

## The Evolution of Modern Self-Identity: A Taylorean Perspective

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**Abstract:** The second half of nineteenth and twentieth century has seen tremendous changes in the way human beings understand themselves and how they relate to the changing cultural, economic, political, religious, social, and scientific practices of society. It is important that we understand this 'evolution of modern self-identity' in order to understand its changed attitude to Religion, especially toward Christianity in the West. Modernity has both challenged the traditional way of being religious and at the same time offers the resources for adopting a 'reflective religious perspective.' Drawing inspiration from the works of Charles Taylor I provide a genealogy of the different transitions and transformations of our understanding of *human self-identity* in view of indicating its impact on modern understanding of religion.

**Key words:** modernity as cultural, self-identity, inwardness, deism, moral sentimentalism.

### Introduction

It is evident from the recent history that there is a new shift of emphasis in the way we understand ourselves. This, in turn, has also changed the way the moderns understand and practice their religion. Different religions have been affected in different ways but there is little doubt that they have all been affected. There was a time when "everyone believed, and so the alternative [to believing] seemed outlandish"<sup>1</sup> as rightly noted by Charles Taylor. This is no longer the case with regard to religious belief, especially in the West. In order to understand this change Taylor attempts a retrieval of the history of the factors that were instrumental in shaping modernity and the resulting change in self-identity. There are four factors that he considers crucial to this purpose: (1) the sense of self as inward, (2) affirmation of the ordinary, (3) Deism, and (4) moral sentimentalism. Before turning to these, let us begin with Taylor's understanding of modernity.

## 1. Taylor's Understanding of Modernity: Some Introductory Considerations

The word modernity comes from the Latin word *modo* which simply means “of today” or “what is current” as different from the earlier times. The concept “modernity” refers to new modes of social life, social institutions, and organizational ability which became evident in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century the evolution of modernity was explicit and was expressed in different forms, especially as it manifested secularism. Historical evolution of modernity can be construed in various ways. Some of the prominent factors that became instrumental in the shaping of modernity are: The Renaissance (C. 14-16<sup>th</sup> Centuries), The French Revolution (1789), The Reformation (C. 16-17<sup>th</sup> Centuries), The Scientific Revolution (C. 16-17<sup>th</sup> Centuries), The Enlightenment (C. 18<sup>th</sup> Century), and The Industrial Revolution (C. 18 – Early 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries). In general all these historical factors contributed to the human self being seen in more individualistic, rationalistic, scientific, and secular in perspective. It will definitely be a rewarding exercise to elaborate on the above historical factors to understand their impact on the formation of the modern self. Prior to that, let us see the specific character of Taylor's analysis of modernity as found in his “Two Theories of Modernity”.<sup>2</sup>

Taylor describes two ways of conceiving modernity. First it can be understood in “cultural” terms where the main focus would be on the differences between cultures or civilizations. It sees the present society as “the picture of a plurality of human cultures, each of which has a language and a set of practices that define specific understandings of personhood, social relations, states of mind/soul, goods and bads, virtues and vices, and the like” (TTM 172). With changes in these, a new culture has emerged in the West that we call modernity. The second view sees modernity as an “acultural” happening that has to do with the emergence of new discoveries and the demise of “traditional” myths. He clarifies what he means by “acultural”:

By this I mean an operation that is not defined in terms of the specific cultures it carries us from and to, but is rather seen as of a type that any traditional culture could undergo. [...] a

paradigm case, would be one that conceives of modernity as the growth of reason, defined in various ways: For example, as the growth of scientific consciousness, or the development of a secular outlook, or the rise of instrumental rationality, or an ever-clearer distinction between fact-finding and evaluation. (TTM 172-73).

In the acultural understanding the change to modernity is seen as a result of increased technology, ease of living, mobility, etc. These, it is thought, are indifferent to our notions of personhood, the Good, or society and could occur in any culture regardless of their norms and practices. Taylor observes that most see modernity in acultural terms, describing it as the rise of reason against Romantic irrationalism. He considers many negative views of modernity as equally acultural. For example,

Modernity is characterized by the loss of the horizon; by a loss of roots; by the hubris that denies human limits, our dependence on history or God, that places unlimited confidence in the powers of frail human reason; by a trivializing self-indulgence that has no stomach for the heroic dimension of life, and so on. (TTM 174).

“Acultural theories tend to describe the transition of modernity in terms of a loss of traditional beliefs and allegiances” (TTM 175). This loss may be moaned or celebrated, but both consider modernity as a matter of either “coming to see” (positive reading) or coming to “lose sight of” (negative reading) certain perennial truths. What is missed out by acultural theories of both kinds is that there was no inevitability about the transition to modernity. Speculating on how the acultural theories have come to dominate our understanding of modernity, Taylor notes that the West, with a dominance of Christendom in the beginning of modernity, considered all other cultures and people as “barbarians, or infidels, or savages” (TTM 174). Taylor continues:

It would have been absurd to expect the contemporaries of the French Revolution, on the either side of the political divide, to have seen the cultural shift within this political upheaval,

when the very idea of cultural pluralism was just dawning in 174).

