THE RELIGION OF THE HEART: SELF, SOLIDARITY, AND THE SACRED IN ROMANTIC LIBERAL MODERNITY

by

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Abstract

North Americans and Western Europeans increasingly prefer "spirituality" to "religion." In response to this "spiritual turn," a voluminous literature has emerged across the human sciences. Yet the study of spirituality remains rife with discord and fragmentation. This study seeks to clarify the nature of these debates, as well as advance a substantive position within them. In Part I, following in the footsteps of contemporary cultural sociologists, I contend that the spiritual turn signals the ascent of an enduring cultural structure in Western modernity, which I call the religion of the heart. I draw from a wide array of sociological and historical studies, supplementing these with my own empirical research, in order to offer a brief history of this religious tradition, and delineate its core tenets. In Part II, I synthesize the existing scholarship on "spirituality," advancing a genealogy of the spiritual turn since the 1960s. I maintain that the religion of the heart holds deep elective affinities with the romantic liberal social imaginary that crystallized in popular consciousness during this era and transformed the institutional spheres of Western liberal democracies, eventually giving birth to a new social order—romantic liberal modernity. In Part III, I illuminate the striking degree to which academic debates about the religion of the heart, or "spirituality," track debates about romantic liberal modernity, delineating the social-cum-political theoretical traditions that scholars have drawn upon to criticize both. I then draw from the Durkheimian tradition in order to mount a defense of the animating ideals of romantic liberalism, challenge these traditions' chief theoretical and normative presuppositions, and flag the concerns critics raise that warrant further empirical investigation. In Part IV, I advance institutional ethnographies of three sites where the religion of the heart is institutionalized in a specific discursive form as a means of assessing the validity of these concerns. I conclude that while critics may have reason to disparage both the religion of the heart, and romantic liberal modernity more generally, the reality is far more complex than their critiques suggest—and more importantly, far less hopeless.

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The debts I owe for the completion of this study are many—too many, unfortunately, for me to recount in full. Alas, such is the nature of scholarship; we stand on the backs of so many giants that it becomes near impossible to name them all. I will therefore give thanks to those who most readily come to mind, and hope the rest will not be offended by my lapses in memory.

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Once I extend my vision beyond the academic world, the debts begin to rack up very rapidly. Indeed, it is striking to reflect on the degree to which the completion of a work of scholarship like this depends upon a whole array of relationships, support systems, and social networks. The end product, which obscures these background forces and factors, belies the truth: that we are little without the people around us.

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Table of Contents

Abstract ii
Acknowledgements iii
Preface viii
Chapter 1 Introduction 1
Part I: The Spiritual Turn 10
Chapter 2 From 'Religion' to 'Spirituality': A Literature Review 10
Chapter 3 A Cultural Sociological Approach to the Study of Religion 26
Chapter 4 A Brief History of the Religion of the Heart 37
Chapter 5 Today's Religion of the Heart 51
Part II: The Making of Romantic Liberal Modernity 66
Chapter 6 A Genealogy of the Present: The 1960s and the Rise of Romantic Liberalism 66
Chapter 7 Institutions as Moral Dramas: The Making of Romantic Liberal Modernity 88
Chapter 8 Mapping the Romantic Liberal Institutional Order 103
Part III: Romantic Liberal Modernity and Its Discontents 122
Chapter 9 Romantic Liberal Modernity and Its Critics 122
Chapter 10 A Durkheimian Reformulation of Romantic Liberalism 141
Part IV: The True Self in Social Context 165
Chapter 11 Recovering Authenticity: Moral Reform and Shifting Involvements at a Twelve Step Group 165
Chapter 12 Embodied Enchantment: Prosperity and Positivity at a Greedy Institution 195
Chapter 13 Romantic Liberal Subjects: Public Performance and Political Ambivalences at a Public Speaking Club 227
Chapter 14 Conclusion: In Search of the Good Society 256
Bibliography 264
Appendix A Research Process and Methods 306
Appendix B GREB Clearance 319

Preface

Grappling with *Habits of the Heart*

> *We have argued that any living tradition is a conversation, an argument in the best sense, about the meaning and value of our common life.* (Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*)

Some years ago, I came across a book that woke me from what in hindsight was a dogmatic slumber. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, written collaboratively by five accomplished scholars (four sociologists and one philosopher), is a profound meditation on the history and nature of individualism in America, and its corrosive implications for democratic public life. I say *Habits* woke me from a dogmatic slumber because the first time I read it, despite over 25 years having passed since its original publication, the picture it painted of liberal democratic life seemed terrifyingly accurate. Seeing both my society and myself in its pages shook me to my core (what its authors no doubt intended). Thus, *Habits* challenged me to take a hard look at both.

What is striking is the degree to which the issues raised by *Habits* remain as timely as they were in the 1980s (perhaps even more so), as well as the extent to which they speak not merely to Americans, but all of us living in liberal democracies in the twenty-first century. This is because *Habits* is fundamentally concerned with the problems thrown up by modernity, or how to create a decent, just, and cohesive society in a world of multiple and conflicting moral perspectives and social institutions. Indeed, it is likely for this reason that the book has tended to be misread.[1] The popular interpretation of *Habits*, at least in scholarly circles, is that Robert Bellah and his coauthors advance a wholesale indictment of the moral languages of liberal individualism—utilitarian and expressive in nature. Yet their view is far more nuanced. Rooted in a classical sociological paradigm, they see the fact of institutional differentiation as the defining characteristic of modernity, and they conceive of moral languages as "living cultural traditions" or "distinctive patterns of meaning" which "make different kinds of commonsense out of our experience of different institutional spheres of social life" (Tipton 1986, 166). Thus, rather than fearing individualism *in toto*, they feared only its "overgeneralization," that is, its growing dominance in American social life, and the concomitant attenuation of the biblical and republican moral traditions in America (172). In this way, rather than offering a jeremiad against utilitarian and expressive

[1] See Bellah's (2007) "Reading and Misreading 'Habits of the Heart'."

individualism, *Habits* advances a "multivocal cultural argument" about these moral traditions and their rightful place in the good society.[2]

And yet *Habits* is not very kind to individualism. Indeed, "expressive individualism," as Bellah and coauthors call it, receives particularly harsh treatment.[3] This, I think, is why *Habits* affected me so much. This moral tradition is intimately familiar to me; it permeates my life world, and rolls easily off my tongue. Thus, despite being significantly persuaded by *Habits*, I nevertheless had reservations. Is expressive individualism really at odds with community and commitment? Is our moral ecology truly under threat? And if so, must we revive the biblical and republican traditions to solve this? What presuppositions inform these judgments? And what ideal are we comparing the present to? I couldn't shake the feeling that much was obscured in the story *Habits* told.

I decided to explore these issues by conducting my own study. I wanted to extend the project the authors of *Habits* had begun, to answer their call and take part in the public discussion about individualism and its consequences. I wanted to know to what degree, and in what ways, their analysis held. However, once I set out it was clear that I could not approximate anything like what they produced. *Habits* was the byproduct of four different research projects, conducted by multiple teams of researchers.[4] I knew I would have to narrow the scope of my investigation were I to have any chance of answering their call.

It is no accident that religion receives sustained attention in *Habits*.[5] Following Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*, Bellah et al. observed that, historically, religion has been central to social and political life in America, what with puritanism and sect religion playing a key role in giving life to the republican virtues and values that were pivotal to the birth of American democracy. Furthermore, well attuned to contemporary religious change,[6] the authors picked up on a crucial development which, at the time, was only in its early stages, but has since become a marked feature of the contemporary religious landscape—the semantic shift from "religion" to "spirituality." Bellah et al. contended this shift signaled the triumph of "religious individualism," a term they borrowed from Ernst

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[2] Steven Tipton, personal communication, November 12, 2019.

[3] In a later essay Bellah describes their treatment of expressive individualism as "severe" (Bellah 1990, 1060).

[4] For a useful summary of *Habits* and its distinctiveness as a work of social science see Reynolds and Norman 1988.

[5] Chapter 9 is devoted entirely to the topic of religion in American life.

[6] Bellah was an astute observer of contemporary religious life, writing and editing a number of important volumes on the religious implications of the 1960s counterculture including *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World*, and *The New Religious Consciousness* (co-edited with Charles Y. Glock). And each of his coauthors also produced scholarship on religion in public life at various points in their careers.

Troeltsch. They observed, "Contemporary religious individualists often speak of themselves as 'spiritual' rather than 'religious,' as in 'I'm not religious but I'm very spiritual'" (Bellah et al. 1985, 246). They even offered an exemplary case, a woman they called Sheila Larson. When asked to define her religiosity, Larson answered, "My faith has carried me a long way. It's Sheilaism. Just my own little voice." According to Bellah et al. Sheilaism reflects a kind of religious expressive individualism, which holds "'self-realization' as the highest aspiration" (234).[7] Furthermore, they feared that with its increasing prevalence the social foundations upon which American democracy has historically stood would crumble.

Many have followed in their footsteps. As we shall see, concerns abound regarding the decline of civic engagement and moral community as a result of the shift from "religion" to "spirituality." And in recent years others have argued that religious individualism serves to conceal and perpetuate social and economic injustices. Leaving aside for now the legitimacy of these concerns, we can see that *Habits* placed the semantic shift from "religion" to "spirituality" on the sociological map, making evident its significance for both public and private life.

This study is an attempt to extend as well as challenge the legacies of *Habits*. It extends them as follows. First, though principally a work of cultural sociology it operates "in the border areas between philosophy, the humanities, and the social sciences" (Bellah 1990, 1063). In other words, it seeks to embody what Bellah et al. (1985, 298) alluringly call "social science as public philosophy." I therefore reject the positivist assumption that the competent social scientist must cease to be a general citizen of society, as well the post-modern assumption that the social critic must take a position of detachment from their own society and its ideals. Second, it concerns itself fundamentally with the implications—social, political, economic, and existential—of the shift from "religion" to "spirituality," and seeks to contribute to the public discussion about the traditions, moral ideals, and political aspirations that animate liberal democracies in the twenty-first century. Like the authors of *Habits*, I use classic sociological methods—the interview and participant observation—and interlace my sociological analysis with philosophical reflection as a means of illuminating the issues at stake.[8] Finally, I assume with *Habits* that in order to make sense of the problem of modernity we must begin from the fact of institutional differentiation, and its vast implications for social and political theorizing (see Tipton 1990).

At the same time, this study diverges from *Habits* in a number of ways. In the intervening years since first reading *Habits* I have been able to make sense of, and grapple with, my initial response. I see now, in a way that eluded me before, just how American *Habits* is. By this I do not mean that the issues it throws into light are only of relevance to Americans. By no means. The spread of utilitarian and

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[7] David Yamane (2007, 182) argues Sheilaism has become "one of the most famous expressions of religious individualism ever recorded."

[8] See Appendix A for more on my research process and methods.

expressive individualism is far from exclusive to America, thus the challenges they pose (as well as the opportunities they bring) are endemic to all post-1960s liberal democracies, including my native Canada. But what is undeniably American about *Habits*, I have come to believe, are the specific challenges they diagnose *as* problems, as well as the remedies they prescribe to solve these.

This is no more evident than in their discussion of religion. Following Tocqueville, *Habits* assumes a "tight linkage of religion and public life" (Bellah et al. 1985, 221), that is, they view religion as "indispensable to the maintenance of republican institutions" (Tocqueville [1835] 1998, 120). This is why they are far from enthused about the rise of religious individualism, or Sheilaism, and why they instead champion the revival of a "public church" (Bellah et al. 1985, 237). Moreover, their call to revive the biblical and republican moral traditions reflects a distinctly American genealogy. Of course, few can fault them for this, given their intended audience. But one cannot help but wonder whether such a prescription makes sense even for America in the twenty-first century, let alone other liberal democracies (cf. Madsen 2002, 120). And what of competing moral traditions, such as the moral individualism which cultural sociologist Jeffrey Alexander (2006a), following Durkheim, persuasively demonstrates is institutionalized in the Civil Sphere? Why is there scarce mention of this? However much the authors of *Habits* sought to distance themselves from the "communitarian" label (cf. Bellah et al. 1991, 6), I continue to think it apt. For despite their protestations to the contrary, a sense of nostalgia undoubtedly runs through the book's pages. This sense subtly shapes a narrative of decline and decay, which lends an enduring plausibility to their sometimes sharp criticisms of the social order of post-1960s liberal democracies and the characters that inhabit it. As Bellah and his coauthors understood well, how one narrates the story of modernity is crucial to one's evaluation of it.

In turn, I seek to offer a, though parallel and at times overlapping, nevertheless distinct narrative of both our past and present. With a richer understanding of the nature of social theory, as well as what was (and remains) at stake in debates about "spirituality" today, I have come to see that *Habits* was powerful and persuasive because from within the normatively charged lens through which it filtered the world its conclusions were inescapable. As a result, I have chosen a different lens through which to gaze upon modernity.

Instead of Tocqueville, I place a different Frenchman, Émile Durkheim, front and centre, treating him as both guide and interlocutor.[9] This might seem to conflict with *Habits*' animating aspiration: to spur a conversation amongst Americans about the meaning and value of their common life. But the fact that *Habits* spoke to me, a Canadian, and continues to resonate with many who reside outside of

[9] This is not to say *Habits* was not also indebted to Durkheim. Yet, as I argue in Chapter 10, I believe there are crucial aspects of the Durkheimian tradition that the book fails to account for.

American borders, suggests this parochial aim may no longer be appropriate. *Habits* has clearly struck a global chord—and we, too, wish to be part of the conversation. Moreover, perhaps the solutions to our common problems do not lie in the annals of American history, but instead have more eclectic, that is, foreign sources.

Finally, this study diverges from *Habits* insofar as it makes the issue of meaning in modernity just as central as those of community and justice.[10] In so doing, it heeds the counsel of philosopher Charles Taylor, that most erudite of modern thinkers. In *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* Taylor remarks,

> Bellah and his collaborators often write as though the principal issue were what I have called the public consequences…. They search for ways to recover a language of commitment to a greater whole. But without ever saying so, they write as though there were not really an independent problem of the loss of meaning in our culture, as though the recovery of a Tocquevillian commitment would somehow also fully resolve our problems of meaning, of expressive unity, of the loss of substance and resonance in our man-made environment, of a disenchanted universe. A crucial area of modern research and concern has been elided. (Taylor 1989, 509)

Following Taylor, I argue studying the shift from "religion" to "spirituality" is important because it reflects a shift in meaning-structures, that is, the way individuals make sense of their selves, especially in relation to a greater order. Accordingly, while I am concerned with the state of social and political life in liberal democracies my focus on the religious sphere is primarily motivated by a recognition of the need for ultimate or transcendent meaning, or what we might call *enchantment*—and an acute awareness of the forces that stifle its fulfillment.

In the closing pages of *Habits* Bellah et al. (1985, 302) write, "Our argument, then, relates to getting the story right for scholarship but also for popular consciousness." After having conducted my own theoretical and empirical investigations, while I have great respect for *Habits* and its authors, I have come to doubt the veracity of certain parts of the story they tell. Accordingly, I aim to answer the call and join the conversation. For, like them, I think it is crucial that we get the story right.

[10] This is not to say the question of meaning does not feature at all in *Habits* (cf. Bellah 1990, 1064), only that it is far from centre-stage.

Chapter 1

Introduction

> *We are just at the beginning of a new age of religious searching, whose outcome no one can foresee.* (Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*)
>
> *[R]eligion seems destined to transform itself rather than disappear.* (Émile Durkheim*, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*)

The term "spirituality" has a long history; arguably originating in the Christian tradition it derives from the Greek noun *pneuma*, signifying the spirit of God (Sheldrake 2013, 2). Yet over the centuries its meaning has morphed, changing with its surrounding social context. Religious studies scholar Boaz Huss (2014, 15) remarks, "The most striking semantic shift of the term is found in its juxtaposition to religion." Indeed, since the 1960s North Americans and Western Europeans have increasingly preferred "spirituality" to "religion." As sociologist Reginald Bibby (2017, 143) observes, "While religion has been scorned and stigmatized and rejected by many, spirituality has known something of celebrity status." He recently found that in the U.K. 27 percent of the population identifies as "spiritual but not religious" (SBNR), 33 in the U.S., and 41 in Canada (Bibby 2019, 57). Thus Heinz Streib and Constantin Klein (2016, 79) note, "it is an empirical fact that talking about spirituality and self-identifying as spiritual (and not religious) is growing in prominence." These developments have provoked a host of reactions in mainstream media, ranging from puzzlement to reproving polemic.[11] Few outside the academy agree on what the shift from "religion" to "spirituality" means. And despite a consensus among scholars that a semantic shift has taken place, and indeed matters, there remains widespread confusion regarding how best to make sense of it (Rose 2001).

What do we make of this? Gordon Lynch (2007, 7) has called studying "spirituality" "a kind of religious and cultural Rorschach test, where what the researcher sees is often a projection of their own values, hopes and concerns." Although this was likely meant to be tongue-in-cheek, it is nevertheless illuminating. As we shall see, *what* one thinks of "spirituality" is formatively shaped by *how* one chooses

[11] In recent years articles discussing the "spiritual but not religious" have appeared in *The National Post* (Carlson 2012); *Huffington Post* (Davis 2014); *Time Magazine* (Wolpe 2013); *The New York Times* (Oppenheimer 2014, Brooks 2019a); *BBC News Magazine* (Castella 2013); *Tricycle* (Webster 2017); *Los Angeles Times* (Nicolaou 2012); and *The Atlantic* (Kitchener 2018).

to study it, *where* one chooses to study it from, and *what* one studies it for (Holmes 2007). Moreover, the field's major controversies revolve around fundamental and long-standing debates over the good society, and reflect long-lived disputes over the project of modernity and its residual legacies that continue to divide both scholars and laypeople alike.

This study seeks to map and assess the social and political implications of the shift from "religion" to "spirituality," otherwise known as the "spiritual turn," in post-1960s liberal democracies. Extending the legacy of *Habits*, it studies this shift synoptically, that is, as it relates to key social, political, and economic developments of the past half-century. It aims to grapple with modernity and its discontents by means of focusing on the changing nature and role of religion within it. Moreover, it engages with, and contributes, to both the theoretical and normative debates that circulate across and within the study of spirituality, blurring the distinction between philosophy and social science.

For the sake of clarity, let me state plainly the argument that underpins this study. Despite the allegedly nebulous nature of the concept, I argue that most talk of "spirituality" signals a coherent cultural structure, which I call *the religion of the heart*. By cultural structure, I refer to a symbolic framework that orders and animates distinct discourses—both "secular" and "religious." The religion of the heart, as I understand it, has longstanding roots in the Western tradition. We can see it at work in the Romantic, Transcendentalist, Theosophist, and New Thought movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as the New Age, Charismatic Christian, and Human Potential movements of the 1960s. Indeed, the 60s play a central role in the story I tell. Sociologists of religion tend to speak of this period as "unusually irreligious" (Voas and Chaves 2016, 1543). I disagree. If we follow Weber and Durkheim and expand our definition of "religion" to include unchurched forms of religion, we see that the 60s were a period of tremendous religious ferment—that is, they mark the era when the religion of the heart moved from the cultural margins into the mainstream. Yet it would be wrong to view this shift in isolation from wider societal developments. In my view, the spiritual turn is best thought of as the religious wing of a more general cultural-cum-political revolution. This revolution was characterized by a widespread embrace of romantic ideals, a reformulation of liberal values, and the concomitant reform of key primary institutions—as well as the creation of a whole series of secondary institutions—in order to reflect these new dispensations.

Social theorists have coined the term "late modernity" to capture the epoch which began around the 60s (e.g. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002). This is useful, but its generality obscures what is distinctive about twenty-first century liberal democracies such as the U.S., U.K., and Canada. As a result of the upheavals of the 1960s, we in the liberal democratic West inhabit a social order that remains animated, and indeed legitimated, by a *romantic liberal* social imaginary. I therefore refer to this social order as *romantic liberal modernity.* Moreover, the religion of the heart—which goes by "spirituality" in

popular discourse today—bears deep elective affinities with romantic liberal modernity; so deep that I argue the religion of the heart can be thought of as *the spirit of romantic liberalism*.

Does this account find support in the existing academic literature? I argued above that the study of spirituality is deeply contested, characterized by widespread disagreement. And yet, in a sense, my analysis is indebted, to a significant degree, to extant studies of spirituality. How is this so? Perhaps the Buddhist parable of the three blind men and the elephant is illustrative. In the parable each blind man touches a different part of the elephant and thus attains only a partial understanding of what sort of thing an elephant is.[12] In important respects, this is what I think the study of spirituality has resembled—scholars have attempted to make sense of the "whole" by focusing only on specific "parts." Or better yet, scholars have produced accounts of "spirituality" without making explicit the way their theoretical and normative presuppositions have shaped their conclusions. As a result, the study of spirituality has taken place across a plethora of subfields—sociology of religion, religious studies, the sociology of health, the study of biopolitics and postmodernity, critical sociology, political science, anthropology, and cultural studies—each of which has contributed much to our understanding of the spiritual turn, but whose theoretical and empirical insights have yet to be comprehensively compared or synthesized. Accordingly, the study of spirituality remains deeply fragmented, with many simply talking past one another, and others not listening at all.

For this reason, in Part I: The Spiritual Turn (Chapters 2-5) I review the existing literature and provide such a synthesis.[13] In Chapter 2, I suggest what has stifled the study of spirituality are two interrelated factors: first, the dominant approaches in the sociology of religion have, in their own ways, failed to capture the social and institutional dimensions of "spirituality." Second, the bifurcation of religious studies in the 1990s led to disciplinary siloing and the erection of multiple communication barriers separating scholars studying the spiritual turn. As a result, insights produced in one subfield have rarely been synthesized with those from others. Moreover, theoretical and normative disagreements have obscured the common ground that scholars share. In other words, returning to the Buddhist parable, there exists little shared sense of what the "elephant" in question consists of.

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[12] Of course, studying "spirituality" is not like studying an elephant in that our object of study is dependent upon our analytic frameworks. In other words, there is no whole to grasp—as in the case of the elephant—there is only what we *choose to see* (McCutcheon 1997, 110). And yet I would argue that "spirituality" is not *merely* a byproduct of the scholarly imagination insofar as what we are studying is *social*. Thus, despite the diversity of accounts in the study of spirituality it would be wrong to suggest the objects of study in many of these studies do not overlap—at least in most cases.

[13] I draw primarily from the Anglo-American scholarship, though I also reference French, Latin American, South Korean, and Easter European scholarship.

In Chapter 3 I follow in the footsteps of scholars such as Dick Houtman, Stef Aupers, and Colin Campbell and lay out the foundations of a cultural sociological approach to the study of religion, which I use to synthesize the extant literature. This approach is indebted to the classical sociological thought of Max Weber and Émile Durkheim. I argue Weber's preoccupation with the human need for ultimate meaning in disenchanted modernity, and Durkheim's view that the sacred and symbolic are constitutive of collective life remain invaluable for theorizing religion today. I then discuss the difference between strong and broad programs in cultural sociology, making clear my own allegiances.

The study of spirituality has resembled a puzzle whose pieces have been scattered chaotically across a variety of subfields and disciplines. As a result, the larger picture to which these pieces belong has been obscured. This is why I take pains to explicate the nature of the cultural structure that underlies contemporary "spiritual" discourses in Chapters 4 and 5.

In Chapter 4 I draw from the work of Ernst Troeltsch, Robert C. Fuller, Leigh Eric Schmidt, and Wouter Hanegraaff, among many others, in order to provide a brief history of the religion of the heart by examining some of its key carrier movements and representative voices, providing supportive examples from my empirical research. My methods include: discourse analysis of popular "spiritual" and self-help books, qualitative research consisting of in-depth interviews with 50 Canadian millennials (born between 1980- 2000) who self-identified as "spiritual but not religious" (SBNR), and participant observation at three sites in downtown Toronto where the religion of the heart was institutionalized—a Twelve Step group, a neo-Pentecostal church, and a Toastmasters public speaking club. For more on my research process and methods see Appendix A.

In Chapter 5 I draw extensively from the existing scholarship on "spirituality," as well as my own empirical research, in order to systematically outline the ten tenets that comprise today's religion of the heart. No doubt, in offering such a synthesis of the existing literature, I retrace steps and cover tracks that have been tread before. However, I argue such a synthesis, given the insights it affords, is sorely needed. For instance, not only does it enable us to place into conversation disparate academic literatures—connecting scholarship on the New Age, Charismatic Christian, and Human Potential movements—but it also allows us to see just how intimately the shift from "religion" to "spirituality" is related to the consolidation of romantic liberal modernity—the story I tell in Part II: The Making of Romantic Liberal Modernity (Chapters 6-8).

In Chapter 6 I trace the ascent of the religion of the heart to the 1960s. Inspired by the historical research of scholars such as Callum Brown, Hugh McLeod, and Peter Clecak, as well as the political theoretical work of Nancy Rosenblum, among others, I argue that it was during this era that an unprecedented alliance between romanticism and liberalism took root and blossomed. Romantic liberalism, in contrast to rational liberalism, seeks to reconcile romantic disenchantment with liberal

institutions by means of enchanting the private sphere. Accordingly, romantic liberals interpret "freedom" in a particular way, one that resonates strongly with an expressivist conception of the human condition. I link key cultural and political developments of this period, demonstrating that they were equally motivated by a romantic liberal social imaginary. I conclude that the rise of the religion of the heart reflects the religious wing of a wider romantic liberal revolt, to which the rights revolutions and liberation movements of the period also belong.

In Chapter 7 I draw from the work of Steven Tipton and secularization theorists in order to advance an institutional analysis of the 1960s. Treating institutions as moral dramas I make vivid how the counterculture, understood as a series of secondary institutions, launched a moral crusade against the competing economic, legal-political, and private spheres. I demonstrate how the counterculture successfully transformed both the private sphere, while reforming the legal-political sphere, thereby giving life to romantic liberal modernity. I conclude with a discussion of the moral, political, epistemic, and economic developments that have precipitated not only the decline of Christendom but also the flourishing of the religion of the heart.

In Chapter 8, I draw on a wide array of empirical studies of "spirituality" in order to map the series of secondary and primary institutions that comprise the religious sphere in romantic liberal modernity—which I call the *romantic liberal institutional order*. These include: (1) the holistic milieu, (2) the Charismatic wing of the congregational domain, (3) popular culture and entertainment media institutions, (4) arts institutions, (5) healthcare institutions, (6) educational Institutions, and (7) certain dimensions of the economic sphere. These various institutional fields, I argue, offer social support and plausibility to the religion of the heart. I then draw from my interviews and ethnographic fieldwork in order to make the case that attraction to "spirituality" in romantic liberal modernity follows one of a number of distinct social pathways.

In Part III: Romantic Liberal Modernity and Its Discontents (Chapters 9-10) I shift my focus from the empirical to the normative. Furnished with an understanding of its basic cultural structure, its historical development, and the basis and nature of its institutionalization in romantic liberal modernity, it becomes clear that debates about "spirituality" in large measure reflect debates about romantic liberal modernity and its discontents. This may sound farfetched. Yet consider the range of accounts found in the academic literature. Critical commentators variously associate the following ills with the shift from "religion" to "spirituality": irrationality and subjectivism, rugged individualism, declining civic engagement and the corrosion of political solidarity among citizens, the encroachment of market logics into all spheres of social life, and new sinister forms of social control. At the same time, defenders celebrate what they view as the virtues of "spirituality": its sacralization of individual liberty, its

privileging of an expressivist ethic and the tradition of expressive individualism, its respect for pluralism, and its promise of private enchantment.

Unquestionably, the extreme divergences of these assessments have, in no small part, contributed to the fragmentary character of the field. Scholars studying the spiritual turn have, in many instances, espoused specific social-cum-political theoretical frameworks without making explicit their theoretical or normative presuppositions. This has produced, expectedly, rich diversity in the study of spirituality, along with widespread confusion, as scholars have failed to acknowledge that their disagreements stem from espousing distinct normative traditions, each of which harbours its own assessment of romantic liberal modernity. Yet once we identify and examine the social-cum-political theoretical traditions that dominate the study of spirituality the picture that emerges makes crystal clear where the fault lines lie: romantic liberals defend what they view as the religion of the heart's support for expressivism and private enchantment, rational liberals charge it with irrationalism, communitarians and conservatives view the spiritual turn as the breakdown of community and the corrosion of authentic religion, civic republicans and civil society theorists blame it for the death of civic virtue and the decline of political solidarity, feminists disagree about its merits and shortcomings as a result of their disagreements about what the feminist project entails, and neo-Marxists, post-modernists and post-structuralists perceive it as a victory for neoliberalism. Thus, in Chapter 9 I draw from the political theoretical work of scholars such as Will Kymlicka, Bernard Yack, Stephen Macedo, and Michael Walzer, along with many others, in order to outline each of these six traditions, illuminating the way their presuppositions shape their assessments of both romantic liberal modernity and the religion of the heart.

Of course, it is all well and good to chart the fault lines, but we cannot dodge the inevitable question: who is right? Critics or defenders? The simplicity of this question belies the truth: it cannot be answered in a straightforward manner. It depends as much on theoretical-cum-normative presuppositions as it does on empirical facts. Or put another way, what one thinks of the religion of the heart depends on what one thinks of romantic liberal modernity, which in turns depends upon the social-cum-political theoretical tradition one espouses.

The authors of *Habits* understood this well, even if they failed to make it explicit. Their analysis privileged the thought of Alexis de Tocqueville, whose vision of the good society has long inspired American commentators. Instead, I place Durkheim front and centre. And in Chapter 10, inspired by the brilliant interpretive work of Mark S. Cladis and W. Watts Miller, I set out the building blocks of a Durkheimian reformulation of the romantic liberal tradition that troubles, if not refutes, many of critics' concerns about the current social order—and with it, the religion of the heart. In other words, I draw from the Durkheimian tradition in order to defend romantic liberal modernity against its detractors. Yet, in the process, I also flag two concerns that recur within the literature on "spirituality," and which a purely

theoretical analysis cannot resolve. These are as follows: (1) To what extent does the religion of the heart mitigate or exacerbate the pathologies of romantic liberal modernity—anomie and egoism? And (2) Does the religion of the heart lead to a colonization of competing social spheres, thereby impeding shifting involvements and the adoption of rival social perspectives and moral traditions?

These unresolved concerns call out for careful empirical investigation. However, not just any methodological approach will do. Given Durkheim's insights regarding the constitutive role of ritual in social life, it follows that any responsible empirical investigation of the religion of the heart must avoid talk of abstractions and instead look on the ground, as it were, at the distinct moral communities in which it is institutionalized. As Durkheim understood well, examining discourse alone reveals little about how it gets encoded and enfleshed amongst particular groups of people, and therefore what its real-world effects are.

Thus in Part IV: The True Self in Social Context (Chapters 11-13) I shift my focus from large cultural trends to local differences and advance three institutional ethnographies, each of which critically examines a site where the religion of the heart is institutionalized in a distinct discursive form. Case studies such as these, I argue, provide the most effective means of assessing the degree to which critics and defenders are correct in their assessments of the religion of the heart.

In Chapter 11 I examine the way the religion of the heart is institutionalized at New Life Fellowship (NLF), a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous in downtown Toronto. I then systematically outline the version of the religion of the heart encoded and enfleshed at NLF, which I call *Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) discourse*. Next, I examine the relationship between AA discourse and the pathologies of egoism and anomie. I argue critics are wrong to suggest that the religion of the heart in this discursive form cannot serve as a site of social integration or moral regulation. I also make the case that NLF functions as what I call a generative institution among its members—which facilitates, rather than stifles, shifting involvements and civic engagement.

In Chapter 12 I turn my gaze to C3 Toronto (C3T), the neo-Pentecostal church where I conducted participant observation. Tracing the history of C3 Church and the wider Charismatic movement to which C3T belongs, I demonstrate how we find a version of the religion of the heart institutionalized at C3T that I call *Charismatic Christian (CC) discourse*. I argue that while the case of C3T vindicates critics' fears about the intimate affinities shared between the religion of the heart and neoliberalism, it also throws into light critical and thorny issues that many have failed to adequately reckon with.

In Chapter 13 I examine Tomorrow's Leaders (TL), a Toastmasters International public speaking club that institutionalizes a secular (psychological) version of the religion of the heart, which I call *Self-Help (SH) discourse*. I locate the rise of Toastmasters International in relation to the longstanding tradition of self-help in North America, and the Human Potential movement of the 1960s. I then argue SH

discourse as institutionalized at TL serves to (re)produce romantic liberal subjects who import their own conceptions of authenticity into club meetings. I conclude, in turn, that TL's relationship to the pathologies of romantic liberal modernity remains ambivalent.

Though I do not advance an unqualified defense of the religion of the heart in the ethnographic case studies that comprise Part IV, I nevertheless conclude that critics of "spirituality" have tended to commit one of two critical errors.

The first is *theoretical* (though it has normative implications): critics tend to equate "spirituality" with atomistic individualism, when in fact, as I demonstrate in Parts I and II, it signals a cultural structure—the religion of the heart—which is both culturally coherent and institutionally rooted. This is most common among communitarians, civic republicans and civil society theorists. As a result of their faulty sociology, which presumes talk of "spirituality" is traditionless, discursively incoherent, and incapable of commanding discipline or allegiance, these scholars have failed to see that, in some cases, the religion of the heart is both morally demanding and serves as a source of solidarity. At the same time, I argue that this theoretical error is mirrored in the self-understanding of romantic liberals and adherents of the religion of the heart, thereby limiting their ability to recognize and appreciate their social and institutional debts.

The second error is *normative*: critics lack an appreciation of the distinctive features of romantic liberal modernity and its animating ideals—specifically, the ramifications of institutional differentiation, the romantic liberal attempt to balance public discipline and disenchantment with private expressivism and enchantment, and romantic liberal modernity's privileging of distinctly liberal virtues. This is most common among neo-Marxists, critical feminists, and post-structuralists. In my view, to the extent that the religion of the heart enchants the private sphere without threatening the functioning of rationalist liberal public institutions, encourages shifting involvements, and helps to sustain morally decent forms of left-liberalism I see no reason to criticize it. On the contrary, such a social function is both laudable and ought to be welcomed.

I argue that rather than criticize the religion of the heart, and romantic liberal modernity with it, *in toto* we must instead recognize their internal diversity. Moreover, we must seek to identify and give equal attention to those cases where they live up to their promise, as to those where they do not. This is my guiding principle in Part IV.

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The story I tell in this study is less one of corrosion than one of contradiction and complication. Unlike Bellah and his coauthors (and many other commentators whose work we shall later examine) I do not see

the spiritual turn, along with the cultural, social, and political developments that have given rise to it, as cancerous—at least not entirely. In fact, it is precisely these kinds of generalizing and caricature-like claims that I wish to challenge. Romantic liberal modernity is neither plagued by narcissism and civic apathy nor by capitalist greed. Things are just not that simple. No doubt, while I firmly believe romantic liberal modernity has brought with it great achievements which deserve the term progress, I can empathize with those who look longingly at the past with a sense of nostalgia, as well as those who condemn its gratuitous and vain excesses. What this means is that while I may endorse the project of romantic liberal modernity, I am not blind to its failings. Indeed, one of my primary aims in writing this study is to alert those of us who find ourselves defending the romantic liberal project—especially in its egalitarian forms—to our blind spots. At the same time, I am not only interested in preaching to the choir. In large measure, this study should be read as a defense of romantic liberal modernity against the emergence of a host of critiques that seek to throw into doubt the viability of liberal democracy in the wake of the 1960s.

Part I: The Spiritual Turn

Chapter 2

From 'Religion' to 'Spirituality': A Literature Review

In the wake of the 1960s scholars began to take note of a semantic shift traversing national contexts. Since then a voluminous literature devoted to the study of "spirituality" has emerged across the human sciences. And yet the field remains low on cohesion and high on Babel-like confusion. Indeed, religious studies scholar Jonathan Herman (2014, 164) has suggested that "spirituality" is "a subject that is, in both popular and academic discourse, especially entropic and haphazard." In this chapter I review the extensive academic literature on "spirituality." I argue the field is rife with contention and fragmentation for two reasons.

First, while theoretically promising, the dominant approaches used to study "spirituality" in the sociology of religion have either focused too narrowly on labels, giving insufficient attention to the wider social, political, and economic changes informing the spiritual turn, or they have made the mistake of using *emic* (insider) definitions as *etic* (academic) categories, thereby failing to adequately capture the collective and institutional character of what goes by "spirituality." That is, they have, in various ways, reproduced the popular self-understanding that "spirituality" is essentially de-institutionalized and asocial. These include the secularization paradigm, rational-choice or religious economies approaches, and more cultural approaches.

Second, due to the dominance of these approaches within the sociology of religion, as well as the splintering logic of post-1960s religious studies, the study of spirituality has taken place across a host of subfields and disciplines, which have rarely engaged with one another. While studies produced in these disparate subfields have usefully shed light on the discursive, social, and institutional, dimensions of "spirituality," their theoretical and empirical insights have yet to be comprehensively compared or synthesized. As a result, even beyond the sociology of religion the study of spirituality lacks a clearly defined object of study.

Distinguishing Two Different Fields: The Study *Of* and the Study *For* Spirituality

It has become increasingly clear that underlying the "spiritual but not religious" (SBNR) moniker is an implicit normative opposition, which can be summed up: "religion" the "institutional bad-guy" versus

"spirituality" the "individual good-guy" (Zinnbauer and Pargament 2005). This polarization of "religion" and "spirituality" has become something like cultural commonsense, at least among those who reject "religion." For instance, in her recent study of religious "nones" in America Elisabeth Drescher observes:

> Often 'religion' failed for Nones not only because it was seen as dull, formulaic, rule-bound, or corrupt, but also because it tended to overwrite self-identity in ways that seemed to compromise personal integrity and authenticity. Where 'religion' seemed to make individuals passive objects within a rigidly unchangeable structure, 'spirituality' allowed for creativity, flexibility, and change by individuals situated as active agents in their own lives. (Drescher 2016, 46-47)

Yet notwithstanding the establishment of a thin *emic* consensus regarding the nature of "spirituality," Streib and Klein correctly point out, "there is still considerable fuzziness in regard to the conceptualization of spirituality as an *etic* term" (2016, 78 emphasis added). Part of the reason for this is that the semantic shift from "religion" to "spirituality" gave birth to two very different fields, which scholars have unfortunately failed to distinguish.[14] The first field comprises sociologists, historians, and cultural and religious studies scholars who study "spirituality" as a socio-cultural construct. These scholars seek to offer a description of what goes by "spirituality" as it presents itself in a specific social or discursive context. This approach, I believe, is best understood as the *study of spirituality*—and it is to this field that this study seeks to contribute.

The second field, by contrast, comprises what might be called applied fields. Indeed, in recent years academic journals dedicated to the applied study of spirituality have popped up left, right, and centre; it seems every week a new textbook that aims to integrate "spirituality" into the spheres of education, healthcare, or business is published (Bender 2007). Although this is an oversimplification, scholars in these fields generally do not study "spirituality" in order to identify what the term signifies in popular discourse, or how it relates to broader social and political developments, but rather to find out how "spirituality" might impact their place of work. In other words, they are motivated by a personal interest in "spirituality" and the positive benefits (or negative consequences) they believe it will produce in practical application. This field is best understood as the *study for spirituality*.

This distinction is important because those belonging to the study for spirituality tend to use *emic* definitions of "spirituality" as *etic* categories, that is, they reproduce the emic polarization of *institutional religion* versus *subjective spirituality* in their analyses. From a sociological perspective this is problematic because such an opposition is vacuous. This is why there has recently been a call to bring the "social" back into the sociology of religion (Altglas and Wood 2018). Indeed, reproducing this binary presupposes what needs to be explained—the origins and nature of *the opposition itself*. Thus scholars who take as

[14] For more on this distinction see Watts 2017.

evident the emic distinction between "spirituality" and "religion" not only universalize what is in fact a quite recent Western phenomenon (Dein 2005; van der Veer 2009; Jacobs 2013), but also overlook a crucial question: how did the distinction between "religion"—understood as *institutional* in nature—and "spirituality"—understood as *individual and private*—become cultural commonsense? Thus we might say the study *for* spirituality is *itself* a byproduct of the very cultural and social processes and transformations which those in the study of spirituality are interested in studying. It is no wonder, then, why the field remains considerably fuzzy.

And yet even once we separate the study of spirituality from the study for spirituality, the former still remains rife with divergences, dissension and disagreement. I think one significant cause of this has been the field's marginalization by the dominant approaches within the sociology of religion.

The Sociology of Religion and the Study of Spirituality

Given its empirical prevalence, it is striking how little attention has been paid to the spiritual turn in the sociology of religion.[15] Penny Edgell (2012, 248) correctly notes that sociologists of religion have tended to dismiss "spirituality" as a subject, considering it unworthy of serious study. It is as though they have assumed the semantic shift from "religion" to "spirituality" is merely a passing fad—or just that, semantics. Of course, this is not entirely fair. Some sociologists of religion have given it their attention. As I see it, the theoretical approaches fall into one of three types. The first belong to the secularization paradigm, the second to the rational-choice or "religious economies" school, and the third I call cultural approaches in the sociology of religion. Although each of these approaches has contributed important insights to our understanding of the spiritual turn, I argue they have also served to marginalize the study of spirituality and exacerbate its progressive fragmentation.

