

# Charles Taylor and a Theological Response to the Secularization of Chilean Society

by

Nemo Castelli, S.J.

Professors: Brian Robinette & Dominic Doyle

S.T.L. Degree Thesis

May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020

To the Chilean youth,  
who long for a more humane and fulfilling way of life.

## **Acknowledgements**

To the Lord, who has called me to the Minimum Society that bears His name.

To the Society of Jesus in the United States, which has welcomed me in these turbulent times  
and has encouraged me to study with human depth.

To the STM,  
for the dedication of its team so that we can form ourselves attentive to the Signs of the Times.

To Juan Cristóbal García Huidobro, S.J., Jesuit companion and friend  
with whom we share these searches at the current crossroads of history.

To Professors Brian Robinette and Dominique Doyle,  
without whose help, questions and rigor I would not have been able to carry out this research.

To the young people who serve in Techo-Chile and Fundación Vivienda  
and to the social leaders of the Chilean slums,  
whose friendship and trust have nailed questions to my soul.

## Contents

Acknowledgements .....	2
Contents .....	3
Introduction and methodology .....	4
Using the glasses from Charles Taylor's toolbox .....	11
1. The revolution of authenticity: cultural context for the search for meaning and fullness .....	14
2. The silence that produces blindness: no articulations for an authentic subject .....	21
2.1 The moral and epistemological reasons for a modern spell .....	24
3. Moral structure hermeneutics: learning to speak in order to see from one's identity .....	30
3.1 There is no possibility of human life outside the frameworks .....	30
3.2 The narrative identity of the human subject .....	37
3.3 Authentic freedom .....	42
3.4 Conceptual notions about the good .....	44
4. Towards a new ethical realism to come out of the bottle: appellative realism .....	47
5. Exit towards an inhabited space for recognition. The authentic identity between what is received and what is constructed .....	57
6. Fullness as an exit towards transcendence? .....	65
6.1 Blindness for the triple transcendence that transforms within an immanent frame .....	73
Conclusions: instructions and music to fly .....	83
The practical but not metaphysical primacy of human life .....	86
Eschatological collapse .....	90
...a letter to Diogneto .....	96
Bibliography .....	100
Notes .....	105

And it happened that while they were conversing and debating,  
Jesus himself drew near and walked with them,  
but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.  
(Luke 24: 15-16)

## **Introduction and methodology**

A major cultural transformation process is taking place in Chile. Along with the process of modern and neoliberal reforms of recent decades its society has moved from a traditional community to a modern society. Chile used to be a Catholic, conservative, hierarchical and homogeneous community, cohesive by close forms of sociability such as the neighborhood, labor unions, political parties and the Church. In the last decades this community has transitioned to a modern society in the following ways: by promoting the individual freedom and autonomy of its members; by promising and extending material prosperity transversally through consumption; by and expanding a rights regime; by legitimizing the public sphere as a supposed neutral meeting place for the plurality of life forms and convictions; and by developing a democratic political system linked mainly by exchange interactions, which finds its best expression in the universal free vote and the market.

Despite the fact that the Chilean turn towards neoliberalism is presented only as a change in the political and economic model, this turn represents an ideal of civilization around certain values that would configure the human being and his/her *social imaginary*<sup>1</sup>: the dissolution of all forms of social solidarity in favor of individual effort, private property, technical and economic reduction of political problems, personal responsibility, family values and socialization through consumption.. This paradigm maintains that human well-being can best be expanded by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, small State, minimum social

security provision and free trade. Its core values would be summarized in the defense of freedom and human dignity.

Like in any neoliberal modernization process, Chilean society has experienced the traits of ambivalence related to it. One of those aspects that attract attention has to do with the difference between the perception of satisfaction regarding the personal sphere and the public sphere. Chileans say they experience a feeling of happiness and fulfillment when it comes to their personal, intimate and family life, to the extent that surveys show that more than 70% of those who live in Chile are happy with their personal life<sup>2</sup>. But at the same time they declare with the same emphasis that they are upset with the institutions, they feel that public life is not worthwhile and that it is a source of bitterness and discomfort.

A closer examination of these survey data reveals a deeper ambivalence from the point of view of subjectivity, showing that the Chilean culture have been incubating a silent crisis during decades. Notwithstanding, the feeling of fullness regarding personal life, there is an individual and cultural malaise among young people. On one hand, the meritocratic culture that modernizing processes offer and that is promoted in Chile –that is, the idea that people have the right to perceive resources and opportunities for the development of their lives according to their effort– has not yet reached to the entire population. Despite the fact that the cohort of Chileans between 19 and 29 years of age is more equal than the older ones, Chile remains a segregated and structurally unequal country<sup>3</sup>. Public and private institutions are far below what is needed from them and create the feeling of social deception. Moreover, in the last decade, all the major national institutions have been affected by different forms of corruption creating a perception of power abuse, mistrust in the public sphere and widespread impunity<sup>4</sup>. On the other hand, there is dissatisfaction with excessive consumerism, greed, individualism, competitiveness, the relentless

pursuit of success, the predominance of commercial relationships and the disappearance of forms of community socialization that offered deeper human connections and horizons of significance .

These shifts, among other factors, are producing a deep emptiness and a lack of meaning and hope among young people. It is striking that the same country that according to the latest UNDP<sup>5</sup> research can offer the highest levels of human development opportunities in Latin America (measured through the expectation of education, life and participation in national income) is the one that, since October 2019, has witnessed one of the largest social protests after the dictatorship<sup>6</sup>, one that is led by young people who demand a more dignified meaningful life. It is also shocking that Chile leads the sustained increase in the suicide rate among young people, who today, perhaps more than ever, yearn for a more fulfilling and humanizing way of life<sup>7</sup>.

What are the fundamental features of our historical situation that they can shed some light upon this deeply ambivalent, and often contradictory, dynamic? What is operating behind the scene so that we can understand the current crossroads? Does the Christian faith tradition have something to say and propose to this current way of interpreting and living human history? Young Chileans continue seeking some form of transcendence in their lives, but often do not feel understood or inspired by Christianity. Today fewer than 38% of Chilean youth recognize themselves as part of the Catholic Church and 41% as not part of any religion at all<sup>8</sup>. The Chilean youth affirms that they experience the divorce between faith and science that occurs in university circles and the negative judgment against those who profess and practice a religion in those environments. Moreover, they understand faith as an individual act and disengaged from an ecclesial institution which they distrust. They perceive it and its hierarchy centered on power, offering a message that excludes and imposes a discriminating moral that makes no sense to

them, that is not open to changes, and whose power, conscious and sexual abuses, crimes and cover-ups on behalf of the clergy are unacceptable and shameful<sup>9</sup>.

However, these approaches do not quite explain the situation of the Christian faith among young Chileans, especially if one considers that the decline in Catholicism has been taking place slowly in Chile since the 1960s<sup>10</sup>. Even during the late 1970s and the 1980s, when the Chilean Catholic Church enjoyed very high degree of prestige before civil society, the figures indicate that the number of people who identified with the Catholic Church gradually decreased.

The Chilean Catholic Church has a long tradition of commitment to justice, human dignity, and the courageous defense of Human Rights and the construction of democracy. Social Catholics were the ones who promoted labor unions to defend and promote the lives of workers since the end of the 19th century. Chilean social Catholics started real estate corporations to build houses for those who were excluded from the cities when the Ministry of Housing did not exist (founded in 1965) or those who founded primary educational institutions for the children of the peasants who came to the cities. In the same spirit, the Catholic hierarchy offered ecclesial land in the 1960s to initiate Agrarian Reform as a sign that a New Earth and a New Heaven was possible. And in the darkest moments in the history of Chile, the Catholic Church was a refuge for the oppressed and the voice of the voiceless, literally giving its life for the people of Chile and for Jesus alive among the poorest<sup>11</sup>.

In the decades of 1970-80s “the Catholic Church became a “Samaritan Church” willing to give a hand to all those who were left wounded in the way by the military[-civic] dictatorship<sup>12</sup>. [It] assumed as its mission the [institutional] defense of the human rights of the people who were being persecuted by the State”<sup>13</sup>, with the express authorization and support of Pope Paul VI. Furthermore, with great apostolic creativity and courage, and with high levels of



participation in its communities, the Church created different institutions to serve the victims of political violence and poverty. With international support it founded savings cooperatives, banks with a social focus, schools and technical training centers, social housing factories, support institutions for migrants and peasants, and a center for the defense and promotion of human rights<sup>14</sup>. With this institutional backing it organized through its parishes a “strong network of solidarity among the urban and rural poor”<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, the Chilean bishops had a strong influence in creating the conditions of possibility for the return of democracy<sup>16</sup>. “Thus, the Church entered into the 1990s as one of the most respected and trustworthy institutions in Chile”<sup>17</sup>; nevertheless, it was not aware of the deep cultural change that was being incubated through neoliberal modernizing processes.

As Chile inaugurated a new democratic cycle, expanded access to higher education, and consumption operated as a device for socialization, there was a big “change in the leadership of the Church [orchestrated from] the Vatican. Conservative minded bishops replaced progressive bishops in almost all the dioceses. Once democracy came back, these bishops considered that”<sup>18</sup> it was time to return to what they considered the “spiritual main mission”<sup>19</sup> of the Church and they closed the institutions committed with Human Rights and social justice promotion. “To the surprise of many, [the hierarchical Church discourse] took a radical conservative turn, and started to work in alliance with right-wing political parties, in the defense of what they called the *agenda valórica* (moral or values agenda), and remained mostly in silence about several political and social issues that were key to the recently recovered democracy”<sup>20</sup>. In 1991 the new archbishop of Santiago, Carlos Oviedo, wrote a pastoral letter defending the thesis that Chile was going through a “morality crisis”, rooted in an unhealthy eroticism, “the loose sexual morals of the youth and moral relativism”<sup>21</sup>. This thesis was embraced by most of the [renewed] Chilean

Episcopal Conference and became the overarching discourse that allowed them to oppose all kinds of laws related to family and sexuality, from a more open sexual education in schools, and VIH prevention campaigns, to contraception, divorce, [sexual and gender diversity rights], and abortion. Thus, the moral authority and privileged position that the Church gained in the Chilean society [due] to its defense of human rights and democracy, was [now] used politically for a completely different agenda”<sup>22, 23</sup>.

This radical shift to conservative morals and politics accelerated the distancing process between the Church and the Chilean youth. Its hierarchy continues “speaking from a position of moral authority that proved to be very useful to fight against a dictatorial regime, but was no longer politically adequate in a more pluralistic[, opened] and democratic society. [Moreover], because this moral authority was used in a completely different direction, the Church discourse started to be perceived as an illegitimate and authoritarian intrusion in public [and personal life], losing its prophetic [spirit] and slowly drawing the Church into positions of institutional self-defense [and survival], and moral and political irrelevance”<sup>24</sup>.

Since 2010, this Church “had to confront one of its deepest crisis derived from the sexual, [power and conscious] abuse scandals”<sup>25</sup> in all of its dioceses, “in all groups of clergy, including the progressive factions”<sup>26</sup>, and in all religious movements. The indolence of the reaction of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the suspicion of cover-up, the lack of guarantees in the investigation processes and the lack of measures of human, symbolic and economic reparation produced a profound break between the hierarchy, the People of God and the civil society<sup>27</sup>. As a consequence, “the trust in the institutional Church has dramatically diminished and the secularization process has accelerated. And the clergy’s moral authority, the main card that the Church played in the [intra-ecclesial and] public debate for decades, and the pillar of its political

influence, fell to the grounds”<sup>28</sup>. Now, “the voice of the bishops and priests is hardly heard anymore, [particularly in youth settings, and the few] organized laity has serious problems to finds their place in this ecclesial and national culture”<sup>29</sup>.

My claim is that beyond the data and these cultural and historical factors listed before, that have undoubtedly influenced and accelerated the Chilean secularization process, we are facing a great cultural tsunami that receives the name of *neoliberal modernity*, which involves transformation of the frame in which people think, feel and live, but that has not been considered with enough attention. Tsunamis produce a wave that is not necessarily big, but that has a devastating force, that moves slowly and without stopping, changing everything in its path. There is no way back. All we can do is try to recognize the new geography so that we can start rebuilding over it with the new and old materials that are useful for human life.

The cultural change in Chile has been rapid and profound, like the passing of a tsunami. And the Christian community is just beginning to recognize this new spiritual and cultural landscape. In this sense, the condition of possibility that this tradition can offer horizons of meaning and paths of fulfillment to the new generation of Chileans is a deeper understanding of, on one hand, the emerging modern subject, and on the other, what it means to live in a secular culture that has democratized education and consumption. The intellectual effort of this thesis will show the blind spots both (1) of the modern subject who has silenced the question about his/her identity, generating a deep unease such as meaninglessness, and (2) of the believers community, whose obsession with issues of personal (and sometimes social) morality prevent them from seeing what it means to search for fullness in a culture that has silenced the language for the transcendent and how to situate itself within it.

In order to see these blind spots, this thesis does a reception of a part of Charles Taylor's project of self-understanding of modernity. His proposal, as he himself has defined it –of a “philosophical anthropology of modernity”<sup>30</sup>– will allow us to grasp the transcendental structure that all human beings, believers and non-believers, share in the current historical secular atmosphere. In the first place, the constitutive orientation of the human being towards the good described in *Sources of the Self*, which has been forgotten by modern thought, making him/her blind and dumb when asked about his/her identity. And secondly, this orientation that became the unwavering search for fullness in *A Secular Age*, from which Taylor infers that believers and non-believers, alike, are obligated to respond to a longing for transcendence within the immanent frame in which the modern subject lives<sup>31</sup>.

### **Using the glasses from Charles Taylor's toolbox**

Why have we resorted to Charles Taylor's varied toolbox of thought? Why use the wide range of lenses that your thinking offers to try to understand the longing for meaning and transcendence of the modern subject? Do I have any positive predisposition to Taylor's thinking because of his theistic interpretation of human experience?

In my interpretation Taylor's global proposal revolves around two fundamental axes. On the one hand, the formulation of an ontology that aims to account for the invariants that underlie human variability, such as orientation to good and the search for fullness. And on the other hand, the articulation of a philosophical history, which in the case of *Sources of the Self*, sheds light on the controversial notion of “modernity”, thereby accounting for the constitutive historicity that is expressed in the various ways of being agent, human subject or person. In *A Secular Age* these objectives are repeated but from the perspective of what we call

“secularization”. Taylor does not remain in the usual political or sociological approaches, interested in determining the place that religion occupies in the public sphere. Nor does he reduce his research to statistically defining the practices and mode of belief in our contemporary societies. Rather, after taking a historical overview of the reformist transformations of Latin Christianity and the irruption of new social imageries that have created the conditions for exclusively humanistic alternatives to emerge, he sheds light on the conditions of possibility of belief and unbelief in our time<sup>32</sup>.

From Taylor’s double perspective, ontological and historical, this thesis concentrates on the first and in some analyzes of the current cultural moment. As if the Canadian thinker gave us his hermeneutical microscope, we are going to look into the depths of the moral structure of human agent, to recognize that the modern subject is not an empty, self-referring, objectifying rationality, but a self who is structurally oriented towards a good that shapes his/her identity and that needs to be taught by others to narrate her/his life, to remember, to appropriate her/his corporeality, to conceive some type of transcendence (or total immanence), to relate to diversity, etc., and as we already said, seeking some kind of fullness for life.

Likewise, we will borrow Taylor’s wide-angle lens to observe part of the twist of the 1960s that allows, on the one hand, the emergence of the *culture of authenticity* whose main value is the possibility of choice on the part of the subject, very similar to what is happening today in Chile, and on the other, the consolidation of what our author calls the *immanent frame*. This frame constitutes the background of meaning in which our beliefs, whether we are believers or non-believers, develop, and where we seek to make contact with the sources of fullness of life that we embrace, whether immanent or transcendent. Some experience this immanent and self-sufficient order in a thoughtless way, proper to an exclusively naturalistic world view. But for

others, the alternative of keeping their eyes open to the irruption of various versions of transcendence also arises. Therefore, the study of the conditions of possibility of this opening to transcendence while living in an immanent frame, is an inescapable challenge if, as a religious tradition, we intend to offer horizons of meaning and experiences that give access to some kind of human fullness. In this way, we will try, paraphrasing Wittgenstein, to help to show the fly the way out of the flycatcher bottle<sup>33</sup> of modern meaninglessness.

As we will show, the way out begins when the affirmation of ordinary life has a practical priority but not a metaphysical priority. This affirmation, typical of modernity, is suspicious of any articulation of valuations that may undermine its goodness, silencing the question for the good, and of any teleology that indicates that more than life matters, clouding the search for human fulfillment. In so doing, and paradoxically, it ends up weakening the affirmation of ordinary life threatened by lack of meaning.

Likewise, we will show that one of the fundamental conditions of possibility for the Christian community to offer horizons of significance in the modern secular context is to recover the eschatological tension between the reality as we experience it and the full future that we hope for. This eschatological vision offers ways of human fulfillment that must be freely chosen by the authentic subject, which is presented as a best provisional account of human affairs where the narrative of the subject's own life is interpreted.

Finally, we must indicate that Taylor's hermeneutical position does not claim to be a neutral analysis. He does not disguise his teleological interpretation of the human subject or hide his confessed hope and believing approach to the problem, for, as Taylor himself warns us, no one can offer an account that is "take"-free. Notwithstanding, more importantly, we agree with him that his position is unapologetic about his own commitments. He offers reasons for a certain

kind of Christian position, opened to the dialogue and discussion with other takes<sup>34</sup>. In this sense, receiving Taylor's thought is also a learning process of intellectual rigor and honesty.

In a second stage after this thesis, we will need to articulate in greater depth the content of the tacit backgrounds on the subject and the world image that underlie our beliefs, as well as the history of the changes of the cosmological and social imagery of our time.

## **1. The revolution of authenticity: cultural context for the search for meaning and fullness.**

In this first and brief section I am going to describe the cultural revolution that Taylor calls *Age of Authenticity* which has profoundly altered the conditions in which seeking for meaning and fullness unfolds. This will allow us to put into perspective the blind spots that Taylor's analysis has shown.

The most evident expression of the *Culture of Authenticity* is what Taylor calls "an individuating revolution" that brings together three axes: a moral/spiritual, an instrumental and an "expressive" individualism<sup>35</sup>. This arises from a broader critique of the buffered and disciplined modern subject, concerned above all with instrumental rational control, offering a conformist vision of the human being, which crushes individuality and creativity, excessively preoccupied with production, repressing feelings, spontaneity and imagination<sup>36</sup>.

Starting from this, what has value for the human being today is understood in terms of individual self-fulfillment<sup>37</sup>, fueled by a powerful moral ideal<sup>38</sup> behind it: being true to oneself (in a specifically modern understanding of that term<sup>39</sup>), that is to say, *being authentic*<sup>40</sup>. This ethic of authenticity<sup>41</sup> focuses on the possibility of having "the right to choose for themselves

their own pattern of life, to decide in conscious what convictions to espouse, to determine the shape of our lives in a whole host of ways that their ancestors couldn't control,"<sup>42</sup> whether for socio-cultural, ideological, religious or economic reasons. Because if "everyone has a right", increasingly defended by our legal systems, "to develop their own form of life grounded on their own sense of what is really important or of value", nobody can be forced to adopt an identity that he/she does not want. "People are called to upon to be true to themselves and to seek their own self-fulfillment. What this consist of, each must, in the last instance, determine for him/herself. No one else can or should try to dictate its content"<sup>43</sup>. However, as we shall examine further, this does not mean that the process of determining and choosing what is valuable excludes the presence and participation of others. Those are rather degraded modes of self-fulfillment, because in fact, it requires them to be fulfilled. For instance, the language and categories that we inherit to articulate about what kind of life appears credible or valuable<sup>44</sup>, the importance of recognition in the intimate and social planes that shapes one's identity<sup>45</sup>, etc.

Taylor outlines that the ethics of authenticity has two moral sources<sup>46</sup>. On one side, it is part of the subjective turn of modern culture towards a new form of *inwardness*, in which we end up thinking of ourselves as beings endowed with inner depths, as Descartes and Locke showed. On the other, its precedent is the 18th century discovery that human beings are endowed with a moral sense, an intuitive feeling for understanding what is right and wrong, anchored in our feelings and not in a dry calculation of consequences (in particular those concerned with divine reward and punishment, as Locke defended). Now "morality has, in a sense, a *voice within*"<sup>47</sup> that tells us what the right thing to do is<sup>48</sup>. However, authenticity is developed out of a moral displacement. On the original view, the inner voice was important to know what is right and wrong as not only a matter of calculating consequences. But "being in touch with our moral



feelings, takes on independent and crucial moral significance. It comes to be something we have to attain to be true and full human beings”<sup>49</sup>. Appropriating our life and breed an identity of our own, inevitably happens to learn to be in contact with our inner experiences, naming what others (people, experiences, encounters, circumstances, nature, etc.) cause on us, what we think and what we feel, listening to our inner voice. The novelty is that if it was previously considered essential for a full life to be in contact with some moral source (such as the Idea of Good or God), now that source is deep within ourselves. Nevertheless, this “doesn't exclude our being related to God or the Ideas; it can be considered our proper way to them”<sup>50</sup>.

In addition, Taylor explains that the importance and power of the being in contact with oneself increased after Herder’s *principle of originality* was introduced as a difference with moral significance: “there is a certain way of being human that is my way. I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else’s”<sup>51</sup>. Thus, “being true to myself means being true to my own originality, and that is something only I can articulate and discover. In articulating it, I am also defining myself. I am realizing a potentiality that it is properly my own”<sup>52</sup>. If I am not, I lose sight of the key to my life and what it means to be human to me. And the danger of getting lost can be both due to pressures to adjust to external conformity and/or because by adopting an instrumental stance to myself, I may have lost the ability to hear this inner voice. For, I can find the model to live only within myself. “This is the background to the modern ideal of authenticity and the goals of self-fulfillment or self-realization in which it is usually couched, [including its most degraded or absurd forms]. This is the background that gives moral force to the culture of authenticity, [...] what gives sense to the idea of “doing your own thing” or “finding your own fulfilment””<sup>53</sup>.

What are the factors that led culture to adopt this moral and spiritual figure? Taylor points out that one of the most significant processes is related to the *consumer revolution*. In the case of Chile, from the 1990s onwards, the consolidation of neoliberal reforms expanded consumption and mediated relations through the market, which universalized access to material and symbolic goods. The neoliberal post-90's affluence and the diffusion of what many had considered luxuries before, produced a new concentration on private space with the means to fill it, attributed to personal effort and the new possibility of individual choice.

To measure the magnitude of the change in the material conditions of Chileans, it is worth reviewing key data. While the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita PPA in 1985 was only \$1.444.-, in 2018 it reached almost \$25.222.-<sup>54</sup>. According to the United Nations Development Program, the per capita income of the poorest grew by 145% in the last fifteen years<sup>55</sup>, which made the members of the younger generations a little more equal to each other than those of the more old generations. Access to higher education has been universalized<sup>56</sup> and the consumption of durable goods has expanded and made accessible to the masses, while poverty has declined from almost half of the population in the early 1990s to 8,6% in 2019<sup>57</sup>, if measured by income<sup>58</sup>, and a 20.7%<sup>59</sup> if it is measured in a multidimensional way<sup>60</sup>. The material conditions of existence have being enhanced substantially in key dimensions, either in terms of housing quality and access, household equipment, access to basic services or coverage of the educational or health system. Likewise, neoliberal capitalist modernization transformed the public and private infrastructure of the country, extending the population's perception of material welfare<sup>61</sup>.

The objective perception of the fast material changes that used to take generations and the importance of the personal effort necessary to achieve them, imaginary that has been reinforced

from the entrepreneurial world, the right-wing parties and the neoliberal culture, produced that historically excluded majorities attribute almost only to their own efforts the welfare they now have. After this process it is very difficult for the old sources of authority that served as support for the more conservative customs continue to fulfill their role. And the Church hierarchy is one of them.

On the other hand, neoliberal policies in the work sphere and the technification of the countryside dismantled the relations of previously close-knit working-class or peasant communities. People concentrated more on their own private lives, and that of their nuclear families, dissolving social ties and deteriorating primary groups of belonging, mutual help and collective reference (such as the neighborhood, the Church, unions or political parties). However, people are less willing to participate in the public and trust each other less and less, many continue to long for more meaningful community relationships and to live contributing to the well-being of everyone.

The culture of consumption legitimized the idea “of “choice”, that is bare choice as a prime value, irrespective of what it is a choice between, or in what domain”<sup>62</sup>, which strengthens the possibility of having the right to freely choose the type of life and the identity (values, political, religious or sexual) we want to live as long as we respect the lives of others. In this context, the search for meaning and fullness takes on a new and more immediate meaning, with a wide range of things available that were previously only available to the wealthy. Young people acquired another individual awareness through consumption, the incentive to express personal taste and massive access to higher education<sup>63</sup>. This scenario facilitated the emergence of a culture where “each one of us has his/her own way of realizing our humanity, and that it is important to find and live out one’s own, as against surrendering to conformity with a model

imposed on us from outside, by society, or the previous generation, or religious or political authority”<sup>64</sup>.

