The Impacts of Modernity upon Religiosity:
A Critical Study of Charles Taylor

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The relationship between modernity and religiosity has been in the center of many scholarly debates. Among others, Charles Taylor presents in his works a general picture of the elements that shape the secular age. He starts with the question why people used to be faithful, while they are not easily so in our age. To answer, he explores the past five centuries in the West and coins some terms to explain what happened. Among these terms, the "conditions of belief" is a key concept to explain the current situation. This article discusses four impacts that, according to Taylor, modernity had on religion. Additionally, it tries to shed some light on certain aspects of Taylor's ideas and critically analyze them. Finally, it concludes that although Taylor's work helps us better understand our age and the modern situation of faith, it needs to be modified and completed.

Keywords: modernity, Charles Taylor, religiosity, conditions of belief, secular age.

Introduction

In his work *Nothing to be Frightened of*, Julian Barnes begins the memoir by expressing a nowadays familiar condition regarding faith: "I don't believe in God, but I miss Him" (Barnes 2009, 1). The same statement is, more or less, used by a considerable fraction of people in

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modern societies; a kind of statement that is not as certain as pre-modern statements, a statement that conveys a sort of doubt, silence, or even denial. What is the story of faith in the modern era? What are the impacts of modernity upon religiosity? Many scholars have tried to address these questions. Charles Taylor is one of the key thinkers in this regard.

Taylor's Question

Taylor begins his project with a simple question:

> Why was it virtually impossible not to believe in God in, say, 1500 in our Western society, while in 2000 many of us find this not only easy, but even inescapable? (Taylor 2007, 25)

To answer this question, he starts a long journey in history. He explores various theological, philosophical, and social movements in the past five centuries to discover the pieces that have shaped our identity today: Idealism, Deism, Reformation, Enlightenment, and Romanticism are, according to Taylor, the most important events that have affected our identity. To explain this gradual shift, he coins some new terms, one of which is "conditions of belief."

Conditions of Belief

To understand this term, one needs to consider the philosophical tradition to which Taylor belongs. Taylor can be seen as a bridge between analytical and continental philosophy. He is influenced by Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Merleau-Ponty, among others, and he also refers once in a while to philosophers like Foucault.[1] A common idea among these thinkers about belief is that belief does not appear in

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1. For example, Taylor uses the Foucauldian term "unthought" to explain the Secularization theory (Taylor 2007, 427-36). The term "unthough" can be introduced shortly as "the given empirical and historical truths about who we are" (Gutting 2014).

a vacuum and always has a background[1] and context; for example, in his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein emphasizes the concept of picture as a background that shapes our understanding: "A picture held us captive. And we couldn't get outside it, for it lay in our language, and language seemed only to repeat it to us inexorably" (Wittgenstein 2009, 53).[2]

Taylor also believes that people think, live, and understand in a special image that they receive from society, which he calls "social imaginary":

> By social imaginary, I mean something much broader and deeper than the intellectual schemes people may entertain when they think about social reality in a disengaged mode. I am thinking, rather, of the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, notions and images that underlie these expectations. (Taylor 2004, 23)

Taylor's social imaginary also refers to the idea that belief and thinking always occur in a context. Hence, if we want to answer the question about faith in 1500 CE and in 2000 CE, we need to pay enough attention to the background of these two eras. And without considering these two backgrounds, we will not be able to understand the difference.

The social imaginary has been affected by many events during the past five centuries. Taylor tries to explore different social movements,

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1. "This emerges as soon as we take account of the fact that all beliefs are held within a context or framework of the taken-for-granted, which usually remains tacit, and may even be as yet unacknowledged by the agent, because never formulated. This is what philosophers, influenced by Wittgenstein, Heidegger or Polanyi, have called the 'background'" (Taylor 2007, 13).
2. In 2015, Taylor and Hubert Dreyfus published a book on Epistemology titled *Retrieving Realism.* The first chapter of the book was titled "A Picture Held Us Captive" after this idea of Wittgenstein (Dreyfus and Taylor 2015, 1-26).

theological and philosophical schools, and important phenomena that had impacts on the social imaginary; he studies Reformation, Deism, Nominalism, Enlightenment, Romanticism, Disenchantment, and so forth to show the factors that paved the way for a shift in the social imaginary.

He emphasizes that he does not speak about a theory that is replaced by another but about "how our sense of things, our cosmic imaginary, in other words, our whole background understanding and feel of the world has been transformed" (Taylor 2007, 325).