The Secularization Paradigm

The secularization paradigm holds that modernization—equated with institutional differentiation, privatization, pluralism, economic growth, the rise of individualism, liberal democracy, and the increasing authority of science and technology—spells trouble for religion (see Tschannen 1991). Although a full review of the paradigm is beyond the scope of this study, it is worth rehashing some of its key theoretical postulates.[16]

Central to the theory is a thesis of *institutional differentiation*: in modern Euro-American societies the religious sphere has separated from other institutional spheres—the economy, politics,

[15] By the sociology of religion I am referring to the discipline's representation in journals such as *Sociology of Religion*, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, and *Review of Religious Research.*

[16] The literature on the secularization paradigm is vast. For a useful summary see Bruce 2011.

education, the family, etc.—and no longer functions as a comprehensive "sacred canopy" for society as a whole (Berger 1967). Instead, each sphere is governed by its own specialized institutions, which entail their own symbolic orders and moral logics. As a result, the religious sphere becomes one social sphere among many others, and the scope of its authority is drastically reduced (Fenn 1972; Casanova 1992; Chaves 1994). It should be noted, the process of institutional differentiation is said to have occurred in the shift to modernity—indeed, it is constitutive of it—especially with the advent of the liberal separation of church and state (Davie 2007, 57).

Following from the thesis of differentiation are two sub-theses: a *thesis of privatization* and a *thesis of religious decline* (Casanova 1994). The thesis of privatization holds that with institutional differentiation, and the evacuation of religion from the public sphere, individuals privatize their religiosity, that is, "people limit religion to the private realm so as to avoid public controversy over competing world views" (Thiessen 2015, 18). In turn, religion in modernity becomes a "private affair," intrinsically related to the emergence of a private sphere free from government intrusion as well as ecclesiastical control. In the 1970s the privatization thesis was offered support by work emerging from the sociology of knowledge, especially that of Peter Berger.[17] Berger (1979) famously argued that institutional differentiation creates a context of religious pluralism, which not only encourages privatization, but also religious decline, as it undermines the plausibility of any single religious worldview. What he called "the heretical imperative"—constitutive of the modern condition—refers to the necessity to choose one's beliefs, as opposed to being able to take them for granted. Thus, in modernity, Berger proposed, religion becomes merely a matter of choice bereft of strong "plausibility structures."[18] In turn, secularization theorists argue that religious decline is an irreversible byproduct of modernization. According to Steve Bruce (2017, 6), the paradigm's most tireless advocate, "Modernization changes the status and nature of religion in ways that weaken it and make it difficult to pass successfully from generation to generation."

Not surprisingly, proponents of the paradigm have tended to conceive of the shift from "religion" to "spirituality" as evidence of religious decline (e.g. Bruce 2002, 2011, 2013, 2017; Voas and Crockett 2005; Crockett and Voas 2006; Norris and Inglehart 2004; Voas 2009; Glendinning and Bruce 2006; Turner 2014; Thiessen 2015, 2016; Voas and Chaves 2016). No doubt, this is in part because the shift has coincided with the growth of "religious nones," which has itself become a burgeoning area of study (e.g. Drescher 2016; Lee 2015; Beyer et al. 2019). These scholars have largely drawn on the theoretical

[17] Although Berger (1999) recanted his commitment to the thesis of religious decline, these earlier theoretical insights of his nevertheless remain central to the secularization paradigm.

[18] By "plausibility structures" I am referring to the social bases that make a specific religious belief-system plausible to its adherents. For more on this concept see Berger and Luckmann 1966.

insights outlined above, tailoring them to suit their purposes when necessary, but leaving them basically intact. Thus the "spiritual turn" has been interpreted by secularization theorists in the following way: institutional differentiation has produced a privatized religiosity (what goes by "spirituality"), which is individualistic and therefore lacks the institutional support necessary to sustain itself over time. Bruce (2011, 119) captures this aptly: "Far from refuting the secularization paradigm, both the nature and the extent of alternative spirituality offer strong support for a key element of the paradigm: individualism undermines religion."

To be clear, I do not think the theoretical premises of the secularization paradigm are mistaken. In fact, I think they are extremely illuminating. Moreover, I agree with Bruce that the paradigm has often been caricatured and misunderstood. For instance, proponents are often accused of presuming they have discovered a universal law of social development, when in fact secularization theorists have from the beginning simply been interested in explaining common features of modern industrial societies (4). Moreover, the secularization paradigm is just as much an account of religious change as it is of religious decline thus a rising interest in "spirituality" does not necessarily refute it (154). Finally, Bruce is certainly correct that one can endorse the secularization paradigm and not be a secularist—that is, one who celebrates the dissolution of religion in modernity.

And yet there remain reasons to resist the paradigm in its entirety. The most important centres on its conception of religion. Linda Woodhead (2010, 31-32) has persuasively argued that undergirding the secularization paradigm is an "enduring presence of a submerged norm of 'real religion'… and represents an unacknowledged 'commitment to historically influential forms of church Christianity'." Similarly, Courtney Bender and Omar McRoberts (2012, 20) contend that in forcing a hard conceptual distinction between "spirituality" and "religion," secularization theorists render "spirituality" religion's "sloppy shadow" or "the crazy uncle upon whom the dysfunction of the entire family is projected." Of course, there are good historical reasons for privileging this form of religion. As Bruce (2011, 99) notes, church religion has been dominant for centuries in the West, and it is important to be able to capture its decline. Yet as a result of casting it as the protagonist in their narrative of religious decline, all rival forms of religiosity are necessarily placed in supporting (that is, subordinate) roles, if not left out entirely. The following remark by David Voas and Mark Chaves (2016, 1524) is illustrative: "There may be more diffuse spirituality now than previously, but it should not be mistaken for an increase in traditional religiosity. On the contrary, it is probably a consequence of the waning of traditional religiosity." Here we see the spiritual turn presented as a mere chapter in a larger story of religious decline—an interest in "spirituality" marks one last step on the road to religion's demise. While this might well be true, it nevertheless rests on a number of questionable assumptions.

First, the existence of a lost golden age of faith. Indeed, comparative claims about the ineffectual

and socially insignificant nature of "spirituality" rely heavily on assumptions about the past which, while possibly correct, are by no means uncontested (see Stark 1998). Second, this position assumes that we have the appropriate data and survey metrics to accurately map such trends. But what justifies this? As Voas (2009) himself notes, sociological studies tend to rely on self-reports about how "religious" a person is. But given the associations carried by the terms "religious" and "religion" in twenty-first century liberal democracies, it is hard to accept this as reliable. Thus many studies rooted in the secularization paradigm fail to account for the myriad ways the meaning of questions and terms has changed over time (Smith et al. 2013, 925). This is why Dick Houtman and Paul Tromp (forthcoming) have recently argued that quantitative sociologists need new survey metrics by which to map what today goes by "spirituality." Finally, even if we lay these concerns aside and accept their larger story of decline, it warrants highlighting that according to secularization theorists "religion" is, by definition, pre-modern (Bruce 2011, 119). It follows that to the extent that a society is liberal democratic it is, by definition, less religious. Disregarding the potentially circular nature of such a claim, one wonders whether the triumphant declaration that modern societies are "secular" raises more questions than it answers. Indeed, one could argue that secularization theorists' myopic preoccupation with the decline of church religion has distracted from, and marginalized, other equally important questions.

As one might expect, this observation was made much earlier by sociologist Thomas Luckmann in *The Invisible Religion*. Luckmann (1967, 26) condemned the sociology of religion of his day for conducting what he described as a "sociography of the churches." He also argued that the "shrinking of church religion" is "only one—and the sociologically less interesting—dimension of the problem of secularization" (40). For Luckmann, (himself a proponent of the secularization paradigm) what should interest sociologists of religion is not merely whether a nineteenth century conception of religion is in decline (see Brown 2009), but also answering the question: "What are the values overarching contemporary culture? What is the social-structural basis of these values and what is their function in the life of contemporary man?" (Luckmann 1967, 40).

Answering these questions is important not merely in order to advance scholarly knowledge, but also to provide those who inhabit modern societies with a more accurate and adequate self-understanding. Though Bruce is correct that one can both endorse the secularization paradigm as a descriptive account of social change, without normatively endorsing it, he is strikingly silent about the degree to which "theories of secularization double as empirically descriptive theories of modern social processes and as normatively prescriptive theories of modern societies" (Casanova 1992, 20). Indeed, while Bruce may be perfectly capable of distinguishing between these two modes, he remains very much in the minority. For as sociologist José Casanova (2006, 15) observes, the secularization paradigm, as a folk theory, tends to accompany a secularist self-understanding, which interprets the decline of religion as a "quasi-normative

consequence of being a 'modern' and 'enlightened'" person. Such a conception legitimates what Charles Taylor (2007, 530) calls a "subtraction story" of modernity, which frames secularization as a mere shedding of traditional vestiges, thereby occluding "the way in which each stage of this process has involved new constructions of identity, social imaginary, institutions and practices." Fascinating, then, is that while the secularization paradigm, beginning in the 1970s, progressively lost its hegemonic status in the sociology of religion, it simultaneously rose to become the de facto folk theory among the publics of liberal democracies. Ask anyone who does not study religion whether the West has experienced secularization and the chances that they will answer affirmatively are extraordinarily high. What this reveals is that, despite their sincere and thoughtful attempts to bring nuance to their accounts, secularization theorists have unwittingly conspired with the populaces of liberal democracies to legitimate a crude subtraction story of religious decline.

And yet the thesis of religious decline is not, understood on its own terms, incorrect. I am perfectly happy to concede that post-1960s liberal democracies are not traditionally Christian, and that we have experienced the erosion of Christendom (see Clark and Macdonald 2017). But I also agree with Taylor (2007, 437) when he writes that, "the interesting story is not simply one of decline, but also of a new placement of the sacred or spiritual in relation to individual and social life." Thus the thesis of decline is less wrong than uninteresting. I see no reason why the study of spirituality must narrowly focus on establishing whether "spirituality" is "filling the gap left by the decline of the churches" (Bruce 2011, 106). In fact, why must we assume anything about the degree of religiousness expressed in the past? In line with Luckmann (1999), I argue the secularization paradigm remains extremely fruitful for theorizing the character of the contemporary religious landscape, but secularization theorists' preoccupation with religious decline—born of their conception of religion—has stifled our ability to take full advantage of its theoretical insights.

Rational Choice or "Religious Economies" Approaches

In the 1980s, a rival school of American sociological thought emerged to compete with the secularization paradigm for authoritative status in the sociology of religion.[19] Inspired by the economic thought of Gary Becker this "new paradigm" is premised upon a series of "axioms" about social life: humans always seek to maximize gains and minimize losses; humans have questions of ultimate meaning that they desire answers to (e.g. Does life have a purpose? Is death the end? Why do we suffer?); to answer some of these questions it is necessary to assume the existence of the supernatural; religions provide systematic explanations or answers to these questions based on supernatural assumptions that also postulate

[19] For an overview see Sherkat and Ellison 1999.

rewards—which are called *compensators*. A religion, therefore, is a "system of general compensators based on supernatural assumptions" (Stark and Bainbridge 1979, 119). And finally, religious organizations are "social enterprises whose primary purpose is to create, maintain, and exchange supernatural based general compensators" (Stark and Bainbridge 1980, 125).

Though rational-choice approaches can be divided according to demand-side and supply-side types, both assume that the disestablishment of the churches and the rise of an open market for religion produce religious vitality (Warner 1993, 1053). In other words, the "religious economies" paradigm posits, contra the secularization paradigm, that there is nothing inherent to modernity that is troublesome for religion. Rather, what cripples religious vitality are state-enforced religious monopolies. Furthermore, rational-choice theorists contend, given that humans are naturally religious, "the process of secularization is self-limiting," that is, "it generates revivals and the formation of new religious groups" (Stark and Bainbridge 1980, 128).

How have rational-choice theorists theorized the spiritual turn? Not surprisingly, they have not conceptualized the rising interest in "spirituality" as evidence of religious decline. Rather, in the 1980s Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge (1979, 125), pioneers of the new paradigm, framed the shift from "religion" to "spirituality" as a decline in church religion and a concomitant increase in cult religion, which they defined as culturally deviant. However, in more recent years Stark has taken to calling "spirituality" "unchurched religion," which he conceptualizes as a "relatively free-floating culture based on loose networks of like-minded individuals who, if they do gather regularly, do not acknowledge a specific creed" (Stark et al. 2005, 8).

Rational-choice theorists tend to measure religious vitality by church attendance, church membership, belief in God and the afterlife (Gorski and Altinordu 2008). Thus one could say that they merely flip the thesis of religious decline on its head, as they argue pluralism induces religious demand, whilst leaving the nineteenth century conception of religion and its associated metrics untouched. However this would be somewhat unfair, given their willingness to define religion broadly, as concerned with questions of ultimate meaning. In turn, while I might applaud rational-choice theorists for their willingness to expand the concept of religion, and "look with equal care to the obscure fringes of the market place" (Bainbridge and Stark 1982, 352) I nevertheless think such approaches rest on dubious presuppositions, which have produced a distorted picture of what goes by "spirituality" and contributed to the marginalization of the study thereof.

Although a comprehensive critique of rational-choice approaches is beyond the scope of this

study, in what follows I outline what I take to be their most problematic dimensions.[20] First, given their assumption that the "spiritual actor" is nothing but a "calculating maximizer" these approaches obscure the degree to which religion often serves as a source of nonutilitarian moral imperatives and social solidarity (Bryant 2000, 521). They also remain incapable of theorizing the embodied dimensions of religion (McGuire 2008, 19-44). Indeed, intentionally or not, such approaches naturalize the norms and practices of utilitarian individualism,[21] thereby reframing *homo religiosus* as *homo economicus*, as religious studies scholar Joseph M. Bryant has aptly put it. Second, recent studies make clear that the religious economies paradigm's foundational assumption that pluralism produces religious vitality has not been born out in the empirical data (see Chaves and Gorski 2001). Thus there are good reasons to think the theoretical insights of the secularization paradigm more accurately capture modern social processes (Bruce 2011, 148). Third, by grounding their analyses in the organization of specific types of cults rational-choice approaches fail to heed cultural sociologist Colin Campbell's (2002) suggestion that, while cults may themselves be transitory phenomenon, the cultic milieu remains a constant and stable feature of society. For this reason, as Anne Taves and Michael Kinsella (2013, 95) note, rational-choice theorists "obscure the less familiar but potentially stable, intentional forms of organization." Finally, by equating the spiritual turn with the rise of cult religion rational-choice approaches have reinforced the impression that "spirituality" is culturally deviant and marginal, thereby legitimating its marginalized status in the sociology of religion.[22] I therefore wholeheartedly agree with Liselotte Frisk (2013, 61) when she writes in her critique of rational-choice approaches that when it comes to studying "spirituality" "some new thinking is necessary."

Cultural Approaches in the Sociology of Religion

Alongside the secularization and rational-choice paradigms, cultural approaches to the sociology of religion have grown in prominence in recent years (see Edgell 2012). As regards the study of spirituality I think we can divide these approaches into two types, each of which can be distinguished according to the research question they prioritize. The first type of approach seeks to answer the question, "What does it mean to be 'spiritual but not religious'?" whereas the second type foregrounds the question, "Why has

[20] For a trenchant critique of the "religious economies" school in the sociology of religion see Bryant (2000).

[21] By "utilitarian individualism" I am not referring to the ethical tradition that goes by utilitarianism. Rather, I am referring to a moral language, and mode of being, which reduces the good to the pursuit of one's own self-interest (see Bellah et al. 1985, 32-33). I expand on this concept at length in Chapter 7.

[22] This has, in fact, been conceded by Bainbridge (see Bainbridge 2004).

this moniker become so ubiquitous in liberal democracies?" Both approaches have strengths and weaknesses, and both have inadvertently served to marginalize the study of spirituality.

1. Focused Approaches

These approaches seek to establish what "spirituality" as distinct from "religion" signifies by means of focusing narrowly on either forms of self-identification or classifying particular emic understandings (e.g. Marler and Hadaway 2002; Saroglou and Muñoz-García 2008; Berguijs et al. 2013; Ammerman 2014; Bibby 2017, 2019; Marshall and Olson 2018; Steensland et al. 2018). While such approaches have contributed much to the study of spirituality, their lack of historical analysis and failure to theorize the cultural, social, political, and economic changes informing the spiritual turn have led them to produce a more disjointed and divided picture of the contemporary religious landscape than exists in reality.

To give some examples: Brian Steensland et al. (2018) identify a range of emic meanings associated with the term "spirituality," concluding there exists little consensus on the ground regarding what it means to be "spiritual." Similarly, Reginald Bibby (2017, 72) observes that, "a majority of individuals who say they are 'spiritual and religious' are inclined to embrace religion and seldom reject it." And Nancy Ammerman (2014) argues that, at least among a large percentage of Americans, "spirituality" and "religion" are not viewed as wholly at odds, but rather, as complementary. According to these scholars the emic distinction between "religion" and "spirituality" is not so clear-cut, for many continue to identify as "religious and spiritual," especially in America. This would suggest the shift from "religion" to "spirituality" is less substance than mere semantics.

What should we make of this? Unfortunately, these studies tend to confound more than they illuminate because they fail to make a crucial distinction—that between the emic label "spirituality," and the cultural structure that underlies it. Indeed, while asking individuals what they mean by "spirituality" may be the only means we have to discern its underlying cultural structure, this does not make it foolproof. This is for two reasons: first, it is a rare individual who can articulate, in systematic terms, their theological or philosophical commitments and how they fit together. Second, as Ammerman rightly notes, the "spiritual but not religious" label "reflects moral and political categories more than analytic ones" (Ammerman 2014, 52). This leads her to conclude that when individuals make distinctions between "spirituality" and "religion" they are merely drawing boundaries around those whom they disagree with morally or politically. I have no doubt this is true. However, it obscures two fundamental points: first, those who identify as "spiritual but not religious" and those who identify as "spiritual and religious" may share a religious orientation while nevertheless diverging in their moral and political views. Indeed, Michael Hout and Claude Fischer have suggested identification with "religion" in America has everything to do with political polarization (2014, 430) (see also Yi and Silver 2015). And second, while some may

reject the binary distinction between "spirituality" and "religion" few would suggest that these concepts are synonymous with one another (Steensland et al. 2018, 468). Thus it may be that such boundary drawing is *itself* less substance than semantics, and that giving attention to whether or not individuals identify as "spiritual but not religious," or "religious and spiritual" (or something else entirely) may obscure more fundamental similarities.[23]

2. Broad Approaches

In foregrounding the question, "Why has the 'spiritual but not religious' moniker become so ubiquitous in liberal democracies?" the second type of cultural approach takes a broader, more historical, perspective of "spirituality." In other words, these scholars are sensitive to the way changes in the religious landscape are related to those occurring in other spheres of society, as well as the degree to which the contemporary religious landscape is distinctive. An example is sociologist Robert Wuthnow's *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s*, which describes a shift from a "spirituality of dwelling" to a "spirituality of seeking" taking place in post-1960s liberal democracies. According to Wuthnow Americans are, "reshaping deep religious traditions in ways that help make sense of the new realities of their lives" (1998a, 11). And in *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion*, Wuthnow relates these transformations to the "high value our culture places on individual freedom" (2007, 133). Similarly, Grace Davie (1994) advances her well-known "believing without belonging" thesis, whereby religion at the end of the twentieth century is said to be unmoored from institutional constraints, redirected toward individual religious feelings and experiences. And in both *A Generation of Seekers* and *Spiritual Marketplace* Wade Clark Roof describes a "spiritual marketplace" within an "expanding consumer-oriented culture targeting the self as an arena for marketing," which gives life to a "popular spirituality," characterized by "a qualitative shift from questioned belief to a more open,

[23] This suggests that social scientists studying "spirituality" need to concern themselves with two distinct levels of analysis: first, they ought to give attention to the way groups construct symbolic boundaries in order to shore up a moral or political identity. Ammerman's study accomplishes this well. She usefully identifies that what she calls a "theistic package" of spiritual discourse tends toward political conservatism while an "extra-theistic package" tends toward more progressive positions (Ammerman 2014, 41, 32). This is an important finding that deserves attention. But there is a second level of analysis that attention to such boundary drawing can distract from: the degree to which these groups may be caught up in similar socio-cultural processes. As we shall see, studying the latter reveals that while the "spiritual but not religious" and the "religious and spiritual" may, in general, differ in some ways (for instance, politically), in others they are quite similar. That is, whether or not one subscribes to what Ammerman calls a "theistic package" or an "extra-theistic package," "spirituality" for most signifies a relatively coherent cultural structure. We might say, then, a lack of attention to the larger historical, cultural, political, and economic developments informing the spiritual turn have led these scholars to miss the forest for the trees (Watts 2018b).

questing mood" (Roof 1999, 8, 9). According to Roof, religious life today is marked by a preoccupation with "inwardness, subjectivity, the experiential, the expressive" (7). He also notes the prevalence among Baby Boomers to believe that "inner experience is the wellspring of authentic spiritual and religious life" (Roof 1993, 68). In line with these works, a number of studies have theorized the shift from "religion" to "spirituality" as symptomatic of what David Harvey (1989) calls the "the postmodern condition" (e.g. Lyon 1993; Tacey 2004; Forman 2004; Huss 2007). For these scholars, "spirituality" signals a rejection of metanarratives in lieu of a "God of one's own" (Beck 2010). Indeed, Boaz Huss (2014, 54) calls "spirituality" a "postmodern cultural dominant."

Despite the very real insights garnered from these broad cultural approaches, they share a crucial flaw—the tendency to theorize the shift from "religion" to "spirituality" as being one from an institutionalized form of religiosity, to one that is free-floating, bereft of institutional support, and lacking internal consistency. This is summed up in Wuthnow's claim that the religious landscape at the end of the twentieth century is characterized by a fundamental "messiness" (1998a, 198). Even as perceptive a thinker as Charles Taylor argues that the religious formations underlying what he calls the "spiritual super-nova" of late modernity "don't form a system, and are held by individuals here and there, rather than being socially shared" (2007, 531-532). According to these scholars, "spirituality" lacks a coherent structure and substantive content. This is captured well by the various terms used to describe it: "popular religion," "vicarious religion," "diffuse religion," "folk religion," and "postmodern religion." Unfortunately, these approaches fail to theorize, at any depth, the degree to which "spirituality" is shaped and supported by entrenched cultural norms and social structures (Altglas 2018, 83). Not only does this reproduce emic understandings, but it also fails as sociological analysis—that is, it fails to capture both the cultural structural coherence of what goes by "spirituality" as well as the degree to which it is bound to an institutional order.

Beyond the Sociology of Religion

Though the dominant approaches within the sociology of religion may have served to marginalize the study of spirituality since its inception this has fortunately not prevented the production of serious scholarship on the spiritual turn. Since the 1960s, manifold studies have sprouted up across a host of subfields and disciplines, yielding tremendously fertile insights into the shift from "religion" to "spirituality." The problem, however, is that these studies have rarely been placed into conversation with one another, thereby leading to a vicious siloing effect. In this concluding section I outline how and why this process unfolded. I also provide a brief overview of these myriad studies, highlighting their theoretical and methodological innovations. I do so for two reasons. First, in order to contribute to the

delimitation of a distinctive and self-conscious scholarly field, and second, to make clear the bases of the cultural sociological synthesis I advance in the proceeding chapters.

The hegemonic status of the secularization paradigm began to wane in the 1970s, primarily as a result of the emergence of a panoply of what became known as New Religious Movements (NRMs). In turn, a number of fascinating sociological and anthropological studies emerged which tangentially discussed the shift from "religion" to "spirituality," though often under the guise of advancing in-depth social scientific accounts of distinct NRMs (e.g. Wuthnow 1976; Glock and Bellah 1976; Tipton 1982; Jorgensen 1982; Luhrmann 1989; Palmer and Bird 1992). In time, the study of NRMs splintered into a series of disparate subfields, one of which became known (not uncontroversially) as "New Age Studies." The early contributions to this field consisted of comprehensive sketches of the shared discourses that structured the rich and seemingly never-ending diversity of various NRMs that rose to prominence in the 1970s (e.g. York 1995; Heelas 1996; Hanegraaff 1996; Sutcliffe 2000). What distinguished these analyses from those dominant in the sociology of religion were their sincere efforts to theorize "New Age" on its own terms. Thus New Age served for these scholars as a useful category to capture a range of phenomena that, while different on the surface, exhibited strikingly similar underlying discursive features.

However, because the members of these groups seldom identified with the New Age label, and because the term was often used pejoratively by critics (e.g. Groothuis 1986; Marrs 1990), it came under sustained scholarly criticism (e.g. Sutcliffe 2003; Wood 2007). Meanwhile the shared discourses that the early New Age Studies scholars had identified were migrating far beyond the limited purview of a few curious NRMs. Indeed, at the beginning of the new millennium a number of large-scale studies made clear that New Age discourses were spreading far and wide, crossing national borders and becoming ever more mainstream (Houtman and Mascini 2002; Partridge 2004; Lambert 2004; Houtman and Aupers 2006, 2007; Campbell 2007; Knoblauch 2008). And when we trace the theoretical debts, we learn that early New Age Studies inspired a vast number of regionally specific studies, which have since found evidence of New Age discourse in Britain (Heelas and Woodhead 2005; Lynch 2007; Woodhead 2018), the Netherlands (Versteeg 2006; Otterloo et al. 2012; Zondag 2013); Sweden (Frisk 2013); Canada (Chandler 2011; Watts 2018a); Australia (Possamai 2000); the United States (Bloch 1998); South Korea (Kim 2006); Latin America (Guerriero 2018); and even post-socialist countries such as Slovenia and Romania (Potrata 2004; Gog 2016). These studies shed light on the truly global reach of the discourse that was once called New Age.

Regrettably, because a new term to replace the New Age label was never settled on, scholars inspired by, and indebted to, these early studies have been forced to come up with neologisms to describe what they observe. This has led to the unfortunate situation we face today, where there are literally

countless terms used to describe what was once subsumed under New Age in the academic literature.[24] Indeed, this proliferation of new terms used to capture what once went by New Age but which now goes by "spirituality" has played no small part in exacerbating the field's fragmentation—for unless one takes the time to trace theoretical debts it is not all obvious that these studies are speaking of what is, in effect, the same discourse.

The situation is made worse by the fact that in recent years an independent literature on the "spiritual but not religious" (SBNR) category and cohort has emerged, which pays almost no mind to New Age Studies or the secondary literature it has spawned (e.g. Wexler 1998; Lesser 1999; Webster 2012; Mercadante 2013; Gottlieb 2013; Daniel 2013; Bregman 2014; Cooper 2016). Not surprisingly, these studies—generally emerging from the disciplines of theology, philosophy, religious studies, and political science—observe strikingly similar discursive trends, yet use different language to describe them, thereby erecting yet another communication barrier between scholars studying the spiritual turn.

At the beginning of the new millennium, historians of religion began responding to the shift from "religion" to "spirituality" by tracing the origins of the emic polarization of "spirituality" and "religion." While the early contributions to New Age Studies made some progress on this task, in their wake a host of comprehensive and sophisticated studies have been published, which shed light on what goes by "spirituality" today and its entanglements with liberal thought (e.g. Fuller 2001; Porterfield 2001; Albanese 2007; Bender 2010; Eskenazi 2010; Schmidt 2012; Hedstrom 2012; Halafoff 2013; Versluis 2014; Parsons and Fuller 2018). In addition to carving out a space to study rival religious traditions to historically influential forms of church Christianity, these socio-historical studies significantly challenge the splintering and siloing logic of post-1960s religious studies.

As I mentioned above, New Age Studies began as a branch growing off of the tree of the study of NRMs. Other branches included the study of self-help, humanistic psychology, or what is sometimes called therapeutic culture (associated with the Human Potential movement), and the study of Pentecostalism and the wider Charismatic movement. These three subfields have for decades existed independently of one another, with strikingly little engagement between them. No doubt, this has made good sense to many, given the glaring differences between their respective objects of study. But the socio-historical studies cited above make evident that, while no doubt distinct, the cultural logics undergirding these various cultural-cum-religious forms share much by way of origins. Moreover, studies produced

[24] Just a few examples: "self-religion," "self-spirituality," "subjective-life spirituality," "mind-body-spirit spirituality," "alternative spirituality," "holistic spirituality, "post-Christian spirituality," "contemporary spirituality," "new spirituality," "religious individualism," "the invisible religion," "the American religion," "Marginal Christian spirituality," "liberal gnosticism," "spiritualities of life," "new spirituality," "panentheism," and "popular spirituality."

within these respective fields demonstrate that these historical debts continue to exert a sizeable influence on contemporary expressions.

For instance, a range of studies of self-help and humanistic psychology chart remarkably similar genealogies as those found in the socio-historical studies of "spirituality," and also observe near identical cultural logics as those once discussed in New Age Studies and the secondary literature it has engendered (e.g. Meyer 1980; Derloshon and Potter 1982; Anker 1999; McGee 2005; Travis 2009; Swan 2010; Lavrence and Lozanski 2014). Furthermore, a number of scholars of Charismatic Christianity—the popularity of which is global in scope—have charted similar cultural trends, and even remarked on the affinities shared between expressivist forms of Christianity and that which was once called New Age (e.g. Hunt and Hamilton 1997; Coleman 2000; Poloma 2003; Hunt 2000, 2002; Martin 2002; Campbell 2007; Heelas and Houtman 2009; Bowler 2013). In turn, these socio-historical studies have collectively advanced a convincing argument for theorizing these various cultural-cum-religious developments alongside one another, viewing them as tributaries flowing out of the larger cultural structure that informs the spiritual turn.

New Age Studies not only inspired a vast secondary literature that carried forward their efforts to locate New Age discourse across national contexts, it also inspired a growing literature which theorizes the relationship between "spirituality" and the economic structures and disciplinary regimes regnant in modern societies. These have tended to belong to one or other of the following subfields: critical sociology, critical religious studies, the study of biopolitics and governmentality, and cultural studies. Due to their sensitivity to issues of power and privilege these approaches have theorized "spirituality" as it relates to the distinctive social order of post-1960s liberal democracies. What these approaches demonstrate, contra the dominant approaches in the sociology of religion, is that "spirituality" is neither culturally incoherent nor socially insignificant. On the contrary, it signals a clear and unifying discursive logic, is institutionally supported, and plays critical social functions in romantic liberal modernity (e.g. Miller and Rose 1994; Nadesan 1999; Rimke 2000; Lau 2000; Possamai 2003; Carrette and King 2005; Barker 2007; Philip 2009; Comaroff 2009; Taylor 2010; Maddox 2012; Martin 2014; Altglas 2014; Redden 2011; Binkley 2014; Williams 2014; Koch 2015; González 2015; Reveley 2016; Godrej 2017; Crockford 2017; Pursuer 2018; LaMarre et al. 2019; Wrenn 2019). In my view, these studies reflect some the most important and innovative in the field. They have undeniably advanced our empirical understanding of the spiritual turn. Yet, due to their expressly normative character—they fuse the language of fact with that of political theory—their empirical insights have been largely obscured.[25]

[25] Sociologist Isaac Reed (2011) calls this type of account a "maximal interpretation." I discuss this concept and its relevance to my own analysis in the following chapter.

Finally, while these studies have successfully theorized, in the tradition of New Age Studies, the specific discourses associated with "spirituality" they have failed to identify the more general cultural structure that underwrites these.

For these reasons, I argue a more cultural *sociological* approach to the study of spirituality is needed. Interestingly, the rubric for such an approach was offered some time ago in *Habits of the Heart*. Robert Bellah and his coauthors' analysis of what they called "Sheilaism" is most promising, though normatively charged. They characterized Sheilaism as a form of "religious individualism" that posits "personal religious experience as the basis of belief," and contended it "tends to elevate the self to a cosmic principle" (Bellah et al. 1985, 235). But they placed such claims in historical context, viewing Sheilaism as the heir of a well-worn American religious tradition, exemplified by the likes of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Walt Whitman (233). What makes the analysis offered in *Habits* instructive is the degree to which the authors framed the shift from "religion" to "spirituality" as the eclipse of one kind of religion by another. That is, they recognized the *social* and *institutional* nature of what they called "religious individualism."

A cultural sociological approach seeks to heed these theoretical insights. Scholars that have contributed to this paradigm—such as Dick Houtman, Stef Aupers, and Colin Campbell, among others—acknowledge that romantic liberal modernity is characterized by real religious change, and seek to provide an empirically grounded account of what this change consists of. Such a theoretical framework, I argue, holds great potential for unifying the study of spirituality by clearly delineating its object of study.

Conclusion

In the following chapter I outline the basic tenets of the distinctly cultural sociological paradigm that carries forward the analysis of religion offered in *Habits*, while also refining it in light of existing scholarship on the spiritual turn. I apply this paradigm in order to offer a synthesis of the academic literature as a means of delimiting the field's object of study—which I call the religion of the heart. Of course, this is not to say my analysis is therefore value-neutral. Given the intrinsically hermeneutical nature of social research, I do not believe this is possible. But as I have previously emphasized the study of spirituality remains rife with discord for reasons that too few have recognized, and the first step toward clarifying what it is we disagree about is to provide as uncontroversial an empirical analysis as possible. This is my goal in the remainder of Part I.

Chapter 3

A Cultural Sociological Approach to the Study of Religion

> *Cultural sociology is a kind of social psychoanalysis. Its goal is to bring the social unconscious up for view.* (Alexander 2003, 4)

In the previous chapter I argued that the dominant approaches in the sociology of religion, while theoretically productive, have largely failed to capture the social and institutional bases of "spirituality," and that alternative approaches, which have avoided making this mistake, have nevertheless served to exacerbate the study of spirituality's fragmentation. In this chapter I outline the nature of a cultural sociological approach to the study of religion and why I believe it can overcome both of these problems. I begin, however, by responding to recent arguments from critical religious studies scholars in favour of abandoning the category of "religion." I argue, by contrast, that religion remains a useful heuristic tool for identifying and delimiting certain dimensions of human behaviour and social life. Moreover, I contend that what goes by "spirituality" adequately falls within the purview of the cultural sociological conception of religion that I operationalize in this study—hence why I call it the *religion* of the heart. I then lay out the theoretical foundations of this conception, indebted to the classical sociological thought of Max Weber and Émile Durkheim. I suggest Weber's preoccupation with the human need for ultimate meaning in disenchanted modernity, and Durkheim's view that the sacred and symbolic are constitutive of human life remain invaluable for theorizing religion today. I conclude that what makes the strong program in cultural sociology amenable to theorizing "spirituality" is twofold: first, it aptly captures the social and institutional character of the religion of the heart, and second, by distinguishing between cultural structures and discourses a cultural sociological approach serves to illuminate the common ground which rival accounts of "spirituality" share.

The Problems with "Religion"

Ever since the "cultural turn" in the human sciences (see Hunt and Bonnell 1999), sociologists have paid close attention to the role of discourses and symbolic classification in shaping social life, yet the question of religion has received little attention beyond the disciplinary confines of religious studies (Shilling and Mellor 2001). This has led to a peculiar situation: while many outside of religious studies departments

continue to assume, with secularization theorists, the self-evident nature of the category "religion," and also assume those of us in the West live in a secular age, many within said departments contend, not only that religion is not *sui generis*, but also that the use of "religion" as an etic category is problematic.[26] More specifically, critical religious studies scholars argue that "religion" is not only a social construction, but also one that serves "modern political ends and reflects modern political circumstances" (Arnal 2000, 31). As a result, they argue that the term is "freighted with a great deal of normative baggage," which academics are better off doing without (Martin 2015, 297).[27]

The claim that religion is not useful as an analytic category simply because it is a social construction seems quite dubious. For this remains the predicament of *all* analytic categories, not simply "religion."[28] Indeed, such suspicion toward analytic categories reflects, it seems to me, a rejection of social science *itself*, which, if heeded would require its extinction. No doubt, many thoughtful critical religious studies scholars acknowledge this, and argue instead that what distinguishes the concept "religion" is the *disproportionately* normative connotations it carries.[29] But it is not obvious that "religion" is any more loaded than alternative categories (see Goldstein et al. 2016, 5), thus jettisoning it from our vocabulary merely seems to kick the can down the road. Furthermore, the fact that religion reflects modern political circumstances seems quite unproblematic, given that it is precisely such circumstances that I am interested in. And while I recognize that there are those for whom "modern political ends," as Arnal puts it, are anathema, I am not convinced this grants them authority to dictate scholarly standards.[30] Ultimately, categories should be evaluated on the basis of their usefulness for illuminating and making intelligible important aspects of social life, and I remain convinced that religion has not, in this sense, run its course. This is for the following reasons.

First, scholarly criticisms notwithstanding, religion remains a term that millions (arguably billions) of individuals continue to use. This may be of little consequence to those who write only for scholars of religion, but for those of us who seek to engage with colleagues in other disciplines, as well as

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[26] Scholars who advance this claim include McCutcheon 1997; Fitzgerald 2000, 2015; Arnal and McCutheon 2013; Martin 2015. These scholars generally rely on post-structuralist approaches in order to deconstruct the category "religion" and identify the interests its various uses serve.

[27] Kevin Schilbrack (2010) distinguishes between *abolitionists* and *retentionists*, the former being those who think we must abandon the concept of religion, and the latter being those who think we can salvage it. Clearly, this makes me a retentionist.

[28] Of course, to say something is socially constructed is not therefore to say it does not exist or that it does not hold real-world consequences. I thank Dick Houtman for pointing this out.

[29] I thank Craig Martin for making this clear to me.

[30] Critical religious studies scholars would be the first to admit that there are no neutral categories. Given, then, that we must choose *some* scholarly categories to conduct our inquiries, why should being modern in origin and character be a disqualifying feature? And why should we think a pre- or anti-modern category would be more appropriate?

nonacademics, this fact cannot be ignored. Second, while we might scoff at the term's many folk uses, it would be disingenuous to suggest there do not exist clear family resemblances between most them (see Saler [1993] 2000). Thus, rather than throwing in the towel because we cannot find necessary and sufficient conditions for the concept, I argue scholars would be wise to take advantage of—and when necessary challenge—emic understandings of religion in formulating their own second-order uses. Furthermore, a central aim of this study is to shed light on the deeply *religious* (and here I assume certain folk understandings) aspects of what goes by "spirituality" in post-1960s liberal democracies. Accordingly, I think the recent trend of using "spirituality" as an etic category (customary in the *study for spirituality*) is far more distorting than using the category "religion," given that it obscures fundamental similarities between what gets called "spiritual" and what gets called "religious" in romantic liberal modernity. In other words, I am in full agreement with Heinz Streib and Ralph Hood (2011, 449) when they write, "it does not make sense to invest time and energy in conceptualizing 'spirituality.' This term is unnecessary for the scientific discourse and for the conceptualization of etic terms in empirical research."[31]

I therefore follow the advice of sociologists Philip Gorski and Ateş Altinordu and use the category "religion" as an analytic variable (2008, 75). That is, cultural sociologists like myself use this category in a particular way, and in an ideal-typical fashion, because it allows us to capture a dimension of social and cultural life that we wish to understand (not because we believe it to be universal). In turn, I do not consider myself advancing a cross-cultural definition, to be applied any and everywhere. On the contrary, mine is a conception of religion that emerges from, and is quite specific to, the Euro-American contexts that I study. Moreover, it has been formulated with the aims of synthesizing the extant literature on "spirituality" and shedding light on what I take to be important theoretical and substantive issues.

As I understand it, a cultural sociological approach to the study of religion returns to, and synthesizes, the thought of two pioneers of sociological thinking, Max Weber and Émile Durkheim. As Luckmann (1967, 12) notes, both Weber and Durkheim "sought the key to an understanding of the social location of the individual in the study of religion." Moreover, both believed "the problem of individual existence in society is a 'religious' problem." Importantly, in espousing a social scientific paradigm cultural sociologists maintain that any study of "spirituality" must treat its object as a social phenomenon. Critical sociologists Véronique Altglas and Matthew Wood (2018, 26) are therefore right to suggest, "research that investigates religion and calls itself sociology while refuting the principle that religion is studied as socially constructed, would be … a subversion of sociology itself." At the same time, I remain

[31] It follows that I conceive of the study of spirituality as a subfield belonging to the broader study of religion, not as an independent scholarly field.

wholly agnostic regarding the question of religious truth (see Droogers 2011). For, as I see it, whether the cultural structures and discourses we study correspond to anything not socially constructed is simply not a question the social scientist *qua* social scientist can answer.

In sum, in cultural sociological fashion, I believe that a synthesis of Weber and Durkheim's theories of religion provides us with a more expansive and therefore useful conception of religion, which enables us to make sense of the cultural structure underlying what goes by "spirituality" today. In what follows I outline the nature of this synthesis.

Max Weber's Contribution: The Human Need for Meaning in Disenchanted Modernity

Chris Shilling and Philip Mellor (2001, 73) remark, "Max Weber's vision of modernity is perhaps best known for its analysis of self-determining human subjects struggling to invest their actions with meaning in an increasingly rationalized world." Indeed, central to Weber's sociology of religion and modernity are "problems of *meaning*—of evil, suffering, death, and the like—that are inescapable in human life but insoluble in purely scientific terms" (Bellah 1970, 7).[32] By meaning, cultural sociologists refer to "a conception of teleological purpose in the cosmological sense" (Alexander 2013, 34). That is, we mean a *theodicy*, which enables an individual to situate herself in a horizon of ultimate meaning that both transcends her and gives meaning to "the world's imperfections" (Weber [1922] 1991, 139). Cultural sociologist Colin Campbell (2007, 166, 167) describes a theodicy as a cultural system that serves "to meet the universal human need for meaning at the highest level," such that, when successful, "it tells people what it is they should think, how they should feel, on what basis they should judge others as well as themselves, together with what actions they ought to perform to attain salvation, peace, or enlightenment." According to Weber, modernity is distinctive as an epoch insofar as it dissolves the solid grounds upon which a plausible theodicy might emerge. Indeed, in a famous lecture entitled "Science as a Vocation," Weber ([1922] 1946) diagnosed the disenchantment of the world, by which he meant that the world was no longer mysterious, or that it could, in principle, be understood by means of calculation or reason. This occurs, fundamentally, due to increasing rationalization; Weber argued that with the systematic application of modern science and instrumental rationality to technological and governance systems comes the inevitable disenchantment of the world. Weber's is therefore a tragic and pessimistic account of modernity: humans require ultimate meaning, but rationalization makes this impossible (Shilling and Mellor 2001, 58-59).

