to place all citizens on equal footing – often because of their religious or cultural worldview, not in spite of it. Although the secular state is seen as a curative for

---

[437]Ibid.

[438]Peter Beyer, 'Questioning the Secular/Religious Divide in a Post-Westphalian World', *International Sociology,* 28/6 (November 1, 2013 2013), 663-79.p. 664.

[439]Habermas, 'Notes on Post-Secular Society', (p. 20.

these dilemmas of diversity, religion is often supressed, creating further instability. The question remains as to whether all citizens can find a place in secular society, and whether the secular state can be both pluralistic and stable. Both historically and contemporarily this remains a pressing problem.

POLITICAL DIMENSION

This aspect of Habermas's post-secular idea is that the political sphere has been rapidly evolving over the last century with a number of developments that have changed the hitherto largely unchallenged political world. The Westphalian political order relies on sovereign states that exercise their power over public spaces and keep religion in check. In a contemporary sense, this control over public spaces has come under threat from globalising forces that act across and beyond national borders.

If anything, Habermas's post-secular theory is a political theory through which he examines the Enlightenment project and reconfigures the political sphere to include the religious. For him, the post-secular is the intersection between religion and democratic politics.[440]As Cooke states:

> In Habermas' political theory the concept of postsecular society is used primarily in a normative sense. It does not merely *describe* a secularized social order in which religious worldviews continue to shape the identities of many inhabitants; it *makes a plea* for a model of law and politics in which religious arguments are not excluded from political debate.[441]

In terms of the political conceptions of post-secular society, Habermas sees a range of perspectives to bring understanding to this area. As the post-secular is tied up with citizenship concerns, particularly in democratic societies, what post-secular political citizenship looks like is important. Secular states have provided a separation between church and state, with the

---

[440]Mark Redhead, 'What's So Post About the Post-Secular?', *WPSA 2012 Annual Meeting* (Portland, Oregon, 2012a). p. 2.
[441]Cooke, 'A Secular State for a Postsecular Society? Postmetaphysical Political Theory and the Place of Religion', (p. 227.

understanding that the state does not favour one or the other perspective. The political role of religion is such that the state cannot influence changes to public understandings of religions and changes in secular understandings of such. Habermas's hope that citizens, both believers and non-believers, can engage in a mutual learning process cannot be moderated by the state, but must be undertaken by another agency.

As citizens in a historically liberal society, both believers and non-believers are placed on 'a non-religious footing'.[442] It would seem that the exercise and governance of religious rights and citizenship cannot be undertaken by the state and cannot be supervised by a secular authority. Habermas says this is possible by understanding that all citizens have guaranteed political participation and the knowledge that rationally accepted outcomes for democratic processes and civil law must prevail.[443] So the basis of a Habermasian political citizenship in a post-secular state is based on the notion that each citizen has about themselves, that they are free and equal members of a political community.[444]Equal citizens under the law here must offer each other good reason for their political statements.[445] But it also puts the onus on the governing bodies and institutions to provide reasonable understandings for decisions and measures accessible to all citizens.

Another political ramification is the secular state is often confused with a secular society. A secular state does not necessarily mean a secularised society;.[446] the question raised is whether a secular state can exist alongside a post-secular society. The problem of the translation of religious ideas in the public space – that is, in the political arena that Habermas advocates – is a problematic requirement. Translation requires a pre-debate by believers as to the meaning and understanding of the matter at hand. The debate of such meanings should

---

[442]Habermas, 'Religion in the Public Sphere', (p. 6.
[443]Ibid. p. 6.
[444]Ibid. p. 7.
[445]Ibid.
[446]Eduardo Mendieta, 'A Postsecular World Society? On the Philosophical Significance of Postsecular Consciousness and the Multicultural World Society. Eduardo Mendieta Interviews Jurgen Habermas', *Monthly Review,* (2010). p. 12.

take place within the context of the debate of the issue across the belief divide rather than outside of it.[447] Even so, this translation of ideas places the onus on believers to provide connections to knowledge outside the experience of the non-believers. For non-believers, democracies are political systems that already use a secularised language. Although Habermas raises some very important points, it is also evident that his analysis of the post-secular on a political level is challenging. It requires all citizens to be self-reflective, tolerant, and understanding of the mechanisms associated with democratic liberal structures.

PHILOSOPHICAL DIMENSION

Habermas' conception of the post-secular parallel his discussions of post-metaphysical thought. He reflects on the changes to philosophy particularly in its relationship to religion. He suggests that, in this post-secular era, this relationship is dialogical and open.[448] Citing philosophers such as Bloch, Levinas and Derrida as examples of contemporary engagement in this effort, he positions post-secular philosophical dimensions as reflective of post-metaphysical thinking.[449] But he also notes a further problem, that of the relationship between philosophy and science. This is an important deliberation as the post-secular attempts to reflexively consider the legacy of the scientific Enlightenment in the hope of having philosophy remain an unassimilated critical tool. Post-secular philosophy can be a revisionist lens that invigorates the field of philosophy, allowing religious perspectives to remain active within that field of understanding.

Secular philosophy is a concern of Habermas's as he projects that the 'secularist self-understanding' of philosophy will more readily assimilate with the sciences.[450] Habermas fears that if this occurs philosophy will lose the power of reflexivity, and science will emerge

---

[447]Cooke, 'A Secular State for a Postsecular Society? Postmetaphysical Political Theory and the Place of Religion', (p. 229.
[448]Mendieta, 'A Postsecular World Society? On the Philosophical Significance of Postsecular Consciousness and the Multicultural World Society. Eduardo Mendieta Interviews Jurgen Habermas'.p. 4.
[449]Ibid.
[450]Ibid.

as the lens that offers a total understanding of the world.[451] In a post-metaphysical era, philosophy has become disengaged from its religious roots and then becomes subject to a secular agenda. Coupled with this is Habermas's suspicion of the Enlightenment as he continues to question its influence in contemporary times.

Habermas is critical of the Enlightenment project and its relationship with science, echoing the changes to philosophy over the last 20 years. This indicates not so much a move to post-secular philosophy as a rethinking of the Enlightenment, with a move away from secular philosophy. John Caputo discusses this in *On Religion*, providing the example of reason, which has been identified as a historicised and historically contingent concept by some philosophers.[452] Caputo argues that these philosophers have a more modest sense of how knowledge changes and evolves, presenting philosophy in more recent times as a humbler proposal. He states philosophers have largely rejected the ideas of meta-language and meta-narrative and have renewed their interest in religion.[453] Although Caputo mourns the loss of the break between religion and the academy that occurred as a result of modernity, the reality is religion remains a force in the lives of many.

> By the end of the nineteenth century God was indeed all but dead among the intellectuals. Religious faith had become scientifically dubious (Darwin), psychoanalytically twisted (Freud), and economically and politically reactionary (Marx), while Kierkegaard was saying that Christian faith represented a leap into the Absurd. The view from the pews was largely unshaken by all this. Modernity had no spiritual vision to offer in the place of the one it had torn down.[454]

For some philosophers, religion has made a return. Although there was (and to some still is) a tension between philosophy and religion, every field of philosophy contains writings from

---

[451]Ibid.
[452]Caputo, *On Religion*.p. 64.
[453]Ibid. p. 65.
[454]Ibid. pp. 55–56.

authors who are anti-Enlightenment, as well as those who are postmodern and post-secular.[455]

At the very least, discussion has been reinvigorated in the philosophical field, where

> [c]ontemporary philosophers have grown increasingly weary with the 'old' Enlightenment. Their tendency has been more and more to unmask the modernist unmaskers… and to look around for a *new* Enlightenment, one that is enlightened about the (old) enlightenment.[456]

These ideas are echoed by de Vries in his outline of the philosophical responses to the return of religion. He argues that appropriate responses to contemporary changes are 'perhaps no longer measurable with the help of such terms as *secularism, postmodernism, multiculturalism, transnationalism*'.[457] This he sees as reason enough to reconsider the phenomenon of religion and its return to the field of philosophy.

For Habermas, the post-secular offers a critical position from which to reflect on the legacy of the Enlightenment. For him, the Enlightenment agenda has run its course, and the modernist position has left a legacy of problems. The interviews touched on a number of contemporary problems – environmental, social and cultural – and noted that the post-secular offers a mechanism for dialogue on these issues while incorporating valuable religious and spiritual perspectives.

The below section will explore some broader themes found in post-secular literature that link to Habermas' work, but also discuss a range of perspectives found in the field.

---

[455]Ibid. p. 66.
[456]Ibid. p. 37
[457]H. De Vries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). p. 35.

As a central concern of Habermas, who has cited on a number of occasions the increasing place and role of religion in the public square, religion has been undergoing a rise in public profile.[458] That religion has an increasing profile and influence in this sphere is related to the high visibility afforded fundamentalist movements; a reaction to this phenomenon, also noted by Liedman, is the obvious increase of religion's presence in politics.[459] Religion had been relegated to the domestic or private realm by the secularisation theory; however, with the demise of that theory's credibility, religion is cited as being a central part of a vibrant public sphere.[460] Habermas also recognises that public opinion is often influenced by churches and religious organisations that, due to the pluralist nature of contemporary society, have increased their participation in public dialogue on a range of issues, including ethical and moral questions.[461] The position of the church in a post-secular world is further theorised by Trainor, who – drawing on the work of Habermas – argues that the church is becoming more widely recognised than ever before as having a legitimate role to play by offering a 'sacred solution' to western societies' ills.[462] Religion in this sense (Habermas does not indicate any specific religion) does not stand above society but needs to continue to foster an active engagement with issues of justice, as well as cultural and political dialogue.[463]

The effects of this are twofold; first, it increases the level of public visibility of religions and, second, it requires an increase in the literacy of both believers and non-believers towards religious images and language, further encouraging dialogue. From this aspect, it is evident

---

[458]Habermas, 'Notes on a Post-Secular Society', p. 17; JürgenHabermas, 'Pre-political foundations of the democratic constitutional state?' in Florian Schuller (ed.) *The Dialectics of Secularization,* trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 2006), p. 46; Jürgen Habermas et al., *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age,* trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge UK: Polity, 2010), p. 22.

[459]Sven-Eric Liedman, 'The rebirth of religion and enchanting materialism', *Eurozine,* 2008, p.2.<www.eurozine.com>, accessed 19 May 2010.

[460] Mariano Barbato & FriedrichKratochwil, 'Towards a post-secular order?', *European Political Science Review*, 1/3 (2009), p. 318.

[461]Habermas, 'Notes on a Post-Secular Society', p. 20.

[462] Brian Trainor, 'Theorising post-secular society', *Philosophy& Theology*, 19/1-2 (2007), p. 98

[463]Habermas, 'Pre-political Foundations of the Democratic Constitutional State?' p. 51.

that the post-secular is more a patchy and emerging vision, rather than the actual reality of the relationship between religion and society as it is currently manifested. Nonetheless, Habermas indicates that the progression of a post-secular society is underway in some parts of Europe and the western world, where secular society has to 'adjust' to the growing existence of religion.[464] Casanova discusses this newly awakened public persona of religion as world event, citing the election of Pope John Paul II in 1978 and the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, among other instances, as contributing to these changes. He also suggests that, in the context of globalisation, world religions are involved in global action and dialogue consolidating a more public and involved persona that offers public credibility to religion.[465]

According to Moberg et al., the public dialogue that a post-secular society may foster cannot simply be a 'bridging of differences' but is a far more complex discursive process,[466] one that requires what Connolly describes as a 'deep pluralism'.[467] As an example of this deep pluralism they cite as contemporary environmentalism, in which a blurring of the boundaries between secular and sacred demonstrates the current fluidity between different sectors of knowledge.[468] The environmental debate, underpinned as it is by principles of holism and the re-enchantment of nature, 'promotes the sacralisation of nature'.[469] For Lynch, this makes nature the site of the divine and, consequently, the human self becomes a sacralised site.[470]

The widespread and public deployment of this sacralised discourse on nature demonstrates how issues can straddle the secular/sacred divide to encompass a range of what may have previously been opposing agendas.

---

[464]Habermas, 'Notes on a Post-Secular Society', pp.19–20.
[465]Casanova, *Public Religions in the World*, p. 225.
[466]Marcus Moberg, Kennet Granholm, and Peter Nynas, 'Trajectories of Post-Secular Complexity: An Introduction', in Peter Nynas, Mika Lassander, and Terhi Utrianinen (eds.), *Post-Secular Society* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2012). p. 12.
[467]Bender, 'Religion and Spirituality: History, Discourse, Measurement.'. p. 147.
[468]Moberg, Granholm, and Nynas, 'Trajectories of Post-Secular Complexity: An Introduction'.pp. 12–13.
[469]Gordon Lynch, *The New Spirituality: An Introduction to Progressive Belief in the Twenty-First Century* (London: I.B.Taurus, 2007). p. 11.
[470]Ibid.

Often referred to as the visibility of religion, religious resurgence is a further characteristic noted in the literature. It refers to the notion that religion will not continue to simply exist in modern societies but, rather, is a 'creative and expansive force' (which, indeed, it always has been).[471] Gorski and Altunordu link this resurgence to an understanding that the world is a very different place when comparing 1968 to 2008, particularly when looking beyond Western Europe, where organised religion is growing in membership.[472] Berger also refers to this resurgence and possible explanations for it, including reactions against aspects of modernisation and secularisation (which will be discussed further in the following sections), but also rightly warns that all religions cannot be grouped together as a monolithic global phenomenon. Instead, discussions on religion require a diversified approach that acknowledges the differences inherent in religions worldwide, with some religions experiencing growth while others wane.[473]Tacey goes into further detail about this resurgence, using the umbrella term of spirituality to focus on the experiences of young people as well as alternate and so-called 'New Age' practices, all of which to him are indicators of disillusionment in the modern era.[474] Through this, he presents a focus on the phenomena present in Australia.

Historically, one of the key events often referred to as the touchstone of this disillusionment is the 9/11 attacks. Ward refers to this date as significant, as does Torpey, while also noting that there are other significant historical moments related to the post-secular.[475] This is due to his observation of the clustering of transformations in culture and politics that surround these

---

[471] Richard Schaefer, 'A new time for religion? ', paper presented at the 12th Berlin Roundtable on Cultural Pluralism Revisited: Religious and Linguistic Freedoms, 7-11 April 2010, p.6. <http://www.irmgard-coninx-stiftung.de/index.php?id=241>, accessed 20 May 2010.

[472] A. Altinordu and P. S. Gorski, (2008), 'After secularization?', *Annual Review of Sociology,* 34 (2008)*,* p. 76.

[473] Berger, 'The desecularization of the world', pp. 11–18.

[474]Tacey, 'Spirituality in Australia today', pp. 52–53.

[475] John Torpey, 'A (post-)secular age? Religion and the two exceptionalisms', *Social Research*, 77/1 (2010), p. 269; Graham Ward, 'The Academy, the polis, and the resurgence of religion: An interview with Graham Ward' by Brandy Daniels, *The Other Journal,* 12 (2008), <http://www.theotherjournal.com/article.php?id=439>, accessed 25 November 2009.

historical moments and that, to Ward, denote resurgence.[476] These changes have been influenced by the policy trends towards globalisation and multiculturalism, also experienced in Australia that have impacted both national and individual identity. Bouma, in the Australian context, offers some further detail about this resurgence by turning attention to both fundamentalism and revitalised religions. This includes his observations regarding Islam in Australia and Opus Dei worldwide, stating the changes in these movements are indictors of post-secularity.[477] Habermas also cites the examples of the 'winners' of this resurgence, including the worldwide Catholic Church, Evangelicals and Muslims.[478]

Although this resurgence is acknowledged in much of the literature, Derrida offers another perspective. He suggests that the resurgence is not the same as recurrence, neither is it a revival or counter-praxis to secularism; rather, it is a current manifestation or envisioning of a globalised world in which societies and cultures both communicate and resist.[479] In the Derridean sense, resurgence, therefore, is an expression of globalisation, and not necessarily an increase in religious adherence in the statistical sense. The return of religion is also noted by Derrida as a phenomenon that has astonished those who naively saw religion as at an end.[480] In a similar vein, Reder and Schmidt state that 'return of religion' is not, strictly speaking, the correct terminology; they suggest that religion is gathering renewed attention, albeit in a new form.[481] This theme is taken up by Harrington, who notes that the post-secular is reminiscent of revision and not necessarily the return to something that was absent.[482]

---

[476] Ward, ' The academy, the polis, and the resurgence of religion'.
[477] Gary Bouma, *Australian Soul, Religion and Spirituality in the 21ˢᵗ Century* (Melbourne Vic: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 102.
[478] Habermas, 'An awareness of what is missing', p. 19.
[479] Carl Raschke, ' Derrida and the return of religion: Religious theory after postmodernism', *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory*, 6/2 (2005), p. 13.
[480] Jacques Derrida, ' Faith and knowledge', in Jacques Derrida & Gianni Vattimo (eds.) *Religion* (Cambridge UK: Polity Press, 1998), p. 5.
[481] Michael Reder & Josef Schmidt, ' Habermas and religion', in Jürgen Habermas et al., *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age,* trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge UK: Polity, 2010), p. 2.
[482] Austin Harrington, ' Habermas and the "Post-Secular Society"', *European Journal of Social Theory,* 10/4 (2007), p. 547.

For Cesare Merlini, religious revival is not evidence of a post-secular era. He acknowledges that religious revival is occurring in a range of places internationally, particularly in the United States, in Muslim circles and elsewhere (e.g., Israel). He sees the temptation to view these trends as emerging post-secular indicators but considers other factors that make these changes appear contradictory.[483] The three examples he mentions require closer examination.

Merlini sees that there have been a number of profound changes in Christian circles; he also notes the impact that issues such as the paedophilia scandal have had alongside this.[484] Merlini acknowledges the growth of churches in South America and Africa, but sees this as strongly linked to a North American foreign policy agenda and the spread of US influence.[485]

The rise of fundamentalist groups is one of the most salient topics of the last ten years. Fear has dominated discussions that fail to consider the entire Muslim world (including Asian forms of devotion) and focus predominantly on the Middle East. Islam in all its diversity is seen as anti-western and anti-democratic, supporting a non-secular state that is insulated and uncompromising. For Merlini, attempts at securing a secular democratic state in a number of countries has failed due to significant outside interference.[486] Both in Israel and in the diaspora, Merlini sees changes to the Israeli state as resurgence. For him, the secular state of Israel, as its founding fathers envisioned it, is slowly evolving into a state that requires allegiance to religious principles often embodied in orthodox and fundamentalist Jewish groups.[487]

THE RETURN TO ORTHODOXY

---

[483] Merlini, 'A Post-Secular World?', (p. 117.
[484] Ibid. p. 118.
[485] Ibid. pp. 118–19.
[486] Ibid. pp. 119–21.
[487] Ibid. p. 121.

Alongside the changes mentioned above, the literature also remarks on a return to orthodoxy. Alessandro Ferrara asserts that all the major world religions are 'as active as ever and within each... the most conservative tendencies are on the rise'. [488] Boeve concurs with this sentiment, stating that on the other side of this pluralist landscape is an appeal to a 'pure' tradition historically constructed that for all intents and purposes may have never existed.[489] Nynas considers why this turn to orthodoxy has occurred, suggesting that although new identities are formed under the influence of the post-secular, this also has the effect of solidifying 'entrenched identities'. [490] Thus, post-secular movements have the effect of opening up possibilities of change while also sowing the seeds of resistance to that change by feeding a need for a stronger sense of religious integrity within groups. These opposing currents of resistance and change signify a new cultural framework in which a reinterpretation of religion and spirituality occurs with an accompanying recovery of tradition.[491] As discussed earlier one example of growing conservative trends is the Opus Dei movement in Australia.[492]

CHALLENGES AND REACTIONS TO THE DOMINANT NARRATIVE OF THE SECULAR

Taylor muses over the understanding of the post-secular in response to his discussion of Europe. He states that post-secular may not necessarily be an age in which declines in belief and practice will be reversed but, rather, a 'time in which the hegemony of the mainstream master narrative of secularisation will be more and more challenged'.[493] That the secular worldview

---

[488]Alessandro Ferrara, 'The Separation of Religion and Politics in a Post-Secular Society', *Philosophy & Social Criticism,* 35/1-2 (January/February 2009 2009), 77-91.p .81.

[489]Lieven Boeve, 'Religion after Detraditionalization: Christian Faith in a Post-Secular Europe', *Irish Theological Quarterly,* 70/2 (June 1, 2005 2005), 99-122.p. 109.

[490] Connolly as quoted in Peter Nynas, 'Post-Secular Culture and a Changing Religious Landscape in Finland', (Åbo Akademi University, 2010).p. 4.

[491]Giuseppe Giordan and Enzo Pace, *Mapping Religion and Spirituality in a Postsecular World / Edited by Giuseppe Giordan and Enzo Pace* (Religion and the Social Order: V. 22: Leiden ; Boston : Brill, 2012., 2012)., p. 1.

[492] For more information about the growth of this movement see Bouma, *Australian Soul : Religion and Spirituality in the Twenty-First Century*.pp.154–55.

[493] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 534.

has become both dominant and naturalised is what is being questioned here. With religion still playing a strong part in both private and public spheres, it is certainly relevant to question the pervasiveness of the master narrative of the secular. Schaefer, however, acknowledges the challenge that this involves, as the secular worldview has often been deployed as a means of experiencing and organising modernity; to dispense with it will be an enormous challenge since, as he states, it is one of the 'last remaining "master narratives" of modern history'.[494]

Another aspect noted by Barbato and Kratochwil is the need for 'some dissonant voices to the secular choir', some alternate views – which religion can offer – that are counterpoints to secular discourse.[495] Further to this, Philpott states that only when religion is recognised as an alternate narrative can there be a fuller understanding of the secular worldview.[496] Davie recognises that the problem here may lie in the fact that the main theoretical framework from which religion has been viewed was secularisation, causing the relationship between religion and modernity to be an overwhelmingly negative one.[497] An additional problem noted by Tschannen is that the secularisation thesis is 'ineluctably *ideological*', advocating a pessimistic response to religion.[498] That the secular became synonymous with modernity is largely what is being questioned here, with the breakdown of this power bloc noted by Casanova as derivative of the secular as ideological, universal and teleological.[499]

AN AMBIVALENCE TOWARDS RELIGION

Not all the literature is concerned with the apparent transformation a post-secular society may bring to the contemporary world. Geoghegan notes that the post-secular could suggest a

---

[494]Schaefer, 'A new time for religion?' p. 3.
[495]Barbato&Kratochwil, 'Towards a post-secular order?' p. 333.
[496] Daniel Philpott, 'Has the study of global politics found religion?', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 12 (2009), p. 196.
[497] Davie, 'Europe: The exception that proves the rule?', p. 77.
[498] Olivier Tschannen, 'The evolutionary principle in the study of religion and society', in G. Davie, P. Heelas & L. Woodhead (eds.) *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures* (London UK: Ashgate), p. 44.
[499] Casanova, 'The secular and secularisms', p. 1054.

'deeply antagonistic stance towards secularism'.[500] This is due to the term denoting the deep divide that the antinomy of secular versus religion has caused. From this position, religion is in opposition to the secular worldview, with a post-secular position an attempt to overcome this. To Geoghegan, then, the post-secular is not a rejection of the secular but, rather, recognition of the positives that both secularism and the post-secular offer, while acknowledging they also offer negative elements that require critical appraisal.[501]

While Geoghegan discusses the possibility of a coexistence of secular and post-secular principles, Dalferth takes this position further. He views the post-secular as holding misplaced hopes for cultural progress.[502] This is due to his explanation that a secular state may be officially neutral towards religion but society may not be; therefore, to state that the post-secular exists presumes that the secular existed in a society and that there has been a seamless progress from pre-secular to secular to post-secular.[503] This historical story of the presence of religion in the western world is vehemently disputed by Dalferth.

> There is no simple or unambiguous development… neither in the west nor anywhere else. There was never an age of faith in Europe…There never was a complete exorcism of religion from the public life of society or the individual life of its citizens such that a recent return of religion to the public sphere would mark a decisive historical change…And whereas proponents of post-secularism argue for its patchy emergence from the secular age by reference to phenomena…these do not in any sense add up to a coherent picture or present unambiguous evidence that we are entering a new post-secular age.[504]

While there is certainly much to consider in Dalferth's position – history is indeed never as straightforward as its interpretations often suggest –he largely ignores Habermas's discussion and contributions, as well as the overwhelming consensus in the literature on the demise of

---

[500]Vincent Geoghegan, 'Religious narrative, post-secularism and Utopia', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy,* 3/2 (2000), p. 206.
[501]Geoghegan, 'Religious narrative, post-secularism and Utopia', p. 206.
[502]Ingolf Dalferth, 'Post-secular society: Christianity and the dialectics of the secular', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 78/2 (2010), p. 320.
[503]Ibid. p. 322.
[504]Ibid. p. 324.

the secularisation theory. Both of these aspects are pivotal to these discussions. Dalferth further discusses his definition of post-secular as societies that are 'neither religious nor secular. They do not prescribe or privilege a religion'.[505] In the light of the literature previously discussed, this ambivalent position is not helpful in constructing a critical analysis of the secularisation theory.

Are we post-secular?

In response to this question, I discuss the position adopted by Adrian Pabst in 2013. Pabst critically explores the following:[506]

- That the post-secular fails to challenge the secularist account of religion that essentialises faith.

- Post-secularity fails to overcome the hegemony of secular reason.

- A denial of a shared transcendent outlook reinforces the dominance of secular reason.

- Post-secularity is wedded to notions of difference and alterity.

- The shift towards postmodern difference merely reinforces the sacralisation of the secular.

Pabst claims that since the nineteenth century theorists have focused on the pairing of modernity with secularity, and the concomitant decline of religion. He notes that since the 1960s there has been an equally strong development in the literature that explores the emergence of a 'significant religious dimension'.[507] Using the standard theoretical shift from modernity/secularisation to post-modernity/de-secularisation found in the literature, Pabst questions the assumptions that underpin these pairings. These assumptions include the rise of religion and its increasing public visibility, which are often labelled as a resurgence. For

---

[505]Ibid. p. 325.
[506]Adrian Pabst, 'Why We Do Not Live in a De-Secularised or a Post-Secular World ', (World Public Forum Dialogue of Civilizations 2013).
[507]Ibid.

Pabst, de-secularisation does not mean the resurgence of religion but, rather, the decline of the hegemonic presence of the secular.

Pabst explains that any suggestion of the return of God is mistaken, as the ongoing presence of religion in politics evidences. He claims the global presence of religion in politics is enduring, 'visible and influential', particularly since the decline of the secular hegemonic order.[508] Pabst does not by see this emerging presence as de-secularisation and post-secularity, as to him these 'imply monolithic realities and linear trends' that cannot 'capture the bifurcation between traditional, orthodox traditions, on the one hand, and modernising creeds, on the other hand'.[509] This is an interesting point, as he does begin to account for the internal changes experienced in individual religious organisations and denominations. He argues that the theories that explain these phenomena would be more useful than the uniform approach that the term post-secular indicates. For him, the post-secular remains trapped in the secular logic it challenges, as it cannot be understood without understanding its dependency on the secular.[510] The secular is the prism through which post-secular is viewed.

Why the post-secular remains secular

Although the post-secular challenges the hegemony of the secular, Pabst claims this relationship locks religion into an essentialised position, wherein it is seen as an enduring presence, while investigations into internal changes within religion and faith are overlooked.[511] It is these internal transformations that are so crucial to understanding the role of religion in contemporary contexts. Pabst argues post-secularity views[512]

- unbelief as the default position,

---

[508]Ibid.
[509]Ibid.
[510]Ibid.
[511]Ibid.
[512]Ibid.

- moral imperatives as a necessary inclusion in political debate, and

- religion as contributing to the common good on secular ground serving the purpose of secular politics.

Pabst also shows concern for Habermas's preoccupation with the contemporary growth in radicalised faith expressions and activity. Pabst considers this to be a narrow focus that commits Habermas to the secular state needing to remain religiously neutral and free of the influence of this radicalisation. Furthermore, Pabst notes that Habermas ignores the history of the attempts at establishing secular utopias in Europe that affected the vast majority of its population over much of the last century.[513] This particular omission is not only Habermas's blind spot; it is something overlooked in much of the literature. Habermas also notes that the discussion that takes place in political and public contexts must be free from reference to transcendent principles, something that concerns Pabst and diminishes religious influence significantly.

UNBELIEF AS THE DEFAULT POSITION

Erin Wilson and Manfred Steger note that, in the European context, 'unbelief is no longer the default position and is itself considered one option amongst many others'.[514] Charles Taylor's position here is that, in a secular age, unbelief is the default position, but has now been relegated to one option among many. For Wilson and Steger, the default position in a post-secular age is pluralism, a mix of both non-belief and belief.[515] Further to this, they argue that 'religion has been rehabilitated into the public sphere' and can function as a 'legitimate option for challenging dominant political ideological paradigms'.[516] The evidence they cite to

---

[513]Ibid.
[514]Erin K. Wilson and Manfred B. Steger, 'Religious Globalisms in the Post-Secular Age', *Globalizations,* 10/3 (2013), 481-95.p. 485.
[515]Ibid.
[516]Ibid.

bolster this point is the growth in faith-based organisations that are increasingly active in policy and social contexts, adding a non-market based voice to public campaigns.

POST-SECULAR AND DIFFERENCE

Michelle Dillon discusses how the post-secular, as espoused by Habermas and Taylor, endorses an active tolerance of religious and cultural difference.[517] To bridge the gap of difference, particularly where religion is concerned, is one of the most challenging of contemporary dilemmas. From the opposition to the building of mosques, to the display of religious items in public, the challenges here are significant. Acceptance of difference and otherness requires an engagement between faiths with an appreciation of, and generosity towards, exploration of sameness and difference.[518]

The argument discussed in the literature regarding the post-secular and difference suggests that there are two ways the gap can be bridged. Difference and plurality are held up to be positively welcomed, accepted and rationalised, alongside a passive pluralism as the perspective citizens must accept. As Dillon notes, these two positions are contradictory and require simultaneous engagement and disengagement.[519]

For Connolly, engagement across the divide of difference is crucial to achieve what he terms a state of 'deep pluralism'.[520] This pluralism is one in which a 'variety of fundamental perspectives gain a significant presence in cultural life… [and] can widen the politics of forbearance, generosity, and selective collaboration'.[521] What Connolly is describing here is a post-secular public space where difference is accepted without the dominance of one system

---

[517]Michele Dillon, 'Jurgen Habermas and the Post-Secular Appropriation of Religion: A Sociological Critique', in Philip Gorski et al. (eds.), *The Post-Secular in Question* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 249-78.p. 262.
[518]James Martin, 'A Post-Secular Faith: Connolly on Pluralism and Evil', in Alan Finlayson (ed.), *The Political Thought of William Connolly* (London: Routledge, 2010), 129-43.p. 4.
[519]Dillon, 'Jurgen Habermas and the Post-Secular Appropriation of Religion: A Sociological Critique'.p. 262.
[520]Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist*. pp. 184–87.
[521]Ibid. p. 187.

or set of values over another. Echoes of Habermas's post-secular dialogic process are found in Connolly's work, with the hope that public spaces can be opened up to encompass both secular and religious perspectives.

The post-secular self

The question of what constitutes the post-secular self is alluded to by Bouma as he suggests that the link between identity and religion in the twenty-first century is altogether different from that in the twentieth century, acknowledging that religious belief still forms the core of identity for some.[522] From this, the post-secular self may differ very little from the secular. This research suggests this is an underestimation of the impact that post-secular society has on the individual and will posit a configuration of the post-secular self based on the historical and philosophical changes that have occurred under the influence of post-secular society. I explore this in the following section.

A heightened awareness of changes to both the planet, and the life that is contingent on it, has signalled a significant shift in how the human person is understood. Secular models no longer seem applicable, particularly those models that concretise the dualist nature of the human person as constituted by the Enlightenment project. The separation of humans from nature fostered by a secular worldview is now viewed by some as an unsustainable position.[523] As discussed by Hamilton, 'if we understand how we became radically disconnected from Nature, this should help us understand what it would take for us to become reconnected with Nature'.[524] This separation resulted in what Charles Taylor describes as an 'anthropocentric shift' and is outlined in *A Secular Age.* Taylor's focus in his discussion of this term is on the

---

[522]Bouma, *Australian Soul,* p. 30.
[523]Gordon D. Kaufman, 'Re-Conceiving God and Humanity in Light of Today's Evolutionary-Ecological Consciousness', *Zygon,* 36/2 (2001), 335-48.p. 336.
[524]Clive Hamilton, *The Rebirth of Nature and the Climate Crisis* (2009) (July 7).

changes to the human person that occurred under the influence of secular ideas and ideologies.

This research acknowledges that secularisation has resulted in social and cultural changes, but what is more pivotal and central to this development are changes to the understanding of the nature of the human person. Consequently, the question of what constitutes the post-secular self is an important aspect at this critical time. I will explore a configuration of the post-secular self based on the historical and philosophical changes that are occurring under the influence of post-secular change. I propose that the advent of the post-secular self indicates the diminishing influence of secular humanism,[525] while bridging the human/nature divide.[526]

Reconfiguring the secular

According to Taylor, the secular self refers to the reconfiguration of the human person in what he describes as the 'recreation of human identity'.[527]The secular vision that heralded this evolution offered an alternative conception of the human person as, in order for the secular project to succeed, the human person needed to be reinvented as a 'disengaged, objectifying subject'.[528] For Berger, secular influence fostered individuals who see the world without recourse to religion.[529] In essence, this individual is atomised and disconnected from the world around them. Hannah Arendt called this 'mass society' in her seminal work *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.[530] The secular self was proposed as a self-fashioning model, a mature individual who has the capacity to live in a world without recourse to religion.[531] According to Taylor, the groundwork for these changes was laid down in the seventeenth and

[525]Frame, *Losing My Religion : Unbelief in Australia*.p. 129.
[526]David Tacey, 'Environmental Spirituality', *International Journal of New Perspectives in Christianity,* 1/1 (2009b), 1-5.p. 17.
[527]Taylor, *A Secular Age*.p. 560.
[528]Ibid. p. 560; Taylor, *Sources of the Self*.pp. 462–63.
[529]Berger, *The Sacred Canopy : Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*.pp.107–08.
[530]H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1973). p. 94.
[531]Hirschkind, 'Is There a Secular Body?'. p. 639; Taylor, *A Secular Age*.pp. 562–64.

eighteenth centuries when the transcendent dimension of human life came into question in previously uncharted ways.[532] He outlines four ways that this came about:[533]

- the eclipse of the sense of further purpose

- the eclipse of grace

- a fading sense of mystery

- the eclipse of the idea that God was planning a transformation of human beings.

In reflecting on more recent eras, Gary Bouma argues that the link between identity and religion in the twenty-first century is altogether different from that of the twentieth century, acknowledging that religious belief still forms the core of identity for significant numbers of people.[534] So, although the secular self is as influential as Taylor outlines, and has historical antecedents, he like Bouma, acknowledges the persistence of religion and its changing link to self-identity, and the role it plays in post-secular contexts.

Throughout *A Secular Age*, Taylor illuminates a number of changes in what Jose Casanova remarks in reference to the main theme of his work as 'the emergence of the self'.[535] Taylor's previous work, *Sources of the Self*, provides further understanding of the development of the secular self as 'stifling the response in us to some of the deepest and most powerful spiritual aspirations that humans have conceived'.[536] Taylor argues that the atomistic view of the human person that secular influence promotes isolates the self from wider relational sources and meanings valuable and necessary for human existence and flourishing. The secular influence positions religion as a private individual concern that, once relegated to the private sphere, becomes impotent in public arenas. This ignores the connection that exists between individuals and religion; according to Bellah, 'religion retains its unique capacity for

---

[532]Taylor, *A Secular Age*.p. 222.
[533] Ibid. pp. 222–24.
[534]Bouma, *Australian Soul,* p. 30.
[535]Casanova, *Secularization*.
[536]Taylor, *Sources of the Self*.p. 520.

reflection on the social whole', and this 'reflection' can take the form of public activity directed by and participated in by individual religious selves who, in and through these processes, manifest their belief in public ways.[537]

This has proved to be one of secularism's blind spots, as its predicted demise of religion did not occur.[538] Suggesting that, in order for the secular project to succeed, the human person needed to be reinvented as a 'disengaged' subject oversimplifies the complex processes and interactions humans are involved in.[539] The post-secular self is a reflection of this complexity, particularly in regard to human relationships with nature. Whether these changes will result in progress towards restoring the planet is unknown. Nonetheless, these changes are a reflection of a movement from models based on alienation to ones based on connection, and are driven by a growing desire for deeper understandings of contemporary crises.