Notwithstanding, consumer culture and social media tend to be very ambivalent. On the one hand, they offer a false sense of self-determination. All kinds of merchandise become vehicles of individual expression, even of some kind of identity, but founded on rather aesthetic expressions that do not necessarily account for the values that shape one’s own identity and far-reaching commitments. This displaces in importance the sense of belonging to larger-scale collective groups (nations, churches, political parties, and movements around certain causes) and can trivialize difficult moral issues in the social and personal sphere, emptying values such as freedom, rights, respect, non-discrimination, etc. On the other hand and paradoxically, the limits that a culture of respect, tolerance, freedom and mutual benefit require are relativized, when it comes to the search for individual fullness.

In a context like the Chilean where to imagine one’s life and live in a way where meaning and significance can be constructed without any reference to the divine or transcendence, the culture of authenticity also affects religious experience<sup>65</sup>. Our religious identity, as stated, “must not only be my choice, but it must speak to me, it must make sense in terms of my spiritual development as I understand it”. This relativizes belonging to both a communal ecclesial or particular institutional framework, challenging a “monolithic authority” understood as a doctrinal frame that can lead off a spiritual inspiration “by the allegation that it doesn’t fit with some orthodoxy”<sup>66</sup>.

Religious authenticity means that for many people “to set aside their own path in order to conform to some external authority just doesn’t seem comprehensible as a form of spiritual life”<sup>67</sup>. From the romantic period comes the idea that desiccated reason cannot reach the ultimate

truth in any form; “getting assent to some external formula is not the main thing, but being able to generate the moving insight into higher reality is what is important”<sup>68</sup>. Hence, following one’s own spiritual intuition is a priority over fit with some orthodoxy, incorporating plurality and a possible atomism in the religious experience and spirituality of our time.

Likewise, tolerance is introduced as a relevant spiritual attitude, which also challenges the possibility of shared religious experience and community belonging. As on the horizon of authenticity my spiritual path has to respect those of others, it exploits a diversity of individual spiritual pursuits (whether associated with nature, oriental meditation traditions, or some kind of historical commitment)<sup>69</sup>. And in turn, the acceptance of various ways of living these searches is legitimized, whether they require a stable community to survive, or that they only have more lax affinity groups and only demand some advisory service. This, added to the communication possibilities offered by technology, has the effect of broadening horizons but weakening community life and religious ritual. Furthermore, in a context such as Latin America, where the experience of faith has been closely related to the possibility of prosperity and economic survival, rapid access to material goods and the emergence of new modes of production and consumption, it has also weakened the collective belongings. Surveys show that religiosity has become more personal and individualized. It is not that Chileans have suddenly become non-believers: it is that religiosity has diversified and has acquired a more “Protestant” dye but not necessarily belonging to an institutionalized religion<sup>70</sup>.

These are the relevant features of the Age of Authenticity that we need to consider when trying to understand some of the contradictions of modernity such as lack of meaning, and the possibilities of the Christian believing community to offer horizons of significance. Some critical views point to individualism as one of the main problems of this culture. However, as we

will see in Taylor's analysis of the current ethics of authenticity and of the malaise and contradictions of modernity, the source of discomfort does not have to do with the ideal of individual self-realization, but with recovering the deeper meaning of authenticity, which drives a self-realization that far from excluding unconditional relationships and moral demands beyond the self, it requires them in different ways to find a meaningful life.

## **2. The silence that produces blindness: no articulations for an authentic subject**

As the data on Chilean youth confirm, the preeminence of the lack of meaning or the loss of horizon is perhaps one of the features that could define our time<sup>71</sup>. Taylor's diagnosis is that this is due to a certain chill in the face of ethical deliberation and articulation of values and strong evaluations, on the suspicion that these could harbor a certain undue imposition of ends or lifestyles on people's freedom and decision possibilities. Or an attempt to homogenize a plural world, or a devaluation of everyday life based on higher forms of life that could be discriminatory or based on an illusion. For this reason, supposedly in defense of freedom and the affirmation of ordinary life, modern morality proposes a supposedly objective, abstract and universal procedure to determine the correct obligatory action towards others, reducing moral issues of importance only to this dimension. This mistrust in value accounts and qualitative distinctions with some ontological force, is supported by two aspects. On the one hand, in the naturalistic, rationalist and empiricist currents inspired by modern natural science and its notion of disengaged and universal reason. On the other hand, in the wake left by the romantic currents

that, in defense of the demands of nature, the particularity that should not sacrifice inferior goods and expressive integrity, maintain that there is no reason to articulate and deliberate<sup>72</sup>.

However, if moral issues are examined, it must be admitted that there are other issues that go beyond obligations to others. For instance, there are questions that revolve around what makes our lives meaningful and fulfilling, or about the characteristics by which we think ourselves (or others) are dignified and worthy of respect<sup>73</sup>. Other questions include respect for the life and integrity of others or the importance of well-being. However, and responding to modern prejudice, Taylor shows that these three axes of morality are considered only through the articulation of moral intuitions and value distinctions that he will call *strong evaluations*<sup>74</sup>. As we will explain, this articulation depends upon *frameworks*, which are themselves formed by the *qualitative distinctions* offered by the meaning backgrounds or horizons of significance on which these evaluations are based. These cannot be manufactured from scratch but are received in shared linguistic networks since the moral structure of the human being is *dialogical*. Furthermore, this structure is open to a *space of moral sources* where a transaction occurs between us, others and the world, offering more integrative modes of authenticity. Therefore, we will show that without such articulation of qualitative distinctions, what is put in check is the possibility of answering what gives meaning to and how to live our lives, that is, our *identity*.

Furthermore, Taylor's cultural and historical hermeneutical analysis searches behind our values for the image of humanity that naturally support and encourage them. His claim is that *what we value* is intrinsically related with what we believe about human beings and the world, that is, with the *kind of narrative* in which we make sense of our lives. Nevertheless, current dominant modern moral philosophies tends to obscure the connection between senses of the self –*identity*– and moral visions –*the good*– focusing their reflection on what it is right to do rather

than on what it is good to be. In this sense a liberal society “is one that as a society adopts no particular substantive view about the ends of life. The society is, rather, united around a strong procedural commitment to treat people with equal respect”<sup>75</sup>.

This position leaves no conceptual margin for the notion of good as the object of our love or fidelity, and no room for the question about the attempt to live the best possible life<sup>76</sup>. Instead, Taylor vindicates the intrinsic relation between self and moral, revealing the eclipsed place that the good has in the modern identity. He seeks to bring out and examine those richer backgrounds languages of our spiritual nature and predicament, that lies behind some of the moral and spiritual intuitions of today’s people, ignored as confusing and irrelevant by contemporary philosophy, and in which we set the basis and point of the moral obligations we acknowledge, but more importantly, what makes life worth living.

Given this, Taylor turns on the alarms, for he will reveal that for today’s human being it is not so clear how we can and should think of ourselves as subjects who have –or do not have– a sense of what is important to us, what we should be responsible for and what is valuable. In this respect, this sense of human moral identity is not fully explicit for the majority of us since it is not primarily a set of well-formulated beliefs but values related to some picture rather than other of what human beings are, or in Taylor’s concepts, to certain conception of the human agent.

In *Sources of the Self* and in particular in *The Ethics of Authenticity*<sup>77</sup> Taylor attempts a critical analysis of the malaise of modernity as the current narrative, through what he calls an effort to recover those forgotten moral sources of the human agent. Sources that modern philosophy would not have adequately understood and whose omission not only weakens that philosophy but also modern society itself. The moral and political philosophy of modernity – rationalism and naturalism in morals, liberalism in politics– would have distanced us in such a



way from our practical argumentation practices in everyday life, from the value frameworks in which we constitute our identity and from the moral sources, that they would be leaving us blind and dumb. On the one hand, this blindness leaves us unable to explain to ourselves who we are, and on the other, unable to address the problems and malaises we actually have. Paradoxically, a culture like the modern one, whose science and its technical applications have managed to conquer the macro and micro material world, transforming it and putting it at the service of the human being, has not made it possible for the human being to know firmly who he/she is and what it is about to be a human and to be human within and with others in the limits of nature. Faced with the question, “who are you?”, the modern subject seems not to be able but to remain silent.

## **2.1 The moral and epistemological reasons for a modern spell**

There are epistemological and moral motives that have somehow bewitched the contemporary human being, silencing qualitative distinctions and substantive articulations about good in moral thought and judgment, since it classifies them as irrelevant or harmful. This inarticulation is what paralyzes the modern subject, making him/her blind in the moral sphere (in the strong sense). But, why is the naturalistic and rationalist model so attractive to our contemporaries? What is this model trying to explain but fails? And if it fails, why isn't it abandoned as a model? We will try to address these issues.

At the epistemological level, there is wide acceptance of modern naturalistic or subjectivist epistemological arguments. First, *naturalism* comprehends the human with the same molds of the scientific model of the prestigious natural sciences born in the 17th century, operating with an emphasis on the impersonal third person observer perspective. This

accentuates the capacity that impartial subjects would possess to revise their conceptions of the good or to decide between alternative conceptions of the good when the given priority of any of them is not recognized. Naturalism thus postulates impartiality as the way to face moral pluralism and the way to resolve moral conflicts. As no morality can be imposed in the public sphere, *procedural* and non-substantive modes of solution to pluralism emerge.

Second, the goods or “values” are understood as projections in a morally neutral world, so values are not part of the content of things, that is, they are not part of reality<sup>78</sup>. Something like substantive ideas about the good that we can know through the use of our reason would be a Platonic epistemological illusion. In turn, the reasoning of modern natural science is extrapolated into practical reasoning, assuming a neutral and objectifying position that tries to describe human affairs in external terms and not culturally conditioned. These are some of the reasons why our world view, in terms of ‘value’ ended up being considered optional<sup>79</sup>. Then, at the individual level for modern naturalist or subjectivist positions the task of considering a good life is irrelevant to morality; qualitative distinctions would be useless since we only need to describe the content and set a criterion for mandatory actions with respect to others<sup>80</sup>. In other words, as has been argued, moral thought pursues what is right to do and not what is good to be<sup>81</sup>.

Third, inarticulation is justified through what Moore<sup>82</sup> has called *Hume’s naturalistic fallacy*. This considers reality (reductively) as the set of quantifiable, measurable and even verifiable facts. On this reality, analytical and synthetic logical propositions are recognized. The former have no need for verification, they are always true since they depend on the meaning of the terms involved (for example, “ice is water in a solid state”, or “salt is salty”). The second must be verified in contrast to sensitive experience, so they can be true or false. Consequently,

the ethical propositions that emerge in this rigid scheme cannot be true or false, making an undue transition from propositions of fact to propositions of value or of duty. According to Moore, a fallacy is incurred by confusing “good” with “the good”, passing from the thought that all the “x” elements (for example pleasure, desire) are good (which may be correct), to which the “x” elements are the good. That is to say, a moral property is inferred from some natural property, not only identifying ‘good’ with a natural property, but with anyone who accompanies it. Thus, “the good” is fallaciously equated with “what produces pleasure” or “what satisfies a desire”. As Moore teaches, the fallacy consists in passing from an identity of extension (the objects to which it refers to) to one of intension (what it means). And since the question “what is “the good”?” requires explanations, this fallacious position strengthens the inarticulation that impoverishes the value density of language even when, like him, we want to describe ways of being.

Taylor teaches that after Hume’s naturalism many of the modern philosophies are equally inarticulate because they replace the substantive dimension of values and of the hierarchy of some over others, (incidentally, it is how they appear in everyday life when trying to make explicit the complexity of what we live in a dense evaluative language), by the procedures to resolve the conflicts between valuations of good, reducing the qualitative distinctions between these strong evaluations to a single consideration or *basic reason*, impoverishing moral thought. Hence, these inarticulate, procedural, and rationalist ethics focus only on the notion of justice and not of the good.

The strength and survival of naturalism is due to, at least, two phenomena. On the one hand, to the fact that it is articulated with a set of knowledge and practices that make it somehow “connatural” to the complexity of developed societies that induce formalism and the loss of immediate community sense, which in turn, induces an atomistic conception of the social whole.

And on the other hand, to the feeling of power and control that rational calculation gives. As Taylor notes, even if it is a mirage to think that subjects can choose certain goods or norms outside substantive value horizons based on the strength of their argumentative rationality in procedural frameworks, this makes the attractiveness of liberal, naturalistic and rationalistic theories understandable. But such a position suffers from the fallacy of simplification, which supposes a “discarnate self” and an objective rationality that should not take over history and that has an unlimited capacity for choice. Furthermore, it is founded on the psychology of classical empiricism “according to which human agents possess the full capacity of choice as a given rather than as a potential which has to be developed”<sup>83</sup>. Likewise, liberal atomism believes that the subject is not culturally conditioned, that she/he is capable of not being influenced by a given horizon of significance, and of being indifferent to values, to the articulation of strong evaluations in languages that express qualitative contrasts. Therefore, this subject is located above the diversity of values and can choose between them. Atomism, in addition, supposes a radical relativism and subjectivism. The first holds that each person has their own values and that they cannot be argued about, since the values of another, as they belong to their vital choice, should not be questioned. Moral subjectivism points out that reason cannot mediate moral disputes, since moral positions are based on the fact that each person has adopted them and not on reason or the nature of things. Obviously this factor strengthens the aforementioned relativism.

Taylor accuses the naturalistic and rationalist epistemology typical of modernity, of inducing a misunderstanding of the functioning and role (a) of language, (b) of practical rationality and (c) of the social sciences<sup>84</sup>, since it is blind against to the elements of self-interpretation of the first person, defining elements to understand human action and the vital

commitments that constitute human identity. In Taylor's approach, heir to contemporary hermeneutics, the interpretations that the human agent makes of himself, of the reasons for his/her action and of the question about meaning, are crossed by qualitative evaluations and weightings. What Taylor will call the *Best Account* (BA) of our behavior (which we will explain later) requires that we overcome the naturalistic reduction. Moreover, the reasons for a value preference can only take shape when they are expressed in a value and expressive language. Thus, this language is essential to understand the acts, motives and identity of the subject who performs and formulates them. But naturalism is unable to account for those hermeneutical features –expressive language, revealing evaluative contrasts, articulation of strong evaluations– which are the central elements when it comes to understanding the “meaning” that, as a question and as a problem, human beings we try to give into our lives<sup>85</sup>. We will deepen on this later.

As we said, the exclusion of qualitative distinctions and moral articulation to embrace modern naturalistic or subjectivist arguments is also founded on moral motives and not only in epistemological reasons. Among these, Taylor highlights: (1) the modern notion of freedom and self-determination, (2) the affirmation of ordinary life against notions of superior life like contemplation or heroism or ascetic commitment, (3) the autonomy of the subject to determine his/her purposes without external interference, (4 ) the sense of practical benevolence of science to improve the condition of humanity, (5) the desire for a completely universal ethic and (6) justice, equal respect and universal benevolence<sup>86</sup>.

Paradoxically, based on these *hypergoods* that modern moral philosophies deny as goods but embrace, they have concentrated on determining mandatory actions, mute the qualitative distinctions that expose the meaning of our moral actions, the way we evaluate our behaviors and that of others and how we seek full meaning for our lives. As we have said, associated with this

modern idea of freedom arises the *procedural* conception of modern ethics –which judges the rationality of the agent by how he thinks and not by whether the result is substantively correct– unifying the field of morality around a only basic consideration and as opposed to a “substantive” notion of morality.

In consequence, Taylor claims that the silence on practical argumentation, value frameworks and moral sources not only makes us blind and dumb in respect of our actions and therefore our identity, but makes every possible behavior, every practicable way of life, seems to be equally acceptable from the point of view of liberal impartiality. The result is that in the end nothing has a value and everything becomes insignificant and futile, denying even the sense of authenticity, when on the contrary, our moral culture has been accumulating some value criteria according to which we say which lives are full and which bring frustration or failure. For instance, as modern selves we are moved by universal justice and beneficence through science and technique, are particularly sensitive to the claims of equality, the value of the individual, feel the demands to freedom and self-rule as axiomatically justified, and put a very high priority on the avoidance of death and suffering as part of the affirmation of ordinary life<sup>87</sup>. Nevertheless, both our public and individual morals have been left without articulation –a key concept for Taylor that we’ll continue to account for– and in this dislocation would be the main root of our modern moral and identity problems.

As said, Taylor maintains a philosophical suspicion towards the epistemology of modernity expressed in his emphasis on the substantive of the moral dimension (of good versus duty and fairness, of value versus procedure) and his attempt is to recover what he judges should not have been lost in the modern philosophical revolution. It is important to note that his recovery work it is not translated into a longing or an attempt to return to an old lost world: the

various modernities –fruit of human creativity as he constantly recalls– that have been accumulating to make us what we are, do not have a way back. In this respect, the diagnosis of the blindness and muteness of the moral state of our identity and of our modern culture is not resolved with a therapy that starts at the root. Taylor is a thinker who critically defends the ideas and institutions that define modernity: democracy, rights and freedoms, the impetus for tolerance and equality, etc., but in his work he tries to understand in-depth the changes that disturb us, avoiding misunderstanding what we can do about them. In this sense, what he would like to recover is modernity in a new language for articulation of values and moral sources as he realizes that the value frameworks have a linguistic and social matrix, and they have an indispensable place shaping our personal and collective authentic identity as human beings. Simultaneously he is looking for a hypergood without demeaning ordinary life and without discrimination and intolerance, without any of the “various forms of social exclusion and domination [...] built into the very definitions by which a hypergood perspective is constituted”<sup>88</sup>.

### **3. Moral structure hermeneutics: learning to speak in order to see from one’s identity**

#### **3.1 There is no possibility of human life outside the frameworks**

What we might call Taylor’s *ethics of articulation* is sustained and inspired by his hermeneutical position on *language*. This will allow him to propose a different type of substantivity of values, that is, a new (and not without tension) *ethical realism*.

Naturalism understands language as a designative set of signs that a subject uses to describe and manipulate the world, a conception that would have derived towards representationalist language notions. These reduce meaning only to the observer's perspective. For Taylor this is a reductive and instrumental conception of language that only understands it as something that operates between us and the objective world; as something that we use to mediate the relationship between the subject and the objects.

Faced with this position, Taylor understands language in articulatory terms, in a holistic and expressive way<sup>89</sup>. In other words, language is understood as a means of meaning in which we are immersed and which constitutes us, and which, as we said, is essential to express and understand the acts, ends and identity of the subject. Where is its articulating role captured? Taylor discovers that certain feelings referred to the subject form the basis of our understanding of the human. Such feelings are constituted in certain articulations that we can consider interpretations, those that require language<sup>90</sup>. Then, he expands this notion of articulation to address other fields of analysis of human behavior, in particular focusing on values as they appear in the strong evaluations. In this sense, this enriched notion of linguistic articulation is more complex since it incorporates the cultural assumptions of interpretation and of strong evaluations.

In this same hermeneutical horizon, Taylor opposes two types of evaluation of desires, one *weak* and one *strong*. In the first one, associated with naturalism and classical forms of utilitarianism, the human being ponders the various types of desires that he has, calculating the consequences of realizing them. In the second, based on the hermeneutics that he claims, the human being ponders them attending to some quality that is put into play in those desires. This form of strong evaluation takes notice of the qualitative value of the diverse desires, for which it



is necessary to specify what type of goods the action or desire refers to<sup>91</sup>. That said, precision is carried out through different contrasts, such as those stated in those culturally dense terms.

These contrasts establish a hierarchy based on the contents that in fact are valued in a culture and such contents are expressed in a set of contrasts that articulate evaluative languages. Taylor insists that a strong evaluator (expressed in culturally dense terms and whose references are interwoven with a whole set of symbolic particular meanings of a given culture) operates at a greater “depth” than one who uses only weak evaluations, since he/she is able to give reasons for his/her motivation in a more evaluative articulated way<sup>92</sup>. As we will develop further, the *strong evaluation* reaches its greatest strength when the subject is able to proceed to a radical valuation in which their behaviors and motivations can be subjected to a more in-depth criticism in those moments when the very meaning of life is go questioned. This capacity for revision is associated with the subject who practices them in such way and according to Taylor, this radical valuation is ultimately a reflection on one’s identity: in it the subject, proceeding to understand him/herself without imposing external criteria of valuation, takes his/her own life in his/her hands, and exercising strong self-determination, he/she takes responsibility for him/herself<sup>93</sup>. We will go into these aspects below.

The moral and spiritual intuitions or strong evaluations “involve discriminations of right or wrong, better or worse, higher or lower, which are not rendered valid by our own desires, inclinations, or choices, but rather stand independent of these and offer standards by which they can be judged”<sup>94</sup>. These are sustained and articulated on a *background of qualitative distinctions* that give them meaning, to which we resort whenever we must account for the meaning of our judgments or moral actions as correct in any of the three moral axes<sup>95</sup> that are shown substantially overlapping.

However, moral intuitions vary from one culture to another, constituting different types of *frameworks* that incorporate the qualitative distinctions provided by the background, implicit –most of the time– or explicit, for our moral judgments, intuitions or reactions in any dimension. Hence, the frameworks also provide the contexts in which those reactions make sense<sup>96</sup>. But in an increasingly plural culture, these frameworks have become problematic, since there is no longer one that is proposed as a common horizon where moral judgements and actions are intelligible to everyone, stressing the human being. Before this new more pluralistic and disenchanted world, Taylor affirms that the search for a credible framework will be always the search for significance and end in life, the one found when articulating moral intuitions, the adequate meaningful expressions on which we sustain our options and decisions<sup>97</sup>.

The urgency of helping to visualize these frameworks can be perceived when it is verified that it is not possible to act without them, although we do not perceive them because many times these are not conceptually formulated. What happens is that everyone thinks and lives within a framework, with goods, qualitative distinctions and ends with which they live and die, with a sense that some actions or mode of life is incomparably higher than the others which are more readily available to us<sup>98</sup>. For instance, the ethics of honor and heroism associated with a citizen who highly esteems an existence dedicated to public service and not only to the private sphere of economic well-being; or the ethics of a life according to reason understood as an order of the soul in tune with the cosmos; or as a disengaged-self capable of objectifying reality and that governs its desires and the tendency to excess, insatiability and conflict; or a theistic ethic that includes a better life from the transformation of the will, to be turned into Good News for others, especially those suffering from some kind of poverty, discrimination or exclusion.

Although it is true that frameworks do not enjoy the same ontological strength as before, it is not possible to act without reference to one of them. As Taylor argues, to inhabit the three axes of moral thinking –our sense of respect for and obligations to others, our understanding of what makes a full life, and the characteristics by which we think of ourselves as worthy of respect or dignity– we necessarily do value distinctions from a certain framework. It operates as a horizon of qualitative distinctions within which we live our lives and make sense of it; therefore it is not optional. What is more, it is absolutely impossible to get rid of it. These provide us with the background, implicit or explicit, for our judgments, intuitions or moral reactions. In this sense, to articulate a framework is to explain what gives meaning to our moral responses, because in articulating we try to explain what we presuppose when we judge that a certain way of life is truly worth considering, or when we place our dignity on a certain achievement or define our moral obligations in a certain way.

Taylor shows that these frameworks can only be explained from a certain moral ontology, so they are outside the scope of modern thought, which, inspired by the model of the natural sciences, suspects ontology due to a misperception about what the nature of the moral is. For example, one of the ideas that has led contemporary philosophical thought to confusion is the modern *affirmation of ordinary life* –one of the modern translations of respect for the human being. This thought is erroneously suspicious of qualitative distinctions that would undermine the goodness of ordinary life of production, reproduction, work and family. These distinctions they would eclipse the dignity and value of everyday human desire and its satisfaction, with some superior activity such as contemplation, citizenship or heroic asceticism. But as already shown, the naturalism or utilitarianism that could support this position does not realize that the affirmation of ordinary life is also a qualitative distinction. Neither does it realize that the only

way to discuss what kind of ordinary life can be better involves making explicit the frameworks and their qualitative distinctions, since the best is not something external that is imposed on the agent but a way of living ordinary life<sup>99</sup>. Therefore, it is not that these are not rooted in a certain ontology, but that they are subject to variable human interpretations (subject to be discussed later).

The seriousness of the matter can be weighed when we grasp that these *frameworks* are linked to the question of the *identity* of the human agent, that “as such it is the background against which our tastes and desires and opinions and aspirations make sense”<sup>100</sup>. It is in modern plural culture where the dynamic and essential link between identity and a certain kind of orientation can be expressed in the moral space<sup>101</sup>. Let us explain how they are related in a complementary way.

On the one hand, the role of identity is to guide us, to provide us with the framework within which things make sense to us, by virtue of the qualitative distinctions it incorporates. Using Taylor’s spatial analogy, identity gives us the fundamental orientation, the place from which we respond, and thus allows us to define what is important to us and what is not. Our identity defines the space of qualitative distinctions within which we live, make decisions and act<sup>102</sup>. Thus, our identity offers frameworks that provide us with the horizon within which we know three things (among others): (i) what things mean to us through strong qualitative distinctions within which we live; (ii) with whom we deliberate about it; (iii) where we are in relation to it.

On the other hand, frameworks and their horizons of significance also constitute our identity, because to know who we are is to be oriented in the moral space towards a good, with questions that we answer from our framework in which we live and have assumed. From this

perspective “my identity is defined by the commitments and identifications [like being Catholic, Anarchist, Palestine or Mapuche] which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what it is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse, or oppose. In other words, my identity is somehow the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand”<sup>103</sup>. Thereby, one has an identity insofar as these things have a stable (although contingent and dynamic) significance within which it is possible to perceive certain vital possibilities as good and other and as bad or banal. On the contrary, whoever loses that commitment or that identification is left adrift, because in a set of questions she/he no longer knows what the meaning for him/her of things is, because she/he has lost the framework or horizon within which things are perceived as good or bad. This is what brings about an acute disorientation that we call “identity crisis”.