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[32] Courtney Bender et al. (2013, 3) counsel against identifying religion with meaning systems and issues of ultimate concern, but it seems to me including these as dimensions of religion, understood as an analytic variable, remains tremendously useful, so long as religion is not *reduced* to them.

It is not difficult to see just how indebted the secularization paradigm is to Weber's thought. However, contemporary cultural sociologists have employed Weber's own theoretical framework to come to a quite different conclusion about religion in modernity. While Weber may have diagnosed the modern world as disenchanted, he nevertheless contended that humans exhibit a basic drive toward ultimate meaning, and that such a drive cannot be extinguished (Parsons [1964] 1991, lvii). A revised version of Weber's theory therefore seeks to identify how this drive toward meaning manifests in romantic liberal modernity.

Émile Durkheim's Contribution: The Sacred and the Symbolic in Modern Life

Rather than conceiving of religion as bound to the individual need for ultimate meaning in an imperfect world, Émile Durkheim took a wholly sociological approach, insisting on viewing religion as an "eminently social thing" (Durkheim [1912] 1995, 9). In turn, he produced the following definition: "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them" (44). A number of things follow from this.

First, according to Durkheim, every society has a religion, whether "secular" or not. Second, religion for Durkheim consists of "two basic categories: beliefs and rites" (34). Indeed, a religion only has moral force insofar as both of these elements are present and active. I will wait until Part III of this study to discuss Durkheim's conception of ritual—the second elementary form of religious life—for here I wish to focus exclusively on the first: *représentations collective* or collective representations, symbols, and ideals.

Durkheimian scholar W.S.F. Pickering (1984, 73) observes, "Durkheim's theoretical argument rests on the proposition that at the heart of every society there are collective representations which are necessary for its existence." Indeed, for Durkheim, collective representations or shared symbols are what make social life possible. However, it is not merely that symbols enable individuals in society to communicate; they also underwrite social cohesion by being classified as either sacred or profane. And those that are deemed sacred, are "set apart and forbidden"—that is, they are viewed and experienced by the community as having a special aura and being authoritative. It is therefore not surprising that Durkheim's discussion of religion is often indistinguishable from the way he speaks about morality. In fact, we can say that religion and morality, according to Durkheim, express two aspects of the same phenomenon. Religion refers to the cultural system of beliefs and rites that circumscribe the society's sacred forms, while morality refers to the norms and sanctions that compel action because they are deemed sacred. Gordon Lynch aptly sums up Durkheim's contribution to a cultural sociological theory of religion:

> The sacred is defined by what people collectively experience as absolute non-contingent realities which present normative claims over the meanings and conduct of social life. Sacred forms are specific, historically contingent, instances of the sacred. Sacred forms are constituted by constellations of specific symbols, thoughts/discourse, emotions and actions grounded in the body. These constellations of embodied thought, feeling and action recursively reproduce the sacrality of the sacred form and constitute groups who share these discourses, sentiments and practices. (Lynch 2012, 29)

Strong and Broad Programs in Cultural Sociology

Durkheim has played a pivotal role in shaping what has come to be known as the strong program in cultural sociology, or what Jeffrey Alexander and Philip Smith (1993) conceive as a late-Durkheimian cultural studies. Outlining the basic tenets of the strong program Alexander (2013, 3) writes, "At the foundation of cultural sociology is the anti-historicist claim that structures of meaning – cultural codes, symbols, and narratives – are a permanent, not transitory element of consciousness and society." The strong program in cultural sociology therefore assumes the centrality of meaning in social life. While it acknowledges the role of "hard" factors such as the economy and politics, it nevertheless rejects the claim that these are wholly determinant of social life. In other words, cultural structures are believed to have a causal role within the construction of social life, such that they play an independent part in a "multidimensional and complex whole" (Alexander 2005, 21) (see also Kane 1991). For this reason, strong program cultural sociologists grant analytic autonomy to culture, for they argue that we must first identify and articulate the meaning systems alive in society before we can establish their causal effects (Alexander and Smith 2010, 20).

In a recent review of journal articles in the sociology of religion David Smilde and Matthew May (2015) found that the majority presuppose something like the strong program outlined above. That is, most studies of religion assume the relative autonomy of religion, and its ability to play a causal role in social life (Bender et al. 2013, 12). One problem with this approach is that it assumes a priori what needs to be demonstrated empirically. As Smilde (2013, 51) puts it, "Clearly religion can have causal effects. But these effects are inconsistent and sometimes absent altogether." Following John Hall et al. (2010), Smilde therefore advocates for a "broad program" in cultural sociology, one that allows for the autonomy of religion but does not presuppose it (Smilde 2013, 55). However, as Alexander and Smith (2010, 20) make clear, the strong program can be distinguished not by an explanation that is "all about culture" but rather one that is "just about culture." In other words, cultural sociologists belonging to the strong program "do not assume real-world autonomy for cultural structures just because [they] give them analytic autonomy."

In order to avoid confusion, let me be clear: Parts I and II of this study advance a strong program

analysis inasmuch as I conceive of my task as bringing the "the unconscious cultural structures that regulate society into the light of the mind" (Alexander 2003, 4). Indeed, it is only by granting analytic autonomy to the cultural structure underlying the shift from "religion" to "spirituality" that we can bring conceptual clarity to the field. However, in Part IV, my analysis is more accurately thought of as belonging to a broad program.

On the Nature of Disagreement in Social Theory

As William Arnal (2000, 22) rightly points out, definitions of religion cannot be wholly separated from general theories of religion. This is because "no statement about what religion *is* can avoid at least partially *explaining* what religion *does*, where it comes from, and how it works." Moreover, as Martin Riesbrodt and Marry Ellen Konieczny (2010, 146) explain, "social scientific understandings of religion are informed by basic assumptions about Western modernity, the course of history, and the place of human beings in this world." In other words, general theories of religion emerge from distinct social theoretical traditions, which highlight specific functions, identify and distinguish between salient and nonsalient features in variable ways, and emphasize some social processes at the expense of others (Collins 2007). In grounding my empirical analysis of "spirituality" in a cultural sociological paradigm, I have chosen to privilege the Weberian and Durkheimian traditions. This may raise doubts about the legitimacy of my synthesis of the existing literature. One might reasonably ask: how can I claim to advance a comprehensive synthesis if my theoretical framework excludes or disadvantages competing traditions? This is a fair question, one that I take seriously. In this section I offer my response.

There are at least three levels of analysis where disagreement in social science can arise. First, on the level of *methodology*. Certain research methods yield certain kinds of results, and stress distinct scales of analysis (Lamont and Swidler 2014). To give an example: anthropologists and sociologists often disagree as to what kinds of research methods and methodologies are most useful for studying the social. In general, sociologists seek large-scale trends and abstract social patterns, while anthropologists give attention to particularities on the ground. What you can learn from a survey is quite different from what you can learn from an interview, or, for that matter, from participant observation.

Second, one might espouse similar methods, but nevertheless disagree on the *theoretical frameworks* most useful to apply them. Theoretical frameworks, Charles Taylor (1985, 63) informs us, "delimit the area in which scientific enquiry will be fruitful," by telling us "what needs to be explained, and roughly by what kinds of facts." As a result, different frameworks yield different *interpretations*, and therefore social scientists may disagree on how best to contextualize or explain a particular social fact. However, this is not to endorse relativism. Evidence doesn't talk without theory, but theory becomes fiction without evidence. All interpretations must be sensitive to the facts. Moreover, certain theories

occlude or obscure the evidence. Thus I argued in the previous chapter that the main approaches in the sociology of religion have failed to identify the nature of the cultural structure that informs the religion of the heart and its institutionalization in romantic liberal modernity. Inappropriate theoretical frameworks yield distorted conclusions.

Thirdly, we can find disagreements at the *normative* level. As Jeffrey Alexander (2010, 84) makes clear, "Every theory has ideological dimensions, certain a priori commitments which allow it to evaluate, in the moral terms of 'ought', the empirical facts which record what the world 'is'." Following this line of thought, but extending it slightly, I would argue most social theoretical accounts implicitly espouse, if only tangentially, a *political theory*. For as Taylor (1985, 65) notes, all political theories are "linked with certain explanatory theory or theories, and incompatible with others." Thus social theories always privilege certain political theories, while political theories always privilege certain social theoretical explanations.

Of course, these distinctions are not unambiguous. For instance, disagreements at the theoretical level can (and often do) hold normative implications, while normative assessments can sometimes stand or fall on the basis of their theoretical debts. Still, the distinction remains analytically useful. For in my estimation, the study of spirituality has been characterized by disagreement at the normative level just as much, if not more so, than at the levels of methodology and theoretical interpretation. Indeed, as we shall explore at length in Part III, another source of confusion in the field is that scholars' normative presuppositions have remained largely implicit in their choice of *social-cum-political theoretical frameworks*. Restated in philosophical parlance, analyses of "spirituality" have resembled enthymemes, hiding their core premises.

It follows that a synthesis of the academic literature that strives to combine the theoretical and normative dimensions of every existing account of "spirituality" is a fool's errand. This is because differing social-cum-political theoretical frameworks are inherently conflictual and therefore incommensurable. Yet, as I have repeatedly stressed, it would be wrong to suggest these accounts hold nothing in common.

In *Interpretation and Social Knowledge: On the Use of Theory in the Human Sciences* Isaac Reed usefully distinguishes between *minimal* and *maximal* interpretations in social theory. The former merely report the facts of the case, delimiting an empirical object of study, while the latter *interpret* those facts in light of a *theory* about how the social tends to work. Put otherwise, minimal interpretations report what *happened*, or what *is*, while maximal interpretations organize, explain, and often judge—that is, they go

"beyond"—the facts (Reed 2011, 24).[33] Once again, this distinction is not categorical; minimal and maximal interpretations fall along a spectrum. Yet the differences between accounts residing at opposing ends of the spectrum are real. It is one thing to suggest that "spirituality" generally signifies a desire for personal authenticity; it is another altogether to suggest this social fact demonstrates that the spiritual turn is evidence of social progress, cultural decay, or the hegemony of neoliberalism. The first is a relatively minimal interpretation, while the latter are maximal. Reed also notes, "at the level of bare social facts—the level of understanding required to report what happened—we quite often can achieve a good deal of consensus, despite our theoretical, or even epistemological differences" (18). Indeed, as I argued in the previous chapter, scholars studying "spirituality" have largely (although not entirely) agreed on the bare social facts—what discourses of "spirituality" consist of. However, the presence of this agreement has been obscured because of the striking differences in their maximal interpretations.

For this reason, I restrict my analysis in Part I to *minimal maximal* interpretation.[34] My interest is in delimiting, as clearly as possible, what I take to be the study of spirituality's object of study—the religion of the heart. It is in this sense that the synthesis I advance is comprehensive. However, in Part II, I advance a *moderately maximal* interpretation; that is, I privilege the theoretical insights of Weber and Durkheim in order to produce an empirically grounded, yet hermeneutically thick, picture of the spiritual turn and the rise of romantic liberal modernity. I deem it moderately maximal because while my theoretical framework is cultural sociological—and therefore presupposes a theory by which to interpret the facts—I nevertheless eschew, as much as possible, normative assessment. Still, those who are not sympathetic to my cultural sociological approach will undoubtedly find reasons to object. But I make no apologies for this. The fact is social inquiry must always depend upon *some* interpretive framework. Moreover, as Taylor (1985, 26) notes, because humans are "self-interpreting animals," social theory always impacts the very world it aims to describe. Thus "getting the story right" can never be merely a matter of establishing the facts of the case. Needless to say, this insight lies at the core of *Habits*: how we narrate our present makes a difference. It goes without saying, then, that Part II advances the cultural sociological interpretation of the spiritual turn that I am most persuaded by, and which I argue ought to be authoritative.

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[33] Reed (2008, 194) describes maximal interpretation as follows: "an interpretation that goes beyond what can be minimally apprehended by observing, interviewing and recording, surveying and counting, and chronologically ordering the actions of human subjects."

[34] Because I restrict my account of the religion of the heart to that which is relatively uncontroversial in the literature I would argue Part I borders on minimal interpretation, though I acknowledge that my cultural sociological account of the religion of the heart goes beyond merely reporting the facts—hence why I call it *minimal maximal*.

A Cultural Sociology of "Spirituality"

We can now sum up the theoretical basis of the cultural sociological paradigm to which this study belongs. The paradigm begins by drawing on Max Weber's insights regarding the disenchantment of modernity, and the human need for ultimate meaning. According to Weber, what makes religion distinctive is that it offers a theodicy, or a framework of meaning, by which individuals can come to terms with fundamental existential questions. In short, Weber's classical sociology helps us to understand why "the issue about meaning is a central preoccupation of our age" (Taylor 2007, 718). Thus cultural sociologists studying "spirituality" have directed attention to the ways in which modernity generates "its own enchantments" (Bartolini et al. 2017, 349), and sought to map the forms these take. Next, the paradigm combines these insights with a Durkheimian cultural sociology that conceives of religion as constituted by symbols of classification, or shared cultural structures, which bind individuals to one another by virtue of delineating that which they hold sacred. It is to this cultural sociological paradigm that my work belongs.[35]

No doubt, this integration of Weberian and Durkheimian insights may seem strange, given that their definitions of religion are generally thought to be incommensurable (Smith et al. 2013, 925). While this may be true, if understood in formal terms, I am far less interested in maintaining the purity of their respective definitions of religion than in using their insights as a means of studying key dimensions of social life. In turn, whatever inconsistencies may exist within their formal models of religion, my own use of the term religion is very much "unbounded," postulating "no sure or stable border where religion ends and non-religion begins" (Saler 2009, 164).

Still, before I move on, it is important to make clear how I distinguish between *cultural structures* and *discourses*, and why this distinction is so essential to this study. By the former I refer to implicit hidden codes or deep structures which order and organize distinct discourses, whereas the latter I think of as concrete meanings which instantiate implicit codes in discursive form. In this sense, we can think of cultural structures as ideal types, or analytic abstractions, which are only made manifest through specific discourses (Simko and Olick 2020). Indeed, cultural structures, while deeply constraining and enabling of social life, are often invisible to their adherents (Rambo and Chan 1990). This is why Alexander (2003, 3) analogizes the strong program in cultural sociology to a "social psychoanalysis," the goal of which is "to bring the social unconscious up for view." It also explains why a cultural sociological approach is needed to unify the study of spirituality: even the most innovative studies have failed to identify the deeper *cultural structure* that informs specific *discourses* associated with "spirituality." Thus, scholars studying New Age, Charismatic Christianity, and humanistic psychology, and the movements they are associated

[35] For an extended explication of this paradigm see Houtman and Aupers 2010, Chapter 1.

with, while perhaps noting shared affinities between them, have generally highlighted their theological or philosophical—that is, discursive—differences. While I think this is an important task, I nevertheless argue it has resulted in a failure to see the *more basic symbolic framework* upon which these discourses collectively rest—which I call the *religion of the heart*.

Chapter 4

A Brief History of the Religion of the Heart

> *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.* (Matthew 12:34)
>
> *Oh Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.* (Psalms 15: 1-2)
>
> *Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string.* (Emerson [1841] 2000, 133)

In the previous chapter I outlined the nature of a cultural sociological approach to the study of religion. In this chapter I use it to chart the history of the religion of the heart, highlighting its key carrier movements and representative figures. And in the following chapter I use it to systematically reconstruct its ten logically interrelated tenets. In so doing, I synthesize an array of literature on "spirituality," privileging sociological and historical studies. I also supplement these works, where applicable, with findings from my own empirical research, as well as discursive analysis of popular spiritual and self-help literatures. Importantly, the religion of the heart, understood as a *cultural structure*, makes possible a wide variety of specific *discourses*, which collectively inform much of the contemporary religious landscape. Perhaps, then, it is helpful to think of the religion of the heart as the background symbolic framework within which individuals operate as regards their "spirituality." While many (perhaps most) remain unaware of this framework, a closer look reveals that their discourses are only made meaningful in light of it. Indeed, once one becomes aware of the religion of the heart, suddenly what initially resembled an incoherent and chaotic mess begins to look far more comprehensible.

Why the Religion of the Heart?

The *heart* is a central concept and metaphor for much of what goes by "spirituality" today. Its meaning is multiple, speaking to the various dimensions of its cultural structure. It is also a term that was invoked often by my informants. For instance, a recent graduate of teachers' college who is also a member of Alcoholics Anonymous described "spirituality" as, "Following my heart in any way that it directs me," while for another SBNR informant it entailed, "Listening to my heart." We ought not be surprised therefore when Robin Sharma in *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* counsels, "Be guided by your heart.

The rest will take care of itself" (1997, 134). Similarly, Neale Donald Walsch in *Conversations With God* writes, "Every heart which earnestly asks, 'Which is the path to God? is shown. Each is given a heartfelt Truth" (1995, 94).

The heart beckons themes of authenticity and sincerity, central to "spirituality." It also portends a preoccupation with one's inner life, especially intuitions and feelings. Deepak Chopra in *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success* instructs, "Consciously put your attention in the heart and ask the heart what to do…. Only the heart knows the correct answer" (1994, 43). In our interview a SBNR artist lamented, "I'm a very cerebral person, so I feel like I've neglected my heart." The notion that "spirituality" gives primacy to the heart and not the mind is a common theme. Chopra writes, "the heart is intuitive; it's holistic, it's contextual, it's relational…. At times it may not even seem rational, but the heart has a computing ability that is far more accurate and far more precise than anything within the limits of rational thought" (44). And Joseph Murphy, well-known preacher of New Thought, writes in *Within You Is the Power*, "The great truth is that as a man thinketh in his heart … so does he act, experience, and function in life" (1977, 160).

In *Heart Religion*, historian John Coffey notes that the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the "heart" as "the seat or repository of a person's inmost thoughts, feelings, inclinations, etc.; a person's inmost being; the depths of the soul; the soul, the spirit" (2001, 6). To know oneself, for my informants, requires getting in touch with one's heart, not one's head. In this sense, the rational is not contrasted with the irrational, but with the emotional or affective. Moreover, the heart is where you find the divine or superempirical. As pastor Joyce Meyer (1995, 106) asserts, "God has placed faith in our heart." A young arts major, in describing how she thinks about "spirituality" shared, "love has a lot to do with it." Of course, love—however we might understand it—is often symbolized by the heart. As an emblem we associate it with that which we are most attached to, that which fills us with joy, serenity, and peace. Hence why a theatre practitioner described "spiritual experiences" as those that leave her thinking: "I am so very privileged and lucky to be a part of this!" Similarly, in *Your Sacred Self* New Age author Wayne Dyer (1995, 50) describes "spirituality" as: "light and joy and focuses on the experience of love and inner bliss, radiating those qualities outward."

The religion of the heart models religious commitment on romantic love; one does not come to know God through rational reflection, or by accepting abstract beliefs, but rather through submission to an overwhelming experience, of being overcome by a spontaneous sense of union with a force greater than oneself. As a metaphor for a religious form the heart suggests the primacy of experience—ecstatic, effervescent, even transcendent in nature—and a concomitant lack of structure. It also suggests compassion, gentility, and kindness. In *Your Best Life Now*, evangelical pastor Joel Osteen counsels, "Keep your heart of compassion open. Learn to be quick to follow that flow of love God puts in your

heart" (2004, 249). More than this, the heart in Western culture is often used to symbolize health or wellness. We exercise in order to develop a strong heart, and perhaps to feel good. In this, we see how the heart, given its polyvalence as symbol and concept, gestures toward a mind-body-spirit connection. Very rarely do we associate the heart with negativity or depression, unless of course we are referring to a broken or heavy heart. But in this register we would commonly see the need for healing; hearts may break, but their natural state is one of wholeness. Thus one SBNR interviewee asserted, "I think my heart wants to grow stronger. I think it wants to be heard more, and integrated." And finally, the heart is something that can be more or less pure. Osteen cautions, "Don't let your heart get polluted," and then instructs, "Examine your own heart and see if there are attitudes and motives you need to change" (157, 208). Thus despite the seemingly innocuous and innocent self-presentation of heart rhetoric it can, and often does, come bearing a moral system, replete with its own disciplines, virtues, and taboos.

For these reasons, and many more which we shall soon examine, I have come to think it fitting to call the cultural structure that shapes and gives meaning to much of the religious landscape in twenty-first century liberal democracies the *religion of the heart*. However, this is not a wholly novel term. Elisabeth Jay (1979) uses it to describe Anglican evangelicalism as it is expressed in the nineteenth century novel. Theologian Ted Campbell (1991) has used the "religion of the heart" to describe a number of religious movements which emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Harvey Cox calls Charismatic Christianity not merely an "experiential religion," but also a "religion of the heart" (1995, 11, 12). And sociologist Linda Woodhead once used this term to describe the religiosity of Princess Diana, for whom "it was not institutions which were important, but individual human beings and their feelings" (1999, 127). Woodhead argued, presciently, "it is possible to discern the outlines of this religion, a religion more widespread in contemporary society than is often recognised, and a religion superbly adapted to life in late modernity" (120).[36]

Though I do not claim my own conception of the religion of the heart is identical to these others, it comes pretty close. The religion of the heart is best understood as a cultural structure that has deep roots in the West, constituting a tradition of sorts. By this I mean that, while it takes distinct discursive forms at different times in history, one can find its symbolic structures recur over time. That said, I do not claim that the current discursive expressions of the religion of the heart are universal. Having been shaped by contemporary social, political, and economic factors, they are clearly not. Yet while acknowledging this fact, we must beware of perpetuating an ahistoricism that refuses to understand the cultural present in

[36] Furthermore, Jean-Jacque Rousseau used the "religion of the heart" to capture his preferred form of religion (Cladis 2003, 6). While my own use of the term is, by contrast, entirely nonnormative, implying no judgements of value, both Rousseau's conception and my own nevertheless hold much in common.

relation to its past. The religion of the heart both belongs to a long-standing tradition, and simultaneously reflects a novel constellation of beliefs, practices, and ideals which have been significantly influenced by recent societal developments.

The Religion of the Heart in Historical Context

The religion of the heart belongs to an old and peripatetic tradition. Ted Campbell (1991, 2) identifies what he calls the "religion of the heart movements" that emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, all of which centred their theology in "heartfelt religious experience." He includes in this tradition Jansenism, Quietism, English puritanism, Quaker spirituality, Pietism (especially the Moravian Church), and Methodism. Despite their theological differences Campbell argues what unites these movements is that, for each of them, "Affective experience became the center of the religious life" (3). They all maintained that, "sacraments are ineffective without appropriate inward affections" and posited, "experience as the basis of knowledge" (3, 17). Among the puritans, the "heart" was contrasted with the "head," with the religious life ultimately being concerned with the former, not the latter. In a similar vein, Pietism stressed an "epistemology of religious experience" (62) which was taken up, notably, by the Protestant liberalism of Friedrich Schleiermacher, as well as, in a more extra-theistic mode, the German and English Romantics. Campbell therefore concludes, "The power that held this unique cluster of men and women, of ideas and movements, together was a fresh way of approach to the religious ultimate, an insistence that 'the heart,' the human will and the affections, was the crucial link between divinity and humanity, that the way to God was the way of heartfelt devotion" (177).

Ernst Troeltsch's "Spiritual" or "Mystical" Religion

In *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, Ernst Troeltsch ([1912] 1992, 731, vol. 2) refers to this tradition as "spiritual and mystic religion," which he contends, expresses itself "in subjective religious experience and 'inwardness', in concentration upon the purely interior and emotional side of religious experience." He writes, "In the widest sense of the word, mysticism is simply the insistence upon a direct inward and present religious experience" (730). Though spiritual or mystic religion has been much "maligned" by scholars of religion in the twentieth century (see Garrett 1975), Troeltsch was adamant that it warranted sociological attention. Within this tradition, direct experience of God or the divine becomes an "independent religious principle," that is, spiritual and mystical religion "sees itself as the real universal heart of all religion, of which the various myth-forms are merely the outer garment." Furthermore, while Troeltsch argues it emerged from within the Christian tradition he also notes that its adherents have often believed "non-Christian religious souls" can also be in touch with the divine, for they assume "the universal unity of the Spirit" ([1912] 1992, 745, 747, vol. 2). Accordingly, the mystic's

tendency is "to identify Christianity with an entirely personally differentiated and entirely inward spiritual religion" (795).

At this point it is worth examining some of the claims my "spiritual but not religious" informants made about "spirituality" in contrast to "religion." When asked how they defined "religion" and why they rejected it, the answers I heard fit well with the descriptions of "spiritual religion" outlined by Troeltsch:

> "Being in a religion implies that you follow a certain structure."
>
> "[Religious people] are so set in their ways, they don't want to change anything."
> "Religions are organized and have set rules, set guidelines."
>
> "For me, 'not religious' just means not subscribing to the institution, or having any set strict rules or beliefs."
>
> "Organized religion seems like you're creating boundaries for yourself, you're looking for something that you're not able to find internally."
>
> "[Religion] places limitations on life and life experiences."

And when asked how they defined "spirituality" and why they preferred it to "religion," these individuals responded:

> "For me the biggest thing is you don't adhere to a strict doctrine, you more so try to find out what is true to you."
>
> "Spirituality, I think, can be a lot more free."
>
> "Spirituality is something you believe in, whereas I feel like religion is imposed upon you."
>
> "I like the way spirituality is taught in that sense of wholeness."
>
> "Spirituality to me is more about exploration and freedom, and just being who you are."

We shall map the ways these responses find logical coherence with one another in the following chapter, but for now I wish to examine the historical context wherefrom this semantic shift emerged.

A Third Way

A useful way of understanding the religion of the heart is as a kind of "third way" within the Western tradition, which has for various reasons been largely overlooked and marginalized in intellectual history. According to historian Wouter Hanegraaff, the West has been constituted by three traditions, each of

which stresses a distinct approach to truth: *reason* (represented by the Ancient Greeks and Enlightenment rationalists), *faith* (represented by traditional Christianity), and *gnosis* (represented by occultist and esoteric movements) (1996, 517-519). Whether or not the religion of the heart is fundamentally a gnostic tradition, as Hanegraaff, among others (e.g. Herrick 2003; Versluis 2014) suggest, I remain undecided. In any case, Hanegraaff's analysis enables us to make useful analytic distinctions, those between epistemologies that stress reason, doctrine, and feeling/intuition.

The movements that carry the religion of the heart are united insofar as they give primacy to the last of these: feeling and intuition. Resultantly, the religion of the heart has historically found itself in conflict with movements that champion either of the other two epistemic stances. Thus, Ted Campbell (1991, 169) writes, "the religion of the heart movements early in the nineteenth century faced opposition or resistance from two different sides: on the one hand was the pervasive influence of the Enlightenment … and on the other hand were a range of conservative reactions against the Enlightenment, which often blamed the religion of the heart movements for doctrinal laxity, and might even accuse them of having opened the way for the Enlightenment."

For adherents of the religion of the heart, "God is experienced rather than believed in, and on that basis His existence is usually regarded as fairly self-evident and non-problematic" (Hanegraaff 1996, 183). One of my SBNR interviewees, a recently graduated business student, asserted, "I think spirituality, you can't really ignore it. Like you have to acknowledge that there are other things going on in the universe." The religion of the heart rejects rationalistic and scientific reductionism while at the same time criticizing dogmatic traditionalism. That is, it "rejects neither religion and spirituality nor science and rationality, but combines them in a higher synthesis" (517). Another of my SBNR interviewees shared, "For the past year, and even more now, my goal has been to really strengthen my intuitive voice. Because that's the one that I haven't given enough attention to. Like I know that I'm rational, and I know that logic is strong. But I don't want to discount that other side of me. I think it's the more important one." Similarly, an SBNR grad student in a humanities program asserted, "Knowledge isn't wisdom." When asked what she meant, she replied, "I've met tons of people who have PhDs, and I don't feel they're very wise." Hearing this, I was reminded of Robin Sharma's claim in *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, "Einstein said that 'imagination is more important than knowledge'" (1997, 67).

Campbell (1991, 100) makes the interesting point that this stress on experience, in some ways, owes much to the Enlightenment philosophy of John Locke, who argued, in empiricist fashion, "experience is the surest basis of knowledge." He remarks, "Its implications for religion were drawn very quickly. If experience is the surest basis of knowledge, then tradition wisdom, including Biblical teaching, must be questioned" (100). An SBNR informant in his early thirties who lives a somewhat nomadic lifestyle asserted, "The learning about God—I've done a lot of that. I can provide good arguments for or

against, but that didn't mean anything to me personally. It's like a puzzle; being able to solve a puzzle is fun, but it doesn't change my life." He concluded, "God wasn't something I could be taught about, it was something I had to go experience."[37]

The Romantic Movement

Since the Enlightenment the most important carrier of the religion of the heart has been the Romantic movement. The primary actors were poets and writers, who sought to relocate the sacred to the aesthetic, exalting unconstrained self-assertion. In his study of the Romantics *Natural Supernaturalism* M. H. Abrams (1973, 13) argues that far from rejecting Christian thought, the Romantics, in fact, translated biblical themes and ideas into a language of immanence. Indeed, Romantics were far more hostile to the structure of Enlightenment rationalist philosophy than to biblical history and prophecy. In fact, they borrowed much from the latter in order to critique the former (32).

Yet it would be wrong to view Romanticism as a mere extension of biblical morality. As philosopher Isaiah Berlin (1999, 135) notes, Romanticism, far from endorsing a new form of traditionalism, railed against tradition as such; what the romantics shared, over and above all else, was the desire to "break up the nature of the given." Bertrand Russell (1946, 658) concurs: "The romantic movement, in its essence, aimed at liberating human personality from the fetters of social convention and social morality." Similarly, Elline Kay Eskenazi (2010, 126) writes, "For God, Romantics exchanged the individual person. For an abode of the sacred, they exchanged nature. And for a diabolical force, Romantics exchanged society and social convention. From the Romantic perspective, self, society, and nature are primary categories—principal characters in the story of a human life." Thus the primary target of Wordsworth's censure was "custom" and "habit"—which he perceived as the most heinous sources of despotism (Abrams 1973, 379). Indeed, Berlin (2006, 247) contends that for the romantics "self-expression, self-realization, is the goal of man, as of everything in the universe." This we find in both the counter-enlightenment thought of Herder, as well as the poetry of Coleridge. But the command to self-expression is rooted in a particular conception of the universe: "to live is to do something, to do is to express your nature. To express your nature is to express your relation to the universe" (Berlin 1999, 106). Moreover, it emerges from a view of modern society as corrupting, or as the source of vice—summed up powerfully in proto-Romantic Jean-Jacques Rousseau's dictum, "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains."[38] From this we can begin to make out the contours of the ethical framework

[37] Accordingly, we might say the religion of the heart entails a process of "religious purification," that is, its adherents seek "an eternal, universal, and solidly grounded religious truth" (Cortois et al. 2018, 313, 312).

[38] On Romanticism's debt to Rousseau see Babbitt 1919.

that underwrites today's religion of the heart. As Taylor (1989, 368-369) notes, "This notion of an inner voice or impulse, the idea that we find the truth within us, and in particular in our feelings—these were the crucial justifying concepts of the Romantic rebellion in its various forms. They were indispensable to it." In their quest to re-enchant the modern world, the romantics left us a host of religious ideals and themes, which today inform "spirituality."

Metaphysical or Harmonial Religion

It should come as no surprise then that historian Leigh Eric Schmidt (2012) finds the romantic impulse at the core of the religious and metaphysical movements, which swept across America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Most notably, during the eighteenth century, Unitarians, Universalists, followers of Emmanuel Swedenborg, and Transcendentalists—spinoffs of early American Protestantism, who were deeply influenced by the Romantics—propagated what Catherine Albanese (2007, 161) calls, "self-culture," as they followed "a spiritual logic … from outer to inner." Indeed, Ralph Waldo Emerson—whom historian Sydney Ahlstrom (1977, 152) calls America's "national poet"—was a Transcendentalist who championed "spontaneous, direct, unmediated spiritual insight into reality" (Versluis 2014, 2). Additionally, Transcendentalists—and Theosophists after them—channeled the romantic fascination with non-Western cultures and looked to the East for religious inspiration (a trend that continues to this day). Emerson held an abiding fascination with the *Upanishads*, while his friend Henry David Thoreau became enamored with the *Bhagavad Gita* (Fuller 2001, 79-80). And yet, as Amanda Porterfield (2001, 130-31) notes, these New Englanders tended to interpret Hindu and Buddhist scriptures "within an idealistic intellectual framework that involved a distinctively American combination of German philosophy and English Romanticism."

These new religious movements gave birth to a number of offshoots such as Spiritualism, Mesmerism, Theosophy, Christian Science, and New Thought, among other nineteenth century metaphysical religions that have been carriers of the religion of the heart. Historian Robert Fuller observes in *Spiritual but not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America*, these movements stressed direct personal experience above all else, preaching that "Genuine spirituality … has to do with personal efforts to achieve greater harmony with the sacred" (2001, 4). Similarly, anthropologist Peter van der Veer (2009, 1115) describes a yearning for a "core spirituality" that transcends tradition, and which has crossed oceans, shaping both Western and Eastern cultural contexts." This was especially true of Theosophy, which sought, in esoteric fashion, to synthesize Eastern and Western religions, and even prophesied the coming of a "new age" of spiritual consciousness (Fuller 2001, 54). Nevertheless, following what Schmidt (2012, xv) calls, "the Emersonian turn—the sense that religion was fundamentally about the sacredness of the individual," the religion of the heart took on a quintessentially

American hue.[39] Schmidt writes in *Restless Souls: The Making of American Spirituality*, "Much of what has come to be labeled 'spirituality' in contemporary culture and in contemporary scholarship is better seen as a complex artifact of nineteenth century religious liberalism" (2012, 90). For instance, New Thought, which emerged in the 1880s, emphasized the holistic connection between right thought and human health, happiness and prosperity, and preached that "men were actually individualizations of God" (Meyer 1965, 268, 77). Ralph Waldo Trine, one of the most well known New Thought leaders, forged the popular notions that "worrying minds and disordered emotions – fear, anger, jealousy, sorrow, or malice – wreaked havoc on people's bodies" and that seekers must therefore learn to calm their minds in order to allow the "harmony" of the divine flow in and through them (Schmidt 2012, 154-155). Thus Schmidt concludes, "Religious liberalism, with its motley bedfellows of romantics and reformers, led the way in redefining spirituality and setting out its essentials" (12).

The Triumph of the Therapeutic

In the late nineteenth century, there was no spokesperson of the religion of the heart more important than Harvard psychologist and philosopher William James. It is therefore worth noting that James was significantly influenced by the Romantic tradition, especially its religious innovators such as Swedenborg and Emerson (Fuller 2001, 130). In his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, James both carries forward and extends what Taylor calls the "massive subjective turn" of modern culture. Wade Clark Roof (1999, 16) writes, "Of all his penetrating insights into religious psychology, James's comment on the power of a religious experience to redeem and vivify—to fill an empty interior world—is especially fitting to our time." Indeed, James's pragmatic, experience-based, approach to religion is a staple of much literature on "spirituality," new and old. For instance, in *The Power of Positive Thinking* Normal Vincent Peale assures his readers that positive thinking is, "a system of creative living based on spiritual techniques" (1952, x). While New Age authors Esther and Jerry Hicks write in *Ask and It Is Given: Learning to Manifest Your Desires*: "Your true knowledge comes from your own life experiences" (2004, 4).

Of course, it is a crucial part of my argument that the religion of the heart is not isolated to explicitly "spiritual" texts and locales. Thus it is worth pointing out that James's pragmatic and experiential approach to self-development is a staple of much secular self-help as well. For instance, in *Awaken the Giant Within* author and life coach Tony Robbins assures his readers, "you don't have to believe or use everything within [this book]. Grab hold of things you think are useful; put them into action immediately" (1991, 29). And we also find a discernible emphasis on personal experience in much

[39] Having said this, the religion of the heart certainly spread beyond American borders. For instance, the Theosophical Society in Toronto exerted sizeable influence in Ontario (see McCann 2012).

humanistic psychology; Carl Rogers, in *On Becoming a Person*, describes his philosophy of client-centred therapy in especially illustrative terms: "Experience is, for me, the highest authority.... Neither the Bible nor the prophets—neither Freud nor research—neither the revelations of God nor man—can take precedence over my own direct experience" (1961, 23, 24). Finally, James's *Varieties* played a pivotal role in inspiring the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, thereby spawning the wider recovery movement.

In sum, James stimulated a shift in religious thought away from belief toward the *experience* of believing. His pragmatic approach to "religion" or "spirituality" is one of the defining characteristics of the "spirituality" my informants espouse. On this view, spiritual practices—meditation, yoga, reflection, journaling, etc.—are seen as instrumentally valuable, allowing individuals to attain their desired ends. Not only this, but what makes these activities "spiritual" is nothing inherent in them, but rather, the intentions and attitudes of the individuals engaging in them. Thus, any practice, can be "spiritual," so long as it is done in the right spirit.[40]

Another key figure worth mentioning is Carl Jung, a disciple of Freud until they had a falling out. The crux of their conflict lay in Jung's turning away from the scientific-materialism of Freud towards a more Jamesian approach to nature and the psyche (see Jung 1933). Sociologist Philip Rieff (1966, 116, 114) suggests that in supplying a "fresh statement of opposition between reason and spontaneity, thought and feeling, restriction and freedom, distortion and honesty," Jung developed a "fresh rhetoric of spirituality." Indeed, since James and Jung, psychology has become a central carrier of the religion of the heart. Thus Fuller (2001, 124) remarks, "Some mistakenly assume that the rise of modern psychology has gone hand-in-hand with a loss of interest in spiritual issues," when the reality is rather that "on the whole, psychology has had a special affinity with America's unchurched spiritual traditions." Indeed, it was a synthesis of metaphysical religion and early psychological discourses that paved the way for what Robert Bellah et al. (1985) call "therapeutic culture." What's more, it solidified what Rieff calls the "triumph of the therapeutic"—denoting the eclipse of the language of biblical religion by that of secular psychology.

The 1960s Counterculture and its Religious Wings

A crucial period in the flowering of the religion of the heart, however, was the counterculture of the 1960s.[41] It was at this time that this cultural structure was embraced by a large swatch of the population in the West—predominantly youth—and consequently found its way into key spheres of modern society. Its success was most obvious in the popularity of three movements, which, though overlapping, it is useful to

[40] It is for this reason that sincerity is such a crucial concept; one's inner state makes all the difference (see Keane 2002).

[41] The 1960s receives sustained attention in Chapters 6 and 7.

separate analytically: the New Age movement, the Human Potential movement, and the Charismatic movement.[42]

Hanegraaff (1996, 183) writes, "New Age ideas about God reflected a marked aversion to rigid, doctrinal definitions. The latter [were] associated with a narrow-minded dogmatism which lacks affinity or has lost touch with the experiential dimension." Similarly, Colin Campbell (2007, 130) contends that within the New Age movement there was a "strong emphasis … on the importance attached to each person finding his own spiritual path." Much of what goes by New Age can be traced back to Transcendentalism, Theosophy, and Spiritualism (Sutcliffe and Gilhus 2014, 4). New Agers channeled the romantic aversion to all forms of reductionism, and celebrated the imagination and intuition above all else. For them, "personal experience [was] the sole and exclusive yardstick for reality testing" (Campbell 2007, 227). However, as a result of the Emersonian turn, as well as the triumph of the therapeutic, the religion of the heart in its New Age form became something quite different from that of romantics like Wordsworth and Coleridge. Eskenazi describes the religion of the heart as it crystallized during the New Age:

> For this style of Romantic, the most urgent task is self-actualization: to realize all one potentially is by discovering personal values, living authentically, cultivating artistic and intellectual gifts, and using them to express the personal vision. From the Romantic's perspective, it is society that hinders his progress by insisting that he subordinate personal to traditional values, self-expression to social harmony, and self-actualization to social functionality. Subject to such coercion, he becomes alienated from himself, and enters adulthood unaware of his true values, and estranged from his true self. From this perspective, self-discovery is the precondition to authentic living. Despite the fact that social authorities discourage the journey toward self-actualization, the Romantic feels it is his highest priority. (Eskenazi 2010, 4)

Here we see how the religion of the heart takes different discursive forms at different times, adapting to its surrounding socio-cultural conditions. Nevertheless, within New Age literature one finds motifs that resonate clearly with the self-culture once trumpeted by the likes of Emerson and Thoreau. For instance, in James Redfield's bestselling New Age novel *The Celestine Prophecy*, the protagonist describes his encounter with the divine as such: "I felt this euphoric connection with everything, and this total kind of security and confidence … a mystical experience" (1993, 105). While Deepak Chopra in *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success* writes, "If you embrace the present and become one with it, merge with it, you will experience a fire, a glow, a sparkly of ecstasy throbbing in every living sentient being" (1994, 61). Though never cohesive, and utterly contested, there is little doubt that the New Age movement has been one of the most important carriers of the religion of the heart in the twentieth century.