According to Taylor “materialism” can be considered as another factor driving acultural theories. The proponents of the acultural view are reluctant to invoke moral or spiritual factors and therefore, changes are seen as the bye-products of more down to earth causes like social change, industrialization, etc. Taylor sees three things wrong with this preference for the acultural theories. Two of these become obvious upon reflection, but the third is a “more subtle mistake about the whole framework in which human history unfolds” (TTM 179).

Firstly, modernity in part is based on a moral outlook than merely a matter of “coming to see” truths. He continues, “In the West science itself has grown in close symbiosis with a certain culture, in the sense in which I am using that term here - that is, a constellation of understanding of person, nature, society and the good. To rely on an acultural theory is to miss all this”(TTM 179). The result is a distorted view of modernity as an inevitable product of the enlightenment package, say, the result of science and technology, or we fail to see the change at all. Thus, for example, it is assumed that all cultures in history held similar (though perhaps undeveloped) views that moderns in the West do, not seeing the central role that such distinctions as the “inward/outward” have had in shaping post-Augustinian Western culture/modernity. Hence, Taylor states,

[...] a purely acultural theory distorts and impoverishes our understanding of the West, both through misclassification (the enlightenment package error) and through narrow focus. But such a theory’s effect on our understanding of other cultures is more devastating. The belief that modernity comes from a single, universally applicable operation imposes a falsely uniform pattern on the multiple encounters of non-western cultures with the exigencies of science, technology, and industrialization. (TTM 180).

The second error of the acultural approach is to think of modernity as an inevitable point of convergence for all traditional societies due to some universal constant at work such as reason or

technology. It affects our understanding of other cultures because we assume that the newly industrialized culture must now “come to see” certain truths and, hence, make some cultural changes, “such as the ‘secularization’ or the growth of atomistic forms of self-identification” (TTM 181). The acultural understanding, thus, levels off all cultures, making them simply ‘less advanced’ versions of ourselves; it is assumed that others will eventually “come to see” as we do once they see the success of instrumental rationality and technology. As against this view, the cultural theory does not see modernity as following a linear path. On the contrary, changes will be seen as necessarily influenced by the past, analogous to conversion of the Rome to Christianity or Indonesia to Islam. In the one case Roman Christianity is deeply influenced by Greek philosophy and in the other case Indonesian Islam is very different from the other versions of Islam. Therefore, Taylor proposes that we should start speaking about “alternative modernities” instead of “modernity in the singular” (TTM 182).

Thirdly, the acultural view promotes the lack of awareness “that our explicit beliefs about our world and ourselves are held against a background of unformulated (and perhaps in part unformulable) understandings, in relation to which these beliefs make the sense they do”(TTM 186). In this matter he acknowledges the influence of Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Michael Polanyi, John Searle, and Herbert Dreyfus. But Taylor goes beyond them in recognizing the social character of these background understanding in terms of which explicit beliefs make sense.

Taking a cultural view of modernity Taylor examines, in his massive *Sources of the Self*, how the Western world has viewed the self throughout history, tying it into their moral outlook. Most relevant is his examination of the rise of modern individualism and the valuation of the ‘common life.’ He finds the roots of individualism in Augustinian Christianity and the Reformation. Prior to Augustine’s ruminations on the self, individualism was practically non-existent (reflexivity). Later in Descartes, the self was atomized and the detached observer became “the Good”; the self was no longer essentially tied to its history and culture, but only contingently related.

Through the exercise of rationality one can transcend their particular context, finding universal truths that are divorced from such contingencies as history. Let us follow Taylor's analysis of the evolution of the identity of modern self in more detail, as found in his book *The Sources of the Self*.

## **2. Evolution of Modern Identity and the Sources of Inwardness**

Emphasizing the role of history for understanding the modern self, Taylor boldly states that "we cannot understand ourselves without coming to grip with history."<sup>3</sup> For him, "Understanding modernity aright is an exercise of retrieval" (SS xi). Taylor argues that it is necessary to save modernity from its most unconditional supporters, as he considers their view of modernity flawed.<sup>4</sup> Dissatisfied with his contemporaries for not being faithful to the genealogy of the self, morality (good) and identity, he attempts an alternative retrieval of history. And his re-reading of history to frame self-identity is a unique combination of the 'greatness and dangers (*grandeur et misère*)' of history (SS x).

A key feature of the modern notion of the self is a sense of inwardness (SS 111). Universal as this "inner-outer" distinction might seem, Taylor contends that it bears a large stamp of the modern West. In tracing the evolution of modern self, Taylor distinguishes between what belongs to human agency *as such* in all times and places, and what is shaped differently in different cultures. His main thesis is "that the self exists essentially in a moral space by means of a master image, a spacial one."<sup>5</sup> One of the flaws of modern self-understanding is its localization of the inner and outer i.e., restricting the notions of "inner" and "outer" to specific locations (e.g, reason, soul, nature, etc.). This is flawed because it forgets that human self lives in a space of moral issues. Such localizations have become significant in our understanding of immanence and transcendence which, in turn, also changed our approach to religion. As Taylor sees it, "What we are constantly losing from sight here is that being a self is inseparable from existing in a moral space of moral issues, to do with identity and how one ought to be. It is being able to find one's standpoint in this space, being able to occupy, to *be* a perspective in it." (SS 112). Being a self in our modern understanding is inextricably related to a moral predicament and human agency. In this moral

space, one is not just a 'biological organ' but a person living and engaging in a situation, and measuring up to what is good, what is right, and what is worth doing (MT 298). Heidegger's famous formulation of *Dasein* as "there-being" is in question here (MT 298) as it seems to lack this moral aspect of the self.<sup>6</sup>