This transformation in the social imaginary has led to a change in the conditions of belief, where we find some criteria for plausibility and implausibility of the beliefs. The conditions of belief refer to the cognitional status of humans, which is affected by the social imaginary, and since our social imaginary has changed, our conditions of belief also have transformed.

Taylor's Answer

In short, the answer to the first question is that since our conditions of belief have changed, some ideas and beliefs which were believable in the past are not very persuasive nowadays. This change is not limited to the content of beliefs but also to the process of belief; as one of the commentators of Taylor has said, nowadays "we don't believe instead of doubting; we believe while doubting" (Smith 2014, 4).

This shift in the conditions of belief is the main reason why the belief in God in 1500 CE was very predominant and seemed very natural, while in 2000 CE people find it easy (or even inescapable) to abandon it.

> Now I believe that an examination of this age as secular is worth taking up in a third sense, closely related to the second, and not without connection to the first. This would focus on the conditions of belief. The shift to secularity in this sense consists, among other things, of a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be

one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace. (Taylor 2007, 2-3)

The change in the conditions of belief does not necessarily entail unbelief, because it is obvious that there are still many believers in the secular age. However, the difference usually is not what a person believes but how she believes is the main question. In other words, the primary distinction is not the subject and content of belief but the way one believes a creed (Smith 2014, 23). So, we need to pay attention to both the content and the process of belief in the modern context.

The Impacts of Modernity upon Religiosity

The shift in the social imaginary and then in the conditions of belief have had deep impacts on religious beliefs and practices and generally on what is called religiosity. In this part, I will discuss some of these impacts.

1. An Option among Others

After the rise and fall of many social, theological, and philosophical movements and the advent of scientific discoveries that led to different understanding of the reality, the public sphere was witnessing various prescriptions for humanity. For example, while the Catholic Church emphasized the hierarchy and the authority of the Pope, the Reformation Church denied such authority (Taylor 2007, 61). In contrast to the Enlightenment that called humanity to rely on reason, be mature, and "dare to know" (Kant 2000, 51-57), Romanticism called for following the inner voice and recognizing the feelings as a source of knowledge (Taylor 1989, 368-69).

New ideas about the universe, humans, knowledge, the ideal way of life, and so forth emerged that were different from previously predominant religious ideas. In the new explanations, the universe was not necessarily a creature of God. The same was true about humans:

humans were no longer "porous selves" that could be affected by external beings and powers but "buffered selves"; a kind of self that is independent and resistant against the outside (Taylor 2007, 37-39).

The new explanations become more acceptable by new philosophical arguments and scientific discoveries. Hence, we arrive at a stage where faith and religious explanations are not the only way of thinking and understanding but one among the others and, therefore, an option among other options. This is what Taylor explains as secularity in the third sense:

> [T]he change I want to define and trace is one which takes us from a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others. I may find it inconceivable that I would abandon my faith, but there are others, including possibly some very close to me, whose way of living I cannot in all honesty just dismiss as depraved, or blind, or unworthy, who have no faith (at least not in God, or the transcendent). Belief in God is no longer axiomatic. There are alternatives. (Taylor 2007, 3)

This change is one of the main impacts of modernity upon religiosity, and the secularity in the third sense is one of the substantial contributions of Taylor to scholarship. This new sense can explain our current circumstances; circumstances in society that leads to

> a pluralist world, in which many forms of belief and unbelief jostle, and hence fragilize each other. It is a world in which belief has lost many of the social matrices which made it seem "obvious" and unchallengeable. Not all, of course; there are still milieux in which it is the "default" solution: unless you have powerful intuitions to the contrary, it will seem to you that you ought to go along. But then we also have milieux in which unbelief is close to being the default solution (including important parts of the academy). So over-all fragilization has increased. (Taylor 2007, 531)

The fact that, in a pluralistic world, the belief in God is not axiomatic and belief and unbelief mutually fragilize each other depicts the current

situation in the Latin Christendom, where, in each aspect of personal or public life, there is a contest. In this circumstance, each person has the freedom to choose the option that she thinks fits better to her beliefs and needs. There is no single answer to all questions but plenty of possible answers to one single problem. This contest continues and each side tries to overcome the other; the contest shows that we are witnessing a post-secular era, where belief and un-belief can be present in public. Unlike the previous age, in which the secularization theory emerged, religion can be seen as an authentic option—not a superstition or secondary phenomenon. In contrary to the previous theory that predicted the decline of religion, the idea of Taylor makes room for religion and presents new possibilities for a religious understanding of the world.