Under the term 'disenchantment' Taylor notes a number of key issues related to the secular self. He views disenchantment as a 'subtraction story', along the accepted lines of the rise of science, the changes to human society under the proliferation of new ideas, and the decline of God.[540] Nonetheless, he notes it is not confined to Weber's subtraction story which tends to focus on the wider arenas of human interaction. Taylor instead proposes that there was a significant move in a 'new sense of self'.[541] This self moved from an open and porous condition, in which it was vulnerable to the world of spirits and the powers of the cosmos, to a buffered self, one in which the self is bounded, invulnerable and master of self-meaning.[542]

Taylor argues that the porous self existed in a world that did not hold solid boundaries between the self and the cosmos. Taylor refers to this as a 'fuzzy' boundary that positions the

[537] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*. p. 130.
[538] Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist*. p. 4.
[539] Berger, *The Sacred Canopy : Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. pp. 107–08.
[540] Taylor, *A Secular Age*. pp. 25–27.
[541] Ibid. pp. 25–27.
[542] Ibid. p. 38.

human person as vulnerable to a range of experiences and emotional responses. One case he examines is that of possession. Through the ages understandings of possession have existed on a scale that included 'full' possession, various levels of domination, and partial experiences of fusion between spirits and humans.[543] The porous nature of the human person allowed for these experiences to be understood as experiences, not just beliefs or ideas that could be reduced to a rational explanation. The point, for Taylor, is that no clear line could be drawn between the physical and non-human world.

Although the buffered self has been viewed as a shift towards a self that has shed irrationality and false beliefs, Taylor sees this shift as an impoverishment that has relegated the experience of enchantment to one of nostalgia located in the past.[544] He views this as a closing off of vulnerability to a range of now-distanced experiences.[545] This move toward a more clearly bounded self occurred gradually, influenced as it was by emerging ideas both revolutionary and more subtle. There is no doubt that attempts at reconnecting this severed link are occurring and are analogous to the porous self. The popularity of movies and television series that explore supernatural concepts, as well as concern for the environment often framed in a pseudo-spiritual way, are evidence of this. These explorations, although proliferating, are often dealt with differently than in the past and are viewed more as optional elements within the larger field of human, rather than purely spiritual, experience.

The secularisation theory played a large part in this repositioning of the spiritual, as it fostered a negative approach to religion that is reflected in changes to the self that occurred under its influence. The secular self is positioned as a way of 'being-in-the-world' and is often mistakenly understood as a neutral way of being, indeed as the default human position –

---

[543]Ibid. p. 40.
[544]Ibid. p. 301.
[545]Ibid.

as simply a choice not to be a religious being.[546] This is a misconception, as the secular self can be considered a way of being that is just as ideologically charged as a religious one. Secular is not a neutral position on the human person, as claimed; rather, it can be seen to operate as a position.

Regardless of the secular advocacy of neutral social and public spaces, at the heart of the secular is its normative position on the human person, which is a denial of the 'basic structure of being a human person'.[547] The resultant divide between humanity and God that secular influence upholds is evident in pronounced changes towards the human person within scientific, theological, philosophical and other fields of human endeavour. Believers have thus come to be framed by the idea that their belief is informed and motivated by feeling and subjectivity, and is associated with childish immaturity and illusion. Religion was no longer designated as a rational and legitimate desire of believers, but was set in opposition to the coming of age embodied by the secular self.

The divide between transcendent aspects of life, God, belief and the beyonds of human existence was fostered by this secularised rational view of the human person. The split that supported the rise of the anthropocentric view is explained by Taylor as one that took place gradually. This did not initially remove God altogether but narrowed the effects of providence over a prolonged process. The human person came to be seen more and more as a part of the rational order and would be less and less dependent on the four previously areas outlined by Taylor – which, while previously broader and reliant on the porous nature of the self, gradually narrowed in their understanding:[548]

---

[546]Alessandro Ferrara, 'Reflexive Pluralism', *Philosophy & Social Criticism,* 36/3-4 (March 1, 2010 2010), 353-64.p. 354.
[547]Caputo, *On Religion*. p. 9.
[548]Taylor, *A Secular Age*. pp. 222–24.

1. A sense of further purpose – the purpose of the human person moved to one in which, essentially, we only owe God for our own achievements and the common good is based on a rational, goal-oriented existence.

2. The eclipse of grace – God's freely given gift of grace that enabled the human person to live beyond the restrictions of their fallen nature was now viewed as being attainable through a reasoned, disciplined existence.

3. The sense of mystery fades – if the human person is designed for good, and to achieve good through the exercise of reason, there was no longer any mystery to existence.

4. Decline of the idea that God could transform human beings – self-cultivation would achieve the better good of oneself and others, and social harmony would ensue. Transformation and the need to call upon God to rescue us from the frailty of the human condition diminished while training, discipline and correct conduct were to take its place.

In these four considerations a secular view begins to take shape, as a shift from the long-held view of the fundamental reliance on religion and spiritual practice diminished. Under the influence of the secular, this divide grew wider and obscured the religious worldview.

A secular model views human persons as unique figures of agency and value, while assigning the natural sphere and nonhuman entities a differing value. It sets the natural world as outside that of inner and human experience, in essence alienating the human person from this world.[549] It is claimed by Patrick Curry that this separation and ostensibly foundational secular perspective initially evolved from the Abrahamic religions whose focus on a universal singular point of reference (i.e., God) disallowed other perspectives. Curry terms this 'monist essentialism' for, as outlined by Ferrara, 'there is one God, so there is one law, one justice,

---

[549]Ibid. p. 300.

one correct understanding of the good life or the good society',[550] and power was wielded to enforce this singularity.[551] Kaufmann also notes that Christianity fostered an anthropocentric orientation, particularly with its focus on the profound issues of human life such as birth, death, sin and our ability to be self-reflexive and conscious of such things. On these terms, monotheistic beliefs are claimed by Kaufman to be 'fundamentally human-centred'.[552] Essentially, these authors argue that both secularity and religion are implicated in the shift towards a human-centred way of being that is bounded, or using Taylor's term, buffered.

The link between secularity and religion is heightened by a discussion of the following aspects of the post-secular self discussed below: the sacralisation of the self, the collapse of the human/nature divide, the pluralist self and the virtual self.

THE SACRALISATION OF THE SELF

Often used in reference to 'New Age' spiritual practices, the sacralisation of the self signifies the use of the self as a personal spiritual authority, with this located in the 'deeper layers' of the self.[553] This is paired with the understanding that 'the self itself is sacred'.[554] This is considered a change from previous eras, with the sacred self seen not just as an experience or manifestation of the divine, but as an aspect of the inner true self. The move towards this post-secular sacralisation was assisted by a number of secular characteristics notably:

- the growth of individualism,

- the decline of religious authority and the rise of individual self-authority,

---

[550]Ferrara, 'Reflexive Pluralism', (p. 361.
[551] Patrick Curry, 'Post-Secular Nature: Principles and Politics', *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture & Ecology,* 11/3 (2007), 284-304.p. 289.
[552]Kaufman, 'Re-Conceiving God and Humanity in Light of Today's Evolutionary-Ecological Consciousness', (p. 336.
[553]Stef Aupers and Dick Houtman, 'The Spiritual Revolution and the New Age Gender Puzzle: The Sacralisation of the Self in Late Modernity (1980-2000)',
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241849455_The_spiritual_revolution_and_the_New_Age_gender_puzzle_the_sacralisation_of_the_self_in_Late_Modernity_1980-2000>, accessed May 6 2016.
[554]Ibid.

- the turn towards subjectivism and experiential values, and

- the understanding that the self is capable of exercising autonomous choice.

These four aspects mark changes to the secular self but also underwrite the current changes discussed in this exploration of the post-secular self, with the divine self as one dimension of this exploration. This divine self is held to be in contrast to the more widely promulgated pre-secular religious conception of the self as fallen, sinful and alienated from nature.

Lynch points out a number of dimensions to this aspect of the post-secular self.[555]

1. Recognition of our sacred selfhood – exists as points on a spectrum ranging from the self as a sacred site and an authentic expression of the divine to the self as divine.[556] This is significant, as it situates the human person as inherently good and no longer alienated from God or the earth. The divine is in the here-and-now and the gap between human and divine is non-existent.

2. The authority of personal experience – as an embodiment of the divine we can trust ourselves as revealing aspects of divine truth, allowing the sharing of ourselves and our experiences as the sharing of divine reality.[557] Tacey notes that this aspect of the self is in contrast to the autonomous secular self, which fosters narcissism and self-sufficiency. This post-secular aspect places an obligation on us to serve the sacred other.[558]

3. The search for authentic selfhood – the development of one's self is viewed as cooperating with divine progress and is the finding of one's true self.[559] This does not

[555] Lynch, *The New Spirituality: An Introduction to Progressive Belief in the Twenty-First Century.* pp. 55ff
[556] Ibid. p. 56
[557] Ibid. p.57
[558] Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution : The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality.* pp. 146–47.
[559] Lynch, *The New Spirituality: An Introduction to Progressive Belief in the Twenty-First Century.* pp. 58–59.

require a movement away from the material form of the self but acknowledges the complexities of embodied experiences and denies the need for disembodied release.[560]

THE COLLAPSE OF THE HUMAN/NATURE DIVIDE

In response to the current environmental crisis, a rethinking of the relationship between humans and nature has been occurring. Under the influence of secular ideas, nature has been denied as a site of sacredness and spirituality. In turn, nature-based religions came to be viewed with growing negative associations and suspicion, if not outright hostility, by mainstream Christian religions and non-believers alike.[561] In particular, pantheism and panentheism were associated with 'primitive' worship and polytheism. Although these beliefs are often part of more ancient cultures, they are being re-examined in this recent turn to nature.[562] Nature-based religions and spiritualities can foster a sense of reconnection between the human person and nature and a mutuality lost due to secular influences.

Nature came to be seen as separated from religion through the rise of science as an independent authority, whereas previous it was previously, in many ways, a field of religion.[563] Taylor's position on this is that the growing turn towards understanding the cosmos as a mechanistic universe prefaced the disenchanted worldview typical of the secular age.[564] The emptying of cosmos of mysterious forces and spirits paralleled shifts in subjectivism and identity. Self-cultivation and self-possession underwrote the rise of anthropocentric identity, as the human person no longer needed the power of God to rise above their vulnerable state but could use their own power and agency to negotiate the

---

[560]Ibid. p. 59.

[561]Bron Taylor, 'The Greening of Religion Hypothesis (Part One): From Lynn White, Jr and Claims That Religions Can Promote Environmentally Destructive Attitudes and Behaviors to Assertions They Are Becoming Environmentally Friendly', *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature & Culture,* 10/3 (07// 2016), 268-305.

[562]Ibid.

[563]Cornel W Du Toit, 'Secular Spirituality Versus Secular Dualism: Towards Postsecular Holism as Model for a Natural Theology', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies,* 62/4 (2006), 1251-68. p. 1256

[564]Taylor, *A Secular Age*.p. 300.

145

world.[565] This alienation from nature now positions the human person as disconnected from it and is implicated in the current destruction of nature seen in contemporary ecological crises. In view of these crises it has become an ethical imperative for humanity to reconnect to nature in order to regain our sense of self and rescue the planet from the brink of disaster. Although this appears to be ethical altruism, it situates the human person as both the source and the solution, and remains reminiscent of the anthropocentrism we had hoped to move away from.

The alienation spoken of by Taylor is also discussed by Mike King, who suggests this alienation from nature is a break from spirituality. Although he acknowledges nature can be understood from an entirely secular perspective, he notes that a deeper exploration of nature of necessity becomes spiritual. This, to him, is a site of post-secular spirituality.[566] Du Toit also discusses the entrenchment of secular dualism leading to alienation, with the term post-secular expressing an acknowledgement of our interdependence with nature.[567] Post-secular being is emerging as a way to bring the biological and spiritual dimensions of human existence together and reconcile them. Jersild suggests these aspects are complementary, with each bringing a particular perspective to our understanding of the human person, allowing for a fuller notion of what it means to be human.[568]

Post-secular changes are, to a degree, influenced by the rise of recent ecological discourse and the discontent that the human person has experienced due to the alienation from nature. This discontent fostered by secularism has directed individuals towards new ideas and understandings of religion and spirituality and the world around them. There has been change

---

[565]Ibid.

[566] Mike King, *Postsecularism: The Hidden Challenge to Extremism* (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co, 2009). p.171.

[567]Du Toit, 'Secular Spirituality Versus Secular Dualism: Towards Postsecular Holism as Model for a Natural Theology', (p. 1257.

[568]Paul Jersild, 'Rethinking the Human Being in Light of Evolutionary Biology', *Dialog,* 47/1 (2008), 37-52.p. 38.

in the way humans and non-humans are situated in the order of creation, with a growing emphasis on interdependency. This has heightened awareness of how all human persons, and indeed all living beings, are implicated in the planetary future.

RELATIONAL PLURALISM

The alienation often referred to in discussions of secularism and its effects suggests that the current move towards the post-secular self discussed in this chapter is a move towards reconnection and relationship. This is supported by the current pluralistic culture found not only in Australia but worldwide. The global movement of ideas and people has increased exposure to values and experiences previously inaccessible. For religion and spirituality this is equally true. This has also been driven by a growth of tolerance of different religious views, which in Australia has been termed by Gary Bouma as a 'multi-religious' society.[569] Bouma writes that the 'fact of religious plurality and the rise of discourses of acceptance of religious diversity have radically changed the social context... and individuals who are religious and spiritual'.[570] As the religious character of Australian society continues to evolve, pluralism will become more evident and influential.

Curry states that monist essentialism is often associated with religious and secular hegemonic practices, whereas pluralism (which is not to be confused with what he terms 'rootless' relativism) is supportive of relational and post-secular worldviews. For Curry, there are two aspects to the plural: 'any perspective... cannot exhaust other possible or actual perspectives' and 'a perspective requires a perceiver and a perceived'.[571] These two aspects of pluralism are suggestive of an inbuilt relational model that cannot exist without reference to other possibilities.

---

[569]Bouma, *Australian Soul : Religion and Spirituality in the Twenty-First Century*. p. 15.
[570]Ibid.p. 117.
[571]Curry, Yale University, 'Miroslav Wolf: Secularisation, Modernisation and Religion', (Yale University, 2011).p. 285.

Curry also sees the benefits of pluralism linked to an ecocentric view, as relational pluralism does not restrict 'the network of relations and perspectives that constitute all entities to human ones alone'; thus, pluralism is an essential enabler of ecocentrism and a renewed relationship with nature.[572] For Curry, it is imperative that the post-secular sacred is '*both ecological and pluralist*'[573] (his emphasis). Individuals within society recognise that the problems we face on a global scale are complex, and pluralism, as a methodological tool with its multiple perspectives, offers possible solutions to these.[574] This requires individuals to engage in a reflexive openness to a range of possibilities, beliefs and experiences of religion and spirituality.

THE TECHNO-SPIRITUAL SELF – VIRTUAL SPIRITUALITY

Currently influencing the field of human understanding is the use of technology to develop spirituality and spiritual identity. The increasing influence of technology on a globalised scale has disseminated religious ideas beyond old boundaries onto a worldwide stage, contributing to the increasing public presence and mobility of religious ideas. The proliferation of websites and the virtual presence of religion and spirituality on Facebook, YouTube and other social media sites has fed movements and linked people on a globalised scale. It is ironic that, while the logic of the secularisation theory doomed religion to extinction, the very technology that embodies its goals of modernity and rationality has enabled religious and spiritual movements to embrace this way of disseminating ideas and meanings.

On a surface level, spirituality and the World Wide Web is a partnership made in heaven. Even so, Du Toit notes that technology has enhanced secular ways of both seeing the world and the self, as it has removed a sense of mystery from aspects of life. Du Toit concedes that,

---

[572]Ibid. p. 286.
[573]Ibid. p. 297.
[574] Michael S. Hogue, 'After the Secular: Toward a Pragmatic Public Theology', /2 (2010): 346. p. 349

in this removal, meaning has been attributed to the technology itself.[575]Aupers and Houtman call this phenomena 'cybergnosis' – a convergence of digital technology and spirituality, a relocation of the sacred to the digital realm. [576] This partnership between technology, spirituality and the self has facilitated a kind of secularisation process and can be seen as one side of this story, with the other suggesting an enhancement of spiritual knowledge, identity and visibility.

For religion, cyberspace has presented many opportunities for expansion and dissemination. This is equally applicable to religious and spiritual identity. Karaflogka notes that religious structures and systems will continue to shape and be shaped by the dynamics of virtual culture. These effects are both 'creative and corrosive'.[577]

Religious experience can be mediated by the internet in a number of ways. Interestingly, in the online space it is known that the unaffiliated may have more interactions than the affiliated.[578] If that is the case, then there are a whole range of issues associated with religious identity that census data and other forms of data will not capture. In terms of further issues here, a 2014 study found that the internet has influenced disaffiliation.[579] There are many questions that still require answers regarding the internet space and the overall impacts it has had on religion and spirituality; however, some issues that need to be included here are how religion is impacted by social interactions on the internet, and how self-identity is constructed in this online space.

---

[575]Du Toit, 'Secular Spirituality Versus Secular Dualism: Towards Postsecular Holism as Model for a Natural Theology', (p. 1263.

[576]D Houtman and S Aupers, '" Reality Sucks": On Alienation and Cybergnosis', *Concilium: International Journal of Theology,* 41/1 (2005), 81-89. p. 3.

[577]Anastasia Karaflogka, 'Religion on - Religion in Cyberspace', in Grace Davie, Paul Heelas, and Linda Woodhead (eds.), *Predicting Religion* (England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008). p. 199.

[578]Micah Sifry, 'Religious Identity and Internet Use in America', (2010).

[579]Emerging Technology from The Arxiv, 'How the Internet Is Taking Away America's Religion', *MIT Technology Review,* (2014).

Lombaard elaborates on this viewpoint in his discussion of what he terms e-faith. He makes a distinction between *religion online* and *online religion* (his emphasis). Religion online is the extension of religion by institutions to an online presence; online religion is faith fed primarily by the internet.[580] Even though this distinction appears workable, Lombaard recognises that this may be too sharp a line to draw. It is possible for these positions to intersect at various points, as they are dependent on the very same technology. This leads Lombaard to suggest that, phenomenologically speaking, they are not very different.[581]

The implications of Lombaard's discussion are highlighted in the descriptive experience of being disembodied, unrestricted by gravity and geography, that virtual being facilitates. This experience has been likened to that of avatars, angels or gods.[582] It is understood as a transformative practice unhindered by physical restrictions. This sense of being beyond the physical has led to further speculation about what it means to be human and the quest for the self, with – for some – a deeper sense of liberation and escape. This virtual spiritual self, although appearing boundless, is dependent on a physical presence, as well as a variety of formations.[583] The appearances of diverse, countless and boundless virtual existences harbour what Horujy understands to be partial, unactualised practices that, instead of being positioned as new paradigms of human existence, 'virtualise' existing paradigms.[584]

'IMAGINED COMMUNITY'

Bryan Turner notes that there are a number of factors involved in religion on the web that are reminiscent of Benedict Anderson's 'Imagined Community' concept.[585] One of these is the

---

[580] Christo Lombaard, 'Thinking through the Spirited Web. Some Clarifications on the Internet and Embodied Experiences Thereof', *Communicatio,* 33/2 (2007). p. 5.

[581] Ibid.

[582] Houtman and Aupers, '" Reality Sucks": On Alienation and Cybergnosis', (p. 5.

[583] Sergey Horujy, 'Anthropological Dimensions of the Postsecular Paradigm', *Politics, Culture and Religion in the Postsecular World* (Faenza, 2011). p. 6.

[584] Ibid.

[585] Bryan Turner, 'The Post-Secular in Question: Religion in Contemporary Society', in Philip Gorski et al. (eds.), *The Post-Secular in Question* (New York: New York University Press, 2012). p. 151.

coming together of disparate groups that may be spread over vast distances, connected only in virtual space. The example he offers is that of the Muslim diaspora, which often finds itself living in communities hostile to its faith. As much as this can be seen as a space that brings people together, in this process of connecting to virtual communities these adherents may seek information and authority outside what may be considered their traditional boundaries. These kinds of interactions can also lead to a fostering of individualism, as it offers adherents a place to express their individual positions while claiming membership of larger groups. The ambiguous nature of these interactions shows how negotiable online communities can become, opening up possibilities of change as well as invention.

The individualism fostered by web communities continues to be one of the most noted expressions of secular, and now post-secular, identity. The competing movements involved in bringing people together as an imagined or virtual group are the same mechanisms that underpin individual expressions of religion and spirituality and, hence, a tailor-made approach to religion and identity. At the same time, this approach compartmentalises religion as a consumer product alongside the many other products available in the online environment. Spirituality has proliferated in this online culture, as individuals seek solutions to both everyday and less common problems. The theme of therapy or self-help that runs through these sites sees the privatisation of spirituality as a common outcome. In this regard, the anxieties regarding the intersection of modernity and religion appear to be borne out.

If these movements do not require attendance or formal participation and are less reminiscent of institutional churches, their appeal is evident. As sites of spiritual encounter, they are global in their outreach and blur, if not obscure, the class, gender, education and motivation of the people associated with them. Even so, there is speculation about the long-term impact these communities could have, as no real numbers can be known. The mobile nature of the

online environment is less conducive to long-term commitment, being designed for rapid spiritual consumption and easy transition from one identity to the next. This diversification of the spiritual marketplace opens up astounding possibilities not confined to the fundamentalist sites often are scrutinised by media outlets. Obviously, associations with radical groups will continue to be considered an ongoing threat to the possibility of future peace; however, this threat may be overstated. Nonetheless, the presence of such diversity in the online environment indicates that the secular and post-secular are competing in a breakdown of the boundary that has existed between the sacred and the profane for millennia.

In conclusion, I agree with Horujy, who argues with great clarity, that the post-secular human represents a 'specific dual anthropological configuration' of the religious and the secular human.[586] In the post-secular individual, these two positions are in dialogue with each other and move away from estrangement to a reconsideration and reassessment of their relationship.[587] The erosion of the boundaries between these two configurations may allow for access to solutions to contemporary problems such as the environmental crisis. At the very least it can encourage the deconstruction of a secular anthropological view in which human beings are disconnected from each other and the world in which they live.

Conclusion

From an overview of the literature it can be seen that there is no consensus on the definitions of the secular, religion and spiritualty; what does emerge, however, is a consensus that the post-secular refers to changes in religion, with secular remaining present, alongside these changes. Additionally the secularisation theory a highly contested model that is no longer

---

[586]Horujy, 'Anthropological Dimensions of the Postsecular Paradigm'. p. 4.
[587]Ibid. p. 6.

viable. The neosecular and post-secular positions are attempts to reinitiate and reinvigorate discussion of the relationship between religion and society with some success, particularly in drawing attention to the element both hold in common – a concern with religious change. Religion and spirituality are also key emerging aspects subject to significant changes. In relation to my research question- what is the nature and extent of post-secular changes in Australia, this exploration of the literature has clarified that even in a seemingly secular society such as Australia, the possibility of post-secular change is present.

Chapter 4. Method

This chapter sets out my methodological approach to this research, bringing together the theoretical considerations of Chapter 2, with their application to the research phenomenon. I begin with an exploration of my pre-understandings and then discuss how I apply hermeneutic phenomenological methodologies to this research. This research is situated in the qualitative field of inquiry and employs the constructivist approach, based on the understanding that I, as the researcher, and the participants actively construct the meanings that emerge through this process. This qualitative inquiry will 'not "discover" knowledge from behind a thick one-way mirror; rather it is literally created by the action of inquirers with the "object" (construct) inquired into'.[588]

As discussed in Chapter 2, some key ideas have influenced me, and this research recognises that I, as a researcher, co-constitute meanings with the participants. These meanings are understood as interpretations and descriptions of the phenomena investigated. Additionally, meanings are never complete but continue to develop and are linked to me as the researcher and my preconceptions. Vital to this process of understanding and interpretation is a continuous conversation between the researcher and the 'texts'. The researcher is not outside the processes of investigation but, rather, as an insider with a history of understanding is implicated in the processes and sees this as a positive role in the search for meaning.[589] Particularly through the recognition of my own relationship to the phenomena, this allows for an approach that is dynamic and evolving, moving beyond the various points of knowing and discovering to a deeper interpretative stance. The inclusion of my pre-understandings in this chapter highlights this relationship.

---

[588]Egon Guba as quoted by Carol Grbich, *Qualitative Research in Health: An Introduction* (Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1999).p. 5.
[589]Laverty, 'Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations', (p. 11.

As discussed in the previous chapter, this approach originated in the work of Heidegger and was later developed by Gadamer. This methodology involves a focus on the human person as immersed in and defined by experience, not as something we may simply know, but as something constitutive, as comprising who we are.[590] This is in line with an approach to religion as phenomenological, as a lived experience that individuals, including myself, are immersed in. The rejection of the subject/object divide is fundamental to my processes of understanding here as I live the research process and method.

Pre-understandings

Integral to this research, and my choice of hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodology, is the importance for me of reflecting on my pre-understandings and their influence on my research. In the preliminary stages of this research I undertook a reflection of my pre-understandings. Pre-understanding is one of the hallmarks of the Gadamerian approach. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer notes the importance of awareness of 'one's own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings'.[591] This necessitates the 'foregrounding and appropriation' of one's pre-understanding.[592] An examination of my pre-understandings offered a vehicle for much of what I have examined in this research and was the beginning of my post-secular journey.

As a committed Catholic for much of my adult life, I believe I have a strong awareness of the secular worldview and its effect on the individual. I began by reflecting on this and other assumptions I carry with me about the secular and post-secular and its effect on religion and the individual. Below, I outline my pre-understandings, reflecting on those I view as significant to this research. I reconsider these in Chapter 10.

---

[590]Gadamer, *Truth and Method*.p. 67.
[591]Ibid.p. 271.
[592]Ibid.

1. **A secular worldview has a negative effect on the relationship between religion and the individual.**

In the initial stages of this research, I view the secular as always in tension with religious or spiritual aspirations. Societal change, marked as it is by modernity, has pushed religion to the margins, where it must compete against a wider marketplace of modern distractions.

I assume that religious positions exist in tension with all other views, and that this tension is largely to blame for the struggle religious organisations face. One example I have followed over the years that appears to confirm this is the teaching of scripture in public schools. I am also aware that a number of schools, under that 'scripture' banner, may already teach a variety of worldviews, such as Buddhism and pseudo-spiritual topics such as positive life choices. In New South Wales, and in certain schools that I am aware of, there has been ongoing criticism of scripture classes and 'ethics' classes have been introduced as an alternative.

2. **A secular worldview creates conflict for the believing individual, who must live and function within a society that does not accept their belief system.**

On an individual level, a person is confronted with many different values and understandings. Certainly, in terms of influences on the individual, the media often has a strongly biased agenda towards a secular position.[593] The individual cannot help but be influenced by these values due to their prevalence in the public and private sphere.

From my own position as a teacher, I have been involved with people from many different backgrounds and in many different contexts. Throughout this time, I have come across few people claiming to be religious or spiritual who do not appear to be in some way influenced

---

[593] One such agenda has been repeatedly directed towards the presence of Islam in Australia.

by a secular worldview. If I look at myself, I also have to say that I have not always lived up to the faith I profess, and I can very easily blend into the secular world that I claim to resist.

3. A secular worldview dictates the relationship of the individual to religion.

The pressure that a secular worldview exerts over the individual is inexorable and ineluctable. This relationship is one-sided and the individual has very little power to resist. With this pre-understanding, the secular is monolithic and dominates many sectors of society. It is a causal factor in the waning of religion; as the secular worldview grows, religious influence diminishes. This, to me, was equally relevant from a social perspective an on an individual level. Didn't the statistics verify this? Fewer people in church means greater secular influence; it was obvious. I myself had witnessed this decline in my own experience of faith and that of those around me. All that was left to do was mourn the loss of the 'golden age' when faith was more widely accepted and lived.

4. The secular worldview relegates religion to the private sphere.

I believed that, once religion lost its public relevance, all that was left was the private practices of its remaining adherents. These remnant groups would maintain strong ties amongst themselves in smaller groups, allowing for the growth of smaller community type churches.

My experiences of smaller church groups were a part of my upbringing in the faith, and what I noticed at the time is that they developed out of a shared need for mutuality and that, often, splinter groups formed from larger congregations. They may or may not have had doctrinal or personal issues with the larger groups, but certainly the members of these smaller groups sought devotional comfort and shared faith experience with other members. Due to the

flexibility and mobility of these small groups, there was somewhat of a push for such home church-type groups in my community during the 1970s, 1980s and beyond.

5. **Religion is more deeply connected to the individual and their sense of self than the secular worldview acknowledges.**

As the secular worldview has no paradigm for understanding religious worldviews, I ascertained that secular positions underestimate the value of religious notions. They offer, at most, a cursory understanding of the importance of religion to the individual, rather than any real attempt at dialogue or shared values. From this position, religious individuals are often stereotyped and mocked. Even a fleeting glance at newspaper and media representations of religious individuals will lead to this conclusion.

I often resent the power of the secular world to impinge on my life. There is so little balanced religious content apparent in contemporary Australia, with the bias toward the consumerist worldview largely obscuring the spiritual values so necessary for a meaningful life. I have often felt powerless against the secular machine, just one remote voice in my corner of the world.

6. **The secular worldview has provoked powerful counter-movements.**

Links are often suggested between the rise and activity of conservative and fundamentalist religious groups and the power of the secular world. I have often thought this to be a strong possibility, even though I realise that this is more complex issue than popular opinion may suggest. Even so, the media plays a lead role in creating this opinion of so-called 'marginalised' religious groups, often portraying them as cultic or, even worse, immoral or evil.

On the receiving end of this reality, there was even a sense within the smaller prayer and church groups I have been involved of an 'us' and 'them' mentality. There was an overt need to 'stay strong' against the secular tide that threatened to inundate us. Often, too, I recall that the rhetoric of secular values and worldviews as evil was deployed to galvanise the members of these groups.

7. **A post-secular worldview fosters the validity of individual religious expressions.**

At a basic level, upon initially reading about the so called post-secular phenomenon I may have misunderstood the term. I have understood it simply as the return or revitalisation of religion, a kind of springtime for religion and its followers. It may also encompass the acceptance of individual expressions of religious adherence, and give individuals room to consider the growing public awareness of religious and spiritual thought. I wonder whether this will turn out to be rather a naive way of thinking about the post-secular. It is highly probable that this phenomenon will turn out to be far more complex and contradictory in nature than this.

Despite such acceptance, individual religious experience and identity will, in all likelihood, remain a challenged and even a marginalised place for the individual, as religion is still so often viewed with suspicion and negativity (such evidenced by the popularity of Richard Dawkins's *The God Delusion*). If the popularity of this poorly argued book, and similar publications, is anything to go, by the rise of atheism is probably just as notable as the rise of the post-secular.

8. **The post-secular worldview collapses the boundaries between public and private displays of religious belief.**

One view that is raised in sociological discussion is the relegation of religion to the private sphere. This position is underpinned by personal choice and freedom to pursue faith behind closed doors without impinging on anyone's rights not to be encroached upon by this belief.

From my perspective, this plays out in the workplace. I have accepted that my beliefs are, in a sense, 'put aside' to teach at the institution for which I work. To put aside my beliefs and principles is part of functioning in a secular environment. Obviously, this is not as straightforward a process as I suggest here, but in the case of post-secular society it is suggested that this type of demarcation will be less likely to occur. Instead, religious perspectives will be welcomed in the public sphere. Sounds a little too good to be true, but that is my initial understanding of the collapsing of this boundary.

Theory in Action

This research draws on the phenomenological school of thought, integrating philosophical and methodological considerations that require careful negotiation and ongoing reflection. The methods used in hermeneutic phenomenology are not necessarily apparent at the beginning of the research, but become part of an unfolding process. The path towards this can be found during this research through a relationship with the literature and the research process. There are no prescriptive methods available, such as those found in quantitative research, as the researcher needs to consider the best way forward throughout the research process. In other words, hermeneutic phenomenological research can produce unique research informed throughout by the researcher's understandings and individual research journey. Although this can assist in producing unique research outcomes, it can also be considered one of the most challenging aspects of the work. Nonetheless, it provided me with

incentive to work closely and be guided by those who have trodden this path before me. Furthermore, hermeneutic phenomenology is an interpretative approach through ongoing dialogue with self and others, with the interviews providing a way to link interpretation and understanding in an ongoing dialogic process.

Moving from philosophy to method was an interesting and challenging time for me and required me to think beyond reproducing the ideas from the texts with accuracy and precision, to instead explore the ideas beneath the text. I drew on the philosophical ideas of prejudice (the historical reality of the researcher), reflection (working with the interview texts, and my understandings as they arise) and interpretation (as a productive not reproductive process) to inform the key steps in my research method.[594] A number of researchers have used similar methods and assisted me here, including Ajjawi and Higgs[595], Hunter[596] and van Manen.[597] These researchers offered me guidance in how to translate the philosophy to the method while including the above-mentioned aspects that were so vital to me as the research unfolded.

What I considered to be the most appropriate method to employ for this research were interviews that were recorded and transcribed, with follow up interviews facilitating ongoing engagement and reflection with the texts and the participants. In-depth interviews support the dialogic and reflective principles of hermeneutic phenomenology, in which meaning is created between the researcher, the experiences and the participants. I used focused, semi-structured interviews as they facilitate in-depth inquiries into a field of study. I employed interviewing techniques in which I was the listener, keeping questions to a minimum and

---

[594] Sharkey, 'Hermeneutic Phenomenology'. pp. 31-32.
[595] Ajjawi and Higgs, 'Using Hermeneutic Phenomenology to Investigate How Experienced Practitioners Lear N to Communicate Clinical Reasoning', (
[596] Colin Hunter, 'Hermeneutics and Phenomenology in Research', <http://www.jmm.org.au/articles/13615.htm>, accessed May 26 2011.
[597] Max Van Manen, 'Phenomenology', <http://www.maxvanmanen.com/files/2014/07/SAGE-Phenomenology.pdf>, accessed September 2 2014.

allowing the key informants minimal disruption while acknowledging their expertise. My use of key informants or elite interviewing recognised that these participants had specialised knowledge on my area of inquiry that was crucial to moving towards deeper understandings.[598]

The participants I approached and who agreed to participate in this research are listed below[599]:

Table 4.1: Research participants

Participant	Position
Professor Emeritus Gary Bouma	• Emeritus Professor of Sociology, School of Political and Social Inquiry, Monash University 2008 • UNESCO Chair in Interreligious and Intercultural Relations – Asia Pacific 2005
Associate Professor Carole Cusack	• Associate Professor in Studies in Religion at the University of Sydney • Editor of *Journal of Religious History* and a number of related journals
Associate Professor David Tacey	• Associate Professor Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences La Trobe University • Author of five books on spirituality and culture, including *Edge of the Sacred* and *Re-Enchantment: The New Australian Spirituality*
Dr Scott Stephens	• Online Editor of Religion and Ethics for the ABC • Honorary Research Advisor UQ
Professor Clive Hamilton	• Professor of Public Ethics at the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics Charles Sturt University/University of Melbourne • Australian author and public intellectual
Professor Tracey Rowland	• Dean of the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family, Melbourne Campus • Adjunct Professor of the Centre for Faith Ethics and

---

[598]Victor Minichiello, Rosalie Aroni, and Terrence Neville Hays, *In-Depth Interviewing: Principles, Techniques, Analysis* (Sydney: Pearson Education Australia, 2008). pp.52–53.
[599] All participants agreed to have their names disclosed.

I chose to do elite interviewing for the distinct purpose of involving others in an ongoing dialogue. In elite interviewing, selected participants are especially knowledgeable about a certain field. They may be in a position of authority or working in a specialised context, denoting both their authority in the field and that they have attained a high level of experience and knowledge. My reasons for conducting elite interviews were NOT to

1. uncover truths – but, rather, to produce a more complex picture of the phenomena;

2. uphold my preconceptions – as I needed to be open to alternate/opposing/new responses and directions. My preconceptions needed to be challenged.

My pre-conceptions and my historical horizons were the starting point of my method and moved me throughout the process to question myself and my developing understandings.