Taylor presents those historical developments, which have been distorted, one-sided, and conflicting in many respects, from the dimensions of *inner* and *outer* sources with a view of combining them in the same self. In order to make his argument, Taylor brings out two major trends in history with regard to the self: a. moral frames of self-mastery (self-control) and b. moral frames of self-exploration.<sup>7</sup> These will be seen in the following subsections. What Taylor calls 'inwardness' I present here as 'inner sources' which contribute immensely to the making of the modern identity.

### 2.1. Moral Frames of Self-Mastery: Plato, Descartes and Locke

There are three main philosophers whom Taylor considers as contributing significantly to the moral frames of self-mastery: Plato, Descartes, and Locke. For Taylor, the main theme of Plato's *The Republic* can be summarized as 'we are good when we are ruled by reason.' There are three kinds of selves: rulers, auxiliaries and farmers; these were guided by desire, courage and reason, respectively. The harmony or balance of society comes through the 'ruling of the reason.' Here we can identify a very explicit localization of the higher and the lower (reason and desire). The good soul enjoys order (*kosmos*), concord (*xumphonia*), and harmony (*harmonia*). According to Taylor, Plato offers us a view of moral sources and his higher moral state is in the domain of thought.<sup>8</sup> What we gain through thought is self-mastery. The good man is master of himself (SS 115). With Plato the ethics of action and glory found in the poets was replaced by the ethics of reason and reflection. Plato never used the inner/outer dichotomy; for him, reason is connected to order and unity. "To be ruled by reason, to have a clear vision, is to be ruled by that vision. One might almost say that on this view one's action is under the hegemony of the order of things itself." (MT 304). The soul ruled by reason is an ordered one. The same reason is instrumental for the ordering of desires and other ambitions. Hence

there is an ordering of the lower to the higher which can be seen as a substantive vision of Plato. Higher order of goods demands a higher order of reason which can see the *Good*. What is important for Taylor is how this *ethic of reason* has brought about a new understanding of the human agent. Without the *unified self* of Plato, the modern notion of interiority could never have been developed, though it took a further step to bring it fully about. (SS 116-120). Taylor states:

[...] mastery of oneself must mean that something higher in one controls the lower, in fact that reason controls the desire. From Plato through Stoics, into the Renaissance, and right to the modern day, this mastery of reason remains a recognizable ideal even though it is contested in modern civilization in a way it doesn't seem to have been among the ancients. (MT 303).

The Stoics refuted Plato's view, especially his "theoretic vision of truth and its soul/body dualism." (MT 304). They emphasized our ability to make deliberate moral *choices*;<sup>9</sup> for them, all that matters is to execute this capacity. This capacity must be in our power too. Hence, a proper form of life is sufficient unlike Plato's world of forms. A shift from theoretical reason to practical reason is clear here. The concern is not "the good" but a "the vision of the order of goods" (MT 304). According to Taylor, in *A Secular Age*, something like this Stoic view influenced Rene Descartes. The implication is that even among the stoics there were distinctions of realities. Not all things were considered as equally pleasurable or profitable.<sup>10</sup>

In Descartes, we find advocated not hegemony of a certain vision but "direct domination of one faculty over the other: reason instrumentalizes the passions." (MT 305). He thus situates the moral sources within us (SS. 143), even if his first concern was not with morality. The goal is to gain mastery of oneself, shifting the hegemony from senses to reason. Descartes makes a 'transposition' by which we no longer see ourselves as related to moral sources outside of us, or at least not at all in the same way. An important power has been internalized (SS 143). The universe has been understood *mechanistically*. One can observe the Galilean-scientific-representational model is echoed or repeated here. Hence, the order



of ideas ceases to be something we *find* but it is rather something we *build*. The order of representation must meet with the standards of the thinking activity of the knower (SS 145). Descartes' "dualism" of body and soul is strikingly different from Plato's. For Plato, one realizes one's soul when one turns toward a supersensible Forms or Ideas, which is eternal, immutable. There is no such Order of Ideas or Reality in Descartes (SS 145). The material world is mere extension. Thus, Descartes comes up with his "disengaged" or "disenchanted" reason which functions mechanistically and scientifically.

Descartes' intellectualism and instrumental reasoning creates a new theory of passions but not of tradition. Passions are emotions in the soul, caused by movements of the animal spirits. Reason rules the passions when it can hold them to their normal instrumental function. The hegemony of reason for Descartes is a matter of "instrumental control (SS 150).