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[42] My analysis here runs parallel to that of Peter Clecak in *America's Quest for the Ideal Self: Dissent and Fulfillment in the 60s and 70s.*

As with the New Age, the Human Potential movement is difficult to pin down, for its core groups and membership fluctuated over time. Yet Hanegraaff (1996, 49-50) contends that by the 1970s the movement was strongly associated with humanistic psychology and other post-psychoanalytic schools of thought. Tracing its intellectual origins, Taylor (1989, 497) writes, "The idea of the human potential movements in the United states … go back to the original expressivism, partly through the indigenous American line of descent, including Emerson and Whitman. These movements incorporate post-Freudian psychology," but without the "tragic sense of conflict which was central to Freud."

Abraham Maslow is arguably the most well known of all humanistic, or post-Freudian, psychologists, responsible for bringing the legacies of James and Jung to a wider audience. He introduced a number of neologisms that continue to find resonance today: "self-actualization", "peak experience", "Being-cognition" and "transpersonal psychology." The debt owed by Maslow to Jung is by no means small for, as stated above, it was Jung who first saw psychology as the future language of "spirituality." But it was Maslow who made this notion palatable for the public. Thus, Véronique Altglas (2014, 205) writes, "Maslow's work has been instrumental in connecting religion and therapy. Maslow celebrated religious experience as a source of self-realization—therapy then becomes a means to attain spiritual fulfillment."

Of course, he was not alone. Inspired by the writings of Emerson, Carl Rogers received his doctorate in psychology in 1931 and went on to develop what became known as client-centered therapy. Rogers's clinical approach presumes that within each and every individual lies an "innate valuing process" that will guide him or her morally. He proposed that when an individual connects with their true self via therapy well-being naturally follows. The works of Maslow and Rogers have together played a formative role in shaping what we might call "secular" variants of the religion of the heart (Browning and Cooper 2004; Fuller 2006). Their stature as renowned public intellectuals aided the mass adoption of Romanticism, and its absorption into various spheres of social and cultural life. Thus religious studies scholars Jeremy Carrette and Richard King (2005, 72) contend that it was "the development of humanistic psychology in the USA that had the greatest impact in forging the modern, privatized sense of spirituality."

Too few have noticed the degree to which the Charismatic movement, associated with the global spread of Pentecostal style worship, largely exhibits the cultural structure of the religion of the heart. Nevertheless, not all have failed to see this. For instance, anthropologist Tanya Luhrmann (2004, 518) observes, "Mainstream churches have seen their congregations dwindle; evangelical, New Age, and other more demanding faiths have seen their memberships explode. And what U.S. citizens seem to want from these new religiosities—and from evangelical Christianity in particular—is intense spiritual experience." And in *Pentecostalism: The World and their Parish* David Martin (2002, 3) argues, "Insofar as

Pentecostalism spreads it does so principally through a charismatic movement partly inside the older churches and partly 'breaking bounds' in every sense, even displaying faint affinities with New Age 'spirituality'." He further contends, "you can see it as an adaptable form of heart-work and spiritual self-exploration," concluding "there is a border here where evangelical experience shades into experimentation and the Spirit melts into spirits and spirituality" (169, 173). Similarly, writing about the North American Charismatic movement Margaret Poloma (2003, 22) observes, "What can be said about the movement ever since its inception … is that it is more about a distinct 'spirituality' rather than about 'religion'." Finally, sociologist Danièle Hervieu-Léger (1990, S21) observes what she calls a "Christianity of the heart," taking the Catholic Church by storm in France and beyond.

How do we explain this? It becomes easier to comprehend when we take a historical perspective. Scholars have shown that the Charismatic revivals find their origins in German Pietism, early Methodism, Schleiermacher's inductive theology, and the Holiness movement of the nineteenth century (Walker 1997; Hollenweger 1986; Neuhouser 2017). Clearly, then, Charismatic Christianity owes much to what Ted Campbell calls the "religion of the heart movements," whose theological outlooks gave primacy to heartfelt religious experience. Yet in addition to these explicitly Christian religious currents, we also find substantive linkages to the American metaphysical religious traditions discussed above. Indeed, in her comprehensive history of the American prosperity gospel, historian Kate Bowler (2013, 12) writes, "Victorian America was a hotbed of mind-power, bursting with transcendentalism, spiritualism, Free Masonry, Christian Science, and, of particular interest here, an offshoot of Christian Science called New Thought. Out of this miasma came the thinkers who nurtured a particular species of mind-power, planting the seeds of the present-day prosperity gospel." Aware of these connections Hanegraaff (1996, 303-304) writes, "New Age religion is rooted in complex post-Enlightenment developments of the western religious consciousness; and these have been crucially determined, not by a simple rejection of, but rather by a dialectic tension with traditional forms of Christianity." Indeed, the alternative metaphysical movements listed above—especially Theosophy and New Thought—played a significant role shaping the New Age, Human Potential, *and* Charismatic movements. This explains why, "the form of Christianity that flourishes in the West today … bears considerable resemblance to the New Age movement" (Campbell 2007, 345).

Conclusion

While the New Age, Human Potential, and Charismatic Christian movements may have had quite distinct politics, and no doubt envisioned the good society differently, what has often gone unnoticed is the degree to which they adhered to the same underlying cultural structure. We might say, then, while the "spiritual but not religious" (heirs to the New Age and Human Potential movements) are generally more committed

to mystical illumination, understood in extra-theistic terms, Charismatic Christians celebrate direct communion with a theistic God through the Holy Spirit.[43] Needless to say, the rhetoric undoubtedly belies the similarities. We can see, then, why in his authoritative account of "unchurched spirituality," Fuller (2001, 9) contends, "unchurched spirituality is gradually reshaping the personal faith of many who belong to mainstream religious organizations." Though Charismatic Christians no doubt understand and practice the religion of the heart in a quite different way than the "spiritual but not religious," both these religiosities emerge from, and work according to, the same cultural structure. In other words, while they might espouse distinct discourses rooted in different theologies, the cultural structure underlying these discourses is basically identical.

[43] I draw the terms "theistic" and "extra-theistic" from Ammerman 2014.

Chapter 5

Today's Religion of the Heart

In the previous chapter I charted the development of the religion of the heart over time, identifying its historical precursors. But I would not wish to give the impression that today's religion of the heart is identical to its earlier renditions. The religion of the heart that my informants articulate, and draw upon, is undeniably shaped by contemporary social conditions. In other words, the voices that I invoke to represent the religion of the heart are voices that inhabit a particular socio-cultural context—broadly, North America in the twenty-first century. We must keep this in mind. Nevertheless, as I explicate the various dimensions of today's religion of the heart, I shall sometimes make connections to past iterations, thereby establishing my historical claim that these disparate voices do, in fact, belong to a tradition, if variegated in nature.

The religion of the heart consists of ten logically interrelated tenets, which together form a coherent cultural structure upon which distinct cultural discourses may be erected, organized, and made meaningful. They are the following:

1) Experiential Epistemology
2) Immanence of God or the Superempirical
3) Benevolent God/Universe
4) Redemptive Self as Theodicy
5) Self-realization as Teleology
6) Self-Ethic (Voice from Within)
7) Virtue is Natural
8) Sacralization of Individual Liberty
9) Mind, Body, Spirit Connection
10) Methodological Individualism

1. Experiential Epistemology

The religion of the heart is fundamentally characterized by an *experiential epistemology*. To quote Neale Donald Walsch (1995, 3) : "*Feeling is the language of the soul.*" We can classify this epistemic stance as "the belief that there is no authority external to the individual qualified to judge the nature of truth"

(Campbell 2007, 134). While adherents might vary in the weight they give to reason, or abstract principles and doctrines in other spheres of social life, as regards their "spirituality" nothing trumps direct personal experience. For instance, an SBNR engineer who dabbles in Buddhist meditation asserted, "For me it's your own truth," while a member of a Twelve Step group stated, "I found it was more encouraging to find the truth within myself." This helps to explain why the religion of the heart so often leads its adherents to gravitate towards, and find inspiration in, testimonies, personal narratives, and autobiographical anecdotes; where and when individuals can "identify" or "relate" to others' experiences the religion of the heart is strongest. Shared experiences are the basis upon which the religion of the heart finds commonality and builds community.

Sociologist Margaret Poloma (2003, 23) observes that Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians "tend to be anticreedal, believing that 'knowing' comes from a right relationship with God rather than through reason or even through the five senses." She therefore concludes, "the P/C worldview is experientially centered." Giving credence to this claim, in a sermon at C3 Toronto, the neo-Pentecostal church where I conducted fieldwork, one of the pastors declared, "God's love cannot be taught. It cannot be understood. It cannot be theologically grasped. It can only be *experienced*." Moreover, my neo-Pentecostal informants made clear in interviews that they joined C3 Toronto primarily because they *felt* God's presence there—that is, their experience of God's presence in worship legitimated their continuing commitment. As regards the religion of the heart, the more intense, ecstatic, and effervescent the experience, the more authoritative.

For SBNRs, "spirituality" is signaled in moments of quiet contemplation or unexpected bliss—be it while in meditation, climbing a mountain, or dancing at a rave. While for my Charismatic informants, God's presence is most often felt in moments of praise and joy. Their form of worship—which excites the emotions and encourages a letting go of inhibitions—becomes a primary gateway into God's presence (Luhrmann 2004). For instance, following an extended period of worship, comprising a seven-person band, flashing stage lights, and collective singing, the pastor announced during a Sunday service, "do you feel *that* warm feeling? That is God. He is here with us!"—what was met with resounding applause.

Furthermore, among all of my informants—both SBNR and Charismatic alike—"spiritual" or "God" moments stood for those times when everything in their life seemed to align, as if unfolding according to a divine or cosmic plan. These experiences are interpreted as evidence for the existence of "something more," and it is these moments which, as one Charismatic participant put it, "cannot be ignored," that encourage the adherent to pursue their "spiritual" interests—to read more, to talk to others about these experiences, to delve deeper into their "spiritual journey." Explaining her attraction to the religion of the heart one SBNR interviewee asserted: "Because the rational scientific mind doesn't like unexplainable things. And there is so much unexplainable that happens when you enter the world of

spirituality." For this individual, as for others like her, these experiences—of absolute joy, of self-transcendence, of synchronicity—contain within them, if not proof, then at least the possibility of a greater force in the world, or a larger order. And for those who do not accept the idea that such experiences can be adequately explained by scientific materialism, they become a catalyst for a growing attraction to the religion of the heart (Besecke 2001). Thus ecstatic and effervescent experiences play a crucial role in legitimating today's religion of the heart, serving as plausibility structures.[44]

2. Immanence of God or the Superempirical[45]

In light of the intimate relationship between ecstatic and effervescent experiences and the religion of the heart, it is should come as no surprise that, from within this cultural structure, the superempirical—however it might be described or labelled—is something that can be *experienced*. In other words, God or the superempirical is conceived as not categorically separate from humans, but rather as accessible *through* the self. In this, the religion of the heart not only encourages a thirst for a "direct communion with God," but also assumes its potentiality (Troeltsch [1912] 1931, 731).

Colin Campbell (2007, 66) argues that, "belief in a transcendental, personal god is giving way to belief in an immanent and impersonal one." While I agree that the religion of the heart entails an ontology that is more monistic than dualistic, what one finds among Charismatic Christians is not so much a rejection of a transcendental, personal God in favour of an immanent and impersonal one, but rather one that is simultaneously transcendent, immanent, and personal (Poloma and Pendleton 1989; Richter 1997). As anthropologist Simon Coleman (2000, 235) observes, "These Christians worship a God who is both within the self and a permanently moving force on the earth as a whole." To give a brief illustrative example: a young Charismatic Christian shared in an interview, "God likes to talk to me in nature. That's where I feel His presence the most." For this woman God exists in everything and is everywhere, ever-present.

This harkens back to John Wesley's Methodism, whose "primary and original sphere of action was finding the supernatural in the fabric of everyday life" (Martin 2002, 7). We can therefore say that today's religion of the heart postulates a *God within* insofar as one can access God or the divine *through the self*, but also a *God without* insofar as the superempirical permeates the universe. This is why I have described it as the immanence of the superempirical. Indeed, this is a crucial aspect of the religion of the heart because it is what informs the background symbolic framework upon which adherents interpret their

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[44] This will become clear in Part IV.

[45] I use the term "superempirical" as opposed to "supernatural" on the grounds that supernatural implies that the "spiritual" cannot be a part of nature, and that nature solely consists of physical matter (see Smith 2003, 98).

ecstatic and effervescent experiences. As one SBNR interviewee put it, "spirituality is like being aware of one's spirit and its connection to all things." While another said, "I just get charged from the forest. I think it's the energy, the ions." Thus when SBNRs speak about "feeling energies"—be they in other persons or in the natural world—they are affirming the immanence of the superempirical.

This is, of course, a central theme in much New Age literature. For instance, Neale Donald Walsch (1995, 26) writes, "We are composed of the same stuff. We ARE the 'same stuff'," while Wayne Dyer (1995, 139) states, "Everything in life is energy." But while Charismatic Christians may not use the terms "impersonal spirit," "energy," or "life force" we should not assume they do not subscribe to this cultural structure. Much like SBNRs, these Christians also assume a "continuity of the self with [an] ever-present divine reality" (Fuller 2001, 85)—although they speak most often in terms the "Holy Spirit." Indeed, according to Charismatics, God may be "up there" but what matters most is that he is "in us."

3. Benevolent God or Universe

For adherents of the religion of the heart, whatever it is that informs the "something more"—be it God, Nature, a cosmic energy, the divine feminine, or simply the Universe writ large—it is good. That is, the religion of the heart breeds what William James ([1901] 1992, 79) once called the "optimistic type," for whom, the divine, "if you will only trust her sufficiently, is absolutely good." Moreover, it entails what he called the "religion of healthy-mindedness," committed to exploring and mapping the "wonderful inner paths to a supernatural kind of happiness" (77). In short, today's adherents of the religion of the heart carry forward the American legacy of "harmonial religion," wherein alignment with God or the Universe promises freedom from guilt and shame—and in some instances, boundless flourishing (Fuller 2001, 51).

This is especially clear in the accounts of my SBNR informants. For instance, when asked what her conception of "God" was, a woman who was raised Anglican replied, "It's not the God of my childhood—the 'I'm watching over you' God. It's something that takes care of our souls." Similarly, a young trans activist shared that they rejected the religion of their youth because of how judgmental and hateful God seemed: "I thought God was supposed to be one of love … unconditional love." While another SBNR informant credited the Catholicism she was raised in with engendering in her "uncomfortable and disturbing feelings."

Interestingly, I heard similar claims made by Charismatics. For instance, many of these Christians chose to move from the denomination of their youth to a neo-Pentecostal style church because the former, as one informant put it, "didn't want me to prosper," and was "too strict." While Phil Pringle, the senior pastor of C3 Church, proclaimed at a C3 conference, "The Christian God is not a bad God. He wants you to find life. He wants you to find fulfillment." He then counseled, "Get out of cynicism, defeat, discouragement, and depression."

Furthermore, the religion of healthy-mindedness is a staple of much contemporary "spiritual" literature. In *The Amazing Results of Positive Thinking* Norman Vincent Peale (1959, 81) asks rhetorically, "Why do people insist upon making religion stilled and unnatural, and above all, getting pained looks on their faces when it is mentioned. When you've got the real article, you can hardly contain yourself, you're so happy. You are walking toward the sun." Joel Olsteen—known colloquially as the "smiling preacher"—assures his readers, "God wants you to have a good life, a life filled with love, joy, peace, and fulfillment" (2004, 76), adding, "individuals who view themselves as God sees them are usually happy about who they are" (57). And echoing these ideas in New Age parlance, Neale Donald Walsch (1995, 296) asserts, "The Highest Thought is always that thought which contains joy." While Wayne Dyer (1995, 296) writes, "Your higher self wants you to be at peace."

In sum, the religion of the heart today affirms the goodness of God, Nature, or the Universe (however they are discursively framed), assuring its adherents that subjective well-being and inner peace are the natural state of things.

4. Redemptive Self as Theodicy

The religion of the heart presupposes a theodicy. While ecstatic or effervescent experiences may serve as one of its plausibility structures, it is the character of its theodicy that sustains commitment to it. Colin Campbell (2007) contends theodicies are comprised of three components, which serve to meet distinct needs for meaning: cognitive, emotional, and moral. The religion of the heart's conception of an immanent superempirical force supplies *cognitive meaning* to its adherents by offering a descriptive account of the reality they experience. It assures them that they are in contact with an immanent reality that transcends them, and which they can access through their bodily senses, feelings, and intuitions. It offers *emotional meaning* by means of a teleology of self-realization which encompasses an ethical framework that orients daily interactions and long-term goals (I examine this in the following section). And finally, the religion of the heart meets the human need for *moral meaning* by providing an account of why suffering exists.

Fundamentally, the religion of the heart postulates that *all suffering is redemptive*. In this, it shares much with what narrative psychologist Dan P. McAdams (2006) calls the "redemptive self." Importantly, this is not an otherworldly redemption—it does not presume redemption will only (or ever) come in an afterlife. Rather, today's religion of the heart presupposes redemption in *this* life.[46] As a result,

[46] I have always been struck by how little reference is made within neo-Pentecostal churches to hell or the afterlife.

adherents learn to find meaning in their darkest moments, to extract lessons from their pain, and to discover how their suffering fits into a larger divine or cosmic plan.

For instance, Tony Robbins (1991, 285) writes, "our disappointments may truly be opportunities in disguise." Joel Olsteen (2004, 170, 204) urges: "the greater struggle, the greater reward," and "God has a divine purpose for every challenge that comes into our lives." Wayne Dyer (1995, 7) writes, "The starting point to your sacred quest is understanding that the universe and our participation in it are not haphazard things." "If it is true that we are part of an intelligent system, we can assume that we go from no-where to now-here for some purpose. With this realization you can stop doubting that you are a divine creation with purpose and just accept that you are. You are part of this intelligent system *and* you are here for some divine reason" (10). While these authors may have quite different theological or discursive understandings they nevertheless share the conviction that our lives and the events we experience are not meaningless.

By postulating that all experiences and events unfold according to a larger plan, these authors enable their readers to both make sense of, and cope, with the existence of suffering. Accordingly, the religion of the heart provides an interpretive lens, or symbolic filter, through which to experience one's life. No longer do mundane or ordinary moments pass by without significance. Instead, they are understood as imbued with great personal (even cosmic) consequence and value. While my informants may differ in their understandings of this phrase, I have found that when it comes to their own lives *everything is meaningful*. For some, this means that setbacks always contain within them a life lesson that they needed to learn in order to realize their potential. While for others, events are interpreted as being divinely orchestrated.

For example, an SBNR interviewee relayed, "the biggest choices in my life I didn't make consciously. They are moved from some deeper force within me." For this young man the most important of his life-decisions were not made of his own self-will, but were directed by the larger forces of the universe. Another SBNR informant, an aspiring singer, described experiencing "the weirdest coincidences" whereby specific persons would come into her life at "just the right time." These synchronicities she interpreted as giving credence to the religion of the heart. Furthermore, one hears similar accounts from Charismatic Christians. For instance, one of the campus pastors at C3 Toronto preached, "If you are in a dark place you have to understand that God has made a way for you." As Poloma (2003, 23) observes in her study of Charismatics, "God is seen as active in all events past, present, and future that work together in a kind of master plan."

5. Self-Realization as Teleology

We have seen that the religion of the heart narrates the self in redemptive terms. But it remains to be explained how redemption is understood. What ultimate end does suffering serve? Simply put: *self-realizatio*n—that is, suffering is necessary to actualize one's potential and realize one's true self. Accordingly, the religion of the heart entails an *expressivist ethic*: it remains a core precept in both my informants accounts, as well as popular "spiritual" literature, that we all have within us a "true self" which reflects *who we truly are*, and which it is our life's goal to realize.

Charles Taylor refers to this as a *romantic expressivist* conception of human life. "This is the idea which grows in the late eighteenth century that each individual is different and original, and that this originality determines how he or she ought to live…. Each person is to be measured by a different yardstick, one which is properly his or her own" (Taylor 1989, 375). On this view, the ultimate purpose of life is to fulfill one's own nature, which means espousing the "inner élan," or the *voice within*—however these are understood (347).

We see this theme repeated time and again in the literature on "spirituality." For instance, Deepak Chopra (1994, 97) writes, "Each of us is here to discover our higher self or our spiritual self." Wayne Dyer (1995, 5) directs people to locate their "sacred self." Esther and Jerry Hicks (2004, 5) tell us, "Your life is about the continuing expression of who you truly are." Joel Olsteen counsels, "learn to be happy with who God made you to be," and, "Be an original, not a copycat" (2004, 91, 92).

We also find a romantic expressivism in secular psychological and self-help discourse, if only in a more secular form. For instance, Tony Robbins writes in *Awaken the Giant Within*, "I believe our *true* identity is something that's indefinable and greater than anything that's describable. We are soul; we are spirit" (1991, 431). And Carl Rogers (1969, 109), in outlining his client-centred approach to therapy asserts, "I find I am more effective when I can listen acceptantly to myself, and can be myself [sic]" and that when a client "drops the false fronts, or the masks, or the roles" he "appears to be trying to discover something more basic, something more truly himself."

It follows that from within the religion of the heart, "'personal growth' can be understood as the shape 'religious salvation' takes" (Hanegraaff 1996, 46). This is as true of Charismatic Christians as it is of those who are heirs to the New Age and Human Potential movements. As Coleman (2000, 197) observes, "Believers are supposed to both guard against doubt and to seek evidence of continuous personal growth in God, the source of all prosperity." Thus a Charismatic informant confidently declared, "We should never feel bad about wanting growth because God wants us to personally grow." It is for this reason that one scholar has suggested, "evangelicals have Christianized the self-help movement" (Nadesan 1999, 24).

Moreover, it is generally believed by both Charismatics and SBNRs that one ought to engage in a constant process of work upon oneself in order to actualize one's potential. For example, an SBNR grad

student shared that "spirituality" is "demanding in that you always feel accountable…. You don't really get any holidays from spirituality." And a Charismatic Christian informant similarly explained, "spirituality" means, "always wanting to grow and expand and be a better version of myself." For these adherents the "spiritual" life requires work—self-work.

Importantly, while humanistic psychological and self-help discourses are certainly coherent without the background metaphysical picture provided by the religion of the heart, taking on little in the way of religious meaning for a great many persons, they nevertheless naturalize an expressivist ethic, and also often presuppose the theodicy and teleology this cultural structure propagates (Parsons 2010, 17). Thus, they are easily combined with this picture—and when this occurs, they become *existentially meaningful* (Browning and Cooper 2004). That is, it is in such instances when these secular discourses become carriers of the religion of the heart.[47]

6. Self-Ethic (Voice from Within)

What follows from this teleological conception of human life is what sociologist Paul Heelas deems a *self-ethic.* The basic idea "is that what lies within – experienced by way of 'intuition', 'alignment' or an 'inner voice' – serves to inform judgments, decisions and choices required for everyday life." In short, "The 'individual' serves as his or her own source of guidance" (Heelas 1996, 23). Thus, one of my SBNR interviewees asserted, "Spirituality is something *you* believe in, whereas I feel like religion is imposed upon you." While another proclaimed, "I need to look within myself to do anything."

Fuller (2001, 143) argues that "spirituality," "point[s] to a psychological process whereby individuals can apprehend, and become inwardly connected to, an immanent divinity." Indeed, the religion of the heart sees the true self as a conduit of the superempirical or God. For instance, Deepak Chopra (1994, 3) celebrates, "the divinity within us." Wayne Dyer (1995, 5) contends, "there dwells within all human beings a divine energy." While Joseph Murphy (1977, 3) describes, "the Presence of God within you." And translating this notion into a theistic frame, Norman Vincent Peale (1959, 37) laments, "The pathetic fact is that many of us do not live as people who have the Kingdom of God within us. We do not really use the great forces the Almighty God has put into us." And similarly, Phil Pringle of C3 Church preaches, "The God inside of you is bigger than anything you are facing."

In assuming a mystical access to divine power, the religion of the heart teaches its adherents that they need not suffer hesitation, self-doubt, or ambivalence about how to lead their lives, nor need they seek inspiration outside of themselves since they have everything they need already within themselves. Of course, the "voice from within" is framed differently across contexts and persons. For SBNRs—who

[47] This process is discussed in Chapter 13.

borrow primarily from the New Age and Human Potential movements—this voice is generally spoken of as one's "Higher Self" and understood as a byproduct of Nature or the Universe. Whereas for Charismatics, the voice from within may be equated with the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, once again, the rhetoric belies the underlying similarities (Heelas 2002).

In *On Becoming a Person* Carl Rogers contends that the ultimate goal of client-centered therapy is, "to be that self which one truly is" (1969, 166). For Rogers, this necessarily requires "moving away from what the culture expects [one] to be" (169). Crucially, then, according to the religion of the heart the true self is *presocial*, and therefore *not constituted by society*. It follows that to the extent that one is self-consciously taking on external roles, or trying to live up to expectations derived from society, one is not being authentic to oneself. Thus, in our interview an SBNR Twelve Step member relayed that when she feels the "least spiritual" is when, "I'm conscious of myself as the external me." While another SBNR interviewee iterated, "I feel terrible pretending to be something that I'm not." And channeling Rogers, Chopra, and Olsteen a Charismatic informant explained, "'spirituality' is stepping away from social cues, social norms, and social expectations."

Finally, the voice from within, interpreted as one's true self, encourages the development self-awareness, for if the ultimate end of life is to achieve the self that one truly is, then one must first become aware of *who that is*. This may be achieved through a variety of practices, but fundamentally it requires *going within* in order to *delineate* those parts of the self that are understood as byproducts of society and culture, from those which are authentic to oneself.[48] Of course, how the socialized self is discursively framed varies—SBNRs are more likely to speak in terms of one's "ego," whereas Charismatics might instead speak of one's "worldly identity" or "the enemy." The problem for both of these groups, however, remains the same: societal norms and institutions stifle the true self by hemming it in, manipulating it, or repressing it.

7. Virtue is Natural

How does the religion of the heart conceive of the source of virtue or moral action? If not society, then what encourages individuals to be good? The religion of the heart presupposes that if one is living as one's true self *one will naturally act virtuously*. Again, we can trace this to the eighteenth century romantics, according to whom humans are naturally good (Babbitt 1919, 130). As a young SBNR queer woman put it, "To be human and alive is to feel spiritual. Like it's just a natural state." An SBNR engineering student said, "I think ethics is just how you act. So for me it's not creating any change in me,

[48] It is for this reason that reflexivity is such a central dimension of today's religion of the heart (see Roof 1999).

because being 'spiritual just means being yourself." And an SBNR entrepreneur shared, "When I'm spiritual I can get along well with anyone." Similarly, Wayne Dyer (1995, 17) writes, "Every problem—be it with relationships, finances, health or self-image—has a solution in the sacred self. When you are peaceful, experience silence, meditate and listen, really listen to God, you will be directed away from the worldly and toward the divinity that is within you. You will know what you need to do." Becoming virtuous is ultimately a byproduct of realizing one's true self.

This illuminates something important about the way the religion of the heart conceives of morality. Rather than speak in terms of "good and evil," its adherents are far more comfortable speaking in terms of "healthy and ill." I mentioned in the preceding chapter that the triumph of the therapeutic has significantly shaped today's religion of the heart. Exemplifying this shift from sin to sickness, Carl Rogers (1969, 26) argues, "persons have a basically positive direction." Accordingly, what leads individuals to cause harm either to themselves or others is, on this view, either oppressive social structures or psychological trauma. This helps explain the focus on "healing" in the accounts of both my SBNR and Charismatic informants. As Wayne Dyer (1995, 359) puts it, "transcend the false self that we call the ego. That is when healing will occur." And similarly, Norman Vincent Peale (1959, 149) writes, "You have to give God a chance to reach into your soul with His healing power." Becoming whole, healing, realizing one's true self—these are all synonyms as regards the religion of the heart (see Bowman 1999, 181; McGuire 2008, 130). It follows that *all healing entails moral reform.*

Lastly, not only is virtue the natural result of achieving one's true self, but one is also promised happiness, understood as subjective well-being or inner peace. An SBNR artist submitted, "When I feel a state of permeating calm, that to me feels spiritual and it feels like the true self." Another remarked, "Spirituality is very peaceful." And Eckhart Tolle (1995, 5) writes, "the unhappy and deeply fearful self … is ultimately a fiction of the mind." The idea is that in realizing one's true self, one simultaneously becomes moral and achieves subjective well-being. In other words, the religion of the heart promises *a perfect harmony between authenticity, virtue, and inner peace*.

8. Sacralization of Individual Liberty

There is perhaps no value more sacred to the religion of the heart than *individual liberty*. What this amounts to in practice is, first and foremost, a commitment to allowing individuals to "listen to the voice within" and "follow their heart"—that is, *negative freedom*. In other words, adherents of the religion of the heart demand that individuals be granted a sphere within which they cannot be interfered with, where they have *freedom from* external obstructions and constraints.[49]

[49] On the distinction between negative and positive freedom see Carter 2019.

This derives from the expressivist ethic at its core. Moreover, today's religion of the heart is fundamentally egalitarian. As Eeva Sointu and Linda Woodhead (2008, 273) suggest, "spirituality" recognizes "the uniqueness—and unique worth—of each and every individual." Indeed, evincing the Protestant principle, and sharing in the Emersonian celebration of "individuality," its adherents reject all attempts to order, tame, or control the true self.

This is especially evident among SBNRs. For instance, a trans activist, when asked why they left the church of their youth replied, "So I could actually determine my own freedom." Similarly, a psychology major shared that while she enjoys visiting different religious communities, what she detests is when they "put an ultimatum on me." Another relayed, "from my understanding, there is no legitimate way of praying to God. Everyone can pray to God in his own way."

The religion of the heart, with its self-ethic, leads its adherents to rail against what they perceive as external norms and regulations. Because they hold self-realization in such high esteem, they give great weight to *self-expression*, that is, the ability to express, and be recognized as, one's true self. Thus an SBNR informant explained, "When I think of religion, it's very obviously … tainted and very limiting; placing limitations on life and life experiences, whereas spirituality to me is a bit more about exploration and freedom, and just being who you are." And one hears strikingly similar claims among Charismatic Christians. For instance, as I explore at length in Chapter 12, it was common to hear that my Charismatic informants chose a neo-Pentecostal church because it offered them freedom to express themselves.

Nevertheless, this commitment to negative freedom derives from a more fundamental commitment to *positive freedom*. By this I mean a *freedom to* realize one's true self, which Harold Bloom (1992, 26) aptly describes as "a purely inner freedom." This inner freedom requires shedding all external attachments—only the individual who lives *as* their true self is truly free. Thus Wayne Dyer (1995, 48) encourages readers, "Begin by making your decision to be free by letting go of your personal history." Similarly, Robin Sharma (1997, 170) warns, "Never be a prisoner of your past." And Eckhart Tolle, for whom "mind" represents societal expectations and norms, writes, "you can free yourself from your mind. This is the only true liberation" (1999, 18). Of course, much psychotherapy is premised upon a similar ideal. For example, Phil McGraw (1999, 48) encourages his readers to "adopt the attitude of questioning and challenging everything in your life that you can identify as having been accepted on blind faith or as having been adopted out of tradition or history."

In sum, the religion of the heart sacralizes individual liberty in the following senses: because it views norms and social institutions as stifling individual authenticity, it challenges and contests external constraints that are seen to regulate or deform the true self. However, because it conceives of norms and social institutions as *aspects of the self*—the "ego" or "the world"—it endorses a conception of positive

freedom that requires individuals to shed these aspects in order to become truly free (Houtman and Aupers 2010, 15).

9. Mind-Body-Spirit Connection

There is arguably no more complicated concept as regards the religion of the heart as the notion that the mind, body and spirit are in some sense interdependent. Yet, at its most basic, we can safely assert that the mind-body-spirit connection implies *a general hostility to dualisms*. In agreement, Colin Campbell (2007, 66) writes, "all dualisms are being rejected, whether that of god and mankind, mankind and nature, mind and body, or body and soul, in favor of generally holistic assumptions." However, as far as I can tell, there exists no consensus as to which of these dualisms is necessarily opposed by the religion of the heart, and which should be left intact. For instance, within the accounts of my informants these specific dualisms are sometimes challenged, and at others, not.

Yet what is abundantly clear is that the religion of the heart presupposes some version of the idea that *thought shapes reality*. Thus Deepak Chopra (1994, 31) writes, "Thought has the power to transform." Phil McGraw (1999, 178) contends, "There is no reality; only perception." Tony Robbins (1991, 75) assures us, "Beliefs have the power to create and the power to destroy." Joel Osteen (2004, 121) preaches, "Our words are self-fulfilling prophecies." Robin Sharma (1997, 63) asserts, "the quality of your thinking determines the quality of your life." Joseph Murphy (1977, 37) pronounces, "the law of life is the law of belief." And Esther and Jerry Hicks (2004, 18) proclaim, "You *do* create your own reality."

And should one think only best-selling authors make these claims, I heard variations on this theme from nearly all of my informants. For instance, a young SBNR grad student asserted, "I believe in the power of the mind." A recent SBNR immigrant to Canada shared, "I've learned that as long as you believe you can do something, you can." An SBNR singer instructed, "We're creating the reality that we're experiencing." And a SBNR law student made clear, "I've always believed some element of 'perception is reality'." Furthermore, one hears strikingly similar claims among Charismatics, albeit framed in more theistic terms. For example, I regularly heard from the pulpit at C3 Toronto, "You will reproduce what you repeat"; "If you want to see blessing in your world, you need to speak blessing into your world"; and "You need to be speaking about the good things that God is doing in your life." Providing some context to these proclamations, Bowler (2013, 2) observes that neo-Pentecostals often speak of "*faith* as an activator, a power that unleashes spiritual forces and turns the spoken word into reality." Indeed, I saw many examples of this while studying Charismatics. For instance, a member of the C3 Toronto leadership team informed me, "If we want to activate the power of God, sometimes we just

need to speak his words." While another asserted, "If I ever need God, I just pray and he shows up in my life. It never fails."

What remains puzzling is how best to interpret all of these statements. As I remarked above, I do not believe there exists a consensus on this point. Thus it would seem the meaning of the mind-body-spirit connection—its generally holistic direction—remains open to multiple interpretations. It is worth noting, then, that adherents of the religion of the heart can give credence to all of these interpretations without needing to commit to any one of them.

10. Methodological Individualism

One way or another, for all of my informants, the "spiritual" life involves taking responsibility for themselves. Whether it be one's own happiness, success, past trauma and pain, or simply one's attitudes, the religion of the heart locates responsibility in the individual. As anthropologist Susannah Crockford (2017, 41) correctly points out, from within the religion of the heart "the individual self, not society, is the locus of change and power." That is, the religion of the heart endorses a strict *methodological individualism*. Or put another way, this cultural structure prescribes mass self-transformation, or mass self-realization to combat the ills of the world.

For instance, the idea that "God helps those who help themselves," is a staple at C3 Toronto. Moreover, these young Charismatics often criticized other Christians for what they saw as a failure to take responsibility for themselves. And this anti-structuralist lens was also articulated by SBNRs, as the following informant's account vividly illustrates: "I think moving people close to their potential definitely is their spirituality, and if more people approach that as their spirituality, as finding their passion and working through that passion, then I think the world is definitely going to improve. Not by one person's action, but by everybody's smaller actions." Finally, we see this vision outlined in popular "spiritual" literature as well. Wayne Dyer (1995, 347) writes, "The world is encountering a spiritual deficit that reflects our need to consciously get on the path of our sacred quest. The solution to individual global problems is to overcome the spiritual deficit. When you make the shift in consciousness allowing yourself to be an agent of heightened awareness, you are contributing to the transformation of our world."

Bringing Clarity to the Contemporary Religious Landscape

As we have seen, from within the symbolic filter naturalized by the religion of the heart any activity, event, or experience can potentially be interpreted as "spiritual" in nature. In fact, what makes an event or experience "spiritual," fundamentally, is not whether it conforms to traditional religious or secular boundaries and conventions, but rather *its quality* (ecstatic/effervescent) and the *purpose it serves* (self-awareness, self-expression, self-realization).

This explains why scholars have observed the tendency towards religious bricolage—that is, "the joining together of seemingly inconsistent, disparate contents" (Wuthnow 2007, 15)—among many people today. Indeed, the contemporary religious landscape has been described variably as replete with "do-it-yourself-religion" (Baerveldt 1996), "pick-and-mix religion" (Hamilton 2000), "religious consumption à la carte" (Possamai 2003), and characteristic of a "spiritual supermarket" (Lyon 2000). There is certainly truth in this. For my informants, exercising, dancing, or hiking can be considered "spiritual," as what matters foremost is whether they *experience* a connection to a force greater than themselves—be it God or the Universe—and whether or not it helps them to grow personally, heal, or realize their true self. As we have seen, adherents of the religion of the heart do not respect traditional semantic boundaries. Because the superempirical pervades everything, it can be connected with anywhere, and at anytime, provided one is open to it. Similarly, among Charismatic informants, bricolage is also common—if always interpreted *within* a theistic frame.

We can now see why studies that have focused narrowly on the semantics associated with the term "spirituality" have tended to produce a more disjointed picture of the religious landscape than is warranted. The fact that adherents engage in an eclectic "pick and mix" form of bricolage is not evidence of social incoherence, but rather derives from a consistent and underlying cultural logic. And though the religion of the heart may encourage a post-modern incredulity towards metanarratives, this is not the case with respect to its own. Furthermore, the fact that individuals who self-identify as "spiritual" do not all agree about what this term means is not evidence that they do not collectively subscribe to a shared cultural structure, but rather evinces the fact that they do—one that prizes subjective experience and self-realization over and above labels of self-identification (Houtman 2015). As Troeltsch knew well, "mystical" or "spiritual" religion tends to induce a suspicion of labels because labels are human constructions, which are believed to constrain the individual spirit from flowing where it wishes. In turn, what has made the religion of the heart so difficult for social scientists to study is that its adherents deny adhering to it. They prefer instead to view themselves as nomadic traditionless seekers in touch with a universal spiritual core that cannot be captured by language. Yet I have tried to show that a closer look at their accounts illustrates something quite different. The truth is much, if not most, of what goes by "spirituality" today is animated by an underlying and shared cultural structure—the religion of the heart.[50]

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[50] Having said this, I want to reiterate that in understanding the religion of the heart as a cultural structure, I accept that it takes many distinct discursive forms on the ground. That is, while the New Age, Human Potential, and Charismatic movements may belong to a shared cultural structure, we ought not presume they are identical, be it socially or politically. Moreover, the religion of the heart often interacts with local contexts to produce particular syntheses that could easily be missed by grand theorizing of the kind I have conducted thus far (Wood 2010). I take up the implications of this insight in Parts III and IV.

Accordingly, in the rest of this study I assume a basic commonality, if not commensurability, between what scholars call "spirituality" and the religion of the heart, as I have defined it. In other words, I use these terms interchangeably. As I argued in Chapter 2, the study of spirituality has suffered significantly due to a lack of shared nomenclature; this despite the fact that we largely agree on the character of the discourses we study. I therefore think it justified to impose my own analytic framework, to the extent that it serves the pragmatic purpose of delineating that which scholars of "spirituality" agree upon and that which we do not. In other words, while doing so undoubtedly risks reifying my etic term, "the religion of the heart," I ultimately think it is worth it.

Part II: The Making of Romantic Liberal Modernity

Chapter 6

A Genealogy of the Present:

The 1960s and the Rise of Romantic Liberalism

> *The 1960s transformed America's consciousness in immeasurable ways*.
> (Campbell 2007, 238)

> *I believe, along with many others, that our North Atlantic civilization has been undergoing a cultural revolution in recent decades*. (Taylor 2007, 473)

In Part I of this study I delimited the cultural structure that informs what goes by "spirituality" today, which I call the religion of the heart. In Part II, I locate it in space and time, as it relates to the past half-century. In this task, I restrict my gaze to the liberal democratic West. It is no mere accident that the religion of the heart rolls off the tongues of so many in twenty-first century Euro-American societies. Though it is arguably as old as the Christian tradition from which it arose, as well as bound up with major modern developments, the religion of the heart's recent popularity is incomprehensible without accounting for the transformations that took place during and in the wake of the 1960s. Thus, while I recognize that speaking of epochal change always risks sacrificing nuance and reducing social complexity, I am convinced that such language is warranted.[51] As historian Callum Brown (2009, 8)

[51] Eleanor Townsley (2011) argues that the "Sixties" has become a "popular trope" used by progressives and conservatives alike to reduce the complexity and contradictions of this period and reinforce the popular notion that the era marked a radical break with that which came before. While Townsley is no doubt correct that unsophisticated applications of the trope can serve to cloud or veil critical aspects of history, her approach risks divorcing her theory from the empirical evidence. However much the trope of the 60s might squash nuance, any responsible social analysis must concede, with historian Sydney Ahlstrom (1970, 3) that, "New cosmic signs *were* being read in the 1960's. The decade *did* experience a fundamental shift in American [and I would argue Western] moral and religious attitudes." Thus while I agree with Townsley that the 60s can be narrated in various ways, any acceptable interpretation must be sensitive to the bare social facts—and these undeniably show that significant change occurred during this period. It is therefore worth noting that Townsley's textualist approach makes

observes, “The 1960s revolution was about how people constructed their lives – their families, their sex lives, their cultural pursuits, and their moral identities of what makes a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ person.” Without question, the seeds of this cultural revolution were centuries in the making, but the events of the 60s precipitated their flowering to an unprecedented degree. Moreover, this occurred on an international scale, affecting nearly all liberal democracies.[52] As a result, we in the West continue to live out the legacies of this tumultuous period—whether we recognize it or not.