Moreover, Taylor points out that our deep identity, in a historical sense, brings together in a complex way various commitments that may be universal and some particular identifications, in which some stand out more and give greater character to our identity. In a non-historical sense, our identity in the strong sense is verified when I can be an interlocutor among others, that is, when I have my own point of view, a fundamental moral orientation from which to respond or play a role, or when I can speak by myself giving reason for my actions and options. In this respect, using the same spatial analogy, we can say that our identity supposes finding a moral space, assuming the space that our framework tries to define as an ontological basis through strong evaluations or qualitative distinctions<sup>104</sup>. What we sometimes lose sight of is that an identity not only always involves the question of a highly valued good, but that an identity is something to which one is faithful and cannot renounce. In this sense, it is that identity provides us with the indispensable framework within which we live and, by virtue of the qualitative

distinctions it incorporates, things make sense to us. In this way, being a self is a question of what and how much things matter to us, of taking a stand and of being able to articulate linguistically about it. This is being *a self* in the strong sense: it is being able to answer who we are<sup>105</sup>. It is having your own identity; and in this sense, “we are” a fundamental orientation that defines from where we respond with our life, “we are” the place where we situate ourselves with respect to the good. Therefore, having a moral point of view understood ultimately as the orientation of our identity, that is to say, as the question of what kind of life is worth living, is not and cannot be optional. What is at stake is our identity and therefore our freedom, that is, that there is a human subject in strong sense, capable of determining him/herself and giving account of it<sup>106</sup>.

A naturalistic position (rationalist or utilitarian), which points out that it is possible to dispense with frameworks, is in serious difficulties to account for the possibility that there is a human subject, an interlocutor with their own identity expressed in qualitative distinctions about things that are significant for him or her. And as I have pointed out, these are elaborated through a language of interpretation that one has accepted as a valid articulation of these questions. Being a self, a person, is not being an object of scientific study, but being constituted by self-interpretations<sup>107</sup> that we make about ourselves or of the meanings that things hold for us, which are never fully explicit. This doesn't mean that we are totally transparent to ourselves either. However, we are constituted by a language in which we move to find an orientation to good.

### **3.2 The narrative identity of the human subject**

In this horizon we have described, Taylor points out that language has three functions<sup>108</sup>: (1) expressive, (2) revealing and (3) articulating. The first is the way in which humans

“formulate things”<sup>109</sup>. We articulate senses in a complex and dense way, making us aware of something. Second “language serves to place some matter out in the open between interlocutors”<sup>110</sup> generating a public space and opening, revealing what is expressed. And the third allows us to articulate through language certain things, such as “our most important concerns, the characteristically human concerns”<sup>111</sup>, so that they impact us. In addition, it must be considered that “a language only exists and is maintained within a language community, [what indicates that] one is a self only among other selves”<sup>112</sup>, and that one is described with reference to those who surround us. This is a key point to address from Taylor's proposal, since there are two modern values that would apparently deny that reference: the modern aspiration to freedom and the centrality of the individual, but as we will show, these do not contradict each other rather they require each other.

Let's see. On the one hand, in an evolutionary sense, the languages of moral and spiritual discernment are learned through upbringing and are bred through shared speech. Through our experiences with others we learn the meaning of what is love, anger, sadness, shame, justice or the aspiration to the whole, etc. and therefore also with others we learn valuations and judgments, which allows my own self-definition. On the other hand, inasmuch as we open ourselves to other spaces of conversation, towards other places of “the common” or “the public”, these valuations and judgments mature and become appropriate as an original way of understanding myself and interpreting human life. Consequently, the self only exists within some “interlocution websites”<sup>113</sup> that are transposed, so it is not possible to be a self (in a strong sense) alone.

Thus, the question about my identity, about who I am, is answered by (i) defining the place from where I speak and (ii) to whom I speak in the space of moral and spiritual orientation

within which my most important defining relationships exist. That is, the question of the identity of a human agent includes her/his position in moral and spiritual questions oriented to a good, and also the reference to a *defining community*. But both tend to be eclipsed by the conceptions of modern naturalism or rationalism, or by an ill-gotten authenticity in a type of narrow individualism that instrumentalizes others or that loses interest in the great concerns that go beyond the self (of political, historical or religious type).

Even further, the reference to a defining, particular and historical community of belonging is not lost when tensions occur, such as when some subjects distance themselves from opinions that they judge to be dehumanizing<sup>114</sup>. A human being can always be original but insofar as he is in relation –by opposition, criticism or improvement– with the language and vision of others. Otherwise, if she/he loses that reference, she/he can get lost in confusion. As Wittgenstein maintains, something like a language potentially invented by individuals privately is not possible. The distinctions are not invented from scratch but arise through languages that we share with other agents in an essential way; then, innovation, new meanings and new languages can only be elaborated through conversation, within a common language through exchange with whom one has a certain common understanding of what is at stake in such an undertaking<sup>115</sup>.

Then, as we have said, my identity is shaped in the first place, by the definition of (i) the place from where I speak, that is, of the space of moral orientation or framework where I recognize certain goods. Secondly, my identity is shaped by (ii) those with whom I speak about such goods. Third, Taylor highlights that within the frameworks, the goods by which our moral and spiritual orientation is defined, and which we speak to significant others, are (iii) the same by which we will measure the value, weight and substance of our lives<sup>116</sup>; the three are inextricably



linked. The latter is related to knowing where we are in relation to the good and not just recognizing it in the moral space. Let's delve into this third aspect.

The modern aspiration to the *fullness* of one's life against a vain or empty life, has historical antecedents in the search for meaning and connection with a greater reality, not only in cosmic or religiously significant terms, but also of participation in important events in our history (political, natural, sports, entertainment or whatever). This "contact" with a greater reality, using Taylor's spatial analogy, is understood in different ways in contemporary culture depending on the good with respect to which a subject learns to move to be correctly located<sup>117</sup>. For instance, in relation to God it can be a relationship in sacramental terms, or prayer or action in history<sup>118</sup>. For those who adhere to an ethic of honor, it is defined with respect to the proximity of the space of fame and the distance of that of shame. For those who define good as self-control through reason, the image of fulfillment has to do with being able to order their lives and avoid being overwhelmed by the desire for inferior things. For those who are moved by some form of affirmation of ordinary life, the most important thing is to ensure a good job and a good family. For those who find the meaning of life in the possibilities offered by expression, they will seek to be able to realize it through some intellectual or artistic means or in the configuration of their lives. As you can see, in all these typologies the crucial question is how far or how close we are to the good<sup>119</sup>.

On the other hand, this notion of where we are located in the direction of our lives, has an unavoidable temporal dimension. It evolves as we develop our most fundamental motivation or meet external limits, and thus, our lives are changing. This allows Taylor to point out another basic feature of human existence: we are always changing and becoming situated in time<sup>120</sup>, gradually becoming autonomous agents in possession of something like a proper place in relation

to the good<sup>121</sup>. So when considering what defines our identity, (i) the orientation to the good and (ii) the others with whom we dialogue about it, they are not an optional matter, nor (iii) is the place where we situate ourselves in relation to the good. The first is an absolute matter because there is no other option between these two: we are or we are not in the direction of that good. But the latter is relative to the first: because once in the direction of good, the question is whether we are closer or farther in the process of becoming. Then, the question of our condition never depletes in what we are because we are always changing and becoming<sup>122</sup>.

This allows Taylor to consider the *narrative nature of our identity*. “In order to make a minimal sense of our lives [and] to have an identity, we need orientation to the good, which means some sense of qualitative discrimination, of the incomparably higher. Now we see that this sense of the good has to be woven into my understanding of my life as an unfolding story. But this is to state another basic condition of making sense of ourselves, that we grasp our lives in a *narrative*, [...and] making sense of one’s life as a story is also, as orientation to the good, not an optional extra; that our lives exist also in this space of questions, which only a coherent narrative can answer. In order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going”<sup>123</sup>. In this sense, the human agent must grasp her/his life in a narrative that cannot be arbitrary or neutral and whose authenticity depends, not on a mere flash, but on the way or the path that he has followed to become a self as someone valuable or with a significant life<sup>124</sup>. Therefore, as subjects we will not be fully human until we are able to say what it is that moves us, around what we build our lives and to narrate our history on how and where we are placing ourselves with respect to the good that we seek<sup>125</sup>. And the linguistic tools (categories, frameworks, backgrounds) are received in some kind of linguistic

community with which we cannot lose reference. Only then do we know who we are. Only in this way we have identity.

### 3.3 Authentic freedom

Far from threatening freedom through his substantive proposal of human identity, Taylor seems to be recovering and reworking the difference and necessary complementarity (in tension) between *negative freedom* and *positive freedom*. Negative freedom is that no one interferes with my actions. “In this sense, political freedom is simply the area in which a human being can act without being hindered by others”<sup>126</sup>. Instead, “the positive meaning of the word freedom derives from the individual’s desire to be his own owner. I want my life and my decisions to depend on myself, and not on outside forces, whatever these are”<sup>127</sup>. These are two modes of freedom that are at different levels and generally tend to be confused. There is not necessarily an opposition between them; on the contrary, the modern ideal of individual freedom demands its complement. Negative freedom answers the question: can you do what you want? On the other hand, positive freedom refers us to the question: can you choose the object of your love? It is possible that a subject does not find interference to carry out what she/he wants and, despite this, lack the ability to choose the object of her/his will and to determine her/his own actions if it is still under the spell of modern morality that despises the articulation of the qualitative distinctions originally learned and appropriate in a reference community. Obviously, there is also the possibility that a subject lacks negative freedom and, despite this, retains his free will<sup>128</sup>.

Taylor calls positive freedom *self-determining freedom*, and distinguishes it from *authenticity*, because since they have been developed together they tend to be confused as well and are not the same<sup>129</sup>. There is closeness because authenticity is itself an idea of freedom, “it

involves my finding the design of my life myself, against the demands of external conformity”<sup>130</sup>. But Taylor argues that authenticity cannot and should not always go hand in hand with self-determined freedom, for the latter undermines itself. On the one hand, freedom taken to the extreme does not recognize limits that it must respect, and on the other, it tends to abolish all horizons of significance, losing them and trivializing the situation of the human being, leaving him “alone in a silent universe, without intrinsic meaning, condemned to create value”<sup>131</sup>. This produces a flattened world reinforcing the degraded and egocentric image of authenticity albeit more friendly, as it is taken as if it supports the demands for recognition of difference or diversity. Additionally, self-determined freedom tends to eclipse the horizons of significance and its frameworks, and reduces significance to the possibility of choice, making human life an exercise in freedom even if meaning is lost or all moral sources fail. This is the downfall of authenticity as it is only trapped in an anthropocentrism incapable of articulating value options and incapable of recognizing any difference both in itself and in others. This means that there are no compelling reasons why some things should be more important than others. Therefore, by offering the horizon of freedom as an authentic identity, Taylor re-elaborates the difference and complementarity between the aforementioned freedoms<sup>132</sup>.

This brief review together with the arguments that we will continue developing show how and why the modern idea of *freedom*, together with the *affirmation of ordinary life* –ideas that Taylor endorses but not this version– are two of the main reasons for the shift from the substantive to the procedural in morality. They suppress the articulation of qualitative distinctions, which silences the constitutive goods that shape human identity. These two hypergoods in which the procedural morality is inspired distort our deliberative attitude, produce

confusions and reduce morale to actions due to other disregarding the question for the good life<sup>133</sup>.

As we continue to delve further, Taylor will show that the external forces in which the subject dwells are not imposed from without, but are received and elaborated from within as a path to authenticity.

### **3.4 Conceptual notions about the good**

Before continuing, we must delve into some more specific conceptual notions about the good (which we have only used so far in a general way) that Taylor uses to explain the primary place of qualitative distinctions in our life and moral thought and, consequently, the importance of their articulation<sup>134</sup>. Obviously, his starting point is the moral and vital assets that he has been showing, those that only exist and become an option through a certain articulation in webs of language or interlocution.

First, the “vital good”: goods that define the qualitative distinctions between actions, desires, feelings or motivations and lifestyles; they are facets or components of the good life. Second, the “intense good”: actions, motivations, lifestyles that are considered qualitatively superior, incomparably superior than others in a qualitative distinction, which provide the point of view from which to weigh, judge and decide on these. These intense goods, these higher order goods are called *hypergoods*, and generally involve a change and a rejection of previous goods<sup>135</sup>. As we will explain later, for Taylor this status is precisely what defines “morals” in our culture. Finally, from the perspective of certain moral phenomenology, Taylor points out that certain goods that we consider superior have an attractive force that inferior goods do not have,

and that they configure the sources that we recognize as moral and that they have an “objective” force for subject. For instance, the moral force of respect for life from the perspective of theism, for which life is a divine gift and the human being an image of God. This type of moral considerations mobilized Christians in Chile to actively promote and defend Human Rights during the civic-military dictatorship during the 1970s and 80s. The moral sources that configure these superior goods are designated by Taylor as a “constitutive good”: good that, on the one hand, constitutes or defines what is a good action, defining the content of moral theory, and on the other, that good is also the strength or love that moves us to good action. That is, that constitutive good defines and empowers. For this reason the constitutive good is a *moral source*, something whose love or respect empowers us to do good and be good. For instance, external constitutive goods such as the Idea of Good that sheds light to see other goods and make decisions dispassionately; or the Agape to and from God which transforms us; or the Exodus story as a path of liberation that draws an enormous moral force (in a transcendent or immanent sense). Or internalized goods such as the dignity of one’s moral reason, or the courage to face the disenchanted world, the search for one’s own originality, etc.

Taylor notes that in the first instance it does not matter if modern immanent humanism does not recognize a proper place for moral sources or constitutive goods, because although they are not recognized, there is still something that occupies that function, defining certain actions and motives as superior, and empowering the human agent to live in conformity with what is superior. However, neglect of all knowledge of qualitative distinctions has caused this dimension of moral thought and experience to be abandoned. For this reason, many do not know what to say when they must answer, for instance, what is what underpins the sense of respect for the rights of others, or the notion of good or the sense that they embrace for their lives.

The understanding of the good as a moral source has also been silenced by the main strands of modern moral consciousness. And although the articulation of these goods is difficult and problematic, particularly in plural contexts where diverse traditions coexist and where there are no languages or historical or symbolic references shared by all, it is not only important but essential. The articulation of the constitutive goods or moral sources helps us to approach them, to clarify them, capturing what they include and mean for human life. Those who recognize them can be moved to respect and love them in such a way that they receive their powerful moral force that enables them to live to their measure. It is the force of language; “words can empower, [...] words can at times have tremendous moral force”<sup>136</sup>. Without any articulation we disconnect from the good and we could stop being a self or human beings in the strong sense, or be disoriented accompanied by great anguish.

However, there are some reasons to mistrust the articulation of hypergoods or moral sources, as it can be a possible source of deception, typical of a word that is only the imitation of an authentic narrative that is used only to thicken our vanity or maintain the status quo, or because mixed with some historical falsehood it can be a place of escape that, by giving certain moral security, isolates us from the energy of true moral sources. In addition, any articulation does not work: some articulations could be dead and not exert any force on people.

Taylor suggests that strength comes not only from the formulation, but from the entire act of discourse: the most vigorous case is when the speaker, the formulation, and the act of delivering the message come together to reveal the good<sup>137</sup>. The effective articulation releases force when it brings sources closer, clarifies them, and makes them accessible in all their inherent strength, in their ability to inspire good and mobilize by drawing us in. This is how words have power.

If it is true that our deepest identity is narrative, the unknown force that articulation reveals allows people to understand their lives through a history that is renewed and enriched, that re-founds, gives meaning and substance to their own life relating it to a greater narrative, a broader history as realization of the good<sup>138</sup>. The strength of the sources articulates our feelings and our history, connecting us with that source (such as the struggle through the prism of the Exodus that the civil rights movement in the U.S. carried out). The strength of certain histories is linked to the comprehension of our lives in the narrative as something that is related to the good.

#### **4. Towards a new ethical realism to come out of the bottle: appellative realism**

In the previous section we have developed part of the analysis that Taylor offers for a better comprehension of the functioning and role of language, the social sciences and practical rationality to recover the vision of the self-interpretation of the human subject as a way of understanding human action and the vital commitments that are constituting her/his identity. In this section we will delve into it with particular emphasis on practical rationality and the kind of ontological foundation for morality that Taylor discovers. Let's see.

Taylor is opposed to a merely subjective character of values. Nevertheless, the status of moral realism of such objective force does not have the character of a naive realism in the manner of the Platonic Ideas. Although they do not have an independent existence from human beings, they do not depend on them either. In other words, there is a recognition of the transcendent force exerted by the appeal to certain values that exceed the will or interest of the



subject and his particular circumstance. As Taylor's hermeneutical analysis points out, we cannot dispense with the dimensions of value that stain all our judgments and descriptions. In this respect, the "value terms are real features of our world"<sup>139</sup> and the hierarchicalization of such terms is inherent to their recognition and to its articulation in the moral language by which, let us remember, we become moral subjects in a strong sense ourselves. Therefore, as has been shown, our way of being must be understood as a historically and dynamically constructed identity, which places Taylor's *appellative realism*<sup>140</sup> of values somewhere between objectivist Platonism of values and naturalistic projectivism<sup>141</sup>.

Taylor's position is heir to hermeneutics and phenomenology. He thinks that we can no longer be simple realists in our metaphysics or about hypergoods<sup>142</sup>. Human beings are self-interpreting beings, and consequently not Cartesianly transparent. But neither are creative imaginations with any correspondence beyond the self. Rather our self-interpretations are at their best when they are social<sup>143</sup>. Taylor places the subject's self-understanding, the possibility of meaning and meaning that shape their identity, in a space of transaction between the world and ourselves. This inhabited space has different dimensions; one of them enables the frameworks, the horizons of significance or backgrounds and their qualitative distinctions that allow, on the one hand, the articulation of hypergoods, and on the other (as we will see later) the recognition that we require from others to forge our identity, be given to us. This inhabited space has different dimensions; one of them allows us to be given the frameworks, the horizons of significance or backgrounds and their qualitative distinctions that allow both the articulation of hypergoods and the recognition of others (as we will see later) that we require to forge our identity. This places us within a broader horizon where what comes from outside does not impose itself but passes through the inwardness of the subject, where it is originally elaborated

and appropriated. Thus, what comes from outside does not impede freedom<sup>144</sup>, nor the affirmation of daily life nor the original expressiveness of the subject; on the contrary, it is what drives them for a life with significance and meaning. We will show the same with regard to the relationship of the human being with God and the life of the Gospel: the relationship with a broader presence that does not limit but rather conveys, empowers and transforms the human being.

But let's return to our line of argument. If *appellative realism* is taken seriously, it can break the spell that silences qualitative distinctions and substantive articulations and that blind us about our identity. It shows that goods are part of the world but not as studied by the natural sciences. Thence it is an unjustified leap to claim that they are therefore not real, nor objective, and not relative like any other part of the natural world<sup>145</sup>. Therefore, it cannot be said a priori that human beings must be explained by a science as understood by modern natural science, as if they were an object or a part of a disenchanted universe that considers the goods that the human being intensely values as not real. It is necessary to free oneself from the enchantment of the natural sciences and from Platonism that leaves the modern moral subject dumb and blind to examine and articulate moral goods.

In this sense, to penetrate human affairs and thoroughly explain the question of what it is to live in the universe as a human being, we do not have a better measure of reality than the language of "goods" or "values". They are the ones that best allow us to understand and explain both our actions and feelings and those of others. And unless other terms are proposed in which human agents can live their lives more clairvoyantly, the moral notions in which they cannot avoid living their lives meaningfully, cannot be excluded.

Nor can evaluative language be dispensed with simply because it does not conform to the logic of the model of modern science. Taylor proposes the *Best possible Account* (BA) principle in response to projectivist theories of moral judgment and the attempts to distinguish “facts” from “values”<sup>146</sup>. The BA notes that the sphere in which we try to explain and deliberate about our future action, in which we evaluate our character, feelings, reactions, behaviors and lifestyle and those of others, is one whose vocabulary we assume as the most realistic and insightful<sup>147</sup>. These terms that we select to understand human life are indispensable, understood as the narration that makes the most sense to us and in which we dwell, at least until it is possible to replace them with another. For the BA is the most credible explanation we have of the reality of human affairs, although provisionally. This is the ontology BAs can offer, again distinct from Platonic ontology and the purported universal objectifying neutrality of modern reason.

This is possible because our culture has separated the Platonic synthesis between the scientific explanation and the moral notion: physics is no longer anthropocentric, it no longer uses its terms to express itself, nor can human science express itself in the terms of physics because it wouldn’t be understood appropriately<sup>148</sup>. “Our value terms purport to give us insight into what it is to live in the universe as a human being, and this is a quite different matter from that which physical science claims to reveal and explain”<sup>149</sup>.

Now this tight ethical realism underlies authenticity not on the mere affirmation of choice itself. This perverts authenticity since the differences affirmed in that election are not valued. They become insignificant. “We cannot, therefore, reasonably pretend that a truncated way of life is moral for certain people based on the defense that they have a right to it”<sup>150</sup>. This position of Taylor is contrary to the universalism of the impartiality of modern thought, and argues that we have the ability to justify our own way of life as more significant than others, resorting to

intensely valued goods to reflect and make an opinion about what we live<sup>151</sup>. Likewise, we use them to determine what is thought of others and to universally judge other ways of life based on those strong criteria of value that we receive and possess. The strength of the proof lies in the very strength of these criteria and in their ability to express values that cannot be undervalued, since they contain content whose lack of knowledge, forgetfulness or destruction would go against our very way of being. However, the strength of these criteria can only be justified within a given framework or horizon of significance and for subjects who share such horizon<sup>152</sup>.

Belonging to a horizon of significance is articulated in a reflexive way in the conscience of a subject when articulating her/his BA and defining her/himself, that is, naming her/his identity. Therefore, this appears linked to the recognition of the highest goods that are expressed in a full and desirable way of life. But more than just attractive formulations and articulations of the desirability of a full form of human life, they involve a hierarchy of goods and, as Taylor shows, the recognition of a certain objectivity of higher goods. In fact, authenticity depends on the recognition of the transcendence of the horizons of significance; by appealing to them they appear to be independent of the subject's will. They are not merely chosen. Horizons of significance constitute something given<sup>153</sup>. We'll delve later into the elements that are received.

It is important to recall that the objectivity of higher goods is relative, since the horizons of significance that are given to us are expressed in linguistic articulations within a cultural group. Consequently, this hermeneutical position recognizes the possibility that there are forms of realization of the human that are incommensurable with each other<sup>154</sup>.

As a result of the modernization process and the greater cultural plurality, there has been a diversification of the goods by which we moderns move. This has produced that we do not take a single framework that guides our lives but one as the most important and serious of all<sup>155</sup>.

This highest good is what Taylor calls hypergood; our identity, our sense of being a person with the ability to take our own position and a direction in life will be marked by our commitment to this hypergood. That is, they provide the point of view from which to weigh, judge, and decide on other goods. This status is precisely what defines “the moral” in our culture: a set of goods or demands that not only have a particular importance, but also surpass and allow others to be judged.

However, as shown, hypergoods produce epistemological tensions. Briefly going through the most significant ones from this perspective will help us delve into Taylor's proposal in response to the currents that mute qualitative distinctions and horizons of significance. In the first place, the recognition of hypergoods is understood as the passage from a primitive or average condition of the moral conscience to a superior one, where we recognize ourselves guided by a certain sphere of goods that we consider to have incomparably greater dignity<sup>156</sup>. The critics of modern culture are varied. Those who embrace the principle of universal and egalitarian respect are suspicious of any requirement that may be illusory or self-destructive, or that minimizes natural desires and their satisfaction, or even becomes a justification for domination and social oppression<sup>157</sup>. Nietzsche took his criticism further and claimed what was supposedly the lowest in us or in our will of power to reach the self-affirmation of what we are. However, as Taylor insists, on the one hand, it is not possible to make sense of our moral life without something like the perspectives of a hypergood that allows us to grow and argue why this point of view is better than any other<sup>158</sup>. And on the other, these and all the criticisms are committed to their own hypergoods, such as equal and universal respect or the will of power, even if they don't realize it.

Now, what authority has practical reason to hold that one hypergood is superior to others? Naturalistic epistemology would use the natural sciences model, which supposes neutralizing our moral reactions, and would look for external decision criteria on questions of moral order. On the other hand, the moral practical reasoning model that considers the linguistic moral ontology, proceeds by “transitions” of comparative proposals between hypergoods<sup>159</sup>. This allows obtaining an objective *epistemic gain*, (in the sense discussed here) such as reducing errors, solving contradictions or confusions or gaps, standing as the best provisional account (BA), whose confidence arises from the fact that we have better grasped the situation we are facing<sup>160</sup>. In this horizon of understanding, if I abstract myself from the moral intuitions that move me, I will be incapable of understanding any moral argument and therefore of making some epistemic gain.

Secondly, the suspicion about hypergoods comes from the reference that some make to realities that transcend human life, such as nature, the Idea of good or God, which have no place in the explanation of the natural sciences. The utilitarian and Kantian currents particularize this position. We will mention them briefly, knowing that each one requires in-depth treatment.

