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*A Secular Age* and After —Secularization and Modernity—

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I think we have suffered in Western academy for many years, maybe a century and a half, from a kind of ethnocentrism whereby the theories that we devised for modernity – both how it happened and its consequences - were thought of as universally applicable theories, whereas, in fact, I believe that they were reflections on the Western experience that were then projected onto others. And, this is even true of such a great thinker as Max Weber, for all the tremendous admiration I have for him and all that I have learnt from him. I don't blame him. That was back at the beginning of the 20th century. But, it is clear that he was still making ethnocentric judgments about other societies. And, I'm sure that I am, too. I think this is something that we have to go on combating.

But the decisive break has been made in the last half century, or maybe even less, by many people, whereby, we now see, to take this example of modernization and modernity, that there isn't a single process of modernity or modernization which has been passed through by some societies earlier, some societies later, or first pioneered in the West then happening elsewhere; that is, a single track on which humankind is stretched out, with some farther behind and some farther ahead.

Rather, we have to see the development of what we might call modern societies which have certain similar institutional features like industrial economies and bureaucratic states organized on the Westphalian pattern and, very often, democratic institutions, representation and so on, whereby states in fact succeed in becoming, in that sense, modern on the basis of cultural resources that are very different from each other, and, therefore, on kinds of organizations which are very different from the Western case, which was supposed to be the pioneering case. I'm giving this as an introduction because, in looking at this particular aspect of secularization, which is thought to be an aspect of modernity, I deliberately set

myself the task in this book of purely looking at one great civilizational case, that of Latin Christendom. And, not even all of Christendom. I'm talking about the part that later spills out of Western Europe into the Americas and elsewhere. But, it is simply one case.

Why does that make me glad to be here? Because of the strategy underlying this different way of proceeding than that of a lot of people that preceded me - and I'm thinking of the great secularization sociological theorists of the post-war period like, originally Peter Burger, although he's since changed his mind about this, who were then writing within this universalistic framework: Secularization is something that goes along with modernity and modernity is a process that can happen, has happened or will happen everywhere, and so it will have the same consequences everywhere.

Whereas, I think that we can only arrive at that kind of general view, if ever we do, after a series of close case studies of particular civilizations. Indeed, even my fat book is too wide because there are great differences within the West, and I try to take account of them in the book, and we really should focus even more narrowly. But certainly, when we have given some account of what the trajectory is in the West and other people have made studies of India, Japan, China and so on, we can then begin to see how these might all fit together into a global picture. But, only after that first phase.

I am going to make some anticipations of this global picture, citing what I think are certain contrasts between, for instance, the West and Japan, in terms of religious development - and very hesitantly when it comes to Japan, of course. But, I think we can begin to see what's peculiar to the West if we look at it in this kind of perspective of contrast. So, why master narratives of secularity?

The starting point is the famous set of secularization theses which we find in Western academy going back to Max Weber and even before. And these, roughly speaking, go along the lines of "Modernization brings secularization." Modernization here is a shorthand term for a whole set of developments that we would all recognize immediately. I mentioned a moment ago the development of industrial economies, of modern bureaucratic states, the much greater concentration in cities, the developing of economies which are turned towards continuous growth and if they don't achieve continuous growth they tend to implode, and so on.

With much greater social and geographical mobility, these are all factors or

developments that have been brought under the head of modernization. And, under the head of secularization, there were thought to be two important components. One was the retreat of religion from public life, and the second was the decline of belief and practice among individuals and groups in those societies. The causal arrow was very clear in this view: “Modernization brings about secularization.”