In this chapter I tell the story of the 60s. I relate the rise of the religion of the heart to the wider social, cultural, and political developments of this period. My argument is that it was during the 60s that an unprecedented alliance between romanticism and liberalism took root and blossomed. Although unstable and lacking self-consciousness in its early days, this alliance eventually crystallized into a coherent and stable social imaginary—one that today offers legitimation to both the religion of the heart and the institutions that support it.[53]

In order to understand precisely how this came about we need to examine the nature of these two schools of thought and feeling. I therefore begin with a philosophical examination of the roots of romanticism. Crucial, in this regard, is what spurred the Romantic movement—its dissatisfaction and disenchantment with modernity. Second, I explain what I mean by liberalism. I understand liberalism as a tradition of political thought constituted by a commitment to securing “the political conditions that are necessary for the exercise of personal freedom” (Shlkar 1989, 21). While liberals might disagree over how best to interpret this fundamental value, they are nevertheless liberals in virtue of this shared commitment.[54] As we shall see, romantic liberalism, in contrast to rational liberalism, seeks to reconcile romantic disenchantment with liberal institutions by means of enchanting the private sphere. Accordingly, romantic liberals interpret freedom in a particular way—one that resonates strongly with the expressivism at the core of the religion of the heart. For this reason, the religion of the heart is usefully thought of as the

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absolutely no reference to actual events of the period. Finally, given my stated ambitions in Chapter 3, I have no problem with the fact that tropes—whatever their content—often become self-evident and therefore serve to inform “our history” or “our past” (Townsley 2001, 112). For this is exactly what I intend.

[52] As a result, while I occasionally highlight distinctive national developments, the trends I narrate are sufficiently general to aptly capture developments across national contexts. I discuss the implications of this approach in Appendix A.

[53] Charles Taylor (2004, 23) defines a “social imaginary” as: “the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations.”

[54] Accordingly, the political Left and Right in North America largely share a commitment to the liberal tradition, but simply hold radically different interpretations of what liberal principles entail in practice. I return to this point in Chapter 13.

religious expression typical of romantic liberals. Finally, I examine the 1960s counterculture and the various social and political developments it spawned—which I argue reflected the rise of romantic liberalism. I outline the key religious developments that took place during this era, and then relate these to the social and political changes that accompanied them. My aim in this chapter is to link the religious, social, and political developments of this period, offering a comprehensive picture of how, despite their differences, they collectively served to animate, propagate, and embed the romantic liberal imaginary that legitimates the social order of twenty-first century liberal democracies.

The Romantic Response to Modernity

Historian Peter Gay (1995, 47) postulates 1798 as the beginning of the Romantic period. In the popular imagination, the Romantic movement was fundamentally aesthetic in nature, yet it has proved incredibly politically consequential. It represented a rebellion against the classical stress on rationalism, tradition, and formal harmony, in lieu of the individual, the imagination, and raw feeling. The Romantics came of age during a period of tremendous upheaval—industrialization, urbanization, and economic turbulence were dramatically transforming the nature of social life. They looked out at their budding industrial societies and shuddered, experiencing nothing short of world-weariness, or the sense that everything they valued—authenticity, individuality, sensuality, self-expression, mysticism, eroticism, and the imagination—was being stunted and degraded as a result of modern industrialism. In short, "They sought to liberate the human spirit from the mechanistic prison" of modernity (Ahlstrom 1977, 156).

Michael Saler (2006, 694) remarks, "There is one characteristic of modernity … that has been emphasized fairly consistently by intellectuals since the eighteenth century: that modernity is 'disenchanted'." It was this sense of disenchantment that spurred the Romantic Movement. Thus while Max Weber may have articulated the thesis of disenchantment in social scientific terms, it began as a form of romantic cultural criticism (Josephson-Storm 2017). The Romantics, when looking out at modernity and contemplating the view of humanity proffered by modern science, asked, "What is the place of the Good, or the True, or the Beautiful, in a world entirely determined mechanistically?" (Taylor 1989, 459).

As we saw in Chapter 3, the Romantic movement was deeply religious in nature, as its iconoclastic proponents sought to identify and articulate a "subtler language" which could "make manifest the higher or the divine." In the wake of the Romantics, "Deeply felt personal insight" became the "most precious spiritual resource" (Taylor 2007, 489). Though they bore the imprints of Enlightenment thought, the Romantics simultaneously railed against the culture of rationalism and the materialist outlooks championed by the *philosophes*. They detested the "ugliness" and the "spiritual emptiness," of the budding modern world, and the utilitarian individualism of the marketplace (Campbell

1987, 218). And they especially railed against what they saw as the repressive, routinizing, and instrumentalizing aspects of modern public life—which Taylor (2007, 633) calls the "disciplines of civilized life."

But rather than propose political revolution, the Romantics instead sought to re-enchant the world by means of *turning inward*. They offered as an antidote, "the ideal of self-expression," that is, "the aim of realizing individuality through creativity" (218). In short, in the self the Romantics found the source of re-enchantment. Gay writes,

> The prophets, poets, and propagandists of the nineteenth-century quest for the naked heart were the romantics. They explored its possibilities and complicated its outlines; they refined its vocabulary and more or less unwittingly shaped the bourgeoisie's perception of the self for decades ahead. The stakes were high: leading romantics saw it as their historic mission to re-enchant the world. They felt an urgent need to restore the sense of wonder and mystery that eighteenth-century deists, skeptics, and atheists—Voltaire and Hume and Holbach and their fellow mutineers against faith—had attempted to erase with their bloodless scientism, impious insults, and shallow witticisms. The Enlightenment had, romantics charged, damaged the inner life almost beyond repair. Theirs was a brave effort. Disenchanted with disenchantment, they worked to undo the secularization of the world that had been the dismal accomplishment of their father's generations. (Gay 1995, 37)

With this history in mind we can see the great extent to which today's religion of the heart carries forward the romantic legacy. We see this, first, in its championing of the romantic ideals of self-expression, sincerity, and authenticity (Trilling 1971). Indeed, as we have noted, the "spiritual" journey inward requires identifying and expressing one's true self—however that is conceived.

Another key romantic theme informing the religion of the heart is the distrust of all forms of reductionism. Isaiah Berlin (1999, 120) nicely sums up the rationale underlying this romantic conviction: "The only persons who have ever made sense of reality are those who understand that to try to circumscribe things, to try to nail them down, to try to describe them, no matter how scrupulously, is a vain task." The romanticism of today's religion of the heart is evident when its adherents reject all reductionist explanations for human life and its beauty. Just as for Wordsworth "to dissect is to murder," so, too, is it "unspiritual" to study human life analytically.

It is also fair to say that romanticism's hatred of the disciplines of civilized life continue to exert much force in the contemporary era. When popular commentators point out the deadening or soul-crushing effect of modern rationalism, bureaucratization, and mechanization, they are drawing from the Romantic tradition. Expressivism, given its commitment to an ideal of authenticity, generally distrusts all forms of impersonality, calculation, and unspontaneous collectivity. All of this was evident in the counterculture of the 60s. However, what made the era's romanticism distinct was its alliance with liberal

political ideals—that is, a commitment to the moral equality of individuals and the value of individual freedom.

What is Liberalism?

Philosopher John Gray (1995, 78) argues liberalism is the political theory of modernity and the Enlightenment. Similarly, Robert Bellah (1970, 70) contends liberalism is "the primary ideology of modernization." Why is this? Larry Siedentop (2014, 349) supplies an answer: "the only birthright recognized by the liberal tradition is individual freedom." Indeed, the Declaration of Human Rights, signed in 1948, is a fundamentally liberal document, as are the United States Constitution and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Thus, it is quite common for critics of liberalism to equate it with individualism (Lukes 1971). This is correct if by "individualism" we mean that the individual is conceived as the basic unit of society. For the primary preoccupation of liberals is "securing the conditions of personal liberty" (Rosenblum 1994, 541). To this extent, liberals are concerned with individual autonomy and the conditions that make it possible.

Indeed, it was for this reason that early liberals introduced the distinction between public and private spheres. Interested in securing conditions of peace among warring Protestants and Catholics, these liberals proposed this distinction to demarcate state affairs from those they claimed were the business of private citizens (e.g. religious belief). They were primarily concerned about the potential despotism of the state, and the need to identify political principles upon which to co-exist peacefully. Thus in response to the wars of religion, early liberals sought peace and security, and formed their principles on this basis. Accordingly, religious belief (basically Protestant in nature) was relegated to the private sphere, the role of the state was severely restricted, and commerce and science were given an enlarged status in public life (Owen 2014).

Bertrand Russell (1946, 578) adds, "Implicitly, the tendency of early liberalism was towards democracy tempered by the rights of property. There was a belief—not at first wholly explicit—that all men are born equal." Indeed, in principle, liberalism conceives of every individual as having an equal moral status, which requires that they be treated "with equal concern and respect" (Kymlicka 1989a, 140).[55] It was on this basis that early liberals rejected the doctrine of the divine right of kings. For liberals, moral equality between persons favours democracy on the grounds that citizens ought to have an equal say in who governs. Thus, the notion of consent is a key liberal value, as it follows from the liberal

[55] This is not to say liberals have always lived up to their principles, as the stains of slavery and colonial genocide (among other historic injustices) on the Anglo-American conscience make evident.

commitment to individual autonomy, that is, self-rule. Citizens must consent to those public decisions that will infringe on their liberty.[56]

Finally, liberalism is fundamentally concerned with pluralism. Liberals assume that a free society will necessarily produce social and moral diversity, and on this basis make central specifying "the terms of peaceful coexistence in a pluralist society, whereby the form of pluralism is characterized by incommensurable worldviews" (Gray 1995, 85). Whether or not this makes liberalism neutral towards all worldviews is a matter I will return to in later chapters. What we can conclude, in any case, is that liberalism understands the problem of pluralism in a particular way, one that is deeply inflected with what we might call Protestant assumptions (Asad 1993).

Rational v. Romantic Liberalism

We can distinguish between two versions of liberalism that I call *rational* and *romantic*—which Russell (1946, 618) refers to as the "hard-headed" and "soft-hearted" schools of liberalism.[57] In describing the former, Russell stresses its "Emphasis on prudence" (593). In other words, the disciplines of civilized life—disinterestedness, public reason, self-restraint—which the early romantics believed stifle human flourishing and expressive freedom, rational liberals deem both essential and praiseworthy. For rational liberals, modern life necessarily requires discipline of various kinds; a peaceful and prosperous polity requires citizens to cultivate the habits of self-restraint and temperance. This emphasis on prudence, rational liberals argue is necessary in order to secure the conditions of personal liberty (Shklar 1989, 21).

Nevertheless, in her remarkable book *Another Liberalism: Romanticism and the Reconstruction of Liberal Thought*, political theorist Nancy Rosenblum (1987, 4) notes that liberalism in its rational mode wards "off everything affective, personal, and expressive." In other words, rational liberalism is a byproduct of enlightenment thought, mistrustful of the emotions, afraid of arbitrariness, and wary of anything that smacks of irrationalism. It celebrates commitment to impersonal government, impartial rule of law, and rational calculation. In short, rational liberalism "distrusts the law of the heart" (34). Moreover, as Nomi Maya Stolzenger (2009) argues, rational liberalism endorses a conception of freedom as self-mastery, whereby autonomy is conceived as the willingness and ability to submit to a higher authority—be it secular or religious in nature. Since Durkheim, scholars have spoken of this moral tradition as "moral individualism." Perhaps the clearest example is Kant, who saw moral action as characterized by rational obedience to the categorical imperative.

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[56] That said, there is no necessary connection between liberalism and democracy, as the recent emergence of "illiberal democracies" around the globe is demonstrating.

[57] Judith Shklar (1989, 28) makes a similar distinction between the "liberalism of natural rights" and the "liberalism of personal development."

But, as Rosenblum rightly notes, due to its arid legalism, rational liberalism has often provoked a romantic counter-response, describing the relationship between romanticism and liberalism as "one of mutual tension, reconciliation, and reconstruction" (Rosenblum 1987, 3). She writes, "When liberalism imposes its severe discipline of legalism, it excites a romantic reaction" (Rosenblum 1989, 207). This is because romantic expressivism resists homogenization and routinization, that is, "its nemesis is generality and regularity, security of expectation" (207). History bears this out.

For instance, John Stuart Mill, a quintessential liberal if there ever was one, sought solace in the poetry of Wordsworth in the midst of a prolonged depression (Abrams 1973, 136), and after having been rescued by romantic pieties, allowed romantic convictions to inform his liberal theory. One of the primary motivators for Mill's famous harm principle was the expressivism of Alexander von Humboldt—for whom privatism is necessary to cultivate one's individuality. Thus, in *On Liberty* Mill rails against the "despotism of custom," and contends, "Mankind are greater gainers by suffering each other to live as seems good to themselves, than by compelling each to live as seem good to the rest" ([1859] 2016, 73, 16). As Rosenblum (1987, 24) informs us, Mill came to believe "liberalism might be open to a romantic justification of private liberty as the condition for imaginative expression."

In agreement, Robert Devigne argues that Mill endorsed liberal legal structures and institutions on the basis that they provided the conditions for self-development. He writes, "Mill is a romantic-expressive liberal. The focus of Mill's attention is upon the relation of reason to self-realization, and the idea, underlined by such terms as 'self-development' and 'inner consciousness,' is that the best life is distinctive and authentic, something every individual can discover for himself" (2006, 76). Translating Mill's view into contemporary philosophical parlance, philosopher Will Kymlicka (1989a, 12) argues the romantic liberal is morally committed to the belief that "my life goes better if I'm leading it from the inside, according to my beliefs about value."[58] It is for this reason, as Kymlicka (2003, 80) acknowledges, that romantic liberalism "grants a very wide freedom of choice in terms of how [people] lead their lives." That is, "It allows people to choose a conception of the good life, and then allows them to reconsider that decision, and adopt a new and hopefully better plan of life."

Indeed, it was romantic-influenced liberals who reformulated the private/public distinction to mean the distinction between the personal and social; that is, they were "concerned not only to protect the private sphere of social life, but also to carve out a realm *within the private sphere* where individuals can have *privacy*" (Kymlicka 2007, 395).[59] Thus within a romantic liberal social imaginary the private sphere

[58] Though Kymlicka does not distinguish between rational and romantic liberalism, he argues this is the basis of "the political morality of modern liberalism" (1989a, 13). Given its indebtedness to Mill, I would argue this view aligns more with romantic than rational liberalism, as I define them.

[59] Mark Cladis (2003, xxxi) argues we can trace this conceptual transformation back to Rousseau.

is conceived as a protected space of personal retreat from public life, necessary in order to cultivate one's individuality and realize one's true self.

Though the seeds of romantic liberalism long presaged the 1960s, it was not until this boisterous era that it reached maturation. Indeed, Stolzenberg argues that in the wake of the 60s it became common for liberals to recast autonomy as self-expression, which she argues "exalts the irrational side of human nature, disparages psychological repression, and elevates 'the heart' over 'the head'" (Stolzenberg 2009, 196). Similarly, legal theorist Lawrence M. Friedman (1990, 3) describes a shift during these years whereby "*expression* [became] favored over *self-control.*" While Thomas Franck (1999, 39) argues the 60s gave birth to a "new individualism," which "challenge[d] the limits on personal self-determination so long imposed by the traditional objects of allegiance."

We can see then how sixties romanticism gave life to a distinctive kind of liberalism, which finds fresh justifications for supporting liberal institutions, principles, and policies (Rosenblum 1987, 208). Of course, pure romanticism rejects the very terms of political theory. But romantics need not be (indeed have not been) so consistent. In truth, in the late-twentieth century many romantics have made peace with liberalism (Brooks 2000). This is not only because romantic discontents arise in response to the disciplines of civilized life, but also because they arise "in response to romantics' own compensatory visions" (Rosenblum 1987, 4). In other words, chastened romantics are likely to find in liberal society a reasonable compromise—as occurred en masse in the 60s.

The 1960s as the Rise of Romantic Liberalism

The 60s marked the beginning of epochal social, cultural, and political change that continues to shape life in twenty-first century liberal democracies.[60] Indeed, this era is associated with no less than the Civil Rights movement, second-wave feminism, Gay liberation, the Environmental movement, the Vietnam War and its protest, mass religious disaffiliation, and the spread of multiculturalism. And while these developments certainly had national contours, they were in many respects global trends.

In this section, I am primarily concerned with what came to be known as the counterculture in the West, which I argue reflected a distinctly romantic liberal development. Framing it as such serves to illuminate the degree to which the spread of the religion of the heart is bound up with many of the historical developments listed above.

In *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* historian Hugh McLeod (2007, 1) writes, "The 1960s were a period of decisive change in the religious history of the Western world"; so decisive, that "these years may come to be seen as marking a rupture as profound as that brought about by the Reformation." What

[60] By the "60s" I am referring to the years roughly between 1958 and 1975.

made them so decisive? The 60s marked the widespread acceptance of romanticism. Indeed, as Colin Campbell (2007, 188) observes, the counterculture was the "social expression of romanticism."[61] Romantic attitudes and ideals were, as I have remarked, a much earlier innovation, but it was only in the sixties that they became a mass phenomenon (16). Thus Talcott Parsons (1984) famously called the 60s the "Expressivist Revolution." This revolution was spawned by a host of both social and economic factors—the post WWII affluence boom, the rise of consumer culture, and increased urbanization, among others. But from a cultural sociological perspective, the counterculture of the 60s reflected a romantic revival in order to re-enchant what was perceived as a culturally disenchanted world (cf. Roszak 1969).

This attempt at re-enchantment manifested itself as a form of critique against "the system." During the 60s, institutions—both public and private—were perceived by youth as repressive and alienating, stifling individuals from being truly creative and autonomous (Houtman et al. 2011, 13). Peter Clecak (1983, 18) writes of the period, "There was considerable disaffection with various facets of the industrial civilization, including science, technology, and the institutions of capitalist political economy: the dominant multinational corporations; big unions; the huge apparatus of the state; the professions; and unresponsive political institutions." In short, romantic attitudes became pervasive among the youthful baby boomers. Moreover, as David Bouchier (1983, 48) observes, "With hindsight it is possible to see the various protests of the 1960s as one protean social movement for greater human freedom." But this was freedom in a romantic liberal, or expressivist, register. Hence why "the biggest revolution in Western societies during the 1960s involved a redrawing of the boundaries between public and private" (McLeod 2007, 67). Within the counterculture and associated movements, the traditionalist expectation to submit and obey familial and social customs, the rational liberal focus on disinterestedness, legalism, and scientific calculation, and the utilitarian focus on the narrow pursuit of one's economic self-interest were all rejected in favour of finding and expressing one's individuality. Wade Clark Roof (1993, 63) sums things up: "there was more to the sixties than politics or drugs, there was also freedom. Freedom from the old conformity. Freedom to break out of social structures that impoverish or exploit. Freedom to be yourself." Indeed, the 60s gave life to what Taylor (1991) calls the "culture of authenticity" that we in the West inhabit today.

Robert Wuthnow (1976) once referred to this era as the "Consciousness Reformation," for he interpreted the counterculture as an attempt to upend the traditional categories of Western thought. But I would argue countercultural youth were simply re-interpreting Western ideals. As Campbell (2007, 224) notes, youth activists shared a "deep respect for individual human dignity, autonomy, and self-

[61] Campbell (2007, 241) remarks, "The outcome was a fully romantic movement, comparable in nature and extent to the first Romantic movement, and destined, like its predecessor, to bring dramatic changes to the civilization of the West."

determination." The counterculture combined this liberal reverence for individual freedom with a romantic critique of modernity.

Furthermore, while secularization theorists tend to conceive of the 60s as unusually irreligious, there is an alternative interpretation available. For instance, Sydney Ahlstrom (1980, 511) argues that the 60s ushered in "another Great Awakening." And Doug Rossinow (1998, 12) similarly argues, "the search for authenticity that infused American radicalism generally in the 1960s had a notable spiritual aspect." Indeed, while the rising authority of a romantic liberal social imaginary may have spelt trouble for traditional Christianity, it simultaneously privileged other religious forms. This becomes evident when we examine the religious expression of the counterculture, the New Age Movement.[62]

The New Age attack on Traditional Biblical Religion

Although New Agers often gave the impression that they had no predecessors, it is indisputable that New Age thought merely revived and revised the romantic thesis of disenchantment. As Paul Heelas (1993, 106) explains, "Suffice it to say that all the major themes of the contemporary New Age can be found in the classics of the Romantic tradition." Likewise, Taylor (2007, 510) writes, "much of the spirituality we call 'New Age' is informed by a humanism which is inspired by the Romantic critique of the modern disciplined, instrumental agent, which was central … to the 60s." Indeed, New Age thought harmonized well with the romantic liberal imaginary animating wider developments in society (Heelas 2008, 30).

The New Age, and the counterculture more generally, took aim at Christianity principally, or what Bellah et al. (1985) call the tradition of biblical religion, for they perceived it as the ultimate upholder of moral traditionalism. One axis upon which New Agers targeted biblical religion was its conception of "original sin." They rejected the Christian doctrine of human depravity, in favour of a romantic conception of human benevolence (Woodhead 1993). Interestingly, this was helped along by the rising authority of the social sciences, which held that individuals were products of social forces, and therefore corrupted by society (Wuthnow 1976, 120). Additionally, New Agers challenged the Calvinist notion of a distant and wholly transcendent God, instead championing an immanent conception of the divine, often equated with "Nature." Finally, the New Age provided a religious home for those inspired by the women's liberation movement, as it offered ideals of femininity and masculinity more in tune with the romantic liberal ethos of the counterculture (Brown 2007, 411-414).

What added to the New Age's appeal were the responses to the counterculture by the Christian churches. These took one of two forms. The first was reactionary. For instance, in his 1968 encyclical,

[62] Campbell (2007, 185) writes, "Indeed the connotations between the counterculture and New Age are so close and direct, both in ideas and in personnel, that it is not unreasonable to consider the latter as the direct continuation, rather than the mere outgrowth, of the former."

Humanae Vitae, Pope Paul VI denounced the use of birth control, while the bulk of Protestant churches fought to "drive back the forces of sexual liberalization" (412). Actions such as these solidified the countercultural association between "being religious" and being "part of the [conservative] establishment" in the minds of youth (Brown 2010, 475).

The other response was reformist. In light of countercultural critiques liberal theologians began to rail against their own tradition (see Hollinger 2011). In turn, the following became features of mainstream theology in the 60s:

> [A] critical view of the church (and indeed of institutions generally); an insistence that the best practical Christianity was often to be found outside the church; the rejection of a legalistic code of morality in favour of situation ethics; the claim that the true place of Christians is with the marginalized, and a consequent suspicion of any kind of respectability or recognized status; a horror of dogma. (McLeod 2007, 84).

The theological radicalism preached from the pulpit tended to alienate the more conservative laity while failing to attract the younger generation. As a result, the 60s gave rise to "the eclipse of the Protestant establishment" (Ahlstrom 1970, 10). Hence why Brown (2009) and McLeod (2007) both trace the decline of Christendom to this period.

The Charismatic Movements and the Spirit of Romanticism

Yet some forms of Christianity not only survived but flourished. They did so by adapting to the new cultural climate, by acknowledging and catering to the sweeping "demand for immediate, powerful, and deep religious experience" (Bellah 1976, 340). Steve Bruce highlights the striking degree of affinity between the counterculture and the neo-Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements of the time (2011, 14) (see also Walker 1997; Coleman 2000). Likewise, Roof (1993, 75) observes, "The evangelical and charismatic revivals of the 1970s and 1980s served to infuse new experiential meanings into old images." As we have seen, despite its theistic commitments (and Charismatics' claims to the contrary) Charismatic Christianity is significantly romantic (see Percy 2005). McLeod (2007, 139) explains, "Charismatics were expected to know their Bibles and to base their lives on biblical principles; however, the most important aspect of their contemporary appeal lay perhaps in the extent to which they recognized the roles of feelings, emotions, intuition." It is therefore no exaggeration to call what occurred in the wake of the 60s a religious revolution, one that impacted both those outside and within the churches. As romantic expressivist ideals and attitudes spread throughout both the cultural and religious spheres, infiltrating mass media, fashion, publicity and advertising, the entertainment industry, and even the household, Western liberal democracies were changed "in immeasurable ways" (Campbell 2007, 238).

Of course, this is not to suggest that the New Age and Charismatic movements, as respective

carriers of the religion of the heart, were or are identical. On the contrary, while they might both be informed by romantic expressivism, they were often opposed politically. This is because the 60s also witnessed the emergence of the "culture wars" that continue to characterize the political landscape (Hunter 1991). Thus, while Charismatics in the 70s and 80s may have adopted much of the expressivist language of the counterculture, they nevertheless remained theologically conservative (McLeod 2007, 137). Andrew Walker (1997, 30) clarifies, "The 1960s was a revolution of experience – sexual and chemical – and in some quarters this revolution was seen as counter-cultural. The Charismatic movement in the churches reflected the idealism, the heightened experience, and the hedonism of this counter-culture even though ideologically they were opposed to each other."[63] Indeed, in the wake of the sixties, Charismatics were able to reconfigure the religion of the heart towards theological and political conservatism, thereby hiding the degree to which they had accommodated to the countercultural ethos. Writing decades later, Mark Shibley (1998, 68, 72) observed, "born-again Christians have grown comfortable with the wider culture," such that they "accommodate to lifestyle choices that would be unthinkable in more traditional Christian contexts."

The Environmental Movement and the Church of Nature

The religion of the heart has long served to animate environmentalist aspirations and ideals. For instance, in romantic fashion, Ralph Waldo Emerson preached to his fellows that they were alienated from the natural world, and should therefore "seek mystical union with the Divine in the woods" (Stoll 2015, 41). Emerson was convinced that real human flourishing could only be achieved if people sought serenity and guidance in the "beauty of nature" (117). Moreover his Transcendentalism inspired a panoply of early American environmentalists: notably, architect Frank Lloyd Wright who, "worshipped in the church of Nature," as well as conservationist John Muir, "the patron saint of the Era of Ecology" (126, 175).[64] In fact, by the mid-twentieth century, historian Mark Stoll informs us, Transcendentalism had become "environmentalism's effective spiritual reed" (115).

As Doug Rossinow (1998, 279) notes in his history of the New Left, many in the counterculture revived the Emersonian ideal of "a harmony between humans and the rest of nature and a belief in a spirit-life that connected all living things." This was even true, to an extent, of Rachel Carson, whose *Silent Spring* catalyzed the modern environmental era. Though Carson was a committed natural scientist, she did not shy away from praising "the spiritual value of nature" (Stoll 2015, 197). She also insisted, with fellow female environmentalists Annie Dillard and Jane Jacobs, that "environmental concern include

[63] This polarization was most evident in the U.S., as the counterculture gave birth to a conservative backlash, which became known as the Moral Majority.

[64] Stoll (2015, 148) describes Muir as "Spiritual, Not Religious."

humans and human society and not just mountains and rivers (193).

Of course, the environmental movement was far from homogeneous; there were no doubt deeply anti-humanist strands to it. But as Campbell (2007, 86) notes, many environmentalists saw their cause in romantic terms, that is, as premised upon the need for humans to reconnect with nature in order to realize their true selves. For instance, Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess (1989, 8), the pioneer of the Deep Ecology movement, rooted his ecological movement in the quest for "self-realization."

Stoll's religious history of the American Environmental movement identifies a striking trend: many environmentalists followed in the footsteps of Wright, who travelled "a religious journey away from orthodoxy toward a spiritual (and not merely scientific) relationship to nature" (Stoll 2015, 158). This trend hit full stride in the 60s. Courtney Bender (2007) writes, "some parts of the environmental movement and alternative health movement claimed a 'spirituality' that was counter to organized religion's non-organic, non-holistic, materialist foundations, and urged an alternative, countercultural spirituality." Indeed, as we saw above, many progressives in the 1960s rejected wholesale the Christianity of their youth in lieu of a more extra-theistic conception of the religion of the heart (Heelas 2008, 48). Their criticisms of biblical religion were so comprehensive that, like the Romantics themselves, they diagnosed it as irredeemable (Woodhead 1993). It is fair to say, then, that the expressivism of the counterculture developed in such a way that it generally supported progressive causes—environmentalism becoming something of a signature issue (Höllinger 2004, 2017).

But its reach extended much further than this. The crystallization and spread of a romantic liberal social imaginary played no small part in inspiring the second-wave feminist, Gay liberation, and multiculturalism movements—all of which pitted themselves discursively against the establishment (of which the Christian church was deemed a primary actor). In this way, the romanticism of the 60s gave life to a particular formation of romantic liberalism that both inspired and shaped the rights revolutions of the late-twentieth century.

The Romantic Liberal Legal Revolution

A vast array of legal developments accompanied these cultural-cum-religious changes, amounting to no less than a "revolution in legal culture" (Friedman 1990, 178). As McLeod (2007) notes, the 1950s were characterized by an, although tenuous, considerable moral traditionalism. Similarly, Callum Brown (2009, 6) argues the "1950s was a deeply old-fashioned era, so old that it has often been described as the last Victorian decade." WWII left Westerners craving security and stability, and this was reflected in both social and legal institutions. For instance, in the 50s, it was commonly accepted that nation-states could legally enforce moral behaviour (McLeod 2007, 44). Most countries had obscenity laws, which severely restricted representations of sex in public media of any kind, and some even had blasphemy laws (45).

Homosexuality was illegal in many states, and contraception was not widely available.

Though no doubt a generalization, I think it fair to suggest that prior to the sixties, Western nation-states interpreted the distinction between private and public according to an *authoritative ethic*, rooted in a conservative interpretation of biblical religion. According to sociologist Steven M. Tipton (2002, 21), an authoritative ethic, "presupposes a set of social roles and relations that feature superordinate and subordinate members, whether parent and child, officer and soldier, foreman and laborer, or rulers and subject." On this view, moral action requires submission to tradition, as an authoritative ethic "places a much higher value on self-control and discipline, on traditional values, and on the norms of the group" (Friedman 1990, 2). As a result, in the 50s an intense moral scrutiny pervaded in private life at the same time as states felt it appropriate to enforce moral behaviour. McLeod writes,

> In the 1950s, concepts of decency and discretion ensured that much that was normal in private was excluded from the public sphere, and some forms of behaviour which were regarded as abnormal, but were nonetheless known to be widespread, were surrounded with secrecy and taboo. At the same time, the state penetrated the private sphere in order to punish these widespread, yet morally unacceptable and seldom openly discussed practices, including most notably homosexuality and abortion. Attacks on religion and open expressions of religious doubt lay on a borderline. On the one hand the Western world had a long and widely known history of religious scepticism going back to the seventeenth century; on the other hand the idea continued to be widely accepted that in a Christian country it was bad manners to air one's religious doubts publicly, and that at the very least the convictions of what were assumed to be the believing majority should be treated with respect. There was also a suspicion that those who openly attacked religion were likely to be political subversives or crazed fanatics. (McLeod 2007, 67)

But, as McLeod notes, in the 60s all of this began to change. As a result of the counterculture and the great swelling up of romantic liberalism across the West, taboos were broken, laws revised, norms upended, and traditions done away with.[65] This was fundamentally a moral shift; what occurred was no less than a generation-wide rejection of moral traditionalism—informed by nineteenth century Christianity—which pervaded in the 1950s, in lieu of a full-throated romantic expressivism (Franck 1999; Fukuyama 2018). And as a result of this cultural shift, the years between 1959 and 1969 marked what McLeod (2007, 218) calls a "legislative revolution." He outlines the range of legal changes instituted within the U.K. during this period:

> The beginning was the Obscene Publications Act of 1959, which protected works of literary or scientific merit from prosecution for obscenity. Restrictions on gambling were relaxed in 1960 and on drinking in 1961. Attempted suicide was decriminalized in 1961. The death penalty for

[65] At the close of the decade, Ahlstrom (1970, 10) summed up the end results thus: "the social structures, legal arrangements, values, and power relationships that supported the White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant (WASP) establishment have been gradually undermined."

> murder was suspended in 1965 and abolished in 1969. The year 1967 saw the decriminalization of male homosexuality and a major extension of the legally permitted grounds for abortion, and also for the first time contraceptives were made available to unmarried couples through the National Health Service. In 1968 theatre censorship was abolished. And in 1969 the divorce law was liberalized…. (McLeod 2007, 218)

Similar changes occurred across nearly all liberal democracies. What occurred during this period was no less than a radical process of liberalization. That is, these legal reforms were justified in virtue of extending the sphere of individual freedom. But as we have seen, this was freedom understood in a romantic expressivist sense, which challenged the presumption that the state could dictate how individuals ought to lead their private (personal) lives.

Obscenity, censorship, and blasphemy laws, from a romantic liberal perspective, infringe on the space of private life. The criminalization of attempted suicide and homosexuality is a violation of an individuals' right to act on their desires, however much others may disapprove—as is the criminalization of divorce. Recall, for romantic liberals, one's private life is a sphere where the state has no right to intrude, a view powerfully captured by Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau's 1967 pronouncement: "there's no place for the State in the bedrooms of the nation." But perhaps more than any other legal change, it was the legalization of abortion that most reflected this new romantic understanding of freedom. *Roe v. Wade* struck down the anti-abortion statutes in the U.S. on the basis that they violated the *right to privacy*; it was now accepted that the state had no right to interfere with a woman's right to choose what to do with her own body. This relied on a re-interpretation of the fundamental dividing line between the private and public. In other words, these reforms were only possible because, as Brown (2009, 196) reminds us, "the 'personal' changed so much in the 1960s."[66]

Feminism and the Religion of the Heart

This is also true of the Women's liberation movement, which political theorist Martha Nussbaum (1997, 89) argues was fundamentally liberal in character: "It was about realizing in women's lives the ideals of liberty and equality." Although this movement was of course not politically homogeneous, as many

[66] Focusing on the Canadian Context, Reginald Bibby argues the 60s brought about four societal shifts: a move from dominance to diversity; from obligation to gratification; from deference to discernment; and from homes to careers (2017, 22-34)—which journalist Peter Newman (1995) aptly calls "The Canadian Revolution." Moreover, as historian Mark Noll (2006) has noted, it was also during the 1960s that Canada lost its "Christian identity." Noll reminds us that in the 1950s Canada had a stronger claim to being a "Christian nation" than the United States, but by the 1970s this had drastically changed. Furthermore, it was during this period that Canada lost its identity as a British nation, allowing José Igartua (2006, 13) to speak of the "Other Quiet Revolution," which swept across English-speaking Canada at the same time as Quebec was experiencing its own. None of this can be made sense of without reference to the 60s counterculture and its legacies.

members championed various forms of neo-Marxism and political radicalism, with hindsight it is clear the liberal wing won out. As Rossinow (1998, 332) puts it, "the feminist left of the early 1970s made its most lasting political contribution to political liberalism.[67] It did this by challenging, in romantic liberal fashion, the traditional drawing of the boundaries between public and private (McLeod 2007, 67). Again, this relied on the very same conception of freedom that lies at the core of the religion of the heart: the notion that freedom means *freedom to be oneself as one feels oneself to be*, and also to be *recognized* as such. By claiming, "the personal is political" second-wave feminists challenged the traditionalist assumption that women's place is in the home, and shone a light on the various ways injustice manifested in the private sphere.

This is exemplified in the writing of Betty Friedan, whose *The Feminine Mystique* effectively launched the second-wave of feminism. Friedan argued that middle class women were suffering due to the hegemony of what she called the "mystique of feminine fulfillment," which narrowly prescribed for women the role of housewife-mother (1963, 14). Drawing from the humanistic psychology of Rogers and Maslow, Friedan maintained that what made the feminine mystique so insidious was that it prevented the modern woman from "realizing her true nature" (303). She wrote, "our culture does not permit women to accept or gratify their basic need to grow and fulfill their potentialities as human beings" (69). For feminists like Friedan, then, the moral traditionalism that was rampant in the suburbs of 1950s America was a political problem because it was stifling the self-realization of half the population. Accordingly, theirs was a "politics of authenticity" (Berman 1970), which resonated deeply with the romanticism of New Agers. Hence why during the 60s many women's religious affections "relocated to the New Age" (Brown 2007, 418).

Of course, the feminist attraction to the religion of the heart has longstanding roots. As religious studies scholar Rita Gross (1996, 35) informs us, a number of nineteenth century carrier movements of the religion of the heart such as Spiritualism, Devotionalism, Christian Science, and New Thought allowed women "greater participation and recognition than was available in mainline Protestant denominations." Not only were they more accepting of female membership, but their teachings explicitly valued women's experiences. Spiritualism, for instance, attracted a predominantly female following because it "elevated the importance of the 'feminine' qualities of passivity and receptivity" and endorsed rituals—for instance, the séance—that were to be practiced in "the domestic setting" (Tumber 2002, 33).

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[67] Indeed, this is also true of the Civil Rights movement, the New Age movement, the environmental movement, the gay liberation movement, and nearly all of the other social movements that emerged around this period. While they certainly contained elements that were hostile to liberalism, even in its romantic form, liberal democracies found ways to accommodate them. In short, these movements successfully *reformed* the liberal political order, they did not revolutionize it.

Devotionalism—often called "heart religion" because it "relied for evidence of grace on the strength of religious feeling"—did much the same thing (27). Women also flocked to Mary Eddy Baker's Christian Science teachings, in part, because it "imagined the divine through the prism of middle-class women's domestic sensibility" (45). And historian Catherine Tumber (2002) even argues that the rise of New Thought "reflected the ascendency of feminism" (9). Hence why Catherine Albanese (2007, 235) contends these metaphysical religions of the nineteenth century "valorize[d] the role of women."

However, it wasn't until the 60s that the alliance between the religion of the heart and feminism reached its apex. What made this possible were the wider social and institutional changes that occurred during this period. For instance, between 1964 and 1972 the Civil Rights Act, the Equal Rights Amendment, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Act were passed in the U.S., each of which served to advance the struggle for equal rights for women and other disenfranchised identity groups. Of course, these amendments were not passed without a struggle, but as Peter Clecak (1983, 183) notes, what matters is that they were "ratified in the court of public opinion." These legal changes led to a drastic increase in the number of women enrolling in higher education, holding positions of authority in society, and running for public office, not to mention increased public attention devoted to "women's issues" such as unequal employment opportunities, earnings discrimination, and inequitable divisions of household responsibility. Moreover, as the legal order was remade to reflect a romantic liberal social imaginary feminine ideals were similarly recrafted (Brown 2009, 176). And while young women increasingly rejected the traditionalist conceptions of piety championed in the churches, they simultaneously searched elsewhere for a viable religious alternative. In time, "the spirituality of the New Age emerged in the late twentieth century … as a new site of ideal femininity" (415).

The Sexual Revolution and Romantic-Expressivism

One of the most important legacies of the 60s is the sexual revolution it set off. This was supported by a range of technological innovations and social changes—contraception, the automobile, television, women entering the work force en masse (Illouz 1997, 57)—but the dramatic shift in sexual norms could not have occurred without a widespread acceptance of romantic expressivism. Reflecting upon this development Lawrence Friedman writes,

> The modern movement to decriminalize sexuality is much more than a reaction to the born-again prudery that flared up in the nineteenth century. It has a central place in the culture of personal choice. It is not merely a defensive tactic against the aggressive attacks of the moralists who want to stamp out sin or vice; the point is, above all, to achieve parity of *legitimacy*. (Friedman 1990, 154-155).

Indeed, the sexual revolution was fundamentally about challenging the status of deviance so long

attributed to those who diverged from traditional biblical sexual morality. It had many facets, but a core component was the movement for gay liberation, which challenged the norms of heterosexual propriety that had been taken for granted only years before. Gay liberationists channeled the romantic attack on "straight" society, decisively rejecting both the "Biblical threats of hell-fire" as well as the claim that homosexuality is an illness. For these activists, "a person should not struggle against desires and inclinations, she should not squash patterns of behavior which represent the core of her being, her actual self that demands fulfillment" (Friedman 1990, 156). McLeod further notes, gay liberationists "wanted to talk openly and without inhibitions about sex, and to affirm not only the joys of sex, but the advantages of multiple partners" (2007, 184). Although some gay liberationists framed their struggle in Marxist terms, most celebrated Mill's romantic liberal notion of "experiments in living." Finally, gay activists challenged traditionalist assumptions about the meaning of marriage, championing instead romantic notions of self-fulfillment and free love, ultimately leading to the legalization of same-sex marriage in a host of Western nations (Macedo 2015).

Of course, the sexual revolution was not merely about the fight for gay rights and freedoms. At its most basic, it targeted the boundary between private and public, thereby extending the legacy of the Women's liberation movement. Brown (2011, 191) explains, "It challenged the acceptance in the late 1950s that the state had the right to supervise, if not regulate, sexual behaviour." In this way, the sexual revolution was similarly predicated upon a politics of authenticity, demanding "radically liberal social reforms" in order to enable "individuals to express their authentic personalities" (Berman 1970, 221). That is, the sexual revolution was fundamentally romantic liberal in nature, concerned as much with personal authenticity as political empowerment.

Multiculturalism and the (Expressivist) Politics of Recognition

What political theorists call the "politics of recognition" partakes of expressivism as well; feminists and gay activists sought (and continue to seek) public recognition of their identities, aspiring not only to a legal system, but also a public culture, that offers their true selves equal respect and concern. This is a fundamental tenet of romantic liberalism, and it helps to illuminate another political development that is a byproduct of the romantic liberal uprising: multiculturalism.

Drawing from Hegel, Charles Taylor (1992) argues multiculturalism emerges from the human need to receive recognition of one's identity by others. In a similar vein, Francis Fukayama (1992, 135) argues it is ultimately the struggle for recognition that serves as "the primary motor of human history." Whether or not Fukayama is right about this, it is difficult to make sense of the dramatic changes in public policy regarding national identity, citizenship and immigration across Western nations since the 60s without reference to the demand for equal recognition by previously disenfranchised identity groups.