Utilitarianism echoes the liberation associated with nominalism, posed by the modern independence of the subject who determines his own purposes without interference from external authority. Normative orders must originate in the will of the subject according to what she/he wishes and not in a cosmic order independent of her/his will. Utilitarianism in its most mature version indicates that each person is the best judge of her/his own happiness. It rejects all religious paternalism, which results in the rejection of the idea that good is founded on a certain natural order. Along with sustaining the affirmation of ordinary life, it affirms the freedom of the individual to determine the goals of her/his life and her/his particular definition of happiness.

This set of motives converges to discredit qualitative distinctions, making them appear intellectually suspicious and morally sinister. However, it will be very difficult for utilitarianism to understand what is the moral motivation to which it appeals when it relates the motivational theory of hedonism with the social benevolence that it supposes. Utilitarianism tries to reconcile the principle of utility and self-interest that seeks individual happiness with the happiness or well-being of society: subjects driven by self-interest, by utility, by their own benefit that benefits others.

On the other hand, Kant distinguishes between actions performed by duty and those performed by inclination, which is based on his distinction between the desire for happiness and respect for the moral law. He shares the emphasis on freedom as self-determination and the moral law as something that emanates from our will and that has a universal rational character. As one of the formulations of the categorical imperative points out: “act as if the maxim of your action should become, for your will, universal law of nature”<sup>161</sup>. Kant’s moral source is found in the dignity of the rational agent, whose status is unique in the universe, and whose moral obligations are determined by her/his reason. It dismisses as irrelevant the qualitative distinctions that separate the upper from the lower in human nature or in the cosmos. What are important would be the criteria that guide the action, not the visions of good.

Faced with realities that have no place in the explanation of modern science, Taylor vindicates the separation between *moral notions* and *scientific explanations* (to which we have already referred), so the appearance of the natural sciences does not prevent us, if we take the coherence of BA seriously, to perceive God or the Idea of Good or nature as essential for the best explanation we can present of the moral world. The acceptance of any hypergood connects in a complex and intrinsic way with the fact that it moves us.

We must specify that this connection between perception of the good and the fact of being moved by the good does not represent the standard of a subjectivist model. “We sense in the very experience of being moved by some higher good that we are moved by what is good [and infinitely valuable] in it rather than that it is valuable because of our reaction”<sup>162</sup> as postulated by naturalisms. Notwithstanding, the most reliable from the moral point of view, is not justified from outside of our moral intuitions, but on those intuitions that are more intense and that must respond to BA transitions. And the way to know if one is correct is to ask oneself if the new best provisional account poses a transition from my current belief towards error reduction, etc. In this, it is shown that the perception of a hypergood, in addition to offering the reasons and the meaning of our moral actions, works as a guiding sense of what is most important and thus also helps to configure the identity of the human agent. As Taylor has been insisting, the qualitative distinctions offered by reasons in moral thought are not external nor do they imply impassion, but anchored in our moral intuitions can somehow show that certain moral practices and fidelities are correct. When I offer an explanation of my concerns and fundamental reasons for you to understand my life, you can see why the perception of a hypergood while offering a reason also helps define my identity<sup>163</sup>.

Thirdly, the reason for the practical benevolence that coming from Christianity has influenced visions such as that of Bacon, who claims a type of scientific work that, in addition to creating objects of contemplation, mitigates the condition of humanity, improving its condition, reducing the poverty, increasing prosperity, etc.<sup>164</sup>

Finally, the desire for a completely universal ethic comes into play when the goods that we articulate in qualitative distinctions are usually the goods of a particular cultural group and are embedded in their way of life.



“Various combinations of these motives tend to bring Kantians and Utilitarians [and others] together around theories of obligatory action and relatedly, lead them to share a procedural [rather than a substantive] conception of ethics”<sup>165</sup>, in which rationality or thought of the agent is judged by how she/he thinks and not by whether the result is substantively correct. What is important is how the result has been achieved, not the particular result itself. This transition from substantive justification to procedural justification is associated with fidelity to the modern idea of freedom<sup>166</sup>; thus, for the utilitarians, practical rationality will be the maximization of the calculation of benefits; for Kantians it will be the universalization of the moral law<sup>167</sup>. Paradoxically, hypergoods like freedom, altruism, and universalism lead to their negation. Procedural practical reason denies the hypergoods that move it. But the Kantian principle of the just above the good shows itself inconsistent, since modern moral thought makes us inarticulate for some of the most important questions of morality that are removed from modern moral consciousness and reduced exclusively to obligations. As has been said, given their focus only on obligatory action towards others, they tend to unify the moral sphere around a single consideration or ‘basic reason’ distorting thought and moral sensitivity.

In short, as Taylor insists, modern moral philosophies of a naturalistic and scientific nature have bewitched the contemporary human being, making the notions of the superior and inferior cease to exist. They have silenced qualitative distinctions and substantive articulations about the good, which has left the subject blind and dumb, unable to choose the object of her/his will and to determine her/his own actions and commitments, unable to say who she/he is. The discovery of Taylor’s *appellative realism*, that is, the type of relative objectivity of the terms of value that are received in a web of interlocution is part of the output for a self-understanding of the subject and the configuration of her/his identity, in relation to a larger space, a space of

transaction between the world to which she/he belongs and her/his inwardness. We will deepen on this in the next section.

## **5. Exit towards an inhabited space for recognition. The authentic identity between what is received and what is constructed**

We have observed that Taylor's new ethical realism –his appellative realism– places us somewhere between the objectivist Platonism of values to which the human subject conforms and the subjective naturalistic projectivism that affirms the subject's constructive moral capacity. In this hermeneutic space there is an exchange, a transaction between the self-interpreting being and the world in which it is becoming. There are various aspects that the subject receives, which in principle do not depend on her/him, to be in turn reworked personally and collectively, shaping her/his personal and collective authentic identity as human beings.

This highlights the *dialogical structure* of the constitution processes of human identity, structure that has been forgotten by the monological turn of the dominant modern philosophy. It “seriously underestimates the place of the dialogical in human life, [...] it forgets how our understanding of the good things in life can be transformed by our enjoying them in common with people we love; how some goods become accessible to us only through such common enjoyment”<sup>168</sup>. More seriously, it forgets that “we become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence of defining an identity, through our acquisition of rich human languages of expression”<sup>169</sup>. As we have already suggested before, these languages, such as those of love, gesture, art, religious expression, etc., are received in exchange with others. And from this permanent dialogue, we develop our own opinions, outlook, stances toward things

incorporating a necessary solitary reflection. Likewise other important things such as the definition of one's identity are not carried out only in solitary reflection but in dialogue with significant others. This conversation in which we define ourselves continues internally, even though those significant others are no longer present in our lives. As Taylor recalls, our identity remains dialogical throughout our lives<sup>170</sup>. Additionally, if some of the things that are of value to us are accessible in relation to the people we love, that person becomes something internal to my identity<sup>171</sup>. In this sense, we have already studied the hermeneutical structure for that new language for the hypergoods and moral sources articulation that are given to us in a web of interlocution. Thus, the frameworks and horizons of significance in which hypergoods make sense, we receive them but to be processed and transformed and appropriate.

There are three other aspects that Taylor develops as part of the dialogical structure of human life and that are also part of the inherent demands of the ideal of authenticity. First, the need to consider "the demands of our ties with others"<sup>172</sup> that reveals the constitutive role of a moral community<sup>173</sup> in understanding the moral fabric in which we constitute our identity<sup>174</sup>. This is expressed, as we will explain, in the modern need for recognition. Second, consider the "demands of any kind emanating from something more or other than human desires or aspirations"<sup>175</sup>. Third, the space of languages of personal resonance that put us in contact with a larger whole. Let's dig deeper.

When we are blind to the constitutive role of a moral community, the ideal of self-realization is degraded into a purely personal understanding where bonds and communities are merely instrumental. On the intimate plane, others have to be subordinated to personal fulfillment; unconditional bonds that can last a lifetime and are lived in a gratuitous way are meaningless. Socially, political citizenship is only marginal, even though the ideal of self-

actualizing individualism incorporates certain notions of how to live together in society<sup>176</sup>. This instrumentalization of bonds is blind to links between recognition and identity, which acquire a particular characteristic in the modern culture of authenticity.

Taylor shows that the acknowledgment of the relation between recognition and identity is something that became particularly problematic recently in the modern culture. Because, in general terms, “our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Non-recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being”<sup>177</sup>. The history of discrimination and abuse of indigenous peoples, of black people, of woman, of homosexuals show us that a due recognition is a vital need. Yet, now this is even more problematic due to two changes. First, the collapse of social hierarchies that used to form the basis for the recognition of honor, intrinsically linked to inequalities and a role within society (monarchy, clergy, army, peasant, craftsman, etc.).<sup>178</sup> Second, in the face of this, the idea of dignity used in universalist and egalitarian terms arises, moving from honor for a few to the dignity for all. That is one of the origins of the forms of equal recognition that have been essential to democratic culture<sup>179</sup>.

Nevertheless the possibility of personal definition through roles or social classes within a democratic society has also been weakened. Thus, “what does decisively undermine this socially derived identification is the ideal of the authenticity itself”<sup>180</sup>. The importance of recognition has been modified and intensified by this new understanding of individual authentic identity that emerges at the end of the 18th century, one that is particular to me and that I discover in myself,

together with the ideal of being true to myself and my own particular way of being. As we already pointed out, it should be noted that although identity must be generated internally, this is not synonymous with isolation, but through dialogue. Thus “my discovering my own identity doesn’t mean that I work it out in isolation, but that I negotiate it through dialogue, partly overt, partly internal, with others. That is why the development of an ideal of inwardly generated identity gives a new importance to recognition. My own identity crucially depends on my dialogical relations with others”<sup>181</sup>. This new situation challenges the human being because although there was always a certain degree of dependence on others, since “general recognition was built into the socially derived identity by virtue of the very fact that it was based on social categories that everyone took for granted [, yet] inwardly derived, personal, original identity doesn’t enjoy this recognition a priori”<sup>182</sup>. It has to win it through exchange, and the attempt can fail”<sup>183</sup>.

So, in a personal realm, our “identity can be formed or malformed through the course of our contact with significant others. [... It] needs and is vulnerable to the recognition given or withheld by significant others”<sup>184</sup>. Therefore those relationships that define my identity cannot be expended; “if my self-exploration takes the form of such [...] temporary relationships, then is not my identity that I am exploring, but some modality of enjoyment”<sup>185</sup>.

In social terms, the emphasis on the notion of dignity has articulated a “politics of universalism, emphasizing the equal dignity of all citizens, and the content of this politics has been the equalization of rights and entitlements”<sup>186</sup>, underlain by the notion of a supposed neutrality and the loss of the value category that we have analyzed<sup>187</sup>. Faced with this equalization, Taylor seeks in the political idea of *equal recognition* the basis for a reconceptualization of the public sphere that meets both the demands for equality of modern

democracies and the recognition of the particularities of cultural traditions and historically constituted forms of identity.

Taylor is lucid in showing that “recognizing difference, like self-choosing, requires a horizon of significance, in this case a shared one”<sup>188</sup>. For the danger of the politics of difference (contrary to the universalism of dignity) is that it considers all ways of life and forms of identity as equally valuable in themselves due to the fact of their mere difference. But mere difference is not a foundation for equality of value. For instance, men and women, as Taylor notes, are equal because above the differences we recognize that there are common or complementary properties that have a certain value. This requires that we share certain standards of value where the identities in question are shown to be equal. Otherwise the equality that we defend will be only an imposture or an empty act.

For this study, this social dimension shows Taylor’s understanding of human dignity. In front of the modern assumption of dignity as a right, he understands dignity from the value category. Namely, this would be a capacity that all human beings share, “a universal human potential”<sup>189</sup> that must be respected equally for all but in whose conception the elements of emergence, development, and process of constitution are central. Taylor recovers the idea that modern liberal thought attributes to subjects as a fact what is only a capacity that must be developed in dense social, cultural and material settings. Two ways of understanding politics are based on this twofold way of understanding the idea of ‘equal dignity’: on the one hand, the classical contractualism of blind neutrality of the public sphere with respect to particular worlds; and on the other, the one that understand that this sphere can be especially sensitive to promoting the development of these life worlds, especially when some of them are threatened. That is, on

the one hand, neutral impartiality, and on the other hand, an equality interested in particularity and its recognition<sup>190</sup>.

Taylor is not advocating for the elimination of the distinction between the just and the good or the idea of ‘equal dignity’, but how to instill in it a sense of substantive value without unfair and arbitrary discrimination and exclusions. That is the balance between community and rights, between the idea of “equality” and the idea of “recognition”. Taylor articulates the political heritage of liberalism, with its deduction and attention to the idea of fairness and impartiality, with the particular cultural traditions and with the ideas of good that those traditions embody<sup>191</sup>. These are fundamental in the constitution of the authentic identity of the human being.

Let us now consider the second dimension of the dialogical structure of the human condition: the demands that come from something that is beyond human aspirations. Taylor explains how and why human identity in the horizon of the “authenticity in not enemy of demands that emanate from beyond the self; it supposes such demands”<sup>192</sup>. For defining ourselves and determining what our originality consists in requires us to take as background what is significant. This demands that we overcome the reduction, as we have already described, of soft relativism and self-determined freedom that accentuates the value of “choice” itself. It supposes that things have no meaning in themselves but that they acquire it when someone decides, thinks or believes it. But if that were so, we could not explain this claim by making it intelligible, nor could it be subject to criticism. Personal impression cannot determine what is significant. Furthermore, the difference becomes insignificant. As we have already indicated, “things take on importance against a background of intelligibility”<sup>193</sup> that Taylor also calls

horizon of significance, for which some things are worthwhile and others not, long before the election.

Taylor emphasizes both in relation to the authentic identity of the human being whose significance comes from her/his own choice. It not only depends on those horizons being given, but also, “depends on the understanding that *independent of my will* there is something noble, courageous, and hence significant in giving shape to my own life. [...] Self choice as an ideal makes sense only because some *issues* are more significant than others”<sup>194</sup>. Conversely, if significance depended only on one’s choice, nothing would be significant. A horizon of issues of importance is required to help define the aspects in which the formation of one's identity becomes significant. In this sense, contemporary forms of culture that focus on self-fulfilment by fleeing and opposing the demands of society or history or nature, etc., are only “narcissistic” and superficial forms of authenticity. Paradoxically, the reductive understanding of freedom that is closed to the demands that come beyond the self, destroys the conditions for choosing a meaningful life.

Consequently, authentic identity can be defined “only against the background of things that matter”<sup>195</sup> and that are silenced by modern procedural culture: history, nature, society, the demands of justice and solidarity, the needs of recognition of discriminated groups, the duties of the citizen or the call of the God of history.

How is the need for openness coordinated with what the “world” starts as a call to respond authentically with the force of modern subjectivation? Subjectivity founds the critical attitude that mobilizes us not to accept the dictates of authority in themselves but to think for ourselves. However, in order not to be closed in on ourselves, Taylor introduces an important distinction in the way of understanding modern freedom and autonomy in light of the



authenticity that drives us to discover and articulate our own identity. Namely, authenticity has two facets, one regarding “the *manner* and the other concerning the *matter* or *content* of action”<sup>196</sup>. Regarding the manner of embracing a certain ends and ways of life, authenticity refers to itself: this must be “my” orientation. Not so with regard to the content. As we have seen, these should not refer to the subject and it is not necessary that the expression of her/his aspirations be made in opposition to what is beyond the subject. On the contrary, the relevant significances are independent of our wishes. But, “to confuse these two kinds of self-referentiality is catastrophic”<sup>197</sup>. As Taylor well recalls, there is no longer a homogeneous public reference point that makes us share the assumptions, but rather a plurality of significances as if it were a forest in whose light gaps different aspects of reality open up and resonate in different ways in people. Taylor himself refers to it with an example about modern poetry, whose language defines, creates and at the same time reveals and manifests a greater reality: “the inescapable rooting of poetic language in personal sensibility doesn't have to mean that the poet no longer explores an order beyond the self”<sup>198</sup>. The important thing that Taylor shows is that while we can no longer be naive realists and trust in the objective reality of essences that are beyond the observable, neither we can shut ourselves up in the subjectivity of the disengaged and instrumental reason that consider the world only as raw materials at hand for our projects. We “still need to see ourselves as part of a larger order that can make claims on us”<sup>199</sup>.

This leads us to consider the third aspect that accounts for the dialogical structure of the human condition and that at the risk of schematic superficiality we will only make a reference, since this requires further development. To grasp the demands that our world to which we belong has on us, we need to enter the space of languages of personal resonance (which, as the second aspect indicates, is not subjectivist in its content). This is the only possibility of being

true to ourselves: recognizing the languages that put us in contact with a larger whole in a deeper and more interior way.

In this space of languages of personal resonance, a hypergood might be as much found as made, empathizing that there is something like a hypergood that is not exhausted in any language we use to refer to it. As Taylor says, Rilke takes us “beyond expressivism and beyond any temptation to a mere celebration of our epiphanic power, to the central issue of the nature of epiphany, not just as our action, but as a transaction between ourselves and the world [...] transfiguration is a task laid on us by the world”<sup>200</sup>. It seems that for Taylor the transaction between the world and ourselves is something which the world initiates. We are responders to a call from something already there in the world, arising in our experience in the form of a “constitutive factual good” that promises some kind of fullness for our life, far from any arrogant self-celebration of human abilities.

But if there is the appellative realism of these hypergoods that we found and made at the same time thanks to the world’s initiative, does this mean that the human being is structurally open to transcendence? And if so, to what kind of transcendence? In the next sections we will delve into it.

## **6. Fullness as an exit towards transcendence?**

We have shown that the human being is structurally oriented towards good. For this reason, the possibility of an authentic human identity in a strong sense, that is, of being a self with the ability to take a position with an orientation in life, implies the reception and personal appropriation of value frameworks and horizons of significance that are articulated in reference

communities. They bring us into contact with the backgrounds of things that matter, the hypergoods that are beyond individual aspirations and against which our identity is shaped. We have mentioned as examples history, nature, society, the demands of justice and solidarity, the recognition needs of discriminated groups, the citizen duties or the call of the God of history. The hypergoods are what make our life have a certain moral/spiritual form and that we can experience it daily full of meaning<sup>201</sup>.

However, the question about the lack of meaning in our culture is not reduced to the lack of articulation of our frameworks, of the moral sources and of the hypergoods that guide our lives. Our time is haunted by the “the specter of meaninglessness”, which is, in a sense, a dispatch from *fullness*. We experience this for example in our experience of time: faced with the chronological homogeneity of secular time, the human being experiences, as we have already explained, the need to make sense of his/her own history through a narrative that gives unity, foundation and orientation to his/her life. But as we will see, in the modern secular condition lurks the fear that we may be making this up<sup>202</sup>.

Taylor suggests that “this theme is indeed special to modernity; [...] in earlier years, it would have seemed bizarre to fear an absence of meaning. When humans were posed between salvation and damnation, one might protest at the injustice and cruelty of an avenging God, but not that there were no important issues left”<sup>203</sup>. In Taylor’s view, it speaks of (a) the desire of eternity, “the desire to gather together the scattered moments of meaning into some kind of whole”<sup>204</sup>, and (b) of inherent teleology in our actions, “one that seems to always implicitly have an “ultimate” to which it is aimed, even if we so often concern ourselves with the penultimate”<sup>205</sup>. As we have already explained, these ultimate or constitutive goods, into and toward which the subject lives, are shown as having worth and with the ability to move the

subject. In this sense, they present themselves as “a place of fullness, or richness which transcends the ordinary to which we orient ourselves morally or spiritually”<sup>206</sup>.

Taylor is very clear in pointing out that *a place for fullness* is not a hidden way of talking about God; this yearning is inscribed in the human structure. “It arises out of a sense that there are goals which could engage us more fully and deeply than our ordinary ends [that] will not easily be uprooted from the human heart”<sup>207</sup>. However, it is not that the human agent is focused on meaning as such –that is the structure– “rather than on some specific good or value. One might die for God, or the Revolution, or the classless society, but not for meaning”<sup>208</sup>.

In this sense, Taylor recognizes that he is “taking it as axiomatic that everyone, and hence all philosophical positions, accepts some definition of greatness and fullness in human life”<sup>209</sup>. “There is no escaping some version of [...] “fullness”; for any liveable understanding of human life, there must be some way in which this life looks good, whole, proper, really being lived as it should. The utter absence of some such would leave us in abject, unbearable despair”<sup>210</sup>. In this sense, both believers and non-believers have their own versions of fullness. And both fight reductionist conceptions of a narrow scientific materialism that would leave no room for fullness.

What are these reductionist visions? Within the varied forms that materialism presents, Taylor concentrates on two. First, the mechanistic explanation of the world interprets it only through efficient causation and considers any recourse to meanings and teleology in our explanations an illusion. Second, motivational materialism explains action only based on the lower motives, not in moral aspirations or, strong evaluations. Again, it is both epistemological and moral motives that support the materialistic perspective of the modern science that bewitch the human being. Among the former, the position of external, from nowhere and impartial vision stands out, where an impersonal universal order is interpreted. Among the latter, courage is

postulated to be able to carry on human existence without the need for teleological illusions or meaning. Furthermore, they submit that religious or metaphysical considerations would separate us from concrete and daily concerns for happiness, desire and human suffering<sup>211</sup>.

Then, Taylor presents three forms of human achievement that in our culture are defended as a possibility that escapes materialistic possibilities: about agency, ethics and aesthetics. First, “there is the sense that we aren’t just determined, that we are active, building, creating, shaping agents”. Second, “there is also a spiritual objection: we have higher ethical/spiritual motives”. And third, from the aesthetic we experience that “art, nature moves us; we have a deeper sense of meaning; we can’t see our “aesthetic” responses as just another form of pleasurable reaction. They have a deeper significance”<sup>212</sup>.

As we said, both believers and non-believers positions have their own approach to answer what real fullness consists in, and some lean firmly on immanence while the others posit some transcendent source or power. Nevertheless, Taylor will consistently question: whether one’s ontology is adequate to support a sense of fullness and if one’s position is really viable<sup>213</sup>. For instance, the Modern Moral Order (MMO) that understands human beings as rational, sociable agents that collaborate in peace for their mutual benefit and for the defense of their rights. It is a high calling to altruism and other-regard. However, as Taylor has account, because of an inadequate appreciation for moral sources, modernity fixates on scrupulous moral codes of social behavior that delineate high moral expectations with very specific rules. But it doesn’t mean that we know how to make people moral. Codes don’t make people care for their neighbor or for other creatures or for the environment. In other words, codes are inadequate as moral sources precisely because they do not touch on the dynamics of moral motivation that we have shown in the previous chapters<sup>214</sup>. It was not the code or a rule that produced active nonviolence

resistance in Martin Luther King Jr, or the life of courage and prophecy in Monseñor Oscar Arnulfo Romero, or the activist determination of Berta Cáceres, or forgiveness in Nelson Mandela. Even in the face of the modern determination to end suffering supported in the power and greatness of the human nature. But, is it enough? In the extreme case of the blackguards, the failures, the useless, the dying, those on the way out, in brief, those who negate the promise of human greatness, does not human history show that “perhaps only God, and to some extent those who connect themselves to God, can love human beings when they are utterly abject”<sup>215</sup>? Or that only they can stay with the sufferers when there is nothing more to do than just being there? Taylor will delve into a series of dilemmas that have no definitive solution either from an immanent perspective or from a transcendent interpretation: the experience of evil, the meaning of suffering, the question of meaning and death, or the understanding of the place of sexuality and violence in human life.

Once again the human’s concern is dual. First, we want to discover what the moving force is here, to give an account which does justice to it. Second, we sense that getting it right will help to strengthen it, and to liberate it from the motives that could turn it into its opposite<sup>216</sup>.

It is suggestive that Taylor links the constitutive goods or *moral sources*, with respect to which the subjects learn to move and at the same time are moved, with a *place of fullness*<sup>217</sup>, in any of its three modes. Whether as a way of (1) identifying the fullness that guides and allows us to perceive what it is made of, moving us deeply but not always clearly: the presence of God, the voice of nature, the force that flows through things, the work to achieve a wish or drive to build. Or (2) modes of distance that produce boredom, lack of power, the feeling of exile and confusion. Or (3) in its intermediate state mode to which the subject generally aspires: a certain daily routine order in which things have meaning since they help daily happiness in human

relationships, in which we exercise a vocation that gives us satisfaction and we experience that we contribute to the common welfare. In this case, a certain daily contact with the significance of our activities and the confirmation that we are moving slowly towards that place of fullness are vital<sup>218</sup>. In these three modes –the proximity of fullness, exile or intermediate forms– the place of fullness is not something that one possesses, there is still a way to go, although it does not necessarily imply a state beyond this life. This arises especially when the effort is put into “understand better belief and unbelief as lived conditions, not just as theories or sets of beliefs subscribed to”<sup>219</sup>. Since it is in the lived experience where we look for the most credible explanation for the reality of human affairs, including credible frameworks, hypergoods and moral sources, and a notion of fullness and the immanent or transcendent force on which it relies.

In this sense, believers and non-believers have different ways of experiencing that fullness and the source of power that can bring us closer to that fullness, because we experience the world differently. From their perspective, believers explain the place of fullness in reference to God, understanding it as something that is beyond human life and/or nature but that comes towards them (the reference to the horizon of the Judeo-Christian God experience is evident):

...often or typically, the sense is that fullness comes to them, that it is something they receive; moreover, receive in something like a personal relation, from another being capable of love and giving; approaching fullness involves among other things, practices of devotion and prayer (as well as charity, giving); and they are aware of being very far from the condition of full devotion and giving; they are aware of being self-enclosed, bound to lesser things and goals, not able to open themselves and receive/give as they would at the place of fullness. So there is the notion of receiving power or fullness in a relation; but the receiver isn't simply empowered in his/her present condition; he/she needs to be opened, transformed, brought out of self<sup>220</sup>.