2. Anthropocentric Interpretations of Religion

The great emphasis on humanity—whether on human emotions and feelings or on the intellect and reason—has led to new interpretations of religion. These new interpretations try to understand religion from a human point of view and to be concerned with the new social imaginary and conditions of belief.

Taking this concern into consideration, while religious dogmas, creeds, and obligations have the same appearance, their meanings have changed in the new interpretations. This shift in the meaning is one of the important impacts of modernity upon religiosity. In what follows, I will mention some of these changes.

God

The common notion of God in the pre-modern era as a king that rules the whole world and everyone must follow His orders gradually changed through the ages. This change took place through the plentiful criticisms of religious beliefs and the unhelpful apologetics delivered by the Church, which, instead of defending the God of religion, tried to

defend God as a general creator—the idea that, Taylor thinks, paved the way for Deism (Taylor 2007, 225).

However, in the new notion, God is not a king. There is a tendency to portray Him as an impersonal being that is not active and does not intervene in the world:

> What Deism in its various forms wanted to reject was seeing God as an agent intervening in history. He could be agent qua original Architect of the universe, but not as the author of myriad particular interventions, "miraculous" or not, which were the stuff of popular piety and orthodox religion. (Taylor 2007, 275)

Another aspect of God that has changed is His providence. Unlike the pre-modern era, humans now know that the goal of creation is to flourish the capacities of human beings and, thanks to the power of reason, humans now can realize the true way of life, the way in which their capacities can be activated (Taylor 2007, 222). Taking this shift into consideration, the plan of God for creation can be understood and executed through human reason; therefore, humans are not in need of other sources to discover the divine providence.

In the anthropocentric interpretation, God is not capable of anger. God is pure love and does not have any wrath; hence the decline of the belief in the Hell (Taylor 2007, 649-50). This image is basically different from the picture that one can find in religious texts. They are many attributes of God that are mentioned in the sacred scriptures of Abrahamic religions, and although love is one of them, there are such divine attributes as anger, punishment, commanding, and so forth. The anthropocentric interpretation of God takes a selective approach toward these attributes, and the criterion for this selection is human preference.

Worship

In all Abrahamic religions, worship has an important place. Believers ought to worship God. Since the notion of God has changed, the position of worship has shifted too. While in the pre-modern

understanding of religion, worship was an essential part of religion and people would gather in religious centers to worship God, the anthropocentric interpretation of religion does not put much emphasis on worship, and it loses its significance: "Moreover, there didn't seem to be an essential place for the worship of God, other than through the cultivation of reason and constancy" (Taylor 2007, 117). This shows that worship became a secondary issue that is a means to achieve the cultivation of human reason, and since now humans know the true way of life, it is possible that some people see worship as "unnecessary and irrelevant" (Taylor 2007, 117).

Sin

Taylor believes that one of the main concepts that have been transformed is sin, which is a central concept in all Abrahamic religions. In the past, sin meant disobedience against the command of the almighty God. But this concept was gently replaced by the concept of illness, and "[w]hat was formerly sin is often now seen as sickness" (Taylor 2007, 117, 618). In other words, what in the religious outlook was a sin (disobedience) turns into sickness through the new therapeutic outlook. While the first outlook emphasizes the role of the human and her freedom and responsibility, the second insists on the innocence and sickness of people. Hence, in the second view, sinful humans do not deserve punishment but just need care, because they did not commit sin—they simply became ill.

Problem of Evil

The problem of evil has been an important topic of philosophical and theological debates for centuries. It has relied on a conflict between believing in God that is all-knowing, all-merciful, and all-powerful, on the one hand, and observing so many disasters and evil in the world, on the other. These two sides raise the question of the possibility of having such a God and such evils in the same world.

To address this question, there are two approaches: the pre-modern approach, which tries to emphasize the role of unknown factors, such as the hereafter, or the divine wisdom, which is also beyond our comprehension. The second approach which is affected by modernity is what Taylor describes in the following passage:

> Once we claim to understand the universe, and how it works; once we even try to explain how it works by invoking its being created for our benefit, then this explanation is open to clear challenge: we know how things go, and we know why they were set up, and we can judge whether the first meets the purpose defined in the second. In Lisbon 1755, it seems clearly not to have. (Taylor 2007, 306)

This second approach encounters the problem from a point of view in which it is given that humans have the privilege to understand the whole problem and sit in the position of the judge and announce that the purpose of the creation of the world is not compatible with evil. This anthropocentric shift changes the content of the problem, although it seems that it is the same problem.