Writing of the ethnic revivals of the twentieth century, which spurred the spread of multicultural policies across the globe, beginning with Canada's adoption of an official policy of multiculturalism in 1971, Kymlicka (2003, 67, 19) argues "the ethnic revival is essentially a matter of self-identity and self-expression" and "accommodating ethnic and national differences is only part of a larger struggle to make a more tolerance and inclusive democracy." In other words, according to Kymlicka (2007, 20), "multiculturalism should be seen as an intrinsic part of a larger process of liberalization and democratization."[68] These processes were propelled, he argues, by the human rights revolutions—of which the Civil Rights, Women's and Gay liberation movements are examples—that challenged the ethnic, gender, and sexual hierarchies entrenched, since their inception, in the primary institutions of Western liberal democracies (88).[69]

One might argue that the delegitimation of these various social hierarchies belongs to a distinct social process—what we might call an equality revolution—altogether separate from the spread of a romantic liberal imaginary. While it may be true that increasing social and political equality and the widespread acceptance of romantic expressivism need not, and indeed have not, always coincided, I would argue these processes were deeply interdependent in the West during the 60s.

Prior to the 50s, liberal democracies granted far more freedom to some (able-bodied white Christian males) than others (non-Christians, women, blacks, indigenous peoples, and the disabled). Thus, we might say liberal democracies of this period betrayed their own political ideals, as they failed to treat their citizens equally. What allowed this, among other things, was the moral traditionalism and authoritative ethic regnant in these societies; not only did this ethic demand deference to authority but it also stringently enforced ascriptive statuses and social roles, which privileged WASP culture and its presumptive representatives. Accordingly, the moral traditionalism of the 50s coded those identity groups that conformed to the narrow cultural ideals of the period as more "civil" than others and therefore more worthy of public recognition and political power (Alexander 2006a). This serves to explain why the rise of a romantic liberal imaginary helped to propel the equality revolution.

First, by attacking the authoritative ethic and the institutions that supported it, the counterculture both loosened the grip of WASP culture on people's consciousness, as well as multiplied the number of

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[68] While it might be true, as Keith Banting and Will Kymlicka (2007) note, that the philosophical justifications for multiculturalism are many, ranging from the idea of a "right to culture" to a "precondition for individual autonomy," I am here less interested in debating which of these is most persuasive, and instead interested in explaining what allowed these widespread legal and social shifts to occur.

[69] According to Kymlicka (2007, 91), "In all three stages of this struggle against ethnic and racial hierarchy, what matters is not the change in international law *per se*, which has had little impact on most people's everyday lives. The real change has been in people's consciousness." I agree, and think this shift in consciousness has its roots in the 60s.

respectable, as opposed to feckless, cultural options.[70] As Clecak (1983, 218) observes, "the concept of normality was widened to encompass difference—racial and physical differences, differences in gender, mental and emotional differences, and differences in preferred ways of living." Second, as a result of the widespread acceptance of an expressivist conception of freedom, individuals became less defined by ascriptive social roles than by their inner lives. Thus, a shift in conceptions of freedom entailed a transformation in prevailing ideas of personhood and citizenship, which enabled a radical expansion in conceptions of *who is owed freedom*. Once again, Clecak captures the process aptly: "Instead of being ignored or going unnoticed, discrimination on grounds of membership in every arbitrary or cultural category was called to public attention. It was scrutinized, protested, and actively lobbied against in the political, bureaucratic, and judicial arenas" (186). Clecak concludes, "when taken together, the various categories of dissenting minorities add up to a clear majority of Americans who worked to widen and deepen the rights of persons in these decades" (187). And Lawrence Friedman similarly argues that the social movements, which propelled the rights revolutions in the West, all presupposed a romantic expressivist conception of the self:

> The sin of segregation … was its failure to allow full development of the souls of black children. The distinct melodies and nuances of expressive individualism echo clearly through the screen of legal language. The civil rights movement was only the beginning of a trend. Next came a new and revitalized women's movement, followed by the uprising of the 'sexual minorities' (notably, gays and lesbians), and by strong claims to benefits and power by a whole cluster of groups: the handicapped, the elderly, prisoners, students, immigrants and others. (Friedman 1999, 63)

In turn, while we might be able to distinguish the equality revolution from the rise of a romantic expressivist conception of freedom, in actuality the two processes were fundamentally interpenetrated.

The 1960s and its Aftermath

Just as New Agers challenged traditional religious assumptions regarding how one ought to worship or connect with the sacred, so too did environmentalists challenge traditional conceptions of the natural world, feminists challenge traditional conceptions of what it means to be a woman, and gay activists challenge traditional conceptions of acceptable sexuality. Of course, speaking in these terms belies the primary point I wish to make: that these were not entirely separate or distinct movements, but rather different aspects of the same romantic liberal revolt. In agreement, Maya Stolzenberg writes,

> Many of the most significant social transformations that have occurred over the last two centuries

[70] For more on the distinction between respectability and fecklessness see Jenkins 1999, Chapter 5.

> can be traced to the ascendance of a romanticist view of freedom and human psychology over the more traditionalist rationalist one. The most obvious examples would be the various radical and reformist movements that have aimed at redefining the terms of sex, gender, and family: the movements for women's liberation, sexual liberation, and reproductive freedom, the more recent movements for gay rights and gay marriage and still more radical visions of queer liberation, not to mention the seemingly more moderate but in fact no less revolutionary no-fault divorce movement of the 1970s – all of these adumbrated by earlier changes in marital and sexual practices, such as the shift away from the practice of arranged marriages and toward companionate marriage and marriage by choice. It is hard to conceive of any of these movements, of their aims and aspirations, let alone their successes, without the spread of romantic notions of self-expression, self-definition, and free love. (Stolzenberg 2009, 197-198)

Thus, in his study of the "spiritual" journeys of the baby boom generation Roof (1993, 68) comments on the "inner-directedness of the 1960s and 1970s and its great emphasis on the pursuit of the self as an ideal: through values such as self-fulfillment, self-acceptance, and the intrinsic benefits of experience itself." Similarly, Wuthnow (1998a, 148) contends the "1960s witnessed new thinking about the self, shaped by new experiences and opportunities but also reacting to the way the self had been described during the 1950s." What too few have acknowledged (and thus what I have stressed) is that the developments birthed in this period were animated by a distinctly romantic liberal social imaginary, which presupposes an romantic expressivist conception of the human condition, underwritten by an expressive ethic, and thereby interprets liberal principles and institutions through a romantic lens.

But what of today? Are these historical developments still relevant to us, fifty years on? No doubt it would be wrong to reduce the personality of twenty-first century liberal democracies to the transformations wrought during the 60s. Much has occurred in the last half-century that has not yet been accounted for. And yet I believe it is difficult to overstate the degree to which we in post-1960s liberal democracies are living in a world produced by the 60s and its aftermath. We can find support for this by examining our primary and secondary institutions, as I do in Chapter 7. Or we can simply survey the generation that came of age in its wake. In carrying out the latter we find that millennials are, to a striking extent, carrying forward the legacy of their parents—the countercultural baby boomers. Ideals and norms that were once considered radical in the heyday of the counterculture are largely taken for granted by today's young adults (see Hout and Fischer 2014). This helps to explain why, for instance, millennials are the most "socially progressive" (or rather romantic liberal) than any generation in history (Greenberg and Weber 2008; Winograd and Hais 2011). It also serves to explain why "spirituality" has become increasingly popular among the young (Houtman and Mascini 2002, 464; Heelas and Woodhead 2005; 110; Alper 2015). In turn—whether one likes it or not—the romantic liberal social imaginary birthed in the 60s lives on, in both tangible and intangible respects; it permeates our institutional spheres, our social

structures, and, as we have seen, our religious landscape. This is why I call the social order we in post-1960s liberal democracies inhabit *romantic liberal modernity*.

Conclusion

My genealogy in this chapter has largely remained at the level of philosophical ideas. I have said little of the institutional conditions that precipitated this mass romantic liberal revolt. We might therefore ask: what enabled an entire generation to adopt the romantic critique of society? And how did their proposed solution—to reconcile romanticism with liberal institutions—create the social conditions conducive to the flourishing of the religion of the heart? In the following chapter I offer a thoroughly institutional analysis of the 1960s, which re-narrates the historical account outlined above from a macro-sociological perspective. In so doing, I illuminate what occurred during this period at an institutional level, and how the developments set off in the 60s produced the institutional dynamics many young people in the early twenty-first century largely take for granted.

Chapter 7

Institutions as Moral Dramas: The Making of Romantic Liberal Modernity

> *[I]nstitutions are essentially and dialectically moral, and therefore open us to look critically at the logic of one institution from the standpoint of another. For, if 'institutions think,' as Mary Douglas puts it, what they think about is one another in terms of their own moral logics and metaphors.* (Madsen et al. 2002, xiii)

In the previous chapter I offered a genealogy of the rise of romantic liberalism. I argued the various cultural, social, and political upheavals of the 60s were animated by, and served to crystallize, the romantic liberal social imaginary which serves to legitimate the social order of post-1960s liberal democracies. This imaginary, however, did not emerge out of thin air, nor was it universally supported. As Mary Douglas (1986, 8), drawing from Durkheim, reminds us, "thinking depends on institutions." Indeed, while meaning systems and cultural structures require individuals for their propagation and reproduction, they ultimately depend on, and find their origins in, social institutions. In *The Good Society* Bellah et al. (1991, 40) explain, "Institutions form individuals by making possible or impossible certain ways of behaving and relating to others…. Each individual's possibilities depend on the opportunities opened up within the institutional contexts to which that person has access."

In turn, if we are to make sociological sense of the making of romantic liberal modernity, we first need to understand how the counterculture and its associated social movements challenged and reformed the primary institutional spheres of mainstream society. Thus in this chapter I retell the story I narrated in the preceding chapter, but from an institutionalist perspective, which conceives of modern societies as "interinstitutional system[s]" (Friedland and Alford 1991, 232), and institutions as situated moral dramas.[71] In so doing, I rehash insights garnered by the secularization paradigm, and synthesize these with a cultural sociological perspective of institutions. An institutionalist account, I argue, not only affords a more sociologically sensitive understanding of the 60s and its aftermath, but also serves to shed light on why the religion of the heart is best adapted to romantic liberal modernity.

Institutional Differentiation and Moral Diversity

Recall from Chapter 2 that the core thesis of the secularization paradigm is one of *institutional*

[71] I thank Steven Tipton for this formulation.

differentiation. According to Émile Durkheim ([1893] 2014), it is precisely this process—the result of the division of labour—that demarcates modernity as a distinctive period. Moreover, as Steven Tipton (2002, 31) notes, Durkheim considered it an essential sociological task to determine "how the division of labor in modern society carries over into the division of moral understanding in modern culture." Following this line of inquiry, cultural sociologists hold that with differentiation, as a result of the division of labour, modern individuals inhabit multiple institutional spheres, each of which are governed by divergent social norms, symbolic orders, and moral traditions. For instance, in the marketplace, individuals may be conceived as customers and producers; in a court of law, they may be conceived as autonomous actors imbued with certain inalienable rights; and in the family, they may be conceived as unique individuals holding special relationships of affection to one another.[72] Moreover, each moral tradition "relies on a given social institution's structural arrangements, practices, and relationships to frame the moral activity and character it articulates" (21). Finally, symbolic orders and moral traditions, by their very nature, are "imperial" (33). In other words, the nature of institutional differentiation is such that "the individual attempts to take the ethical outlook predominant in one sector of social life (whichever he is involved in and identified with) and to generalize it to the whole" (Tipton 1982, 279).[73] This is a crucial point, for it serves to illuminate how institutional transformation occurs: change is the result of moral clashes both within *and* between institutional spheres. These conflicts can lead to the wholesale replacement of one moral tradition with another, or the production of "moral hybrids," which combine two seemingly contradictory meaning systems (Tipton 2002, 33). Roger Friedland and Robert Alford (1991, 254) explain, "Individuals, groups, and organizations struggle to change social relations both within and between institutions. As they do so, they produce new truths, new models by which to understand themselves and their societies, as well as new forms of behavior and material practices." This insight remains critical for making sense of what occurred during, and in the wake of, the 60s.

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It is a sociological axiom that life in modern society is scattered across institutional fields. But differentiation produced by the division of labour has led many to speak of modern life as fragmented and alienating. This criticism has had diverse spokespeople. Weber echoed it when he described modernity as

[72] I write, "may" because moral logics are subject to contestation and change, which is precisely what occurred in the 1960s.

[73] For this reason, neo-institutionalists contend that in order to maintain the "differentiated unity" (Luhmann 1990, 409) that characterizes the modern institutional dynamic, the independence of each sphere much be safeguarded (see also Walzer 1983). I return to this important point in later chapters.

an "iron cage." And Marx similarly decried the forms of alienation experienced in capitalist modernity.[74] But ever since Rousseau this has been especially the cry of those who espouse a romantic expressivist conception of the human condition. These individuals have sensed in modernity a lack of wholeness, an inability to express their spontaneous impulses, and an inner fragmentation which mirrors that which exists in the structures of society. They have also sensed inside of themselves a false self, derived from society, and a true self, derived from God or Nature. Of course, as we saw in the previous chapter, this is precisely what spurred the 60s counterculture. The youthful romantics of the era lamented the disenchantment of the world—that is, the loss of mystery, the fragmentation of everyday life, and a nagging sense of meaninglessness—and they sought, in imperialist fashion, to remake the world in their image.

An institutionalist perspective urges that the power of this cultural criticism was, in fact, dependent upon a whole series of secondary institutions which emerged in and around this era: the demonstrations, sit-ins, rallies, protests, and marches, the music festivals (the birth of Rock N' Roll and the icons it supplied), the new academic disciplines, consumer culture, and more. Additionally, media outlets such as *Rolling Stone*, *Ramparts*, and *The Village Voice* "played important roles in defining the counterculture and propagating its spirit and its ideas" (Kimball 2000, 227). Indeed, each of these social institutions served to inscribe and naturalize the symbolic order and moral tradition of *expressive individualism*, and its attendant expressivist ethic. Thus, if we follow Bellah et al. (1991, 40) and think of institutions as "patterns of social activity that give shape to collective and individual experience," it becomes evident—however much it conflicts with the anti-institutional self-understanding of the counterculturalists themselves—that the moral uproar that emerged during this period, was only made possible by the formation of these countercultural institutions. That is, they offered an institutional/social base from which the counterculture could contest the symbolic orders and moral traditions that reigned in competing institutional spheres.

Moral Conflict Across Institutional Spheres

In *Getting Saved from the Sixties* Tipton (1982, 24) argues, "As a crisis of meaning and morality, the counterculture's causes [were] themselves chiefly cultural." In this section, I examine the way the counterculture, understood as a series of secondary institutions, mobilized an attack upon moral traditions regnant in rival institutional spheres, consolidating the crystallization of a romantic liberal imaginary, and reconstituting the religious sphere of liberal democracies in the process. Conceiving of institutions as

[74] Of course, Marx located the origins of alienation in capitalist relations rather than societal differentiation. But I think it plausible to suggest differentiation was a prerequisite of Marx's critique (see Sayer 1991, 62).

situated moral dramas serves to shed light on how the counterculture challenged, with varying degrees of success, the symbolic orders and moral vocabularies inscribed in the economic sphere, the legal-political sphere, and the private sphere of 50s society. Indeed, while the counterculture ultimately failed to remake society in its image, it nonetheless significantly transformed the institutional structures of liberal democracies.

The Romantic Challenge to the Economic Sphere's Utilitarian Ethic

One of the central institutional spheres in modernity is the capitalist market, or the economic sphere. Within this institutional field a symbolic order and moral tradition of *utilitarian individualism* reigns supreme. This is not to be confused with the philosophical tradition, utilitarianism. Rather, utilitarian individualism, and the *utilitarian ethic* it endorses, date back to the writings of Hobbes and Locke, who regard the individual as "the sole proprietor of his own person and his capacities or skills." On this view, human actions "are essentially understood as utilities or means toward the satisficing of egoistic ends [sic]" (Cortois 2019, 23). Accordingly, within the economic sphere individuals are conceived (and lauded) as *homo economicus*, or what C. B. Macpherson (1962) famously called "possessive individualists"—bent on maximizing their utility as efficiently as possible.

In the 60s, countercultural youth railed against the utilitarian ethic endemic to the market, which they argued encouraged a life of selfish maximization, and neglected the deeper dimensions of human life. This was evident, for instance, in the countercultural celebration of bohemian and alternative lifestyles, living off the land, and Timothy Leary's famous motto, "turn on, tune in, drop out." As Tipton (1982, 19) puts it, "the counterculture challenged utilitarian culture at the most fundamental level. It asked what in life possessed intrinsic value, and to what ends ought we act. Do ever more money and power add up to life's meaning, or do they obscure it?" Indeed, counterculturalists sought to pollute the life of rational-calculation by encoding it with terms such as "straight," "bourgeois," and "the Man." Thus, in romantic fashion, they mounted a direct challenge to the materialism and egoism they saw as inherent to the worlds of business, industry, and work.

Yet despite this attack upon the symbolic order of the marketplace, history evinces that the expressivism of the counterculture ultimately failed to overthrow it. For utilitarian individualism remains firmly anchored within the economic sphere of society, and has arguably expanded its influence since the 1960s as a result of the neoliberal economic policies established across the West (and beyond) in the 1980s. Nevertheless, this is not to say the countercultural attack had no impact. Indeed, in the aftermath of the 60s, the economic sphere—on both the production and consumption sides—has institutionalized something of a moral hybrid. As I explain in the following chapter, the counterculture's confrontation with the utilitarian ethic of the market ultimately produced what scholars call "new" or "soft" capitalism

(see Boltanski and Chiapello 2005; Heelas 2008; De Keere 2014), which combines, unevenly, the vocabularies of expressive and utilitarian individualism. In the wake of the 60s, the economic sphere was fundamentally altered.

The Romantic Challenge to the Legal-Political Sphere's Rationalist Ethic

Another central institutional sphere in modern liberal democratic societies is that of the state, or what I call the legal-political sphere. Within this sphere, *moral individualism* is the reigning moral tradition—the language of rationalist liberalism par excellence. Moral individualism emphasizes the moral equality of all persons, and the obligation to never treat others as mere means. It stresses our capacities for free will and rational deliberation. And as cultural sociologist Liza Cortois (2019, 28) points out, "Since the Declaration of Independence (1776) and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens (1789), moral individualism has acquired … a direct juridical translation."

Prior to the 60s, the moral individualism inscribed in the legal-political sphere of liberal democracies primarily privileged a *rationalist ethic* (although not comprehensively, as I discuss below). This ethic privileges "reason-giving debate and rational virtue" and "requires schooling in systematic knowledge" (Tipton 2002, 24). Moreover, as a symbolic order, rationalist moral individualism presumes, "the organizational structures of assemblies for disciplinary discussion and hierarchies of expertise" as well as "application of reasoned conclusions in policy and practice" (24).

Not surprisingly, the expressivism of the counterculture led its proponents to target the overly rationalized impersonality they alleged pervaded public and civic life in the 1950s; that is, they attacked the rationalist ethic that sponsored most modern legal and political institutions. Counterculturalists argued abstract rules and regulations, insensitive to personalities, relationships and circumstances, stifle individuality and alienate the "head" from the "heart." They also challenged the universalism presupposed by moral individualism, which emphasizes our rational faculties as opposed to our need for authentic self-expression. In short, they channeled the romantic critique of rational liberalism, charging modern bureaucratic life with repressing the subjective and the emotional.

With hindsight, we can see the hardcore romantics of the 60s failed in their task of overthrowing the moral individualism underlying the liberal order. As Cortois observes, moral individualism, in its rationalist mode, continues to pervade in a variety of institutional fields including higher education (especially science departments), law (especially in legislative and judicial functions), and governance (bureaucracy). In fact, moral individualism has emerged in the twenty-first century as something of a "globalized culture" that finds institutional supports and protections in international organizations such as the UN, European Union, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (Cortois 2019, 28). And as Jeffrey Alexander (2006a) demonstrates, the tradition of moral individualism remains firmly entrenched

in what he calls the "Civil Sphere" of democratic societies (albeit discursively framed differently across national contexts).

But the moral individualism inscribed in the legal-political sphere of the 50s was not limited to a rationalist mode. On the contrary, numerous laws were interpreted through the lens of an authoritative ethic and symbolic order, which, as we learned in the previous chapter, endorse the virtue of obedience, as well as legitimate "organizations structured by chains of command, in which those above issue orders and those below obey them" (Tipton 2002, 21). And recall, this ethic classifies individuals according to "ascriptive statuses and highly role-specific commands" that "separate and rank persons by age, sex, and seniority" (22, 23). For this reason, while liberal democratic states in the 50s inscribed the tradition of moral individualism in their Constitutions and Charters they nevertheless assumed it right and just to deny certain classes of persons the full scope of romantic liberal freedoms, while enforcing moral behaviour. Thus one cannot make sense of the panoply of legal reforms which occurred during and in the wake of the 60s—regarding both the "public life" issues of political and social inclusion of previously disenfranchised groups, and the "private life" issues of public obscenity, homosexuality, divorce, abortion, gambling, drinking, blasphemy, and more—without reference to the institutional transformations engendered by the legal-political sphere's encounter with the counterculture. In other words, from an institutionalist perspective, the romantic liberal legal revolution was ultimately the result of a clash between the counterculture's romantic expressivism and the authoritative ethic privileged in various corners of the 1950s legal-political sphere.

As we learned in the preceding chapter, this clash ultimately led to "a variety of legislative measures, executive orders, and legal decisions" which "enhanced the rights of persons to due process, to access to decisions affecting them, and to personal privacy" (Clecak 1983, 187). Moreover, this revolution was principally fuelled by a reinterpretation of the value of individual freedom; that is, justifications offered for liberal legal and political institutions and principles were, in many instances, reformulated to reflect a romantic expressivist understanding. Thus, writing in the 90s, Lawrence Friedman (1990, 36) remarked, "The central concepts of modern legal culture are choice, consent, freedom, and individual rights. These are old terms, but what they mean in the 1980s is startlingly different from what they meant to Jefferson or Locke." Indeed, it is just as likely today for rights discourses and legal principles to be framed and interpreted by judges and jurists within an expressivist register, which stresses the obstacles to authentic self-expression, as that of a rationalist one, which focuses on the intrinsic and equal worth of all human beings. This is a defining feature of romantic liberal modernity.

The private/public distinction is central to the liberal tradition. It is also, not coincidentally, central to the fact of institutional differentiation.[75] By "private sphere" I refer to the institutional sphere that is imperfectly captured by the notion of civil society—symbolically independent of the economic and legal-political spheres, at least in principle.[76] It includes the realms of the family, voluntary associations, and religious organizations. Importantly, this does not mean the private sphere is asocial or free of a shared symbolic order or moral tradition. By no means. As Cladis (2003, 18) explains, "The private … does not occur outside of social conventions, but occupies a set of conventions that constitute a somewhat distinctive realm."

Following Hugh McLeod, I argued in the previous chapter that the private sphere in the 1950s was governed by a pervasive and entrenched moral traditionalism. Though the institutional fields of the family, popular culture, and religion institutionalized distinct discourses, and though there certainly existed deviant social institutions, an authoritative ethic largely reigned supreme in private life. This meant, within the private sphere, social roles were strictly ascribed and enforced across and within institutional contexts, and there existed comparatively little room for personal choice or self-expression, as the symbolic order privileged tradition and community, not the individual. As Friedman (1990, 27) puts it, "It was a God-fearing, hard-working, disciplined, traditional self, as far as private life was concerned."

While the counterculture may have railed against the egoism of the marketplace, and the overly rationalized nature of civic and public life, its primary goal was to challenge the authoritative ethic and attendant traditionalism that informed the private sphere prior to the 60s. Counterculturalists did this by encoding "50s" private life as repressive, alienating, conformist, backwards, patriarchal, unjust, and ultimately unfree. Of course, the changes did not take place overnight. But, in time, the romantic expressivist assault successfully, and profoundly, transformed the symbolic order of the private sphere, replacing an authoritative ethic with an expressivist one.[77]

This naturally held massive implications for the religious sphere. Rhys Williams (2007, 48) informs us, "Religious language and meanings become entwined with culturally approved ways of

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[75] For an insightful discussion of the private/public distinction as it relates to religion see Casanova 1994.

[76] Though I recognize the economic sphere is often referred to colloquially as the "private sector," my conception of the private sphere excludes the world of the market.

[77] Importantly, this was a change that occurred "from below," thereby spurring changes "from above." Indeed, the reforms that occurred in the legal-political sphere, associated with the romantic liberal legal revolution, were ultimately responses to the moral reforms taking place in the private sphere. As Friedman (1990, 35) remarks, "The new variety of individualism stresses self-expression, that is, cultivating the inner human being, expanding the self, developing the special qualities and uniqueness of each person. The idea naturally seeps into legal culture as well."

thinking, acting, and being. Religion helps legitimate cultural forms and, in turn, becomes a legitimate mode of expression within a culture." Indeed, the close associations and affinities in the 50s between the moral tradition of biblical religion and the authoritative ethic that governed private life meant religious organizations were placed under intense scrutiny by counterculturalists. As a result, many 60s romantics considered "religion" utterly antithetical to their expressive individualism. Interestingly, it did not matter whether some religious denominations and spokespeople allied themselves with the counterculture, engaging in both critical self-reflection and political activism. There was sufficient religious opposition to the upheavals of the period that "religion" became a polluted term in romantic expressivist social contexts (Clecak 1983, 117). This is why we cannot make sense of the religious sphere of romantic liberal modernity without accounting for the wider romantic liberal revolt.

Secularization theorists contend that the 60s exacerbated the decline of religion. But armed with a broader conception of religion this story becomes suspect. Rather, what occurred was a *reconstitution* of the religious sphere itself. Prior to the sixties the religious sphere was comprised solely of those groups that explicitly labeled themselves "religious." But in the wake of the 60s, as expressive individualism rose to become the primary moral tradition of the private sphere, this no longer held true. Alongside the various secondary institutions associated with the broader counterculture, the New Age and Human Potential movements—its religious wings—produced their own social institutions: conferences, retreats, communes, research centres, not to mention best-selling books and magazines. These served to contest the tradition of biblical religion and its privileged authoritative ethic, granting increased authority and legitimacy to the expressivist religion of the heart. And in the process these movements served not only to *reconfigure* the religious sphere of liberal democracies, but to *expand* it as well, bringing into its jurisdiction social institutions, organizations, and groups that did not themselves identify as "religious." This was made possible due to the distinctive character of the religion of the heart, which enables its adherents to locate God or the superempirical potentially anywhere—in both "religious" and "secular" settings—and which affords religious bricolage of dizzying proportions. No doubt, the Charismatic Christian revivals of this period breathed new life into the congregational domain, creatively combining the language of biblical religion with an expressivist ethic. But the fact is much of the religious activity subsequent to the 60s has taken place outside of the churches. Thus, what occurred in the wake of the 60s was a *contraction* of the old religious sphere (as church religion declined), and its *expansion* into novel territory (as the religion of the heart spread), and this was ultimately the result of the counterculture's successful transformation of the private sphere.

The Religion of the Heart in Romantic Liberal Modernity

As a result of the counterculture's romantic challenge to the economic, legal-political, and most

importantly, the private sphere, it fundamentally altered the institutional dynamics of liberal democracies. Importantly, what began in the 60s has only intensified and expanded. In this section I sum up the multiple ways these institutional changes have progressively produced social and political conditions conducive to the spread of the religion of the heart. These fall into four categories: moral, political, epistemological, and economic. My argument is that the religion of the heart, since the sixties, has served as a dominant framework of religious meaning for romantic liberals, and that this is because the very institutional reforms that brought about the decline of Christendom simultaneously created conditions conducive to the flourishing of the religion of the heart.

1. Moral (Sacralization of Individual Liberty and the Rights Revolutions)

One way of summing up the period of time elapsed since the 60s is, as Francis Fukuyama (1999, 39) has put it, the "Worldwide Liberal Revolution." In the wake of the Cold War, Fukuyama triumphantly declared "the end of history," contending that liberal democracy had emerged victorious in the war of political ideologies and was unlikely to be unseated (47). Though highly controversial, and in hindsight quite premature, Fukuyama was describing a real phenomenon. In the wake of the 60s, what occurred was no less than a liberal democratic revolution, which took a distinctive shape in the West—which I have characterized as the rise of romantic liberalism. As we have seen, the replacement of an authoritative ethic with an expressivist one in the private sphere threw into doubt the interpretation of biblical religion which, in many instances, served to legitimate the former. This was primarily a moral shift, but one that was crucial for eroding the authority of "religion" for many 60s youth (Hout and Fischer 2014, 433).

But more than this, the shift to romantic liberalism expanded the legal-political sphere to incorporate a wide range of previously disenfranchised identities, and transformed the boundaries of the private and public in order to enable these individuals more freedom and self-determination (Clecak 1983, 24). Michael Ignatieff (2007) calls this process the rights revolution. He argues, "The rights revolution took off in the 1960s in all industrialized countries, and it is still running its course. Just think for a minute about how much rights talk there is out there: women's rights, rights of gays and lesbians, aboriginal rights, children's rights, language rights, and constitutional rights" (Ignatieff 2007, 1). And noting the degree to which the rights revolutions were propelled by a romantic liberalism, Clecak (1983, 185) remarks, "During these years prevailing ideas of personhood changed, largely as a consequence of political and cultural dissent launched in the sixties. A neo-Romantic concept of the essential equality of persons spread through many regions of society." As a result of this shift, we can speak confidently of the degree to which "rights-consciousness" has become "embedded in our cultures in the Atlantic world" (Taylor 2007, 486).

The rights revolution made it such that the religion of the heart—which is, in effect, the religious

analog of expressive individualism—would be considered a viable religious alternative, especially among romantic liberals. For one, the religion of the heart, in romantic liberal fashion, sacralizes individual liberty, and authorizes a self-ethic. As a result, it places a premium on the values of tolerance, self-expression, and self-realization. This makes it especially well adapted to the hyper-diverse character of liberal democracies—especially in urban areas. Political scientist Ronald Inglehart (1977) has spoken of a value shift in Western societies from "materialism" to "postmaterialism," which he traces back to the 60s. Of course, this shift is not universal, but rather has a distinct class character. Expressive individualism—and therefore the religion of the heart—are predominant among the middle classes, and, as I discuss in the next chapter, find support in some institutional fields more than others. However, given that the middle class reflects the "part of society that dominates its culture and defines the moral aspirations of the rest" (Madsen 2002, 109), the popularity of expressive individualism among this cohort is not insignificant. Thus, remarking on the success of the religion of the heart in the twenty-first century West, Anneke van Otterloo et al. (2012, 247) write, "It is this new cultural climate – in which individual liberty had become more and conformity to external authority less important – that damaged the meaning-providing potential of Christianity and made people susceptible to … 'inner spirituality'." Finally, an expressivist ethic is central to what Heelas and Woodhead (2005, 81) call "subjective wellbeing culture," the "most widespread cultural expression" in the liberal democratic West. In short, the religion of the heart flourishes in romantic liberal modernity because "there are many features of our civilization that foster it" (Campbell 1978, 152).

2. Political (Romantic Liberalization and Privatization)

The secularization paradigm holds that with institutional differentiation and the shift to modernity, the religious sphere becomes one institutional field, or "sub-system of society," among others (Dobbelaere 1984). Following this line of thought, I have argued the religious sphere in modernity belongs primarily (although not entirely) to the private sphere, or the realm of civil society. As a result, I agree with secularization theorists that religion no longer serves to legitimate the entire social order since, as we have seen, distinct symbolic orders and moral traditions govern different institutional spheres. Of course, this is not to suggest that religion can no longer serve important social functions. But it does mean that the scope of religious authority in modernity is reduced (Fenn 1972; Chaves 1994).

Here we are once again presented with the close relationship between the liberal distinction between private/public and the fact of institutional differentiation. Religion belongs to the private sphere—is "privatized"—insofar as it does not receive explicit legitimation in the primary institutional spheres of society (e.g. the economic or legal-political spheres). Of course, not all religious groups accept this privatized status. For instance, José Casanova (1994) has charted the emergence of various religious

movements that seek to contest the structural boundaries separating institutional spheres in modernity, as well as the liberal tradition that legitimates them. Indeed, it is useful to keep this in mind when considering the elective affinity between romantic liberalism, conceived as a political philosophy and social order, and the religion of the heart.

Romantic liberalism, understood as a political theory, offers romantic justifications for liberal principles and institutions. That is, romantic liberals seek to protect individuals from the potential despotism of custom and tradition, allowing them to engage in their own religious quests, or to find and express their true selves. They do so primarily by reformulating the private/public settlement. Because romantic liberals acknowledge the romantic yearnings of citizens to express their true selves, however they understand this, they conceive of the private sphere (and therefore the religious sphere) as a site of expressivist self-development. On this view, the private sphere is the personal sphere, referring to the space within which one ought to have the freedom to examine and express oneself in whatever way one chooses, so long as one does not infringe on another's right to do so. At the same time, for romantic liberals, religious convictions must remain confined to the private sphere, so as to prevent unresolvable conflicts within the public sphere. This division is predicated on a desire for institutional/moral equilibrium: romantic liberals view the private sphere as a necessary antidote to the disciplinary character of civic or public life, and the egoistic character of life in the market. While modern individuals may find their economic lives filled with egoistic competition and instrumental rationality, or their public lives stifled by bureaucracy and the demand for rational impartiality, both of which impede their creative impulses, they are afforded a private space within which to realize their true selves.[78] Or put in more institutionalist terms: romantic liberals believe the moral individualism inscribed in the legal-political sphere, and the utilitarian individualism inscribed in the economic sphere, needs to be counterbalanced by an expressive individualism in private life.

Casanova (1994, 58) distinguishes between "public civil religions" and "private domestic cults." The religion of the heart is the latter—an essentially *private religion*. By this I mean that adherents of the religion of the heart do not seek to contest its privatized nature: they accept the romantic liberal private/public settlement, and agree that religion ought to be "consigned to the private sphere—the sphere of the voluntary group, the family, or the individual" (Cladis 2003, xxxi). Linda Woodhead (2013, 47-48) makes this clear when she suggests that "spirituality" "has a particularly strong tie to personal life," understood as the "sphere of intimate relationships," and that its "thrust lies in its emotional, moral and

[78] That is, for romantic liberals, "romantic inclinations and aversions are protected by the right to privacy, by being left alone" (Rosenblum 1987, 210).

motivational aspects rather than in its orientation to a set of concrete political goals." Indeed, the religion of the heart does not orient its adherents, as public civil religions do, to politically mobilize against rival religious or secular movements, nor to institutionalize a political party. Rather, the religion of the heart aims to enchant private life, to emancipate the spirit from the arid legalism and secular rationality of modern life, and liberate the individual from whatever its adherents perceive to be an impediment to realizing their true selves—be it moral traditions, social expectations, or civic duties.

The elective affinities between romantic liberalism and the religion of the heart should now be obvious: romantic liberalism, as a political theory, offers philosophical justification for what is central to the religion of the heart—self-realization and the enchantment of private (or personal) life. Additionally, romantic liberals propose a private/public settlement that harmonizes well with the effectively private character and ambitions of the religion of the heart. And finally, romantic liberal modernity, understood as a social order, provides the religion of the heart with vital legal protections and substantial institutional support (as I demonstrate in the following chapter).

3. Epistemological (Pluralism and Subjectivization)

The shift to romantic liberal modernity produced not only religious pluralism but pluralism of manifold kinds. For instance, immigration policies enacted in the 1970s began to dramatically increase the number of foreign-born residents and citizens in liberal democracies (Williams 2007, 44; Beyer 2013, 41). As a result, most Western nations are today multi-cultural and ethnically pluralistic to historically unprecedented degrees (Kymlicka 2007). These demographic changes dovetailed with the countercultural demand for recognition, thereby animating official multicultural policies that endorsed forms of integration more sensitive to immigrants' cultural identities, as opposed to a strict accommodationism. Thus it is largely due to the shift from rational to romantic liberalism that, as sociologist Peter Beyer (2013, 5) puts it, "Concepts like diversity, pluralism, multiculturalism, accommodation, integration, tolerance, and inclusion have … become constants in Canadian public debates and official policy." Of course, this also remains true of most other liberal democracies (Franck 1999). Furthermore, increased cultural and ethnic pluralism has, in tandem with a widespread acceptance of the romantic liberal ideals of tolerance and self-expression, led to more inter-faith and mixed-race marriages, making cultural hybridity more and more the norm rather than the exception. In short, the 60s kicked off dual-processes of romantic liberalization and mass migration that have given new meaning to the fact of pluralism.

We have already noted how the high value placed on tolerance by the religion of the heart makes it well adapted to life in post-1960s liberal democracies. As Colin Campbell (1978, 154) puts it, "The increasingly pluralistic character of modern society, with its many and diverse ethnic and cultural groups has made the acceptance of toleration a necessary feature of social and political life." But the fact of

pluralism becomes especially relevant in light of the claim, advanced by secularization theorists, that pluralism leads to religious decline. Recall that Peter Berger once argued that modernity pluralizes institutions and plausibility structures, forcing religious worldviews to compete with one another, thereby engendering religious decline. Similarly, Taylor (2007, 718) speaks of how the late modern world "fragilizes" belief-systems inasmuch as it relatives them. However, these perspectives presuppose a religion with a rationalist or doctrinal epistemology. By contrast, there are good sociological reasons to think the experiential epistemology, central to the religion of the heart, is well suited to the extreme pluralism of romantic liberal modernity.

Ironically, Berger provides us with the theoretical framework to make sense of this, for he observed that in pluralizing institutions and plausibility structures modernity simultaneously forces individuals to look *within* for epistemic authority: "modernization and subjectivization are cognate processes" (Berger 1979, 20). Moreover, due to its experiential epistemology, the religion of the heart is less susceptible to rational or skeptical critique than those religious forms that espouse rationalist or doctrinal epistemologies. In fact, Campbell (1978, 152) has even suggested that this religious tradition rides on the back of humanist and secular criticisms of established religion, turning such attacks "to its own advantage." In agreement, cultural sociologists Dick Houtman and Stef Aupers (2010, 11) argue the widespread attraction to "spirituality" reflects a "psychological adaptation to a massively rationalized world." They conclude: "The disenchantment of the world can hence hardly result in anything else than the construction of more 'modernity-proof' worldviews that are as such less susceptible to disenchantment." This helps to explain why the religion of the heart is most popular among the highly educated, or those most familiar with the rationalist ethic and empiricist cultures that pervade in academic institutional contexts. Accordingly, the pluralism and rationalism characteristic of romantic liberal modernity may well be conducive to the experiential epistemology at the core of the religion of the heart, which locates the grounds of truth within individual experience.

4. Economic (Neoliberalization)

Of course, none of the above was possible without the policies of global economic liberalization established over the past half-century; and in speaking of these changes we need not restrict our focus to the liberal democratic West. As Fukuyama observed, while political liberalism may not have found much traction (in the sense of being enshrined in legal and political institutions) beyond the West, economic liberalism—in the form of market institutions, or capitalism—certainly has. When he wrote of the "larger pattern that is emerging in world history," Fukuyama had in mind the spread of capitalist institutions across the globe (1999, 45). Moreover, there are good reasons to think the cultural, social, and even political changes outlined above would not have occurred without these sweeping economic reforms. For

instance, Ignatieff (2007, 92) observes that the "rights revolution of the 1960s" was "the product of the most sustained period of affluence in the history of the developed world." Similarly, it was this rise in affluence that fuelled increased migration (McLeod 2007, 119). And all of this occurred only because technological innovations made possible by industry produced new modes of telecommunication, transportation, and financial exchange that set in motion what we today call "globalization" (Friedman 2005). Indeed, more than anything else, it is capitalism that has "connected" the nations of the world, creating the sense (certainly not felt by everyone) that we live in a "global village." Furthermore, these processes were extremely intensified with the move towards increased economic liberalization and privatization, advanced by the Thatcher and Reagan administrations in the 80s—which many today refer to as neoliberalism.

From an institutionalist perspective, neoliberalism reflects the imperialism of the symbolic order and moral tradition of the economic sphere—utilitarian individualism is adopted and applied by neoliberal actors without any regard for institutional boundaries or competing moral traditions (Brown 2015). As Jean Comaroff (2009, 28) puts it, "If it means anything at all as a creed, neo-liberalism centers on the effort to extend market values to all domains of social action." Thus, neoliberal policies seek to remake the world in the image of the market: they dissolve barriers to trade between nations, and give unprecedented freedom to corporations, while at the same time rolling back the social and economic protections—rooted in a tradition of moral individualism—afforded by the welfare state. David Harvey (2005, 76) writes of the consequences of neoliberal reforms: "lower wages, increasing job insecurity, and in many instances loss of benefits and of job protections. Such trends are readily discernible in all states that have taken the neoliberal road."

Neoliberal policies, truly global in their scale and impact, have produced a twenty-first century that is characterized by fundamental polarities and asymmetries. For instance, while the world economy has grown exponentially since the 1980s, the distributions of wealth both across and within nations are radically uneven (Picketty 2013). In other words, neoliberalism has produced a few big economic winners and a lot of big economic losers (Stiglitz 2015). Finally, in giving new meaning to Joseph Schumpeter's ([1942] 2008) phrase, "creative destruction," neoliberal policies have sped up the rate of social change and technological innovation, leading to severe disruption of individuals' lives both in the developed and developing worlds. As a result, re-skilling, part-time contract work, and economic precarity have become the norm for many, as have economic migration and displacement produced by natural catastrophes.

A critical question in the academic literature is to what degree the religion of the heart can be understood as an ally to neoliberalism. I leave it until later chapters to examine this question. But what cannot be denied is that, since the 1980s, they have been historically linked to one another.