Here, mastery of reason brings about the internalization of moral sources. But later on Descartes is concerned with "generosity" (*generosite*) and "inner peace" and he makes strength of will as the central virtue (SS 153). He places the notions of "dignity" and "esteem" at the heart of his moral vision (SS 155). His emphasis on reason (speculative and practical) pushes him to disengage from the world and worldly senses. Rationality is no more defined substantively in terms of the order of beings, but *procedurally* in terms of the standards by which we "construct" our own order (SS 156). A procedural approach will result in substantively true beliefs about the world. One meets one's own core in the utmost inwardness, which is not God (SS 156). This is a great internalization different from Plato and Augustine. Whereas Augustine's inward turn led to the realization of one's dependence on God, the Cartesian turn results in self-sufficiency. And with it, Taylor sees the road to Deism being opened up.

Locke takes the Cartesian disengagement and active making to the next stage. The mind is a *tabula rasa* (empty tablet) with simple ideas coming from the senses, which are combined by the mind. The Lockean model of the mind, thus, shapes the world from sense impressions. As with Descartes, knowledge for Locke is not

genuine unless you develop it. Further, the Lokean self not only shapes the representation of the surrounding world but of the mind itself. "The subject who can take this kind of radical stance of disengagement to himself or herself with a view of remaking is what I want to call the *punctual self*. Identify oneself with the power of remaking." (SS 171) He makes it on the basis of consciousness. Locke's person is a moral agent who takes responsibility for his action in the light of future retribution.

Taylor sees one of the great paradoxes of modern philosophy here. "The philosophy of disengagement and objectification has helped to create a picture of the human being, at its most extreme in certain forms of materialism, from which the last vestiges of subjectivity seem to have been expelled. It is a picture of the human being from a completely third-person perspective. The paradox is that ... Radical objectivity is only intelligible and accessible through radical subjectivity. (SS 175-76) This is a place where the modern followers of Descartes, Locke, and Kant, in different ways go wrong: they do not have an in-depth subjectivity, in the first place, to understand radical objectivity.

The modern disengaged self was also linked to a 'moral topography' which took away all our external moral resources and sees our moral resources as *inner*. Undeniably this has contributed greatly to the making of the modern self, which goes along with a certain conception of the 'dignity of a human person.' However, there is a *paradoxical* element in this approach:

The modern disengaged self aspires after a kind of neutrality. Disengagement entails a kind of neutrality in relation to what it is disengaged from. With Descartes and Kant, the connection of this neutrality with a moral ideal is clear enough. But once the drive to objectification becomes all-encompassing, as with modern naturalism, and is meant to account for the totality of human life, this connection becomes lost to view. (MT 312).

Here the disengaged self is considered as a *natural fact*. Taylor thus notices that something is lost from the fact that there is an unmistakable connection with the moral background.

## 2.2. Moral Frames of ‘Self-Exploration’: Augustine and Montaigne

The experience of inwardness is so much a part of our nature and language. We speak of and identify people having inner depths simply because they have the ability to turn to themselves. Human thoughts are understood as something *within*. Taylor contrasts our experience of inwardness with the fact that the ancients actively strived to reach it. Taylor sees something new here. “[...] the suggestion that in turning away from bodily things to those of the soul we are turning inward seems to be absent. Plato doesn’t speak that way.”(MT 313). Taylor continues to articulate the contrast of this self-exploration with the earlier explanation of self-mastery.<sup>11</sup>

The fact is that the lore of the soul gave no special status to the first- person perspective and that the moral sources were external. The turning is captured in the powerful image of Plato used in *the Republic*, where the soul swivels around to direct its gaze toward the illuminated reality, the Ideas. It is not self-focus, but attention to true reality that makes for wisdom and justice (MT 313).

This self-exploratory turn starts with Augustine. His inner and outer dimensions and ultimately his emphasis on the inner has significance for our modern self identity. Though Augustine was influenced by Plato, Plotinus and Manichaeism, he shifted his primary emphasis from reason to *soul*. His distinction of body and soul was based on Plato’s notion of “bodily” and “non-bodily.” (SS 127-128) Thus we find in his works such dichotomies as: spirit/matter, higher/lower, eternal/temporal, and immutable/changing. All may be seen essentially as forms of inner and outer. *Noli foras ire, in teipsum redi; in interiore homine habitat veritas* (Do not go outward; return within yourself. In the “inward man” dwells truth). “Inward lies the road to God” (SS 129). Augustine takes a *first person stance-reflexivity* which is almost like Foucault’s “the care of oneself.” Augustine is between Plato and Descartes. He is the inventor of “*Cogito*” because he is the first one to identify the *first person stance*

as essential for the discovery of truth (SS 133). Taylor's view is that,

[...] he (Augustine) means by "within" is that one encounters God in one's own presence to self. That is because God is not only the maker of heaven and earth whose work can be seen in the cosmos; he is also the power that continually sustains me as a spiritual being. He is at the foundation of my power to think, know, and love. (MT 314).