This can be broken down into two sub-views. One was that modernization brings secularization. This was, you might say, the rationalist view because the development of certain features of modernity, particularly science and technology, make people more rationalistically inclined and then they can't believe in religion on the assumption that religion is all false. And this falsehood gets undercut by the development of science. And, you heard that a lot in the 19th century. But the 20th century variants, the ones that were very strong in the post-war period, took another direction. The causal relation there was seen to pass through social life. That is, the idea was that religion flourished in earlier periods because it was consonant with certain forms of social organization. Think of the European Middle Ages and so on. And, when these forms of social organization were upset, dissipated, destroyed, superseded by the more modern ones, religion tended to fade away because it really belonged in that earlier epoch. So you have, if you like, the rationalistic account of the causal relation, and then you have that sociological account of the causal relation. Since the sociological account was the one that really dominated after the war, that is the one that I am concentrating on.

Now, I want to look at this thesis in the context of what I am calling “master narratives”. By this I mean the very general, very broad account of where we came from and how we got where we are that is shared by a lot of people, very often in a largely implicit way. That is, it is shared by a lot of people that don't know a lot about history and don't really want to learn a lot about history. But, it's part of their consciousness of what they are doing and what they're at. Let me give you some examples that you can see operating in the way English is spoken nowadays in English-speaking countries. People talk about an idea or a person as being “progressive”. And, they talk about another idea or person as being “positively medieval”. And they give these kinds of characterizations of ideas and institutions and people's attitudes, and we all understand, broadly, what they are trying to say when they use them. But, if you think for a minute, you can see that these epithets only make sense within a background story that says, “in the old days it was like that and now it's developed and changed and it's become like this”. So, somebody is progressive because they are moving along this vector. Someone

is positively medieval because they are locked back in those older forms. In other words, they are basically characterizing these ideas of people in reference to a background story, a kind of mapping of these ideas in terms of a diachronic story across history. And, when that gets very powerful and people are thinking in these terms all the time, I call that a master narrative. And, I think that human beings always have something like that, although they are not always organized in the way that the modern Western master narratives are. You can get societies in history where it's clear that they have a picture of their embedding in time, which is largely cyclical. And, you know that human life, human societies go through a cycle and then they start again. Aztec culture, in other words. This stoic picture of the universe as proceeding in great years and then a conflagration ends it all and it starts again and so on.

So, human beings always have an idea of how they embed in time. But it's not necessarily the kind of story which dominates in the Western case, which is a story of advance, real diachronic movement from earlier to later as less developed and more developed. That's something which is peculiar to the West in a certain sense, and it is partly the influence of Christianity and so on. But, I think we can see that a very important variant of these stories begins to rise in the 18th century, with people like Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson, where we get the idea of stages. I call it the "stadial theories" of history or theories of human history that talk in terms of stages.

So, people like Adam Ferguson thought, for instance, that first of all humans lived as nomads. Then, they were hunter-gatherers or maybe hunter-gatherers and nomads. Then, they were agricultural societies. And now, I mean in the 18th century, we have developed something that we call "commercial society". And the features of these ages are defined in terms of how human beings make their living, or how they develop the means to life. But, these different stages, different ways of making a living for human beings, were thought to go along with, as it were to bring into existence, or to suppose for their existence, shifts of culture.

Now, for instance, in the great shift from the agricultural to the commercial society, one of the really important features of 18th century theory was that agricultural societies put a high premium on war because you actually could benefit by war. You conquer more land for your people, exploit the other people in order to be able to have a richer society by doing this. But, it was thought that the move to commercial society actually changes this utterly, and makes war something dysfunctional. Why? Because commercial society mainly benefits from production and exchange; disciplined, organized production increasing all the

time, and exchange between different societies adopting division of labor. But, this kind of continuous enrichment is disrupted by war. This is how they reasoned.

In commercial societies, you find that the ethos of the warrior gets less and less importance and prestige. And the ethos of peaceful production, exchange, learning to understand foreign countries with which you want to eventually trade, and so on — a totally new attitude or ethos is supposed to arise. So, the idea was that these stages were also not just stages in the way we run our economies but also stages in what were the important norms underlying society.