As post-secular research is an emerging area of discussion in Australia, I was motivated to gain contact with the knowledge that the participants have through their concentrated lived experience in the field. The benefits of access to their experience are undeniable; nevertheless, there are also a number of challenges involved in expert interviewing. These include gaining access, which may be difficult due to the constraints of the day-to-day program of these individuals, so some flexibility may be required in terms of location and interview times. Another problem noted in the literature is the 'naive image of the expert as [the] source of objective information'. [600] These interviews cannot be viewed as simply collecting information; they require 'careful validation and a solid theoretical basis'. [601] Hermeneutic phenomenology supports the rigour required of this research as it is based on theoretical understandings that justify this intensive and reflexive approach.

---

[600]Alexander Bogner, Beate Littig, and Wolfgang Menz (eds.), *Interviewing Experts* (Research Methods Series, Basingstoke :: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). p. 5.
[601]Ibid. p. 6.

Gadamer has contributed to my choice of these methods by emphasising the ongoing processes of interpretation that take place through understanding, which effect change not only to understandings of the knowledge itself, but to those involved in the processes.[602] In my role as researcher, I adopted self-reflexive activities including journal writing, engaging in a reflective dialogical and interpretative process. In addition, the interviews undertaken with key figures in this field will form the basis of an ongoing dialogue with the topic, called for by theorists in this area of study. Further to these interviews I will seek from the participants a continuing reflection on their responses. I have obtained ethics clearances for this research and abided by the required protocols of the University of Notre Dame.

The underlying questions of this research rest on the development of religion in the contemporary context. There are two initial questions; I asked the participants to consider:

1. How do they understand the term post-secular?

2. How does their understanding of post-secular apply to the Australian context?

These open-ended questions were discussed during the interview process, in which the participants responded to the questions with minimal interruption so as to garner their thoughts and reflections without my direction. Offering the participants freedom to discuss and reflect without overt interference supports phenomenological research as it allows the phenomenon to show itself through the discourse of the expert; this approach seeks to find understanding from openness to the structure of the essence of the other's experiences. Allowing participants time and space to bring out these understandings is necessary in phenomenological investigations.[603] These recorded interviews then became the texts used for reflection and interpretation.

---

[602]Especially Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald Marshall (New York NY: Continuum, 2004).

[603]Grbich, *Qualitative Research in Health: An Introduction*.pp.170–71.

To assist this investigation the interview component adopted a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology due to its applicability to research that incorporates an investigation of human activities. A small sample of participants was used, as phenomenological studies do not rely on quantitative verification, but on thematic and interpretative methods. This process can be time-consuming; hence the small sample of participants. The selection criteria for participants were that they be Australian academics and commentators who are actively engaged in the field of religion and have worked in this field over at least the last 15 years. For my research the participants were approached for a first interview, later followed up by email contact with the possibility of further brief email/phone contact – in total, up to two hours of interview with each. Each interview was recorded and transcribed for analysis. Once initial data was collected, analysis and interpretation was shared and ongoing between myself and the participants. This ongoing reflection on, and dialogue with, the research questions was in line with the need for the deeper reflective techniques advocated by hermeneutic phenomenology. The guidelines provided by Grbich for a good interviewer were essential to the interview process and included the capacity to listen intelligently, total focus at all times, sensitivity in complex situations, enthusiasm and interest in the interviewee.[604]

Interview process

1. Application for Ethics Clearance.

2. Ethics approval.

3. Finalisation of interview questions.

4. Contacting possible participants (initially via email).

5. If prepared to contribute to research, following up with letter and ethics guidelines.

6. Preparation of interview schedule.

7. First interviews.

---

[604]Ibid. p. 89.

8. After each interview, transcription and complete preliminary analysis.

9. Following first interviews, analysis across all data. First, each interview was analysed (vertical analysis); this was thematic analysis in the iterative mode.

10. Emergent themes were reflected on and discussed with supervisor.

11. Coding exercises conducted – looking at data horizontally across the interviews and drawing common themes together.

12. Second interviews– these could be skyped, phone or email rather than face-to-face.

13. Participants given original transcript and researcher considered specific themes emerging seeking their ongoing input

14. Ongoing reflection on these interviews/themes followed up by email – thanks and possible further comments.

The first part of this reflection process involved self-reflection on my own pre-understandings. This signposted some issues that may have become apparent in the interviews, including my questioning of secularism and the conflict between faith and secular values that I had considered crucial to the move towards post-secular discussions. That the post-secular has emerged out of conflicting and competing views is something I hoped would come through in the interviews as either valid or not. That the secular worldview, in my initial understandings, is a strong and influential position was also tested. Contemporary considerations of post-secularism show that this may not be the case as the interviews may raise other considerations.

To further reflect on my understandings I began a journal, some of the writings from which will be included at various points in this thesis. I do not have a strict regime of writing at regular times but used it to record questions, consider concepts and to 'get out' some thoughts or expressions that came to mind throughout the research. A diary was also used to record the

interviews and concerns in regard to the mechanics/logistics of the research. Both of these tools are used to encourage reflection and accountability.[605]

Preliminary analysis

Preliminary analysis took place after each participant interview. Each interview transcript was identified by a fact sheet containing basic participant and interview notes. Information included details such as location, date and time, length of interview and any special circumstances that required noting, as well as major issues to emerge and any follow-up issues. Each interview was transcribed as soon as was practicable after it had taken place. The transcript was then be checked, read and reread for accuracy. This was followed by readings requiring a questioning approach alongside a 'checking and tracking' of the data to identify issues arising, including any requiring follow up.[606] Another reading of each transcript for possible future directions then took place. I printed out the transcripts with large margins on the side of the data and noted both questions and ideas that arose from it. A number of other methods can be used here, such as comparing issues in transcripts with my own experiences, reading the data in different sequences, identifying specific words or phrases, brainstorming and noting issues arising, listing topics covered and 'chunking' data according to identified groups.[607]

Thematic data analysis

Full data analysis took place once all first interviews had been completed and preliminary analysis had been completed. This involved a more sophisticated approach to the data than the preliminary analysis, as by then the issues arising in the data had become evident. At this stage, thematic analysis was undertaken in the manner outlined by Grbich.[608]

---

[605]Ibid. p.90
[606]Carol Grbich, *Qualitative Data Analysis* (London: Sage 2012).p. 21.
[607]Ibid. p. 63.
[608]Ibid. p. 61.

1. Read and reread database.

2. Recall the research questions, theoretical framework, and literature reviewed, underline/colour key segments and/or write descriptive comments alongside in the margins where further insight is useful.

3. Group like segments.

4. Attach overarching labels and identify sub-groupings.

5. Conceptualise these groupings and link with literature and theory.

This thematic analysis involved a focus on repeated words or phrases, cases, narratives and evidence of answers to the research questions. This was done manually, without the assistance of a software program. This was followed by an ordering of the data into meaningful groupings that were easier to manage, using one or more of the approaches discussed by Grbich: the 'block and file' method, conceptual mapping and/or segmentation.[609] Each of these approaches is designed to support theoretical interpretation and assist in the writing up of the data in summary form.

In attempting to understand the information participants shared with me, I moved constantly between the whole and its parts – that is, I considered their ideas and understandings in relation to my own, as well as to each other's, moving through and around the perspectives offered. This movement is not a methodological movement as much as it is an ontological one, as Gadamer's conceptualisation of hermeneutic phenomenology was about being, first and foremost, before knowing. So, for me to have the opportunity to scrutinise my histories is fundamental to my being, especially as new understandings emerged and I could see myself changing in and through the research.

---

[609] Ibid.

Challenges

There are a number of challenges noted in the literature that were encountered during the interview and interpretation stage; these are described here for reflection purposes as they impact the practical implementation of this research.

Lack of prescription can appear to foster a casual approach to the research. Contrary to this impression, a scholarly and strong familiarity with the philosophical underpinnings approach were required.[610] Alongside a competency in the philosophical underpinnings of the research, I have been able to draw on the experiences of others to consider the best way towards understanding. This is not based on the more traditional or accepted coding approach, which is sometimes viewed by phenomenological research as mechanistic; instead, it is primarily based on reflection and reflexivity, acknowledging my subjectivity as central to the process while calling in to question claims of objectivity often used to authenticate research.

Questions of credibility are likely to be raised but it must be understood that hermeneutic phenomenology is founded in the empirical data of lived experience.[611] The trustworthiness of hermeneutic phenomenological research is situated in the transparency of the process and the ability to bring the reader into the experiences of the researcher. This involves the researcher articulating the experiences of the interviews and data analysis in a sensitive and expressive manner, enabling the reader to see and hear what the researcher saw and heard.[612]

The call for the researcher to work with 'layers of meaning' required me, as the researcher, to reflect deeply.[613] So, beyond the thematic analysis are the other reflective techniques that assisted in my immersion in the research. Journalling, in particular, is accepted as a way of

---

[610]Holroyd, 'Interpretive Hermeneutic Phenomenology: Clarifying Understanding', (p. 7.
[611]Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*., pp. 22–23
[612]Grbich, *Qualitative Data Analysis*.
[613]Sharkey, 'Hermeneutic Phenomenology'. p. 31.

understanding the personal views and assumptions encountered throughout the research process. Alongside this, openness to my pre-understandings was critical as I was not seeking to reproduce ideas and concepts but instead to construct them between the participants and myself. Being upfront and owning up to my own ideas is essential to transparency and the ability to move beyond them. In the next chapter, I begin to explore the interviews and develop emerging themes and perspectives that lead to the fusion of horizons between myself and the research participants. This fusion is critical to the ongoing reflective process undertaken in this research, as it facilitates a broadening of the process of understanding and the realisation that I was not seeking an objective and fixed meaning but instead to open up meanings in a dialogic process.

Case Studies and Hermeneutic Phenomenology

In addition to the above research method, I undertook further interpretive analysis by including three case studies on contemporary Australian religious movements. The three cases discussed in Chapter 9 became an area of focus as my research developed. These movements are exemplars of the post-secular phenomena I was investigating. I initially discovered some details regarding these movements in my early research, which then led me to search and reflect further on their significance. As I collected more information on them, I began to notice some commonalities in their origins, philosophies and devotees. To undertake the investigation of these movements I revisited the Heideggerian principles discussed in Chapter 2, including the circular nature of understanding and the forestructure of understanding.[614] These principles underpinned my interpretive approach as I sought to find

---

[614] Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p. 195.

further meanings of the contexts in which people experience religion. As Heidegger asserts, meaning does not occur in isolation from culture, history or the social world.[615]

Heidegger and Gadamer argue that the interpretive process is circular, situating the researcher in a dynamic process of moving back and forth between the whole and the parts of the research topic. By including the cases discussed in Chapter 9, I continued to consider and reconsider the meaning of the post-secular – drawing out through the case studies a more fine grained examination of the phenomena associated with the post-secular. The use of multiple interpretive methodologies to explore a phenomenon, in the context of a single study, is a unique perspective for undertaking qualitative research, hence my inclusion of the case studies. The interpretations blend with my ongoing understandings, interview analysis and other data used in this research to arrive at a deeper and more genuinely phenomenological-hermeneutical interpretation of the post-secular in Australia.

Case studies are often employed as a qualitative way of approaching experiences, phenomena and causality. Merriam describes a case study as 'an in - depth description and analysis of a bounded system.'[616] Furthermore, 'Anchored in real - life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon. It offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers' experiences.'[617] As the analysis process in interpretive, phenomenology involves an iterative and repeated course by which the data (in the form of language and text) are read, summarized, and re-read by the researcher. In this way the case study provides an additional opportunity to synthesize relevant information that can guide insights.

---

[615] Ibid. p. 43.

[616] Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research : A Guide to Design and Implementation* (Somerset, UNITED STATES: Wiley, 2009). p. 40.

[617] Ibid. p. 51.

The case study approach utilized aligns with hermeneutic phenomenological principles by offering a vehicle to explore the details of the interpretative movements of the researcher in relation to the phenomena under investigation. In addition, case studies allow the researcher to investigate the contexts in which the phenomena emerge.[618] The purpose of this research focus was to develop exemplars of the phenomena. Often used in heath research, case studies and hermeneutic phenomenology are paired to assist in the reflection and interpretation necessary in clinical settings. Benner explains this in her work which uses the hermeneutic circle expressed via three strategies: paradigm cases, exemplars, and thematic analysis. These strategies, Benner argues, 'are useful for allowing the particular claims of the text to stand out and for presenting configurational and transactional relationships'.[619] A paradigm case is 'a strong instance of a particular pattern of meanings'.[620] An exemplar case is useful as 'recognitional tools and presentation strategies. An exemplar is smaller than a paradigm case, but like a paradigm case is a strong instance of a particularly meaningful transaction, intention, or capacity.'[621]

The objective of researching, reading, writing and presenting these examples is to search for understandings that can be used as exemplars.[622] In this process, the researcher ascribes meaning to common experiences that are uncovered during the course of analysis. This engagement with the data, along with conscious recognition of their own background and experience, allows the researcher to question and challenge interpretations along the way.

---

[618] Sarah Crowe et al., 'The Case Study Approach', *BMC Medical Research Methodology,* 11 (2011), 100-00.
[619] P. Benner, *Interpretive Phenomenology: Embodiment, Caring, and Ethics in Health and Illness* (SAGE Publications, 1994). p. 310
[620] Ibid.
[621] Ibid.
[622] Ashwin Kumar, 'Using Phenomenological Research Methods in Qualitative Health Research', *International Journal of Human Sciences,* 9/1 (2012), 790 – 804. p. 799.

> The validity of insight does not depend on the use of a variety of cases from which the social inquirer can make generalizations, or in any quasi-scientific design, but from an authentic insight into the nature of a constellation...It provides understanding rather than prediction.[623]

In summary, the case study investigation undertaken in Chapter 9 used a hermeneutic phenomenological approach that included an in-depth focus on three religious movements currently active in Australia; New Monasticism, Creation Spirituality, and Evolutionary Christianity. As my research revealed, these movements are important examples of post-secular religion in Australia. As exemplars of the post-secular in Australia I identified characteristics of these movements based on detraditionalisation, pluralism and blended knowledge systems, as indicated by the literature. These three aspects became increasingly evident during my research, and from the Australian context very little had been written about them. This indicates that post-secular changes are occurring on the margins of mainstream religions in Australian society. These changes often go unnoticed, being overlooked by statistical events, hence my focus on them as case studies.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Crotty's four questions in relation to developing a research project have been discussed in this chapter.[624]

1. What epistemology is being held to?

The epistemology of this research is constructionism, the view that no objective truth or meaning exists outside the mind. Meaning is not discovered but constructed. Research is a

---

[623] A.J. Mills, G. Durepos, and E. Wiebe, *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research* (SAGE Publications, 2009). p. 273.

[624] M. Crotty, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (SAGE Publications, 1998). p. 2.

human activity in which the researcher as knower is central, and the investigator and the investigated become interactively linked in the creation of findings.

2. What theoretical perspective lies behind and grounds the methodology?

The theoretical perspective is interpretative hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on the lifeworld or human experience as lived, illuminating details and aspects within that. This interpretivist framework of inquiry follows the ontological perspective of not one reality, but rather multiple realities to be scrutinised.

3. What methodology will govern the choice of method, linking that choice to the outcome?

The methodology is hermeneutic phenomenology, the study of lives and their meanings. In hermeneutic phenomenological research, when posing a question the researcher must not just understand the question, they must also live it; helping participants describe experiences as they are lived, to capture their key understandings.

4. What methods will be used?

The method employed is interviewing. Often used in hermeneutic phenomenological research, interviews serve two purposes: first, to explore and gather experiential material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of the phenomenon and. second, as a way of developing meanings through understanding of experiences.

PART B: INTERVIEWS AND FINDINGS

Chapter 5. Answering the Research Questions

This chapter centres on the major topics raised in the interview process and discusses the findings of the initial stage of data collection – the recorded interviews and the transcripts of these interviews. These topics were found to be central to this research as a result of hermeneutic phenomenological reflection upon the data collected, and were evident across each interview forming the basis of this early reflective stage. With each interview the emergence of specific themes became more apparent and related directly to those that had arisen in the literature as being the key factors. These factors were introduced in the literature review in Chapter 2.

To begin this process, I reviewed each recording as soon as it possible after the interview, as well as my notes written during each session. In the following weeks, I began transcribing the interviews and used a 'block and file' [625] approach to sorting the data, identifying commonalities and segmenting them during these initial readings of the data. I reviewed these recordings several times, firstly to transcribe the data, followed by notes and initial reflections. These initial examinations provide the main focus of this chapter.

The two main questions posed during the interviews reflect the research questions and were

1. How do you define post-secular?
2. How does this apply in the Australian context?

The use of these open-ended questions in expert interviews is recommended, as this technique facilitates analysis and allowed me to enter into the world of the participant

---

[625]Grbich, *Qualitative Data Analysis*.p. 66.

through an open conversational dialogue.[626] This also allowed the participants to explain 'why they think what they think' and is the preferred method for interviewing elites.[627] These questions remained intentionally broad to give the participants scope to consider not only the questions asked but also any additional information in relation to each individual's areas of expertise.

A number of topics were discussed during the interviews with three topic areas consistently emerging in each interview:

1. Secular/secularisation/secularism.

2. Religion and spirituality.

3. The relationship of religion to the self.

Each of these topics will be addressed in this chapter using direct quotes from the participants. This initial reflection is then followed by a more in-depth analysis that adopts further hermeneutic phenomenological techniques, the results of which are explored in the next chapter.

Defining post-secular

All the participants were very much aware of the current literature on the post-secular. Habermas was well known, as was Peter Berger's work and others discussed in the literature review. Discussions on the basic meaning of the post-secular as religious resurgence or greater visibility of religion in the public square were familiar to the participants, as was the lack of literature on the topic in an Australian context.

---

[626]Joel D. Aberbach and Bert A. Rockman, 'Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews', *PS: Political Science and Politics,* /4 (2002), 673. p. 674.
[627] Ibid.

There were a number of problems or further lines of inquiry that arose out of the interviews, particularly revolving around the problem of defining and applying the concept of the post-secular. There was an oft-stated objection to the use of the term itself, aptly expressed by Carole Cusack: 'the term post-secular has a number of enormous problems', one of which, she suggests, is that its works from the premise that we *were* secular – we need to consider that this has not been clearly established in the literature. Additionally, it is viewed as an ideologically-charged term used to further the agenda of those who may have felt marginalised under secular ideologies. Again as expressed by Carole Cusack: 'I don't know why anybody would actually use it except with deliberate ideological intent'. This suspicion regarding use of the term post-secular prompted me to consider what context the term has been used in and to consider the reasons why this may have occurred. Using the example of Habermas and Berger, my reflections on this are noted in Table 4.1, opposite.

Gary Bouma also noted that post-secular is one term that has, so far, not led to any conclusive understandings as it has too much inherent uncertainty. According to Bouma it is an 'indicator' of change, 'a kind of "hey something's going on term"', but provides nothing more that can be said. Bouma's preference is for the term 'multifaith', as written in a number of his works. According to Bouma, this term reflects the demographic changes as well as the ideological changes in Australia and other societies worldwide. As a sociologist, this word preference would appear to capture these dimensions.

Table 5.1: Usage of post-secular and de-secularisation – Habermas and Berger

	Habermas	Berger
use and context	Since 2001[628] These were in the context of a discussion of political/liberalist issues calling for wider dialogue in the public square that incorporates religious perspectives, is a political response reconsidering regulated secular public spaces, a political response	1999 – de-secularisation.[629]he is not using it in the same context as Habermas. Berger's understanding is based on resurgent religion and is a sociological response to this
In response to:	Political changes, religious unrest, highly publicised conflict in the Middle East and the 'growing threat' of Islam in the west. Also the global rise of fundamentalism and missionary/conservative activity (not restricted to Islamic contexts)	The rise of fundamentalism, reconsiderations of the conditions of modernity, sociological change and resurgent religion
Purpose	I think he considers the solutions so far employed to seemingly violent and negative tendencies in religion ineffectual, and considers greater understanding can be achieved through open and respectful dialogue. This will always need to include religious perspectives as they remain a strong influence worldwide	I think he hoped to reinitiate dialogue about religion and reignite debate about its role in the public square. Also, for sociologists to reconsider the role of religion in the modern world
Conclusion	Cusack's point that the secular is a theoretical device suggests that the post-secular is also then a theoretical device. Secular and post-secular then become sociological constructs to explain the decline of religious participation and the return to	It would seem counterproductive for Berger to reconsider his own theory. I do think that he came to the realisation that he could no longer ignore the evidence and needed to readdress it. Like Habermas, Berger is reconsidering his previous

---

[628]Habermas, 'Religion in the Public Sphere', (, Habermas, 'Faith and Knowledge'.
[629]Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World : Resurgent Religion and World Politics*.

religion respectively. However, Habermas is readdressing some of what he has said before about the secular by reconsidering this under the rubric of the post-secular.	understandings.

Reflecting on this use of the term post-secular as an indicator, I considered a number of possibilities

1. The term post-secular shares the same inherent instabilities and inconsistencies as terms such as 'postmodern'. Equally, the terms secular and modern were/are as controversial, unstable and troublesome and are still argued in academic circles.

2. This instability allows a range of competing definitions and understandings to circulate at one and the same time, fertilising a dynamic field of thought and theory.

3. This reflects the 'newness' of the term as well as functioning to point to its 'oldness', i.e., its historical roots – this helps me as it shows that an incorporation of the secular is vital to any discussion of the post-secular.

Another response noted a much deeper and deliberate opposition to use of the term post-secular. Scott Stephens stated that 'some people won't buy the description to begin with', and David Tacey likewise said that 'any suggestion that religion might be back really gets a whole lot of people upset, a lot of very influential people'. There is as such also an apparent resistance to its use, based on an ideological opposition to religion. This is not a consequence of greater tolerance of religion but an intentional and programmatic response that seeks to keep religion out of the public square. On the other side of this argument, Tracey Rowland suggested that the problem is not only this active resistance to the term post-secular but a lack of resistance to the forces of secularisation: 'we have allowed our own [Catholic] institutions to succumb to this secularist mentality and we have to fight back'.

There was also an inclination towards considering the post-secular as a development of the secular. Clive Hamilton discusses this in his response:

> Well I mean people talk about post-secular to invoke the idea that we are moving beyond the secular age. Not so much that the secularisation thesis is wrong it's just that it wasn't recognised being a certain phase with a certain character that would come to an end.

This response resonated with my own considerations as, from this perspective, the post-secular is a reflection of the secular landscape and a reconsidering of its contemporary applicability. This aligns with the objectives of this research, which are to address this area of study by reflecting, questioning and considering the implications of these while drawing on a range of voices and perspectives to inform these processes.

In line with the above understandings, some responses also indicated there was a movement away from secular to post-secular views of the world and life. Tacey also considered this the possible start of a new era that shows the inherent weaknesses of secular thinking and ideology. It is more than an indicator, operating as a critique that says the secular is a failed project or sociological experiment. Post-secular, in this sense, speaks of the limitations of secular ideologies. To this extent the responses followed the literature, with a range of viewpoints expressed by the participants. From my initial analysis of the interviews, there appears to be more consensus on the secular than on the post-secular. Participants considered the problems and shortcomings of the secular, as outlined and summarised in Table 4.2.

Table 5.2: Summary: defining secular/post-secular

Participant	Secular	Post-secular
Carole Cusack	Questions the existence of a so called secular age – no uniform secular milieu	'Used by those with overt religious agenda' – questions its use
Gary Bouma	Yes it used to say secular (in reference to Australia) but all that meant was we were ignoring religion at the moment	An indicator of change – questions its use and meaning
Tracey Rowland	An overt ideological agenda	Used to indicate the idea that religion matters in some academic circles

Scott Stephens	An ideological position held up to be the norm	An indicator of problems in the fundamental foundation of western political agendas
Clive Hamilton	Secular has been questioned and found to no longer be valid in its previous understandings	Indicates a move away from secular and widely accepted understandings of the secularisation thesis
David Tacey	Secular has become naturalised as the 'default' position	Indicates deep ideological issues and problems associated with the secular

There is no conclusive or majority response emerging through these interviews on how best to define post-secular. The interviewees were mostly general in their responses and could point out and offer small-scale examples, but no large-scale changes are evident. This is in an immediate sense a direct reflection of the literature as explored in earlier chapters. Even though the interview responses resonated with the literature, there was also a sense of needing to readdress the understandings of secular – this was a unanimous response. The secular was seen as needing redress across the board. This is an interesting response, as it shows that the previously accepted and longstanding theory of secularisation is under question with the interviews reflecting the literature here.

From these initial responses, participants considered the definitions further with a number of more detailed comments. These ranged from broad observations that consider historical and ideological factors to more specific concerns, such as the commodification of spirituality.

Tracey Rowland considered the historical development entailed in the use of the term post-secular:

> I think in its broadest sense it simply means that sociologists have reached a point where they understand that religion matters a great deal to many people in the community. It determines their choices and influences their behaviour and that it can't be ignored sociologically speaking. It's an acceptance that the sort of spirit of the eighteenth century, it's not so much that it's dead, but that it's an inadequate way of making sense of the world.

She went on to express the view that 'I don't think we are necessarily experiencing a resurgence'. Here, she prefaces the need to acknowledge the influence of certain cultural changes heralded by the 1960s. These evoked an anti-Christian, but not necessarily an anti-religious, mentality and reflected the 'search for a different, non-Christian spirituality' that exemplifies a number of these changes in the 60s.

Carole Cusack's remarks are reminiscent of Rowland's in the sense that she acknowledges that the whole point of secularisation was to liberalise religion – not eradicate it. She remains adamant that the relationship between secular and post-secular is based on a false premise: 'Post-secularity doesn't work because we never really had secularity'. Secularity, in this sense, is 'the idea we are in a social situation in which everything is kind of uniformly and blandly committed to the secular, totally secular, has never been the case'.

This attitude is also related to the following comment made by Gary Bouma, who remains unconvinced of a post-secular age. He considers the ebb and flow, movement and countermovement, that characterise religious and spiritual movements. These are never straightforward or clearly delineated eras:

> So I think to say we are post-secular and all of a sudden religious difference makes a difference, it made a difference until well into the 70s and then it stopped making difference for 20 years. Now it started making difference again, well which bit are you gonna be post.

The relationship of secular to post-secular is notably present in the comments made by a number of the participants on the relationship that exists between these phenomena, as indicated by David Tacey's statement:

> I mean as soon as we are able to name the secular, and name it precisely as a theoretical position, we are already post-secular as it were. And so it's one thing to be in it and it's another thing to be able to look at it in a slightly objective way'.

As Tacey suggests, the nature of this relationship is a troubled one, in that the secular has come to be viewed as the 'default' position, a naturalised ideology that is above scrutiny. Even the suggestion of a post-secular emergence stands as a critique of this position and opens up the secular to further examination.

Scott Stephens takes this position further. According to Stephens, the post-secular goes beyond Habermas' notion of resurgence to include the 'beginnings of an identification of what is inadequate in western liberalism itself' as it is located in secular values and understandings of the kind of a society desired by its founders. So, post-secular here does not only operate as a critique of the inadequacy of secular worldviews but specifically indicates deeper ideological inadequacies and instabilities.

How does this apply in the Australian context?

The responses to this second question by the participants indicated a more cautious and reflective response than the previous question. For the most part they were hesitant to suggest that Australia was post-secular. The responses ranged from Carole Cusack's adamant 'no' and Gary Bouma's alternative offering of a 'multifaith society', to more qualified no's including David Tacey's 'not yet' and Clive Hamilton's 'these things always take a long time'. These responses provide an interesting reflection on the current state of religion in Australia

According to Cusack, the state of religion in Australia is reminiscent of a more general cultural understanding of Australians as religiously indifferent, with no hint of post-secular resurgence:

> I think the majority of Australians are utterly religiously indifferent. They're not atheists, there are very few real atheists. They are not fervently religious, very few really fervently religious ones. They're either nominal, so they put themselves down as nominally

somewhere on the census or they're 'nones'. That means if you're religious mate I don't care, it doesn't bother me.

With this attitude apparent in some Australian circles, it is certainly difficult to consider Australia ever becoming post-secular – although there is a generalised perception that Australians are indifferent to many aspect of cultural life, not just religion [630]Gary Bouma also considers that 'you can't get much steam up about religion in Australia. Somebody wants to be steamy about their own fine go ahead just don't bug me, that's the bottom line'. Under these conditions, the use of the term resurgence is a considerable overstatement.

Even so, Tacey, Hamilton and Stephens do not rule out the possibility of a post-secular future, or what I will describe as the surfacing of post-secular undercurrents. Tacey entertains this possibility by stating:

> Australia is anomalous because the religions in Australia don't yet understand post-secular. The religions on the whole are just coming to terms with postmodernism let alone post-secularism and therefore the religions are still in essentially a defensive position in their bunkers... religions are in a sense not yet in a position to be able to grasp the post-secular moment, it's far too early... Australians, they are still reluctant to use the word religion so they say I'm spiritual. Now that is partly I think the first indication that we are in a post-secular society.

This final sentence is indicative of specific changes in the Australian context which are noteworthy and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

Hamilton offers a more extensive reflection that exemplifies a number of characteristics, such as changes in Australia as contrasted with the United States, which he sees as taking a more 'atavistic turn'; Australia is in a sort of interim stage signified by what he considers 'regional chaos'.

---

[630] Stephen Harrington, 'Australians Couldn't Care Less About Politics? Really?', *The Conversation,* (2016).

So there is something new happening. Whether it will peter out or gather strength I'm not sure. A year or two ago I thought it was gathering strength now I have doubts again. But I think that represents something new and quite different, that is talking about a clearer set of moral principles that goes beyond the superficial ideas which grew out of the 60s and 70s, about finding your own moral rules and following them. So yes that's my sort of sense of what the post-secular thing means... Now we are in this state of regional chaos in Europe and the US and here in Australia, although the nature of the chaos is different in each place, but I can't see any form congealing out of this yet. It will happen but when and in what form I really don't have a sense of, it's hard to say. I mean we saw in the 90s for example quite a sustained emergence of the new religions which still find an airing on the ABC with *The Spirit of Things,* but now that's faded, that's not going anywhere. I mean there are people who adhere to it but it has lost its dynamism it's quite clearly not going to go anywhere even though it has its adherents, and even though the ABC still has the program.

This sense of uncertainty was echoed in the statements by Tacey, who suggests that Australia experiences changes at a slower, often delayed pace: 'There's always a time lag so for the post-secular it will be a few years before people are allowed to talk more freely about their beliefs than they do at the moment'. Even so, Bouma (in reference to the census) predicts an 'overall increase in the percentage of Australians indicating their religion'.

Stephens's reflections expand on this position by considering the question of Australia as post-secular as being bound up with the fact that so much of Australian social life is 'so visceral'. To him the Australian relationship to religion is characterised by

[s]uch an aversion to notions of authority, not just ecclesiastical authority, but moral authority as well. There is such an aversion to anything like social programs or rigorous conceptions of the common good... but also... an inherent aversion to the notion of sin. Put all those things together along with the relative social immaturity and the reasonably adolescent nature of Australian social life reflected in media and political debate, I just wonder because there is not that social maturity, because there is not that capacity for self-criticism... precisely because of all those things in public life Australia is increasingly oriented towards private interests... because of all those things secularism here is different to the US and Europe... Bound up in a godless mantra of live and let live, I'll leave you

alone, you leave me alone. As soon as somebody crosses that line then we invoke a kind of secular divide.

From Stephens's exposition, it is reasonable to assume that a post-secular Australia, if and when such a movement may occur, will be on a different trajectory to our global neighbours, as the secular foundation upon which this movement is bases exhibits significant cultural differences.

Secular

It was not possible to discuss the post-secular without reference to the secular and the relationship between them. It was also evident that all participants were familiar with the secularisation thesis and arguments surrounding this theory. Responses in regard to the secular were centred on defining the term and the contexts in which it is applicable. A further concern was the secularisation thesis and doubts/arguments about its current validity.

The definition of secular is addressed by Carole Cusack, who considers this a straightforward process: 'etymologically the Latin gives us where we are, the secular is the here and now'. This is expanded on by Tracey Rowland

> [Milbank] argues traditionally the concept of the secular meant the world before the second coming of Christ. In the Latin liturgy there is frequent references to *in saecula saeculorum,* until the end of time, and so it was a concept that was time-related. From Christ to the end of time.

This time/era understanding is based on religious roots and the widely known work of Augustine of Hippo, among others. However, for Rowland it is critical that we stop thinking about secular as a 'spatial concept... that there is something called the secular world', as the time-related concept 'mutated' to the spatial one.

Although appearing relatively clear-cut, it is the use of the terms secularisation, secularism and secularity that elicit further responses in discussions. A detailed response related to the Australian context was offered by Tacey:

> So when they invented this of idea of secularism it's not what we mean today by secularism. When they gathered together in their meetings around Parramatta and Perth and Adelaide in 1890, and then leading up to the federation of the states in 1901, to them secular just meant that the government of the day should not govern with a view to religious prejudices, religious position or favouring say Irish Protestants over Irish Catholics or something like that.

An example of this kind of historical movement can be found in the establishment of the University of Sydney. Established as a secular institution, specifically outside religious influence and governed by secular principles such as merit entry, rather than entry based on religious affiliation, Sydney University broke from previous traditions.[631] Although this is the historical reality, ironically the University now boasts various accommodation houses and support services for those with religious affiliations.

So, although Tacey considers the historical perspective to be less clouded by ideological prejudice as these founders had a view to an open and equal society, what has happened since was also a part of his discussion. Tacey continues, 'secularism is still the dominant force by far in Australia. I mean secularism as an ideology, not secularism just as it was in 1901, but it became a materialistic anti-religious ideology'.

Cusack anticipates this type of response by prefacing her discussion of secularity and secularism as 'real problem terms' because of the ideological baggage associated with them.

> Post-secularity doesn't work because we never really had secularity. We had secularisation and we have the secular, but secularity – the idea we are in a social situation

---

[631] The University Of Sydney, 'New History Examines University's Role as a Public Institution', <http://sydney.edu.au/news/84.html?newsstoryid=9132>, accessed March 7 2017.

in which everything is kind of uniformly and blandly committed to secular, totally secular, has never been the case.

This position is countered by Stephens, who notes that these terms go beyond being simply descriptive, to an active ideological agenda: 'there is secularity, there is secular, but in terms of the kind of political social programming – it wasn't descriptive, but trying to be programmative and normative'.

Tacey echoes these sentiments: 'secularisation is an indoctrination. It indoctrinates us so profoundly and so covertly I think that it even assumes it's not a theory at all. It assumes, frequently, because it has the dominant position in our society, that it is common sense'.

This then leads to a discussion of the secularisation thesis which is treated as equally contentious by Tacey:

> The secularisation theory is flawed, and all its assumptions are flawed. Its main assumption is that as humanity gets more educated it will have less interest in and hunger for the sacred, and that has proved to be completely wrong.

Tracey Rowland notes areas previously unaffected by secularisation as now secularised

> We have had a few decades of a kind of self-secularisation in the Church's own agencies. We've had secularisation within our hospitals... We have [so] gone out of our way so as not to offend people that we have allowed our own institutions to succumb to this secularist mentality.

For Rowland, secularism is a force that needs to be resisted as its consequences are a loss of religious, and therefore cultural, identity for institutions and individuals. This suggests that this loss can lead to uniformity and lack of distinctiveness, as religious identifiers are compromised on the basis of not wanting to 'offend people'.

Religion and spirituality

There was recognition by all of the participants of the changes to religion and spirituality in contemporary times. A number of issues related to this topic, including the split between religion and spirituality, the proliferation of spiritual and pseudo-spiritual practices and movements, and definitions of spirituality and religion.

DEFINITIONS OF RELIGION

Beginning with definitions of religion, Cusack provides an overview of three kinds: essentialist, functionalist and polythetic. Essentialist definitions are 'insider' and 'theological' and, she would argue, relevant only to theologians. Functionalist definitions look at 'what religion does' but, for Cusack, this opens up other problems, such as religion being relegated to a category of culture or a variant of ideology, leaving little difference between it and other ideologies. Polythetic definitions offer a number of criteria in order to qualify, such as Smart's eightfold typology that includes 'scripture, sacred places etc.'[632].

These references to defining religion are important as they relate to recent changes in how spirituality is understood. According to Bouma, 'the whole notion that religion and spirituality are different in the twenty-first century in some palpable way, I will argue yes'. According to Cusack, religion has increasingly become viewed as a 'lifestyle choice' and not a birthright, as it may have been previously understood. Tacey's reflections follow on from this; 'young Australians are still reluctant to use the word religion... although even when people say I'm spiritual they will often add at the end of it I'm not very religious'. This rift between religion and spirituality is a significant concern of Tacey's:

---

[632] See N Smart Secular Education and the Logic of Religion. 1968, London: Faber and Faber.