His proof for the existence of God was framed by his inward journey, as distinct from Aquinas' natural theology. God is found in the intimacy of Self-presence. *Memoria* is not a collection of thoughts, rather the 'Master within (God)' who lights it there, Illuminated by another source (SS 134-135). At the very root of memory, the soul finds God. Two-way movements of the Soul demonstrate the tremendous difference between knowing and loving. Thus the notion of "will" is developed in Augustine. A teleological theory of nature underlying the Greeks (Plato and Socrates) supposes that everyone is motivated by a love of the Good, which can be sidetracked toward evil by ignorance or distortion and bad habits (Aristotle). But for Augustine, according to Taylor, the "will" must first be healed through "grace" before we can fully function in the Socratic model (SS 138). In Plato and Aristotle, the eye already has the capacity to see, in Augustine the eye has lost its capacity to see which should be restored by grace. Grace opens the inward man to God.

Augustine's self-exploratory method is part of our culture. Later on people started exploring the 'within' not for gaining intimacy with God, but simply to know more and more of their own 'interiority.' This model "becomes central to our culture that another stance of radical reflexivity becomes of crucial importance to us alongside that of disengagement." (MT 314). It is different from and in some respect antithetical to the first disengagement.

Later on Montaigne attempts to recover contact with the permanent, stable, unchanging core of being in each of us – a unanimous feature of ancient thought. He sought, and found some inner peace, in his "*maistresse forme*." Self-knowledge is the indispensable key to self-acceptance. Coming to be at home within

the limits of our own condition presupposes that we grasp our own limits and possibilities. (SS 179). It is in this context that one should 'live one's life to its natural condition.' Taylor states it clearly as, "To live right is to live within limits, to eschew the presumption of superhuman spiritual aspirations." (SS 180). Each of us has to discover his or her own being. Montaigne therefore inaugurates a new kind of reflection which is intensely individual, a self-explanation the aim of which is to reach self-knowledge by coming to see through the screen of self-delusion which passion or spiritual pride has erected. In this new kind of individualism, Montaigne tried to bring the particularity of human feelings to expression. The search for identity can be seen as the search for what I essentially am (SS 181-184). Hence, Montaigne gives us another model of self-reflexivity which also has tremendous influence on our modern culture. There is a question about ourselves and our identity which cannot be fully unraveled or discovered.<sup>12</sup>

The search for identity can be seen as the search for what I essentially am. But this can no longer be sufficiently defined in terms of some universal description of human agency as such, as soul, or reason, or will. There will remain a question about me and that is why I think of myself as a self. (MT 316)

Taylor sees Montaigne as raising not just a *question*, but rather an *area* of questioning. Thus, the question can be seen as a question about the 'identity.' It is here that this question 'first arises in our culture.' We understand that there are individual differences, and each one has a 'moral significance.' Here, one's moral action constitutes the moral topography. "Our identity not only presupposes points of moral reference in relation to which we define ourselves, but also itself constitutes a central moral issue. Whether one is true to one's identity can never be a neutral issue." (MT 316).

After exploring inwardness in and through self-mastery of reason and self-exploration of sentiments Taylor turns to another significant feature of modern identity, namely, its emphasis on the affirmation of ordinary life as against an extraordinary life. Here the former can be seen specifically as *secular* (*immanent*) and the latter

as *spiritual (transcendent)*. An apparent tension between these two is a modern factor.

### 3. The Affirmation of Ordinary life at the Expense of the Transcendental

In the process of the *retrieval* of the moral sources from history, Taylor observes a shift of emphasis on the *ordinary life* in contrast to the *transcendental life*. Hence we observe an evolution of a new idea of “good” and a new ethics disregarding the earlier ethics based on religion or a transcendental absolute. The self begins to evaluate the nature not as something *outside* of it but as something *inside of the outer*.<sup>13</sup>

In fashioning an account of the identity of the modern self, Taylor continues to analyze different facets which can contribute to the formation of a *new ethics* of ordinary life.<sup>14</sup> The very emphasis on ordinary life mainly implies production and reproduction which is related to the human labour that makes things needed for life and our life as sexual beings (marriage and family). This aspect of life was considered “lower” by Plato and Aristotle. “Slaves and animals are concerned exclusively with life.” (SS 211). It is a narrow purpose; it is not a true polis (Aristotle). Theoretical contemplation was the highest ideal to be pursued. Stoics and Epicureans affirmed ordinary life. They were considered lower in grade in that society since their ordering of reality had a less level of conception than the metaphysical contemplation of Plato and Aristotle. Taylor observes:

The transition I am talking about upsets the hierarchies, which displaces the locus of the good life from some special range of higher activities and places it within life itself. The full human life is now defined in terms of labour and production, on the one hand, and marriage and family life on the other. The former one is vigorously criticized (SS 213).

In the affirmation of the ordinary life, what was previously categorized as lower is being exalted, and what was previously considered higher is convicted of presumption and vanity. There has been a *social leveling* or *social reversal* taking place. Hence, in contrast to hierarchies there came equality and benevolence.<sup>15</sup> The ethic of

honour is critiqued and values ordinary life promoted. The Marxist theory is the best known, but not the only case in point (SS 214-215).

This new ethic gradually developed its own *reformed theology*, and a rejection of the mediatory role of the religious priests and organizations, which in turn eventually enhanced the previously condemned *profane life*. Personal commitments of the believers became most important. Protestant churches rejected the special order of the priesthood in favor of the priesthood of all believers (SS 216-217). As a result, the distinction between sacred and profane slowly vanishes. Taylor uses Joseph Hall's<sup>16</sup> words: "God loveth adverbs" to refer to this shift to the ordinary (SS 242).