Now we still think in those kinds of terms. We use the words and we've added to that the original 18th century list, because people then talk about an industrial age, then they say we are in an electronic age, or we are in an information age. This kind of thing is coming out all the time with new books that are being produced trying to explain ourselves to ourselves. And, they are fitting into this kind of master narrative. They are trying to tell us that things are different now because we are in an age where it's not smokestack industries which really produce what's important but information exchange or it's the information age or we're in an age in which electronic communication is going to mold the whole way we live. You see, we in the West are still thinking in terms of this stadial theory structure.

And the secularization thesis fitted into that stadial theory structure. The idea was that, along with the move from valuing war to valuing commercial productive activity and commerce, that along with this change in ethos for a variety of reasons went a change in the place of religion in human life. Therefore, we can see this steady decline of religion that people think they see, or saw, in the Western case as another consequence, another facet of this whole developmental story.

It's that kind of embedding in that kind of developmental story, which I think you really have to bring out in order to see what's going on here. Foucault has the expression "l'impensee", which is the "unthought," that is, the unreflected background understanding of a lot of this Western theorization. I mean, just as I said that ordinary people use the word progressive or medieval and so on without a very clear notion that they are operating with a master narrative story. So, I think Western intellectuals very often are operating with this stadial story without really bringing it up and looking at it.

There are a couple of features of it that are not really all that convincing that I want to bring up here as the prelude or the background to some of my criticisms of the actual secularization thesis. The main feature that I want to bring up is this: As we move on this understanding from one age to the next, say the agricultural to the commercial society, and we change that major ethos, there is an idea of our moving over a boundary and several things are involved in this. One is the idea that the earlier way of being becomes unrecoverable; you supposedly can't resuscitate the ethos of the warrior and so on if you are now living fully in a bourgeois society under the ethos of peaceful production and exchange and so on.

So there is the idea that you can't go back. What existed before is unrecoverable. But, along with that goes, sometimes unspoken, the idea that what existed in that earlier past is not just lost but well lost; that is, we benefited greatly from that. And that, sometimes, is going to run together with the notion of unrecoverability. I mean something is unrecoverable and the subtext is "and thank God for that because we don't want to go back".

But here you see that in the heart of Western civilization there has been this continuing discussion because there have always been protests against this view. And sometimes the protests take the form of saying, "Okay, we accept the unrecoverability to a certain extent. I mean, we can't go back to the Middle Ages, but it's terrible, we've lost something very important." So, there are all sorts of stories about how sometime in the past we had more effective community life, we had a more effective sense of orientation for people in a community with an accepted ethos. And now, we've lost that, people are at sea or they are too individualistic, etc. You know this kind of story, you hear it all the time.

In other words, there is a dark side to the stadial theory, which says, well, we've moved in such a way that we can't go back, but that's a disaster; I mean, that's very, very unfortunate. And, in fact, what you find is that a lot of people waver between these two accounts. What's really interesting about this is that, when you go back to some of the great founding figures like the two Adams, Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson, you find that they were actually very ambivalent about this. We take them now simply as what you learnt in History of Thought 101, that they launched these stadial theories and they thought everything was onward and upward. And, there is some truth to that.

But they also worried very much, for instance, about citizen self-rule. Because they quite understandably saw the great ancient republics and polities as being

examples of the warrior ethos but also as starting examples of citizen self-rule, they were very worried about a world in which the commercial impulse dominated as one where we might lose the capacity for what we would call today democratic self-rule. And then, you go forward and look at Tocqueville in the 1830s in America and you see the same worries there.

So, really in the West, we have something very psychically complex. We have a dominant theory in a sense that it is the one that generally circulates. And then, we have a series of footnotes or demurrals or uncertainties about which people are very much arguing with themselves. So, that's the space that I would like to open up when we look at this story. Have there been simply gains in moving from the earlier to the later phase? Have there been simply losses in moving from the earlier to the later phase? Or, as I think we find in most cases, have there been both gains and losses, and what are they? So, that's something that we should have in mind as a kind of inherent set of questions that have grown up around these stadial theories in the West but have to be kept alive. Because a very simple secularization thesis is one that simply looked at all of this as sheer gain. We move from the earlier form to the later form; religion declines and that's terrific because we are more rational, and so on.