3. Reviving the Original Message of Religion

Taylor tries to have a just evaluation of modernity. While he is against some of the central results of modernity, such as Exclusive Humanism, he acknowledges some positive aspects for modernity—the aspects that he thinks paved the way for reviving some original messages of the Gospels.

> The view I'd like to defend, if I can put it in a nutshell, is that in modern, secularist culture there are mingled together both authentic developments of the gospel, of an incarnational mode of life, and also a closing off to God that negates the gospel. The notion is that modern culture, in breaking with the structures and beliefs of Christendom, also carried certain facets of Christian life further than they ever were taken or could have been taken within Christendom. In relation to the earlier forms of Christian culture, we have to face the humbling realization that the breakout was a necessary condition of the development. (Taylor 1999, 16)

This reviving is one of the helpful impacts of modernity upon religiosity. To be specific, Taylor gives an example:

> For instance, modern liberal political culture is characterized by an affirmation of universal human rights—to life, freedom, citizenship, self-realization—which are seen as radically unconditional; that is, they are not dependent on such things as gender, cultural belonging, civilizational development, or religious allegiance, which always limited them in the past. As long as we were living within the terms of Christendom—that is, of a civilization where the structures, institutions, and culture were all supposed to reflect the Christian nature of the society (even in the nondenominational form in which this was understood in the early United States)—we could never have attained this radical unconditionality. It is difficult for a "Christian" society, in this sense, to accept full equality of rights for atheists, for people of a quite alien religion, or for those who violate what seems to be the Christian moral code (e.g., homosexuals). (Taylor 1999, 16-17)

The new possibilities for original religious teachings to be followed in society are one of the impacts of modernity that should not be ignored. The idea of equality and justice has always been a concern for humanity, and even though our situation nowadays is far from being ideal, it has improved in comparison to the past.

4. Independence of Spirituality from Religion

Spirituality is a deep-seated need acknowledged by most humans. Taylor believes that "This often springs from a profound dissatisfaction with a life encased entirely in the immanent order" (Taylor 2007, 506). This appeal has always been traditionally fulfilled by religions, but in the late modern era, we observe new sources for spirituality—sources that are not necessarily dependent on religions.

New spirituality, Taylor thinks, is against institutionalized religion, and the reason for abandoning religion is that since we are living in the age of authenticity, it is not easy for modern people to follow an outsider

authority (Taylor 2007, 508). To understand the significance of authenticity, one needs to consider its roots in the previous social and philosophical movements, especially Enlightenment and Romanticism, both of which invite humanity to rely on human capacities and depend upon inner authority (reason or feelings) rather than outsider authority. This characteristic is much highlighted in the age of authenticity, and modern people try to live accordingly. Hence, they begin a personal quest for spirituality "defined by a kind of autonomous exploration, which is opposed to a simple surrender to authority" (Taylor 2007, 509).

The personal exploration does not necessarily entail the individuality of the new spirituality. Taylor thinks that although the new spirituality starts from an individual point, it can end up in traditional religions and in participating in a community (Taylor 2007, 509).

Critical Evaluation

The momentous project of Taylor has explained some aspects of modern circumstances. It benefits from new concepts and terms to better understand this multi-facet phenomenon. However, one can see some problematic points in his theory. In this part, I will discuss some of these points. To do so, I will try to evaluate the consistency of his theory and its coherence, and explore some counterexamples and certain aspects of the modern world that have been neglected in it.

Which Religion?

If we look back, Taylor points out some impacts of modernity upon religion. One can pose a simple question here: which religion does Taylor mean when he is analyzing the impacts of modernity? Taylor did not neglect to answer this question; he clearly states that his project tries to study the "Latin Christendom" (Taylor 2007, 15). Therefore, "religion" is Christianity in Western Europe and North America during the past five centuries.