Instead, for modern unbelievers the power to reach fullness is within and is developed in various versions. Kantians find in the subject the capacity to elaborate universal moral laws

different from the law that they can discover in nature, which causes them great admiration and respect<sup>221</sup>. There are other naturalistic versions that in turn are admired of the instrumental reason and the heroic courage of the human being who faces a universe devoid of meaning and hostile, establishing her/his own rules for life. The romantic strands have a reduced perception of reason and are suspicious of its destructive power, and find in nature and/or in the inner depths of the human being the sources of power to achieve the demands of fullness. In this way, they emphasize reception rather than self-sufficiency but do not leave the immanent plane as a place. Instead contemporary postmodern trends emphasize the perpetual absence of fullness<sup>222</sup>.

Taylor suggests that while all people have a sense of fullness the “modes of fullness recognized by exclusive humanisms, and others that remain within the immanent frame, are therefore responding to transcendent reality, but misrecognizing it<sup>223</sup>”, which impoverishes aspects of that reality. However, this blindness to the transcendent is not exclusive to non-believers. Many believers in general, and not only fundamentalists, lose their personal relationship with the transcendence identified with God, when they believe they have been able to dominate it in their schemes of understanding, reducing it to a certain moral order or a certain sociopolitical program or a certain ritual rubricism closer to code fetishism and pseudo-magic power. Without realizing it, they put themselves or their clear ideas of God (but not the transcendent God that comes towards them) or their moral codes as the ultimate or the highest<sup>224</sup>. Now, as the relationship with the fullness –or with the transcendent– cannot be understood from the impersonal and objectifying perspective of modern science, it is not demonstrable that we are responding to a transcendent reality in our identifying and recognizing some mode of what Taylor has called fullness, and seeking to attain it, except insofar as it offers a better account of our experience<sup>225</sup>. At this moral/spiritual level our lived experience is interpreted against a



background of understanding that is articulated in a narrative (self) understanding<sup>226</sup>, which is effective when it confers meaning and substance to people's lives, releasing a vital force<sup>227</sup>. In this sense, "the "better-ness" of that account is something that has to be felt" somehow; but "if one might not *sense* the force of this alternative account, it might still be possible to imagine how the world looks for someone who does"<sup>228</sup>.

It is important to highlight that the existential context where we reach a Best provisional Account of our experience is always threatened by uncertainty. Taylor shows that "secularity<sup>229</sup> is [the] condition in which our experience of and search for fullness occurs; and this is something we all share, believers and unbelievers alike"<sup>230</sup>. As we have already pointed out before, "it 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"<sup>231</sup>; the believer interpretation of our quest for fullness is an option that in many circumstances is embattled with more than reasonable questions.

Consequently, although the most insightful explanation of our moral and spiritual experience can be captured by a theistic conception of existence –which is related to spiritual practices such as prayer, conversation, liturgy, solidarity praxis, commensality, etc.– that has brought me closer to the place of fullness or rescued from inner exile, I can rarely stop doubting completely. There is always a suspicion that I may be inventing everything; "naïveté is now unavailable to anyone, believer or unbeliever alike"<sup>232</sup>. Now we live our lives in a state of constant doubt and uncertainty, since there are always some experiences that are not adequate from our own interpretation of life, or because other lives show possibilities of fullness from

another perspective or because people that are intelligent and reasonably well oriented in life may not agree with our own interpretation.

This change in the existential background shows more seriously than the frameworks in which we articulate the image of fullness of our lives and the moral sources that give it strength are always limited and threatened by doubt. We have shown that it is not possible to live without reference to a framework; the secular context (and in which we must delve further) shows that the framework from which we interpret our lives can no longer be taken for granted. Secularity supposes a plurality of interpretations with which we coexist and where we see ourselves holding one point of view among other possible ones. Not only we do feel that our position is debatable, but we also have the possibility of experiencing the attractiveness or the strength underlying other orientations than ours. Secularity demands from us to formulate our framework explicitly to understand the differential position of the interpretation of our vital orientation. In this way we learn to live our faith or lack of faith reflexively between two positions: “an “engaged” one in which we live as best we can the reality our standpoint opens us to; and a “disengaged” one in which we are able to see ourselves as occupying one standpoint among a range of possible ones, with which we have in various ways to coexist”<sup>233</sup>. Perhaps in this uncertainty lies today the possibility of a more meaningful life.

### **6.1 Blindness for the triple transcendence that transforms within an immanent frame**

Taylor shows that in our current situation, the basic orientation we assume is not defined by bare apprehension of the facts. The immanent order allows us both interpretations: it can remain open to the possibility of transcendence, in response to our deepest longings for fullness,

or it can be considered an obstacle to our ideal of autonomy, characteristic of exclusive humanism, or to our will of power, as the Neonietzscheans claim. However, we must still clarify, on the one hand, the notion of transcendence that Taylor is using, and on the other, what he refers to with the *immanent frame*, that metaphorical concept related to a specific structure to which we have already referred.

With Taylor we have already understood how in a plural context, the limited frameworks within which we interpret, feel and live our experience require to be formulated and articulated. In this lies, on the one hand, the possibility that the modern subject acquires an identity in the strong sense, with a significant orientation from which he/she takes a position, and on the other, the possibility of moving and being moved by what he/she understands as a *place of fullness* in a context of plurality of interpretations.

Taylor is lucid in pointing out that “we have moved from a world in which the place of fullness was understood as unproblematically outside of or “beyond” human life, to a conflicted age in which this construal is challenged by others which place it “within” human life” (in a wide range of different ways). This interpretation of reality as dual, in which two areas can be distinguished and separated, is possible thanks to what Taylor calls the great invention of the West: “an immanent order in Nature, whose working could be systematically understood and explained on its own terms, leaving open the question whether this whole order had a deeper significance, and whether, if it did, we should infer a transcendent Creator beyond it. This notion of the “immanent” involved denying—or at least isolating and problematizing—any form of interpenetration between the things of Nature, on one hand, and “the supernatural” on the other, be this understood in terms of the one transcendent God, or of Gods or spirits, or magic forces, or whatever”<sup>234</sup>.

This terminology allows Taylor to show that what he understands by *secularity* in our Age of Authenticity, refers to the context of understanding, both in its explicit formulations and the implicit background, in which our moral, spiritual and religious experience, and our search for fullness takes place<sup>235</sup>. In this context, although the non-believing interpretations that shape our lived experience seem to be the most plausible, they are not the only ones. For this reason, although all, believers and non-believers, understand the distinctions between the natural and the supernatural, between the immanent and the transcendent, the novelty of modern interpretation is the acceptance in the social imaginary of the separation between “nature” and something transcendent with which you cannot necessarily interact<sup>236</sup>. In this sense, the “immanent frame” refers to a “of immanent order which can be explained and accounted for in their own terms. That is what the modern idea of the “natural”, counterposed to the “supernatural”, [an “immanent” world, over against a possible “transcendent” one] means. It is possible, even tempting to make a claim on behalf of this, that there is no need whatever to go beyond it to understand our world”<sup>237</sup>.

Thanks to the prestige of natural science and the systems it tracks, this general shared understanding by believers and unbelievers tends to appear as the totality for sense-making. Thereupon, this constructed social space frames our lives entirely within a natural rather than supernatural shared order, precluding transcendence<sup>238</sup>. As an enclosed, self-sufficient, naturalistic universe without any reference to transcendence, it encompasses our moral and spiritual seek for fullness, even if we believe in transcendence. Therefore, Taylor claims that “the question isn’t *whether* we inhabit the immanent frame, but *how*”<sup>239</sup>.

In this scenario Taylor places the discussion at the epistemological level. He realizes that the shift to a modern foundational epistemology sites the *intramental* as the locus of certainty,

instituting *representation* as the foundation of all certainty regarding the real. However, this is more a construction and an interpretation of human knowledge theory than evidence. Likewise “The Death of God” and that we “discover” that we are alone in the universe and that if there’s going to be any meaning, we have to make it facing up reality in an adult way, is an invention of modernity based on science control and courage as a moral attitude. And these motives became part of our social imaginary in which we live.

The epistemological reduction of modern science hinders access to the transcendent, since it reduces the divine reality to the causal scheme that it uses to order and explain reality that is understood as “natural reality”. It is this causal concept applied to God one of the factors that has made the modern subject blind to transcendence. “From the mechanization of the world picture, and the atrophy of a sense of God as connected to a meaningful cosmos [there is a] new “univocal” understanding of being, predicated alike of God and of creatures<sup>240</sup>. [...Thus] God becomes more easily conceivable as a very big and powerful Being, in fact, as the supreme Artificer, and his Providence more immediately understood in terms of its remarkable general Design”<sup>241</sup>. Nevertheless, God (at least in the Christian interpretation) is not intelligible in the *immanent cause–effect scheme*, nor as a super provident object. The other complementary factor is moral and is based on the triumphant pride of the human being who would be able to find in him/herself or in immanence the source to achieve the fullness of life.

But in Judeo-Christianity, God is understood as a presence of which to become progressively aware or with which to be in communion, rather than a scientific conclusion to be discursively drawn or a deduction that one reached from evidence afforded by empirical inquiries<sup>242</sup>. God is not understood as the guarantor of an impersonal mechanism but as the absolute alterity that is related to the human being in history transforming him/her through his

Agape. In this sense, that absolute and transcendent divine alterity, that is structurally related to immanence (without being reduced to or confused with it), does not impede or compete, but rather sustains, conveys and makes possible the life and freedom of the human being.

Considering the above, Taylor explains that how one inhabits the immanent frame hinges on how one construe transcendence. The problem is that not too much people articulate a position on these matters too often. This is because, “not only is the immanent frame itself not usually, or even mainly a set of beliefs which we entertain about our predicament, however it may have started out: rather [the immanent frame] is the sensed context in which we develop our beliefs” [,] “something we have trouble often thinking ourselves outside of, even as an imaginative exercise”<sup>243</sup>. The immanent frame has seeped into our social imaginary, that is to say, it has become part of the background understanding: our interpretation is not something reasoned *to*, as much as it is something we reason *from*<sup>244</sup>. It is “a background to our thinking, within whose terms it is carried on, but which is often largely unformulated, and to which we can frequently, just for this reason, imagine no alternative”<sup>245</sup>. In Wittgensteinian terms, it is more like the flycatcher bottle that holds us captive than a reasoned position or articulated worldview. Can we find a way out?

The modern subject that conquered a non-vulnerable mode of existence with the feeling of control over the world and over itself sustained in the power of reason and science, started to experience a loss and a malaise in front of the disenchantment of the world: the sensation of a flat, empty world, where humans have lost something<sup>246</sup>. This produced a search in both believers and non-believers for “that something more” in front of the meaning of life, the need to mean important moments of existence and in response to a certain emptiness of everyday life.

In this context, the spiritual life that emerges from expressive revolution of the Age of Authenticity, “often springs from a profound dissatisfaction with a life encased entirely in the immanent order”. As said, it is a quest for the individual. Nothing is given or axiomatic anymore, so one has to find one’s faith: “I have to discover my route to wholeness and spiritual depth. The focus is on the individual and on his/her experience”<sup>247</sup>. But, as Taylor has defended, it is not mere subjectivism and individualism. There is a search for something else, but that must be relevant to the subject.

Taylor shows it as the typical modern tension that affirms the *value of ordinary life* but yearns for something more. And as he has said, depending on how one construe transcendence, one can understand that “finding out about oneself, expressing oneself, discovering one’s own way of becoming all that one can be” is opposed to “denying or sacrificing oneself for the sake of a super-self order of things, or even living by reference to such an order”<sup>248</sup>. But this contrast can’t be considered exhaustive. The ethic of authenticity is a personal quest that can end in the second term whose super-self order invokes one view of what is supremely important in life. There are no guarantees, but nothing ensures it’s opposite either<sup>249</sup>.

Now, how can you understand the importance of something that involves relativizing what Taylor calls *human flourishing*? In what sense is fullness achieved in this way? Being willing to detach oneself from flourishing supposes responding and articulating our conception of realized life, which makes life worth living. It is what we conceive, for example, when we ask ourselves what we most admire about people.

So, this is one of the fundamental tensions in Christianity. “Flourishing is good, nevertheless seeking it is not our ultimate goal; [...] flourishing and the transcendent goal were distinguished and paradoxically related”. The transcendent God of Christianity wills ordinary

human flourishing. But the resignation necessary to achieve that ultimate goal is not part of human flourishing. They cannot be collapsed into each other to make a single goal because “unless living the full span were a good, Christ’s giving of himself to death couldn’t have the meaning it does”<sup>250</sup>. In this sense:

...the call to renounce doesn’t negate the value of flourishing; it is rather a call to centre everything on God, even if it be at the cost of forgoing this unsubstitutable good; and the fruit of this forgoing is that it become on one level the source of flourishing to others, and on another level, a collaboration with the restoration of a fuller flourishing by God. It is a mode of healing wounds and “repairing the world”<sup>251</sup>

What is Taylor’s interpretation of transcendence, from which this way of inhabiting immanence is thought? The Canadian thinker gathers the Christian tradition to propose a *triple transcendence*, placing the key of contact with this source, in the possibility of the transformation of the subject beyond our usual scope by participation in God’s love (theiosis<sup>252</sup>), which in turn expresses his approach to religious experience.

First, “one believes in some agency or power transcending the immanent order”. Second, “the crucial one [...] is the sense that there is some good higher than, beyond human flourishing. In the Christian case, we could think of this as agape, the love which God has for us, and which we can partake of through his power. In other words, a possibility of transformation is offered, which takes us beyond merely human perfection”. And thirdly, “the Christian story of our potential transformation by agape requires that we see our life as going beyond the bounds of its “natural” scope between birth and death; our lives extend beyond “this life”<sup>253</sup>. Consequently, in Taylor’s view is essential to religion a fullness that requires the transformation of the human beyond mere this-worldly flourishing. In this sense, religion is not just a collection of beliefs about supernatural entities; it engenders a way of life that is transformative<sup>254</sup>.



The aspiration to fullness by making contact with this greater reality implies understanding that humans have an unavoidable temporal dimension, which as we already explained is expressed in its narrative structure. We are always in process, changing and becoming situated in time and open to a fullness that we sense, pre-like but have not yet reached. This is the horizon of Christian Eschatology that supposes that “this is a transformation which cannot be completed in history. [We] as individuals, and as churches, hold open the path to the fullness of the kingdom”<sup>255</sup>.

However, modern moral thought, which is limited to seeking the correct punctual action and that does not consider how the subject can become good and achieve some degree of fullness, has serious difficulties in accepting a horizon like this. The modern moral thought thinks of subjects already made and not as subjects with capacities that can develop in dense social, cultural, material and spiritual frameworks. Furthermore, the objectifying attitude typical of modern thought has a reduced subjective notion of what we can understand by “experience”; in fact, it does not consider this qualifying element. From Descartes’ philosophy of knowledge and mind we receive this way of thinking “of experience as something subjective, distinct from the object experienced; and as something to do with our feelings, distinct from changes in our being: dispositions, orientations, the bent of our lives, etc. That is, “experience” may have a causal effect on these latter, but it is defined separately from them”<sup>256</sup>. In this horizon of understanding we become blind to contacts with transcendence, whether at revealing moments that modify life, in the daily practice of piety in prayer and service, in the awareness of what historical realities demand from us, in the transforming experience of ritual moments and collective celebrations, etc.

Now, notwithstanding exclusive humanism shut down our openness to transformation, like Christianity, it offers remarkable testimonies of humanity and philanthropic action. But both reflect a very different conception of the human being. Taylor quotes Camus to speak of the heroism of someone who still lives in the midst of the perceived meaninglessness and worthlessness of life and who, faithful to the dignity of his rational being, seeks to live in harmony with the common interest and the good of others. It is what Taylor calls a unilateral self-enclosed heroism whose image of fullness is the realization of lone rational individuals. But is that what life is about? Christian faith proposes a quite different view. It supposes that the highest good consists in communion, mutual giving and receiving, as in the paradigm of the *eschatological banquet*. Taylor uses the image of a parent raising his/her child. “The child is being led by a parent along a path of growth. But this is not just a service performed by one human being for another. It only succeeds where it is other and more than this, where a bond of love arises. This is a bond where each is a gift to the other, where each gives and receives, and where the line between giving and receiving is blurred. We are quite outside the range of “altruistic” unilateralism”<sup>257</sup>. This is what we Christians try to say happens when we allow ourselves to be reached by the Trinitarian God, by that stream of love that transforms us, history and creation.

However, that the place of human fullness is better interpreted from the theistic vision or from the exclusive humanism vision is something that cannot be demonstrated; it must be taken “on faith”. The term “faith” is used here in a different sense from that referred to when we speak of a theistic religion. What we are trying to say is that what drives the subject to adopt one or the other path is based on a “general sense” of things that anticipates or anticipates the reasons that he/she can give to justify it. That “general sense” about human life and it’s cosmic and (in some

cases) spiritual environment is a kind of “anticipatory confidence”, whether in belief and relationship with God or in an exclusive humanism or in the vindication of the will of power. In this sense it is a “faith”, a bet. This does not mean that it is an arbitrary position; the subject can try to express the considerations that motivate his/her position. For instance, her/his idea of what is really important in human life or the ways in which he/she thinks that human life can be transformed or the constants in history (if any), etc. Likewise, the life experiences of the subject can make his/her confidence in his/her position stronger or weaker<sup>258</sup>.

In addition, in the case of Christianity, we can’t explain fully “what it means, lay it out in a code or a fully-specified life form, but only point to the exemplary lives of certain trail-blazing people and communities”<sup>259</sup>.

As you can guess, to enter into this stream involves also a *transformation of the frame* in which we think, feel and live. For in addition to the experience of openness to the transcendent that has been embraced as a notion of human fullness, we require, as Taylor teaches, that we can articulate about the values, goods and qualitative distinctions that form the framework against which this experience makes sense. The new generations no longer share the horizon of meaning that opens up to the transcendent transformation. Firstly, because the plural context in which we operate has broken common references. Secondly, because the Modern Moral Order is very different from the divine/human Salvation History order. And thirdly, because even in believing environments, the biblical imagery, the existential eschatological horizon, the practices of collective piety and the liturgical symbolic are accessible only to a minority.

Finally, a transformative proposal has to face the moral prejudice that the Christian religious language refers to something “pre-modern” (God, evil, agape, miracles, penance, etc.) and on the other hand, the challenge of resorting to a “new “subtler language”, whose terms on

their own don't have generally accepted referents, but which can point us beyond ordinary, "immanent" realities". Taylor propone que "what may have to be challenged here is the very distinction nature/supernature itself"<sup>260</sup>. Will it be possible?

## **Conclusions: instructions and music to fly**

We have received some hermeneutical lenses from Charles Taylor's vast toolbox to observe some structural features of the modern subject and of the secular condition in which she/he lives and interprets her/his existence. To be more precise, these tools have helped us understand our own position as subjects oriented towards some good and looking for a place of fullness for our lives, because with Taylor, we believe that a neutral and universal position of observation is not possible.

We can reconnect with the concerns that motivate this research with the aim of offering some conclusive lines from the greater clarity that Taylor has given us. The phenomenon from which this research begins is the verification of the growing lack of meaning and deep emptiness among Chilean youth in the midst of a major cultural transformation process along with modern a neoliberal reforms during the last decades. We went to Taylor to look for glasses that would allow us to better observe, understand and interpret the changes that modernity brings in this particular phase of its economic, consumption and education expansion in Chile. Likewise, we ask ourselves if the Christian faith tradition have something to say and propose to this current generation that yearns for fuller ways of life in a more plural, meritocratic and open culture. We have prioritized in our search a reception of the ontological phase of Taylor's thought with some

of his analyzes of the current condition in which these phenomena occur. Below we present the main conclusions.

To present the main conclusions, we will first offer some elements of the epochal background in which the question of meaning in Chile arises today. Then, I will explain two structural dynamics that I think need to be taken into account. (1) First, the metaphysical and practical priority of the affirmation of everyday life that suspects, on the one hand, of any articulation of valuations that may undermine its goodness, and on the other, of any teleology that indicates that more than life matters. This collapse of priorities promotes a profound lack of meaning by silencing the question of good and fulfillment in the life of the modern subject, which, in turn and paradoxically, infringes upon the priority of everyday life. In this sense, it is the recovery of the tension between the practical priority of the daily life of the human being and it's metaphysical "no priority" that sustains the possibility of good and fullness of human life. (2) Secondly, the eschatological collapse between reality as we experience it and the full future that we hope. Collapse that would appear to take place in the Chilean ecclesial environment which tends to reduce religious experience to moralism (be it social or sexual). Let's start.

In these decades an era of authenticity has coincided with the rapid consolidation of the immanent frame. As we learn from Taylor, this frame constitutes the background of meaning in which our beliefs, whether we are believers or non-believers, develop, and where we seek to make contact with the sources of fullness of life that we embrace, whether they are immanent or transcendent. Some experience this immanent and self-sufficient order in a thoughtless way, characteristic of an exclusively naturalistic world view. But for others, the alternative of keeping their eyes open to the irruption of various versions of transcendence arises. Young people, who in this generation have massively accessed consumption and higher education, experience with

greater force that the closed immanent interpretation is the one that tends to be more accepted, quickly conquering the collective imagination.

The dimension of authenticity of culture is expressed in that what has value for the human being today is understood in terms of individual self-fulfillment, fueled by a powerful moral ideal of being true to oneself. This means that everyone has a right to develop their own form of life grounded on their own sense of what is really important or of value, and nobody can be forced to adopt an identity that he/she doesn't want. Appropriating our life and breed an identity of our own, inevitably happens to learn to be in contact with our inner experiences, naming what others (people, experiences, encounters, circumstances, nature, etc.) cause on us, what we think and what we feel, listening to our inner voice.

Likewise, those looking for some kind of transcendent or religious experience, hope that in addition to being their choice, it speaks to them. In this sense, religious experience must make sense to them, that is, it must not only be understandable but also pertinent in terms of their spiritual development as they understand it. This relativizes community membership and collective participation. Furthermore, children of an age that overvalues personal effort and merit, they relativize the monolithic authorities and do not feel pressured by having to adjust to some kind of orthodoxy. In this condition, the search for horizons of meaning arises; however, as Taylor shows, this search needs others both for the articulation of the goods that shape our identity in a strong sense, as well as for the opening to a place of fullness. These offer meaning, enabling a deeper authenticity.

## **The practical but not metaphysical primacy of human life**

One of the defining features of modernity is the affirmation of the value of ordinary life, which has been given both practical and metaphysical priority. The first refers to the importance and goodness conferred on the life of reproduction, work, production and the family, and the effort to save life and the avoidance of suffering. The second refers to the rejection of the claim, or at least opening the way for the insight, that more than life matters. Paradoxically, this double priority, both metaphysical and practical, produces the conditions for a profound lack of meaning, loss of identity and emptiness in the modern subject, which, in turn, threatens the very affirmation of ordinary life. I explain myself.

In defense of the affirmation of ordinary life, ethical deliberation and the articulation of values and strong evaluations are viewed with suspicion, since these could hide a devaluation of everyday life based on superior forms of life that could be discriminatory or based on a delusion. These distinctions would eclipse the dignity and value of everyday human desire and its satisfaction, with some higher activity such as contemplation, citizenship or heroic asceticism. In addition, establishing a sphere of goods that possess greater dignity would infringe upon the principle of universal equality of the human being, and can become justification of domination and oppression. For this reason, modern morality proposes a procedural, supposedly objective, abstract, impartial and universal approach to determine the correct obligatory action towards others, thus reducing moral issues to this dimension. On the other hand, it considers that values and goods are not part of reality but merely projections of the subject, neglecting any possible ontological status of these. Thus, what is truly important to human life is the determination of what is right and not what is good. A procedure for this is what gives space to the supposedly objective and neutral capacity of choice that the human being has.

This position silences both the question of good and the question of fulfillment in the life of the modern subject. Both are reduced to something optional but not substantive. But as we have learned from Taylor, the identity of the human being is structurally related to her/his ability to articulate about the good. The subject lives and is mobilized by constitutive goods that do not depend on him and that promise the possibility of a full life. Consequently, it is not possible for the subject to have identity and meaning and orientation for her/his life without something like the hypergood perspectives that are defined only against the *background of things that matter*. Nevertheless these are silenced by modern procedural culture: history, nature, society, the demands of justice and solidarity, the recognition needs of discriminated groups, the duties of the citizen, the daily life of work and family, or the call of the God of history. In addition, the subject's processual narrative structure is unknown, blinding him/her to the opening towards a place of fullness and the possibility of the transcendent. This type of rehabilitation of ordinary life has difficulties accounting for the experience of evil and brokenness in history and thinks of the human subject as inherently innocent and self-sufficient. This type of subject tends to develop an excoriating sense of only exogenous guilt: the society, history, the "system", capitalism, patriarchy, etc.

Consequently and paradoxically, the defense of the affirmation of ordinary life, one of the ideas behind the procedural turn of modern morality, suppresses the question for the good life making us blind and dumb before the question of our own identity in a strong sense, and therefore, before the meaning of life.