So let's now look at the problems with the secularization thesis in particular but embedded in that idea of a master narrative. One of the first things that goes wrong and is very disadvantageous about this master narrative is that it identifies the key characteristic of the different ages as what we can roughly call economic. I mean the way the society makes its living, such as by nomads herding sheep, through agriculture, commerce, and so on.

And that encourages the idea, or in fact is the entire real basis of the idea that I was attacking at the very beginning; the idea that there is going to be one story for the whole of humankind. Because, when we focus on the ways in which the economy works, we can find patterns that already have been generalized, or can be generalized relatively easily across different societies. So, everybody has their stock market, the Nikkei in Japan, the Dow Jones, the TSX. So, we have these economic institutions which exist everywhere.

Does that mean that, when certain economic institutions are exported or get implanted in another culture, all kinds of crucial self-interpretations and features or dimensions of our culture will also be exported; for instance, how we conceive of ourselves as individual human beings, how we understand the relationship of ourselves as individuals with our societies, how we understand our relation to

time, and, of course, going even further along this list, even how we understand and conceive religious life, let alone whether we think it's good or bad thing? But, that's exactly what the original mainstream secularization theories thought, and what the original mainstream stadial theories of modernity thought, I think, that this terrible mistake of Eurocentrism, or Western-centrism, if that's the right word, was at the heart of that.

The heart of that was something built deeply into that whole stadial theory we were operating with, that in some sense the key to understanding the change is the movement from one economic form to the other. And that the rest of the features of the culture would go along with that either as consequences of it or as central conditions of it. And so, if the economic form is going to travel, then the culture will travel and the same kinds of cultural changes will occur in India, Japan, and China and so on as did in the West.

And, I think that the first important thing to seeing the weakness of this stadial theory from this point of view is its centering on the economic self-definition of each stage as being the key change which brings the others with it. Because, as I said earlier, we now have enough experience. Nobody could expect Max Weber or Durkheim to see this the way we do today because we have experience of modernization across the world. But, something like Indian democracy, in the way in which the actual process works - the actual way of mobilizing people, for instance, very often around caste or caste groups - is so different from the way this was understood in the West that we are obviously dealing with something which, on the institutional level, is tremendously similar.

I mean for a Canadian, the Indian constitution is almost totally understandable immediately because it's the Westminster style of government plus federalism, and indeed, some of the ideas were even taken from the Canadian constitution. But when you look at the actual process of political life and the two democracies, now you are totally at sea if you try to think of it in terms that are borrowed from Canada or the West. It's a typical example of how similarity at the institutional level has only become possible because of a tremendous difference at the level of actual political organization and political life. I say it has only become possible because India has remained a democracy as against a place like Pakistan, precisely because it has developed a kind of organizational life which continues to sustain those Westminster style institutions. You can see that that's the background to this criticism that I am making of the stadial theory.

A second big criticism to make of these theories is their reliance on what I want to

call a “subtraction story”. And subtraction stories run like this: We can understand the development of certain features of modernity as being the releasing or allowing to emerge of certain features that have always existed in human life but were previously repressed or occluded or hemmed in by earlier forms of belief, earlier forms of society.

One variant of this which is very common in the last two centuries in the West is what you might call the utilitarian variant. And, that’s the idea that human beings are always and everywhere, instrumental individuals - that is, individuals who operate with instrumental rationality, finding the best means in rationality to achieve their goals. But, in earlier forms of very tightly organized society, this behavior was impeded — it was inhibited, it was forbidden or there were at the same time these tightly organized societies operating on the basis of religious and metaphysical views that also made that aspect of human life something not important or something despicable, and so on.