There came numerous analyses that exalted the ordinary for which the Bible itself provided sufficient material. The creation account of the *Book Genesis* reads: *God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.*<sup>17</sup> This is one of the foundational beliefs for all of the three Abrahamic religions (Judeo-Christian-Islamic). Christian renunciation is an affirmation of the goodness of what is being renounced (SS 219). So life is good in itself. Paul states, "It is better to marry than to burn."<sup>18</sup> The highest life can no longer be defined by an exalted kind of activity; it all turns on the spirit in which one lives whatever one lives, even the most mundane existence. All of these affirm the sanctification of the ordinary life and activities. Calvin's<sup>19</sup> call for militant activism (ordinary life) to build a new and proper order of the world does make sense here. It does not in any way mean that he was without any fault in his religious activism. The Old Testament imperative to rectify the disorder in the world is another source for the articulation of our life in the world. The New Testament focus on the poor, sick and sinners is also taken as a source for the emphasis of ordinary life. All the apostles were ordinary, illiterate fishermen. The Puritan theology of work and ordinary life provided a hospitable environment for the scientific revolution. God's role in creation assumes: 1. That working in accordance with our calling preserves ourselves and God's order. 2. It (God's role in creation) is also what protects us against the absorption in things which would wrench us away from God. Hence action takes over

reflection (SS 233) and a new theology and ethics of ordinary life (pragmatic theology) evolves.<sup>20</sup>

In making our preservation the central point of God's will for us, Locke seems to follow the Protestant affirmation of ordinary life. Locke is in fact a crucial hinge in the evolution of the ethic of ordinary life from its original theological formulation to the modern "bourgeois" naturalist one, which has both facilitated and been entrenched by the rise of capitalism. Taylor states: "His ethical outlook was plainly an endorsement of the serious, productive, pacific improver of any class and against the aristocratic, caste-conscious pursuit of honor and glory through self-display and the warrior virtues." (SS 240).

Eventually the Enlightenment of 18<sup>th</sup> Century had crystallized humanism as a distinctly secular, liberal philosophy which became a source for the rationalists known as *Deists* to come up with a set of rationalized ethics (Deism) which naturally rejected traditional theology and clericalism in favor of 'natural religion.' They also emphasized on *natural moral intuition* as against revealed religious moral norms. This intellectual movement has been influencing modern individuals to focus more on natural foundations of ethics rather than the supernatural. Hence it is appropriate to analyze such a *deistic turn* in the West.

#### **4. Deistic Turn: The Rationalized Christianity of Modernity**

The philosophy of ordinary life has significantly influenced deism since revelation which was the source of moral inspirations, is replaced by natural moral intuition. Answers were found in the mind itself. Hence Taylor argued that within a deist order, the road to salvation was no longer determined simply by a person's position in the world and by a person's actions, but also the manner in which a person lives one's life; living "worshipfully" according to Protestants or "rationally" according to Locke.<sup>21</sup> Locke's theological voluntarism<sup>22</sup> became another form of rationalized Christianity. The law of nature is normative for us, according to Locke, because it is God's command. He reconciles the two since he thinks that human beings are capable of understanding God's purposes fairly easily from the actual nature of his creation. This linking of theological voluntarism with the natural



law of human reason makes him a hedonist too.<sup>23</sup> Locke's moral theory consists of two explicit and distinct elements — a broadly rationalist theory of natural law and a hedonistic conception of moral good. Taylor cites Locke, "For humans good is pleasure, pain evil."<sup>24</sup> (SS 235).

According to Taylor, Locke's psychology could be seen as a new transposition of the theology of ordinary life, on the way to its naturalistic successor doctrine (SS 242). In this version, we come to God through reason. That is, the exercise of rationality is the way we take part in God's plan. The ethic of ordinary life, while rejecting supposedly "higher" activities, makes the crux of the moral life depend on the manner in which we live our ordinary life.<sup>25</sup> There is a 'maximizing of reasoning.' Instrumental rationality, properly conducted, is the essence of our service to God. In thus making reason central, Locke was plainly stepping outside the orthodox reformed theology; rejection of original sin is also part of it. Thus, rationality became procedural<sup>26</sup> and instrumental<sup>27</sup> which is to say essentially concerned with our practical affairs. But Locke's "reasonable" religion is not just a swallowing of religious obligation in egoism, or just a step on the road to naturalism, as it too easily can appear to critics. According to Taylor, Locke offers a new understanding of what it is to serve God where one recaptures the old terms in a new significance. (SS 243-244). "Instrumental rationality is our avenue of participation in God's will" (SS 244).

Though deism has its own momentum there is also another modern trend which proposes a *providential order* that comes out of *moral sentimentalism*. This trend has something new to add up to our modern frames of inwardness, emphasis on ordinary life and deism.