Conclusion

We should now be able to understand why the religion of the heart flourishes in romantic liberal modernity. For in light of its romantic expressivism (popularized by the counterculture of the 60s), its sacralization of individual liberty (in line with the rights revolutions), its experiential epistemology (adaptable to pluralism), and the way it invests private life with cosmic meaning it should be quite clear why I call the religion of the heart *the spirit of romantic liberalism*.

If my argument is correct, while the religion of the heart may not legitimate the *entire* social order, it nevertheless serves a critical social function. For unlike radical romanticism, today's religion of the heart does not seek to disrupt or alter the basic structures of the romantic liberal order, nor does it incite revolutionary impulses. Rather, by enabling the romantic liberal to locate herself within a horizon of ultimate meaning, whilst circumscribing her expressivist ambitions to the private sphere, the religion of the heart ensures the stability and survival of romantic liberal modernity.

Still, it remains to be explained how and where the religion of the heart finds institutional support in the twenty-first century. I argued above that as the counterculture successfully transformed the private sphere in the 60s, so too was the religious sphere reconstituted. The changes have taken time, but half a century later the outcome is clear. What originated as relatively marginal secondary institutions in time blossomed into extensive institutional fields and networks, whose impacts have been seismic and sweeping. Indeed, in the twenty-first century the term "counterculture" is a misnomer, as the moral tradition of expressive individualism has risen to become the *lingua franca* of not only the private sphere, but also a number of primary institutions. As a result, there exists an extensive institutional order in twenty-first century liberal democracies that lends support, in both direct and indirect ways, to the religion of the heart. I call this the *romantic liberal institutional order*, and I argue it constitutes the religious sphere of romantic liberal modernity. Much like the New Age, Human Potential, and Charismatic Movements did in the 60s, these various institutional fields serve as plausibility structures for today's religion of the heart. That is, they make possible the re-enchantment of the world, not by removing the fragmentary and alienating dimensions of modern life, but by offering those with romantic needs an outlet for them.

Chapter 8

Mapping the Romantic Liberal Institutional Order

> *[W]hat we think of as spiritual is actively produced within medical, religious, and arts institutions, among others. It is not unorganized or disorganized, but rather organized in different ways, within and adjacent to a variety of religious and secular institutional fields that inflect and shape various spiritual practices.* (Bender 2010, 23)

The 60s set off a series of social upheavals which fundamentally altered the social order of liberal democracies. As a result, the religious sphere of today is not what it once was. No longer is religion isolated to the congregational domain, or confined to explicitly "religious" spaces.[79] With the infiltration of expressive individualism and an expressivist ethic into an array of secondary and primary institutions, the religion of the heart today receives implicit institutional support in both "religious" and "secular" institutional fields. In this chapter I shift my focus from the recent past to the present. I draw from the existing literature on "spirituality," as well as my own empirical research, in order to map the romantic liberal institutional order—that is, the seven institutional fields that collectively constitute the religious sphere of romantic liberal modernity. These include: (1) the holistic milieu, (2) the Charismatic wing of the congregational domain, (3) popular culture and entertainment media institutions, (4) arts institutions, (5) healthcare institutions, (6) educational institutions, and (7) certain dimensions of the economic sphere. Collectively, these secondary and primary institutions give life to the religion of the heart, serving as plausibility structures as well as sites of socialization.[80]

After charting the nature of this institutional order, I then discuss the social pathways by which individuals in romantic liberal modernity become socialized to internalize the religion of the heart. I have argued that the religion of the heart can be thought of as the religion of preference among romantic liberals. Importantly, not all romantic liberals are "spiritual," which is to say, they do not all endorse or

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[79] By "congregational domain" I refer to the whole panoply of organizations and groups (Christian and otherwise) which self-identify as "religious" (see Heelas and Woodhead 2005).

[80] I am not suggesting these institutional fields are inherently religious, such that individuals cannot participate in them for nonreligious reasons. I recognize that there are many who actively participate in these institutional contexts and yet do not subscribe to the religion of the heart. My point is simply that, given the expressivist ethic inscribed in each of these fields, they are *capable* of functioning as plausibility structures for the religion of the heart. In turn, the analysis offered in this chapter is best thought of as concerned with the supply-side of today's religious sphere.

subscribe to this cultural structure in one discursive form or another.[81] So we need to better understand why romantic liberals in romantic liberal modernity embrace the religion of the heart when, in fact, they do, as well as what these social pathways look like.

While it remains the case that any one of these seven institutional fields can serve to expose individuals to discourses of "spirituality," my empirical research suggests the primary sites of socialization are the holistic milieu and the Charismatic wings of the congregational domain. Indeed, it is for this reason that Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead (2005, 13) refer to these institutional fields as the "heartlands of religion and spirituality." Accordingly, I restrict my analysis of social pathways to these two domains, drawing from my empirical data in order to shed light on the personal and social dynamics that lead individuals to become interested in the religion of the heart.

1. The Holistic Milieu

While some commentators contend the religious ferment of the 60s fizzled out by the 1980s, the reality is rather different. Though it took decades to come to fruition, the counterculture and its religious wings eventually gave birth to a vast associational territory, which comprises a range of services and activities where an expressivist ethic is naturalized and "spiritual" discourses are pervasive. In *The Spiritual Revolution* Heelas and Woodhead (2005, 13) call this network of secondary institutions the "holistic milieu," and it includes: yoga studios, meditation groups and retreats, Twelve Step meetings, aromatherapy and acupuncture clinics, wellness workshops, and life-coaching seminars, among other spaces where subjective-life is catered to explicitly. Moreover, the holistic milieu also comprises the "Mind, Body, Spirit" sections in bookstores, as well as the wide array of newspaper articles, magazines, online blogs, and social media pages that discuss "spirituality." Historian Matthew Hedstrom (2012) observes that book culture has been pivotal to the spread of "spirituality" since the nineteenth century. This trend has far from abated. Nearly all of my SBNR informants had participated in the holistic milieu, either by means of engaging in one or more of these activities, or reading relevant literatures (or both).

Organizationally, the holistic milieu holds clear resemblances to what Colin Campbell once called the "cultic milieu," which he argued was becoming, in the wake of the 60s, ever more important for understanding the form and shape of religion in the West. Campbell described the cultic milieu as the "cultural underground of society" which is kept alive "by the magazines, periodicals, books, pamphlets, lectures, demonstrations and informal meetings through which its beliefs and practices are discussed and disseminated." He also contended that because of its inclusive and open nature, "individuals who 'enter' the cultic milieu at any one point frequently travel rapidly through a wide variety of movements and

[81] I thank Dick Houtman for helping me to clarify my thoughts on this issue.

beliefs and by so doing constitute yet another unifying force" ([1972] 2002, 15). Campbell was well aware of the implications the romantic liberal revolt would have for the religious sphere of modern societies, and so rightly predicted that it would gradually come to resemble ever more the cultic milieu. Heelas and Woodhead's analysis in *The Spiritual Revolution*, along with my own empirical investigations, make clear that Campbell was correct (see also Partridge 2004).

2. The Charismatic Wing of the Congregational Domain

While the "spiritual but not religious" moniker might be most prevalent in the holistic milieu, it would be mistaken to think the religion of the heart does not find institutional support elsewhere. This cultural structure is, in fact, institutionalized across a variety of institutional fields. Of course, each of these fields sponsors a distinct discursive iteration, not to mention embeds it within its own set of norms, practices, and rituals. But this should not distract us from noting the cultural similarities across these various institutional contexts, allowing them to serve as plausibility structures for today's religion of the heart.

For instance, we find the religion of the heart in a Charismatic Christian form in the congregational domain, the holistic milieu's competing associational territory (Heelas and Woodhead 2005, 13). Of course, secularization theorists measure religious trends according to the degree to which the congregational domain diminishes in membership and moral authority, and for this reason diagnose modernity as corrosive of religion. Yet, as we have seen, while the congregational domain has certainly suffered setbacks in recent years, certain pockets of it are booming. These are those religious denominations, which belong to, or share affinities with, the Charismatic movement: notably, Pentecostalism, neo-Pentecostalism, prosperity theology, and the nondenominational megachurches. Of these "congregations of experiential difference," Heelas and Woodhead report that they "give explicit attention to individual selves and their feelings, fears, desires, and hopes" (18). "The message is that God is to be known not only by way of external conformity, but in deep inner experience and transformation of a highly holistic nature – in which body, mind, and emotions and spirit are all involved" (63). Indeed, since the 60s, as expressive individualism has risen to become the primary moral tradition of private life, Charismatic Christianity has flourished. Thus, even while much of the congregational domain remains hostile to the religion of the heart, it has nevertheless found traction among Christians via the Charismatic movement. In fact, I believe the holistic milieu and the Charismatic wings of the congregational domain are the chief sources of socialization as regards the religion of the heart.

3. Popular Culture and Entertainment Media Institutions

Lynn Schofield Clark (2007, 9) remarks, "popular culture expresses the zeitgeist of an era, speaking to deep-seated beliefs that are consistent with what we believe are the best qualities of our collective

society." Similarly, Gordon Lynch (2012, 89) argues, "In late modern societies, public media are the primary institutional structure through which forms of the sacred are experienced, reproduced, and contested." Only recently have scholars begun to pay attention to the way popular culture and entertainment media institutions serve as sites of religious socialization. This is most odd given the seminal role music and popular culture played in giving voice to the romantic expressivism of the 1960s counterculture. Not to mention, as Houtman (2015) reminds us, the way New Age discourse was embraced by celebrities of the time.

Picking up on these insights, Anneke van Otterloo et al. (2012, 254) ask, "Could it be … that precisely the powerful modern institutions of market and media now play major roles in socializing young people into this type of spirituality, or at least priming them for it?" Indeed, it can. The religion of the heart in its various forms is often disseminated today via popular films, television, video games, and music. For instance, many Disney films endorse an expressivist conception of the self and a romantic principle of originality. These films also tend to depict traditionalism as backward, and valorize the nonconformist misfit, thereby naturalizing romantic liberal ideals (Watts 2018a, 15). Moreover, as a number of scholars have shown, "spiritual" themes can be found in a wide variety of popular films, television shows, and video games (Shimazono 1999; Partridge 2006; Houtman and Aupers 2010; Erb 2014; Kaler 2018). And talk of "spirituality," "personal growth," and "self-development" has become a staple of daytime talk shows—especially those with a therapeutic bent like those of Dr. Phil or Oprah Winfrey (Travis 2007, Lofton 2011). Finally, an expressivist ethic remains central to popular music today.[82] Hence, Giles Beck and Gordon Beck (2009, 352) contend, "the most fruitful places to look for the cultural transmission of alternative spiritual identities and ideologies among younger adults is popular culture."

Let me be clear: in claiming that the religion of the heart is supported by the institutional fields of popular culture and entertainment media I am not suggesting that individuals who consume these materials are inevitably socialized to internalize it. Rather, in naturalizing the expressivism at the core of the religion of the heart these cultural materials can function in one of two ways: they either serve to prime individuals, making them more receptive to the religion of the heart, or, in the case of those

[82] Popular songs that champion the an expressivist ethic in one form or another include: (Pop) "I Don't Want to Be" by Gavin DeGraw, "Hair" by Lady Gaga, "Complicated" by Avril Lavigne, "Wild Things" by Alessia Cara, "Love Myself" by Hailee Steinfeld, "Do My Thang" by Miley Cyrus; (Country) "What Do Ya Think About That" by Montgomery Gentry, "All Kinds of Kinds" by Miranda Lambert, "Follow Your Arrow" by Kacey Musgraves, "Invisible" by Hunter Hayes; (Rock) "Black Sheep" by Gin Wigmore, "Be Yourself" by Audioslave, "Fat Lip" by Sum 41, "We Weren't Born to Follow" by Bon Jovi; (Alternative) "Ants Go Marching" by Dave Matthews Band, "Let Me Be Myself" by 3 Doors Down; (R&B and Hip-Hop) "A Beautiful Exit" by Miguel, "Always Knew" by Lecrae, "Get Your Freak On" by Missy Elliott, "Take Me As I Am" by Mary J. Blige, and no doubt many more.

consumers who are already invested in its cultural structure, these materials can serve as plausibility structures, reinforcing their commitment to it.

4. Arts Institutions

Romantics have always considered the arts to be one of the primary channels by which one connects with the divine or the superempirical (Campbell 1987, 226). And indeed, in the 60s it was commonplace for New Agers to champion the religious significance of art. This explains why, according to a large portion of my informants, the arts are the most "spiritual" of professions.[83] Similarly, based on her research with "metaphysicals" in Cambridge, Massachusetts, sociologist of religion Courtney Bender (2010, 38) observes, "almost all took for granted the self-evident link between spirituality, inspiration, and artistic, creative experience." For these heirs to the romantics art is the means by which one both discovers one's true self and expresses it. Through creating music, literature, or fine art, one gives external form to the uniqueness that lies within. Thus, a young SBNR theatre practitioner proclaimed: "If you're creating something that pulls from deep inside you, and you're like 'this is important', I think that's a very spiritual act."

In *Creative Spirituality: The Way of the Artist* Robert Wuthnow notes, "Artistic expressions of spirituality correspond especially well with this current interest in the experiential aspects of spirituality" (2001, 22). Indeed, this is why a substantial portion of my informants were either engaged in artistic practices, or aspired to be. The religion of the heart, in all its discursive iterations, valorizes the artistic ideal of the creative genius who, in mining their inner depths, creates beautiful works of art, and thereby enchants the world.

Of course, it would wrong to suggest all arts institutions are "spiritual" in the sense that they legitimate the religion of the heart equally. Some artistic milieus are more amenable to "spirituality" than others. However, as Bender (2010, 41) observed in her fieldwork, "distinctions between spiritual and nonspiritual artists are not always distinct, as 'secular' arts organizations in Cambridge also include and support artists who evoke spiritual rationales and discourses to explain their endeavors." Thus, as with popular culture, it is very difficult to definitively measure the extent to which a specific arts institution functions as a site of socialization for the religion of the heart because while some artists may conceive of their practice in terms antithetical to its cultural structure, others might be unable to make sense of their practice without it.

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[83] There is a growing academic literature exploring the relevance of "spirituality" to artistic practice (e.g. Tacey 2002; Gradle 2007; Williamson 2010; Wexler 2012).

5. Healthcare Institutions

"Healing is, I think, a very very important part of spirituality." This statement, made by an SBNR graduate student, lends credence to Taylor's (2007, 507) suggestion that "the search for spiritual wholeness is often closely related to the search for health." Indeed, across the board my informants affirmed that "spirituality" was closely related to both mental and physical health. As historian Amanda Porterfield (2001, 195) aptly puts it, "wellness itself has taken on spiritual dimensions."

Prior to the 60s, the institutional sphere of medicine and healthcare largely assumed a rationalistic ethic, while the dominant medical paradigm presupposed mind-body dualism. As a result, diseases and their causes were assumed to be located strictly within the body, and a physical reductionism, which excluded social, psychological, and behavioural dimensions of illness, remained dominant (McGuire 2008, 134-136). Counterculturalists vehemently attacked this paradigm. Instead, they endorsed the holistic assumptions of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) in one or other of its many forms: homeopathy, hydrotherapy, naturopathy, aromatherapy, osteopathy, biofeedback, and reflexology. While these alternative approaches—each of which bears historical and cultural affinities to the religion of the heart—remained relatively marginal in the 1980s, by the turn of the century a prominent religious studies scholar could confidently declare: "we are now seeing a large-scale reemergence of holistic ideas about health and illness" (Bowman 1999, 183).

In fact, the label "alternative medicine" has become something of a misnomer. For, in recent years, CAM has moved from the institutional margins into the primary healthcare institutions (Heelas and Woodhead 2005, 72; Campbell 2007, 97; Heelas 2008, 67). Indeed, as I remarked in Chapter 2, there is a burgeoning academic literature within the study *for* spirituality devoted to incorporating "spirituality" into healthcare contexts. And most intriguing is that CAM is not merely popular amongst counterculturalists and their progeny, but finds increasing traction among evangelical Christians (Brown 2014, 61; Yi and Silver 2015, 598).

Of course, not all sectors of healthcare are equally welcoming of "spirituality" (see Grant et al. 2004). In highly rationalized or bureaucratized spaces, with little to no opportunity for human contact or self-expression, the religion of the heart will likely find little institutional support. But with the post-1960s shift to "person-centered" and "caring-focused" medicine has come mounting opportunities for "spirituality" to find traction in healthcare institutions (Baldacchino 2017). Thus, Heelas and Woodhead (2005) found those involved in the holistic milieu populated healthcare institutions in large numbers: as psychiatric nurses, social workers, nurses, and care workers.

However, the health profession that was said to have the most "spiritual" significance, according to my informants, was psychotherapy. Indeed, nearly all of them saw talk therapy as "spiritual" in nature. For instance, one SBNR undergraduate student explained, "I think it's spiritual because I'm thinking

about the way I act, and whether I should act that way, and what's made me the person I am. I think that's all spiritual activity." Similarly, an SBNR secondary teacher asserted, "That would be the perfect world: if everybody was just like, 'I'm going to go do a whole bunch of therapy and fix all of my inner problems, and be conscious of how they're affecting the way I interact.' That is what spirituality is about."

Of course, psychotherapy's emphasis on private life and its methodological individualism harmonize well with the religion of the heart, for both presuppose a conception of psychological health that is deeply informed by romantic liberal norms (Alexander 2013, 145). At the same time, not all psychotherapy legitimates the religion of the heart. But as I mentioned in Chapter 4, when framed by the metaphysical picture naturalized by the religion of the heart, therapy becomes *existentially* (and indeed *cosmically*) significant. Thus one SBNR interviewee asserted, "I think it is to know yourself. That is the deepest spiritual question."

6. Educational Institutions

In the 60s, the counterculture took aim at the institutional sphere of education, which the romantics of the period disdainfully deemed the "knowledge industry." They argued educational institutions had been colonized by instrumental rationality and a sterile positivism that left no room for emotion, spontaneity, intuition, or mystery, and produced docile, unfeeling, and rationalistic subjects. This critique was given systematic treatment by critical theorist Herbert Marcuse in his *One Dimensional Man*—a book that gave voice to the New Left and helped inspire some of the counterculture's more radical wings.

Despite this attack, however, the counterculture was ultimately unsuccessful in fundamentally revolutionizing the educational sphere. As noted in the previous chapter, it remains—especially in the sub-sector of higher education—governed primarily by a *rationalist ethic*, the very same kind that sponsors the legal-political spheres of modern society. Thus analytic reasoning, reliance on the natural and social sciences in their positivist modes, and objectivity as an aspirational ideal, are given pride of place, as are bureaucratic decision-making procedures that valorize universal rules and regulations. In short, the disciplines of civilized life live on in the sphere of education.

Nevertheless, expressive individualism has made inroads since the sixties, reforming certain sub-sectors of the educational sphere in quite dramatic ways. We can see this, for instance, in the post-60s shift towards "child-centered learning," which encourages treating every child as a unique individual with special needs, as well as the increase in student autonomy in classrooms (Friedman 1990, 135). We can also see it in the stress placed today on experiential activities within the mainstream educational system (Heelas 2007). Finally, as noted in Chapter 2, there has been a marked academic interest in integrating

"spirituality" into educational contexts in recent years.[84] This explains why Heelas and Woodhead (2005, 93) found that many participants in the holistic milieu had education-related occupations: primary school teacher, college lecturer, art teacher, special needs teacher, adult education, educational therapist, and religious education advisor.

7. The Economic Sphere: New Forms of Consumption and Changing Conceptions of Work

In the previous chapter I argued that the counterculture's moral attack on the economic sphere in the 60s produced a moral hybrid—an uneven synthesis of utilitarian and expressive symbolic orders and moral vocabularies. This is, no doubt, one of the great ironies of this period: the romantic critique of capitalism was ultimately subsumed into the very capitalist world it once sought to overcome (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005). We find this moral hybrid most evidently at two sites within the economic sphere.

First, in modes of marketing and consumption. As the 60s counterculturalists ridiculed the conformity of mass society, marketers adapted their strategies. Dick Houtman et al. (2011, 19) explain, "Marketing gradually gave way to branding, associating products with young, hip, cool, adventurous and non-conformist images and lifestyles. Corporations started challenging consumers to assert their self-dependence and personal authenticity by setting themselves apart from the dull gray masses." They conclude, "Contemporary consumer culture has come to breathe the rebelliousness and non-conformism of the 1960s counter culture." Indeed, in the wake of the sixties, marketing has been increasingly oriented by the romantic liberal values of authenticity and self-expression, as opposed to those of efficiency or utility. In fact, the growth of the holistic milieu is itself evidence of this transformation in the economic sphere.

The second site is in changing conceptions of work. With the rise of "soft capitalism" many sectors of business have embraced a vocabulary of expressive individualism that champions, "bringing life back to work," "personal growth through work," and "unlocking human potential" (Heelas 2008, 69). This has dovetailed with the emergence of new managerial strategies and techniques which emphasize "empowerment," "creativity," and "leadership," in order to maximize worker productivity and increase profits (see Lambert 2009), not to mention a whole array of corporate trainings, weekend courses, online lectures, seminars, and more (Nadesan 1999, 12). At the same time, there is now a growing business literature—some explicitly "religious," some not—which endorses an iteration of the religion of the heart that combines utilitarian and expressivist language (see Bouckaert and Zsolnai 2012; Bregman 2014, 119).

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[84] Examples include Miller 2000; Tacey 2002.

Of course, economics played a key role in spurring this. With the shift to a post-industrial society—dependent upon a service economy, novel information technologies, and entrepreneurship—new skills have become economically valuable. Social theorists Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello (2005, 97) list the qualities valorized by the "new spirit of capitalism": "autonomy, spontaneity, … conviviality, openness to others and novelty, availability, creativity, visionary intuition, sensitivity to differences, listening to lived experience and receptiveness to a whole range of experiences." Not surprisingly, these are precisely the qualities championed by the romantics of the 60s. As a result of these developments, it has become much harder to distinguish between the economic and private institutional spheres, as the expressivist ethic inscribed in private life has now found an esteemed, if not central, place in professional life.

However, it would wrong to think the differences have been erased. While an expressivist ethic has found its way into certain workplaces—chiefly, those in the information technology, creative, and communication industries—much of industry remains firmly committed to opposing ethics—be they, rationalist or authoritative. Thus, just as the religion of the heart finds support in particular sub-sectors of the healthcare and educational institutions and not others, the same applies here. Those areas of the economic sphere that naturalize a vocabulary of expressive individualism are far more amenable to the religion of the heart than those that do not. As Nancy Ammerman (2014, 180) rightly notes, "some jobs are simply more plausible as spiritual narratives than others."

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It should be clear by now that the religion of the heart is far from lacking institutionalization, as it finds support across a wide array of secondary and primary institutions which collectively constitute the religious sphere of twenty-first century liberal democracies—which I call the romantic liberal institutional order. However, given that not all individuals in romantic liberal modernity take an interest in "spirituality" it warrants asking what distinguishes those who do from those who do not. While one cannot deduce universal maxims, examining the life histories and interview accounts of my informants nevertheless reveals clear cultural-sociological patterns. That is, exposure to, engagement with, and acceptance of "spirituality" follow established social pathways.

In what follows I draw from my interviews with the "spiritual but not religious" and Charismatic Christians in order to outline the nature of these pathways. I argued above that the holistic milieu and the Charismatic wings of the congregational domain serve as the chief sites of socialization as regards the religion of the heart. What this means is that while the five complementary institutional fields remain capable of transmitting the religion of the heart they nevertheless depend upon these rival associational

territories to do so. That is, their expressivist ethic enables them to serve as plausibility structures for "spirituality," but due to their marked internal diversity, this function is only made possible due to the existence of legitimacy secured elsewhere. It follows that the holistic milieu and the Charismatic wings of the congregational domain constitute the core of the religious sphere in post-1960s liberal democracies, disseminating and legitimating discourses of "spirituality." Indeed, it is for precisely this reason that among my informants an interest in "spirituality" could always be traced back to an engagement with one or other (or both) of these associational territories.

Social Pathways into the Holistic Milieu

There is no one path into the holistic milieu, but a recurrent theme among my SBNR interviewees is what we might call *personal crises* and *problems of meaning*.[85] What I mean by this is that for almost every one of my informants, an interest in "spirituality" begins with a story of dissatisfaction or suffering that resulted in them asking one or all of the following questions: "Why is this happening?" "Why am I here?" and/or "Who am I?"

Of course, almost everyone asks one or more of these questions at some point or another. But in the case of my informants, the poignancy of these questions ultimately led to a crisis of sorts. For clarity's sake I have classified the types of personal crises—to be understood as ideal types—according to the following two criteria. First, the specific *content* of the crisis, that is, what the crisis is primarily *about*. And second, the *origins* of the crisis, or the *conditions* that precipitated it. They are as follows: (1) the need to find meaning in suffering (2) disenchantment with utilitarian individualism; (3) struggles with self-identity. I argue (1) is a historical universal, bound up with the human condition, while (2) and (3) are modernity-induced.[86]

1. The need to find meaning in suffering (historical universal)

The issue of meaning came up a lot in my interviews. For instance, Nick told me his life before he found "spirituality" amounted to "a kind of senseless meandering, trying to mitigate that feeling of aimlessness and purposelessness." Similarly, when asked what her life was like before she became interested in "spirituality," Emily responded, "I would just go to class, come back, and there would no thought behind it. There would be no motive. I would just be like a robot. Just kind of going—nothing to think about,

[85] By personal crises I do not necessarily refer to a crisis of the greatest magnitude. I simply mean the existence of "some unsettling personal experience" (Wuthnow 2001, 72). C. Wright Mills (2000) famously distinguished between "private troubles" and "public issues." While personal crises are, of course, experienced privately, I conceive of them as public issues insofar as they are related to the wider social conditions and structures within which an individual is situated.

[86] I thank Dick Houtman for suggesting this typology.

nothing to ponder." And when asked what life might be like without "spirituality" Mohammed responded, "I think without spirituality I would be very sad, very confused. Because if I don't have it, I'm completely bored with what I'm doing, and nothing makes sense."

In *On Purpose: How We Create the Meaning of Life*, sociologist Paul Froese (2016, 45) writes, "It is modernity that enhances meaninglessness." Indeed, the rationalized, pluralistic, and fragmenting nature of modernity has led many to feel haunted by the specter of nihilism (see Berger and Luckmann 1995). But it would be wrong to reduce the problem of meaning to the shift to modernity. As Taylor (2007, 680) wisely reminds us, "When we break down the hunger for meaning into more concrete needs, one is for an answer to the problem of suffering and evil." Following Taylor, I believe such a need is a historical universal, not one that only arises in modern conditions. Of course, the need to find meaning in suffering may be more acute in modernity, but it would be wrong to suppose that the need itself can be eradicated by a change in social organization.

Accordingly, the first social pathway by which my SBNR informants found their way into the holistic milieu begins with a personal crisis catalyzed by the universal need to find meaning in suffering. For example, in our interview Charlene described an adolescence plagued by depression and substance abuse. She was in and out of therapist offices, as well as rehabilitation centres. She struggled tremendously with the question, "Why me?", as she was desperate to know what ultimate purpose her pain served. Then, in high school, a counselor introduced her to Buddhist meditation and "spirituality." They would sit in his office, meditate, and "talk about life, and what really matters." This was her first introduction to the holistic milieu. Over time, she became more and more involved, to the point where she eventually started a business as a reiki practitioner and yoga instructor—becoming what sociologists call a "prosumer." She told me that throughout this process the most important lesson she has learned is that the struggles she faced in her youth were not for naught. Rather, they have been instrumental to helping her realize that she is a "healer," whose purpose is to "spread compassion and love." Reflecting on her history of substance abuse she shared, "there is nothing that fills the void other than spirituality, and addictions are simply trying to fill the void and emptiness."

A quite different, yet similar, case is offered by Philippa, who at the time of our interview had recently graduated from law school. Philippa recounted that she became interested in "spirituality," when her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. Although she had practiced yoga since the age of 12, it was only once her mother fell ill that she became interested in the "spiritual side of it." Philippa movingly described the moral disorientation she experienced once her mother passed; she was angry at the world, but felt immobilized by grief. In response, she continued to practice yoga, and started psychotherapy, where she learned to be "more present, more self-aware, and mindful of my thoughts, feelings, and sensations." She ultimately learned to allow herself to be "vulnerable," or "to feel [her] feelings." When

asked how "spirituality" entered into this process she responded, "spirituality says to look within yourself to find that there's more."

Finally, in our interview Liam described a traumatic childhood. His parents went through a messy divorce, involving the police on a number of occasions. This caused him to develop a rare and crippling anxiety disorder. As he entered adolescence Liam struggled with suicidal ideation and engaged in self-harm. When asked how he coped with his parents' divorce he conceded, "I dealt with it very poorly," while adding, "I didn't have anything else." Liam was first introduced to "spirituality," when he learned about Buddhism in a World's Religions class in high school. He liked Buddhism, he said, because it taught, "All life is suffering." "I related to that more than anything else." Nevertheless, Liam didn't pursue it. He ended up struggling with substance abuse in his late teens, until he found himself in a long-term rehabilitation facility, where he got clean and sober. It was also during this period that his interest in "spirituality" was re-awakened. Upon his release from rehab Liam joined a Twelve Step program and has remained a member since. He explained his continued commitment to "AA spirituality" as follows: "I see a picture bigger than my own pain, or bigger than my own life. Cause that's where I get stuck in, that's chronically where I get stuck."

2. Disenchantment with utilitarian individualism (modernity-induced)

The second social pathway into the holistic milieu begins with a personal crisis spurred by disenchantment, in one form or another, with utilitarian individualism (see Watts 2019). In fact, the accounts of my informants echo in a striking manner the romantic charges brought against "bourgeois society" in the sixties. For instance, Rose asserted, "I feel like we got screwed when the industrial revolution happened," adding, "you know, capitalism and the industrial revolution are synonymous with one another. And yes, I think they have contributed to most if not all of society's problems now." Similarly, Andrew stated, "my parents are very much firm believers in that 9-5 job and that's how you make money, that's how you stay alive. They look at life as more practical than fulfilling. But for me, I don't care if I have a lot of money. I would rather do something more fulfilling." These accounts make evident the expressivism inherent to the religion of the heart. Still, it is useful to consider how this perspective becomes plausible.

Consider the case of Emir, an engineering student who found himself drawn to the holistic milieu after suffering from depression in his third year of university. He recounted that, until this time, he had never had an interest in "spirituality" because he was so focused on achieving top grades. However, his preoccupation with "being the best at everything" led him to suffer a "mental breakdown." Reflecting on this period he recalled:

> That was the moment where I said 'I need to find something more to life than this.' There is something more to life than this. And that was the moment when it was probably in my mind that I'm going to find spirituality, I'm going to find something more to life than my ego, something more to life than the image I have of myself in front of others, in terms of being successful, in terms of other people looking up to me. It should be more about how I feel.

This experience led Emir to re-evaluate his life and read a number of "spiritual" books, including those by Eckhart Tolle and Deepak Chopra. In our interview Emir informed me that since his breakdown he has participated in a range of activities associated with the holistic milieu (yoga, meditation, psychotherapy), and that his outlook on life has changed quite a bit. "People today define 'success' in terms of how many material things they own, how many things they have. The bottom line for most is money and material things. And that's the true problem. They don't have a deeper meaning to their life than that."

Another illustrative case is provided by Samara, an aspiring artist who upon turning thirty suffered, in her own words, "a bit of a crisis." She explained that this was spurred by a mounting feeling of burnout, coupled with the revelation that due to an obsession with advancing her career she had failed to attend to her "inner needs." This revelation emerged as a result of an intimate conversation with one of her best friends, who was herself actively involved in the holistic milieu (as a yoga instructor). Samara shared that ever since this conversation she has reduced her workload, and instead sought to "connect with that inner voice and get in touch with myself." She has done this in order to "really understand what is worth my energy and time." She concluded, "Because I've given too much attention to my brain—I'm a very cerebral person—I feel I've neglected my heart. And now I feel like I need to listen to that."

Emir and Samara each channel the romantic critique of utilitarian individualism, which holds that life is simply about the dogged "pursuit of one's own material interest" (Bellah et al. 1985, 33). Although their reasons might differ, each became dissatisfied with utilitarian individualism. But in order to do this they had to find both a language through which to articulate their frustrations, as well as an institutional field wherein they could seek a resolution. They found these, respectively, in the religion of the heart and the holistic milieu.

3. Struggles with self-identity (modernity-induced)

The third social pathway begins with a personal crisis that finds its origins in the range of identity troubles caused by the social conditions of romantic liberal modernity. One of the consequences of the romantic liberal revolt of the 1960s has been a proliferation of the range of identity options available to individuals, in tandem with a weakening of the structures that once secured stability in people's identities (Froese 2016, 45). Neo-modernization scholars speak of this as "the great dis-embedding," which has been endemic to modernity but has rapidly increased over the last half-century (Beck and Beck-

Gernsheim 2002). In fact, social theorist Anthony Giddens (1991, 28) goes so far as to suggest, "To live in the 'world' produced by high modernity has the feeling of riding a juggernaut." With increasingly complex institutional differentiation, modern life remains segmented, compartmentalized, and highly diversified. Giddens notes that this can lead to moral confusion and existential disorientation (83). These troubles show up especially in the realm of self-identity. Thus Peter Berger et al. (1973, 74) argue, "it should not be a surprise that modern man is afflicted with a *permanent identity crisis.*"

Of course, the truth is many do not experience this. However, there are those for whom this sense of inner fragmentation is severe. In romantic fashion, these individuals sense acutely a conflict or division within themselves. Houtman and Aupers (2007, 309) write, "Robbed of the protective cloak of 'pregiven' or 'self-evident' meaning and identity, the late-modern condition conjures up nagging questions that haunt the late-modern self: 'What is it that I really want?' 'Is this really the sort of life I want to live?' 'What sort of person am I, really?'" We see this play out in the accounts of my SBNR informants

For instance, Zamir, an engineering student, said he only became interested in "spirituality" after his girlfriend broke up with him. He recounted, "When you go through a breakup you go through a period of trying to figure out what went wrong." The breakup significantly shook Zamir's sense of self. Throughout the relationship he had worked tirelessly to change himself in order to meet his partner's expectations. But this ultimately failed, leaving Zamir both hurt and confused. He questioned whether anyone would like him, "for who I really am." He also scolded himself for not being "true to myself." In the face of uncertainty and self-doubt, Zamir chose to read a slew of "self-help books with a spiritual side to them." These taught him that, "if someone doesn't like me for who I am then that's their problem. This is who I am." Moreover, he eventually came to believe that "going through that breakup started the process of thinking of myself as who I am, and not trying to change myself."

Amanda offers a second illustrative example. In our interview she shared that her university experience was void of "spirituality," as all she did was "party, socialize, and study." However, upon graduating she developed severe anxiety. Throughout her undergrad she had assumed that she would go to law school but, in her words, "it was the Fall and I was starting to apply, and I kind of just reached the point where I was like, 'What am I doing? Why am I doing this? Is there any real reason that I want to be a lawyer?' And the answer was absolutely not." This realization set off an anxiety attack, which eventually led Amanda to go on medication. A few months later, her boyfriend unexpectedly gave her a book by Wayne Dyer. The book, in effect, introduced her to the New Age iteration of the religion of the heart. She recounted, "So basically I read that book, and it was the first time I'd read anything like that, and you know, I wasn't out of touch with the idea of having a soul, but I'd never actually thought about it at any depth. But when I read this book I was like, 'This is insane!' But also, 'This doesn't *not* make sense to me.' It made sense. 100 percent." Amanda then contacted a friend of hers, whom she referred to

as “an intuitive life coach.” “We had a Skype session, where she did a Tarot card reading, and it was one of the first times I felt some kind of relief from the anxiety. Like everything she said really resonated; the cards she pulled, the way she analyzed them, and what we talked about in general.” Amanda continued to read “spiritual” literature, as well as seek out conversation partners who might share her budding interests. She eventually decided to ditch her plan to go to law school and instead enrolled in a music production program. “I just asked myself, ‘What do I actually care about? What matters to me?’ So I went from law school to music.” When asked what led her to make this decision she replied, “If you’re going to be a true artist you are connecting with the deepest parts of yourself, and expressing them. And self-expression is of the highest order to me right now.”

A final illustrative case is that of Neil, whose identity issues began in childhood. Neil recounted being terrified that his homosexuality would be found out by his peers in high school. “I barely spoke anything. I barely spoke any words because I knew that people could hear that I was gay.” Growing up queer in a small town Neil got used to hiding parts of his identity. However, even after entering post-secondary he continued to feel a lack of wholeness within: “I remember feeling really divided.” In order to cope with the pain caused by this inner division Neil started abusing drugs and alcohol. “I remember justifying it at the time, like, ‘I’m gay and my life sucks and I need booze’.” In time, Neil found the recovery movement, where he was introduced to “spirituality without religion.” Upon joining Alcoholics Anonymous, Neil learned that he had to “talk about my problems,” and “be authentic.” But most importantly, finding “spirituality” enabled him to take pride in “who I really am,” because he could rest assured that “God made me this way.”

What we see in the accounts of Zamir, Amanda, and Neil are examples of how problems with self-identity lead individuals in romantic liberal modernity into the holistic milieu, where they are introduced to the religion of the heart in one or other of its discursive forms. Identity issues are endemic to modern social life thus it should come as no surprise that individuals are drawn to discourses that enable them to construct a stable sense of self. And in imbuing one’s inner states with cosmological significance, the religion of the heart offers individuals a degree of certitude otherwise unavailable to them.

Social Pathways into the Charismatic Wing of the Congregational Domain

There exist two ideal-typical social pathways into the charismatic wing of the congregational domain. The first path follows roughly the same sociological lines as entrance into the holistic milieu, that is, it generally begins with a *personal crisis* caused by one or other of the need to find meaning in suffering, disenchantment with utilitarian individualism, and/or struggles with self-identity. However, the second path—distinctive to the congregational domain—is what I call the *move from traditionalist Christianity to*

seeker-sensitive evangelicalism, which I believe reflects the evangelical conservative's accommodation to romantic liberal modernity. Of course, this is not to suggest that these paths cannot overlap (they often do). But for analytic purposes, it is useful to distinguish them.

Path 1 – Personal crises in romantic liberal modernity

An illustrative example of the first path is offered by Max, a member of C3 Toronto. Though he was baptized as an infant, Christianity was never a part of Max's home life, and therefore featured only minimally as a source of socialization. Moreover, his early life was characterized by familial instability and constant mobility. His father, a wealthy Ghanaian immigrant, left his white mother when Max was only three years old, leaving the two of them to fend for themselves. He and his mother moved house every couple of years, which made it difficult for him to make close friends. "I didn't have a solid thing to build my life on," Max recounted. "Everything around me has always been shifting." In his teens, Max harboured dreams of becoming an NFL player and being rich and famous. He exercised everyday, read self-help books, and hired a nutritionist. He became popular and made lots of friends. Yet he still struggled with questions of identity. "I didn't know who I was. I was a chameleon. I had lots of friend groups that knew a different side of me, so I felt totally divided inside." In his first year at college, Max befriended "a bunch of New Age kids" whose philosophy he summed up, "love everybody." He found their interest in self-expression and "enjoying life" a welcome alternative to the utilitarian individualism he espoused in his teens. Throughout this period he began taking psychedelics, drinking alcohol to excess, and sleeping around—none of which he had done in high school. He also got a number of tattoos. Reflecting on this time, Max shared that, on several occasions, he "experienced God," but that his understanding of these experiences was informed by New Age thought: "I felt like I was meeting Jesus, but in a New-Agey way. A different kind of Jesus—more vague." Max ended up dropping out of college, and moving in with his New Age friends. He couldn't hold down a job. He was chronically anxious as a result of smoking too much marijuana. And after a year or so, Max became depressed. Desperate for personal change he decided to attend, at the recommendation of his cousin, a C3 Toronto service. Max recounted, "When I first came around C3 I was skeptical. For me, it was just a bunch of lights, and a band." Yet over time his views changed. "With C3, you can't be there, you can't hang out for too long, without eventually becoming a Christian. They are way too convincing." Max told me that since committing to the church over a year ago, getting involved in service and giving financially, he has seen a number of positive changes in his life. He has found a steady job working at a restaurant, and been told by his superiors that he has "management potential." He has found a girlfriend. He feels more confident and hopeful than ever before. "I'm starting to see all these qualities coming out of me…. Cause I'm following Jesus, I've been pulled out of nothingness."

We see in Max's life history a continuous struggle with issues of self-identity, or a longing to find his place in the world. But we also see, especially in recent years, disenchantment with utilitarian individualism (which likely spurred his interest in New Age) and the need to find meaning in the suffering he experienced. What's more, Max's life narrative demonstrates the ease with which individuals can move from the holistic milieu to the Charismatic wing of the congregational domain.[87]

Path 2 – From traditionalist Christianity to seeker-sensitive evangelicalism

The second path into the Charismatic wing of the congregational domain begins from a quite different starting place: individuals who follow this path were raised in a home where there was *strict familial religious socialization*.[88] Recent scholarship suggests that one of the key drivers of the increase in "nonreligion" is family socialization (Thiessen and Wilkins-Laflamme 2017). In short, individuals are far more likely to identify as "nonreligious" if they grew up in a home where either there was no religious socialization or they were given the choice to be religiously committed (74). By contrast, children who are raised in homes where religious socialization is "strict"—that is, where parents do not give them a choice about their level of religious involvement—are far more likely to identify as "religious." Summing up this research sociologist Joel Thiessen (2016, 10) writes, "family as primary socialization agent significantly impacts religious and secular socialization tactics."[89]

With this established, we can now elaborate on the second path into the Charismatic wing of the congregational domain. Individuals who follow this path are almost always raised in homes where familial religious socialization is strict.[90] More often than not, parents subscribe to a socially and theologically conservative ideology, which children are expected to conform to. Yet, having been raised in romantic liberal modernity, these young people experience a significant tension between the authoritative ethic they encounter at home and the expressivist ethic they encounter in other corners of the private sphere, not to mention competing institutional spheres. What subsequently occurs is what anthropologist James Bielo (2011, 31) calls a process of "deconversion," where the young person begins to question or doubt their parents' religious worldview. However, this is soon followed by a "re-conversion" to the religion of the heart in its Charismatic Christian form. As Bielo notes, this de-

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[87] Given that he had already experienced encounters with a "New-Agey Jesus" all it took was for C3 Toronto to provide an alternative discourse with which he might interpret similar visceral experiences.