And, the development of modernity is a result of sweeping aside some of these obstacles of tight organization and of religion and metaphysical belief. And, what emerges is what human beings have always really at base been, now without any let or hindrance. And, you can see how sociological theory of secularization can feed into that because it tries to say that modernity brings about tremendous social and geographical mobility. This means that the earlier tightly organized forms of social life begin to fracture, begin to become looser or the individual has less restrictions, and so on.

Another variant of this is the rationalistic variant where, instead of moving towards the liberation of the instrumental individual, you move towards the liberation of the Kantian rational individual operating by universal maxims. Or there are other variants. You see implicit in Adam Smith a similar type of idea. He says at the beginning of “The Wealth of Nations”: “Human beings everywhere have a propensity to truck and barter, were always bartering in order to improve their situation.” But, the areas within which they can barter and trade are very narrow at the beginning and then, with certain development in society, markets begin to enter into and mediate all sorts of economic activities until this tendency becomes the dominant one in a market society, and so on.

Now, I think that you could see that this kind of view also will comfort the notion that the development of modern economy and modern society will produce everywhere the same type of ethos. Because, if what this development is doing is liberating or getting rid of the obstacles to some fundamental way of being that

everybody is really on about — being an instrumental individual, say - then we will all end up with very much the same understanding of ourselves, of our interests, and of our goals.

But, it seems to me that this is just obviously wrong, that it's not what happens. Take something like a self-understanding, instrumentally rational individual, or an individual focusing on individual interest in an instrumental, rational way. That is certainly a very common and important part of people's identity in the contemporary West. But, instead of seeing that as something that was always there and just needed to have the obstacles taken away, it's plain that actually what's happened is a kind of construction over years of cultural development. It's as kind of cultural creation.

Even in the West, it goes along with other kinds of individualism, like the idea of the fully responsible individual who is really taking utter responsibility for participation in a larger whole. Or it's relation to another kind of individualism, the expressive individual who is trying to find his or her identity and is trying to discover it and work it out. These ways of being and ways of understanding oneself have come about as series of changes, of desired changes, with their undesired side effects, over a long period of history. And, they could even be incomprehensible to people from a totally different culture. And, that is constructed as an insight that goes along with understanding how much human beings are really cultural animals, that they have developed extremely different conceptions of what excellence is, what harmony is, what proper co-existence with others is, and so on.

What you have in the West is not so much the liberation of some total human universal desire to be an instrumental individual; what you have is a development of a particular cultural construction of what it is to be a human being. Now, this may attract other people because it goes along with certain signal successes in economic and military terms. People from other cultures may try to take it on and imitate it, or some may be repelled by it. But, it's not something which is there all the time. So, these are two very big framework ideas from which we have to liberate ourselves, the idea of the subtraction story and the idea I mentioned earlier of the stadial theory as one where the economic definition is basic.

The third thing that I want to talk about here as a basic wrong feature, before I look at the more detailed story as I see it in the West, is what I call the idea of linearity and uniformity. The secularization thesis seemed to be saying that

secularization — just taking the example of the decline of belief and practice - results from certain developments we describe as modernization, say the development of very large cities or large-scale social and geographic mobility or the development of industrial production. The idea was that there is a kind of linear development, linear relation. The more any of these factors develops, the farther religion retreats. But, this doesn't fit the actual story.

I mean even if you think that over the long run, religion has retreated into uncertainty in European societies, and I think you can say it has, it didn't happen in this kind of linear way. Rather, what happened is that certain of these modernity developments upset and destabilized earlier forms of religious life. It has been noted with regard to rural Catholic parishes in France which had long retained high-level belief and practice that, when people were either taken out of those parishes and went to Paris, or something of that kind, they engaged in a quite different kind of life. Or, as has happened more recently because of modern communications, city life has invaded the rural parish. Rural society in the West was also being urbanized in that sort of mental sense and in terms of relations, and in terms of short-term mobility. And, when that happened, the whole way of religious life organized around these parishes began to lose ground.