## 5. Turn to Moral Sentimentalism and Providential Order: A Natural Order

Moral sentimentalism is a theory in moral epistemology or our knowledge of moral truths, according to which our knowledge of morality is somehow grounded in moral sentiments or moral emotions. A turn to such a moral outlook can be seen as part of the new emphasis on ordinary life. Moral sentimentalism was expounded by

the third earl of Shaftesbury, Francis Hutcheson, David Hume and Adam Smith.

Being closest to the Stoics in his views, Shaftesbury<sup>28</sup> considered that the highest good for humans is to love and take joy in the whole course of the world (SS 251). His questions are more cosmological than theological (SS 253). According to Taylor Shaftesbury was unalterably opposed not only to hyper-Augustinian Christianity but also to its offshoot, Lockean Deism, and the idea that God's law is something external. For Shaftesbury, as Taylor views it, "The highest good doesn't repose in any arbitrary will, but in the nature of the cosmos itself; and our love for it is not commanded under threat of punishment, but comes *spontaneously* from our being." (SS 253). This of course entails a rejection of the externality of divine law that was emphasized by deists.

According to Shaftesbury, the good person loves the whole order of things. Instead of finding this dignity in a disengaged subject, objectifying a neutral nature, he sees it in the inherent bent of our nature towards a love of the whole as good. For Shaftesbury, language itself is "natural affection" which keeps societies together. He speaks of the "internalization or subjectivization," a transformation, of an ethic of order, harmony, and equilibrium into an ethic of benevolence (SS 254-255). Shaftesbury's language is a "language of inwardness," but one which is quite lot different from the inwardness of Plato, Descartes, and Locke.

Hutcheson<sup>29</sup> continues very much in his line, developing it into the "theory of moral sentiments" perhaps best-known from Adam Smith's book by that name.<sup>30</sup> According to Hutchenson, the world was designed so that each in seeking his or her good will also serves the good of others. The fullest human happiness, is attained when we give full reign to our moral sentiments and feelings of benevolence, which will in turn contribute mostly to the general good. "God's goodness thus consists in his bringing about our good. His beneficence is explained partly in terms of our happiness." (SS 267). This is the central tenet of the Judeo-Christian religious tradition that God loves and seeks the good of his creatures. However, Taylor observes that the modern deistic views have tendency to define good as self-contained. Though God is not wholly absent (at least they refer to

God) in their view, it seems to be *subordinate to a conception of happiness* which is defined purely in creaturely terms. (SS 267). Thus, as a purely self-contained, non-theocentric notion of good, happiness plays a central role in this outlook. In short, human happiness is central to the moral order. In the older view, “Humans are there for God, not vice versa.”(SS 268).<sup>31</sup> But deism breaks away from this Christian tradition. We also see an anti-hierarchical affirmation of ordinary life. (SS 271). These are the foundations a “rational religion” where inter-connection of mutual service and harmonious life together become major tenets. Living according to the design of nature became the very principle of living. Hierarchical and instrumental conceptions gradually give way to a sense of ‘providential order’ (SS 279-281). This new order is more connected to natural design (immanent) than to supernatural design (transcendental). And from these arises a commitment to an “immanent frame” that will be developed further in what Taylor calls the ‘expressivist’<sup>32</sup> turn.’ This was a turn away from the Lockean Deism. For Locke, cosmos could be understood in terms of interlocking purposes which can be grasped by disengaged reason. However, the expressivism of Rousseau articulated a natural source of life that could be shaped and given a real form through human expression.

## Conclusion

I have been tracing the roots of our modern sense of the self. This has involved us, even in these short remarks, in many facets of the long history Taylor’s North Atlantic civilization. The diverse models of inwardness presented by Plato, Descartes, Locke, Augustine and Montaigne are certainly building blocks for our modern self-identity. But with an expressivist turn human self became expressive of not only about the nature of our inner depths, but also see the grounds for construing this inner domain as even having *depth*. Perhaps secularist perspectives have replaced this *depth* with its own affirmations on values that are not derived from religions or deeper aspects of a particular culture. And so, the inwardness of the modern self has predominantly two facets/power: the power of disengaged rational control and the power of expressive self-articulation that is ascribed to the creative imagination. There is an ongoing tension

between the two powers. Once you disengage from your own nature and feeling, you cannot exercise the second. In other words, the first cannot be first without a proper disengagement. So, these two powers are *constitutionally* in tension. (SS 390).

This diversified moral source with two frontiers of self-exploration (Enlightenment and Romanticism) on the one hand, complicates our moral predicament, but on the other hand, enriches it. Expressivism relates to these frontiers differently than enlightenment humanism. This distinction can be seen broadly as the differences of approaches between the *rational* and the *emotional*. Procedural rational approach considers nature as an object outside of the subject where they scientifically analyze it. However, the romantic approach considers the self as a reality within the nature as a part of it. Here, self *cannot* disengage as being *engaged* to the nature.

Besides these two frontiers, there is a Theistic Variant of thinking which is most ancient, original, and still most influential around the world today. Majority of human race, still have affinity to a theistic source, as their model and moral predicament. Hence, we are products, some way or other, of these three frontiers/sources: Theistic (Christian/Religious), Rational (Disengaged), and Romantic (Expressivist) moral predicaments. Apparently the 'decline' or 'changed' face of the theistic frame has been a historical process where some of its dominant features (ritualistic expressions like church attendance and natural easiness to believe without reasoning) drastically changed and even became unimportant. Still it is hard to believe that the influence of religions, especially Christianity can be ignored or erased from the face of the earth, though a visible shift of paradigm is evident and inevitable.