> The secular people pulled religion and spiritualty apart because it enabled them to be critical of religion while actually ripping out the guts of religion, which is our relationship with God, which was suddenly called spirituality.

This was also elaborated by Stephens, who reflects on Slavoj Žižek's critical stand on modern, commodified and 'fundamentally self-delusory' spirituality. To Stephens, '[s]pirituality is this thing I nurture, this thing that allows me to hold onto my truest and most authentic self', oriented as it is towards nothing other than 'making us feel better about our godless lives'. Hamilton also considers changes to spirituality in terms of personal subjectivity when he states:

> The thing about it is that we come to it with such a modernist subjective understanding. 'Here's this smorgasbord of spirituality, now what suits my personal need' is not what spirituality or religion is about.

Contrary to these notions, he also notes that religion, and specifically Christianity, is 'not just a set of beliefs but a set of practices... that change who they are'. This theme of transformation enacted through religious practices and beliefs counters the suggestion that religion has been emptied of spirituality.

For Cusack, spirituality only means something in religiously institutional contexts such as 'Catholic spirituality... Islamic or Buddhist spirituality, it mostly matches with mysticism and with religious experience and not with "New Agey spirituality"' as that does not align with 'some kind of person who's a religious specialist, it's used to mean anything you vaguely like the look of'.

Discussion of spirituality by the participants emphasised a turn towards individualism and included frequent use of such statements as 'commodified spirituality', 'pick and mix spirituality', 'spiritual supermarket', 'a bit of this and a bit of that', 'individualism',

'smorgasbord of spirituality' and the ability to 'choose my religion', all referred to as recent ideas. As noted by Hamilton, 'the modern idea [is] let me choose what is best for me'.

Religion and the self

Through the discussion of religion and spirituality, a number of comments were made regarding the relationship of the self to religion. These aspects will be discussed further in Chapter 9. One recurring aspect of this topic was the fluidity of the relationship between the self and religion, marked (as Cusack suggests) by an 'economic mode... of consumption' where 'people constitute themselves now'. Bouma offers a further perspective on the evolution of this relationship, which he describes as a 'foundational cultural shift from rationality to experience'. Religion and spirituality have become codified as predominantly experiential and are viewed as valuable insofar as they offer the individual an experience that responds to this need for the self to experience. As Bouma states:

> My experience is my criteria, and provides my criteria for assessing everything. I will listen to yours because it might be interesting and amusing, and your experience becomes part of my experience. You become an experiential object for me... we don't necessarily need to agree on things, it's part of my experience, it's sacred, it's precious, it's unalterable, it's unarguable... What I see happening at sort of a personal level is that you've got people who are negotiating their own lives and want some experience, they want some mystical experience.

More specifically, Stephens is concerned about 'the emergence of a peculiar and ahistorical understanding of the human body' that symbolises the reconstitution of the relationship between the self and religion.

> As soon as you divorce spirituality from the organisations, institutions, habits, accountabilities, obligations that make religion what it is... it becomes the plaything of the individual body – a personal predilection, a quirk, a fetish.

David Tacey reflects further on this view and suggests that the self experiences God and religion in a number of ways, not just in an institutional sense or means

> In my view, we have to accept this individualistic turn and then embrace, widen the notion of what church is. Church occurs whenever God is experienced and sometimes it's within a church building and sometimes it doesn't.

This change from a relationship of the self to a religion mediated by an institutional presence to a religion mandated and sanctioned by the individual is not unique to post-secular discussions but has been emerging over the last 50 years or more, particularly in western society. At the same time, many individuals are seeking stronger institutional connections. These two seemingly conflicting drives do point to one particular question – why are these movements happening in alignment? What does this suggest about our changing relationship to religion? These questions will be considered in further chapters.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an introduction to the main themes emerging in the interviews. These included

- religion and spirituality,
- the secular,
- the post-secular, and
- their application in the Australian context.

The most notable problem to arise in connection with these themes and terms through the interview discussions was the ongoing contestability of them. This provides a challenge for me as a researcher, as coming to a consensus on definitions and meanings is not feasible. On the other hand, these contested meanings provide multiple ways of thinking about the topics and allow for a range of understandings to be equally relevant, even though they may be

contradictory. Nevertheless, these themes continue to resonate in the literature and media accessed for this research, particularly that used in the literature review and Chapter 5. The questions surrounding these areas of inquiry continue to inform my reflections over these chapters.

One aspect raised during the initial reflection stages in relation to this chapter was the absence of reference to terms and phrases often associated with religious and belief systems. I considered the possibility of some words remaining unspoken and why they would be avoided. To assist this reflective exercise, I used a 'wordle' program. I was able to produce a visual word picture of the interview transcripts in order to reflect on the most frequently used terms, as well as those less frequently used or absent (see Table 4.3).

Table 5.3: Frequency of key terms in interviews (Wordle visualisation)

Visually most obvious	Visually less obvious	Absent
religion	churches/church	supernatural
secular	secularism	belief
faith	Christ	profane
spirituality	Catholics	bible
Christian	secularisation	holy
God	tradition	sacred
post-secular		heaven/hell
Catholic		trinity
		theology

In considering why some words were absent, I asked questions about their use, e.g., why, how and when they may be used. I realised that these terms resonate with my experience of religion and my own associations in these contexts. The only word that did not resonate with my earlier experiences was profane. This word had a strong association with my recent history due to my study of Durkheim, who uses it in opposition to sacred.

I began this chapter by identifying the key themes that arose in the interviews and by applying hermeneutic phenomenological techniques to explore them. I chose hermeneutic phenomenology as my approach in this research to uncover the multiple realities within the

field of post-secular Australia. In the following chapter, I will continue this process by further reflecting on the key themes raised here using these techniques which allow me to view them in deeper more sustained ways.

Chapter 6. Reconsidering the Literature and Interviews

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 will reconsider the main themes raised by the literature, integrating these with the interviews and my written reflections throughout the research process. I aim to provide further insight and discussion of the implications of these perspectives. To achieve this I relived the interviews; that is, I re-listened to them and followed along with the transcripts to bring to mind the conversations and issues raised. I once again identified the key ideas and the way these were framed by the participants, as well as my reactions to them as reflected upon in my journalling. This aligns with hermeneutic phenomenological methods, which seek meanings and understandings from sustained reflections; for me, this meant returning to the texts for further insights and reconsidering the essential meanings considered so far.

Regan describes hermeneutics as a fluid set of guidelines that 'aid the human search for truth'.[633] This means that the research participant's life experience 'is in a sense not only their individual experience but also experience valued in relation to universality'.[634] Through this possibility of universality I am able to consider the wider impacts of the participant's ideas and experiences. I do so not to find the 'truth' – and therefore the 'last word' on the topic – but, rather, to open up partial truths and explore their implications. I hoped to tap into the participants *Dasein*, their being-in-the-world, and use that to inspire reflective moments for them, and for me, during the interviews. This chapter considers these moments and further 'unpacks' them.

In this first section, I discuss the secular. In writing this section I bring together the perspectives shared and touched on by the participants in the interviews to piece together

---

[633]Regan, 'Hans-Georg Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics: Concepts of Reading, Understanding and Interpretation', (pp .290–91.
[634]Ibid.

their thoughts into a summary of their positions. For this, I had to see the interviews as hermeneutic interviews. These are interviews in which meanings become known by being uncovered and explored, rather than viewed as pre-existing understandings. For these stories, I considered the way that interviewing supports a dialogic process in which both the participants and I co-create meanings.[635] A fusion of our ideas took place, with a resultant opening up and merging of horizons.

> Stories crafted in hermeneutic phenomenology are thus a provocative and powerful means of evoking shared pathic responses (van Manen, 2014). They can communicate the way we humans make sense of events and relationships, both with ourselves and with others. In a story, we encounter ourselves in dialogue and experience ourselves in different ways. As Gadamer (1976) explains, we are at once interpreting and making the story our own; understanding a story is to 'always and already' to understand and recognize ourselves within it.[636]

To do this, I have centred the sections of this chapter on what I consider the most significant reflections in my journals. They form the basis of the discussion in the chapter, together with the literature that underpins these ideas and the interviews. Each section in this chapter considers a key argument followed by a discussion. I found strong associations with and between some ideas, disagreed with a number, and recognised those I had taken for granted. This re-examination allowed me to distinguish my own blind spots. Throughout this process, I have paid close attention to the inner movements of my thinking to be aware of my responses, combining these with the discussion in this chapter. My reflections are found in text boxes and offer a sample of my thoughts throughout the research journey.

Horizons

To be able to consider the responses from the participants, I needed to reflect on their Gadamerian 'horizons', their range of vision, and be able to place their perspective within a

---

[635] R Vandermause and S Fleming, 'Philosophical Hermeneutic Interviewing', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods,* 10/4 (2011). p. 396.

[636]S. Crowther et al., 'Crafting Stories in Hermeneutic Phenomenology Research: A Methodological Device', *Qual Health Res,* (Jun 26 2016).p. 2.

hermeneutic framework. For the participants, this horizon indicates their understandings and unique vantage point, while also limiting their vision to what can be seen at any given time. For me as the researcher it was equally important to realise I was also 'limited' by my horizons. Most of the participants had worked many years in their field of inquiry and were situated in secular institutions and frameworks, which influenced the positions and issues they discussed. Their academic backgrounds were not solely from religious studies, but a mix of the liberal arts including psychology, sociology and history. Although most of them had been teaching and/or writing about religion and spirituality for many years, they were doing so framed by their horizon. This opened up a range of possibilities to me, as I discovered that their positions reflected this broad range of influences, yet were also intensely focused on a relationship to the secular that was open to change, an evolving perspective. The influence this may have on their responses was something I needed to deliberate on. Would it mean they were more, or less, sympathetic to secular and post-secular viewpoints? Regardless, Gadamer's horizon's suggests a person 'lives' in their horizon, influenced by their prejudgements and historical experiences.

The potential 'bias' or 'prejudice' that each participant brought to the discussions was important for me to think about. Although the participants are known as experts, and their contributions to the world of academia and beyond largely well-respected, I wondered if this was enough for the integrity of this research. Nevertheless, these participants brought their lived experience, their horizons, into my view. The fusion of horizons that occurred through these discussions led me to an enlightening conclusion as, according to Gadamer, 'what makes a limit a limit always also includes knowledge of what is on both sides of it'[637]. For me, this meant that understanding became a real possibility when I became aware of my

---

[637]Gadamer, *Truth and Method*., p. 343.

limited horizon, and the potential for it to be expanded by my encounter with another's horizon.

> REFLECTION
> Secular influence is strongly viewed as a progressive agenda in some of the literature as it
> ❖ Empowers *freedom to choose* religion or not
> ❖ situates the individual as having progressed to the point that they are *self-authoring*
> ❖ is a further development of an historical process that seeks to *reform* religion
> 28/1/2011

THERE NEVER WAS A SECULAR AGE.

No discussion of the post-secular can ignore the claims and understandings underpinning the secular. Taylor, in *The Secular Age*, explores the secular not simply as a neutral idea of governance but as an ideological, philosophical position and, in reality, a way of living and being. The exploration below of ideas raised through this research looks beyond institutional and governmental demarcation, to those issues that affect individual beliefs and experiences.

The theoretical positions highlighted in this section explore the contested field in which understandings of the secular are situated. In response to the statement, 'there never was a secular age', the work of Taylor suggests a more critical consideration that encapsulates a multidimensional understanding of the secular (Figure 2). He asks us to reconsider the secular in the light of these understandings, which do not posit a blanket rejection of the secular age, but seek to understand the conditions under which such responses are made.
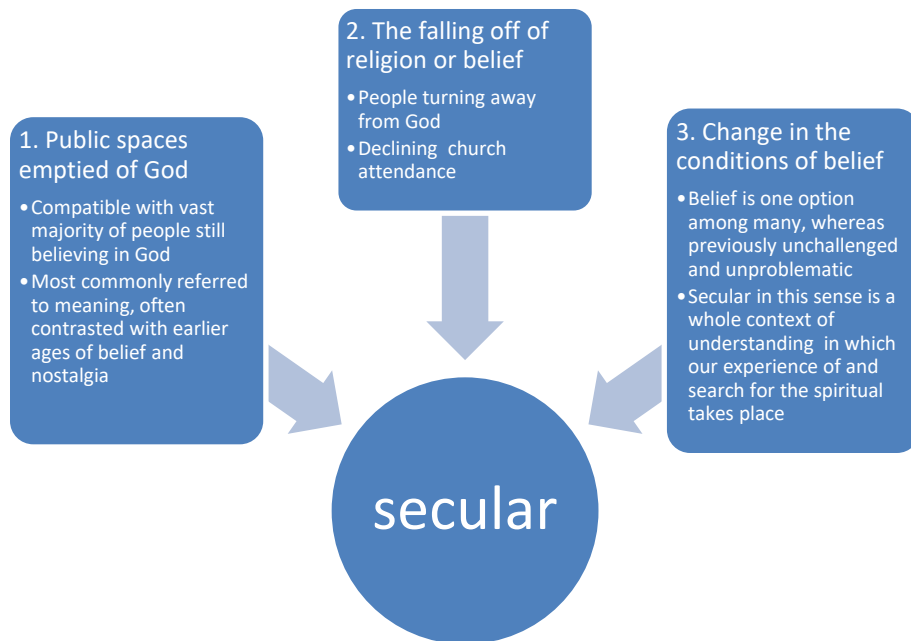
Figure 5: Taylor's view of the secular.

In Figure 2, Taylor considers that whether one can say there is a secular age depends on what understanding of the secular is being used. [638] This is a valid observation, as public demarcations have not historically meant less people believe. It also does not follow that the presence of secular institutional boundaries, such as those found in education, indicate an all-pervading secular milieu. Declining figures of church attendance, and the widely accepted decline of belief, may indicate the presence of a secular age but are countered by the rise in attendance and affiliation in other places. Secular is not, then, all-pervading presence but needs to be considered in all its variability, which is often influenced by other factors, including social and cultural context and time.

As comments from Carole Cusack suggest, an important position to consider is that there never was a secular age. In the light of this statement, the main issue – expressed by a number of authors, including Sophie Van Bijsterveld – is that it is a 'fact that religion has never been

---

[638] Taylor, *A Secular Age*.

away'.[639] The abiding nature of religious belief and affiliation is one of the least discussed subjects in the secular debate, yet it offers grounds for rethinking the long-accepted notion that the secular age is a ubiquitous and uncontestable presence. James Smith, in the *The Post-Secular in Question*, states that 'humans are inescapably religious animals'.[640] If religious individuals are a demographic constant, this suggests that the secular age is a less monolithic presence than asserted by many, particularly those in the social sciences.[641] Smith notes that this does not mean all people are believers, but it does mean that all people have the potential to become believers through practice and, more precisely to him, through ritual formation.

Is the claim that an individual person has the 'potential' for belief discussed by Smith enough to nullify the existence of a secular age? The way belief is understood in modern terms would suggest otherwise. As further explored by Smith, the secular has an attendant

> philosophical anthropology – an implicit picture of the human person. And this standard, assumed picture of the human person sees religion (1) as a basically 'optional' phenomenon and (2) as a primarily intellectual, propositional phenomenon... all humans eat, sleep, breathe, have sex, wear clothes... Then, in addition to that, some (perhaps even many) homo sapiens are 'religious': they are 'believers' who participate in religious rituals and practices, identify with religious communities, and hold religious beliefs.[642]

Accordingly, to secular observers religious belief is a 'curious supplement to being human', not an ever-present constant such as eating, sleeping and breathing.[643]

Smith criticises the way in which religion has primarily come to be understood by secularists

> The 'standard (secularist) picture' of the human person is top-heavy: it still construes religion as primarily a cognitive-propositional phenomenon, as a set of beliefs or 'values'... It is this sort of epistemological fixation that makes it possible for secularist

[639] Van Bijsterveld, 'Religion and the Secular State in the Netherlands'. p. 523.
[640] James Smith, 'Secular Liturgies and the Prospects for a "Post-Secular" Sociology of Religion', in P. S. Gorski et al. (eds.), *The Post-Secular in Question* (New York: New York University Press, 2012). p. 165.
[641] Ibid.
[642] Ibid. pp.165–66.
[643] Ibid.

anthropologists to see religion as an addendum, an optional supplement: clearly not all people have these sorts of beliefs or values; thus religion is not an essential feature of being human.

To say there never was a secular age, based on how the human person is understood, is an important consideration. It forms a central part of Taylor's understanding of the secular as a state in which the conditions of belief have changed, not just at the social and institutional level, but at an individual level. To him, there is a secular age based on the changes to these conditions of belief, more so than the other characteristics. It is also important to consider that secular positions exist alongside a range of others, including religious positions.

Smith notes that those who consider that we are in a secular age would align themselves with the above understanding of the human person as pursuing religion for adjunct reasons, rather than intrinsic ones. Taylor also rejects this notion, observing that the human aspiration to religion will not flag.[644]

For Smith, redefining of what is secular and what is religious is imperative to move beyond an understanding of religion as supplemental doctrines and belief, as well as discovering that the secular is not simply a space emptied of references to transcendence, and instead much that has been considered secular is actually religious.[645] For Jose Casanova this relationship goes even further, as he states that the current global usage of religion was constructed by secular categorisation, which has given it a form that was hitherto alien to it.[646] For me this is an important issue as, throughout this research, the question continually arises – how are we to define religion? What are the implications of these definitions? This has direct links to how the secular is understood, as the widely accepted definition of secular relies on the placement

[644]Taylor, *A Secular Age.*, p. 515.

[645] Smith, 'Secular Liturgies and the Prospects for a "Post-Secular" Sociology of Religion'. p. 176.

[646] José Casanova, 'A Secular Age: Dawn or Twilight?', in Michael Warner, Craig Calhoun, and Jonathan Vanantwerpen (eds.), *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010). p. 278.

of religion as an oppositional force in tension with it. Crucial, too, is the 'new sense of self' advocated by Taylor.[647]

To say there is no secular age due to ever-present religious belief is to critically question the long-held acceptance of the secular age as one of evolutionary progress. Even so, there are a number of other relevant factors. Accordingly, Taylor's assertion that reference to the secular invokes less the tension between the secular and religion referred to above, and more the alternative visions of how the world is understood, is crucial.[648] He also calls into question the defining of the secular as an emptying of public spaces of religion, as this is not a sufficiently strong indicator of declining religiosity and thus not evidence enough of the presence of a secular age. To say there never was a secular age does not take into account the significant insight into changes to the conditions of belief that Taylor's work addresses. (Considerations of the existence of the secular age are separate to considerations of the validity of the 'secularisation theory', which, as previously discussed, have been significantly undermined).

RELIGIOUS REVIVAL IS PART OF THE SECULAR AGE

In my interview with Tracey Rowland, she expressed doubts about the notion of a religious revival linked specifically to the rise of the secular. In contrast, she saw the rise in influence of the secular in non-secular organisations as being a significant characteristic at this time. It would seem that both religious revivalism and secularism within religion are critical issues. Alternatively, a number of authors have asserted that the revitalisation of religion is indicative of a post-secular turn, instigated by the rise of the secular. Merlini considers this rise to be directly due to secular influence.[649] One question of relevance here is at what point

---

[647]Taylor, *A Secular Age*., p. 27.
[648]Ibid. p. 5.
[649]Merlini, 'A Post-Secular World?', (, ibid. p. 123.

does the religious revival created by the drive towards a secular world become a manifestation of the post-secular? And at what point does the rise of the secular in non-secular arenas transform them into secular. On this question Merlini is silent; instead, he discusses how the rise of the secular has transformed societal structures and created a secular environment in which nations can cooperate without being hampered by overt religiosity. This perspective presupposes an understanding of the secular underpinned by ideas of order, rationality and reason, whereas the understanding of religion evokes myth and violence.[650] The consideration that religious revival is part of the secular age is asserted by Merlini as 'not a restoration of Church influence within and between nations but a renewal of the influence of confessions and sects on the secular polity', as there is 'a close link between secularization and religious revivalism not [as] a reaction against but a product of it'.[651]

Acknowledging the revitalisation of a number of religions (including Islam and Christianity) in Dutch society, Sophie Van Bijsterveld sees this revitalisation as only one important factor in the changing relationship between church and state. So, although the long-accepted dictum of the separation of church and state is the most-cited characteristic of the secular in the public domain, other factors that affect this include the realisation that religion is

> not an isolated area of life, but that it is intrinsically connected with views on the human being, on society, and on the state, and, therefore, with values and cultural patterns. Furthermore, religion has become entwined with huge societal and political issues such as integration and cannot be ignored in any debate on pluralism or social cohesion.[652]

Even though Merlini argues for the strong link between religion and secular influence, both at a state and individual level (which I also consider significant), stating that religious revival is a direct product of secular influence needs closer scrutiny. Is it due to resistance to secular influence by believers, or is there something intrinsic to secular systems that supports

---

[650]Wilson and Steger, 'Religious Globalisms in the Post-Secular Age', (pp. 21–22.
[651]Merlini, 'A Post-Secular World?', (p. 123.
[652] Van Bijsterveld, 'Religion and the Secular State in the Netherlands'. p. 523.

religious growth? To consider this relationship only in opposition – i.e. that people are religious despite the presence of the secular and not because of it – gives only one side of the revival story. In light of this, Talal Asad considers the link between religion and the secular as one of both opposition and relationship.[653]

Religious revival due to the presence of secular worldviews suggests a growing realisation among authors such as Tacey of the inadequacies of such a position. To him, this worldview is incapable of understanding the religious movements within its domain. From this perspective, the link between religious revival and the secular is close, despite the obvious secular objective of a distancing from religion. For Tacey, secular institutions cannot cater to 'significant dimensions of human experience'; hence, individuals seek these experiences outside the boundaries of the secular.[654] Taylor concurs: 'I hold that religious longing, the longing for and response to a more-than-immanent transformation perspective... remains a strong independent source of motivation'.[655] From this it can be seen that, even though the secular influence has been acknowledged by many as significant, it has also caused what Lieven Boeve describes as the 'transformation of religion', rather than its disappearance.[656]

This is an unintended effect of secular influence and was not foreseen by commentators as being the most significant aspect of secular influence. Undeniably, the focus of secular considerations has been the diminishing and limiting of religious ideas and adherence, with less reflection on the ability of religion to adapt and develop.

THE SECULAR RISE SIGNALS THE DECLINE OF RELIGION

During my interview with Gary Bouma, he referred to Australian census data that draws a question mark around levels of decline in Australia. Worldwide statistics do not indicate with

---

[653]TalalAsad as quoted by Donnelly, 'We Are a Christian Nation under Threat', p. 7.
[654]Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution : The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality*.pp. 16–17.
[655]Taylor, *A Secular Age*., p. 530.
[656]Boeve, 'Religion after Detraditionalization: Christian Faith in a Post-Secular Europe', (p. 101.

certainty the rise of the secular, or a concomitant decline in religiosity. Hence, the theory of the rise of secular influence correlated with the decline of religion is as problematic as its oppositional statement discussed above. Although most contemporary commentators of religion acknowledge the decrease of affiliation with some strands of mainstream religion, these levels of decline are not consistent across religions and nations and, therefore, are not entirely conclusive. The decline in religious affiliation in some areas is not a significant enough indicator to evidence the broad assertion that decline and containment is the main characteristic of the relationship between the secular and religion.

As the 'standard' sociological theory of decline, Casanova notes that the acceptance of the secular 'condition' as one in which religion has been overcome and replaced by a rejection of transcendence and a reliance on self-sufficiency is a significant anthropocentric shift.[657] So although there is a decline in religious belief, the widespread understanding of this as a 'progressive emancipation' of humanity is a standard response to a far more complex phenomenon. If the rise of the secular worldview is affecting both religious revival and religious rejection, there are forces at work that have opposing yet related results.

For Taylor, these results are created by 'cross pressures'[658] that make earlier forms of religious belief and life unviable, with new forms replacing these, while at the same time fostering a renewed outlook on unbelief. These cross pressures are those between 'the draw of the narratives of closed immanence' on the one side and 'the sense of their inadequacy on the other'.[659] He sees the relationship between unbelief and belief 'reflected in a number of middle positions which have been drawn from both sides'.[660] Some of the characteristics that may be found in these middle positions are understandings of materialism, science and moral

---

[657] Casanova, 'A Secular Age: Dawn or Twilight?'.p. 266.
[658] Taylor, *A Secular Age*., p. 595.
[659] Ibid. p. 595.
[660] Ibid.

good. Casanova considers these middle positions as ones where believers adopt 'an engaged standpoint' while simultaneously adopting a 'disengaged standpoint'. [661] It could be considered that the reverse of this position is equally probable for unbelievers. As a standpoint, this position requires less justification than that of the believer who, according to Casanova, is required to justify their position more frequently than the unbeliever.[662]

Although the main consideration in discussions of secular influence is the decline of religious belief and affiliation, evidenced as it is by data collection and statistical analysis, these methods tend to shine a light on only one side of the secular story. The other side is less frequently discussed but is of far more interest –the continuing presence of religion. This ongoing presence, presented by some as a resurgence or revival, must be considered in discussions of the secular in order for a more accurate understanding of its influence to be achieved.

SECULAR IS A WORLDVIEW ALTERNATIVE TO RELIGIOUS BELIEF

In the interviews, both David Tacey and Scott Stephens were concerned with the notion that the secular has become an alternative worldview without its adherents even realising it. In their view, this worldview has become naturalised through its acceptance as the default human position, relegating religion to the status of a choice or option. How this condition came about is the subject of recent discussion. Taylor has noted how the secular has become the naturalised or default position for many people. As a normative category, the secular has been catapulted into a redefined role remote from original understandings. Taylor borrows the Foucauldian term 'unthought' in his discussion of the secularisation theory.[663] This term could also be used in discussions of the secular, as Taylor's claim is that the social sciences

---

[661] Casanova, 'A Secular Age: Dawn or Twilight?'.p. 266.
[662] Ibid.
[663] Taylor, *A Secular Age*., p. 428.

have presented declining religiosity and the word 'secular' as interchangeable, with little or no consideration of the range of interpretative judgements that could be used in these considerations. The unthought associated with the influence of the secular also points to the development of it as a worldview alternative.

This is because belief now exists along a spectrum that includes rejection and unbelief. This placement of a variety of positions as options removes the secular worldview as the kind of neutral default position and situates it as one position among many, and as being influenced by as many forces and changes as religious belief.

The Secular Age Saw The Waning Of The Golden Age Of Religion

When raised in the interview sessions, there was a consensus amongst participants that there was no such thing as a golden age of belief, in the west or elsewhere. One of the main assumptions held by those who view the move to a secular age as progressive and based predominantly on religious decline is that, in the past, religion and religious belief were positioned in such a golden age. Viewed nostalgically by some, this golden age is perceived as a time when majority of people were adherents of mainstream belief systems (in the Australian context, Christian faiths) that went largely unchallenged by social movements and social change. The invocation of a golden age of faith has been questioned and debunked through the work of key writers including Steve Bruce,[664] Roger Finke and Rodney Stark.[665] They have gone so far as to say that such a golden age never existed – neither in the United States nor in Britain and Europe. Referred to by Stark and Finke as the 'old' paradigm, Taylor raises two questions that are of importance here. First, what definition of religion is being used, and second, what past is this being compared to.[666] More importantly, for Taylor,

---

[664] Steve Bruce, 'The Pervasive World-View: Religion in Pre-Modern Britain', *The British Journal of Sociology,* 48/4 (1997), 667-80.
[665] Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (2nd edn.; New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005). p. 10.
[666] Taylor, *A Secular Age.*, p. 427.

the notion of a golden age situates the rise of the secular as a negative story of loss with a focus on a past that cannot be recaptured, instead of examining what characterises the present.[667] He also considers whether things may have always been the same through the ages 'beneath a changed exterior'.[668]

The golden age of religion also conjures up images of public displays and shared exhibitions of belief. Also noteworthy here is the conception that belief has now become 'privatised' and is no longer acceptable for open and public display. Casanova refutes this, citing the fact that religious questions and concerns are constantly being argued and negotiated in the public square as evidence of the public nature of religion and religious belief.[669] John Torpey provides a helpful way of understanding the distinction that occurs in the public square, using the terms 'latent' and 'active'.[670]

For Torpey, active religiosity refers to the activity that is undertaken in public worship and ritual as well as in the religious practices of individuals, while latent religiosity is the underlying historical foundation of religion that exists in many western countries. This religiosity is referred to by him as a 'substratum' and its presence complicates religious pluralism and public debates associated with its influence. It is manifested more subtly but ostensibly organises public space in, for example, Christmas holidays and other festivals.[671] For Torpey, the important question to ask in regard to the study of religion is 'not the persistence of religion, but in its abeyance in particular times and places is what needs explanation and clarification'. [672] Torpey is justifiably cautious about suggesting that something may be viewed as being at the end of an era. The example he cites is that of the decline of religiosity as a product of the post-World War Two period in Europe. While this decline this is often considered directly linked to the post-war years, there was also a

---

[667]Ibid. p. 532.
[668]Ibid. p. 427.
[669] J. Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (University of Chicago Press, 1994). p. 10.
[670] John Torpey, 'Religion and Secularization in the United States and Europe', in Phillip Gorski, David Kim, and John Torpey (eds.), *The Post-Secular in Question: Religion in Contemporary Society* (New York: New York University, 2012). p 290
[671]Ibid.
[672]Ibid. p. 297.

substantial rise in wealth at that time.[673] Equally as important is the movement of immigrants since then, and the trend away from a predominantly white and Christian cultural dominance. So, on the one hand there was a decline in some circles – but, equally, a rise in others; hence the difficulty in interpretation, and the reticence in declaring the end of an era. This caution is as applicable to the claims of the end of the golden era of religion due to the influence of the secular as it is to the cited example.

Conclusion

Examination of the role of the secular is critical to this research. Charles Taylor's work looks beyond the institutional divisions often used to characterise the secular, and is viewed by this researcher as vital to the discussion.

1. It sees the secular as a way of living and being – not just an external rendering.

2. The secular is not a neutral stance on religion.

3. The secular is in relationship with religion – this relationship is one of both opposition and co-dependency.

4. The secular does not presuppose the decline of religion.

5. The secular manifests itself in diverse times, spaces and places differently – it is not a singular process

---

[673]Ibid. p. 297.

REFLECTION SUMMARY: THE ESSENCE OF THE SECULAR

- The secular originally referred to time, activities or actions that were outside the religious.

- During the Enlightenment, the secular came to represent the space or vacuum created by the separation of church and state, and now takes on meanings associated with exclusion of religion from political and other areas of public life.

- This led to the development of the secularisation thesis within the field of sociology, premised on the understanding that religion would disappear from public life and lead to the eventual extinction of religion across the public/private divide

- This secularisation thesis has been found to be only partially true, as religion did not disappear and has come to be expressed in ways that have evolved under the cross pressures of the secular.

- The secular is not a neutral stance on religion but is an ideological and theoretical term that positions religion in opposition to it.

- Far from removing religion from the public and private spheres, the secular has been seminal in the production of religious forms and experiences.

- Although the main consideration in discussions of secular influence is the decline of religious belief and affiliation, evidenced as it is by data collection and statistical analysis, these methods tend to shine a light on only one side of the secular story, and fail to address the continuing presence of religion.

Chapter 7. Religion and Spirituality

Religion remains an important phenomenon in Australian society, albeit one that continues to change and evolve. The following section will revisit a number of key themes that require discussion when approaching the post-secular and its relationship to religion. Some important questions here include whether religion is really on the decline, or whether its modes of expression are continuing to evolve. These are very important threads in the discussion as they indicate a reconsideration of the role and place of religion in contemporary times.

I propose four central points in this chapter:

1. Secular and spirituality are co-dependent terms and exist in mutual relationship.

2. The division between religion and spirituality is a direct result of the influence of the secular.

3. Post-secular spirituality blends the secular with sacred ideas and experiences forming a continually evolving phenomenon.

4. There is renewed engagement with religion.

Critical Reflections on Religion and Spirituality

REFLECTION
Religion and spirituality indicate the existence of a relationship between the subject – the inner self, to an authority/entity greater than the self. The secular may realign this relationship to a default external power i.e., the state, and allows this to become the substitute authority, possibly without the individual realising this has happened.

15/7/2011

'As wealth rises, religiosity declines' is one of the most conspicuous axioms of the secularisation thesis.[675] Although often discussed in secular contexts, there was very little discussion of this hypothesis in the interviews. From this I can conclude that, although material wealth has some correlation with decline in religious affiliation, it is not seen as being a decisive factor. The correlation between wealth and religious practices is a complex intersection – one underpinned by the idea that more fervent religious belief is found amongst the poor and disadvantaged (although this is contradicted by evangelical Anglican affiliation, which is always proportionally higher in high socio-economic local government areas, and by prosperity theology associated with new churches, e.g., Hillsong). Sociologists have argued that the social benefits of religion take on greater importance the fewer resources and the less control people have over their own lives.[676] This perception fails to acknowledge the way that believers who are more materially wealthy or advantaged, are influenced by their wealth to esteem certain values and participate in religious practices based on these values.

Norris and Inglehart state: 'Religion becomes less central as people's lives become less vulnerable to the constant threat of death, disease and misfortune'.[677] Even though this sentiment appears straightforward, a more comprehensive understanding will draw in more factors than wealth to explain changes to religion. Taylor does this well by exploring other issues such as the rise of humanism and changes to society as a whole.

Not all countries conform neatly to the correlation between rising secularism and prosperity, with numerous counter-examples, including the rise in 'megachurches' in many areas of

---

[674]Merlini, 'A Post-Secular World?', (p. 126.

[675] L. Witham, *Marketplace of the Gods: How Economics Explains Religion* (Oxford University Press, 2010). p. 140

[676] Ibid.

[677] Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*.p. 69.

world, particularly Brazil and China.[678] These are often viewed as promoting the 'health and wealth'[679] gospel and offer a sense of belonging to middle class and younger business and professional people. Described by Connell as 'cathedrals of suburbia' and 'spiritual shopping malls', these churches provide members with a sense of 'security and expected benefits'.[680]These contemporary forms of spirituality and religion appears to address a need that modern secular life cannot, while encouraging their members to enjoy material success. This truce between materialism and religion is an interesting commentary on the adaptability of religion in contemporary times. Aside from being very popular with young people, they personify the primacy of personal experience alongside social functions.

Lisa Keister further examines the indirect effect religiosity has on wealth accumulation, and the direct effect religion has on wealth ownership. This manifests in education, fertility and employment rates as it shapes values in regard to these important areas.[681] Her examination shows that the relationship between wealth and religion is not as one-sided as may be widely thought. Although religious affiliation remains strong among poorer populations, how religion shapes the lives of the more wealthy is equally important, as raises the question of why wealthy people still believe. This brings Keister to the conclusion that it 'has become clear that the relationship between religion and wealth is very strong', citing American Mormons and white Catholics as examples of those who are wealthier due to education and family influences.[682] For her, the intersection of wealth and religion continues to be an influential marker of the relationship to religion in American society. Even so, she calls for a more nuanced approach that incorporates differences between denominations and their worldviews.

---

[678] Tom Phillips, 'China on Course to Become 'World's Most Christian Nation' within 15 Years', *The Telegraph,* April 19 2014.

[679]J. Connell, 'Hillsong: A Megachurch in the Sydney Suburbs', *AUSTRALIAN GEOGRAPHER,* 36/3 (2005), 315-32.p. 324.

[680]Ibid. p. 328.

[681]Lisa Keister, 'Religion and Wealth: The Role of Religious Affiliation and Participation in Early Adult Asset Accumulatio', *Social Forces,* 82/1 (2003). pp. 173-205

[682] Ibid.

The discussions of religion during the interviews touched on the changes to religion that characterise it in this contemporary age. This is the theme of Charles Taylor's *Secular Age*, with its focus on changes in the experience of religion. According to Taylor, how religion is experienced is crucial to current discussions. While notoriously difficult to define, the understanding is that religion is no longer about a natural inclination, inner drive or something supposedly innate, but has instead been aligned with choice – an intellectual and cognitive process and assent.

As stated previously, religion has acquired negative connotations of obedience, rigor, creed and dogma. What has become apparent to me throughout the interview and research process is the influence that post-secular thought has on this secular perspective. As discussed by Courtney Bender, the impact of modernity, sociology and secularism on these concepts needs reconsideration in order to reframe religion in the light of post-secular thought.[684]

In Table 6.2, below, I compare how religion is understood within secular and post-secular framings.