That is certainly an insight. But, where the insight is only partial and where it goes wrong if you try to follow it through is not seeing that there is a steady process of what French sociologists call "la recomposition" - recomposition of religious life in new forms. Think of famous cases like the rise of Methodism in England and America in the late 18th century where quite different forms of religious organization respond to this world of much higher mobility and take it to new forms. That Methodism was the ancestor of whole rafts of movements that we see today, what we call Pentecostal over many continents, and so on. And, there are many more examples of this kind.

So, what you have happening is not a linear story at all, and not a uniform story because the ways that people recompose religious life or recompose non-religious forms that fill the same needs in human life of orientation and so on vary tremendously from society to society. So, it's neither a linear movement, because there's always recomposition, nor a uniform movement, because the actual trajectories of these destabilizations and recompositions are very different, looking at France or England, for example.

And, what you have then is a kind of back and forth story because some of these secondary recompositions can in turn be destabilized by other developments. Very

important for my story in the book is what I call the “Age of Authenticity” - roughly speaking, what we symbolize in the West by the “Sixties”, which was the eruption of a very widespread, popular, almost universally held ethic of authenticity, of everybody discovering their own identity and being true to it. “Do your own thing” would be a popular slogan that you may have heard which reflected this. And this kind of shift destabilized other religious ones, including some that are hidden and that themselves resulted from earlier phases of destabilization and recomposition. So, this is constantly going on, I think.

The story is therefore very much more complicated, which is another reason why it would be crazy now to think of a secularization theory that somehow covered the whole world. Even my attempt at a secularization theory covering the West began to crumble as we saw quite different trajectories and very different situations. The United States is a much more religiously practicing society than, say, Sweden. Both societies belong to the same civilization in a sense, but they are really very far apart. Why is this? I would love to have the answers to all of these questions. These are the kinds of question we need to find answers to.

The foregoing was a series of criticisms or formal remarks about the kind of account we would need of secularization in the West, of the decline of religious faith and practice, where that has occurred. But something is still missing here. I have been very critical of the master narratives that are dominating but I owe you, the world, I owe ourselves an alternative master narrative.

Let me try to give you a sense of what it is. I think that the really big factor in Latin Christendom that set us off on this trajectory was the movement for religious reform. Not simply the Protestant Reformation, although of course, the Protestant Reformation is a very important component of this. It's not the only component because you get the very strong push for reform in the late Middle Ages before the Protestant Reformation. And, you get very strong reactions to this reformation in the Catholic Church, which we sometimes describe as counter-reformation or Catholic Reformation.

So, there is a kind of series of movements that have a lot in common with each other. And here is where we get to a very interesting contrast between the West and, for instance, Japan and a number of other countries. You could say that these reform movements had a number of features in common. One is that they pushed very hard for what Weber called “the disenchantment of the world”; that is, certain kinds of collective ritual which the reformers characterized as magic, but which really had the character that they were allowing human beings to

survive and flourish in a world of spirits who had to be placated or perhaps headed off, and so on. You think of those rituals like beating the bounds of the parish where, on certain days, the priest and the whole congregation would walk around the boundaries of the parish carrying the sacrament, the idea being to keep the spirits of the woods and so on at bay who otherwise might come and introduce disease to the cattle, or destroy the crops, etc., a kind of protective measure.

Or, perhaps a kind of relationship to a world of spirits which allowed one to carry on one's ordinary life. This was very much targeted and repressed, sometimes totally, sometimes less radically but put under a cloud. In favor of what? In favor of a conception and understanding of religion which was based on fully personal commitment to either some devotional life or some set of beliefs or some set of disciplines. They varied, of course, but all conformed to the idea that the only proper Christian is the fully, individually, personally committed Christian.