Notwithstanding, Taylor shows that values and hypergoods have an ontological status that we have called *appellative realism*; they are real features of our world, though not as the natural sciences study it, but are somewhere between objectivist Platonism of values and modern



naturalistic projectivism. This opens a transaction space between the world to which the subject belongs and her/his inwardness. For, although values do not have an existence independent of human beings, they do not depend on them either. In other words, there is a recognition of the transcendent force exerted by the appeal to certain values that exceed the will or the interest of the subject and his particular circumstance.

Another way of opening beyond the subject is the linguistic communities where he/she receives language, evaluations, frameworks and the ability to articulate them. In this sense, our own inwardly generated identity depends on our dialogical relationship with others, not on isolation.

What is appearing is that when the human being abandons the notions of the superior or inferior, de facto giving practical and metaphysical priority to a single notion of value such as ordinary life and silencing qualitative distinctions and substantive articulations about the good, he/she goes being blind and dumb, unable to choose the object of his/her will, to determine his/her own actions and commitments, and thus orient his/her life towards a place of fulfillment that is processually achieved. The human being is left unable to say who he/she is. The discovery of Taylor's appellative realism, that is, the type of relative objectivity of the terms of value that are received in a web of dialogue is part of the exit for a self-understanding of the subject and the configuration of his/her identity, in relation to a broader space. A space of transaction between the world to which he/she belongs and his/her inwardness.

At the next level, the practical and metaphysical priority of ordinary life absolutizes the modern aspiration to the fullness of one's life against a vain or empty life. In human experience, that place of fullness is experienced as something that is still incomplete, that we are in the process of fulfilling but that we can experience. This "contact" with a greater reality is

understood in different ways in contemporary culture depending on the determination of the good that guides and mobilizes the subject and with respect to which he seeks to be correctly located. For instance, regarding God this contact can be a relationship in sacramental terms, and/or prayer, and/or community bonds, and/or active commitment in history, etc. For those who are moved by some form of affirmation of ordinary life, the most important thing is to ensure a good job, a good family and the possibility of contributing to the common good. The key question is which moral source associated with daily life as a place of fullness supports and makes its realization viable. Can we affirm that this possibility arises from itself?

There are two aspects that challenge modern subject and equally the affirmation of daily life. First of all, if we talk about the affirmation of daily life we cannot help but wonder for what goes wrong and have some account of evil and brokenness. The affirmation of the goodness of ordinary life in modern culture has been the affirmation of the essential goodness, innocence of our original, spontaneous aspirations. Evil tends to be seen as exogenous to the human being, who has some sort of innate innocence. And secondly, in the face of the sense of meaninglessness of this time, is the mere affirmation of daily life enough to give meaning and orientation to the homogeneous and secular chronological time, objectified by modern science? Is there something else?

The acceptance of some hypergood connects in a complex and intrinsic way with the fact that it moves us. It is part of the strength of the *Better provisional Account* argument. What is it that God moves as hypergood and the life in Him as place of fullness? “A love/compassion which is unconditional, that is, not based on what you the recipient have made of yourself. [...] The love is not conditional on the worth realized in you just as an individual, or even in what is achievable in you alone”<sup>261</sup>. Then, just as the subject receives from others the ability to articulate

his/her moral life to live with meaning, from the transcendent Other he/she receives and participates in a force that transforms him/her and enables him/her to fulfill the good of the human being. In other words, if the daily life of the human being has a practical priority, paradoxically, the recognition that there is a hypergoods beyond human life, as a God who reveals her/himself as unconditional love, at least promises to allow and convey that we affirm the wholeheartedly value of the human life. Given the dialogical structure of the processes of constitution of human identity, at the existential limit, it is the reception of unconditional love that puts us in front of the truest image as human beings. This experience of transcendent love as foundational recognition is what opens us to the equal value of each human being in his/her particularity and to a fuller mode of being, which is in process but which is not a condition for receiving that unconditional love or agape.

Therefore, it is the recovery of the tension between the practical priority of the daily life of the human being and its metaphysical “no priority” that could sustain the possibility of good and fullness of human life. And at the same time, it could prevent human beings from becoming blind and dumb regarding their identity and how to enrich life so that it is worth living. This is not demonstrable but the Better provisional Account could testify by the vital force it releases.

### **Eschatological collapse**

There is another dynamic tension that is important to keep in mind. It is the eschatological tension between, on the one hand, the present life, whether it is interpreted as a life traversed by evil and suffering or it is interpreted from a project of a social order that is expected to be realized in history, and on the other hand, the fullness of time that has been

expressed, for instance, with images such as “Reign of God”, “New Heaven and New Earth” in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Let’s dig deeper.

The distancing of Chileans, and particularly their youth, from participation in the Catholic Church has been taking place slowly since the 1960s, a process that has accelerated since the return to democracy in 1990. It is not easy to establish causal relationships at this time of history, nor can I determine with precision when it began, but I would like to highlight a dynamic that I have called the *eschatological collapse* and whose shock wave can only continue to distance the Church from the young when we all inhabit a space marked by an immanent frame in the age of authenticity.

When Chile regained democracy, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church decided to “*volver a lo propiamente suyo*” –go back to what is more proper to them–, interpreting “*lo suyo*” as a spiritual mission distinct from the project of solidarity and the defense of human rights. However, what apparently happened was that “*lo suyo*” meant a turn from a Samaritan Church to a Sexual Church, with an obsessive concern about issues of personal sexual morality. The ecclesial discourse acquired a certain “reformist” tone in response to what they interpreted as a deep moral crisis in Chile. As we pointed out in the introduction, the hierarchy changed the “value agenda” and the type of political alliances, trying to impose its vision of moral and social order in the public space. Obviously this does not mean that moral issues are not relevant or that we cannot discuss the pertinence of the participation of the Churches in public sphere. What I claim is that when a certain moral discourse prevailed with the pretense of truth that should be imposed on the rest, it tended to lose the dynamic tension between reality, which is effectively crossed by evil and sin, and the eschatological horizon of life and fullness to which it is open.

Our experience of Christian faith is eschatological, that is, related to what we call “the last things”, with the future. But this is more than the future tense. We believe that all reality, the entire universe and us and our history in it, is open not only to the future time, but to the future of time itself, to the future of God. “In God’s future, God comes to God’s creation and, through the power of God’s righteousness and justice, frees it for God’s kingdom and makes it the dwelling place of God’s glory”<sup>262</sup>. The Christian dimension of our eschatology assumes that the divine future that we can expect already began with the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ of Nazareth and that therefore we are on the way, in process until the definitive irruption of God.

This eschatological horizon is already in action through the Spirit that is transforming reality towards the Reign of peace and justice that Jesus proclaimed in the Sermon of the Mount, but has not yet been fulfilled. This tension between a present crossed by evil, suffering and sin and the eschatological future towards which we are going, collapses and is lost when the religious experience is reduced to a certain contingent moral order. The illusion that identifies reality itself with the future Reign makes one’s own notion of civilization, progress, and morality become absolute and seek to impose as if the Reign had already arrived. Something similar seems to have happened with a fraction of the Chilean Church enthusiastic about the project of socialist liberation through the democratic route in the early 1970s, which tended to identify that proposal as the only way to bring about the realization of the Reign of peace, life and justice. Despite the left imaginary helped to specify and express alternative dynamic horizons, this became the instance in which experiences are processed, using theology and the life of Christian faith as a particular complement and not as the principle and foundation of existence<sup>263</sup>.

Taylor has shown how the human being moves and is moved in the direction of places of fullness with which he/she seeks to make contact. Paradoxically, eschatological collapse reduces

religious experience to moralism that always tend to stay within the immanent framework and in the present sense. On the one hand, the human being must adjust him/herself to “nature” and measure him/herself with a certain moral figure, stopping being open to the transcendence that manifests itself as a personal love that is received and given, that is transformative and that encourages us to continue gradually growing. On the other hand, the eschatological collapse tends to reduce the future of reality to what is currently presented to us. In this sense, there is no opening to a progressive transformation of the personal, social and ecological reality that opens up new possibilities, nor does it expect a different fullness from the current one. The experience of a God who “makes all things new” (Rev 21:5b) (not who does new things), is lost<sup>264</sup>. It is a great deal with the status quo.

Furthermore, it is this type of moralism that seeks to impose itself in the public space, which annoys the young people who inhabit a culture of authenticity that promotes, in the first place, the personal search and spiritual choice. The problem is not only that the Church proposes an individual ethic that does not make sense to them, which they experience as discriminating or distanced from their daily reality. What this generation does not accept is that it be imposed on them by resorting to the argument of authority and also that it be established as a horizon of identity and/or collective membership. A Church that presents itself in this way simply ceases to be heard and can easily be combated. It forgets that nobody falls in love in the first place with an institution, but with the cause that a community embraces as a horizon of significance. As we have seen, this horizon, although institutionalized, requires being personally appropriated by the subject.

Other feature that emerges from this collapse is that the incarnation of the Son of God loses meaning and existential depth. Jesus stands out for his great example of life, as a prophet

of justice or as an admirable teacher. And his words are reduced to a code to be applied to the reality that is expected to keep up with the final fulfillment, instead of being a personal and community call, first to participate in a relationship, and second, to grow in life towards that fullness of the Reign. This is the subtle but erosive temptation that transforms the transcendent in a system that turns God into something clearly known and understood ones for all; the subject then would no longer have the need to trust in God. If he/she knows everything about God, somehow he/she has managed to avoid God. He/she forgets that the Judeo-Christian faith believes in the happening of God in Jesus of Nazareth whose story ends in his resurrection. In eschatological terms, the resurrection of Jesus does not close the history of Jesus in the past, but opens a future of resurrection for all humanity and creation. The Father himself, the Creator, is the one who resurrected Jesus and constitutes him as Lord, not in the way of a self-absorbed idol or an inert fetish, but as a life-giving Spirit (1Co 15:45; 2Co 3:17) that continues transforming the subject and history.

Nevertheless, the eschatological images fall into disuse in the ecclesial community and they stop being part of their social imaginary. The believing life, and therefore, the theology that wants to reflect on the experience of God of a community situated in time, ends up immanentizing transcendence in order to say something meaningful in the immanent frame instead of opening it. We mute the eschatological historical process that is marked by the experience of being always unfinished, always on the way and always in a relationship of reciprocity between humanity and God, between what the human being does as a respondent to the force and the voice of the Agape that God communicates to him/her. In this way, the narrative of our personal and community history loses reference to a larger narrative related to a good and its fullness, such as the Reign of God or A New Heaven and a New Earth, ceasing to

give meaning and substance to our life<sup>265</sup>. The Gospel is easily replaced by the canonical code, reinforced by institutions created for it. The concrete people, their biographies and circumstances disappear in the normative rigidity, since no code can address all cases, nor adequately respond to crossroads where a plurality goods in dispute encounter. The liturgy acquires a certain re-centering in the rubric or in the communication capacity of the celebrant. As a consequence, Christian Hope in a great final transformation that stresses our historical experience towards evangelical action, stops releasing its strength. Rather, de facto, we live in an endless chronological time and no longer wait for the final resurrection to full joy that we have already begun to experience in some way. We have become blind to transcendence.

It is surprising that this type of moralism, with a certain fetish attitude towards rules and codes, is a characteristic of modernity. And that many in the Church use the same scheme to combat modernity that they interpret as facing a great moral crisis. They forget or have become blind to see that Christianity does not have a law that is directly related to religion; it doesn't offer a law that concretely tells to people what to do. Christianity is a faith, not a law; it can't be laid out in a code or a fully-specified life form. It is a faith in a transcendent presence that relates personally to the human being, communicating with him/her, participating him/her in His/Her transforming Agape and mobilizing him/her towards fuller ways of life that need to be discerned.

If we listen to what the same young Catholics in Chile say about their faith experience, the similarities are surprising. According the information provided by the field study on youth of the Church in Santiago de Chile, in religious terms, the youth horizon shows a strong immanent approach. "We have realized that we can make the social change that we want, that we do not need Jesus Christ. Jesus has been losing his divinity. He is no longer as sacred as before". "He is a guide, a way to follow forward, an example of solidarity". Nevertheless, some affirm that it



is faith that gives youngsters and society the possibility to certain people to find meaning for their existences and it is something in which they can find support, trust, vent at all times in the difficult struggle of wanting to help others and to find a job, some economic stability, welfare and take care of their own family. But it is striking that the hope of most young Catholics from Santiago has an immanent and intramundane horizon. Only occasionally they affirm that faith gives certainty about life after death and they never resort to the eschatological categories of the Christian tradition. Likewise, the need for grace is not part of their narrative and they make few references to the need for spiritual practices such as prayer or liturgy. “I believe in myself, I believe in my own abilities. I know I can”<sup>266</sup>.

Welcome to the times of authenticity in an immanent frame!

### **...a letter to Diogneto**

Aided by the lenses of Charles Taylor we have tried to understand the hermeneutical structure of the human being. This has shown us that one of the conditions of possibility to acquire an authentic personal identity is the reception, from a linguistic community of belonging where we are recognized, of a value framework that allows us to articulate and make qualitative distinctions about the most important goods that make life worthwhile. Now, in an increasingly plural and open context, there is no single collectively shared framework. Therefore, the search for a credible framework will always be the search for a meaning and end in life.

Moreover, all of us, believers and non-believers alike, live in an immanent frame that threatens us with the meaninglessness of time. Our narrative structure reminds us that as human beings we are becoming towards an end that implicitly or explicitly guides our actions. And we

ask ourselves what moral source –if nature, if God, if the dignity of our reason, if the will to power– associated with that place of fulfillment that we seek, sustains it and makes it viable. In addition, we are always haunted by the question of whether we are right.

The Christian community lives within the immanent framework but open to a personal and community relationship with the transcendence that we experience and point out as Agape. We understand it as a type of transforming love that humanizes us, that is, making us capable of establishing gratuitous reciprocal relationships, that overcome evil and whose fullness ends up being realized beyond history. This framework requires a new language so that it can make sense to a generation of young people who were born in a plural world without language for the transcendent. We need to rework the narrative articulation of the qualitative evaluations that form that horizon of significance that orients towards a place of fullness. In this way, the new generations will be able to place their personal narratives in a greater narrative that offers a liberating and humanizing meaning in an understandable and pertinent language for what they live daily. For, we live in language (corporal, symbolic, spoken, etc.) and through it we can open ourselves to a daily and transformative relationship with the transcendent. Through it we can open ourselves and relate our life to the final meaning of history, trusting in the transcendent and experiencing its strength. This is a condition of possibility for an *eschatological mystique* in the age of authenticity.

*Mysticism* as an existential relationship with the transcendent God that communicates Her/His transforming Agape in history, responds to the moralistic dimension of the collapse that we have described. The human being is structurally oriented towards a hypergood and is constantly becoming in a situated way in time towards more complete ways of being. This occurs by receiving and internally elaborating what he/she receives from outside (recognition,

value framework and horizon of significance, etc.) as a moral force, which enables a humanizing transforming process (theosis) and the shaping of a personal and collective identity in strong sense. Likewise, the Christian life as an *eschatological life* offers a place of fullness that without losing reference to daily life is lucid about the need for transformation of reality to overcome its brokenness, a process that ends up being carried out beyond history. It is the horizon of significance of the Reign of God or The New Heavens and the New Earth that responds to the historical dimension of the described collapse, the one that is unable to respond adequately to the experience of evil and that produce a sense of meaninglessness of ordinary life.

*Eschatological mysticism* is the transformation and humanization of the human being that opens up him/herself to the transcendent in the immanent, facing the reality crossed by brokenness with hope.

This implies, on the one hand, a transformation of the framework in which we Christians think, feel and live in a secular age. And on the other, that we accept that for today's culture, where all inhabit the immanent frame, our framework opened to the transcendent and that gives us our identity, is something strange, foreign, that makes us experience the world in a different way. However, even in the midst of doubts, this contrast allows us to experience with greater sharpness the differential position of the interpretation of our vital orientation living within an immanent frame, and that we can offer it to others.

I am hopeful that if someone comes into contact with the Christian community and writes to a friend, just as the author of a 2nd century letter wrote to his friend Diogneto:

Christians are not distinguished from other men, neither by the place in which they live, nor by their language, nor by their customs. Indeed, they do not have their own cities, nor do they use unusual speech, nor do they lead a different kind of life. Their doctrinal system has not been invented thanks to the talent and speculation of

studious men, nor do they profess, like others, a teaching based on the authority of men.

They live in Greek and barbarian cities, according to their luck, they follow the customs of the country's inhabitants, both in dress and in their entire lifestyle, and yet they show signs of an admirable tenor of life and, in their opinion of all, incredible. They live in their own homeland, but as outsiders; they take part in everything as citizens, but they bear it all as foreigners; all foreign land is home to them, but they are in all homeland as in foreign land. Like everyone, they marry and engender children, but they do not get rid of the children they conceive. They have the table in common, but not the bed.

They live in the meat, but not according to the meat. They live on earth, but their citizenship is in Heaven. They obey the established laws, and with their way of living they overcome these laws. They love everybody, and everybody pursue them. They are condemned without knowing them. They are killed, and thereby receive life. They are poor, and enrich many; they lack everything, and abound in everything. They suffer dishonor, and it serves them as glory; they suffer detriment to their fame, and this testifies to their justice. They are cursed, and they bless; they are treated with ignominy, and they, in return, return honor.

[...]

To put it in a few words: Christians in the world are what the soul is in the body<sup>267</sup>.

\*\*\*

## Bibliography

- Aldunate Sj, José, Roberto Bolton, Pbro., Juana Ramírez, Mariano Puga, Pbro., Margarita Westwood, y Rosa Parissi. *Crónicas de una Iglesia Liberadora*. Colección Sin norte. Santiago, Chile: LOM Ediciones, 2000.
- «Archivo y Centro de Documentación | Vicaría de la Solidaridad». Accessed February 8th, 2020. <http://www.vicariadelasolidaridad.cl/node/41>.
- Aristóteles. *Ética a Nicómaco - Ética a Eudemo*. Editado por Emilio Lledó Íñigo. Traducido por Julio Pallí Bonet. Madrid: Gredos, 2019.
- Berlin, Isaiah. *Cuatro ensayos sobre la libertad*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial S.A., 2007.
- Berrios, Fernando, Jorge Costadoat Sj, y Diego García. *Catolicismo social chileno: Desarrollo, crisis y actualidad*. Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Universidad Alberto Hurtado, 2013.
- Buckley, S.J., Michael J. *Denying and Disclosing God: The Ambiguous Progress of Modern Atheism*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004.
- Calhoun, Craig, Mark Juergensmeyer, y Jonathan VanAntwerpen, eds. *Rethinking Secularism*. Oxford, N.Y: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Cavanaugh, William T. *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ*. Oxford, UK ; Malden, Mass: Wiley-Blackwell, 1998.
- Conferencia de Obispos Latinoamericanos y del Caribe. *V Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano y del Caribe en Aparecida: Documento Conclusivo*. Editado por Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano. Santiago, Chile: Conferencia Episcopal de Chile, 2007.
- Del Villar Tagle, María Soledad. «Chile Despertó: Sociopolitical Discernment from Open, Wounded, and Gifted Eyes». Unpublished manuscript, December 2019, typescript.
- . *Las asistentes sociales de la Vicaría de la Solidaridad: Una historia profesional*. Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Universidad Alberto Hurtado, 2018.
- Echávarri, Orieta, María de la Paz Maíno, Ronit Fischman, Susana Morales, y Jorge Barros. «Aumento Sostenido del suicidio en Chile». *Políticas Públicas UC: Temas de la Agenda Pública*, año 10, n° 79 (junio de 2015).
- Ellacuría, Ignacio. *Escritos teológicos. Tomo I*. San Salvador, El Salvador: UCA Editores, 2000.

- Ellacuria, Ignacio, y Jon Sobrino, eds. *Mysterium Liberationis: conceptos fundamentales de la teología de la liberación*. Vol. I. Madrid: UCA Editores y Editorial Trotta, S.A., 1990.
- «Encuesta Bicentenario». Accessed February 21st, 2020. <https://encuestabicentenario.uc.cl/>.
- <https://www.cepchile.cl>. «Estudio Nacional de Opinión Pública N° 84, Diciembre 2019 - Centro de Estudios Públicos». Accessed February 26th, 2020.  
<https://www.cepchile.cl/cep/encuestas-cep/encuestas-2009-2018/estudio-nacional-de-opinion-publica-n-84-diciembre-2019>.
- <https://www.cepchile.cl>. «Estudio Nacional de Opinión Pública, Octubre-Noviembre 2018 - Centro de Estudios Públicos». Accessed February 26th, 2020.  
<https://www.cepchile.cl/cep/encuestas-cep/encuestas-2009-2018/estudio-nacional-de-opinion-publica-octubre-noviembre-2018>.
- Farley, Margaret A. *Liberating Eschatology*. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999.
- «GDP per capita (current US\$) - Chile | Data». Accessed February 27th, 2020.  
<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=CL>.
- «Global\_POVEQ\_CHL.pdf». Accessed February 27th, 2020.  
[https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/poverty/33EF03BB-9722-4AE2-ABC7-AA2972D68AFE/Global\\_POVEQ\\_CHL.pdf](https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/poverty/33EF03BB-9722-4AE2-ABC7-AA2972D68AFE/Global_POVEQ_CHL.pdf).
- González, Mónica, y Centro de Investigación Periodística. *Lo mejor de CIPER 2. El periodismo que remece a Chile*. Santiago de Chile: Editorial Catalonia, Ediciones UDP, 2013.
- . *Lo mejor de CIPER 3. El periodismo que remece a Chile*. Santiago de Chile: Editorial Catalonia, Ediciones UDP, 2016.
- González, Mónica, Francisca Skoknic Skoknic, Matías Foullieux, Juan Pablo Figueroa, Juan Andrés Guzmán, Sebastián Minay, Cristóbal Peña Peña, Pedro Ramírez, Jorge Sullivan, y Gustavo Villarrubia. *El periodismo que remece a Chile*. Santiago de Chile: Editorial Catalonia, Ediciones UDP, 2010.
- Guajardo Soto, Gabriel, ed. *Suicidios contemporáneos: vínculos, desigualdades y transformaciones socioculturales*. Santiago, Chile: FLACSO - Chile, 2017.
- Gutiérrez, Gustavo. *Teología de la Liberación - perspectivas*. Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1972.

- Guzmán, Patricio. *En nombre de Dios*. 16 MM en color, Documentary. Atacama Productions, París., 1987. <https://www.patricioguzman.com/es/peliculas/en-nombre-de-dios>.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Ser y Tiempo*. Traducido por Jorge Eduardo Rivera. Madrid: Editorial Trotta, S.A., 2009.
- «instrumentum\_laboris.pdf». Accessed February 22nd, 2020. [http://iglesiadesantiago.cl/sinodo/site/artic/20180504/asocfile/20180504162804/instrumentum\\_laboris.pdf](http://iglesiadesantiago.cl/sinodo/site/artic/20180504/asocfile/20180504162804/instrumentum_laboris.pdf).
- Ireneo de Lyon. *Contra los herejes: exposición y refutación de la falsa gnosis*. Traducido por Carlos Ignacio González, S.J. México: Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano, 2000.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Crítica de la razón práctica*. Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, S. A., 1998.
- . *Fundamentacion de la metafisica de las costumbres*. Madrid: Tecnos Editorial S.A., 2005.
- Memoria Chilena: Portal. «La Vicaría de la Solidaridad (1973-1992) - Memoria Chilena». Accessed January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020. <http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-article-3547.html>.
- Lightfoot, J. B. *Padres Apostólicos*. Toronto: Patristic Publishing, 2019.
- Lowden, Pamela. *Moral Opposition to Authoritarian Rule in Chile, 1973-90*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995.
- Moore, George Edward. *Principia Ethica*. Mineola, N.Y: Dover Publications, 2004.
- Observatorio Social. «Observatorio Social del Ministerio de Desarrollo Social del Gobierno de Chile». Accessed November 29th, 2018. <http://observatorio.ministeriodesarrollosocial.gob.cl>.
- Oviedo Cavada, Carlos. *Moral, juventud y sociedad permisiva: una invitación a una vida más evangélica*. Santiago: Ediciones Pontificia Universidad Católica, 1992.
- Palet, Andrea, Pilar de Aguirre, y PNUD Chile, eds. *Desiguales: orígenes, cambios y desafíos de la brecha social en Chile*. Santiago, Chile: PNUD : Uqbar Editores, 2017.
- Papa Francisco. «Carta Papa Francisco a los Obispos de Chile en Roma el 15 de mayo de 2018». [www.t13.cl](http://www.t13.cl), 15 de mayo de 2018. <https://www.t13.cl/noticia/nacional/la-transcripcion-completa-del-documento-reservado-papa-entrego-obispos-chilenos>.

Parker G., Cristián. «Pluralismo religioso, educación y ciudadanía». *Sociedade e Estado* 23, n.º 2 (2008): 281-353.

Pew Research Center. «Religion in Latin America: Widespread Change in a Historically Catholic Region», noviembre de 2014. <https://www.pewforum.org/2014/11/13/religion-in-latin-america/>.

Rahner, Karl. *Curso fundamental sobre la fe: Introducción al concepto de cristianismo*. Traducido por Raúl Gabás. Barcelona: Herder Editorial S.L., 2007.

———. *Escritos de Teología. Tomo I: Dios-Cristo-María-Gracia*. Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, S.A., 1961.