Table 7.1: Secular and post-secular framing of religion.

Secular	Post-secular
Religion and spirituality are inherently independent – I can be spiritual without being religious	Spirituality and religion are historically embedded ideas constantly produced and reproduced; any opposition is due to a set of historically influential ideas – these are not ideas that will always remain influential but are contingent on a range of factors
Religion is an historical institution formed by cultural and social movements. Spirituality is	Questioning of whether these experiences are individual or always mediated through broader

---

[683]Aleksandr Morozov, 'The Fourth Secularisation', *Religion, State and Society,* 36/1 (2008), 33 - 38.
[684]Courtney Bender, 'Things in Their Entanglements', in Philip Gorski et al. (eds.), *The Post-Secular in Question* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 43-76.

primarily experiential and offers an individualised experience linked to emotional and sensory characteristics	collective traditions. Post-secular recognises that religion and spirituality remain interconnected despite the turn to the individual experience
Religion is located within ideological histories and narratives in which issues of marginalisation and alienation are inherent	Issues of belonging are recognised as important factors that transcend time; there is a movement beyond these to re-articulations that are inclusivist and pluralist

The spirituality revolution

In this section I will explore spirituality as a historical concept and discuss its relationship to religion and the secular. I will refer to the changes to spirituality in Australia and the implications of these changes in the light of post-secular understandings. In Chapter 4, I outlined the interview participant's perspectives on spirituality. This included considerations of the contemporary changes to spirituality and its extrication from religion. Particularly significant was Gary Bouma's remark that 'the whole notion that religion and spirituality are different in the twenty-first century in some palpable way I will argue yes'. This difference is the topic of this section.

As religion has taken on significant negative connotations, spirituality has grown in favour. Spirituality has come to be viewed as a generic term that can be attached to denominational and non-denominational movements, as well as to objects and experiences outside traditional religious beliefs and practices. This paradigm shift in the way spirituality is understood has had significant ramifications for ministry, ritual and individual identity. David Tacey proposes that the decline in mainstream churches has meant the rise of atypical spiritual practices and beliefs.[685] Even so, there are a number of commentators who note that there appears to be a blind spot in this shift, with little recognition that these spiritual practices actually emerged from mainstream religions, including Christian and pre-Christian traditions.

---

[685]Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution : The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality*.

The acknowledgment that spiritual experiences can be had outside mainstream churches is also something that major denominations need to grapple with. People are experiencing noteworthy movements of the spirit not mediated by these churches, and there needs to be more discussion about this. Regardless, spirituality in a contemporary context is most often associated with an inner life or journey, experiences outside the everyday and mundane, and awareness and/or search for the sacred.

At the time of writing this, I have been reflecting on the recent death of my sister. It was during the time of her final illness and death that my own spirituality, and that of my family, was expressed in distinctive ways in the light of the final weeks of my sister's life and her funeral. A number of things I had previously thought were important became insignificant as I faced the impending moment of her passing. There are few moments in life that provide such clarity of purpose. The spirituality expressed in those last few weeks, and in the more formalised rituals of death, was a unique blend of ancient, traditional, contemporary and secular spirituality. My sister had outlined her funeral arrangements and indicated the readings, songs and actions that were to take place. It happened as she requested, and alongside the external symbols of religion such as water, words, candles and incense, there was a thread of spirituality running through the ceremonies – which themselves reflected my sister's spirituality, a blend of Aboriginal, person-centred, peace-seeking, personal and relaxed styles. This was no surprise to those who knew her, and it was a comfortable and comforting presence for me throughout the whole day and the ensuing weeks.

This spirituality, expressed in contemporary ways, draws on points outlined by Courtney Bender, including:[686]

---

[686]Bender, 'Religion and Spirituality: History, Discourse, Measurement.'.

- spirituality as a part of a religious tradition or institution (in my and my sister's case, the Catholic tradition),

- seeker spirituality (someone who has no ties to any institutional religion, but who is nevertheless searching for meaning and spirituality),[687]

- spirituality as aiding personal development, and

- spirituality as individual.

Each of these elements was present in my sister's spiritual journey at some point: her youth in the Catholic Church, her search for deeper spiritual understandings and belonging in spiritual movements as an adult, and the blend of these as her own individual spiritual expression during her final illness.

For my sister, her life had been a search for peace and a place where she could express herself and her individuality. For her, spirituality was a fluid journey that formed and reformed in response to life circumstances. Spirituality as a fluid journey, responsive to life's circumstances and individual need was a commonly remarked upon contemporary idea expressed in the interviews.

This spirituality has a historical genesis, with what is now seen as an independent concept previously being seen as a co-dependent. Religion and spirituality were, until recently, inextricably entwined. The circumstances that have separated them will be discussed here, along with the question of how to define spirituality. According to Bender, the 'porous' nature of the term has seen it historically influenced and variable depending on theological understandings and social change.[688] These two concerns, defining and dividing, are the most

---

[687]Anke Bisschops, 'The New Spirituality and Religious Transformation in the Netherlands', *International Journal of Practical Theology,* 19/1 (06// 2015), 24-39.p. 25.
[688]Bender, 'Religion and Spirituality: History, Discourse, Measurement.'.

frequent discussion points in the literature on spirituality. At the heart of this discussion is the tension between religion as a communal experience and spirituality as an individual one.[689]

I argue here, as does van der Veer, that spirituality in the modern, individualised, subjective sense has been produced simultaneously with the secular.[690] As such, it is a relatively recent phenomenon tied to contemporary understandings of the secular as spaces emptied of God and the sacred. These changes in the concept of spirituality are matched by changes in the concept of religion. As discussed previously, conceptions of religion have changed significantly since the Enlightenment. There has been a gradual erosion of public authority, trust and belief in truth, with an accompanying drive towards private faith, the rise of science, rationalism and individualism in countries such as Australia. Religion needed to be demarcated in order for new philosophies and worldviews to emerge that did not encompass religious truth or doctrine,[691] yet these new ideas may be still be suggestive of spirituality in some way. In addition, religion was separated from the state to ensure the development of the secular worldview as a viable option in statecraft.[692] In more recent years, religion has become associated with violence, producing an even more problematic understanding. These circumstances have combined to assist in the rise of spirituality and the secular. In the next section, I consider a number of points raised in the interviews around spirituality.

SPIRITUALITY AS INDIVIDUALISED AND COMMODIFIED

Spirituality is a way people deal with personal and life challenges. Scott Stephens discussed how spirituality has become a therapeutic response to godlessness. The range of spiritual practices, or practices labelled as spiritual, continues to grow. As noted by Tracy Rowland,

---

[689] Giordan and Pace, *Mapping Religion and Spirituality in a Postsecular World / Edited by Giuseppe Giordan and Enzo Pace*. pp. 2–3.

[690] Van Der Veer, 'Spirituality in Modern Society'. p. 1097–98.

[691] Jeremy R. Carrette and Richard King, *Selling Spirituality : The Silent Takeover of Religion / Jeremy Carrette and Richard King* (London : Routledge, 2005.

1st ed., 2005). pp. 13–14.

[692] Ibid.

these are often pseudo-spiritual, even pseudo-sacramental, practices designed to communicate deeper meaning and experience to individuals.

Reflecting some aspects of Eastern religions, and embraced by New Age movements, self-knowledge and a search for the true self are often viewed as a key part of the spiritual journey of an individual. Scott Stephens, echoing Žižek, remarked in the interviews that spirituality is nurtured in order to hold on to the truest and most authentic self, and then to divorce the true and authentic self from what one does. This split between who one is and what one does allows individuals to function in a capitalist society that they feel powerless in.

Both Cusack and Stephens expressed concern over the turn towards the commodification of spiritual experiences. Žižek's remark that capitalism relies on spirituality as a release valve is intriguing.

> The target on which we should focus, therefore, is the very ideology which is proposed as a potential solution… Western Buddhism, this pop-cultural phenomenon preaching inner distance and indifference towards the frantic pace of market competition, is arguably the most efficient way for us to fully participate in capitalist dynamics while retaining the appearance of mental sanity – in short, the paradigmatic ideology of late capitalism.[693]

Although Žižek specifically refers to western Buddhism here, the same thought could be applied to a range of spiritual practices. As discussed by Stephens, this is echoed in the writings of Bonhoeffer on cheap grace: 'Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance…. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate'.[694] For Tacey, Žižek and Bonhoeffer, the sacred has come to exist outside mainstream belief, doctrine and religious systems, in order for human beings to function within an ideology and structural worldview that is, to varying

---

[693]Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge, MA, US: MIT Press, 2003).p. 26.

[694]Dietrich Bonhoffer and Dietrich Bonhoffer, *The Cost of Discipleship / Dietrich Bonhoffer; [Translated from the German...By R. H. Fuller]* (London : SCM Press, 1959.
Revised and unabridged edition., 1959). pp. 44–45.

degrees, religiously illiterate. It also contributes to an oppositional paradigm in which religion becomes negatively charged, unable to adopt to the changing world around it.

SPIRITUALITY IS THE 'AUTHENTIC' FORM OF FAITH EXPERIENCE[695]

That spirituality, in its current cultural and historical mode, is the authentic form of faith experience is a prevalent and influential idea. David Tacey discusses the characteristics of this experience by stating it is 'democratic and non-hierarchical... the new paradigm is ruled by a sibling model'.[696] Although this is an attractive way of describing spirituality, the fact that spirituality has strong roots in both traditional and, more recently, emerging forms of religion goes unacknowledged. The forms of spirituality most often referred to in the interviews as exemplars of contemporary experience included yoga, meditation, communing with nature and similar experiences.

This 'new' spirituality is imbued with some very 'old' strands of spirituality that have existed for millennia, including cosmology, nature and inwardness and the connection between these. That these have now been rediscovered and labelled as authentic suggests a misinterpretation of the current cultural climate and its relationship to historical changes that have always existed. These changes to spirituality were discussed in the interviews, as explored in Chapter 4; however, the overriding feature of these discussions was concern over these changes and whether they are of a delusory nature that is specific to western spirituality.

For Houtman and Aupers, this spirituality emerged during the 1960s and is often referred to as 'New Age', which they understand as being 'an incoherent collection of ideas and practices'.[697] This is related to the array of practices and beliefs that circulate around the term New Age, which has been identified in sociological literature as fostered by a 'pick and mix'

---

[695]Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution : The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality*.pp. 38–39.
[696]Ibid. p.38.
[697]Dick Houtman and Stef Aupers, 'The Spiritual Turn and the Decline of Tradition: The Spread of Post-Christian Spirituality in 14 Western Countries, 1981–2000', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,* 46/3 (2007), 305-20.p. 306.

attitude. The fragmented nature of these beliefs and practices has led many to assume the 'New Age' is an insignificant movement, even though it has emerged from a historical era. There is a tendency to relegate all eclectic spirituality to the single category of New Age and to thereby suggest the ephemeral nature of their existence. What has been missed here is that such eclectic spirituality is drawn from a long faith tradition that looks to the self and inwardness as the path to the truth of the real self. This, then, has influenced the diversity of this tradition in its contemporary forms.

The claim then made regarding spirituality is that, under the influence of the secular (including individualisation, detraditionalisation and differentiation), spirituality has become ever-more associated with the individual. It exists outside traditional religious boundaries and is viewed as a discrete phenomenon fostering a relationship between religion and the self that has taken on previously uncharted dimensions.

WE ARE IN AN AGE OF 'SECULAR SPIRITUALITY'[698]

It is also significant that, alongside the changes to spirituality commonly grouped as New Age, there is a drive to understand an ever-broader range of practices as spiritual, ranging from national celebrations and memorials to sporting events and walks in national parks and other outdoor activities. This broadening of denotation was part of the discussions in the interviews. There was a generally negative view of the relabelling of secular activities as sacred and the resulting changes to the definition of spirituality. The relocation of the sacred was cause for concern, as this meant that the sacred has become an entirely subjective experience mediated by the individual and entirely removed from the traditions from which it emerged. Of deeper concern is the sacred being mediated by national interests, political agendas and economic interests. Concerns were expressed about the commodification of

---

[698]Du Toit, 'Secular Spirituality Versus Secular Dualism: Towards Postsecular Holism as Model for a Natural Theology', (p. 1253.

religious and sacred experiences and what the buying of sacred experiences leads to in terms of the future of religion. These will continue to the subject of ongoing speculation and research.

The imprecision that sits at the heart of these discussions – the relationship between secular, spiritual and the relocation of the sacred – is, Tacey suggests, a problem of unclear boundaries. He asks, 'How secular are secular people? How religious are church-going people? How spiritual are the religious organisations? Almost everything is uncertain, difficult, complex'.[699] However, this uncertainty is characteristic of any time in history, so I do not see this questioning as offering any enlightening way of thinking about this topic. That these questions are being asked more frequently, however, is significant, as it suggests the space between the secular and religion is occupied by spirituality.[700] Even if this is a very tenuous space, it is worth considering that it continues to press its influence both towards secular and towards religion. This is depicted in Figure 5.
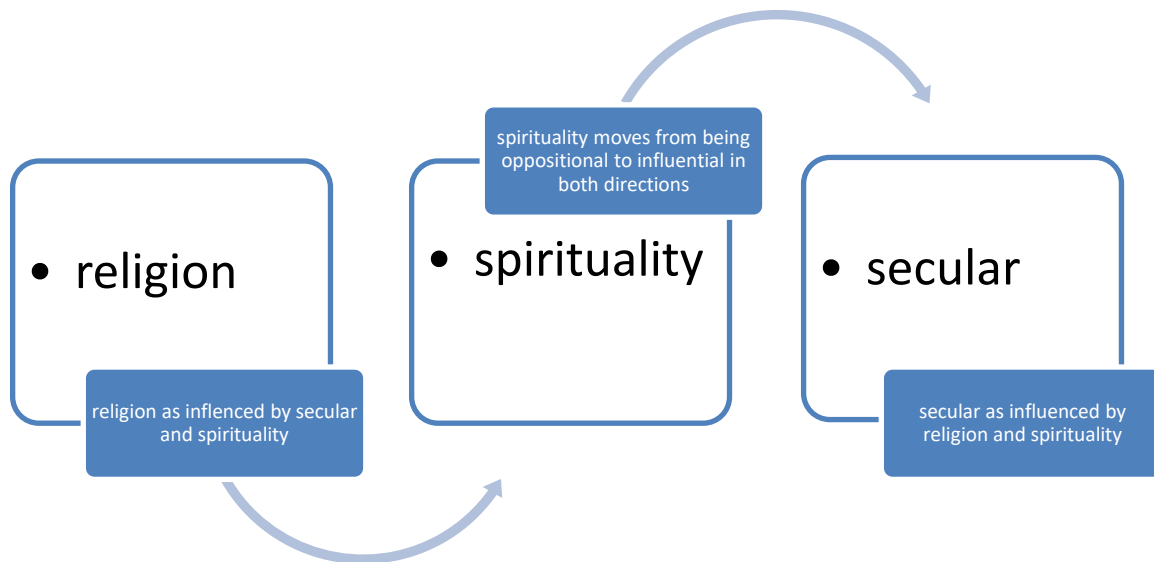
Figure 6: The space between religion and the secular.

---

[699]Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution : The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality.*, p. 122.
[700] Gorski, Kim, and Torpey, *The Post-Secular in Question: Religion in Contemporary Society*. p. 7.

Spirituality and youth

The spirituality of youth in Australia needs to be raised in any discussion of the secular and post-secular, as it gives an indication of the future direction of these phenomena. Recent studies have shed light on important aspects of spirituality in Australian youth; these include the 2004–05 'The Spirit of Generation Y' project.[701] In 2015, Tacey referred to young people as 'apparently secular' in a conference lecture.[702] This is a very intriguing perspective to me, as it calls for a rethink and renegotiation on of my ideas about young people – for example, that young people are individualistic, narcissistic and apathetic when it comes to religion and spirituality. For Tacey, this is simply not the case; in his experience, young people are open to seeking understanding of the interior life and a greater purpose. Here, it appears, there is a pairing of the secular with the spiritual as the drive for the former leads to a renewed interest in the latter.

In 1993, Marisa Crawford and Graham Rossiter outlined the characteristics of youth spirituality they viewed as differing from older generations. They concluded of the younger generation that:[703]

- they are at a high-water mark of secularisation,

- they tend to forge meaning and purpose in ways that are different from those used by older generations; the focus of their spirituality is different,

- they relate to traditions and traditional religion in different ways, and

- they have a different approach to understanding and forming identity – and religious identity in particular.

Fast-forward 13 years to 2006, and nine prominent elements of youth spirituality are identified by Crawford and Rossiter, as summarised below.[704]

---

[701] See Mason, Michael Christopher & Singleton, Andrew Tintin, 1970- & Webber, Ruth, 1944- (2007). The spirit of Generation Y : young people's spirituality in a changing Australia (1st ed). John Garratt Publishing, Mulgrave, Vic

[702] *Youth Spirituality: The Call to Interiority* (2015) (The World Community for Christian Meditation).

[703] Marisa Crawford and Graham Rossiter, 'The Spirituality of Today's Young People: Implications for Religious Education in Church-Related Schools', *Religious Education Journal of Australia,* 9/2 (1993), 1-8.p. 2.

1. Ideals – guidance in life management.

2. Varied sources of spirituality– family, friends, secular and religious movements, other religions, celebrities and popular culture.

3. Being part of a community of faith – the need to feel accepted and comfortable.

4. Group membership – social and friendship groups are a large influence.

5. The prolongation of adolescence – a range of lifestyle options are available to them which they can try out.

6. Cultural plurality – they are exposed to an ever-increasing range of cultural belief systems and behaviours.

7. Social and political concerns – wary of political, corporate and large institutions.

8. Environmental concerns –environmentally savvy but at the same time consumerist.

9. Anxiety about a violent society – growing up with the backdrop of terrorism, there is diminished positive valuing of some belief systems.

These characteristics are significant in that they link in with a number of post-secular understandings of spirituality discussed in the sections above. They demonstrate that youth in Australia may contribute to a growing post-secular presence as they continue to explore the issues and experiences they see as important. Also important is that very little reference to church, doctrine and gospel values is made in either of the above lists. It appears, then, that the secular project has been successful in terms of youth culture; there is still a need to connect to and experience spirituality, but this takes place within secular frameworks. Many of the nine elements listed above speak to an important consideration of youth spirituality – that of spirituality as relational.

---

[704]Graham Rossiter, 'Some Perspectives on Contemporary Youth Spirituality : A 'Need to Know' for Church School Religious Education', ibid.27/1 (2011).

Although Tacey asserts there is a 'phoney wall between religion and spirituality',[705] for youth in Australia spirituality remains a positive expression, while religion is tied to the negative. Spirituality continues to gain currency in a range of circles, including education, health and wellbeing, while religion remains positioned in the opposing negative perspective.[706] Jacqueline Hodder has categorised youth spirituality as falling within one of two expressions, New Age or Evangelical. For her, New Age denotes an individualistic approach, while Evangelical is community- and belonging-centred.[707] The polar opposition of these categories is notable, as it points to different trajectories with a similar goal – that of finding meaning through relationship. Also ironic here is that, according to Hodder's research, young people understand spirituality in relational terms and, in both the above categories, saw this as being the primary result.

Conclusion

This chapter analysed a number of key factors underpinning religion and spirituality in Australia. Religion and spirituality have changed in Australia in significant ways. Although mainstream religious affiliation has changed, this does not necessarily indicate a change in religiosity in Australia. Similarly to Bouma Mackay notes a decline in affiliation with mainstream religion has seen a concomitant rise in spiritual affiliations and practices with less restrictions and institutional governance desired by participants.[708] A movement away from mainstream belief systems to an eclectic range of beliefs and practices is evident. However, also notable are the movements and changes within and between mainstream religions. These movements, although less apparent, indicate the shifting grounds on which

---

[705] World Community for Christian Meditation, *Youth Spirituality: The Call to Interiority*

[706] Jacqueline Hodder, 'Spirituality and Well-Being: 'New Age' and 'Evangelical' Spiritual Expressions among Young People and Their Implications for Well-Being', *International Journal of Children's Spirituality,* 14/3 (08// 2009), 197-212. pp. 199–200.

[707] Ibid. pp. 197–98.

[708] Hugh Mackay, *Beyond Belief,* (Macmillan Publishers, Australia, 2016)

understandings are based in Australia. The following chapter looks at how these are linked to understandings of the post-secular.

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:10px;">

REFLECTION SUMMARY: THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

- Secularisation has had religious effects and these effects are different to previous eras.

- Religion prior to the pre-modern era was largely a unified phenomenon that incorporated spiritual and devotional practices that regulated the sacred for believers.

- The commodification of spirituality and spiritual experiences marks this particular time in history. Spirituality and spiritual experiences can be bought and sold, offering the individual a therapeutic balm against the pressures of this age.

- The new religious landscape created by the influence of secularisation and the relationship of the secular to religion has had two effects.

- First, spirituality and religion have been reconstructed to enable them to exist separately. Spirituality has taken on multiple and individualised meanings while religion has lost meaning and has been recast into a negative discourse.

- Second, individuals have become subject to these changes and now enter a relationship with religion and/or spirituality based on a redefining of the boundaries between the sacred and the secular.

</div>

Chapter 8. Critical Reflections on the Post-Secular

Introduction

> REFLECTION
>
> Religion is more deeply connected to the individual than the secular perspective assumes or recognises. The term post-secular holds an in-built recognition of this relationship.
>
> 17/2/2010

This chapter will explore the claims made of the post-secular in the literature and the interviews. It will draw on the most commonly held definitions and statements, critically analysing them in the light of my research question – What is the nature and extent of post-secular changes in Australia? In particular, I will investigate the claims of Habermas, including the three defining features of religious resurgence that he sees as significant to the post-secular era.

> Above all, three overlapping phenomena converge to create the impression of a worldwide 'resurgence of religion': the missionary expansion (a), a fundamentalist radicalisation (b), and the political instrumentalisation of the potential for violence innate in many of the world religions (c).[709]

Habermas sees the post-secular as indicating a remedy for contemporary challenges, including religious unrest. In essence, he argues that economic and social decisions need to account for religious perspectives, and incorporate this awareness into political and public decision making. Over the last decade or so, his articulation of a post-secular society has been a valuable response to the challenges of the contemporary moment, as it is a catalyst for opening up public discussion about the role of religion in society. Although much of this

---

[709]Habermas, 'Notes on Post-Secular Society', (pp. 17-29.

discussion has been on the academic front, there has also been increased media attention on religion in the public square.

THE PROBLEM OF 'POST'

The association of the post-secular with postmodernism, postcolonial and other 'post' terms positions is problematic, in that definitions are multifarious. Yet it also creates an association with certain timeframes and ways of thinking.[710]It suggests there are other ways of living and thinking that need to be reconsidered. I gained insight into the contemporary challenges faced on a global scale, including inequality, environmental and moral dilemmas, during the interviews. The participants, in particular Clive Hamilton, pointed to the complexity of many of these issues, for which solutions are not simple or easily implemented. For Hamilton, the secular, liberal, Enlightenment project has run its course and needs a significant rethink in order to grapple with these contemporary issues. Religion and religious perspectives have something relevant and necessary to offer the discussion. Complex problems require a range of positions and alternatives that break free from dominant thought, which is often dictated by economic principles. The potential for alternative solutions, influenced by religious thought, that break through dominant market and material values, is significant.

At the very least, use of the term post-secular has aroused conversation about the secular, and has given the impetus for a rethinking of this to occur. For Habermas, it is necessary to review old paradigms, as to him the Enlightenment project has been disrupted – if not altered – by some crucial factors, including economic and social changes.[711] The secularisation of society relied on the Enlightenment project for its foundation, as reason subsumed all other

---

[710]A. L. Molendijk, 'In Pursuit of the Postsecular', *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology,* 76/2 (03 / 15 / 2015), 100-15.p. 100.
[711]Dillon, '2009 Association for the Sociology of Religion Presidential Addresscan Post-Secular Society Tolerate Religious Differences?*1', (, p. 147.

ways of thinking. The Enlightenment agenda centred secular thinking, even though much of the world may have remained religious. For Habermas, the world was secular because of the placement of Enlightenment values at the heart of progressive agendas.[712] Religion could not contribute to these same ideals of progress in the way that secular Enlightenment thought could. The solutions to social, economic and political problems could be found without recourse to religion and this paved the way for other values to be promoted, including new economic and political ideas that could dismiss religious paradigms as regressive.

According to Habermas, there is a post-secular because there was a secular, one enshrined in political and public thought that disregarded the religious yearnings of the majority of the world's population. Even though the secular continues to be reconceptualised through Charles Taylor's work, this is also a symptom of the post-secular; the secular can no longer be viewed as a natural and necessary precondition of modernity. In the ferment of social change experienced over the last 50 years, it is evident that secular understandings of the world do not give a full account of the challenges experienced by many individuals and societies, nor do they provide solutions to these challenges. The post-secular offers a position from which to reconsider the secular, while proposing a critique of its claims.

Habermas is not the only academic to use the term post-secular, with the academic popularity of the term paralleling the use of such terms as postmodern and postcolonial. However, it is also just as problematic as these terms, and just as vigorously debated.[713] The scholars who argue for the applicability of the notion of the post-secular note that the cultural, social and political differences that have emerged over the last half a century are historically unique. On the opposing side, however, some note strong evidence that, in some societies, the

---

[712]Habermas, 'Notes on Post-Secular Society', (p. 22.
[713]Molendijk, 'In Pursuit of the Postsecular', (p. 100.

secularisation thesis remains relevant.[714] Many also suggest that, given to the challenges of conceptualising the secular, it is not yet appropriate to claim a movement to the post-secular.[715] They note that it is premature to argue for the post-secular, as it has not yet been fully determined what the secular is. For Habermas, this is not a barrier, insofar as he argues that the post-secular is an agenda that allows for a more effective analysis of contemporary issues.[716]

As the secular has contributed to contemporary problems through its support of values of progress and economic development, it is essential to view the post-secular as a critical lens that interrogates the secular while seeking solutions beyond it. Although Habermas does not refer to environmental and social justice issues in his post-secular discussions, it is possible to apply his thinking to these issues. His dialogical approach requires openness to the other – an acceptance of another's perspective and of the value of that perspective for that person. Surely this is one of the ways in which current global crises can be approached, with respectful and open discussion incorporating a range of perspectives and possible solutions that do not disregard the religious and spiritual, but are also open to these values.

Jürgen Habermas

This section will return to discussion on Habermas' reasons for applying the term post-secular to some areas of the world, including Australia. He discusses three key characteristics, missionary expansion, fundamentalist radicalisation and political instrumentalisation. I respond with some thoughts regarding each of those three characteristics and their relevance to Australia.

---

[714]Habermas, 'Notes on Post-Secular Society', (p. 18.
[715]Paul Corrigan, 'The Postsecular and Literature', (2015).
[716]Habermas, 'Notes on Post-Secular Society', (p. 19.

MISSIONARY EXPANSION

Habermas points out the rise of conservative groups within established organisations and churches, referring to both western and eastern religions. He particularly notes the growing influence of the Christian churches in Africa and Asia, and the Evangelical presence in South America.[717]

For Australia, missionary expansion has occurred in waves over the entire history since settlement. This often follows European or US Evangelical/Pentecostal movements. The current movement in Australia runs along the lines of revivalism rather than establishment of new missions. Historically, missions in Australia have been linked to social policy and programming. This has often led to a negative response to contemporary missionary movements.

FUNDAMENTALIST RADICALISATION

In this section Habermas refers to radical Muslims and Pentecostals. Their 'rigid moral conceptions' are of concern, alongside their growing global influence. This is also apparent in Asia, with religious sects combining Buddhism with esoteric New Age elements.[718]

These fundamentalist groups are also present in Australia. Over recent years they have come to the fore due to Lindt Café siege in 2015 and other incidents. The media play a large and problematic role in the identification and labelling of these groups and individuals.

POLITICAL INSTRUMENTALISATION

Here Habermas makes reference to ongoing problems of violence in Iran, Islamic terrorism, the ongoing conflict between India and Pakistan, and the religious right in the US.[719]

---

[717]Ibid. p. 18.
[718]Ibid. pp. 18–19.
[719]Ibid. p. 19.

Although very little religious violence occurs in Australia, it is often spoken of by media and political commentators for social programming reasons.[720] The threat of religious violence has created an atmosphere of fear of 'the other', and the potential for this violence is ever-present. This threat may be largely imagined, but is made real to the public through these political and media organisations.

The interviews touched on these three aspects under the umbrella term of religious resurgence. Gary Bouma, in particular, notes that there is no question we are experiencing a resurgence, but he questions whether this can be understood as denoting a post-secular age. For him, there have been resurgences throughout history and to call these movements post-secular is too strong a line to take. So the question remains – does the contemporary religious resurgence equate to a post-secular era? For the interview participants, the answer is no. Here there is a lack of consensus between the literature and the interviews. Religious resurgence is of interest, not because it heralds a post-secular era, but because it is an indicator of elements of social and cultural change.

Habermas views a number of western societies as post-secular.[721] This is a notable position, as it concerns the nature of those societies and the changing conditions of belief in them. He enters this discussion from the position that religion has not died out but is as visible as in previous eras. Instead of seeing social change as a process outside religion, he sees religion as tied to social and political realities.[722]It may be helpful at this stage to understand the post-secular as a process, not a destination. David Tacey reflected on this in the interviews by making the proviso that Australia is not post-secular – yet. The post-secular is not a final destination, and can emerge in some places and not others, existing alongside the secular.

---

[720] Simon Tatz, 'The Anti-Muslim Sentiment Is Sadly Familiar for Many Australian Jews', (2015).
[721]Habermas, 'Notes on Post-Secular Society', (p. 17.
[722]Ibid. pp. 19–20.

Habermas argues that Australia is post-secular, but what that entails for Australia is not fully analysed. Dealing with the presence of both the secular and the post-secular, it can be argued that Australia has entered a time in which a range of viewpoints are discussed and accepted in the public arena. Around the world many people still hesitate to declare their faith position for various reasons, not least the fear of persecution and ridicule. In the western countries referred to by Habermas, public declarations may not be quite as problematic, but discomfort at professing a personal faith perspective publicly is something many people grapple with due to prevailing social norms. This is a very evident way of covertly stifling public religious discussion.

Some change can be noted in the public sphere in the form of social media and internet sites. Blogs, forums, chatrooms, websites, Facebook and a range of other digital spaces are devoted to the religious question and are a platform for discussion of religious identity.[723] In contrast to previous eras, this is one of the most significant changes that may be symptomatic of the post-secular era. Individuals and groups are actively asserting their right to exist and expressing themselves in this digital space and social media, while often gaining significant followings. Whether this space is now too saturated to be an effective tool for the dissemination of ideas is one possible concern; nevertheless, many people see it as a place where they can express their religious viewpoints with conviction.

POST-SECULAR IS AN AGE WHERE RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR WORLDVIEWS COEXIST[724]

Habermas ignited significant debate when he expressed his ideas of the post-secular in public forums. Since then, the term has gained increasing visibility in academic and social debates.

---

[723] A Google search of religious blogs and chat rooms returned over six million hits.
[724] A. Altinordu and P. S. Gorski, 'After Secularization?', *ANNUAL REVIEW OF SOCIOLOGY,* 34/Journal Article (2008), 55-85.p. 56.

Although he viewed post-secular as an indicator of religious resurgence, there are a number of further claims recognised in this research and these will be discussed in this section.

One area not often discussed in post-secular discussions is the existence and rise of non-belief perspectives such as atheism. Rather than analysing only the presence of believers as an indication of the decline or increase of religion, it is also important to reflect on non-believers as a group, as well as people who may inhabit more marginal positions between belief and unbelief. These liminal positions on the belief/non-belief spectrum are often ignored in statistical analysis. Additionally, the rise of atheism, and what is referred to in my interview with David Tacey as celebrity atheists, was a topic discussed by all participants. This rise was viewed by all participants as significant to this time. Tacey, in particular, sees this not simply as the rise of atheism, but the rise of an aggressive anti-religious stance. Also acknowledged by all participants was a universal frustration with this type of response to the secular, as it positions religious worldviews as simplistic, and even in some ways as destructive to the progress of humankind. Equally as important in discussions was the nominal belief or middle position occupied by many – Gary Bouma, Scott Stephens and Carole Cusack stated that many in Australia are nominally religious. Though the post-secular has connotations of the coexistence of religious and secular worldviews, belief and unbelief, it is not simply that these worldviews coexist in a post-secular age, but rather about the changing character of each of these positions.

For Gorski and Altinordu, the discussion of the coexistence of religious and secular worldviews initially proposed by Habermas is one, not of opposition, but of 'transformative interaction'.[725] Post-secular societies can be seen as fertile ground for explorations of the relationship between the secular and religion and a cross-fertilisation between them. The co-

---

[725]Ibid. p. 74.

dependency of the secular and religion is key to understanding the post-secular. Ingolf Dalferth discusses the idea of the post-secular as harbouring oppositional forces, not between believers and non-believers, but rather between the secular state and society itself.[726] From the range of perspectives of the post-secular, it can be understood that the application of the term is context and time specific and cannot suggest social uniformity in our understanding of what the post-secular is.

An interesting point expressed by Dalferth is that while it is recognised that religion can decline, for some reason there is less notice taken of the fact that non-religion cannot.[727] For Dalferth, if society is deemed as secular, there can be no shift from non-religious to religious, there can only be a shift from religious to non-religious.[728] This is an oversight on the part of sociologists insisting on the decline of belief as irreversible, with a concomitant rise in non-belief not considered reversible. Dalferth's assertion that post-secular societies are neither religious nor secular is based on the differentiation he places between the secular state and society itself. In discussions raised in the interviews, the consensus and the overriding concern was not with the determinations of the state, although significant, but with the idea that society is both religious and secular and that historically these two streams of thought have continued to ebb and flow. As raised elsewhere in this research, if this is viewed as the norm in society then to use the term post-secular is inappropriate, as society merely continues to fluctuate as it always has. This is too simplistic a conclusion and disregards the overriding theme of Taylor's work about changes to the conditions of belief at this time. For him, there is something very significant and different to being a believer (and alternately a non-believer) at this time than in previous eras.

---

[726]I. U. Dalferth, 'Post-Secular Society: Christianity and the Dialectics of the Secular', *JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION*, 78/2 (2010), 317-45.p. 321.
[727]Ibid. p. 319.
[728]Ibid. p. 320.

WE ARE IN A POST-SECULAR AGE[729]

As none of the participants considered that we were in a post-secular age in Australia, it is interesting to review what has been said about this outside Australia. While Habermas included Australia in his discussions, the interviews did not correlate with or support his claims.

Habermas's original discussions on the post-secular were centred on a number of western countries, including the 'affluent societies of Europe, Canada, Australia and New Zealand'.[730] Habermas argues that these societies are post-secular as they displayed a 'spreading awareness that their citizens were living in a secularised society'.[731] Although he uses the term in this context to denote a movement beyond the secular, the application of this term is explained by him as

> the expression 'postsecular' is not a genealogical but a sociological predicate. I use this expression to describe modern societies that have to reckon with the continuing existence of religious groups and the continuing relevance of the different religious traditions, even if the societies themselves are largely secularized. Insofar as I describe as 'postsecular', not society itself, but a corresponding change of consciousness in it, the predicate can also be used to refer to an altered self-understanding of the largely secularized societies of Western Europe, Canada, or Australia.[732]

It would appear from the above quote that Habermas still acknowledges the existence of the secular, but notes the change of consciousness that, for him, is captured by the post-secular. Habermas's definition of secularisation appears to be the process by which religion is excluded from the functioning and operations of governance and public life. The post-secular to him then seems to be a kind of self-awareness in public discourse that even though religion

---

[729]Habermas, 'Notes on Post-Secular Society', (p. 20.
[730]Ibid. p.17.
[731]Ibid.
[732] Jurgen Habermas, 'A Postsecular World Society?: An Interview with Jürgen Habermas', in Eduardo Mendieta (ed.), (2010).

has been excluded formally from certain public spaces, it nonetheless remains a feature of the lives of a majority of the citizens of the country. Even so, there are a number of key interpretations of Habermas's use of the term that are outlined here and discussed by their authors.