This was going on in a context in which for thousands of years before, or anyway, a thousand years before you had a Christian practice in which a certain minority of people - not only monks, but monks and nuns would be a very good example of this minority - were committed individually to the practice. And they were operating in a world in which the vast mass of the population was involved in various collections of rituals which belonged to the church and these other rituals — rituals of propitiation and defense - all of which were gathered together in the life of the local parish. This is what I was saying earlier about how the life of the local parish is undermined by certain developments of modernity.

And so, in a certain sense, the thrust of the reform movement was a kind of civil war within Medieval Christianity in which one kind of religious life — the life that previously had been the life of minorities - drove out another kind of religious life, the life organized around collective rituals, which had been the life of the majority. There was a kind of duality. You might think that I am speaking about Christian monks but we could think of bhikkhus in Buddhist India or those who are committed to a life of contemplation and so on in the Hindu context, etcetera.

In all of the great religions that come out of the axial period you've got this two-tiered situation of religion of elites who were individually committed to some path of salvation or contemplation or unity with God on one hand, and the society as a whole. The striking thing about the reform movements in Christendom is that they tried to abolish this duality altogether. You see it very clearly in the Protestant reformers; they totally cannot stand the Catholic idea that there are

some councils of perfection, that some people go farther than others in the life of dedication as monks. There is only a difference between the saved and the damned, and the saved must be 100% Christian.

Now this refers us back to this context of a religious life at many speeds. That's an expression people used about the European Union, that Europe unites but at many speeds; some come in wholly, some come in partially. But, the idea of a religion at many speeds is something that goes way beyond Medieval Christianity, as I experienced in Thailand, for example. You can see that you have the laity feeding the monks who are living this life of higher fuller dedication, which the laity themselves are not living. But, there is a kind of notion of complementarity because one earns merit by feeding the monks, which is why, when these scandals break out about certain monks having a lot of women, people are so shocked and horrified because the whole activity of giving which is meant to earn merit only works if you are really giving to people whose lives are truly holy.

Well, you get this notion of a kind of complementarity. This complementarity was upset by the entire reform movement. This is one of these remarkable outbreaks in history. The reason why this may be not as comprehensible in Japan as it would be in Paris or London is that, in a certain sense, it seems to me as an outsider that the way in which Japan entered into and was influenced by the great axial revolutions was very different from the way in which the religions of Abraham were. Because the religions of Abraham from the very beginning had this tremendous suspicion of these collective rituals which were aimed at securing our welfare in a world of spirits. Already you see in the Book of Kings that Saul is warned against consulting the witch of Endor. And, one of the terrible things he does that gets him denounced by Samuel the prophet is precisely that he is consulting the witch. And you can see this all the way through. And, even before the Reformation there were certain rituals that were considered too dangerous, too outside the pale to be really tolerated.

This is something which is so deeply implanted in our religious DNA in the West that we can't understand moving outside it. You could even say that the very Western concept of magic — not the concept that we got from the Greeks and the other word that was used about the Persians - is really defined by this reform process. The whole set of things that were rejected by this reform movement were kind of put into the category of magic and we developed a concept from that. And then, even someone who didn't believe in God, like Frazer, who wrote "The Golden Bough," comes along with the theory that there is something called magic and something called religion and you can use that as a grid to understand life all over

the world. And then, you get Evans-Pritchard going to study the Nuer and the Zande and his concept of magic. And Evans-Pritchard, to his credit, begins to say, "Hey, now, my Western concept isn't working here. I have to find another way of thinking."

But, you can see how our entire mind has been formed around this experience of reform and the kind of way the grid carved up the world in this process of rejecting certain things and making that a category. And that's Weber's word "Entzauberung", which translate as disenchantment. "Zauber" is the German word for magic. For me, "Entzauberung" means demagification. So, let me get back to the contrast that, number one, the ways in which post-axial type thinking comes to Japan, Confucianism in one way and Buddhism in another way, come out of traditions which didn't have that *a priori* hostility to what we call magic.