However, this answer does not seem to be enough, because the inhabitants of Latin Christendom are not the same; there are different situations in North America and Western Europe, and one cannot unify all the diversity (Casanova 2010, 270-71). Latin Christendom consists of Catholicism and Protestantism, and each one of them has its own characteristics. While Protestantism—and generally Reformation—is one of the origins of modernity, the Catholic Church was the target of the modern movements and their criticisms. Considering this difference, one cannot put both the Catholic Church and the Protestant Church in the same category in encountering modernity.

Moreover, in each denomination, there are various kinds of thought. The liberal and orthodox are two poles, and there is a spectrum of different ways of thinking and interpreting religion between them, each of which has its own encounter with modernity. So, it is not easy to present a meta-narrative about religion in the Latin Christendom in the past five centuries.

Furthermore, an important point to be considered is that the question of the impacts of modernity has many variables, and it is not only religion that shapes the encounter with modernity but also society, culture, economy, and so forth. And it is not right to raise one factor and neglect the rest.

David Martin has discussed this problem and stated that secularization is an outcome of the encounter of the culture of each society with the religious outlook of that society, and since each society has its own culture and its own religious outlook, it is not feasible to have a general secularization theory for all (Martin 2005, 123-40). Considering his point, each society has its own circumstance (culture and religion), and the outcome of the encounter of the religion with the

public culture is not necessarily the same in all societies; therefore, it is not possible to have a meta-narrative about secularization.

Belief/Unbelief Dichotomy

The main question of Taylor in his project is why it was "virtually impossible not to believe in God in, say, 1500 in our Western society, while in 2000 many of us find this not only easy, but even inescapable" (Taylor 2007, 25). This question is based on a dichotomy of believer/non-believer, and I think this is not as accurate as it may seem.

If we consider the anthropocentric interpretations of religion as one of the impacts of modernity upon religiosity, which was discussed earlier, then we can see that there are various new interpretations of religious teachings. Some of the central concepts of religion have been re-interpreted in accordance with the new understanding of humanity—the modern social imaginary; for example, God, worship, sin, and the problem of evil are among many concepts that have changed. This change did not affect the appearance of these concepts, and people still believe in "God," but their contents have extremely changed: God in the pre-modern era is not the same as God nowadays. A scholar like Butler can observe the gradual transformation of a given creed through the ages and realize that a certain religious notion like God is not the same in the pre-modern and modern eras (Butler 2010, 202-4).

Another point that should be taken into the account is the significant concept of conditions of belief. As Taylor put it, the conditions of beliefs—the standards of acceptance or rejection, the criteria of the plausibility or implausibility of beliefs—have changed since our social imaginary has been shifted. This explains the difference between the pre-modern and modern eras regarding the question of faith. The transformation in the conditions of belief means that we are living in a different social imaginary and we have a dissimilar way of acceptance or rejection of a belief. In other words, the change in the conditions of

belief leads to the change in the whole process of belief, which makes it difficult to compare pre-modern beliefs to modern ones.

In short, (1) the change in the contents of belief and (2) the change in the conditions of believers make the dichotomy ineffective, because not only the contents of belief are not the same but the believers are not similar either. Therefore, the comparison between these two eras, based on this dichotomy, is not successful.

Religious Fundamentalism

One of the influential religious movements in the modern age is Fundamentalism. "Fundamentalism" is a relatively new term that was first used for Evangelicals in the U.S. and, later on, its usage expanded to other religions as well (Frey 2007, 35). Today, the term is used for Christians, Jewish, Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus who seem to have certain characteristics. Fundamentalism—or fundamentalisms— usually emphasizes religious teachings and calls for a return to the golden religious past. They give priority to "divine knowledge" over "human knowledge." These movements normally do not refuse to use violence to reach their goals.

The important point here is that Fundamentalism is a modern phenomenon; it is a reaction to the radical secularization that took place during the modern age (Munson 2006, 255). Fundamentalism understands modernity as a crucial hazard for religion and, therefore, tries to fight modernity and its implications, worldview, and plans.

Fundamentalism appears in the modern societies, as it was mentioned earlier; the term itself was coined in the US., and nowadays one can easily find religious fundamentalists in Europe and other developed countries. If we accept this situation, then we need to look back to the ideas of Taylor.

Surprisingly, religious Fundamentalism is missing in Taylor's analysis, whereas it is such an important part of religiosity in modern times that he is not justified in ignoring it.[1] Fundamentalists are found in all great religions and have their own ideologies, goals, and plans; they understand modernity as a trackless way which should be replaced by divine guidance. Fundamentalism is one of the impacts of modernity upon religiosity, but it is not considered in Taylor's project. None of the impacts that have been mentioned for modernity emerged among Fundamentalists: they do not consider faith as an option among others, they do not offer anthropocentric interpretations about religion, and they do not believe in the independence of spirituality from religion. The absence of Fundamentalism in Taylor's work makes his image of modern religiosity incomprehensible.