Michele Dillon views Habermas's post-secular as

> religions potential for remedial cultural resource for contemporary societal ills...an analytic device for acknowledging not so much the persistence of religion as the partial failure (derailing) of the Enlightenment, a failure that by default brings religion back and into the secular.[733]

For Dillon, secularisation has occurred but the post-secular acts as an indicator to demonstrate the persistence of religion. In this response, the ambiguous nature of the term is highlighted, as Habermas applies it to secularised societies that nonetheless are experiencing a 'change of consciousness'. This is similar to David Tacey's response in the interviews; he also noted the coexistence of the secular with a more recent change in society that parallels a questioning of its dominance. Habermas's view is that the secular and post-secular coexist.

Hent De Vries also speculates about the meaning of Habermas's words.

> Among other things, this would mean that the post-secular invites the secular to historicize and contextualize itself, and, where at all possible, to venture beyond its narrowest formulation and its juridical confines. As a matter of fact and compromise, a relaxed and cool – or, as Jürgen Habermas might say, detranscendentalized and fallible – secularism, one that rids itself once and for all of its reductionist and 'fundamentalist' assumptions, might well be the most and best we can aim and hope for at the present juncture in time... Habermas teaches us, nothing short of a 'new orientation', perhaps even a 'new form of consciousness', is called for.[734]

---

[733]Dillon, 'Jurgen Habermas and the Post-Secular Appropriation of Religion: A Sociological Critique'.p. 256.
[734]H. De Vries, 'Global Religion and Postsecular Challenge', in Craig Calhoun, Jonathan Vanantwerpen, and Eduardo Mendieta (eds.), *Habermas and Religion* (Cambridge: Ploity Press, 2013). p. 204.

The new form of consciousness suggested here is aligned with Charles Taylor's discussion of the changes to the conditions of belief that set apart his definition of the secular. Taylor sees beyond those who posit the separation of religion from the public square and the decline of religion as secular indicators, to a change in the conditions of religious belief that mark the secular age. In a sense, Habermas takes up where Taylor leaves off. At this stage, it appears Habermas is indicating social change – something going on within society and individuals. The post-secular here is an adjustment within society to the continued presence of religion.

For Mark Redhead, this adjustment problematises the post-secular encounter with political systems. These systems, in many cases, have been set up and developed over time with the view to an exclusion of religion. Religion, however, has once again manifested itself as a problem in seeking legitimacy in the public square, a place that has for some time normalised its absence.

> So far [Habermas] has developed two dimensions to his analysis; a focus on the post-secular as the site of the inter-relationship of religion and democratic politics and a focus on the post-secular as the problem of how to include members of various religious faiths within necessarily secular acts of public reasoning.[735]

Habermas is certainly concerned with how the presence of the post-secular manifests itself in democratic society but, as noted by Hovdelien, this also can be seen as the comingling of co-dependent worldviews in what is the reality of contemporary life. Hovdelien argues:

> Habermas employs the term 'post-secular society' to describe contemporary societies. This implies an understanding of religiously based descriptions of reality as present and existing alongside secular descriptions of reality. Indeed this is how it should be in today's multicultural society.[736]

---

[735]Mark Redhead, 'What's So Post About the Post-Secular?', (California State University, Fullerton, 2012b). p. 1.
[736] Olav Hovdelien, 'Post-Secular Consensus? On the Munich-Dialogue
between Joseph Ratzinger and Jürgen Habermas', *Australian eJournal of Theology,* 18/2 (2011). p. 111.

Barbato and Kratochwil view the Habermasian turn as one in which the post-secular emerges as a way of speaking and understanding religious perspectives and religiosity.

> Habermas proposes the concept of a post-secular society for the project of preserving the semantic potential of religion through a procedure of translation; it has three identifiable dimensions: one moral, one political, and one philosophical.[737]

From the above authors, it can be understood that Habermas is concerned with political and other related changes, but that he also sees the post-secular as capturing a current trend that forces us to deal with the changes to religion evident in the public square. Operating as both a critique and an indicator of change, for Habermas the post-secular encapsulates a current need to dialogue with religion.

Although Habermas entertains these post-secular changes, he does not abandon secular sensitivities; he acknowledges that secular society continues to exist, but also recognises that predictions of the disappearance of religion were misplaced and, indeed, erroneous.[738] Citing a number of contemporary examples, Habermas's revisiting of the secular and his movement towards the post-secular is a timely and necessary reminder that individuals and society continue to evolve. His call for a dialogue between religious and secular viewpoints is particularly apposite in the light of recent events that have often been described using religious dimensions and understandings. At the very least, religious understandings are needed to avoid one-sided discussion of topics that require input from both sides of the secular/religious divide.

In order to further theorise the post-secular, I have reconfigured Taylor's understandings of the secular to three understandings of the post-secular (Figure 7, below). I also draw on Horujy's post-secular self, which represents a 'dual anthropological dimension' in which the

---

[737] Mariano Barbato and Friedrich Kratochwil, 'Towards a Post-Secular Political Order?', *European Political Science Review,* 1/03 (2009), 317-40.p. 331.

[738] Habermas, 'Notes on Post-Secular Society', (p. 20.

'religious man and the secular man develop a dialogical partnership'.[739] This reconfiguration highlights the coexistence of, and even the co-dependent relationship between, the secular and post-secular. Essentially, Figure 5 reveals the relationship between the secular and post-secular in which the human person is the exemplar of the breaking down of the boundaries that have surrounded discussions on religion and the secular, religion and spirituality, and religion and tradition.
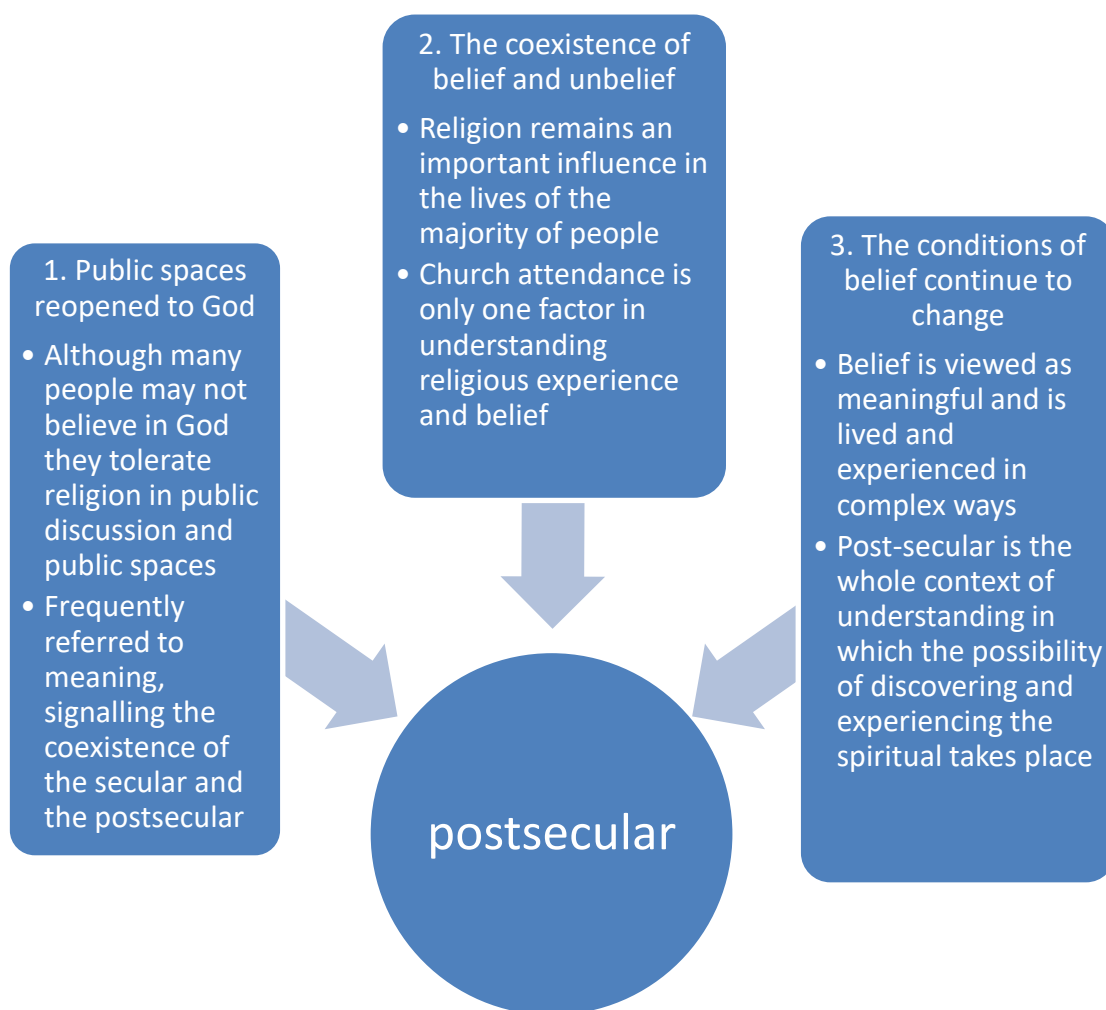
Figure 7: The post-secular reconfigured.

---

[739] Horujy, 'Anthropological Dimensions of the Postsecular Paradigm'. p. 4.

REFLECTION SUMMARY: THE ESSENCE OF THE POST-SECULAR

- The term post-secular has been used by Habermas to represent the awareness expressed in public and academic discourse that the secularisation thesis failed in a number of key ways, including the extinction of religion from the public sphere and the transformation of religion for the individual.

- To Taylor the post-secular refers not only to this historical, political and sociological change, but also to the anthropological vision of the human person and how this has evolved under the presence of the secular.

- The divide between religion and the secular in the public sphere also led to a new way of thinking within individuals, and their relationship to religion.

- Secularisation processes remain present in contemporary public and private spaces but this has not eliminated the function of religion in them, instead it has transformed this function.

PART C: FURTHER REFLECTIONS

Chapter 9. Developments in Australian Religion: Contemporary Post-Secular Movements

Introduction

Australia has not been immune to the recent world-changing events over the last decade or so. Alongside these external events, a change in attitudes to religion has been developing that has been described as 'the return of religion and the "crisis of secularism"'.[740] Although the number of Australians regularly attending religious services or identifying with religious traditions is decreasing over time, there is nonetheless a growing interest in and inclusion of religion in public dialogue and debate. The phenomenon of the 'post-secular' is embedded in these discussions and reflects responses to these global events and the changing attitudes towards religion in Australian public life.[741] The three movements discussed in this chapter are evidence of this response and reaction to global events that see people seeking answers to crisis and change. This seeking is framed by a rejection of secular worldviews and an embrace of diverse spiritual and religious perspectives, often cited as characteristic of post-secular change.

Whilst the phenomenon or idea of the post-secular is less evident than the secular in Australia, it is nonetheless a feature of public debate and dialogue concerning the nature and role of religion in Australian life. The very notion that there is such a phenomenon as the 'post-secular' is a matter of significant debate amongst scholars in the field, particularly as it is often defined in opposition to the secular. At the very least, the use of the term 'post-secular' amongst scholars in the Australian context appears to operate largely within the

---

[740]Wilson and Steger, 'Religious Globalisms in the Post-Secular Age', (pp. 481–82.
[741]Ibid.

ongoing theoretical debate over the role and future of religion in Australian life, both public and private. In this chapter, I argue that religion in Australia is subject to a range of unique conditions that sets it apart from its British roots, and more particularly differentiates it from the United States. I investigate three movements in Australia that display post-secular characteristics such as detraditionalisation, pluralism and a blending of knowledge systems.

On a global level, the post-secular has often been defined as a resurgence of religion, which has cast a negative light on the term, developing as it has in response to a number of calamitous world events.[742] In Australia, the picture is less clear, although the return – rather than resurgence – of religion is noteworthy. The post-secular here can be seen as a possibility, an undercurrent that connects people back to historical ideas and experiences, while pointing to contemporary changes. These apparent changes to religion and secularity may be labelled post-secular, as some of the definitions of post-secular currently circulating find relevance.[743] For the most part, however, Australia's experience so far of the post-secular is quiet and inconclusive; nevertheless, the role of religion in Australia is being renegotiated. This renegotiation has been led by religious and political leaders, as well as by the public through the diversity of religion practiced here.

Australians play a large role in the acceptance or denial of the post-secular. Many Australians are viewed as religiously indifferent; from the early days of the colony, this indifference has been well documented.[744]The story of the post-secular sees secular Australia as continuing on this trajectory, while a number of new religious and spiritual horizons begin to appear. The movements discussed in this section serve as examples of the phenomena associated with post-secularism and speak to the post-secular in their revivalism, impact on the individual and

---

[742] Habermas, 'Notes on Post-Secular Society', (p. 17.
[743]Paul Rooney, 'National Curriculum, Postsecularism and Pedagogy : Opportunities for Christian Education', *Journal of Christian Education,* 55/2 (2012). p. 30.
[744]Patrick O'farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community in Australia : A History* ([Melbourne] : Nelson, 1977., 1977).p. 17.

capacity to support a range of values and experiences for the individual. In addition I discuss changes within the Australian Catholic Church as an exploration

Changing spiritualities

To preface my discussion of the movements, it is important to discuss spirituality and contemporary changes to the individual's experience of religion and spirituality. Historically, religion was considered the source of spirituality and understood as its 'depth dimension'; in modern times, however, it is positioned as separate to, and even in tension with, spirituality.[745] Religion is now more often associated with adherence to tradition in the form of creed and dogmatic requirements, and less with personal religious experience. Tacey explores the notion that spirituality has been seen in a pejorative sense, as something that could radicalise individuals against religious authority through their reinterpretation of the faith.[746] Many a mystic over the centuries has experienced criticism or censure for what was misplaced enthusiasm viewed as a threat to accepted belief. Nonetheless, in contemporary terms spirituality is understood as existing largely separate from religion and has taken on diverse associations and expressions.

Spirituality now has connotations of connection to the sacred as well as of alignment with inwardness and personal experience, as Tacey states, it is a 'people's religion'.[747]Viewed as remarkably positive, spirituality has a connection to the inner life of the individual while directing whole-of-life dimensions. This relocation of spirituality from religion to the inner subjective world of the individual resituates authority from external to internal sources and gives some indication as to the emergence of these movements as a reconnection to principles

---

[745]Howell, *The New Spiritualities, East and West: Colonial Legacies and the Global Spiritual Marketplace in Southeast Asia*.p. 20.
[746]Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution : The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality*.p.33.
[747]Ibid. pp.38–39.

thought lost or endangered. In the drive towards deeper spiritual experiences and self-fulfilment in contemporary contexts, these movements advocate for belonging and holistic connections.

It is often assumed that discussion of new spiritualities refers to New Age-style beliefs, but the changes to spirituality discussed here are necessarily 'New Age', though they may bear some resemblances. The changes discussed below refer to developments occurring within mainstream Christian belief systems as well as them. In a sense, there is nothing new about the emergence of these movements; many others have arisen throughout history and have already been noted in the literature as significant. Their occurrence is an indicator of social and cultural change.[748] What makes this post-secular era distinctive is that these practices may be participated in without any prerequisite of religious affiliation. Taylor notes that what may have been understood as 'optional extras' in previous eras are now parts of the mobile field of an individual's association towards, and away from, various aspects of faith and belief.[749]

Perhaps what most marks this era is the changing association between these individual components and fusion with a community. If the post-secular is a new turn towards the self, then what needs to be understood is that the self takes precedence; community needs are to serve individual needs. Lynch notes that individuals may practice certain beliefs and rituals without feeling the need to be involved with organisations or communities. The online presence of various religious and spiritual viewpoints has also assisted this change.[750] The online access to these movements also indicates a membership or involvement that is somewhat anonymous, voluntary and does not rely on ritual or a designated worship centre,

---

[748] One such contemporary commentary is provided by Graham Reside, 'The New Spirituality: An Introduction to Progressive Belief in the Twenty-First Century – by Gordon Lynch', *Conversations in Religion & Theology,* 8/1 (2010), 60-77.pp.68–69, but there are numerous others. Also notable is Durkheim's exploration.
[749] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 516.
[750] Lynch, *The New Spirituality: An Introduction to Progressive Belief in the Twenty-First Century*.pp.72–73.

indicating the changing nature of religious communities. The exception to this in the three movements discussed below is New Monasticism, with its emphasis on communal living. Nonetheless, community members are allowed freedom to participate in activities beyond community life which, in previous eras, would have been untenable.

What comes to the fore in examining these movements is that personal goals, inner authority, experiential values and interior religiosity have shifted to the norm rather than the periphery of the experiences of belief. This is evident in all three movements discussed. While much of the discussion of the post-secular has related to the European context, I consider it equally applicable to the Australian context, although it does not provide a mirror image of the European situation, as the rise of various religious movements has also been noted by Bouma and Tacey as indicating a plural and evolving society in Australia.[751]

Three movements

Three diverse movements that have appeared on the religious landscape in contemporary Australia are New Monasticism, Creation Spirituality and Evolutionary Christianity. I have chosen to investigate these movements as they typify key ideas and\or trends coming to the fore in contemporary religion and spirituality; caring for the planet, the blending of knowledge systems and a global presence. According to Gordon Lynch, religious movements such as these are emerging across and beyond religious traditions rather than in isolation from them.[752] This chapter will investigate the principles they espouse and their relevance to the changing face of the experience of religion in Australia. What is less evident in this research is the level of affiliation or membership growth; these movements are often not clearly demarcated within larger denominations, making it difficult to estimate membership. I reflect on the question of whether these movements have emerged due to what David Tacey terms

---

[751]Bouma, *Australian Soul : Religion and Spirituality in the Twenty-First Century*.pp.116–17; Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution : The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality*.
[752]Lynch, *The New Spirituality: An Introduction to Progressive Belief in the Twenty-First Century*.p.7

'the patent failure of secular humanism'.[753] I also discuss a number of similarities in terms of genesis of these movements, with each situated within the mainstream religious groups from which they emerged while attracting people from various denominations. What their appearance also indicates are changes to the experiential role of religion in people's lives.

One recent event embodies the concerns of these movements and signifies the rise of their visibility and mainstream acceptance of the values they espouse. The 2009 gathering of the Parliament of the World's Religions in Melbourne, Australia, adopted the theme 'Make a World of difference: Hearing each other, Healing the earth'. The predominant theme of this gathering was based on the principles of common responsibility, global community and the sacred nature of the environment.[754] This gathering also discussed social justice concerns such as poverty and peace alongside issues specific to Indigenous peoples, while fostering a sense of shared community and spirituality in the current globalised context. This conference offered a forum for dialogue on the many concerns of contemporary religious movements, such as developing community between religious groups and breaking down denominational barriers, underpinned by a deepening concern for the earth and the planetary future. All these concerns form the backdrop to the post-secular perspective.

The movements investigated here are not clearly bounded by denominational lines and are therefore not often the subject of statistical research. While working on my PhD, I have become more aware that statistics can only show one small part of the story of religious experience (see the box discussion below regarding fertility and religion). Statistical data about religious affiliation and experience does not always consider the formation and development of movements between and within religious organisations and institutions. Data is often collected through analysis of clearly defined categories, i.e., mainstream religions,

---

[753]Tacey, 'Environmental Spirituality', (p. 17.
[754]Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, 'The 2009 Parliament', (updated 12/06/2011)
<http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/index.cfm>

with less concern for changing religious contexts. In this I agree with Lynch, who argues that

what is interesting about this time is that there are a number of shared characteristics present

in the recently emerged movements discussed here that statistics cannot cover.[755]

---

[755]Lynch, *The New Spirituality: An Introduction to Progressive Belief in the Twenty-First Century*. p.8

Statistics and religion - Birth rates and religious affiliation in Australia

One statistical area of interest is the relationship between religion and birth rate in Australia. In 2008, the ABS released data around religious affiliation and birth rate that still engenders controversy. Their findings relate to the significantly higher birth rate of women from Middle Eastern backgrounds at 2.9 in 2006.[756] This figure remains quoted in the 2015 Australian Muslims: A Demographic, Social and Economic Profile of Muslims in Australia Report.[757] In comparison for all women in Australia it is 2.0. Adjusted birth rate for Islamic women is more likely closer to 2.5 but this is still higher than other religious groups. Christianity has the 2nd highest rate of 2.1 with little variation between Christian denominations. Other religions represented in Australia have lesser figures such Buddhism at 1.7 and Hindu at 1.8.
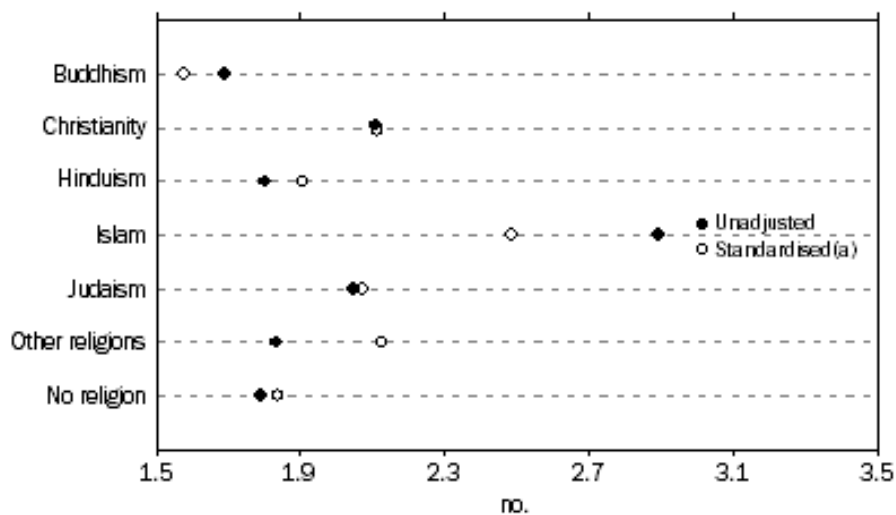
(a) Standardised to the total 40-44 year old women's level of education and income.

Figure 8: Average number of children born and religious affiliation, women aged 40–44 years (2006). (*Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing*)

As noted in the abovementioned report, '[f]ertility behaviour is one of the most socially and culturally regulated behaviours in society. There is a general tendency towards convergence of fertility behaviours of migrant and local populations'.[758] These two aspects, regulation and convergence suggest that national ideas regarding fertility are influential and align with secular influence. Regardless of this religion remains influential

---

[756]Australian Bureau Of Statistics, 'How Many Children Have Women in Australia Had?', (Canberra: Australian Government, 2008).
[757]University of South Australia International Centre for Muslim and Non-Muslim Understanding, 'Australian Muslims. A Demographic, Social and Economic Profile of Muslims in Australia Report', (2015).p. 26.
[758]Ibid.

as the statistics show. This small picture of one aspect of social life in Australia is interesting as it is a microcosm of the changes at a personal and family level, as well as the national level, that highlight religion is still important to individuals but other secular influences are also significant. This blending of religion with the secular is characteristic of religious phenomena in Australia and points to the complexity of the link between them.

> First, religion could affect individual preferences for children or for use of birth control. Second, religion could influence social norms regarding childbearing and women's work. Third, religion could affect education and thus change the shadow price of raising children. Fourth, religious communities could lower the effective price of raising children by providing child-friendly social services, such as day care, schools, and medical care. Finally, religion could affect national politics and thus the provision of child-friendly social services by government.[759]

These aspects discussed by Berman, Iannaccone, and Ragusa are important as they allude to the individual experience of religion and its impacts on behaviours, values and practices. On face value the decline of religion in Australia appears to be linked to the overall decline in birth rate, while at the same time indicating that religion to some groups influences values and attitudes to key practices. As can be seen the link between religion and birth rate is not straightforward and needs a more critical response than statistics indicate.

Post-secular religion

The post-secular is referred to as 'complex and diverse changes that in different ways involve e.g. resacralisation or revitalisation of religion and transform the religious landscape in a profound way'.[760]Bouma argues that this post-secular form of revitalisation is characterised 'by an intense focus on what is declared to be a simple literal reading of the sacred text, which is then applied simplistically to life'.[761] He also argues that this form of religious expression is 'modern', particularly in the sense of how it is communicated via technological

---

[759]Eli Berman, Laurence R. Iannaccone, and Giuseppe Ragusa, 'From Empty Pews to Empty Cradles: Fertility Decline among European Catholics', *NBER Working Papers,* (2012).
[760]Nynas, 'Post-Secular Culture and a Changing Religious Landscape in Finland'.p. 8.
[761]Bouma, *Australian Soul : Religion and Spirituality in the Twenty-First Century*.p. 103.

channels and with its global reach often leading to more fluid expressions.[762] This section seeks to clarify aspects of these theoretical discussions currently found in the literature as characteristics noted in relation to post-secular religious movements. This same literature expresses caution towards the use of 'post-secular' as it remains a contested and ambiguous term. Several noteworthy characteristics of the post-secular will be discussed, including detraditionalisation, the return to orthodoxy, pluralisation and the blurring of the boundaries between sectors of knowledge.

1. Detraditionalisation[763]

As noted by Lieven Boeve, detraditionalisation is the 'interruption of traditions' (in this case religious), which are no longer passed on generationally or as a pre-given set of values.[764] It is not limited to the Christian faith but has affected numerous religions. This has resulted in disruptions to the process of transmission that religious traditions have historically relied on for continuation of their faith. The five characteristics of detraditionalisation explored by Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead are

- the weakening of tradition,

- the sacralisation of the self,

- the individualisation of religion,

- the consumerisation of religion, and

- the universalisation of religion.[765]

Detraditionalisation as a category of post-secular belief suggests that religion has undergone an institutional shift away from mainstream organised churches to the 'diffuse pattern'

---

[762] Ibid..
[763] Boeve, 'Religion after Detraditionalization: Christian Faith in a Post-Secular Europe', (p. 99.
[764] Ibid. p.105.
[765] Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead (eds.), *Religion in Modern Times: An Interpretive Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).p. 342.

referred to by Boeve.[766] He notes that this has been caused by the influence of secularism and is, indeed, the realisation of this process. This is worlds away from the demise of religion foretold by this very same thesis. Instead, alternative processes such as detraditionalisation are now the subject of discussions such as those by academics Heelas and Woodhead and are posed as contemporary indicators of change. Through this, the zero-sum model of the relationship between religion and secularisation has been challenged. As the current transformations of religion suggest, secular values, although still influential, are less likely to present alternative worldviews. Secularisation is not now considered the only force affecting these changes to religion.[767] Instead, Boeve's diffuse model that speaks of a transformation of religion is more relevant in post-secular discussions. Under this understanding, the use of data to examine the decline of religion can only speak to one part of the equation, the decline; it cannot help us understand the reaction to secularism in the form of the rise of individual beliefs and spirituality.

Detraditionalisation: New monasticism

One example of detraditionalisation in Australia is 'new monasticism'. New monasticism refers to contemporary communities that embrace ancient monastic practices such as community ritual, responsibility, work and mission, offering contemporary reinterpretations of these practices. These reinterpretations sit alongside distinct breaks from tradition, such as not renouncing the world but, rather, working in the world; imposing no requirement of celibacy; and embracing other non-Christian religious beliefs and practices. 'The modern monk does not want to renounce, except what is plainly sinful or negative; rather he wishes to

---

[766]Boeve, 'Religion after Detraditionalization: Christian Faith in a Post-Secular Europe', (p. 101.
[767]Houtman and Aupers, 'The Spiritual Turn and the Decline of Tradition: The Spread of Post-Christian Spirituality in 14 Western Countries, 1981–2000', (p. 305.

transform all things… he is not interested in stripping himself of everything, but in assimilating it all'.[768]

As discussed by Mcentee – one of the authors of *New Monasticism: An Interspiritual Manifesto for Contemplative Living* – detraditionalisation is acknowledged as a legitimate process of making religion and spirituality relevant for contemporary times.

> I think that for many there's a rejection of being embedded in a traditional path, and there's a rejection of having a spiritual life that is not directly related in some way to serving the world we are living in right now…And there's often a certain sponatneous kind of antipathy at being in a particular tradition to the exclusion of others.

These new monastic communities have proliferated over the last decade and are primarily situated in the UK, US and Australia. The term 'new monasticism' emerged in 1998 in the response of American theologian Jonathon Wilson to Alasdair MacIntyre's critique of modernity. This critique called for the construction of local communities sustained through their resistance to modernity, much as Saint Benedict, a significant figure in the early history of monasticism, did in his time against equally challenging forces.[769]

New monastic groups are affiliated with western Christian traditions including Evangelical, Protestant and Catholic groups.[770] In Australia, new monasticism has close links with the Anabaptist and Evangelical traditions, even though its members are not solely from these traditions. New monastic communities are found in a number of states, primarily in larger cities. These communities include the Urban Neighbours of Hope in Sydney and Melbourne (Churches of Christ), The Community of the Transfiguration in Geelong (Anabaptist) and The Peace Tree Community in Perth (Anabaptist).[771]

---

[768]R. Mcentee and A. Bucko, *New Monasticism: An Interspiritual Manifesto for Contemplative Living* (Orbis Books, 2015).
[769]MacIntyre as quoted in Jason Byassee, 'The New Monastics: Alternative Christian Communities', *The Christian Century* (122, 2005), 38-47.
[770]Mark Hurst, 'Anabaptism: The Beginning of a New Monasticism', (Canberra, 2008). p. 1.
[771]Ibid. pp. 4–5.

These communities typically attract younger members; they declare strong links to the poor and care for the environment, and have adapted and adopted a monastic rule involving discipline and communal practices.[772] What is unique about these new monastic communities is that they have modified monastic rules to incorporate both married and celibate adherents, in addition to varying organisational structures and granting some level of autonomy for individual members and latitude in regard to their ecumenical associations. This fosters an eclectic mix of theology and spirituality within each community.[773] These communities are also variously viewed as a response to individualism, the mega-church movement, consumerism, globalisation and the emptiness of modern suburban life. In short, they are counter-cultural.[774]

This movement can be considered post-secular due to its adaptation to changing national and global circumstances, while simultaneously reconnecting to older traditions. It is a reaction to the secularisation of mainstream churches as well as the secular influence in wider society in broader terms. On a more individual level, new monasticism may be attracting what Charles Taylor describes as the contemporary pilgrim 'seeker', individuals attempting to discern and follow their own path of which this movement is but one destination.[775] Furthermore, Taylor notes that these contemporary religious drives are towards smaller, more intimate groups of family and friends, often in ecumenical settings with a plurality of spiritualities accepted as the norm.[776]

2. A plural field of interacting religious positions.[777]

---

[772]Rob Moll, 'The New Monasticism', *Christianity Today* (2005).
[773]Hurst, 'Anabaptism: The Beginning of a New Monasticism'. p. 2.
[774]Ibid. p. 2.
[775]Taylor, *A Secular Age*., p-.532–33.
[776]Ibid. p. 534.
[777]Boeve, 'Religion after Detraditionalization: Christian Faith in a Post-Secular Europe', (p. 107.

In a post-secular environment, the disappearance of religion as foretold by the secularisation thesis has not eventuated; instead, a 'dynamic multi-religious society' is evident. As Boeve explains, these societies may host a number of ambiguous and conflicting beliefs. Secular culture has not replaced the dominant belief system; instead, a range of belief options are available alongside the traditional. Detraditionalisation and pluralisation are two parts of the one process. This plural field has been assisted by patterns of global migration and technological advances that have shifted and connected people who in previous eras were less likely to cross paths. Even though tensions remain between a number of religious groups, there is a distinctive ecumenical and syncretistic outlook evident in these new movements and this speak to the changes evident in post-secular contexts.[778]

Boeve states that this pluralism has led to the inversion of the privileged status of Christianity in Europe. This may be the case in Europe, but is less applicable in the Australian context. Tom Frame notes that although Australia has a Christian heritage that continues to influence public life, Christianity never was the state religion, unlike a number of European nations.[779] Gary Bouma states that Australia is both nominally religious and nominally Christian.[780] In contemporary Australia, there is now an increased visibility of other religions and spiritualities alongside Christianity, with cross-pollenisation evident in this post-secular change. Bouma further argues that the plural religious landscape in Australia is growing and all indicators suggest that growth will continue.[781] These belief systems relate relatively peacefully with each other, showing strong ecumenical ties.[782] So, with both ecumenism and pluralism manifest in Australian society, I argue that religion and spirituality are large and syncretic fields of understanding, fostering beliefs that facilitate the growth of new movements.

---

[778]Lynch, *The New Spirituality: An Introduction to Progressive Belief in the Twenty-First Century*.p. 110.
[779]Frame, *Losing My Religion : Unbelief in Australia*., p. 272.
[780]Gary Bouma, 'The Emergence of Religious Plurality in Australia: A Multicultural Society', *Sociology of Religion,* 56/3 (1995), 285-302.p. 287.
[781]Ibid. pp. 26–87.
[782]Ibid. pp. 299–300; Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution : The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality*., p.16–17.

Pluralism: Creation spirituality

Creation spirituality is a set of beliefs based on sacredness of the earth and its inhabitants, both human and non-human. It promotes the deepening of the relationship between humanity, the earth and God by encouraging reverence and mutuality through acknowledgement of the commonality of the sacredness that exists throughout all creation. Creation spirituality draws on biblical creation events, with a particular focus on the time before the fall of humanity, directing beliefs to considerations of God's unerring presence in all creation.[783] For creation spirituality, there is less emphasis on fallen humanity and more on the goodness of humanity and all creation. With a strong focus on sacredness and Indigenous religion and symbols, creation spiritualty has had worldwide appeal, particularly with Matthew Fox in the US and his influence further afield in the UK with the Green Spirit organisation.

Fox is one of the seminal figures of the movement. His autobiography, *Confessions: The Making of a Postdenominational Priest*, offers an insight into the pluralism evident in this movement

> Scales fell from my eyes; I was bumped from my horse! The most pressing question I had brought with me to Paris – how do mysticism and social justice relate (if at all)? – now had a context! So did the issues of dualism and the demeaning of body and matter. Creation spirituality would bring it all together for me: the scriptural and Jewish spirituality (for it was the oldest tradition in the Bible, that of the Yahwist author of the ninth or tenth century before Christ); science and spirituality; politics and prayer; body and spirit; science and religion; Christianity and other world religions. It would be my task to study creation spirituality more deeply and to begin a cultural translation of it. This task would prove to be a process in its own right with unforeseen consequences.[784]

It is difficult to estimate affiliation with this movement, but what is evident is the infiltration of mainstream religion by the principles of ecology theology. Certainly this movement can be

---

[783] B Coman, 'Environmentalism and Catholicism in Australia: The Provenance of 'Creation Spirituality' and Some Implications Arising from the Idea. ', *The Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Australia 2007 Annual Conference* (Campion College, Toongabbie, NSW, 2007). p. 4.

[784] Matthew Fox, *Confessions: The Making of a Postdenominational Priest* (San Fransisco: Harper, 1997).

credited with reconnecting individuals to care for the earth and environmental responsibility. It is this intersection between contemporary concerns for the environment and ecological consciousness that has assisted the rise in expressions of this spirituality. In Australia, these expressions include the 1997 publication of *Rainbow Spirit Theology*, an ecumenical theological engagement between Christianity and Aboriginal culture, and the Ecofaith movement, an initiative of the Uniting Church in Australia. Both these movements see Indigenous knowledge systems as at the core of spiritual transformation in Australia, offering creation spirituality as an expression of the connectedness of creation to the Creator.

Defining creation spirituality presents a challenge due to the ambiguity of the language used in reference to it. Fox writes of it as integrating Indigenous cultures, seeing creation-centred spirituality as 'cosmic... open, seeking, and explorative of the cosmos within the human person and all creatures and of the cosmos without, the spaces between creatures that unite us all'.[785] Although Fox and his followers are highly visible in reference to these beliefs, similar expressions were found by this researcher in other sources. The use of such terminology as open, seeking and cosmic is suggestive of a kind of abstract mysticism that is non-doctrinal, as well as one in which the causes of environmental destruction are less significant than relocating the relationship of humanity to nature.[786]

Not unlike the new monastic movement, creation spiritualty seeks to reconnect its followers to a 'local experience' of religion, one which Tacey claims has been absent in Australia since the establishment of colonial religion here.[787] Tacey also writes of creation spirituality as affiliated with Indigenous culture and as fostering connection with and respect for the earth and ecology. These principles often coincide with new spiritualities, which appear to lack

---

[785] Fox as quoted in Harold Wood, 'The Creation Centered Spirituality of Matthew Foxand His New Reformation of Christianity', (2006).

[786] Lynch, *The New Spirituality: An Introduction to Progressive Belief in the Twenty-First Century*.pp. 37–39.

[787] Tacey, 'Environmental Spirituality', (p. 18.

organisational boundaries, allowing for a type of loose association with them that brings together people from diverse backgrounds and belief systems.[788] This involvement is encouraged by a very visible presence online, with numerous sites devoted to this spirituality and its contemporary manifestations.