And so, in China, for instance, you get tremendously widespread practice of various kinds of family religion and invocation of spirits which have come up out of the ground after the period of communist rule. Because, in a certain sense, it was never really targeted and destroyed by the earlier phases of post-axial religion, by Buddhism, or by Confucianism. It would have existed alongside. In the Japanese case it's even clearer, I think, that one has this tremendously powerful survival of a way of life and a set of patterns of family life and ritual and so on which are in a different mind space from the great world religions as we think of the Buddhism and Christianity and so on, but are not seen as encroaching on their terrain or dangerous for them. I mean, not seen by the local population as things that are antithetical. Or from the standpoint of the religions of Abraham, these practices are always likely to be seen as a menace to or danger for the so-called higher religious life introduced by the post-axial religious changes. In either a Muslim society or in a Jewish society or in a Christian society, there is this kind of built-in antagonism.

So, somebody said to me the other day, "Well, you know, my wife and I were married in the Christian church, and when children came along we had a Shinto ceremony, and when my father died we went to a Buddhist ceremony." For an average Christian, total incomprehensibility breaks out because there is a mindset in which these have got to be in some ways incompatible. You have to make a choice. But there are whole religious trajectories in the world where this kind of choice hasn't been forced and which, therefore, produce a completely different situation in which the conceptual grid that you have when you move in from the West just doesn't fit.

An interesting example is cases where as a result of the tremendous success of Western imperialism, various reformers within cultures that hadn't developed out of Jewish, Christian, Muslim roots - like Hindu India or China - thought that they had to develop something similar. So, you get the Brahmo Samaj with Ram Mohun Roy in Bengal, which was trying to develop a kind of Hinduism which has a kind of doctrinal unity, and an attempt to purify Hinduism of various rites and so on. Or, you get in China certain movements like the famous movement of "smash temples, build schools", under the nationalist regime, before the communists, where the idea is that the notion of superstition begins to enter and a certain targeting of this popular practice begins to occur on the grounds that the only way to have a successful modernization is to get beyond that target and allow only religions which have a high ethical content to survive. Or, in the case of the communists, no religions at all; the ethical content is given by Marxism. And you can see attempts to import this model sometimes, and you can see how alien it is, the very difficulty of those attempts.

So, after these remarks about the general nature of the story, destabilization and recomposition of religious forms by certain forms of modernity, I wanted to get to the very heart of what made the difference in Latin Christendom, which was a particular kind of reform movement that tried to upset the uneasy co-existence in the post axial period of an elite religious life led by individuals on the one hand and the life of the whole society in collective rituals on the other.

And this in turn looks back at the tension that always existed between these high axial revelations on one hand and the religious life on the other. This movement, which produced disenchantment, in turn produced new forms of social organization which have been absolutely crucial to the development of the West. All this occurred in a religious context which doesn't necessarily have a corresponding context elsewhere. It has some kind of corresponding context in Muslim and Jewish societies but not in societies whose access to the acts of revolution came through Hinduism or Buddhism or Confucianism.

That's another reason for coming to the conclusion that the entire trajectory I am talking about is a very special one, a very peculiar one, with all sorts of strange peculiarities, which can just never be repeated elsewhere. But, what can happen is that it can influence others to try to repeat it or to think that maybe it ought to be repeated. And, in this case, it can have a kind of secondary impact. But, we are never going to understand what is going on elsewhere with regard to the nature of religion unless we fully accept that religion means something very different and that the whole way that this operates with the other factors in society is

something very different.

I come back to my starting point, which was that I am very glad to be here, because I'm one of those in the West that has this new way of approaching these problems, of looking at them in terms of the particular civilization we are in. Then, we can have this kind of exchange and we can learn something from each other, and we can begin to piece together the common story by getting clear on our particular stories. Thank you very much for your very kind attention, and let's have a discussion on this.