Reviving the Original Message of Religion

For Taylor, one of the positive impacts of modernity upon religiosity is reviving some of the original teachings of Christianity:

> [I]n modern, secularist culture there are mingled together both authentic developments of the gospel, of an incarnational mode of life, and also a closing off to God that negates the gospel. The notion is that modern culture, in breaking with the structures and beliefs of Christendom, also carried certain facets of Christian life further than they ever were taken or could have been taken within Christendom. (Taylor 1999, 16)

He takes social justice—a major goal according to Christian teachings—as an example to show how modern liberal political culture, based on the idea of universal human rights, could improve the situation of humanity in terms of unconditional justice—a kind of situation which was unachievable without taking distance from Christendom (Taylor 1999, 16-17).

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1. Especially considering the violent operations executed all over the world today.

Taylor's recognition of the positive aspects of modernity seems very fair and admirable at first glance, but is it defendable in a closer look?

Taylor does not give any criteria for what makes a teaching authentic or unauthentic. If one claims that a certain dogma or creed is central to a given religion, she should present her justification for such classification. To name a teaching original, we need a reason, and that reason cannot be our taste or personal preference. Taylor does not explain his criteria for such classification, and, as long as the criteria are not explained, any religious teaching can be introduced as central, which is not permissible according to hermeneutical principles.

Spirituality or Religion?

One can easily observe various types of new spiritual movements. These numerous spiritualties and their new approaches brought thinkers like Taylor to claim the independence of spirituality from religion as one of the impacts of modernity.

Although this claim seems very obvious, it needs more clarification. What is spirituality? There is no consensus on the definition of spirituality. Following some of the practitioners of spirituality, Taylor sketches spirituality as what is in contrast to "institutional religion" (Taylor 2007, 508). On the other hand, some of the scholars tend to present another definition: "[S]pirituality is the living reality of religion as experienced by an adherent of the tradition" (Nelson 2009, 8).

The idea of the independence of spirituality from religion needs to be based on a theoretical base, and we need definitions to distinguish religion from spirituality, and such theoretical base does not seem to have been offered. Taylor's concept of spirituality was already mentioned; with regard to religion he says:

> I insist on this point because in a way this whole book is an attempt to study the fate in the modern West of religious faith in a strong sense. This strong sense I define, to repeat, by a double criterion: the belief in transcendent reality, on one hand, and the connected aspiration to a transformation which goes beyond ordinary human flourishing on the other. (Taylor 2007, 510)

If we take Taylor's definitions of religion and spirituality, we can say that while Taylor introduced spirituality as against institutional religion, nowadays even some spiritual movements have an institutional order; therefore, mere "institution" cannot be the difference.

On the other hand, Taylor's definition of religion can easily apply to all spiritualities, because they are concerned with both transcendent and transformative aspects; therefore, this criterion is not effective either. Taking this difficulty into consideration, one can see that the needed theoretical basis for distinguishing the religion and spirituality is not provided, and hence the claim of independence is not defendable.

Conclusion

To conclude, Taylor is one of the most important thinkers that discussed the question of religion and modernity. His analysis, which opens a new horizon for understanding the question, is very valuable. He emphasizes the role of the social imaginary and, through that, the conditions of belief. His answer to the main question—i.e., why people were faithful in 1500 CE while they are not so in 2000 CE—is the change in the conditions of belief.

This change led to other changes that were called in this paper "impacts" of modernity upon religiosity: "an option among others," "anthropocentric interpretation of religion," "reviving the original message of religion," and "independence of spirituality from religion,"

Taylor's study is a great step toward understanding ourselves and the situation of religion in the modern age. However, it can be criticized

from different perspectives: the metanarrative of religion, the ineffective dichotomy of belief/unbelief, the absence of religious Fundamentalism in his analysis, and the lack of any criteria for discerning authentic religious teachings and for distinguishing spirituality from religion.

In short, although Taylor's account is capable of explaining some of the central phenomena in the modern age, it needs to be modified and also completed by more information. This improvement can make the theory more capable of explaining the current situation.

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