One important aspect of creation spirituality is what Coman describes as the experiential considerations of adherents.[789] This movement relies heavily on what he says is the individual's subjective experience of the sacred in nature. This experience of the immanence of the sacred directs much of the belief and activity of the followers, who seek to more intimately exist in relationship with creation, and thereby the Creator.[790]

3. The blurring of the boundaries between different sectors of knowledge which juxtapose scientific, religious, esoteric and therapeutic discourse and practices.[791]

Peter Nynas uses the rise in popularity of therapeutic and wellbeing practices to indicate that secular and religious epistemologies increasingly intersect in popular culture .[792] Often these practices are promoted as self-help and are flavoured by spiritual knowledge such as eastern mysticism. This aspect is described as a transformation of religion, with some beliefs tied to continuity with the past, while others reflect modernity or a plurality of religious, world and life views.[793] Charles Taylor notes that these intersections bridge the humanist/spiritual divide, particularly those that combine therapy with spirituality.[794] These are indicators of the broadening of the understanding of spirituality and sacredness, both of which in contemporary understandings uphold individual choice and personal experience. On the other

---

[788]Reside, 'The New Spirituality: An Introduction to Progressive Belief in the Twenty-First Century – by Gordon Lynch', (p. 63.
[789]Coman, 'Environmentalism and Catholicism in Australia: The Provenance of 'Creation Spirituality' and Some Implications Arising from the Idea. '. p. 1.
[790]Ibid.
[791]Nynas, 'Post-Secular Culture and a Changing Religious Landscape in Finland'. p. 6.
[792]Ibid.
[793]Boeve, 'Religion after Detraditionalization: Christian Faith in a Post-Secular Europe', (p. 113.
[794]Taylor, *A Secular Age*., p .513.

hand, this 'pick-and-mix' approach suggests there is less commitment to spirituality, and far more questioning of how it serves our personal needs. Individual needs may change over time; consequently, spirituality is understood less as a process of belonging and more about inner need and fulfilment.[795]

Tacey notes that as spirituality has become an individualistic phenomenon subject to constant change, people now bring their understanding of spirituality to the various fields of knowledge they interact with.[796] He also suggests this has given rise to a new sense of belonging.[797] This new spiritual sense has shifted across boundaries and epistemologies, bridging the faith/knowledge divide. As part of the post-secular spiritual quest of the individual, spiritual possibilities can be found in and through a range of experiences. In the various discourses on the environment, lifestyle and health, spirituality has become more explicitly evident. Rather than the decline of such understandings, spiritual quests has prompted a rise in the popularity of what may be considered by some to be a type of pseudo-spirituality. Rachael Kohn notes that this interchange of ideas and values is an exchange of the secular with the spiritual that is characteristic of this era.[798] The collapsing of the boundaries between seemingly opposing knowledge systems such as science and faith signals that secular and post-secular ideas and influences are concurrently circulating, and are dependent on each other for meaning.

Collapse in the boundaries of knowledge: Evolutionary Christianity

While also crediting its beliefs with increased concern for the environment, evolutionary Christianity is a recent movement that has had wider implications for many followers of Christianity. The tension between evolutionary theory and Christianity remains, but this

---

[795]Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution : The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality*.pp.44–45.
[796]Ibid. p. 42.
[797]Ibid. p. 44.
[798]Rachael Kohn, *The New Believers: Re-Imagining God* (Pymble, N.S.W: HarperCollins, 2003). p. 4.

movement seeks to bring together what is often perceived as being in opposition, namely science and belief. The personal order of God's relationship to humanity is contrasted with science's impersonal order, in which humans exist as result of general universal laws rather than on specific claims to benevolence on the part of a divine being. [799] Evolutionary Christianity's concern with the origin of the cosmos, humanity and all life forms is paramount, with creation as part of a greater 'natural' process initiated by the divine creator. [800] More distinct in terms of beliefs and principles than creation spirituality, evolutionary Christianity holds that the either/or view of the origins of the earth (either you are a creationist or an evolutionist) sets up a false dichotomy that has led to much conflict for Christians pressed to assume one position or the other.

In the book *Stories of Contemporary Christians: Towards Evolutionary Christianity*, a number of followers of this movement share their stories. Below are two excerpts that express the intersection of knowledge systems evident in this movement.

> We no longer stay with biblical or medieval thought about everything else – medicine, science, politics, social structure – but for some reason many people think they have to stay with medieval theology that developed in an entirely different world view. To my mind, we have to interpret Christianity through 21st century spectacles. I am currently writing a book which seeks to do just that, linking up some of the new scientific insights from quantum physics and epigenetics to go beyond traditional theological interpretations of the Christ event and link with the idea of global shift that is now happening.[801]

> Now I see the universe as an evolving whole. Time is never-ending so there is no final separation. We will end up whole. The ultimate reality is love, and this love longs to express itself. Evolution is the process through which this love is expressing itself in Creation.[802]

---

[799]Taylor, *A Secular Age*.pp.362–63.
[800]Denis O. Lamoureux, 'Evolutionary Creation: Moving Beyond the Evolution Versus Creation Debate', *Christian Higher Education,* 9/1 (2010), 28-48.p. 28.
[801]Janice Dolley and Jane Ozanne (eds.), *Stories of Contemporary Christians Towards Evolutionary Christianity* (CANA, 2011).p. 22.
[802]Ibid. p.51.

As outlined by Tom Frame in his 2009 publication *Evolution and the Antipodes: Charles Darwin in Australia*, Australia has a long history of involvement in the debates surrounding evolutionary theory and the more recent development of evolutionary Christianity. While referring to the followers of this belief as 'evolutionary theists', Frame declares that '[t]he pre-nineteenth century depiction of creation as a single event at the beginning of time has been abandoned. Evolutionary theory requires creation to be understood as a continuous process rather than an isolated act completed in the distant past'.[803] This assertion may be a personal one by Frame, but the consequences of it are that science and the biblical account of creation are compatible and present no conflict. Weighing in on this debate in Australia is a network of organisations ranging from the more organised 'Progressive Christianity' group to academics and theologians. These debates have often circulated around arguments involving creation science and/or intelligent design, both of which fail to come to terms with the science;[804] the former upholds the Christian account of creation as literal,[805] while the latter views the natural world as evidence of a 'guiding force', not as a randomised process.[806] Frame quotes physicist Paul Davies, who asserts that many theologians now accept 'God works through the evolutionary mechanism'.[807]

This movement can be viewed as post-secular due to the blurring of boundaries between science and religious knowledge and the incorporation of science. This aspect is explored by Gordon Kaufman, who believes that only by coming to terms with our biological evolutionary nature will we be able to attend to the ecological crisis besetting the planet.[808] Kaufman's biohistorical approach is one in which evolutionary trajectories are initiated by God and situate humanity not as the apotheosis of creation but as entirely dependent on all

---

[803]Tom Frame, *Evolution in the Antipodes: Charles Darwin and Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2009b). p. 262.
[804]Ibid. p .216.
[805]Ibid. p. 176.
[806]Ibid. p. 194.
[807]Ibid. p. 257.
[808]Kaufman, 'Re-Conceiving God and Humanity in Light of Today's Evolutionary-Ecological Consciousness', (p. 338.

other aspects of creation.[809] Thus, humanity is fundamentally implicated in the ecological future, not by divine mandate but by obligation to the created order. This change to the established order of God, humanity, creation has far wider implications for Christianity and is a common thread in both evolutionary Christianity and creation spiritualty.

Critical to this movement is the acceptance of a number of theological premises that involve a rethink of humanity in the light of the sciences. It is insistent that Christian theology dialogue with the sciences in order to gain fresh insights into the nature of humanity. Theologian Paul Jersild states that human nature's theological and biological paradigms are complementary, as they bring an 'indispensable perspective' to understanding the human person.[810] Thus, although evolutionary Christianity supports the meeting of science and religion, its most distinctive element is this rethink of the nature of humanity and, in turn, the relationship with the wider circle of creation.

INFLUENTIAL FACTORS

Underlining many of these possible post-secular characteristics is a drive towards non-dualistic or holistic understandings of life and the human person.[811]They also reflect the impact of globalisation, with the exchange and transformation of ideas and values both transnationally and via online communities. Furthermore, elements of a return to self are indicated; the changes to religion can be seen as part of the quest for self that identifies this particular age.[812] This is reflected in relation to religious identity, which is not understood as a pre-given or inherited reality, but as 'endlessly constructed' in post-secular contexts.[813] Concurrently, there appears to be a drive towards renewing older traditions and practices,

---

[809]Ibid. p. 347.
[810]Jersild, 'Rethinking the Human Being in Light of Evolutionary Biology', (p. 38.
[811]Nynas, 'Post-Secular Culture and a Changing Religious Landscape in Finland'. p. 7.
[812]Taylor, *A Secular Age*.p. 509.
[813]Nynas, 'Post-Secular Culture and a Changing Religious Landscape in Finland'. p.7; Vaillancourt, *From Five to Ten Dimensions of Religion: Charles Y. Glock's Dimensions of Religiosity Revisited*.p .66.

making them relevant for contemporary applications.[814] So, what is found in post-secular situations is a mixture of revitalised practices and beliefs alongside more traditional forms. It should also be noted that the post-secular does not signal an end to the influence of secularisation; rather, as noted by William Keenan, society continues to be inflected with contrasting and often conflicting values and beliefs, secular and post-secular alike.[815]

The ongoing influence of secularisation in society does not nullify the growth of post-secular movements within it. Although secularisation continues to play a significant role in society, the disappearance of religion foretold by the secularisation thesis has not taken place; religion survived the immense drive towards secularisation.[816] Instead, as Boeve argues of Europe, a transformation of religion has taken place.[817] In what appears to be a reaction to overt secularisation, this transformation has seen the search for spirituality expand to transcend once rigid denominational boundaries. The transformation of religion suggests a number of processes at play in post-secular societies, such as detraditionalisation. Indeed, the post-secular does not signal the disappearance of already identified trends, but rather re-situates them within a growing religiosity.[818] For the movements discussed in this chapter, the contemporary cultural framework in which they function blends secular and post-secular, traditional and non-traditional, in an evolving and adaptive way that defies the secularisation theory. Consequently movements such as those discussed in this chapter will continue to surface and challenge the secularisation theory.

The post-secular future

---

[814]Nynas, 'Post-Secular Culture and a Changing Religious Landscape in Finland'. p. 2.
[815]William Keenan, 'Post-Secular Sociology: Effusions of Religion in Late Modern Settings', *European Journal of Social Theory,* 5/2 (May 1, 2002 2002), 279-90.p.287
[816]Boeve, 'Religion after Detraditionalization: Christian Faith in a Post-Secular Europe', (p. 101.
[817]Ibid. p.101.
[818]Ibid. p.102.

As illustrated by the three movements discussed in this chapter, individuals are being directed toward seeking experience of new ideas and understandings of religion. The presence of these and other movements in Australia in recent years speaks of a need to connect to the past to recover elements of what has been lost, alongside a reinvigoration with contemporary elements. On one hand, the rise of conservative and fundamentalist movements indicates this repositioning of religion; on the other hand, the expanding choice of spiritual and religious practices is another influential undercurrent. Nonetheless, at the heart of these positions there remains the question of the individual's experience of faith. Post-secular change has resituated the self as directing its own spiritual and religious choices over and above the more traditional inheritance of beliefs.

Encounter with the sacred continues to resonate as an individual need, with the post-secular as a fundamental manifestation of this drive. On this point I agree with Tacey and others who have recognised the human need for connection to life principles and experiences beyond the self, offering purpose and connection to the sacred in the many forms that may take. At this time, post-secular notions speak of such connections due to an inherent resistance to the dominance of the secular in discussions of religion. It is no longer acceptable to say that religion is playing less and less of a role in society; what is acceptable to say is that the role of religion continues to change and requires further positive attention from contemporary commentators. This is the challenge called for by Habermas, one of the foremost thinkers in the European context. He has shifted the discussion of contemporary religion by demanding that secular society seek a new understanding of religious beliefs, one that moves beyond perceptions informed by situating religion as a relic of the past.[819] New movements are

---

[819] Florian Schuller, 'Foreword' in Jürgen Habermas & Joseph Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization*, Florian Schuller (ed.), Brian McNeil (trans) (San Francisco CA: Ignatius Press, 2006), pp. 11–12.

testimony to the fact that religion is as relevant as ever, even if that relevance happens to be expressed in new and different ways.

There are a number of aspects that have assisted the growth of these movements, including the new millennium, ecological crises, technological advances and an individualistic culture. The rise of these movements adds interest and diversity to a growing range of spiritual options that tend towards destabilising traditional meanings while redefining them. The individuals involved may be seeking to understand their faith on levels that were not accepted in previous times. At the very least, their engagement with faith and spirituality shows us how this process is in constant flux and takes on new horizons during times of social change.

In this meeting of secular interests with the post-secular, it is essential to understand these changes as part of a broader move to, as Taylor notes, redefine and recompose the Christian faith.[820] The tight link between religion and identity has been decoupled and what is now taking place is the assembling of a type of personal 'spiritual identity' that runs both counter to and parallel with historical religious understandings and practices. Secularism, largely seen as heralding the demise of religion and religious identity, has instead become the fertile ground for this process. Post-secular movements such as those discussed here feed an alternative theory – that secularism has assisted the rise of new and vibrant spiritualities largely driven by individuals wanting to both grow and share their experience of the sacred.

Conclusion

As little has been written about the post-secular phenomenon in Australia, it is still difficult to know to what extent the changes explored here will impact in the long term. At present, post-secular understandings are a largely untapped phenomenon, with most of the ideas and

---

[820]Taylor, *A Secular Age*. p. 513.

discussion emerging from the United States and Europe, overlooking the changes in Australian society. The definition of post-secular posed by Nynas earlier in this article, as 'complex and diverse changes that in different ways involve e.g. resacralisation or revitalisation of religion and transform the religious landscape in a profound way', is applicable to the Australian context. Given that these movements are small and often found on the periphery of larger religious groupings and movements, it is questionable whether the 'profound' transformation alluded to by Nynas is occuring.

Additionally, the idea of the post-secular evokes optimistic responses from some commentators, of which David Tacey is representative, who refer to it as the turning of the religious and spiritual tide in Australia. However, there are also those who are concerned that it signals the rise of fundamentalism and the expansion and imposition of orthodox religious viewpoints in the public sphere. Above and beyond these concerns, this chapter is a reflection on how these movements indicate contemporary developments in religion that are situated in the wider context of social changes. The influences encompassed – green movements, experiential concerns, notions of the sacred, wellbeing practices and individualism, among others – contain contradictory values. However, it is no surprise that the changes on the religious landscape discussed here are as interesting and diverse as they are contrasting. These notions will continue to feed back into social and cultural discourse over time, influencing Australian society in as-yet unmapped ways. At the very least, these changes offer what Lynch describes as a 'sacralised framework' for considering these contemporary issues facilitating religious and spiritual exchanges in the wider public sphere.[821]

---

[821]Lynch, *The New Spirituality: An Introduction to Progressive Belief in the Twenty-First Century*.p. 163.

That there appears to be a strong link between social change and religion is a further indicator of the continuing presence of religion in Australian society. This is what the post-secular represents – the ongoing importance of religion in the social and cultural dialogue of Australia and contemporary changes to religious and spiritual identity.

> **REFLECTION SUMMARY: THE ESSENCE OF THE POST-SECULAR**
> - Post-secular processes include detraditionalisation and pluralisation that have transformed a search for meaning into a multiple field of experiences negotiated by individuals.
> - Personal spiritual identity encompasses a range of seemingly contradictory positions such as care for the environment alongside the primacy of individual needs and concerns.
> - Post-secular movements have renegotiated elements both within religions and outside religions including notions of the sacred, connectivity, belonging and autonomy.
> - The presence of the post-secular within society is found in spaces where both individually and communally an active process of the rearticulation of religious meaning is taking place. Through this process some truths will be lost while others emerge

Chapter 10. Reconsidering Pre-Understandings

Understanding of myself and my research has intensified with distance and time, particularly when I consider how I initially reflected on my pre-understandings. As Gadamer states, understanding is ultimately self-understanding, with any unchallenged pre-understandings impacting this process.[822] The search for understanding required the awareness of my own bias and preconceptions affecting my projection of meaning onto the text. In order to undertake this research, I had to have an understanding of my own expectations about some foundational ideas, in relation to both the parts and the whole of the meaning. The constant task of understanding is being aware of preconceptions. A search for understanding is, therefore, the working out of pre-understandings and the openness of the hermeneutic process to overcome the limitations of them. This chapter returns to my pre-understandings to reflect on changes to my understandings throughout the process of research and that part of hermeneutic phenomenology that is self-focused.

Gadamer's call for a return to the text provides me with the imperative to return to my pre-understandings. There are a number of reasons this return is included in the final part of this thesis. First, I have travelled a considerable distance in my research from my opening thoughts. Second, these pre-understandings are ultimately self-understandings and undergo interpretative changes over time to continue to challenge my own awareness and presuppositions. My understandings emerge side by side with my bias and, in this process, the text becomes a conversation between the researcher and the author. Third, self-understanding and my expectations have been central to this work and are bound up with the drive to find meaning from the text.

---

[822]Gadamer, *Truth and Method*.p. 97.

As discussed in Chapter 2, my pre-understandings have influenced my approach to this research as well as the knowledge examined in the research. That my pre-understandings be made explicit formed part of the methodology and contributed to the development of my understandings. This chapter will reconsider these pre-understandings and explore the changes I experienced throughout this research journey. The assumptions I held needed to be questioned in order to consider their legitimacy and adequacy. Much of the basis for these early reflections was a negative conception of the secular and a lack of understanding of the phenomena, and these obscured my vision, leading me to over-simplified conclusions.

Exposing pre-understandings is vital to hermeneutic phenomenological methods as it situates the researcher as integral to the interpretative process. It acknowledges that I am immersed in the world and its relationships and that I have a personal position on the phenomena under investigation. It makes explicit my perspective, influenced as it is by my background and faith life, in a world that often views faith as a negative belief system. Even though I have experienced some difficulties living out this life, I have also experienced many graces that continue to punctuate my life; at the same time, I could not let either overpower my research. I needed to confront these pre-understandings and make myself aware of the implications of them. As Gadamer states,

> It is always part of understanding that the view that has to be understood must assert itself against the power of those tendencies of meaning that dominate the interpreter.[823]

In regard to my pre-understandings, two aspects are important. Throughout this research, I have considered myself as an interpreter under an obligation to address preconceptions and move through the research process with openness to what would be revealed. Additionally,

---

[823] Ibid. p. 501.

failing to address these pre-understandings would place this research at risk of simply confirming my own bias rather than revealing the phenomena being investigated.[824]

These were the pre-understandings I outlined in the introduction:

1. A secular worldview has a negative effect on the relationship between religion and the individual.

2. A secular worldview creates conflict for the believing individual, who must live and function within a society that does not accept their belief system.

3. A secular worldview dictates the relationship of the individual to religion.

4. The secular worldview relegates religion to the private sphere.

5. Religion is more deeply connected to the individual than the secular worldview acknowledges.

6. The secular worldview has provoked powerful counter-movements.

7. A post-secular worldview fosters the validity of individual religious expressions.

8. The post-secular worldview collapses the boundaries between public and private displays of religious belief.

Pre-understandings of the secular

Undertaking this research and exploring the phenomena has led to questions regarding my pre-understandings. It has challenged me to adopt new understandings about the reality (or truth) of the phenomena under investigation in this thesis and influenced many of my pre-understandings. My pre-understandings involving my attitude toward the secular (1–6) have changed considerably. Although I still consider there to be tension between secular and religious worldviews, I also now see the secular in a closer relationship to religion than I previously acknowledged. There is now no doubt to me that the secular influence is far more

---

[824]R. Geanellos, 'Hermeneutic Philosophy. Part Ii: A Nursing Research Example of the Hermeneutic Imperative to Address Forestructures/Pre-Understandings', *Nursing Inquiry,* 5/4 (1998), 238-47.p. 238.

complex, and less dichotomous, than I first understood. Yes, it does exist in oppositional status, but it has also influenced the rise of alternative worldviews, as well as religious and pseudo-religious practices. The connection between secular and religious worldviews is far more intimate than I originally considered. This aligns with Casanova's discussion in *Post-secular Society*, in which he suggests that we must avoid the binary categories of religion and secular and be more critically reflective on this relationship. [825] So, in effect, pre-understanding 1 has now changed, allowing me to incorporate this perspective.

The secular worldview has a negative impact on the relationship between religion and the individual, but it also has an enabling relationship, one in which the individual can actively consider a range of positions and seek out faith opportunities. This translates into more meaningful individual experiences of religion than considered previously.

As for pre-understandings 2 and 3, there was much to reconsider. That the individual is set against a secular society and must navigate this relationship cautiously recalls to my mind a number of my own negative experiences, but must now also encompass a number of very positive experiences where my religious standpoint was welcomed and even viewed as beneficial. This was contrary to my expectations. As for the secular dictating how the individual relates to religion, I now see this relationship as one in which the secular has come to mean far more than a one-dimensional perspective. It offers me a way of understanding that sees secular perspectives as often facilitating the relationship with religion rather than disabling it.

My pre-understanding of religion being relegated to the private sphere (4) has also undergone some transformation. Although I still view the public/private divide as influential, I can also see that religion is more of a public discourse than it has been for quite a while – even though

---

[825] Casanova, 'Are We Still Secular?'., p. 44.

many of the things spoken of place religion in a negative position. It is interesting that the idea intrinsic to the secularisation thesis, that religion should be relegated to the private sphere, has not occurred. Much of the public discourse on religion happens through media channels, but more and more it is emerging through academic and social discourse as well. This was unexpected to me and shows the ongoing relevance and role of religion in all spheres of life.

In terms of pre-understanding 5, I still think it true, on the basis of this research, that religion is an important part of individual's lives, and that a failure to recognise this fact is a blind spot in the secular worldview. The secular position has to acknowledge religious perspectives and dialogue with them in a way that is respectful and meaningful. For a secular ideology to be assumed as normative is a false assumption that ignores the role religion continues to play in many people's lives at both an individual and social level.

For pre-understanding 6 – the secular worldview has provoked powerful counter-movements – I think the extent to which these are linked continues to be debated in academic circles. There would appear to be some merit in this statement, as a number of analysts link the rise of fundamentalism to the marginalisation of religion under secular influences. Although I understand there is likely to be a link here, I also now consider the secular worldview as a catalyst for counter-movements both religious and non-religious. So, even though the link tends towards one powerful extreme, I would suggest it also goes all the other way to the other extreme – the rise of atheistic fundamentalism.

Many people may consider my use of the term 'atheistic fundamentalism' controversial, but if the same contemporary measures are used as for religious fundamentalism it will be seen that these are more alike than unalike . Wrongly or rightly, religious fundamentalists are seen as irrational, lacking reason, ideological individuals who exist in a world where only one

272

perspective exists – theirs. This can equally be said of atheistic fundamentalism. On that score, I agree that a secular worldview has contributed to, but is not the sole factor in, the rise of these counter-movements. There are also political and social factors that have contributed but that are outside the scope of this thesis.[826]

Pre-understandings of the post-secular

For pre-understanding 7, my original reflections on a post-secular worldview fostering the validity of individual religious expressions is still true to me to some extent. Although individualised expressions of religion are influenced by the secular, they also continue to be assisted by post-secular influences. Individualised expressions of religion will continue to be a part of religious discourse, but the influence of these kinds of expression may be greater than I previously believed. Yes, the individual is in a real sense creating their own destiny and their own meanings, with this influencing others, but how this will continue to unfold in the future is uncertain. Post-secular influences may further legitimise these expressions.

As for pre-understanding 8 and the collapse of the boundaries between public and private displays of religious belief, I can see this has occurred in a number of areas as outlined in earlier chapters but, beyond these instances and brief moments, this may not have lasting effects. A permanent breakdown of this divide may not be possible. The secular divide still holds influence in a number of spheres, including political, educational and institutional areas, and these historical separations will remain difficult to traverse. There is an acknowledgement that realities sometimes exist beyond this, but for the secular worldview to accommodate this will continue to cause conflict and dissonance. The reality is that the secular, post-secular and religion are very closely intertwined and the general understanding of their oppositional status remains a surface approach that requires ongoing interrogation.

---

[826]Michael O. Emerson and David Hartman, 'The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism', (2006): 127.

This has been largely the driving force of this research – the need to look beyond superficial renditions of these complex realities.

I am the post-secular self

Returning to a point I made in Chapter 1, hermeneutic phenomenology draws me closer to new understandings of myself. According to hermeneutic phenomenology, 'all understanding is self-understanding'; therefore, I stood to gain a unique insight into myself as the post-secular self. I really do see that this has happened. As the post-secular self I have been seeking, I have journeyed with this research, moving towards and away from it, and back again in a cyclical way.

As a research pilgrim, I have developed a way to dialogue with the secular in a contemporary way. During my research, I came across an article titled 'Traditional, Modern and Post-Secular Perspectives on Science and Religion in the United States'.[827]This is a study of perspectives on religion and science, analysing the data around three perspectives: traditional, modern and post-secular. The post-secular in this study is not the mid-point between these perspectives but inhabits a position in which some aspects of both positions are reconciled. I found this very interesting, as even in the reporting of this study by Huffington Post this group was named the 'Post-Seculars'.[828] So maybe I should be called a post-secular. As a post-secular, I see myself as being able to conceive of religion and the secular in new ways, ways that view the relationship between them as more than just conflicted.

As a post-secular I value:[829]

- understanding the link between the secular and religion as not just one of conflict,

---

[827]Timothy L. O'brien and Shiri Noy, 'Traditional, Modern, and Post-Secular Perspectives on Science and Religion in the United States', *American Sociological Review,* 80/1 (02// 2015), 92-115.

[828]Cathy Grossman, 'New Religion and Science Study Reveal 'Post-Secular' Rejection of Evolution', *The Huffington Post,* 29/01/2015

[829] Based on O'brien and Noy, 'Traditional, Modern, and Post-Secular Perspectives on Science and Religion in the United States', (

- seeing the relationship between religion and the secular as an enabling one,

- allowing science and other worldviews to contribute to how I interpret the world alongside my religious perspective,

- recognising that the boundary between the secular and religion is not static and shifts depending on the issue and the individual, and

- realising that religious and secular knowledge systems are multifaceted and both serve as sources of knowledge and values

The reflection on my pre-understandings has been critical to this research as it has allowed me to enter into the process of reconsidering my prejudices and working through them as a catalyst for the research process. As Holroyd notes, 'The opportunity to engage in hermeneutic understanding is likely to arise when individuals undergo any experience that serves to disrupt the ordinary, taken for granted aspects of existence'.[830] The disruption of the everyday in my preunderstandings is what I had hoped to achieve, and I think that I have achieved this, fully recognising that these understandings will continue to change.

---

[830]Holroyd, 'Interpretive Hermeneutic Phenomenology: Clarifying Understanding', (p. 93.

PART D: CONCLUSIONS

Chapter 11. Conclusion

This final chapter brings together the findings from the previous chapters, with the research aims and objectives. It outlines the theoretical and methodological contributions, and the future implications of this study. It identifies limitations of the investigation, and makes suggestions for future research.

From the outset, this research adopted theoretical and hermeneutic phenomenological methodologies to explore the key concepts of this field of inquiry. These concepts were encapsulated in the question I posed in the introduction - What is the nature and extent of post-secular changes in Australia? Specifically, this study aimed at discovering what the post-secular means in relation to the experience of religion. The research objectives were: first, to review the historical development of the secularisation thesis; second, to uncover the nature of the complex relationship between the secular and religion; and, third, to use a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to aid interpretation and guide understandings of the secular, post-secular, religion and spirituality.

This research responds to the growing debates around the role of religion in contemporary Australian society. These debates centre on the so-called growth of fundamentalism, alongside falling church attendance statistics, but overlook the less obvious indicators of change taking place in contemporary Australian society.

The secularisation theory

One of the most significant findings of this research has been that the secularisation theory has proven to be untenable in the face of contemporary changes to the relationship between religion and the secular. The prediction of the extinction of religion by the founders of the

discipline of sociology, namely Weber, Comte and Durkheim, has not occurred. Although initially the ideological impetus of the secularisation theory was formidable, much revision and rethinking of this theory has since occurred. The predicted detrimental impact of modernity on religion has proven false; instead, modernity initiated new relationships between the secular and the sacred. In reference to the Australian context, the secularisation theory has also proven false. Although it was a common assumption that secularisation applied to the Australian context in the light of post-secular indicators, such an assumption no longer provides an accurate explanation for the changes to the role of religion in Australia. One of the ways this has been made manifest is under the still-contested term post-secular.

The post-secular

This research does not conclude that we have entered a definitive post-secular age in Australia, but has identified the presence of key characteristics of the post-secular. These were investigated from a theoretical perspective, as much of the debate on the post-secular is underpinned by theoretical discussion. Alongside this theoretical investigation, the interviews sought clarification of the research uncertainties, but did not achieve consensus on understandings of post-secular definitions, or its impact in Australia. The research questions I posed to the participants were:

1. How do they understand the term post-secular?

2. How does their understanding of post-secular apply to the Australian context?

The interviews achieved further clarity on the meanings of the secular and how this remains an influential position in the Australian and global context. Even so, what emerged was the naming of the post-secular as the beginning of an alternative position that, in and of itself, opens up a space for a rethinking of secular influences and their relationship to religion. As

Molendijk,, Beaumont, and Jedan, discuss, an indication of diverse religious, humanist and secularist positionalities.[831]The case studies confirmed this.

In essence, the post-secular is the recasting of the relationship between the secular and religion. It indicates a growing awareness of the contemporary role of religion in society as an ongoing search for meaning. The post-secular captures two theoretical positions. The first is Habermas' position – that of the changing role of religion in social and political spaces and the public discourse surrounding the place of religion in the contemporary world. The second is Taylor's position – that of a significant shift in personhood and how religion has contributed to this change. The post-secular self is the site where the public/private divide has dissolved, and where a questioning of the artificial boundaries forming this divide has contributed to a new way of understanding being and experience.

Even though there is still much contestation over the use of the term post-secular, certain characteristics noted in the literature (see Table 11.3) can be applied aligning with the five Rosati and Stoeckl factors previously discussed. In terms of the Australian context it can be seen that these post-secular characteristics are evident in the religious and spiritual movements investigated.

Table 11.3: Summary of post-secular characteristics.

Detraditionalisation	The interruption of traditions – religion and spirituality not inherited but more actively sought
Pluralisation	A range of belief options are available – traditional alongside more recently emerged, syncretic and ecumenical outlook
Different knowledge and beliefs intersect	The blurring of boundaries between scientific, religious, esoteric and therapeutic knowledge and practice

---

[831] Arie Molendijk, Justin Beaumont, and Christoph Jedan, *Exploring the Postsecular : The Religious, the Political and the Urban* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2010).

Self-directed	a mobile association with spiritual and religious viewpoints and practices, experiential values, personal goals and inner authority
Reinvigoration of older traditions	Maintaining connections to established beliefs and practices while modifying aspects of them according to contemporary challenges
Sacredness	Due to current ecological issues a rethinking of relationships with creation and the sacred experienced as immanent and subjective
Relationship between God, humanity, creation	a shift in the way human and non-human are situated in the order of creation – emphasis on interdependency

The presence of these characteristics indicates that the relationship between the secular and religion in Australia is dynamic and evolving.

The cultural framework created by the persistence of religion, contemporary world events and changes to our understanding of the human person have situated religion in Australia as a complex phenomenon that requires new approaches in understanding. The post-secular offers a way of understanding religion that shifts it from a primarily negative phenomenon to one in which it is a dynamic, contemporary force that impacts individuals and societies in previously unforeseen ways. Key research findings are that religion:

- is not experienced the same way now as previously,

- is a dynamic phenomenon that can adapt to social and cultural change, and

- is not about those who go to church and those who do not.

The post-secular offers a critical standpoint from which to investigate the secularisation theory and secular perspectives. This research has asserted that the secular is not:

- in a zero-sum relationship with religion, or

- in an unassailable position as the dominant narrative and ideology of the modern era.

In actuality, secular influence is still apparent in society and in individual's lives today, assisting in the transformation of the function of religion, and not the extinction of it.

Religion and spirituality

Spirituality is now viewed as a phenomenon separable from religion and, as such, continues to develop in both secular and religious spaces. The gulf opened up by the separation of religion and spiritualty has seen a profusion of meanings and practices emerge that are fed by both the secular and the religious, charting new ways of thinking and believing.

Concluding thoughts: Australia and the post-secular

When I began this research, Berger's 2009 comment (in a discussion at Boston University on religion and secularity) that he 'doesn't know much about Australia' provoked me to investigate the unknown. I have reflected on what is occurring in Australia, uncovering contested meanings and possibilities. Even so, in Australia, the post-secular is an unfolding reality and is found in places previously viewed as colonised by the secular. These manifestations of the post-secular will continue to punctuate the religious landscape of Australia. This means there will be more to uncover in the future, making religion one of the primary indicators of change in contemporary Australia. This continues to motivate me to contemplate the beyonds of our existence. The post-secular offers a framework within which to rebuild ways of thinking about being, particularly about what it means to be a religious person at this time. The post-secular is this process in practice, pointing towards the future, while simultaneously offering a critical lens on our secular past.

References

Australian Broadcasting Corporation (2005), '*An inside look at Opus Dei* (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2005), ABC (dir.).

Ajjawi, R and Higgs, J (2007), 'Using Hermeneutic Phenomenology to Investigate How Experienced Practitioners Lear n to Communicate Clinical Reasoning', *The Qualitative Report,* 12 (4).

Altinordu, A. and Gorski, P. S. (2008), 'After secularization?', *ANNUAL REVIEW OF SOCIOLOGY,* 34 (Journal Article), 55-85.

Aly, Anne and Green, Lelia (2008), 'Less than Equal: Secularism, Religious Pluralism and Privilege', *2008,* 11 (2).

Anderson, Kay and Perrin, Colin (2008), 'essays beyond savagery', (14: Melbourne University Publishing), 146-69.

Arendt, H. (1973), *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt).

arXiv, Emerging Technology from the (2014), 'How the Internet Is Taking Away America's Religion', *MIT Technology Review*.

Asad, Talal (2001), 'Reading a Modern Classic: W. C. Smith's "The Meaning and End of Religion"', *History of Religions,* 40 (3), 205-22.

Aupers, Stef and Houtman, Dick (2016), 'The spiritual revolution and the New Age gender puzzle: the sacralisation of the self in Late Modernity (1980-2000)', <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/241849455_The_spiritual_revolution_and_the_New_Age_gender_puzzle_the_sacralisation_of_the_self_in_Late_Modernity_1980-2000>, accessed May 6.

Australia, Catholic Vocations Ministry (2016), 'Vocation Directory', <http://www.catholicozvocations.org.au/Home/Catholic-Life/Vocation-Directory>, accessed November 18.

Australia, Interfaith 'Australian discrimination laws', <http://ic.org.au/interfaith/discrimination.html>, accessed Decemeber 11 2015.

Barbato, Mariano and Kratochwil, Friedrich (2009), 'Towards a post-secular political order?', *European Political Science Review,* 1 (03), 317-40.

Bellah, Robert N. (1964), 'RELIGIOUS EVOLUTION', *American Sociological Review,* 29 (3), 358-74.

Bender, Courtney (2007), 'Religion and Spirituality: History, Discourse, Measurement.', *Social Science Research Council Forum: The Religious Engagements of American Undergraduates. .*

--- (2012), 'Things in their Entanglements', in Philip Gorski, et al. (eds.), *The Post-Secular in Question* (New York: New York University Press), 43-76.

Benedict, Pope, Habermas, Jürgen, and Schuller, Florian (2006), *Dialectics of secularization : on reason and religion* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press).

Benner, P. (1994), *Interpretive Phenomenology: Embodiment, Caring, and Ethics in Health and Illness* (SAGE Publications).

Berger, Peter (2008), 'Secularization Falsified', *First Things,* (180), 23.

Berger, Peter (ed.), (1999), *The desecularization of the world : resurgent religion and world politics* (Washington, D.C.

Grand Rapids, Mich.: Ethics and Public Policy Center ;).

Berger, Peter L. (1967), *The sacred canopy : elements of a sociological theory of religion* (1st edn.; Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday).

Berman, Eli, Iannaccone, Laurence R., and Ragusa, Giuseppe (2012), 'From Empty Pews To Empty Cradles: Fertility Decline Among European Catholics', *NBER Working Papers*.