#### Abbreviations of Taylor's Original Works (within the Text)

MT	Moral Topography
SA	A Secular Age
SS	Sources of the Self
TTM	Two Theories of Modernity

## Notes :

1. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 25. (Hereafter SA which will be given within the body of the text).
2. Charles Taylor, "Two Theories of Modernity," in *Alternative Modernities* Ed. Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar (London: Duke University Press, 2001). (Here After: Taylor, TTM. It will be given within the body of the text).
3. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), ix. (Hereafter: SS which will be provided within the body of the text).
4. Joshy V. Paramthottu, *The Dialectics of Religion, Politics and Ethics: A Rereading of Gandhi through the Intellectual Frames of Taylor* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2014), 64. (Hereafter: Paramthottu, *Dialectics*).
5. Charles Taylor, "Moral Topography of the Self" in *Hermeneutics and Psychological Theory* ed. Stanley Messer, Louis Sass, and Robert Woolfolk (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988) 300. (Henceforth: MT. This will be given within the body of the text).
6. Paramthottu, *Dialectics*, 65.
7. Paramthottu, *Dialectics*, 66.
8. Taylor deliberately uses 'thought' in place of 'reason' because he wants to show the flow of the domain of 'thought.'
9. Taylor takes this from Chrysippus expression *proairesis*.
10. Paramthottu, *Dialectics*, 68
11. Paramthottu, *Dialectics*, 72-73.
12. Paramthottu, *Dialectics*, 75-76.
13. Taylor has more explanation on the same theme in his article on *Embodied Agency*.
14. Charles Taylor, "Reply to Commentators," in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* vol LIV(1994): 203.
15. Paramthottu, *Dialectics*, 79.

16. Joseph Hall (1574 -1656) was an English bishop, satirist and moralist. His contemporaries knew him as a devotional writer, and a high-profile controversialist of the early 1640s.
17. Gen. 1: 31 (NRSV).
18. 1 Cor. 7: 9 (NRSV).
19. John Calvin (1509-1564) was an influential French theologian and pastor during the Protestant Reformation. He was a principal figure in the development of the system of Christian theology later called Calvinism. Originally trained as a humanist lawyer, he broke from the Roman Catholic Church around 1530. Taylor analyzes his concept of *militant activism* to emphasize the new interest in *ordinary life*.
20. Paramthottu, *Dialectics*, 81.
21. [wikipedia.org/wiki/Sources\\_of\\_the\\_Self](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Sources_of_the_Self), accessed on 25.06.2014.
22. The “voluntarism-intellectualism” debate in natural law theory predates Locke. Briefly, the voluntarist declares that right and wrong are determined by God’s will and that we are obliged to obey the will of God simply because it is the will of God. Unless these positions are maintained, the voluntarist argues, God becomes superfluous to morality since both the content and the binding force of morality can be explained without reference to God. The intellectualist replies that this understanding makes morality arbitrary and fails to explain why we have an obligation to obey God. (“Locke’s Political Philosophy,” in *Stanford Encyclopedia*, accessed November 2, 2012, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke-political/>).
23. Ethical hedonism is the idea that all people have the right to do everything in their power to achieve the greatest amount of pleasure possible to them. It is also the idea that every person’s pleasure should far surpass their amount of pain.
24. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), Book 2. 28. 5.
25. Paramthottu, *Dialectics*, 82.
26. Procedural Rationality: It is opposite to what is known as “substantive rationality” where reason is considered to have a substantive unity.

27. Instrumental Rationality: In social and critical theory, instrumental reasoning is often seen as a specific form of rationality fusing on the most efficient or cost-effective means to achieve a specific end, but not in itself reflecting on the value of that end.
28. Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671 -1713), and exerted an enormous influence throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries on British and European discussions of morality, aesthetics, and religion. His philosophy combined a powerfully teleological approach, according to which all things are part of a harmonious cosmic order, with sharp observations of human nature. He is often credited with originating the moral sense theory, although his own views of virtue are a mixture of rationalism and sentimentalism. ("Shaftesbury," in Stananford.edu, accessed June 21, 2011, [http:// plato.stanford.edu/entries/shaftesbury/](http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/shaftesbury/)).
29. Francis Hutcheson (1694 – 1746) was a philosopher born in Ireland to a family of Scottish Presbyterians who became one of the founding fathers of the Scottish Enlightenment.
30. Paramthottu, *Dialectics*, 85.
31. Taylor states that the traditional catechism of the catholic: Human being are created "to serve and to love God."
32. For Taylor expressivism has its roots in self-expression and is linked to subjectivity by making or bringing about. Hence it embraces the two fold meaning of expression as a medium or an outward form conveying something that precedes independently of the expression and as something that it brought into being in and by expression itself. In a way Taylor returns to expressive self-realization in Romanticism.