———. *Escritos de Teología. Tomo IV: Escritos Recientes*. Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, S.A., 1962.

———. *Escritos de Teología. Tomo V: Nuevos escritos*. Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, S.A., 1964.

Salinas C., Maximiliano. *Historia del Pueblo de Dios en Chile: la evolución del cristianismo desde la perspectiva de los pobres*. Biblioteca Nacional de Chile. Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Rehue Ltda, 1987.

Smith, James K.A. *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2014.

Sobrino, Jon. *Principio-misericordia, El: Bajar de la cruz a los pueblos crucificados*. Santander: Editorial Sal Terrae, 2000.

Soto Reyes, Marcela Gema. «De la defensa de los derechos humanos a la “crisis moral”: el discurso público de la Iglesia Católica Romana Chilena en la post-dictadura militar». *Religión e Incidencia Pública* 2 (2014): 47-72.

Taylor, Charles. *A Catholic Modernity?* Editado por James L. Heft. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

———. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009.

———. *Philosophical Arguments*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997.

———. *Philosophical Papers 1: Human Agency and Language*. Cambridge, Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

———. *Philosophical Papers 2: Philosophy and the Human Sciences*. Cambridge, Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press, 1985.



- . *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989.
- . *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991.
- Taylor, Charles, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Jürgen Habermas, Stephen C. Rockefeller, Michael Walzer, y Susan Wolf. *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. Editado por Amy Gutmann. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Trigo S.J., Pedro. «Cuál es el acto primero del que la Teología de la Liberación es acto segundo». *ITER revista de teología*, 2001.
- UN - CEPAL. *Panorama Social de América Latina 2018*. Santiago de Chile, 2019.
- UNDP | Human Development Report 2019. «UNDP | Human Development Report 2019». Accessed February 26th, 2020. <http://report.hdr.undp.org/>.
- Warner, Michael, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, y Craig Calhoun, eds. *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2013.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Investigaciones Filosóficas. Edición Alemán/Español*. Traducido por Alfonso García Suarez y Ulises Moulines. Barcelona, España: Editorial Crítica - Grijalbo, 1988.

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> The background understanding taken in a broader way is what Taylor calls *social imaginary*. Different from an intellectual system or framework, “broader and deeper than the intellectual schemes people may entertain when they think about social reality in a disengaged mode [proper of modern sciences, a social imaginary is] the ways [ordinary] 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, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations. [...] The social imaginary is that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy”, enabling us to carry out those collective practices, as a common repertory, that make up our social life. For instance, the rite of voting in an election, or organizing a massive social protest. This way of imagining their social surroundings is often not expressed in theoretical terms; it is carried in images, stories and legends, etc., and are shared by large groups of people if not by the entire society. Moreover, “such understandings is both factual and normative; that is, we have a sense of how they usually go, but this is interwoven with an idea of how they ought to go, of what missteps would invalidate the practice”. Cf. Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Public Planet Books, 2003), 23-24.

<sup>2</sup> See: «Estudio Nacional de Opinión Pública N° 84, Diciembre 2019 - Centro de Estudios Públicos», <https://www.cepchile.cl>, accessed January 29th 2020, <https://www.cepchile.cl/cep/encuestas-cep/encuestas-2009-2018/estudio-nacional-de-opinion-publica-n-84-diciembre-2019>. and «Estudio Nacional de Opinión Pública, Octubre-Noviembre 2018 - Centro de Estudios Públicos», <https://www.cepchile.cl>, accessed february 12th 2020, <https://www.cepchile.cl/cep/encuestas-cep/encuestas-2009-2018/estudio-nacional-de-opinion-publica-octubre-noviembre-2018>.

<sup>3</sup> There is a stubborn Chilean inequality that, although it has diminished somewhat, has already been normalized. In Chile the Gini Inequality Index was 0.57 respect to autonomous income in 1989 at the end of the dictatorship and has maintained around 0, 502 since 2017. This brutal inequality makes most people live in Chile with fear of getting sick, getting old or losing their jobs. This situation is reflected in the 82% of people that have incomes lower than the national average, \$800 approx. The 10% of the population with the highest income earns 37 times more than the 10% with the lowest income. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL), dependent on the UN, in 2017, 50% of the lowest-income households had 2.1% of the country's net wealth, 10% concentrated 66.5% of the total and the wealthier 1% concentrated 26.5% of Chilean wealth. Cf. UN - CEPAL, *Panorama Social de América Latina 2018* (Santiago de Chile, 2019), 62-63.

<sup>4</sup> For instance, as the Chilean historian and theologian María Soledad Del Villar Tagle collects (see: «Chile Despertó: Sociopolitical Discernment from Open, Wounded, and Gifted Eyes» (unpublished manuscript, December 2019), typescript) economic abuses through “the monopolistic tendencies [characteristic of capital accumulation] of the neoliberal economic systems, manifested in collusions among the owner of different companies to maintain high prices (of medicines, chicken meat and toilette paper, among other products)” weakening the free competition that they proclaim and strengthening the concentration of capital illegally, or in tax avoidance and evasion, or in the use of privileged information in transactions and businesses. “Second, politicians from all parties and ideological tendencies have [received financing] from big companies [in exchange of] elaborating laws and policies that favor the economic elites and their business interests” (fishing, mining, forestry, real estate business, among others). As a result, the congress is one of the least reliable institutions for Chileans who perceive it “as an institution that defends the interests and pockets of the owners of big companies rather than the interests [and life] of the common people. Third, corruption and misuse of public money are present [both in] government agents and in all the branches of the Army and the Police. Fourth, the Catholic Church, an institution that was trusted and admired because of its commitment in the defense of Human Rights during the dictatorship [of Pinochet (1973-1990)], has fallen into discredit after a deep crisis derived from sexual abuse scandals” and cover-ups. Most of “these “white-collar” crimes have remained in impunity” or have received economic and moral penalties but never jail because of “deficient laws that punish harshly the crimes of the poor but are lax when crimes are committed by the rich and powerful”.

I am grateful for the suggestion of María Soledad Del Villar Tagle on bibliography to go deeper: the studies of CIPER Chile, a center of independent research journalism, leaded by Mónica Gonzalez (2019 national journalism award in Chile) and one of the few sources of serious research on corruption in Chile. Their best articles are collected in three books: Mónica González et al., *El periodismo que remece a Chile* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial

---

Catalonia, Ediciones UDP, 2010).; Mónica González y Centro de Investigación Periodística, *Lo mejor de CIPER 2. El periodismo que remece a Chile* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Catalonia, Ediciones UDP, 2013); Mónica González y Centro de Investigación Periodística, *Lo mejor de CIPER 3. El periodismo que remece a Chile* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Catalonia, Ediciones UDP, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> «UNDP | Human Development Report 2019», UNDP | Human Development Report 2019, accessed January 26th 2020, <http://report.hdr.undp.org/>.

<sup>6</sup> Chile lived under a bloody civil-military dictatorship between September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1973 and March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1990.

<sup>7</sup> Chile, along with South Korea, leads the sustained increase in the suicide rate among young people. Cf. Gabriel Guajardo Soto, ed., *Suicidios contemporáneos: vínculos, desigualdades y transformaciones socioculturales*. (Santiago, Chile: FLACSO - Chile, 2017). Orieta Echávarri et al., «Aumento Sostenido del suicidio en Chile», *Políticas Públicas UC: Temas de la Agenda Pública*, año 10, n° 79 (junio de 2015).

<sup>8</sup> In 1992, 78% of people between 18 and 24 years old identified themselves with Catholicism and 7,2% did not identify themselves with any religion or identify as agnostics or atheists. In 2006, 60% said they were Catholics and 17% didn't identify with any religion or as agnostics or atheists. Consult the “Encuesta Bicentenario” of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, that has been tracking the changes in religious affiliation and beliefs in the past decades, for more details Cf. «Encuesta Bicentenario», accessed February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020, <https://encuestabicentenario.uc.cl/>. Cristián Parker G., «Pluralismo religioso, educación y ciudadanía», *Sociedade e Estado* 23, n°2 (2008): 281-353.

<sup>9</sup> The Church in Santiago de Chile celebrated its X Synod, between May 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018 under the title “Los jóvenes, la fe y el discernimiento vocacional” (“The youngsters, faith and vocational discernment”). During the months of preparation, a personal survey was carried out to which 52,000 youth and adults, believers and non-believers, responded from the diocese, and 451 focus groups met within the same people. The results and the quotes cited [the translation is mine] are included in the “Instrumentum Laboris” published for such Synod, in particular §39.43-45. Accessed February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020, [http://iglesiadesantiago.cl/sinodo/site/artic/20180504/asocfile/20180504162804/instrumentum\\_laboris.pdf](http://iglesiadesantiago.cl/sinodo/site/artic/20180504/asocfile/20180504162804/instrumentum_laboris.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> I owe much of this historical section to the work and the conversations shared with the Chilean historian and theologian María Soledad Del Villar Tagle. Part of her work appears in: María Soledad Del Villar Tagle, *Las asistentes sociales de la Vicaría de la Solidaridad: Una historia profesional* (Ediciones Universidad Alberto Hurtado, 2018), and in various unpublished papers. My gratitude and admiration for her vocation.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Fernando Berrios, Jorge Costadoat Sj, y Diego García, *Catolicismo social chileno: Desarrollo, crisis y actualidad* (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Universidad Alberto Hurtado, 2013). Maximiliano Salinas C., *Historia del Pueblo de Dios en Chile: la evolución del cristianismo desde la perspectiva de los pobres*, (Santiago, Chile: Rehue Ediciones, 1987). José Aldunate Sj et al., *Crónicas de una Iglesia Liberadora*, (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2000).

<sup>12</sup> In fact, the 1983 systematic reflection of the Chilean Church, “Solidaridad y justicia como un modo de vida y una pastoral para la Iglesia” (“Solidarity and justice as a way of life and a pastoral for the Church”), used the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37) as its inspiring icon. This reflection was used in 17 of the 19 dioceses in Chile that collegially embraced this cause. Cf. «Archivo y Centro de Documentación | Vicaría de la Solidaridad», accessed February 8th 2020, <http://www.vicariadelasolidaridad.cl/node/41>.

The identity of the Church as a “Samaritan Church” has also been deepened by Jon Sobrino, in the context of the Church of El Salvador (Cf. Jon Sobrino, “La Iglesia samaritana y el principio-misericordia”, in *Principio-misericordia, El: Bajar de la cruz a los pueblos crucificados* (Santander: Editorial Sal Terrae, 2000), 31-46.) and collected by the Latin American episcopate at its V General Conference in Aparecida in 2007 (§26: “Illuminated by Christ, suffering, injustice and the cross challenge us to live as a Samaritan Church (cf. Lk 10: 25-37), remembering that evangelization has always been linked to human promotion and authentic Christian liberation”) [the translation is mine]. Cf. Conferencia de Obispos Latinoamericanos y del Caribe, *V Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano y del Caribe en Aparecida: Documento Conclusivo*, ed. Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano, 3a ed. §26 (Santiago, Chile: Conferencia Episcopal de Chile, 2007), 49.

<sup>13</sup> María Soledad Del Villar Tagle, «Chile Despertó: Sociopolitical Discernment from Open, Wounded, and Gifted Eyes» (unpublished manuscript, December 2019), typescript.

---

<sup>14</sup> As Del Villar Tagle recalls (ibid), the Chilean Bishops Conference, leaded by Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez, created “the *Vicaría de la Solidaridad*, Vicariate of Solidarity, where victims of political violence and their families could receive human, legal and economic assistance. [It] worked closely with parochial and Christian Base Communities to provide health care to the poor, organizing soup kitchens, create workshop for the unemployed and give education and recreation opportunities for children”. Documents, photographic and audiovisual files in: «La Vicaría de la Solidaridad (1973-1992) - Memoria Chilena», Memoria Chilena: Portal, accessed January 24th, 2020, <http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-article-3547.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Del Villar.

<sup>16</sup> Within the vast literature on the role of the Chilean Catholic Church during the dictatorship, see the following texts. The first offers an approach from political science, the second from theological reflection and the third from lived testimonies. Pamela Lowden, *Moral Opposition to Authoritarian Rule in Chile, 1973-90* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995). William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ*, (Oxford, UK ; Malden, Mass: Wiley-Blackwell, 1998). Patricio Guzmán, *En nombre de Dios*, Documentary (Atacama Productions, París., 1987), <https://www.patricioguzman.com/es/peliculas/en-nombre-de-dios>.

<sup>17</sup> Del Villar.

<sup>18</sup> Del Villar.

<sup>19</sup> Del Villar.

<sup>20</sup> Del Villar.

<sup>21</sup> Given the unusual prestige that the Chilean Church had at that time, as a result of the heroic defense of human rights during the dictatorship, the letter was received with a certain degree of respect, but fundamentally its central thesis was rejected. On the one hand, it was perceived as exaggerated and retrograde. And on the other hand, it was argued that there was no such moral crisis, but a (Christian) moral crisis. Cf. Carlos Oviedo Cavada, *Moral, juventud y sociedad permisiva: una invitación a una vida más evangélica* (Santiago: Ediciones Pontificia Universidad Católica, 1992).

<sup>22</sup> Del Villar.

<sup>23</sup> As I have pointed out, it was María Soledad Del Villar Tagle who helped me gain this historical awareness. Cf. Marcela Gema Soto Soto Reyes, «De la defensa de los derechos humanos a la “crisis moral”», *Religión e Incidencia Pública* 2 (2014): 47-72.

<sup>24</sup> Del Villar.

<sup>25</sup> Del Villar.

<sup>26</sup> Del Villar.

<sup>27</sup> As confirmed by the first special mission sent from the Vatican to Chile in February 2018 chaired by Charles Scicluna, Archbishop of Malta, the Chilean Church has not given guarantees to the complainants in the investigation processes, it has put the interest of the institution on the of the victims, minimizing the absolute seriousness of criminal acts, attributing them to simple weakness or moral fault, certifying undue pressure on those who had to carry out the investigation of criminal proceedings, including the destruction of compromising documents in the ecclesiastical archives. Likewise, it denounces an elite psychology within the Chilean clergy that has produced internal divisions, a “clericalist” spirit that has tried to impose itself on the conscience of the faithful, and a self-reference that made it forget its prophetic force. The detail of this diagnosis is in a letter that Pope Francis delivered to the Chilean bishops extraordinarily gathered in Rome between May 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Cf. Papa Francisco, «Carta Papa Francisco a los Obispos de Chile en Roma el 15 de mayo de 2018», [www.t13.cl](http://www.t13.cl), 15 de mayo de 2018, <https://www.t13.cl/noticia/nacional/la-transcripcion-completa-del-documento-reservado-papa-entrego-obispos-chilenos>, accessed January 5th, 2020.

<sup>28</sup> Del Villar.

<sup>29</sup> Del Villar.

---

<sup>30</sup> Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Papers 1: Human Agency and Language*, 1st Edition (Cambridge, Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1.

<sup>31</sup> We will have attention to the following essays: *A Secular Age*, *Ethics of Authenticity*, which can be understood as the culmination of another mayor work, *Sources of the Self-The making of modern identity* (of which we will use especially the first part), *Politics of Recognition*, and some of his philosophical researches during those years included in the two volumes of *Philosophical Papers: Human Agency and Language*, and *Philosophy and Human Sciences*.

<sup>32</sup> For a multidisciplinary approach to the secularization process see Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, y Jonathan VanAntwerpen, eds., *Rethinking Secularism*, (Oxford, N.Y: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>33</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Investigaciones Filosóficas. Edición Alemán/Español.*, trad. Alfonso García Suarez y Ulises Moulines (Barcelona, España: Editorial Crítica - Grijalbo, 1988), 253. [the translation is mine]

<sup>34</sup> Charles Taylor, “Afterward: Apologia pro Libro suo”, in Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, y Craig Calhoun, eds., *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, Edición: Reprint (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2013), 319-320.

<sup>35</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 473.

<sup>36</sup> Cfr. Taylor, 476.

<sup>37</sup> Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), 14.

<sup>38</sup> Taylor defines *moral ideal* as a picture of what a better or higher mode of life would be, where ‘better’ or ‘higher’ are defined not in terms of what we happen to desire or need, but offer a standard of what we ought to desire. Taylor, 16.

<sup>39</sup> In general, (knowing that this requires a deeper and more nuanced treatment) the premodern self understands that order, harmony and unity with him/herself is achieved by grasping and loving the natural external order of things, of the cosmos, which would be ordained for good (and in the believer version, towards God). Instead, the modern self discovers that order within itself, for instance, through the intramental moral construction that he/she makes according to the standards of evidence (Descartes) or universalization (Kant). Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), Part II: Inwardness. 111-209.

<sup>40</sup> Taylor thinks that this powerful moral ideal of authenticity is at work and widespread in our times and has grown particularly strong in Western societies since the 1960’s. More and more people think that they ought to act like this, with the impression that they would waste or unfulfill their lives if they don’t.

<sup>41</sup> Taylor recalls that *authenticity* was defined by Lionel Trilling in his book *Sincerity and Authenticity*, and he took this term from him. Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 16.

<sup>42</sup> Taylor, 2.

<sup>43</sup> Taylor, 14.

<sup>44</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, Part I.

<sup>45</sup> Charles Taylor. “The Politics of Recognition”, in Charles Taylor et al., *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann, (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25-73.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 26.

<sup>47</sup> Taylor, 26. [the highlight is mine]

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition”, 28.

<sup>49</sup> Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 26. Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition”, 28.

<sup>50</sup> Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 27.

<sup>51</sup> Taylor, 28-29.

---

<sup>52</sup> Taylor, 29.

<sup>53</sup> Taylor, 29.

<sup>54</sup> «GDP per capita (current US\$) - Chile | Data», accessed February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2020, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=CL>.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Andrea Palet, Pilar de Aguirre, y PNUD Chile, eds., *Desiguales: orígenes, cambios y desafíos de la brecha social en Chile* (Santiago, Chile: PNUD : Uqbar Editores, 2017).

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/research/lessons-from-chiles-transition-to-free-college/>, accessed February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2020.

<sup>57</sup> «Global\_POVEQ\_CHL.pdf», accessed February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2020, [https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/poverty/33EF03BB-9722-4AE2-ABC7-AA2972D68AFE/Global\\_POVEQ\\_CHL.pdf](https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/poverty/33EF03BB-9722-4AE2-ABC7-AA2972D68AFE/Global_POVEQ_CHL.pdf).

<sup>58</sup> These figures must be nuanced when considering the stubborn Chilean inequality that, although it has diminished somewhat, has already been normalized. In Chile the Gini Inequality Index was 0.57 respect to autonomous income in 1989 at the end of the dictatorship and has maintained around 0, 502 since 2017. This brutal inequality makes most people live in Chile with fear of getting sick, getting old or losing their jobs. This situation is reflected in the 82% of people that have incomes lower than the national average, US\$800 approx. The 10% of the population with the highest income earns 37 times more than the 10% with the lowest income. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL), dependent on the UN, in 2017, 50% of the lowest-income households had 2.1% of the country's net wealth, 10% concentrated 66.5% of the total and the wealthier 1% concentrated 26.5% of Chilean wealth. Cf. UN - CEPAL, *Panorama Social de América Latina 2018* (Santiago de Chile, 2019), 62-63.

<sup>59</sup> “Observatorio Social,” *Observatorio Social*, accessed November 15, 2018, <http://observatorio.ministeriodesarrollosocial.gob.cl>.

<sup>60</sup> The Chilean National Socioeconomic Characterization Survey (CASEN) 2017 developed by the Ministry of Social Development of the Government of Chile shows that 20.7% of Chilean families live in multidimensional poverty conditions: education (22.5%) (attendance, backlog school, education), health (22.5%) (malnutrition in children, affiliation to the health system, care), work and social security (22.5%) (occupation, social security, pensions), housing and environment (22,5%) ((habitability (overcrowding, state of the home), basic services, environment), Networks and Social Cohesion (10%) (social support and participation, equal treatment, security).

<sup>61</sup> The main economic infrastructure of Chile, such as the road network and the port system, has been built in the last two decades. Chile can claim to have a high quality and well maintained road system. It built the main vertical north-south highway (Route 5) and the transversal arteries that connect the main cities. In the decade from 2004 to 2014, the total capacity of containers in Chilean ports doubled and the productivity of maritime transport at the port level became one of the highest in Latin America. The main urban infrastructure projects, such as the metro system (underground train) of Santiago and the city's bypass, have sustained the economic and demographic growth of the capital. Between 1985 and 2013, Chile managed to expand its wastewater treatment capacity from 0% to 100%. Finally, Chile has managed to develop this infrastructure efficiently and with a high level, which is testimony to the quality of its institutions.

Chile has also managed to channel private financing for the development of its infrastructure. Chile has adopted and perfected the infrastructure concession model, which largely explains the speed at which the extensive road network has been built. In the more than two decades since the launching of the concessions program in 1992, Chile has financed 82 projects for a value of USD 19,000 million and has built or rehabilitated 2,500 kilometers of roads using this mechanism. Cf. OCDE (2017), “Brechas y Estándares de Gobernanza de la Infraestructura Pública en Chile”, OECD, Israel, <https://www.oecd.org/gov/budgeting/brechas-y-estandares-de-gobernanza-de-la-infraestructura-publica-en-chile.pdf>

<sup>62</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 478.

<sup>63</sup> Chile promulgó en 1981 una ley que permitía fundar universidades privadas con fines de lucro, lo que universalizó el acceso a la Educación Superior.

---

<sup>64</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 475.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Taylor, 3.

<sup>66</sup> Taylor, 486.488.489.

<sup>67</sup> Taylor, 486.488.489.

<sup>68</sup> Taylor, 489.

<sup>69</sup> Pew Research Center, «Religion in Latin America: Widespread Change in a Historically Catholic Region», noviembre de 2014, accessed February 20<sup>th</sup>, <https://www.pewforum.org/2014/11/13/religion-in-latin-america/>.

<sup>70</sup> «Encuesta Bicentenario», accessed February 21st, 2020, <https://encuestabicentenario.uc.cl/>.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 18. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 676.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 100-101.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 16.

<sup>74</sup> Taylor's three axes of what can be called in the most general sense, moral thinking: (A) our sense of respect for and obligations to others; (B) our understanding of what makes a full life; (C) characteristics by which we think of ourselves as commanding or failing to command the respect of those around us, in other words, what we call, dignity. See Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 5.14.15.25.

<sup>75</sup> Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition", 56.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 19.

<sup>77</sup> Named *The Malaise of Modernity* in its first Canadian edition.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 56.

<sup>79</sup> Taylor identifies three levels at which this modern epistemological view is wrongly formulated. (1) The level of the visceral reactions close to the natural instinct are not the same as the moral reactions that imply the affirmation or valuation of something, such as what arouses respect towards another person independent of her/his race, sexual orientation or religion. This is independent of our reaction even of our instinct that receives variable forms through education. (2) At the level of personal identity, the notions of the good are a condition of possibility of it in a strong sense, so the valuations are not optional. (3) The description of the value terms cannot be done without prescriptive language, for example: courage, brutality, gratitude.

<sup>80</sup> Criteria would be the so-called *basic reasons*, external and universalizable, not culturally conditioned, such as: "because it leads to general well-being"; "Obedience to the law"; "leads to a greatest happiness to a greatest number of people"; "safeguards your integrity"; "produces pleasure and not pain", etc.

<sup>81</sup> In modern culture the recourse to objectified knowledge prevails over ethics. For instance, from the utilitarian point of view the knowledge necessary to carry out the calculation that will reveal what is the correct action is disconnected from the own motivation in relation to the good. This type of knowledge can allow a bad person to do harm, just as a well-meaning person does good. In the same way, neo-Kantians will affirm that what is necessary is the sharpness to follow the logic of the argument, a detachable capacity of moral intuition. These positions offer a radically different horizon to the substantive practical thought, for example, of Aristotle, which distinguished between theoretical knowledge and practical wisdom (*phronesis*). The latter did not allow separating the element of practical knowledge from the practice component of virtue or good. Cf. Aristóteles, *Ética a Nicómaco - Ética a Eudemo*, ed. Emilio Lledó Íñigo, trad. Julio Pallí Bonet (Madrid: Gredos, 2019), E.N., book VI.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. George Edward Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Mineola, N.Y: Dover Publications, 2004).

<sup>83</sup> Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Papers 2: Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, (Cambridge, Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 197.

<sup>84</sup> Taylor relates in the introduction to his *Philosophical Papers* how his philosophical positions were forged in his confrontation in the 1960s and 1970s with the models derived from the natural and biological sciences in their application to the social sciences, against which he offers post-Heideggerian and Wittgensteinian arguments based

---

on the hermeneutical or interpretive approach. For a deepening of the debate between the comprehensive perspective of hermeneutics and the explanatory approach of the social sciences, see the essays in the first part of *Philosophical Papers 2: Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, in particular, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man"; "Social Theory as Practice" and "Understanding and Ethnocentricity".

<sup>85</sup> This double movement, no longer only of epistemological criticism, but hermeneutic (of a better interpretation of human experience) and social, lead Taylor to an analysis of the cultural fabric of developed societies through the link of the reconstruction of the concept of value, of its articulation and expression of a substantive moral language. In this holistic interpretation of society, the cultural elements by which a society defines its goals and identity come to the fore.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 393-396.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Taylor, 495.

<sup>88</sup> Taylor, 71.