Beyer, Peter (2013), 'Questioning the secular/religious divide in a post-Westphalian world', *International Sociology,* 28 (6), 663-79.

Biggar, N. and Hogan, L. (2009), *Religious Voices in Public Places* (OUP Oxford).

Bisschops, Anke (2015), 'The New Spirituality and Religious Transformation in the Netherlands', *International Journal of Practical Theology,* 19 (1), 24-39.

Blyth, Stephen (2012), 'A historical overview of Australian religious sectarianism accompanied by a survey of factors contributing to its dissolution', *Journal of Australian Church History,* Vol 1, 81-110.

Boeve, Lieven (2005), 'Religion after Detraditionalization: Christian Faith in a Post-Secular Europe', *Irish Theological Quarterly,* 70 (2), 99-122.

Bogner, Alexander , Littig, Beate , and Menz, Wolfgang (eds.) (2009), *Interviewing experts* (Research methods series, Basingstoke :: Palgrave Macmillan).

Bonhoffer, Dietrich and Bonhoffer, Dietrich (1959), *The cost of discipleship / Dietrich Bonhoffer; [translated from the German...by R. H. Fuller]* (London : SCM Press, 1959.

Revised and unabridged edition.).

Bouma, Gary (1995), 'The Emergence of Religious Plurality in Australia: A Multicultural Society', *Sociology of Religion,* 56 (3), 285-302.

--- (2012), '2011 Census reveals rise of 'no religion' ... but they're not atheists', in Andrew West (ed.), *Religion and Ethics Report* (ABC Online).

Bouma, Gary, et al. (2011), 'Freedom of religion and belief in 21st century Australia', (Sydney: Australian Human Rights Commission).

Bouma, Gary (2009), *Australian soul : religion and spirituality in the twenty-first century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Bremmer, Jan N. (2008), 'Secularization

Notes Toward a Genealogy', *Religion: Beyond a Concept* (Fordham University Press), 432-37.

Bruce, Steve (1997), 'The Pervasive World-View: Religion in Pre-Modern Britain', *The British Journal of Sociology,* 48 (4), 667-80.

Byassee, Jason (2005), 'The new monastics: Alternative Christian communities', *The Christian Century,* 122 (21), 38-47. <http://www.christiancentury.org/article/2005-10/new-monastics>, accessed June 28 2011.

Calhoun, C., Juergensmeyer, M., and VanAntwerpen, J. (2011), *Rethinking Secularism* (OUP USA).

Campbell, Craig and Sherington, Geoffrey (2004), 'Australian liberalism, the middle class and public education from Henry Parkes to John Howard', *Education Research and Perspectives,* 31 (2).

Caputo, John (2001), *On religion* (Thinking in action; London: Routledge).

Carrette, Jeremy R. and King, Richard (2005), *Selling spirituality : the silent takeover of religion / Jeremy Carrette and Richard King* (London : Routledge, 2005.

1st ed.).

Casanova, J. (1994), *Public Religions in the Modern World* (University of Chicago Press).

Secularization (2008) (Miroslav Volf interviews Jose Casanova at Yale University, 3 November 2008).

Casanova, José (2010), 'A Secular Age: Dawn or Twilight?', in Michael Warner, Craig Calhoun, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (eds.), *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).

--- (2011), 'The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms', in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Rethinking Secularism* (New York: Oxford).

--- (2012), 'Are We Still Secular?', in Peter Nyanas, Mika Lassander, and Terhi Utrianinen (eds.), *Post Secular Society* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers), 27-46.

Casanova, Jose (2009), 'The Secular and Secularisms. (Part 1: Origins of the Secular)', *Social Research,* 76.4 (Winter), 1049-67.

Cavanaugh, William (2009), *The Myth of Religious Violence* (New York: Oxford University Press).

Centre, Holy Cross (2016), 'Who are the Passionists', <http://holycrosscentre.com/p_community/>, accessed Nov 11.

Chavura, Stephen and Tregenza, Ian (2014), 'Introduction: Rethinking Secularism in Australia (and Beyond)', *Journal of Religious History,* 38 (3), 299-306.

Coldrey, Barry (2015), 'Australia's Seminaries Flourishing in 2015', *AD2000,* 28 (3).

Collaboration, The Australian 'Religion in Australia', <http://www.australiancollaboration.com.au/pdf/FactSheets/Religion-FactSheet.pdf>, accessed.

Coman, B (2007), 'Environmentalism and Catholicism in Australia: the Provenance of 'Creation Spirituality' and Some Implications Arising from the Idea. ', *The Fellowship of Catholic Scholars Australia 2007 Annual Conference* (Campion College, Toongabbie, NSW).

Community, Emmanuel (2016), 'Presenting the Emmanuel Community', <http://en.emmanuel.info/the-community/presenting-the-emmanuel-community/>, accessed November 11.

Connell, J. (2005), 'Hillsong: A megachurch in the Sydney suburbs', *AUSTRALIAN GEOGRAPHER,* 36 (3), 315-32.

Connolly, William E. (1999), *Why I am not a secularist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

Contiero, Emanuela (2012), 'Italian Catholicism and the Differentiation of Rituals: a Comparison of the Neocatechumenal Way and Renewal in the Spirit', in Giuseppe Giordan and Enzo Pace (eds.), *Mapping Religion and Spirituality in a Postsecular World* (Leiden: Brill).

Cooke, Maeve (2007), 'A Secular State for a Postsecular Society? Postmetaphysical Political Theory and the Place of Religion', *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical & Democratic Theory,* 14 (2), 224-38.

Corrigan, Paul (2015), 'The Postsecular and Literature'.

Council, Social Science Research 'The Immanent Frame', <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/>, accessed 18 March 2013.

Crawford, Marisa and Rossiter, Graham (1993), 'The Spirituality of Today's Young People: Implications for Religious Education in Church-related Schools', *Religious Education Journal of Australia,* 9 (2), 1-8.

Crotty, M. (1998), *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process* (SAGE Publications).

Crotty, Michael (1996), 'Doing Phenomenology', in Peter Willis and Bernie Neville (eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice in Adult Education* (Victoria: David Lovell Publishing), 272-82.

Crowe, Sarah, et al. (2011), 'The case study approach', *BMC Medical Research Methodology,* 11, 100-00.

Crowther, S., et al. (2016), 'Crafting Stories in Hermeneutic Phenomenology Research: A Methodological Device', *Qual Health Res*.

Cudmore, Dominic (2012), 'The Emmanuel Community', *Australasian Catholic Record,* 89 (2), 186-207.

Curry, Patrick (2007), 'Post-Secular Nature: Principles and Politics', *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture & Ecology,* 11 (3), 284-304.

Dalferth, I. U. (2010), 'Post-secular Society: Christianity and the Dialectics of the Secular', *JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION,* 78 (2), 317-45.

de Vries, H. (1999), *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion* (Johns Hopkins University Press).

--- (2013), 'Global Religion and Postsecular Challenge', in Craig Calhoun, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Eduardo Mendieta (eds.), *Habermas and Religion* (Cambridge: Ploity Press).

Dei, Opus (2016), 'Frequently Asked Questions about Opus Dei', <http://www.opusdei.org/en-us/faq/#what-is-opus-dei>, accessed November 7.

Dillon, Michele (2010), '2009 Association for the Sociology of Religion Presidential AddressCan Post-Secular Society Tolerate Religious Differences?*1', *Sociology of Religion,* 71 (2), 139-56.

--- (2012), 'Jurgen Habermas and the Post-Secular Appropriation of Religion: A Sociological Critique', in Philip Gorski, et al. (eds.), *The Post-Secular in Question* (New York: New York University Press), 249-78.

Dixon, Robert, Reid, Stephen, and Connolly, Noel (2011), 'See I Am Doing A New Thing: The 2009 Survey of Catholic Religious Institutes in Australia', *Australasian Catholic Record,* 88 (3), 271-83.

Dolley, Janice and Ozanne, Jane (eds.) (2011), *STORIES OF CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANS Towards Evolutionary Christianity* (CANA).

Donnelly, Kevin 'We are a Christian nation under threat', <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-05-21/donnelly-we-are-a-christian-nation-under-threat/6486830>, accessed.

Dowling, Maura (2004), 'Hermeneutics: an exploration', *Nurse Researcher,* 11 (4), 30.

--- (2007), 'From Husserl to van Manen. A review of different phenomenological approaches', *International Journal of Nursing Studies,* 44 (1), 131-42.

Du Toit, Cornel W (2006), 'Secular spirituality versus secular dualism: Towards postsecular holism as model for a natural theology', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies,* 62 (4), 1251-68.

Durkheim, Emile (1995), *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen Fields (New York: The Free Press).

Emerson, Michael O. and Hartman, David (2006), 'The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism', 127.

Evangelisation, National Office for (2016), 'Passionist Family Group Movement ', <http://www.evangeliseaustralia.com/directory/passionist-family-group-movement.html>, accessed November 11.

Feldman, Noah (2009), 'Religion and the earthly city', *Social Research,* 76 (4), 989+.

Ferrara, Alessandro (2009), 'The separation of religion and politics in a post-secular society', *Philosophy & Social Criticism,* 35 (1-2), 77-91.

--- (2010), 'Reflexive pluralism', *Philosophy & Social Criticism,* 36 (3-4), 353-64.

Finke, Roger and Stark, Rodney (2005), *The Churching of America, 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (2nd edn.; New Jersey: Rutgers University Press).

Finlay, Linda (2009), 'Debating Phenomenological Research Methods', *Phenomenology and Practice,* 3, 19.

Fox, Matthew (1997), *Confessions: The Making of a Postdenominational Priest* (San Fransisco: Harper).

Frame, Tom (2009a), *Losing my religion : unbelief in Australia* (Sydney :: UNSW Press).

--- (2009b), *Evolution in the Antipodes: Charles Darwin and Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press).

Gadamer, Hans-Georg (1999), *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer & Donald Marshall (2nd Revised edn.; New York: Continuum).

--- (2006), 'Classical and philosophical hermeneutics', *Theory, culture & society,* 23 (1), 29-56.

Geanellos, R. (1998), 'Hermeneutic philosophy. Part II: a nursing research example of the hermeneutic imperative to address forestructures/pre-understandings', *Nursing Inquiry,* 5 (4), 238-47.

Giordan, Giuseppe and Pace, Enzo (2012), *Mapping religion and spirituality in a postsecular world / edited by Giuseppe Giordan and Enzo Pace* (Religion and the social order: v. 22: Leiden ; Boston : Brill, 2012.).

Gorski, Philip, Kim, David, and Torpey, John (2012), *The Post-Secular in Question: Religion in Contemporary Society* (New York: New York University Press).

Gräb, Wilhelm (2010), 'Exploring the Postsecular', *The Transformation Of Religious Culture Within Modern Societies: From Secularization To Postsecularism* (Interactive Factory), 113.

Grbich, Carol (1999), *Qualitative Research in Health: An Introduction* (Australia: Allen & Unwin).

--- (2012), *Qualitative Data Analysis* (London: Sage).

Grondin, Jean (2002), 'Gadamer's Basic Understanding of Understanding', in Robert Dostal (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Grossman, Cathy, 'New Religion and Science Study Reveal 'Post-Secular' Rejection Of Evolution', *The Huffington Post,* 29/01/2015

Habermas, J. (2006), 'Religion in the public sphere', *European Journal of Philosophy,* 14 (1), 1-25.

Habermas, Jurgen (2001), 'Faith and Knowledge'. <http://socialpolicy.ucc.ie/Habermas_Faith_and_knowledge_ev07-4_en.htm>, accessed 17 November 2011.

--- (2005), 'Religion in the Public Sphere', *Holberg Prize Seminar* (Bergen, Norway).

--- (2008), 'Notes on Post-Secular Society', *New Perspectives Quarterly,* 25 (4), 17-29.

--- (2010), 'A postsecular world society?: An interview with Jürgen Habermas', in Eduardo Mendieta (ed.).

The Rebirth of Nature and the Climate Crisis (2009) (July 7).

Harrington, Stephen (2016), 'Australians couldn't care less about politics? Really?', *The Conversation*.

Harris, Charles (1996), 'Guidelines for So-called Western Civilization and Western Christianity', in Anne Pattel_Gray (ed.), *Aboriginal Sprituality:past, present, future perceptions of Christianity* (Victoria: Harper Collins).

Harrison, John (2012), 'Faith and belief in "The Land of the Holy Spirit"', *Media Development,* 59 (1), 14-18.

Heelas, Paul and Woodhead, Linda (eds.) (2000), *Religion in modern times: an interpretive anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers).

Heidegger, Martin (1978), *Being and time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell).

Hirschkind, Charles (2011), 'IS THERE A SECULAR BODY?', (26: Wiley-Blackwell), 633-47.

Hodder, Jacqueline (2009), 'Spirituality and well-being: 'New Age' and 'evangelical' spiritual expressions among young people and their implications for well-being', *International Journal of Children's Spirituality,* 14 (3), 197-212.

Hogan, Michael (1987), *The Sectarian Strand* (Victoria: Penguin Books).

Hogue, Michael S. (2010), 'After the Secular: Toward a Pragmatic Public Theology', (2), 346.

Holroyd, Ann (2007), 'Interpretive Hermeneutic Phenomenology: Clarifying Understanding', *The Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology,* 7 (2), 1-12.

Horne, Julia (2015), 'Political machinations and sectarian intrigue in the making of Sydney University', *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society,* 36, 4-15.

Horujy, Sergey (2011), 'Anthropological Dimensions of the Postsecular Paradigm', *Politics, Culture and Religion in the Postsecular World* (Faenza).

Houtman, D and Aupers, S (2005), '" Reality Sucks": On Alienation and Cybergnosis', *Concilium: International Journal of Theology,* 41 (1), 81-89.

Houtman, Dick and Aupers, Stef (2007), 'The Spiritual Turn and the Decline of Tradition: The Spread of Post-Christian Spirituality in 14 Western Countries, 1981–2000', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,* 46 (3), 305-20.

Hovdelien, Olav (2011), 'Post-Secular Consensus? On the Munich-dialogue between Joseph Ratzinger and Jürgen Habermas', *Australian eJournal of Theology,* 18 (2).

Howell, Julia Day (2007), *The New Spiritualities, East and West: Colonial Legacies and the Global Spiritual Marketplace in Southeast Asia* (2007).

Hunter, Colin (2011), 'Hermeneutics and phenomenology in research', <http://www.jmm.org.au/articles/13615.htm>, accessed May 26.

Hurst, Mark (2008), 'Anabaptism: The Beginning of a New Monasticism'. <www.csu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/94734/Hurst.pdf>, accessed 20 May 2011.

Innes, Graeme (2009), 'Are we really the secular nation we think we are?'. <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/opinions/are-we-really-secular-nation-we-think-we-are-2009>, accessed 18 March 2015.

International Centre for Muslim and non-Muslim Understanding, University of South Australia (2015), 'Australian Muslims. a Demographic, Social and Economic Profile of Muslims in Australia Report'.

James, Jonathan (2017), 'As Australia becomes less religious, our parliament becomes more so', *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/as-australia-becomes-less-religious-our-parliament-becomes-more-so-80456>, accessed September 29 2017.

Jersild, Paul (2008), 'Rethinking the Human Being in Light of Evolutionary Biology', *Dialog,* 47 (1), 37-52.

Joel D. Aberbach and Bert A. Rockman (2002), 'Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews', *PS: Political Science and Politics,* (4), 673.

Johansen, B S (2013,), 'Post-secular sociology: Modes, possibilities and challenges', *Approaching Religion,* 3 (1), 4-15.

Kafle, Narayan (2011), 'Hermeneutic Phenomenological Research Method Simplified', *Bodhi: An Interdisciplinary Journal,* 5.

Karaflogka, Anastasia (2008), 'Religion on - Religion in Cyberspace', in Grace Davie, Paul Heelas, and Linda Woodhead (eds.), *Predicting Religion* (England: Ashgate Publishing Limited).

Kaufman, Gordon D. (2001), 'Re-Conceiving God and Humanity in Light of Today's Evolutionary-Ecological Consciousness', *Zygon,* 36 (2), 335-48.

Keenan, William (2002), 'Post-Secular Sociology: Effusions of Religion in Late Modern Settings', *European Journal of Social Theory,* 5 (2), 279-90.

Keister, Lisa (2003), 'Religion and Wealth: The Role of Religious Affiliation and Participation in Early Adult Asset Accumulatio', *Social Forces,* 82 (1).

Ker, Ian (2008), 'Neocatechumenal Way: 'The Age of the Neocats'', *The Catholic Herald,* July 17.

King, Mike (2009), *Postsecularism: The Hidden Challenge to Extremism* (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co).

Kohn, Rachael (2003), *The new believers: re-imagining God* (Pymble, N.S.W: HarperCollins).

Kumar, Ashwin (2012), 'Using phenomenological research methods in qualitative health research', *International Journal of Human Sciences,* 9 (1), 790 – 804.

Lamoureux, Denis O. (2010), 'Evolutionary Creation: Moving Beyond the Evolution Versus Creation Debate', *Christian Higher Education,* 9 (1), 28-48.

Laverty, Susann (2003), 'Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods,* 2 (3), 29.

Leahy, Brendan (2011), *Ecclesial Movements and Communities: Origins, Significance and Issues* (New York: New City Press).

Livestro, Joshua (2007), 'Holland's Post-Secular Future', *The Weekly Standard,* January 1-8.

Lombaard, Christo (2007), 'Thinking through the Spirited Web. Some Clarifications on the Internet and Embodied Experiences Thereof', *Communicatio,* 33 (2).

Low, Remy (2014a), 'A genealogy of the secular versus religious schooling debate in New South Wales (part I): terror and suspicion', *Journal of Religious Education,* 62 (1), 25.

--- (2014b), 'A genealogy of the religious versus secular schooling debate in New South Wales (Part II): populism and patriotism', *Journal of Religious Education,* 62 (2), 53.

Lucas, Brian 'Building Parish Communities Through Better Communication', *Australasian Catholic record,* 81 (4), 410-30.

Lynch, Gordon (2007), *The New Spirituality: an Introduction to Progressive Belief in the Twenty-First century* (London: I.B.Taurus).

Maddox, Marion (2001), *For God and Country Religious Dynamics in Australian Federal Politics* (Canberra: Department of Parliamentary Library).

--- 'God under Gillard: Religion and politics in Australia', <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2011/11/10/3360973.htm>, accessed.

Magrini, James (2012), 'Phenomenology for Educators: Max van Manen and "Human Science" Research', *Philosophy Scholarship,* 32.

Markus, Robert (1988), *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Martin, James (2010), 'A post-secular faith: Connolly on pluralism and evil', in Alan Finlayson (ed.), *The Political Thought of William Connolly* (London: Routledge), 129-43.

McEntee, R. and Bucko, A. (2015), *New Monasticism: An Interspiritual Manifesto for Contemplative Living* (Orbis Books).

Meadmore, Peter (2001), "Free, compulsory and secular'? The re-invention of Australian public education', *Journal of Education Policy,* 16 (2), 113-25.

Melleuish, Gregory (2010), 'RELIGION AND POLITICS IN AUSTRALIA', *Political Theology,* 11 (6), 909-27.

Mendieta, Eduardo (2010), 'A Postsecular World Society? On the Philosophical Significance of Postsecular Consciousness and the Multicultural World Society. Eduardo Mendieta interviews Jurgen Habermas', *Monthly Review*.

Merlini, Cesare (2011), 'A Post-Secular World?', *Survival,* 53 (2), 117-30.

Merriam, Sharan B. (2009), *Qualitative Research : A Guide to Design and Implementation* (Somerset, UNITED STATES: Wiley).

Milbank, John (2006), *Theology and Social Theory: beyond secular reason* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing).

Mills, A.J., Durepos, G., and Wiebe, E. (2009), *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research* (SAGE Publications).

Minichiello, Victor, Aroni, Rosalie, and Hays, Terrence Neville (2008), *In-depth interviewing: principles, techniques, analysis* (Sydney: Pearson Education Australia).

Moberg, Marcus, Granholm, Kennet, and Nynas, Peter (2012), 'Trajectories of Post-Secular Complexity: An Introduction', in Peter Nynas, Mika Lassander, and Terhi Utrianinen (eds.), *Post-Secular Society* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers).

Molendijk, A. L. (2015), 'In pursuit of the postsecular', *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology,* 76 (2), 100-15.

Molendijk, Arie, Beaumont, Justin, and Jedan, Christoph (2010), *Exploring the Postsecular : The Religious, The Political and The Urban* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill).

Moll, Rob (2005), 'The New Monasticism', *Christianity Today*. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/september/16.38.html>, accessed 28 June 2011.

Moran, D. (2000), *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Routledge).

Morozov, Aleksandr (2008), 'The Fourth Secularisation', *Religion, State and Society,* 36 (1), 33 - 38.

Muecke, Stephen (1999), 'The Sacred in History', *Humanities Research,* (1), 27-37.

Norris, Pippa and Inglehart, Ronald (2004), *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press).

Nynas, Peter (2010), 'Post-secular culture and a changing religious landscape in Finland'. <http://web.abo.fi/fak/hf/relvet/pccr/main.html>.

O'Farrell, Patrick (1977), *The Catholic church and community in Australia : a history* ([Melbourne] : Nelson, 1977.).

O'Brien, Timothy L. and Noy, Shiri (2015), 'Traditional, Modern, and Post-Secular Perspectives on Science and Religion in the United States', *American Sociological Review,* 80 (1), 92-115.

Olson, C. and Olson, P.R.S.C. (2010), *Religious Studies: The Key Concepts* (Taylor & Francis).

Overington, Caroline (2008), 'Opus Dei more transparent than legend', *The Australian,* July 15.

Pabst, Adrian (2013), 'Why We Do Not Live in a De-Secularised or a Post-Secular World ', (World Public Forum Dialogue of Civilizations).

Parmaksız, Umut (2016), 'Making sense of the postsecular', *European Journal of Social Theory,* 21 (1), 98-116.

Phillips, Tom (2014), 'China on course to become 'world's most Christian nation' within 15 years', *The Telegraph,* April 19.

Piggin, Stuart (2014), 'Power and Religion in a Modern State: Desecularisation in Australian History', *Journal of Religious History,* 38 (3), 320-40.

Prosman, H.J. (2011), *The Postmodern Condition and the Meaning of Secularity: A Study on the Religious Dynamics of Postmodernity* (Ars Disputandi).

Rawls, J. and Rawls, P.J. (1993), *Political Liberalism* (Columbia University Press).

Record, The (2016), 'Neocatechumenal Way co-founder Carmen Hernández dies at 85', *The Record*.

Redhead, Mark (2012a), 'What's So Post about the Post-Secular?', *WPSA 2012 Annual Meeting* (Portland, Oregon).

--- (2012b), 'What's So Post about the Post-Secular?'. <https://wpsa.research.pdx.edu/meet/2012/redhead.pdf>, accessed June 12 2015.

Regan, Paul (2012), 'Hans-georg gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics: Concepts of reading, understanding and interpretation', *Meta,* 4 (2), 286-303.

Reid, Anthony (2013), 'Crossing the great divide: Australia and eastern Indonesia', in Marshall Clark and Sally May (eds.), *Macassan History and Heritage* (Canberra: ANU Press).

Religions, Council for a Parliament of the World's 'The 2009 Parliament', (updated 12/06/2011) <http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/index.cfm>, accessed.

Report, Catholic World (2016), 'Cardinal Arinze on the Role of the Laity', <http://www.catholicworldreport.com/Item/2629/cardinal_arinze_on_the_role_of_the_laity.aspx>, accessed November 11.

Research, Roy Morgan 'Christians in Australia nearing minority status as religious affiliation declines sharply since 2011 ', <http://www.roymorgan.com/findings/5541-fewer-australians-identify-as-christian-december-2013-201404152234>, accessed.

Reside, Graham (2010), 'The New Spirituality: An Introduction to Progressive Belief in the Twenty-First Century – By Gordon Lynch', *Conversations in Religion & Theology,* 8 (1), 60-77.

Rex, John (2017), 'Secular Substitutes for Religion in the Modern World', *The Politics and Religion Journal,* (1), 3-10.

Ricoeur, Paul (1981), *Hermeneutics and human sciences : essays on language, action, and interpretation*, trans. John B. Thompson (New York Cambridge University Press).

Robinson, Jason (2008), 'Practical Reasonableness, Theory, and the Science of Self-Understanding', *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms,* 13 (6), 687 - 701.

Rooney, Paul (2012), 'National curriculum, postsecularism and pedagogy : opportunities for Christian education', *Journal of Christian Education,* 55 (2).

Rosati, M (2012), 'The Turkish laboratory: Local modernity and the postsecular in Turkey', in M Rosati and K. Stoeckl (eds.), *Multiple Modernitites and Postsecular Societies* (London: Routledge), 61-78.

Rosati, M. (2016), *The Making of a Postsecular Society: A Durkheimian Approach to Memory, Pluralism and Religion in Turkey* (Taylor & Francis).

Rossiter, Graham (2011), 'Some perspectives on contemporary youth spirituality : a 'need to know' for church school religious education', *Religious Education Journal of Australia,* 27 (1).

Schilderman, Hans (2014), 'Religion as Concept and Measure', in Hans Schilderman (ed.), *The Concept of Religion Defining and Measuring Contemporary Beliefs and Practices* (Leiden: Brill).

Schwandt, Thomas A. (1999), 'On Understanding Understanding', *Qualitative Inquiry,* 5 (4), 451-64.

Sharkey, Paul (2001), 'Hermeneutic Phenomenology', in Robyn Barnacle (ed.), *Phenomenology* (RMIT University Press), 16-37.

Sheldrake, P. (2009), *A Brief History of Spirituality* (Wiley).

Shelledy, Robert B. (2004), 'The Vatican's Role in Global Politics', *SAIS Review,* 24 (2), 149-62.

Sifry, Micah (2010), 'Religious Identity and Internet Use in America'. <http://techpresident.com/blog-entry/religious-identity-and-internet-use-america>, accessed Decemeber 9 2016.

Sloan, Art and Bowe, Brian (2014), 'Phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology: the philosophy, the methodologies, and using hermeneutic phenomenology to investigate lecturers' experiences of curriculum design', *Quality & Quantity,* 48 (3), 1291-303.

Smith, James (2012), 'Secular Liturgies and the Prospects for a "Post-Secular" Sociology of Religion', in P. S. Gorski, et al. (eds.), *The Post-Secular in Question* (New York: New York University Press).

Speck, Bruce W. (2005), 'What is spirituality?', *New Directions for Teaching and Learning,* 2005 (104), 3-13.

Statistics, Australian Bureau of 'Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups', <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/775012EF0058A77DCA25697E00184BDC?opendocument>, accessed.

--- (2008), 'How many children have women in Australia had?', (Canberra: Australian Government).

--- 'Religious Affiliation', <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2071.0main+features902012-2013>, accessed.

--- 'Losing My Religion?', <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features30Nov+2013>, accessed.

Stephenson, P. (2011), *Islam Dreaming: Indigenous Muslims in Australia* (NewSouth Publishing).

Stevenson, Deborah, et al. (2010), 'Religious Belief across 'Post-secular' Sydney: the multiple trends in (de)secularisation', *Australian Geographer,* 41 (3), 323 - 50.

Stoeckl, K. and Rosati, M. (2012), *Multiple Modernities and Postsecular Societies* (Taylor & Francis).

Stoeckl, Kristina (2011), 'Defining the Postsecular', *The Seminar of Professor Khoruzhij*.

Swan, Jonathan , Visentin, Lisa, and (2014), 'Coalition celebrates a religious Easter: Eight of 19 cabinet members are Catholic ', *The Sydney Morning Herald,* April 20

Sydney, The University of (2017), 'New history examines university's role as a public institution', <http://sydney.edu.au/news/84.html?newsstoryid=9132>, accessed March 7.

Tacey, David (2009a), 'Spirituality in Australia Today', in Makarand R. Paranjape (ed.), *Sacred Australia: Post-Secular Considerations* (Melbourne: Clouds of Magellan), 44-64.

--- (2009b), 'Environmental Spirituality', *International Journal of New Perspectives in Christianity,* 1 (1), 1-5.

Youth Spirituality: The Call to Interiority (2015) (The World Community for Christian Meditation).

Tacey, David (2003), *The spirituality revolution : the emergence of contemporary spirituality* (Sydney HarperCollins).

Tacey, David J. (2000), *Reenchantment : the new Australian spirituality* (Sydney, N.S.W.: HarperCollins).

Tatz, Simon, (2015), 'The anti-Muslim sentiment is sadly familiar for many Australian Jews'. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-27/tatz-anti-muslim-sentiment-familiar-for-jews/6969356>

Taylor, Bron (2016), 'The Greening of Religion Hypothesis (Part One): From Lynn White, Jr and Claims That Religions Can Promote Environmentally Destructive Attitudes and Behaviors to Assertions They Are Becoming Environmentally Friendly', *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature & Culture,* 10 (3), 268-305.

Taylor, C. (2004), *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Duke University Press).

Taylor, Charles (1998), 'Modes of Secularism', in Rajeev Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and its Critics* (New Dehli: Oxford University Press).

--- (2002), 'Gadamer and the Human Sciences', in Robert Dosta (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 126-42.

--- (2007), *A secular age* (London: Harvard University Press).

Taylor, Charles (1989), *Sources of the Self* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press).

Thomas Aquinas, Saint (1952), *The summa theologica of Saint Thomas Aquinas / translated by fathers of the English Dominican Province; revised by Daniel J. Sullivan* (Great books of the western world: 20: Chicago, Ill. : Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1952.).

Torpey, John (2012), 'Religion and Secularization in the United States and Europe', in Phillip Gorski, David Kim, and John Torpey (eds.), *The Post-Secular in Question: Religion in Contemporary Society* (New York: New York University).

Turner, Bryan (2012), 'The Post-Secular in Question: Religion in Contemporary Society', in Philip Gorski, et al. (eds.), *The Post-Secular in Question* (New York: New York University Press).

University, Yale, (2011), 'Miroslav Wolf: Secularisation, Modernisation and Religion'. Yale University <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8-lGO3rLps>

Vaillancourt, Jean-Guy (2008), *From Five to Ten Dimensions of Religion: Charles Y. Glock's Dimensions of Religiosity Revisited* (2008).

Van Bijsterveld, Sophie (2010), 'Religion and the Secular State in the Netherlands', *Religion and the Secular State: National Reports*. <https://www.iclrs.org/content/blurb/files/Netherlands.pdf>.

van der Veer, Peter (2009), 'Spirituality in Modern Society', (4), 1097.

van Manen, Max (1990), *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an action sensitive pedagogy* (Albany: State University of New York).

--- 'Phenomenology Online', <http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/inquiry/orientations-in-phenomenology/hermeneutical-phenomenology/>, accessed.

--- (2014), 'Phenomenology', <http://www.maxvanmanen.com/files/2014/07/SAGE-Phenomenology.pdf>, accessed September 2.

Vandermause, R and Fleming, S (2011), 'Philosophical Hermeneutic Interviewing', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods,* 10 (4).

Wiercinski, Andrzej (2009), 'Hans-Georg Gadamer and the Truth of Hermeneutic Experience', *Analecta Hermeneutica,* (1), 3-14.

Wilkinson, Peter (2014), 'Who ministers in Australia's parishes?', *The Swag*.

Wilson, B.R. (1969), *Religion in Secular Society* (Penguin).

Wilson, Erin K. and Steger, Manfred B. (2013), 'Religious Globalisms in the Post-Secular Age', *Globalizations,* 10 (3), 481-95.

Witham, L. (2010), *Marketplace of the Gods: How Economics Explains Religion* (Oxford University Press).

Wood, Harold (2006), 'The Creation Centered Spirituality of Matthew Foxand his New Reformation of Christianity'. <http://uuvisalia.org/pdf/creation_spirituality_matthew_fox_by_hwood.pdf>, accessed 11 July 2011.

Žižek, Slavoj (2003), *The puppet and the dwarf: The perverse core of Christianity* (Cambridge, MA, US: MIT Press).

APPENDIX 1 Ethics Approval

8 November 2011

Dr Angus Brook
School of Philosophy and Theology
The University of Notre Dame Australia
Sydney Campus

Ref. #: 011082S

Dear Angus,

I am writing to you in regards to your Low Risk Application for Ethics Clearance for your proposed research project, to be undertaken as a student research project at The University of Notre Dame Australia. The title of the project is: *"The changing face of religion in Australia: from secular to post-secular identity."*

Your proposal has been reviewed by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee, and based on the information provided has been assessed as meeting all the requirements as mentioned in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007). I am therefore pleased to advice that ethical clearance has been granted for this proposed study.

Please note the following conditions of approval which apply to your research project:

- Ethics approval for this project is valid for 3 years. Under the *National Statement* you are required to report on the project's progress on an annual basis and the first annual report is therefore due in **November 2012**. Once your project is completed you are required to complete the Annual Report as a Final Report on your project. You are also required to notify the HREC Executive Officer in writing if this project is abandoned. The Annual Report form can be found at: http://www.nd.edu.au/research/hrec/apply.shtml.

- As a researcher you are required to immediately report to the HREC Executive Officer anything which might warrant review of ethical approval of the project, including unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability and any complaints made by participants regarding the conduct of the project.

- If the design of the study, the choice of instrument, or its manner of administration is altered in any significant way as the study progresses, you are required to submit an amendment in regards to the changes for ethical consideration to the HREC. The Amendment Form can be found at: http://www.nd.edu.au/research/hrec/apply.shtml.

On behalf of the Human Research Ethics Committee, I wish you well with what promises to be a most interesting and valuable study.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Natalie Giles
Executive Officer, Human Research Ethic Committee
Research Office

cc.   Professor Hayden Ramsay, Dean, School of Philosophy and Theology, Sydney

APPENDIX 2 Participant Information Sheet

Research Title: The changing face of Australia: from Secular to post-secular identity.

You are invited to participate in the above research project, which is being conducted by Dr Angus Brook (supervisor), Dr Susanna Rizzo (co-supervisor) and Saskia Ebejer (PhD student) at the School of Philosophy and Theology, University of Notre Dame, Sydney. This project will form part of my Doctoral thesis, and has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee.

The aim of this study is to investigate what the post-secular phenomenon in contemporary Australia. Due to your work in this field you will be asked to give a more detailed picture of your current perspectives. If you agree to participate, you would be asked to contribute by participating in an interview process. With your permission, the interview will be recorded so that we can ensure that we make an accurate record of what you say. When the tape has been transcribed, you will be provided with a copy of the transcript, so that you can verify that the information is correct and/or request deletions. We estimate that the time commitment required of you in total would not exceed 1.5 – 2 hours.

You do have the option to remain anonymous or be identified. However you should note that as the number of people we seek to interview is very small it is possible that someone may still be able to identify you. Once the thesis arising from this research has been completed, a brief summary of the findings will be available to you on application. It is also possible that the results will be presented at academic conferences. The data will be kept securely in the School of Philosophy and Theology for five years from the date of publication, before being destroyed.

Please be advised that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage, or to withdraw any unprocessed data you have supplied, you are free to do so without prejudice. If you would like to participate, please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the accompanying consent form and returning it via postal address or my email.

Should you require any further information, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Dr Angus Brook 02 82044182 or myself- Saskia Ebejer 02 44713839.

APPENDIX 3 Consent Form

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME AUSTRALIA

CONSENT FORM

From secular to post-secular identity – religion in contemporary Australia

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, *(participant's name)* _____hereby agree to being a participant in the above research project.

• I have read and understood the Information Sheet about this project and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

• I understand that I may withdraw from participating in the project at any time without prejudice.

• I understand I can agree to be identified or remain anonymous.

• Whilst the research involves small sample sizes if I choose to remain anonymous I understand that a code will be ascribed to my participation to ensure that the risk of identification is minimised.

• I understand that I will be interviewed by the researcher and that the interview will be audiotaped.

• I understand that the protocol adopted by the University Of Notre Dame Australia Human Research Ethics Committee for the protection of privacy will be adhered to and relevant sections of the *Privacy Act* are available at http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/

• I agree that any research data gathered for the study may be published provided my name or other identifying information is not disclosed unless agreed to.

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE:		DATE:	

RESEARCHER'S FULL NAME:	SASKIA EBEJER		
RESEARCHER'S SIGNATURE:		DATE:	

If participants have any complaint regarding the manner in which a research project is conducted, it should be directed to the Executive Officer of the Human Research Ethics Committee, Research Office, The University of Notre Dame Australia, PO Box 1225 Fremantle WA 6959, phone (08) 9433 0943.

Consent form template July 08