<sup>89</sup> Taylor, "Language and Human Nature" (215-47), "Theories of Meaning" (248-92), "What is Human Agency?" (15-44), in Charles Taylor *Philosophical Papers 1: Human Agency and Language* (Cambridge, Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press, 1985). And Charles Taylor, "The Importance of Herder", in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 79-99.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Taylor, "Self-Interpreting Animals", in *Philosophical Papers 1: Human Agency and Language*, 45-76.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Taylor, "What is Human Agency?", in *Philosophical Papers 1: Human Agency and Language*, 16.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Taylor, 25.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Taylor, 42.

<sup>94</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 4.

<sup>95</sup> Taylor's three axes of what can be called in the most general sense, moral thinking: (A) our sense of respect for and obligations to others; (B) our understanding of what makes a full life; (C) characteristics by which we think of ourselves as commanding or failing to command the respect of those around us, in other words, what we call, dignity.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 78.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Taylor, 17.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Taylor, 19.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Taylor, 23.

<sup>100</sup> Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 34.

<sup>101</sup> The question of identity would be an incomprehensible matter for our ancestors, since cultural homogeneity gave, on the one hand, universality to all questions of moral orientation, and on the other, the ontological hierarchy of roles in society were understood in permanent terms. The crises were not expressed in terms of meaninglessness, but of anguish at some moral assessment that was experienced as unlivable and/or crushing.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 27.

<sup>103</sup> Taylor, 27.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Taylor, 30.

<sup>105</sup> Being a *self* in the strong sense is different from the sociological self that considers the human being in his/her behavior in groups or societies and how societies constitute the human being in a process that it calls socialization. Also different from the psychological self that is considered from how it moves by certain drives, desires and cognitive, affective, behavioral capacities, etc.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 42.



- 
- <sup>107</sup> Cf. Taylor, 35.
- <sup>108</sup> This follows the romantic tradition that continues in different ways in Heidegger and Wittgenstein.
- <sup>109</sup> Taylor, "Theories of Meaning", in *Philosophical Papers 1: Human Agency and Language*, 256.
- <sup>110</sup> Taylor, 259.
- <sup>111</sup> Taylor, 260.
- <sup>112</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 35.
- <sup>113</sup> Taylor, 36.
- <sup>114</sup> In terms of the biblical prophets it is the dehumanizing that is judged as idolatrous and therefore contrary to the will of God.
- <sup>115</sup> Cf. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 36-40.
- <sup>116</sup> Cf. Taylor, 42.
- <sup>117</sup> Cf. Taylor, 44.
- <sup>118</sup> It is surprising that Taylor, whose philosophical approach realizes the need for recourse to history, omits active commitment in history as a way of contact with the reality of God.
- <sup>119</sup> As was said, being in touch with some source of earlier moral views –for example, God, or the Idea of the Good– is now experienced in a different way: any source we connect with, considered essential to full being, has to be found deep within us.
- <sup>120</sup> Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Ser y Tiempo*, trad. Jorge Eduardo Rivera (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, S.A., 2009).
- <sup>121</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 47.
- <sup>122</sup> Then, without any comprehension of how I have come here or how I become this that I am, I have no sense of where I am and what I am. In other words, I can only know myself through the evolution of my history. Cf. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 50.
- <sup>123</sup> Taylor, 47.
- <sup>124</sup> As Taylor points out, the notion of 'self' with a substantial sense and oriented in a framework towards a moral good is not the same as reducing personal identity to a question of self-consciousness or self-perception. This would be the case of Locke's neutral or point self, and it is only a residual element of the traits that distinguish a 'self' from an ordinary object. It has no constitutive and significant concerns, it cannot formulate what it is or how it comes to be, nor can it show consistency in its preferences. 'The self' can only be known through the evolution of its history, understood as a narrative that is being written as a search.
- <sup>125</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 93.
- <sup>126</sup> Isaiah Berlin, "Dos conceptos de libertad". en *Cuatro ensayos sobre la libertad* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial S.A., 2007), 191. [the translation is mine]
- <sup>127</sup> Berlin, 201.
- <sup>128</sup> But as history has shown, it has been totalitarian regimes that use positive liberty as an excuse to curtail the negative liberties of their citizens.
- <sup>129</sup> Cf. Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 27.68.69.89.
- <sup>130</sup> Taylor, 68.
- <sup>131</sup> Taylor, 68.
- <sup>132</sup> As in all human things, we must not forget the conditions of material possibility (basic needs, education, community of belonging, shared languages, etc.) to be able to display the authentic freedom that Taylor explains.
- <sup>133</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 98.

---

<sup>134</sup> Cf. Taylor, 91-98.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Taylor, 62-64.

<sup>136</sup> Taylor, 96-97.

<sup>137</sup> As illustrated by the continued strength of the Gospel or the prophets.

<sup>138</sup> Whether it is the Christian Salvation History, or of the Progress of Humanity, or the Socialist Revolutionary Promise, or the recovery of the Mapuche Indigenous Culture, etc.

<sup>139</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 69.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Carlos Thiebaut, "Nuestro Nuevo Retrato Moral: Charles Taylor", in *Los Límites de la Comunidad* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, 1992). 65-102.

<sup>141</sup> Naturalistic projectivism postulates the mere subjective construction of values and their proclivity to be altered according to the will of the subjects.

<sup>142</sup> And we should add, that we cannot be naive realists in theology either.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 429.

<sup>144</sup> Understood as the reworked complement between negative freedom and positive freedom that Taylor understands as Authenticity.

<sup>145</sup> In a broader sense, the spell of modern science reduces reality to phenomena that appear from the objectifying perspective of the scientific method. Paraphrasing Aristotle (*Metaphysics* IV, 2) we need to recognize that "reality is said in many ways", depending (i) on how and with what the subject looks, (ii) from where he looks and (iv) if reality manifests itself in intellectual perception, in our practices and commitments or in our affections. One of the challenges is to offer ways of accessing these diverse perspectives for a more complete and enriched interpretive approach to reality.

In this sense, reality is not only described as an object, but also, for example, it is narrated in our histories, in our stories and poems that discover new aspects of it, it is remembered, sung, thanked for in a prayer, etc. Likewise, reality is said differently depending on whether we look, for instance, from a university in Boston or from a marginal neighborhood in Santiago de Chile, or if we look from commitment to a political cause or from a basic need. And on the other hand, reality appears differently depending on whether it appears to the subject's consciousness, or to his/her practical experience or to affects or to his/her religious experience.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 58.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Taylor, 58. 69.

<sup>148</sup> In the Platonic synthesis, reason is understood as the perception of the natural order or the correct order or the order of reality as it is. So to be ruled by reason is to be ruled by a vision of that order in the cosmos. This order connects with the correct order of the soul and as a whole one can see that everything is ordered for good. There is a connection between the order of the physical cosmos and the order of the soul, which is mediated by reason. Cf. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 121.

<sup>149</sup> Taylor, 59.

<sup>150</sup> Taylor, "Atomism", in *Philosophical Papers 2: Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, 199.

<sup>151</sup> The kind of realism that Taylor advocates brings forth a kind of relativism, for human societies differ greatly in their cultures and values. If it is recognized that certain goods are only such once the existence of humans within a certain cultural configuration is admitted, is there a way of arbitrating among them when they collide with each other? Don't there seem to be different kinds of human realization which are really incommensurable? What happens is that it is not possible to pass from one culture to the other without verifying some gains and losses of something, since nothing guarantees that universally valid goods are perfectly combinable. Cf. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 60-61..

---

<sup>152</sup> But then, how can these subjects justify the objective force of their values against those who do not share them? How does Taylor's substantiating ethics take care of the problem of moral pluralism and the need to find ways to resolve the conflict of values? Taylor dedicates his *Politics of Recognition*'s reflection to tackle this problem.

<sup>153</sup> Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 39.

<sup>154</sup> One of the critics made to hermeneutics is that if one's own tradition is a condition of possibility of any understanding of an alien tradition, since we cannot come out of every intellectual tradition and of all language intellectually, what ends up being produced is the fusion of horizons that Gadamer talks about, that is, the transformation of one's position by the study of the other, so that we do not simply judge by our original familiar standards; however, this may be the impossibility of understanding other traditions at all.

<sup>155</sup> Cf. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 62-63.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. Taylor, 69.

<sup>157</sup> For instance, models of religious order that excluded and subjugated women; ideals and disciplines of rational control that excluded and dominated the lower classes; notions of civilization that made invisible and excluded subjugated races and peoples, etc.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 71.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Taylor, 72.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. Taylor, 74.

<sup>161</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Fundamentacion de la metafisica de las costumbres* (Madrid: Tecnos Editorial S.A., 2005), 107. [the translation is mine]

<sup>162</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 74.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. Taylor, 76.

<sup>164</sup> Cf. Taylor, 85.

<sup>165</sup> Taylor, 85.

<sup>166</sup> The procedural mode of morality leaves the human being exposed to the inclemency: there is no way to answer why one should aspire to moral maturity, or what is the significance and meaning of our moral code or what is good and why there is something valuable in that horizon and in those mandates that deserve our assent, or what are the priorities.

<sup>167</sup> As already mentioned, the same is observed in the emergence of the modern theory of the social contract, where a conception of a good life is not defined but a procedure for the political self-determination of a diverse population.

<sup>168</sup> Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition", 32.

<sup>169</sup> Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 33. Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition", 31.

<sup>170</sup> Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition", 32.

<sup>171</sup> Taylor, 34.

<sup>172</sup> Taylor, 35.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. Taylor, "Cross-Purposes: the Liberal-Communitarian Debate", in *Philosophical Arguments*, 181-203.

<sup>174</sup> It could be affirmed that part of his NeoHegelian formation is noted here, since it accentuates the holistic character of society and in its light the identity of the subjects is analyzed in their context of socialization, emergence and constitution.

<sup>175</sup> Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 35.

<sup>176</sup> Taylor distinguishes between the individualism associated with a social ethic, from anomie and decomposition that does not refer to any social ethic. For instance, the modes of social existence that the culture of

---

self-realization supposes are (i) the sense of universal right, that is, everyone have the right and the capacity to be themselves, associated with a soft relativism that indicates that nobody has the right to criticize the values of others. This view is complemented by the notion of procedural justice, which in turn points out that the limit of self-realization of any person is respect for equal opportunities for others in their realization. (ii) The emphasis on relationships in the sphere of intimacy, especially sentimental relationships, which are considered the primary setting for self-discovery and self-realization. This is a corollary of the good life centered on the ordinary life of production, family, work, and love and not on a supposedly superior life.

<sup>177</sup> Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition", 25.

<sup>178</sup> Taylor, 26.

<sup>179</sup> There are different notions of dignity in the liberal thought. For instance, the one underlined by the thought of Immanuel Kant understands human dignity as autonomy, that is, in the ability of each person to determine for himself or herself a view of the good life. Dignity is not associated with any particular understanding of the good life, that why there's no possibility to raise the outcome of some people's deliberations officially over that of others. A liberal society must remain neutral on the good life, and restrict itself to ensuring that however they see things, citizens deal fairly with each other and the state deal equally with all. Cf. Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition", 56.

<sup>180</sup> Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 47.

<sup>181</sup> Taylor, 47-48.

<sup>182</sup> This is why the need, says Taylor, is now acknowledged for the first time. In premodern times, people didn't speak of 'identity' and 'recognition' not because people didn't have what we call identities, or because these didn't depend on recognition, but rather because these were then too unproblematic to be thematized as such.

<sup>183</sup> Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition", 34.

<sup>184</sup> Taylor, 34.

<sup>185</sup> Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 53.

<sup>186</sup> Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition", 37.

<sup>187</sup> This neutrality is criticized by peoples who have been colonized, as they see in it an implicit imposition of a certain hegemonic culture. Liberalism is interpreted as some fighting creed that upholds difference-blind principles. Cf. Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition", 43-44.61-73.

<sup>188</sup> Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 52.

<sup>189</sup> Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition", 41.

<sup>190</sup> According to Michael Walzer these two modes are linked with two types of liberalism in the political philosophy of modernity. (L1) A first liberalism would maximize the individual rights and neutrality of the State, which lacks of its own moral project - cultural or religious - and of collective goals beyond personal freedom, the security of its citizens and its well-being. (L2) A second type of liberalism would conceive a State interest in the survival and flourishing of particular national, religious or cultural forms without this hindering the defense of individual rights. See Walzer's comment in Taylor et al., *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, 99-103.

<sup>191</sup> However, the idea of individual rights, should not be taken for granted, for thanks to the rational model in modernity the idea of impartiality is intelligible, and without which the very notion of individual rights would be incomprehensible. And we must remember that at that time, the position that defended the substantivity of values and hierarchy was opposed to it.

<sup>192</sup> Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 41.

<sup>193</sup> Taylor, 37.

<sup>194</sup> Taylor, 39.

<sup>195</sup> Taylor, 40.

- 
- <sup>196</sup> Taylor, 81-82.
- <sup>197</sup> Taylor, 82.
- <sup>198</sup> Taylor, 89.
- <sup>199</sup> Taylor, 89.
- <sup>200</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 482.
- <sup>201</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 5.
- <sup>202</sup> Taylor, 717ff.
- <sup>203</sup> Taylor, 717.
- <sup>204</sup> Taylor, 720.
- <sup>205</sup> James K.A. Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2014), 122.
- <sup>206</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 6 and 677.
- <sup>207</sup> Taylor, 677.
- <sup>208</sup> Taylor, 679.
- <sup>209</sup> Taylor, 597.
- <sup>210</sup> Taylor, 600.
- <sup>211</sup> Cf. Taylor, 595.
- <sup>212</sup> Taylor, 596.
- <sup>213</sup> Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 104.
- <sup>214</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 703.
- <sup>215</sup> Taylor, 684.
- <sup>216</sup> Cf. Taylor, 702.
- <sup>217</sup> Cf. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 44.
- <sup>218</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 6-7.
- <sup>219</sup> Taylor, 8.
- <sup>220</sup> Taylor, 8.
- <sup>221</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Crítica de la razón práctica* (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, S. A., 1998), 197.
- <sup>222</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 9-10.
- <sup>223</sup> Taylor, 768.
- <sup>224</sup> Taylor, 769.
- <sup>225</sup> Recall the “Best provisional Account Principle” in Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 58-59.
- <sup>226</sup> Cf. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 48.
- <sup>227</sup> One of the devotional practices that was discovered and created in the time of the great flowering of an inward religion, associated with a type of discipline, method, and turning into account a new sense of human agency are the Spiritual Exercises by Ignatius of Loyola. This spiritual method is intended to open us to God, through meditation and contemplation aimed at the transformation of the self. It combines a high degree of reflectiveness about one’s own orientation, a consciousness of the distraction and self-absorption that currently dominates us, and proposes ways to nourish a personal relationship with God within human history. This opens us to His/Her transformative agape, and sends us to collaborate with the triune God in the transformation of reality through

---

service, taking us beyond our self-reference. Likewise it offers a broader narrative of the History of Salvation and a place of fullness related to Jesus' proclamation and acting of the Reign of God, where we can interpret our own life and articulate our personal narrative, receiving a vital force that moves and transforms us. In Ignatius experience, it is recognized with a sense of inner satisfaction and joy when considering that path to follow.

<sup>228</sup> Smith *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 138.

<sup>229</sup> As we have said, Taylor is interested in the living experience of belief and non-belief in a culture where the immanent interpretation is what has been imposed (Taylor calls it Secularity 3). In this sense, he is not limited to determining the place that religion occupies in the public sphere (Secularity 1), or to statistically defining the practices and mode of belief in our contemporary societies (Secularity 2). Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 1-3. 19. 20. 136. 299ff. 423ff. 529ff. 678.

<sup>230</sup> Taylor, 19.

<sup>231</sup> Taylor, 3.

<sup>232</sup> Taylor, 21.

<sup>233</sup> Taylor, 12.

<sup>234</sup> Taylor, 15-16.

<sup>235</sup> In a previous note we noted that this notion of secularity is called *Secularity 3* in Taylor's *A Secular Age* essay.

<sup>236</sup> One of the great challenges that believer reflection must face is how to articulate the distinction and structural relationship between God and temporal historical reality. This implies rework the notions of natural-supernatural, temporal-eternal, immanence-transcendence, nature-grace, that could allow us to think, feel and live in another way.

Part of these efforts has been developed by Karl Rahner in his nuanced position on the relationship between nature and divine grace, where he expresses the impossibility of the human being possessing only something like a "pure nature". Cf. Karl Rahner, "Sobre la relación entre la naturaleza y la gracia" in *Escritos de Teología. Tomo I: Dios-Cristo-María-Gracia* (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, S.A., 1961), 327-50. Karl Rahner, "Naturaleza y gracia", in *Escritos de Teología. Tomo IV: Escritos Recientes* (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, S.A., 1962), 215-44. Likewise, in his conception of revelation, history and evolution as a unit in the history of God that articulates History of Salvation, History of Revelation, with History of the World and History of Religions. . Cf. Karl Rahner, *Curso fundamental sobre la fe: Introducción al concepto de cristianismo*, trad. Raúl Gabás, Edición: 1 (Barcelona: Herder Editorial S.L., 2007), Grado quinto: 172-215. Karl Rahner, "Historia del mundo e historia de la salvación" (115-34), "La cristología dentro de una concepción evolutiva del mundo" (181-220), in *Escritos de Teología. Tomo V: Nuevos escritos* (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, S.A., 1964).

From the efforts of the German theologian, Latin American theologians have attempted to radicalize this point. Gustavo Gutierrez has questioned the "distinction of planes" between "the animation of the temporal" and "concerns for the spiritual" that would be based on the natural-supernatural distinction. Cf. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Teología de la Liberación - perspectivas*. (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1972), 93-100. Jon Sobrino finds in the primacy of the Reign of God the ability to unify, without separation or confusion, transcendence and history. Cf. Jon Sobrino, "Centralidad del Reino de Dios en la teología de la liberación", in Ignacio Ellacuría y Jon Sobrino, eds., *Mysterium Liberationis: conceptos fundamentales de la teología de la liberación*, vol. I (Madrid: UCA Editores y Editorial Trotta, S.A., 1990), 467-510. Ignacio Ellacuría understands that there is a single historical reality where both God and the human being intervene as a starting point to understand the Christian historical transcendence, that is, the salvific character of historical facts and not only the historical character of salvific facts. On this horizon, he understands transcendence as something that transcends *in* and not as something that transcends *from*; that is to say, when God is historically and personally reached, neither the human nor the real history is abandoned, but rather delves into its roots. Cf. Ignacio Ellacuría, "Historicidad de la Salvación", in *Escritos teológicos. Tomo I*, (San Salvador, El Salvador: UCA Editores, 2000), 519-628.

<sup>237</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 732.

<sup>238</sup> Cf. Taylor, 542.

---

<sup>239</sup> Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 93.

<sup>240</sup> As we have stated in another note, *reality is said in many ways*, which challenges us to articulate the notion of reality in which we live, as well as the possibilities and mediations for the knowledge and interpretation of that reality (which in turn, requires articulating the notion of knowledge that we use).

<sup>241</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 774.

<sup>242</sup> Cf. Michael J. Buckley, S.J., *Denying and Disclosing God: The Ambiguous Progress of Modern Atheism*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 48-49.

<sup>243</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 549.

<sup>244</sup> Cf. Taylor, 550.

<sup>245</sup> Taylor, 549.

<sup>246</sup> Taylor does not directly identify disenchantment with the end of religion, if it is understood that an “enchanted” world is a world of spirits and meaningful causal forces, of wood sprites and relics that could be essential only to some forms of religion. Additionally, the disenchanting phenomenon of modernity is also associated with a religious experience that becomes increasingly somewhat interior and excarnated. In this sense, we have moved from an era in which religious life was more “embodied”, where the presence of the sacred could be enacted in ritual, or seen, felt, touched, walked towards (in pilgrimages), into one which is more “in the mind”, where the link with God passes more through our endorsing contested interpretations. For instance, of our political identity as religiously defined, or of God as the authority and moral source underpinning our ethical life. In this context, as we have already pointed out, the image of God tends to be reduced to the Creator that designed the world, so He/She relates to us primarily by establishing a certain order of things, whose moral shape we can be easily grasp. Thus, religion tends to be reduced to a morality and God as an agent does not intervene in history. This religiosity eclipses, on one hand, the possibility of considering a “further purpose” as a good that transcends human flourishing, and on the other hand, the idea that humans are being transformed participating in God’s nature, namely, love, or agape as a gratuitous grace. Although, this change musn’t be exaggerated. Cf. Taylor, 221ff. 553-54.

<sup>247</sup> Taylor, 506-7.

<sup>248</sup> Taylor, 509.

<sup>249</sup> Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 90.

<sup>250</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 17.

<sup>251</sup> Taylor, 17. This supposes a deep awareness of the reality of evil and human suffering.

<sup>252</sup> This Taylor insight draws on the patristic tradition of the early centuries of Christianity. Irenaeus of Lyon, in his confrontation with Gnosticism, argues about Christian hope: beyond all expectations of the human being, confident in the very possibilities of his nature, a radical transformation can be expected in history subjected to the eternal return of evil, of suffering and injustice. God has created the human being as flesh and soul, a vital principle but diminished because it is subject to death. But respectful of his/her freedom and as a Father deals with his children, God offers the gift of His/Her Spirit—true life—to enter into communion with Him/Her and make him/her a full human being, the “living human being” who gathers flesh, soul and Spirit. The living human being, who lives in communion and filial friendship with God, moved by the Spirit that is Agape, produces fruits of life and justice in the middle of the world and of history.

The living human being, who shares the divine nature by the gratuitous gift of God, is glorified little by little, by attraction and not by imposition, which shows the delicacy and respect of God. In a process of growth in the Spirit, the human being is being fulfilled until the Spirit lives naturally in the creature, whose soul follows the Spirit and integrates the flesh. The Son, who opens the possibility of the communion of the divine with the human and of the human with the divine, is the mediator of this path of qualification in the Spirit.

This process of integration of the flesh and the Spirit integrates the Church and the human community, without leaving any creature alien to the gratuitous love of God in the Spirit. Everything in due time as the Father has dreamed it for His creation, so that they share the full life: “«But the spiritual does not appear first», says the

---

Apostle (and affirms it as referring to us men), «but first the animal, then the spiritual» (1 Cor 15:46), as is reason. For it was necessary that man should first be molded, and once molded he should receive the soul; and then receive the communion of the Spirit. For this reason the Lord made «the first Adam a living soul, the second life-giving Spirit» (1 Cor 15:45). Thus, like the one who has received life for the soul, when he turns to the lowest he loses his life; so also he who turns to the highest, receives the life-giving Spirit and finds the life”, Cf. Ireneo de Lyon, *Contra los herejes: exposición y refutación de la falsa gnosis*, A.H. V, 12,2b, trad. Carlos Ignacio González, S.J. (México: Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano, 2000). [the translation is mine]

<sup>253</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 20.

<sup>254</sup> Cf. Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular*, 143.

<sup>255</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 643.

<sup>256</sup> Taylor, 729.

<sup>257</sup> Taylor, 702-3.

<sup>258</sup> Cf. Taylor, 550-51.

<sup>259</sup> Taylor, 643.

<sup>260</sup> Taylor, 732.

<sup>261</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Catholic Modernity?*, ed. James L. Heft, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 35.

<sup>262</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, “Liberating and Anticipating the Future”, in Margaret A. Farley, *Liberating Eschatology*, (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 189-207.

<sup>263</sup> Cf. Pedro Trigo S.J., «Cuál es el acto primero del que la Teología de la Liberación es acto segundo», *ITER revista de teología*, 2001.

<sup>264</sup> The eschatological dynamic between the realizations in the present and the process of historical transformation open to an absolute future, that is, the eschatological *already but not yet*, requires an ontology and a procedural way of thought that makes the future of reality, of history and of the human being intelligible. The narrative structure of the subject whose identity is constituted over time within a linguistic community of significance and whose narrative is embedded in larger narratives, account for this demand.

<sup>265</sup> In light of the hermeneutics of the identity structure of the human being we cannot conform to an abstract description of Jesus. To fully understand him and to offer horizons of significance in a culture of authenticity, one cannot forget his historical praxis and the background that gave sense to him that some actions or modes of life were incomparable higher than others. Taylor reminds us that historicity has a constitutive character for human nature and that, therefore, the historicity of Jesus is a constitutive and mediating reality of the revelation of God. Therefore, we need to understand the significant relationships that he lived in the Israel of the first century and that were constituting him as a subject. We need to understand the qualitative distinctions and the framework within which he lived and that form the context in which his value judgments, his relationships, words, gestures, reactions and actions make sense. This historically situated framework helps us understand what was important to Jesus, what his standpoints were, his life choices, and the values that made his life meaningful. That is, who Jesus of Nazareth was, not only as what right things he did but as what good he was. The great framework that configures Jesus is what he understands in his context by *the Reign of God*. This is the reality that he lives and the way in which he self-understands his path of human maturation, his vocation and his programmatic vision.

<sup>266</sup> Church in Santiago de Chile, “Instrumentum Laboris”. *X Synod “The Youngsters, the Faith and the Vocational Discernment”*. §39.43-45. Accessed february 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020, [the translation is mine] [http://iglesiadesantiago.cl/sinodo/site/artic/20180504/asocfile/20180504162804/instrumentum\\_laboris.pdf](http://iglesiadesantiago.cl/sinodo/site/artic/20180504/asocfile/20180504162804/instrumentum_laboris.pdf).

<sup>267</sup> “Carta a Diogneto”, Cap 5-6, en J. B. Lightfoot, *Padres Apostólicos* (Toronto: Patristic Publishing, 2019). [the translation is mine]