[88] "Religious socialization" here means socialization into a tradition that understands itself as "religious" and willingly embraces this label.

[89] This would explain why the vast majority of my SBNR informants grew up in homes with either no, or comparatively less strict, religious socialization.

[90] For the classic statement on "strictness" see Dean Kelley's *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing*. For a revised statement which persuasively suggests "strictness" must be defined relative to culture see Neuhouser 2017.

conversion-reconversion narrative is discursively framed by insiders as a desire for "something more real, more genuine, more meaningful, more relevant, more honest, more biblical—something more." Yet I would argue re-conversion to Charismatic Christian discourse is fundamentally motivated by an attempt to reconcile the traditionalism these young people were raised in with the expressivism of the romantic liberal institutional order.

Let me offer two illustrative examples. Sapphire grew up in what she called a, "strict Korean home," which she characterized as "very conservative." In high school she was not allowed to attend sleepovers, go to parties, or have a boyfriend. And as a child her media consumption was significantly monitored and restricted (for instance, she was not allowed to watch Disney films). Though she never explicitly challenged her parents, Sapphire admitted, "I struggled with my faith at the early part of my life because I thought it was just the result of the way I was raised." She recalled driving for two hours each Sunday in order to attend the Korean church where her father preached. "I would just sit there and listen to the sermon, but I didn't really feel anything." When she was old enough to attend college Sapphire convinced her parents to let her move out of their suburban home to downtown Toronto. Soon afterward, she came across C3T, which she immediately joined. When asked to explain the difference between the church of her childhood and C3T she replied, "It's the Holy Spirit encounter. Those churches were very theology driven, which is great, but they didn't have any real emphasis on the Holy Spirit, or encountering God—it being relational, you know? And that's a huge thing for me." She concluded, "At C3 I learned that Christianity is not a religion. It's a faith. It's a relationship. And I understand that, even though my parents aren't necessarily that way."

Pamela, who grew up going to a Baptist church in a small Ontario town, offers another illustrative example. "So growing up Baptist, it was very staunch. It was expected that you just accept." As a result of the authoritative ethic she was raised with, Pamela was shocked when she arrived at C3T. "So, coming to C3 where it is very vibrant and you can see people being moved by the Holy Spirit felt a little overwhelming at first. But at the same time the presence of God was undeniable." When asked to describe what she found attractive about C3T she responded, "It just felt so honest in a way that I had never experienced at church before. It felt like it was very love-based."

We see in these examples a similar trajectory and distinctive social pathway, whereby millennial evangelicals who have been raised in relatively traditionalist homes come to question their parents' strict approach to faith, and eventually adopt what Bielo (2011, 124) calls a "seeker-sensitive" approach to Christianity which helps them to reconcile the theological conservatism of their childhood with the expressivist ethic naturalized across the romantic liberal institutional order.

Conclusion

I have sought over the last three chapters to make evident that the recent popularity of the religion of the heart can ultimately be traced back to the 1960s. Cultural and religious transformations produced social and legal reforms that, at least in Western liberal democracies, enabled historically excluded identities and ways of being to be recognized as worthy of equal public protection and status. These reforms collectively produced a romantic liberal social imaginary that treats individual liberty, understood as authentic self-expression, as a sacred value, and which legitimates both legal and political institutions. Thus was born a new social order—romantic liberal modernity—that sustains and generates conditions ripe for the flowering of the religion of the heart.

Part III: Romantic Liberal Modernity and Its Discontents

Chapter 9

Romantic Liberal Modernity and Its Critics

> *A modern democratic society is a confabulation of critics*. (Walzer 1988, 17)

> *It would first of all help us to see our way clearer in the ongoing debate between different moral visions which murmurs or rages around us and frequently in us.* (Taylor 1989, 100)

In Part II, I traced the rise of the religion of the heart to the 1960s, illuminating its elective affinities with the romantic liberal imaginary that crystallized during this period. I also mapped the institutional changes that the counterculture set off, thereby reconstituting the religious sphere of liberal democracies, as well as creating social and political conditions conducive to the religion of the heart. Finally, I demonstrated that the religion of the heart today finds support across an array of primary and secondary institutions, which together comprise a vast institutional order within romantic liberal modernity—the social order bequeathed to us by the cultural-cum-political upheavals of the 60s.

In Part III, I review the academic literature on the religion of the heart, and the long-standing debates over the good society that circulate within it. As I made clear in Chapter 2, there is no shortage of academic research on "spirituality." Indeed, much of the story I told in Part II was informed by this scholarship. And yet this common ground within the study of spirituality has been obscured, and in some cases distorted, due to the fact that scholars have fused the language of fact and theory in their maximal interpretations of the spiritual turn.

Recall from Chapter 3 that disagreement in social theory often originates at the level of normative presuppositions. Indeed, while it is rarely ever stated outright, social theories always privilege certain political theories. Thus, I prefer to speak of *social-cum-political theories*, each of which is wedded to a particular, if inchoate, vision of the good society (Bellah 2006). No doubt, these visions operate in the background, but they nevertheless play a critical role in distinguishing between salient and nonsalient phenomena, identifying social processes, and—if only implicitly—adjudicating just from unjust. And perhaps most importantly, each social-cum-political framework assesses romantic liberal modernity

according to its own lights. Thus, as we shall see, debates about "spirituality" in large measure track broader debates about romantic liberal modernity.

The fact that studies of "spirituality" have been influenced by scholars' normative commitments is not, in and of itself, problematic. Indeed, in my view, it is unavoidable. The problem, rather, is that these foundational normative presuppositions have remained unacknowledged or concealed, and therefore have shaped specific accounts only implicitly. Of course, I am not the first to notice this. As mentioned in the Introduction, this was picked up on by Gordon Lynch who has suggested studying "spirituality" is "a kind of religious and cultural Rorschach test." Similarly, in her overview of the field Linda Woodhead (2010, 45) has written, "There is a real, and important, debate about the nature of the good life in a good society going on here." And yet, there has been little attempt to delimit in a comprehensive manner the character and content of this debate.

In this chapter, therefore, I survey the six social-cum-political theoretical traditions that inform the vast majority of scholarship on "spirituality": (1) Rational/Romantic Liberal, (2) Communitarian/Conservative, (3) Civic Republican/Civil Society Theory, (4) Neo-Marxist/Ideology Critiques, (5) Feminist Theories, and (6) Post-Modern/Post-Structuralist/Neo-Nietzschean. I delineate their internal variety and identify representative thinkers as a means of making clear how their respective assessments of the religion of the heart hinge in crucial respects on their respective assessments of romantic liberal modernity.[91]

1. Rational / Romantic Liberal

Recall that rational liberalism, as a product of the Enlightenment, stresses the ideals of disinterestedness, public reason, impartiality, and self-restraint, while encouraging distrust of the emotions and anything that resembles irrationalism. This explains why expressive individualism and the religion of the heart have received considerable criticism from rational liberals in recent years. Indeed, rational liberals fear that romantic liberal modernity is overrun by irrationality and subjectivism, threatening the bases for impartial and rational deliberation. They therefore remain antagonistic to "spirituality" insofar as it places epistemic authority in subjective feelings and personal experience—a position exemplified by the work of New Atheists like Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris. These critics contend that, "by accepting multiple, simultaneously valid truths" the religion of the heart "makes us into idiots" (Webster

[91] Importantly, what I offer are ideal types; accounts found in the academic literature are often multifaceted, containing elements of multiple theories. In such cases, I restrict my analysis to those aspects of specific accounts that pertain to the theoretical tradition in question. One could argue this does a disservice to these accounts, as it presents them incompletely. But I argue this is warranted, if only because abstraction of this kind will help us to get clearer on where the fault lines really lie.

2012, 32, 42). In short, rational liberals worry that the rising popularity of "spirituality" in liberal democratic societies will make intersubjective agreement impossible, and therefore advocate for public reason and science to replace it.[92]

Of course, rational liberalism does not exhaust the liberal tradition. Romantic liberalism, by contrast, seeks in modernity a compromise; it accepts the legalistic, bureaucratic, and fragmenting aspects of liberal regimes, in exchange for a space of privacy, or personal retreat, where "romantic impulses and expressions of personality remerge" (Rosenblum 1989, 210). Romantic liberals prize individual autonomy and self-expression, and on these grounds enthusiastically endorse the private/public distinction, institutional differentiation and the pluralism of social spheres. Though romantic liberalism has as its originator John Stuart Mill, its best-known advocate in recent years is philosopher Richard Rorty.

According to Rorty (1989, 84), "The social glue holding together the ideal liberal society … consists in little more than a consensus that the point of social organization is to let everybody have a chance at self-creation to the best of his or her abilities, and that that goal requires, besides peace and wealth, the standard 'bourgeois freedoms'." Crucially, for Rorty, the private sphere is a place of self-realization, whereas the public sphere is a place of civic duties and public reason. Moreover, it is the former where he consigns religion: "the only role left for religious belief will be to help individuals find meaning in their lives, and to serve as a help to individuals in their times of trouble" (Rorty 2003, 142).[93] According to Rorty, religion can and should serve the important and felt need for private enchantment, but it must not stray into the public sphere—the site of rational deliberation and civic virtue. And yet, in romantic fashion, Rorty does not prioritize one sphere over the other: "our responsibilities to others constitute only the public side of our lives, a side which competes with our private affections and our private attempts at self-creation, and which has no automatic priority over such private motives" (Rorty 1989, 194).

Accounts of the religion of the heart indebted to a romantic liberal framework are naturally the most positive. The scholar whose work most clearly fits within this camp is sociologist Paul Heelas (1993, 1996, 2000, 2006, 2007, 2008), although there are a number of others (Woodhead 1999, 2013; Forman 2004; Tacey 2004; Partridge 2004; Chandler 2008, 2010, 2011; Lynch 2007; Schmidt 2004, 2012; Gottlieb 2013). Heelas is well known within the field of New Age studies for defending what he variously calls "self-spirituality," "inner-life spirituality," and "spiritualities of life" against habitually

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[92] While Harris is sympathetic to the term "spirituality," as evidenced by his book *Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality Without Religion*, there is little doubt that, for him, the religion of the heart is nothing but pure irrationalism.

[93] Thus Mark Cladis (2003, 232) observes: "Rorty espouses a romantic liberal order dedicated to allowing individuals to occupy their own self-made world of unique wishes and feelings."

harsh criticism. His wide-ranging body of work, in which he makes his sympathies with the religion of the heart evident, demonstrates his commitment to romantic expressivism as a means of overcoming the alienating and fragmenting aspects of life in romantic liberal modernity. We might say then that Heelas celebrates the religion of the heart to the extent that it challenges those forces of rationalization that, according to Weber, are seen to disenchant the world. Heelas often draws attention to the way discourses of "spirituality" serve to imbue everyday life (be it, at home, at work, or elsewhere) with "deeper" meaning, thereby potentially challenging the utilitarian individualism naturalized in the economic sphere (Heelas 2008, 4). Furthermore, what we find in Heelas's oeuvre is an attempt to carve out a space for thinking about how the religion of the heart may, in fact, retain the left-liberal commitments of the counterculture—those embodied in the liberation movements of the period (see also Lynch 2007; Partridge 2004). But what makes Heelas's analyses *romantic liberal* in nature is his explicit endorsement of the *expressive humanism*, which he correctly views as fundamental to today's religion of the heart. Thus he celebrates "New Age spiritualities of life" for their "contribution to developing the personalized, expressivistic-humanistic strand of modernity" (2008, 219). In so doing, Heelas agrees that the religion of the heart has deep affinities with the social order bequeathed to us by the 1960s counterculture, and applauds it.

2. Communitarian / Conservative

Communitarians rail against romantic liberal modernity because of what they see as its "individualism." Within political theory, communitarians have taken liberal theorists such as John Rawls to task for espousing a conception of the self that they allege is "(1) empty; (2) violates our self-perceptions; and (3) ignores our embeddedness in communal practices" (Kymlicka 2002, 221). According to Charles Taylor (1991, 58) liberal theory reifies an untenable "social atomism." Similarly, political theorist Michael Sandel (1996, 13) argues that romantic liberalism undermines community as a result of the conception of the self it endorses, which he characterizes as "free and independent, unencumbered by aims and attachments." And finally, philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre ([1981] 2007) suggests liberal theory makes moral consensus impossible because it claims a universal scope and rejects the authority of tradition. Moreover, these critiques are not merely philosophical in nature, as communitarians have contended that this self-understanding remains widespread in romantic liberal modernity. For instance, in *Democracy's Discontent* Sandel argues the "liberal self-image" found expression in "the pop psychology and self-help literature of the 1970s," and that it remains a staple of today's "procedural republic" (1996, 292). Accordingly, he fears with other communitarians that "the moral fabric of community is unraveling around us" (3).

Sweeping pronouncements such as this are a staple of communitarian social science. For instance, in *The Fall of Public Man* Richard Sennett (1976, 340) charges the rise of romantic expressivism and its attendant ideal of authenticity with eroding public life, concluding that our "absorption in intimate affairs is the mark of an uncivilized society." While James Davidson Hunter (2000, 157, 217) singles out "therapeutic individualism"—which he traces to "Romantic modernism"—in order to blame it for the "death of character." And of course, in *Habits* Robert Bellah et al. (1985) forcefully warn that as expressive individualism grows in prominence, communal life in liberal democracies will increasingly be at risk of dissolution.

Admittedly, communitarian claims, either in their philosophical or sociological forms, lend support to multiple interpretations. For this reason it seems to me useful to distinguish between two distinct types: the first I call *liberal communitarianism*, while the latter I refer to as conservative communitarianism or *conservatism*.

Liberal communitarians reject the universalist pretensions of liberal theorists like Rawls,[94] but do not reject the romantic liberal settlement—that is, they accept the private/public distinction,[95] institutional differentiation, and pluralism, and merely seek to protect the autonomy of the institutional spheres, while taking a particular interest in the vitality of moral communities and social identities in the private sphere. In other words, they accept the tradition of expressive individualism, and seek merely to limit its scope—albeit in a more circumscribed manner than romantic liberals.

Liberal communitarian critiques of the religion of the heart focus, first and foremost, on the moral limitations they perceive to be intrinsic to its individualism. Perhaps the most well-known is found in *Habits.* Bellah et al. (1985, 246, 235) argue that "Sheilaism" lacks "any effective social discipline" and fails to "provide practical guidance." They also warn of its "inner volatility and incoherence" and its "difficulty with social loyalty and commitment," charging the religion of the heart with enabling the individual to run amok without moral accountability (236). Following in their footsteps, a number of critiques have targeted the affinities "spirituality" shares with expressive individualism (for an overview see Oh and Sarkisian 2011; Berghuis and Pieper 2013). For instance, sociologists with liberal communitarian sympathies have criticized "spirituality" on the grounds that it discounts the importance of community, and gives too much authority to personal experience (Casanova 1992; Bruce 2006, 2017). In fact, Steve Bruce (1998, 23) has even called the methodological individualism at the core of the religion of the heart "bad sociology" insofar as it discounts the role of social structures in shaping social life,

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[94] I am here referring to Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*, not his later works.

[95] Admittedly, Bellah et al.'s stance toward the private/public distinction remains, in some ways, ambivalent. At times they seem to recognize its irrevocability and moral importance, while at others they contest it. Yet, in my interpretation, their position ultimately comes closer to the former than the latter.

thereby exacerbating the threat of anomie in romantic liberal modernity. According to liberal communitarian sociologists, then, "spirituality" lacks a centralized institution that can ensure generational transmission and socialization, and is therefore deemed unable to muster the moral resources necessary to produce a vital and robust communal life or "challenge the dominance of utilitarian values" (Bellah et al. 1985, 224).

Conservative communitarians, by contrast, lament the shift from what Ferdinand Tönnies once called a state of *Gemeinshaft* to one of *Gesellschaft*. They therefore reject outright the romantic liberal settlement—the private/public distinction, pluralism and the fact of institutional differentiation. Indeed, conservatives conceive of romantic liberal modernity as morally bankrupt, and antithetical to the type of community they desire. For instance, Alasdair MacIntyre ([1981] 2007, xv) suggests that, "what liberalism promotes is a kind of institutional order that is inimical to the construction and sustaining of the types of communal relationship required for the best kind of human life." While Christopher Lasch (1980, 25) likewise laments that, "self-absorption defines the moral climate of contemporary society." Furthermore, Patrick Deneen (2018, 18) calls romantic liberalism an "anti-culture," contending that it "has ruthlessly drawn down a reservoir of both material and moral resources that it cannot replenish." While Robert George (2013, 167) pillories "the expressive individualism and social liberalism," which he (correctly) contends reigns in romantic liberal modernity.

Conservatives are especially concerned about the decline of authoritative biblical religion in romantic liberal modernity, and therefore endorse what we might call public enchantment: "Conservatives hold that the only stable basis for national independence, justice, and public morals is a strong biblical tradition in government and public life" (Haivry and Hazony 2017). It should therefore not surprise us that they have heaped copious derision and scorn on "spirituality" and those who embrace it (e.g. Lee 1987; Mills 2010; Daniel 2013). For example, Martin Marty (2005, 47) describes religionless spirituality as "banal" and "solipsistic." Likewise, Douglas Groothuis (1986, 163) contends, "the New Age world view ultimately dissolves moral distinctions and plunges itself into moral ambiguity, if not anarchy." In his discussion of "New Age spirituality," Lasch (1991, 245) suggests that it "is rooted in primary narcissism." While David Koyzis (2015) similarly writes: "mere spirituality leaves the ego in charge" (for similar critiques see Douthat 2008; Brooks 2019b). And in his conservative narration of the past half-century, Roger Kimball (2000, 268), in polemical fashion, contends that we owe to the 60s not only "immoralist radicalism" but innumerable "bogus forms of 'spirituality'." In short, conservatives view in the religion of the heart everything they despise about romantic liberal modernity—namely, its individualism, expressivism, and pluralism. Hence why George (2016) disdainfully refers to it as "Gnostic liberalism."

3. Civic Republican / Civil Society Theory

Civic republican and communitarian frameworks hold much in common, but I distinguish them analytically to the extent that they emphasize distinct ideals. While they both stress the importance of community, the former tend to focus on the *political* character of communities, that is, the normative functions they fulfill in democratic societies. In short, the civic republican tradition is one that "takes seriously the need for civic virtue" (Kymlicka 2002, 287). But here again we can distinguish between distinct types.

The first type of civic republicanism, indebted to Aristotle, holds that the "activities of political participation and public deliberation … should not be seen as a burdensome obligation or duty, but rather as intrinsically rewarding" (294). We find this framework championed in Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition.* Arendt (1958, 31, 37) contends, in direct opposition to romantic liberals, that true freedom "is exclusively located in the political realm," such that "household life exists for the sake of the 'good life' in the *polis*." Thus while Aristotelian civic republicans like Arendt no doubt champion a distinct normative vision from that of conservatives, they share their antipathy to the romantic liberal settlement. Moreover, in conceiving of private life as a mere means to the more valuable end of participation in public life, they endorse a distinct form of public enchantment. And not surprisingly, this leads them to diagnose romantic liberal modernity as antithetical to the perfectionist forms of citizenship they deem vital to a good society and flourishing human life.

The second type of civic republicanism conceives of civic virtue in instrumental terms, that is, as a means to upholding liberal democratic institutions. Like liberal communitarians, this form of civic republicanism accepts the romantic liberal settlement, and seeks only to ensure that the legal-political sphere retains sufficient autonomy and vitality to uphold democratic institutions. I include civil society theorists in this camp, especially those of a neo-Tocquevillian persuasion, because, like liberal civic republicans, they tend to view expressive individualism in terms of its deleterious consequences for civic life.

In *Democracy and America* Alexis de Tocqueville ([1835] 1998, 206) famously contends that individualism encourages the following self-understanding: "They owe nothing to any man, they expect nothing from any man; they acquire the habit of always considering themselves as standing alone, and they are apt to imagine that their whole destiny is in their hands." Tocqueville feared that were this self-understanding to become widespread it could lead to a new kind of despotism, one where "each nation is reduced to nothing better than a flock of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd" (359). These insights have been systematized in the civil society theory of political scientist Robert Putnam (2000), who has charted a consistent decline in "social capital" over the twentieth century. According to Putnam and other civil society theorists, "it is in the voluntary organizations of civil

society—churches, families, unions, ethnic associations, cooperatives, environmental groups, neighbourhood associations, support groups, charities—that we learn the virtues of mutual obligation" (Kymlicka 2002, 305). Consequently, these scholars fear that, "the individualism promoted so strongly in recent years militates against maintaining faith in standards that may be necessary for fostering public life" (Ricci 2004, 187).

Of course, *Habits* is no less civic republican than it is communitarian. For like Putnam, Bellah and his coauthors take as authoritative Tocqueville's ([1835] 1998, 120) conviction that, "Religion in America … must be regarded as the first of their political institutions." Carrying forward this line of thought, liberal civic republicans contend that religion ought to be concerned not just with private enchantment, but with public life as well. Thus Bellah et al. (1985, 237, 238) champion the ideal of a "public church," which they associate with the "mainline churches" or "religious center." Indeed, part of the reason why they advocate for biblical religion is because they see this tradition as "concerned with the whole of life—with social, economic, and political matters as well as with private and personal ones" (220).

This sheds light on why civil society theorists have tended to be wary of "spirituality." Much like Bellah and coauthors, they fear a "crisis in civic membership" as a result of the eclipse of biblical religion by the religion of the heart (Bellah et al. 1985, xvii). They worry that "privatized religion … embodies less social capital" (Putnam 2000, 74), and that a "society of self-fulfillers, whose affiliations are more and more seen as revocable, cannot sustain the strong identification with the political community which public freedom needs" (Taylor 1989, 508). According to these thinkers, religion ought to encourage active participation in democratic life, sufficient at the very least to shore up the autonomy of the legal-political sphere. These concerns are articulated forcefully in the work of sociologist Bryan Turner (2011, 267), who argues "The evolution of weak or passive citizenship is parallel, in my interpretation of modern society, to the evolution of passive religiosity or spirituality." Turner further laments, "Privatized forms of religious activity do not contribute significantly to the vitality of civil society, but simply provide psychological maintenance to the individual" (225).

In sum, according to civic republicans who accept the romantic liberal settlement, the dominance of expressive individualism in the private sphere prohibits the cultivation of political solidarity and stifles civic engagement. Accordingly, discourses of "spirituality" are considered dangerous because they encourage a turning inward, away from civic duties. In fact, these theorists fear that to the extent that the religion of the heart erodes the authority of biblical religion and the congregational domain, liberal democratic institutions shall deteriorate from neglect.

4. Neo-Marxist / Ideology Critique

By "Neo-Marxist" and "Ideology Critique" I have in mind those social-cum-political theoretical frameworks that find their roots in, and owe their intellectual debts to, Marxism. Of course, Marxist thought is far from homogeneous. Nevertheless, we can get a good sense of its foundational tenets by examining the structure of Marx's worldview.

Marx wrote primarily as a critic of capitalism. Yet, as philosopher John McMurtry (1978, 19-53) makes clear, his disavowal of capitalism stemmed principally from his conception of human nature. Conceiving of humans as producers with special creative capacities, Marx believed that capitalist relations of production stifled these capacities and thereby alienated workers from what made them truly human. This is why he repeatedly described capitalist modernity as "alienating," "inhuman," and "bestial," decrying, in humanist fashion, that workers under capital "have become more and more enslaved to a power alien to them" (Marx 1994, 123). Of course, Marx was also deeply concerned about the social inequalities and injustices of his time. But even were all individuals to become material equals through taxation schemes and government regulation, he did not believe capitalism could be redeemed because alienation would remain.

Furthermore, Marx had a quite distinctive way of analyzing social life: rather than treating ideas as autonomous, he saw them as intrinsically bound up with the material conditions of life—specifically, with the history of class-struggle. Indeed, according to Marx (1994, 129), "The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas." Claims such as these have led many commentators to contend Marx's historical materialism holds ideas (the superstructure) to be merely passive reflections of material conditions (the base) (e.g. Hook 1955). But Marx's thought was in fact much more nuanced (see Giddens 1971).[96] In truth, he did not view the realm of ideas as passive. On the contrary, Marx believed ideas play an active role in class domination. As McMurtry (1978, 116) explains, "The legal and political superstructure is the indispensable general protector of the ruling-class economic order." In other words, capitalist relations of production require legitimation to sustain them, and it is precisely this role that ideologies serve. This is why Marx was deeply suspicious of liberalism, with its private/public distinction and its avowal of property rights. He argued liberal thought serves the interests of the ruling class, or the bourgeoisie, under capitalism (Marx 1994, 161). Marx similarly charged religion with upholding the status quo in capitalist modernity: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world…. It is the *opium* of the people" (28). Because he believed that religion was a response to capitalist oppression—or, as he put it, "but a reflex of the real world" (Marx 1964, 135)—Marx assumed that with the annihilation of capital it

[96] Having said this, there are many passages in Marx's writings that lend support to the determinist interpretation. For instance, "our juridical, philosophical, and religious ideas are the more or less remote offshoots of the economic relations prevailing in a given society" (Marx 1964, 313).

would wither away. In fact, due to his presumption that religion served an ideological function, Marx argued that its abolition was *required* in order for individuals to overcome their alienation (41).

With this history in mind, we can distinguish between two types of neo-Marxist thought: the first is a perfectionist strand, which holds capitalist relations of production to be intrinsically immoral or undesirable owing to the alienation they produce. Remaining loyal to Marx's distinctive humanism, this type holds wage-labour to be inherently exploitative, and conceives of the modes of being characteristic of romantic liberal modernity as shallow, lacking in real value, and at odds with true individuality. We see this position exemplified in the writings of the Frankfurt School, Antonio Gramsci, and Louis Althusser.

Systematizing Marx's theory of the superstructure, Althusser argues that capitalism reproduces itself by means of two different kinds of state apparatus—repressive and ideological. In Althusser's neo-Marxist social schema, the education system, the Church, and the Family, serve as ideological state apparatuses that "ensure subjection to the ruling ideology" by means of ideological "interpellation" (Althusser 1989, 65). In other words, these institutions, argues Althusser, constitute subjects who willingly consent to "capitalist relations of exploitation" (81).

The second type are those which tend to shy away from perfectionist claims about alienation, and instead focusing on modes of domination and sources of injustice in romantic liberal modernity. We see this approach exemplified in the work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.

Acknowledging the fact of institutional differentiation, Bourdieu charts the existence of multiple "social fields"—e.g. the educational field, the cultural field, the religious field, etc.—which he argues maintain relative independence of one another. Moreover, unlike Marx or Althusser, Bourdieu gives close attention to human practice, or habituation, and the specific strategies individuals' use to navigate within and across social fields. Nevertheless, Bourdieu still assumes, with Marx, that social life is fundamentally characterized by "the struggle for monopolistic power," or a "war of everyone against everyone" (Bourdieu 1993, 106, 163). In other words, according to Bourdieu, each social field remains a site of "permanent conflict" where actors (more or less unconsciously) compete for the form of capital—e.g. social, cultural, symbolic, etc.—specific to that field (34). At the same time, actors also compete across fields, endlessly vying for dominance through social distinction (Bourdieu 1989, 20). Accordingly, Bourdieu's social schema adds considerable complexity to the superstructure, which is altogether lacking in Marx's writings, as well as the work of Althusser. Yet despite the fact that he repeatedly rejects the kind of vulgar Marxism that deduces "actions and interactions from the structure" (17), within Bourdieu's theoretical framework social class nevertheless remains in large part determinant. Indeed, this becomes evident when we examine the "habitus"—Bourdieu's term for the "matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions" that individuals are habituated to internalize in their early years, and which subsequently determines their social positioning within and across social fields (Bourdieu 1977, 83). In discussing the

habitus Bourdieu (1984, 77) writes, "it is an immediate adherence … to the tastes and distastes, sympathies and aversions, fantasies and phobias which, more than declared opinions, forge the unconscious unity of a class." And elsewhere he contends that an individual's habitus is "engendered by the objective structures, that is, in the last analysis, by the economic bases of the social formation in question" (Bourdieu 1977, 83). Thus within Bourdieu's neo-Marxist schematic, class is the decisive factor, determining everything from cultural consumption, to religious preference, to moral suasion.

Given their theoretical and normative presuppositions neo-Marxist scholars tend to interpret romantic liberal modernity—which they prefer to call "late capitalist" or "neoliberal" society—as shot through with class-conflict; where moral debates and avowed religious convictions conceal or mystify the material interests which structure and shape them. As a result, what passes for common sense, or what Bourdieu calls *doxa*, is largely considered ideological—and it is generally accepted that the scholar must question everything "so as to eliminate from him or herself all traces of 'doxa'" (Fowler 1996, 11). Thus, whereas romantic liberals view "spirituality" as laudably enchanting the private sphere, neo-Marxists tend to see it as operating to legitimate capitalist relations of production by turning us into the kind of subjects that capitalism requires. Indeed, there has been a concerted effort by scholars utilizing a neo-Marxist framework to present "spirituality"—in one or other of its discursive iterations—as intimately tied to neoliberalism (e.g. Lau 2000; Carrette and King 2005; Wood 2003, 2007, 2009; Wood and Bunn 2009; Comaroff 2009; Rindfleish 2005; Ehrenreich 2009; Kim 2012; Maddox 2012; Martin 2014; Altglas 2014; González 2015; Crockford 2017). Of course, Marxist-inspired scholarship is far from uniform. Yet one nevertheless finds recurring claims advanced from within this theoretical camp. In what follows I consider three illustrative accounts.

In *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion* Jeremy Carrette and Richard King forewarn of "a silent takeover of 'the religious' by contemporary capitalist ideologies by means of the increasingly popular discourse of 'spirituality'" (2005, 2). While Carrette and King borrow liberally from a variety of theoretical traditions, a perfectionist neo-Marxism is not difficult to detect. For instance, they condemn what they call "capitalist spirituality" for doing little to challenge the status quo in romantic liberal modernity, which they interpret as "a lifestyle of self-interest and ubiquitous consumption" (57, 5) (for similar critiques see York 2001; Possamai 2003; Redden 2012). Indeed, according to Carrette and King, neoliberalism "has removed the social dimension of religion and created a spirituality of the self—of the *consuming* self" (68). Granted, Carrette and King acknowledge the existence of anti-capitalist forms of "spirituality"—in fact, they conceive of their book as an attempt to buttress their public standing—but they also contend that what goes by "spirituality" in romantic liberal modernity almost always operates as a "psychological sedative for a culture that is in the process of rejecting the values of community and social justice" (83). They assert, "Privatized spirituality emerges here as the new *cultural*

prozac bringing transitory feelings of ecstatic happiness and thoughts of self-affirmation, but never addressing sufficiently the underlying problem of social isolation and injustice" (77). Interestingly, much like liberal communitarians and liberal civic republicans, Carrette and King yearn for a more publicly engaged religious expression that will antagonize for social change (83). That is, they seek a form of religion that is capable of providing a "countervailing social force to the ethos and values of the business world" (126).

A second neo-Marxist account of the religion of the heart is advanced in Craig Martin's conspicuously titled, *Capitalizing Religion: Ideology and the Opiate of the Bourgeoisie.* Here again the intellectual debts are myriad, but the theoretical imprint of Althusser nevertheless stands out. Martin (2014, 12) begins by informing his reader that he is "interested in rhetorics and discourses that naturalize or legitimate a capitalist system." And, as we might expect, "spirituality," according to Martin, is one such discourse. Taking his cue from Althusser, Martin contends, "Capitalism does not sustain itself, but requires ideology for its maintenance. The self-help and spirituality publishing industry is, arguably, one of the ideological state apparatuses of late capitalism" (89). In other words, Martin argues that the holistic milieu and associated institutions serve to interpellate subjects, thereby leading them to "produce, consume, and accommodate themselves to the regnant mode of production" (35). He therefore concludes that the "spiritual but not religious" discourse is a "domesticated ideology of the status quo" (52). Martin also gives critical attention to the methodological individualism at the core of the religion of the heart. He remarks, "this ideology simultaneously obscures the constitutive role of social structures in the creation of individuals and their desires, as well as the structural causes of individual suffering" (157) (for a similar critique see McGee 2005). In turn, Martin concludes that "spirituality" serves a number of ideological functions in romantic liberal modernity: it deflects critical attention away from social structures, thereby quelling social criticism, and it acclimates middle-class workers "to our prison" (70, 126)—hence why he deems "spirituality" the opiate of the bourgeoisie.

A third, and final, neo-Marxist account of the religion of the heart is offered by Véronique Altglas in *From Yoga to Kabbalah: Religious Exoticism and the Logics of Bricolage.* Altglas contends that practices of religious bricolage—along with an interest in "spirituality"—are intimately related to neoliberalism. For one, discourses of "spirituality" and associated practices, she observes, aid in the cultivation of "soft skills," as well as the accumulation of emotional and symbolic capital, all of which are prerequisites for success in an economy characterized by "flexible accumulation" (Altglas 2014, 275-76) (see also Nadesan 2009; Barker 2007; Wrenn 2019). Moreover, Altglas notes that these interests are very much class-specific, meaning that the romantic expressivism characteristic of the religion of the heart is not, in fact, reflective of a genuine disenchantment with utilitarian individualism, but rather reflective of individuals' class position (319) (for a similar critique see Wood 2007). Thus, drawing significantly from

Bourdieu, Altglas stresses that these individuals are "déclassé," that is, "those having a high cultural capital and educational capital that is not translated in their material achievements" (290). Individuals who engage in practices of bricolage and are interested in "spirituality" belong to what Altglas calls the "new petite bourgeoisie," or those located between the upper classes and the proletariat, and who derive their social status from, and materially depend upon, their ability to produce symbolic goods as well as their role as cultural intermediaries and tastemakers (319). It follows, she argues, that "the realization of the self is not a desire unrelated to issues of social positioning" (290). That is, individuals who embrace discourses of "spirituality," participate in the holistic milieu and champion an expressivist ethic, Altglas maintains, because it aids them to compete for the symbolic, cultural, and emotional capital necessary to dominate in their respective social fields and cultivate markers of social distinction (300). This explains why adherents are willing to pay for "spiritual" classes and other activities within the holistic milieu: "they do so in the hope that what is acquired will contribute to cultural and emotional forms of capital, which in turn, is convertible into career prospect and wealth" (307). Altglas therefore concludes that participation in the holistic milieu "allows the new petite bourgeoisie to display cultural competence and maintain their role in the game of cultural and symbolic struggle," and that an interest in the religion of the heart "is ultimately about social positioning and mobility" (321, 326).

Though neo-Marxist accounts and ideology critiques of the religion of the heart are certainly variable, these three studies usefully illuminate what are central and recurring claims advanced from within this theoretical camp. These are as follows: first, discourses of "spirituality" are considered an ideological channel for the utilitarian individualism inscribed in the economic sphere, and therefore charged with bolstering neoliberalism. Second, the religion of the heart is negatively characterized as a distinctly middle class phenomenon. And third, discourses of "spirituality" are criticized for construing "social problems as the problems of individuals" (Erjavec and Volčič 2009, 129). In other words, by naturalizing methodological individualism, the religion of the heart is singled out for deflecting criticism of, if not legitimating, unjust social or economic conditions.

5. Feminist Theories

By "Feminist" I refer to any social-cum-political theoretical framework that seeks to challenge patriarchal structures and sexist norms, identify and address forms of gender inequality, or empower those who understand themselves as "women." Feminist theorists aspire to a world of gender and sexual equality and justice. The first wave of feminism began in the late-eighteenth century in Western Europe, when certain female intellectuals began to question the systemic inequality they were subject to. However, as we saw in Chapter 6, it was the second-wave feminist movement that emerged during, and in the wake of, the 1960s that has played a significant role in shaping romantic liberal modernity. Recall that feminists during

this period were able to challenge the way liberal societies in the 1950s drew the private/public distinction. By declaring "the personal is political" second-wave feminists drew attention to how the moral norms inscribed in the private sphere privileged men, and were thereby able to alter the liberal settlement. Yet, despite this historical entanglement—or perhaps because of it—contemporary feminists do not agree on what gender justice entails, and therefore disagree on how best to evaluate romantic liberal modernity.

A key question that has preoccupied scholars studying "spirituality" has to do with the asymmetrical number of women attracted to the religion of the heart, especially in its New Age form—which Marta Trzebiatowska and Steve Bruce (2012, 65) refer to as the "spiritual gender gap." Based on their analysis of the available empirical data, Trzebiatowska and Bruce argue that more women than men are attracted to the holistic milieu for the following reasons: most "spiritual" activities are designed by and for women, the focus on health and self-care appeals more to women than men (especially those working in the education and health professions), and discourses of "spirituality" are largely antithetical to conventional notions of masculinity. They therefore conclude, "the content of holistic spirituality milieu is heavily oriented to women" (71). These empirical observations usefully serve to clarify the fault lines that divide feminist scholars.

While feminist thought remains riven with disagreement, we can identify two distinct strands that animate accounts of "spirituality." The first is a romantic liberal strand, which celebrates romantic liberal modernity while seeking to ensure that women and sexual minorities receive equal respect and concern within it. For these feminists, while social roles typically filled by women may have historically come with a lower social status (e.g. caregiver), the goal is not to annihilate the cultural association between "femininity" and these roles, but rather to raise the social status of, and compensation provided for, the role itself. Moreover, while they recognize that progress remains to be made, romantic liberal feminists celebrate the current social order for the degree to which it offers women and other once disenfranchised identities the freedom to realize their true selves without fear of public persecution or legal repercussions.

Not surprisingly, accounts indebted to romantic liberal feminism have been quite sympathetic to the religion of the heart. For instance, they positively highlight the degree to which discourses of "spirituality" prize and affirm traditionally feminine qualities—relationality, concern for the body, emotional openness—ostensibly offering a pro-female religious alternative to the moral traditionalism they associate with biblical religion (Woodhead 1993, 1999; 2007). They also draw attention to the close affinities shared between the religion of the heart and the counterculture of the 60s, thereby framing the former as a potentially emancipating resource for women and other historically marginalized social

identities (Zwissler 2007; Barringer et al. 2013; Burns 2015; Longman 2018).[97] For instance, Eeva Sointu and Linda Woodhead (2008, 268) praise the fact that "spirituality" validates "women's traditional work of relational care" thereby legitimating "an affective selfhood centered on reciprocal disclosure of feelings." They also affirm the way discourses of "spirituality" encourage women to care for themselves, rather than obliging them to focus on catering solely to the needs of others: "holistic spiritualities … give women access to forbidden discourses of self-fulfillment" (270).

By contrast, critical and post-structuralist feminist scholars have criticized discourses of "spirituality" for reifying or essentializing traditional gender norms (e.g. S. Taylor 2010). For example, in noting that, "'spirituality' entails the elaboration of gendered selves," Altglas argues this is far from empowering. Instead, she maintains that in reifying the norm of the nurturing and caring female, discourses of "spirituality" lock women "in subordinate social roles" (2014, 265). Moreover, this type of feminist analysis is not restricted to the religion of the heart in its New Age form. For instance, Eileen Barker (2007, 420) criticizes evangelical discourses of "spirituality" for lending ideological support to traditional conceptions of the nuclear family. While Marion Maddox (2013, 110, 112) criticizes neo-Pentecostalism's "gendered theology," for stressing "gender differentiation" and normalizing "hyperfeminine" ideals.

These critical and post-structuralist feminist accounts tend to depict social life as a site of contestation between sexual and gendered identities competing for advantage in a fundamentally hierarchical system (e.g. Young 1997). Moreover, they implicitly frame gender norms as inherently oppressive (e.g. Butler 1990). As a result, they perceive romantic liberal modernity as marked by formal progress, yet informally mired in patriarchy and sexism, and they charge "spirituality" with not only reifying oppressive gender norms, but also encouraging women to passively shoulder unequal social and economic burdens.

6. Post-Modern / Post-Structuralist / Neo-Nietzschean

As sociologists Chris Shilling and Philip Mellor (2001, 185) note, "'postmodern' is one of the most flexible and imprecise concepts in the social sciences." The term has been used variously to describe an epochal shift, a cultural experience, and an artistic mode of expression. Still, in their social-cum-political theoretical mode post-modern theories fundamentally take aim at the metanarratives associated with modernity—be they social, political, or economic in nature. Thus, philosopher Francois Lyotard defines the post-modern as "incredulity towards metanarratives," that is, an eschewal of philosophical foundations, truth-claims, and objectivity in the name of difference, subjectivity, and discourse analysis.

[97] For an overview of this literature see Keshet and Simchai 2014.

Post-structuralism and some of the deconstructive perspectives that emerged from this approach have had an important influence on post-modernism, and the two perspectives overlap. The names most commonly associated with this tradition of scholarship are Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, and Michel Foucault. Inspired by Friedrich Nietzsche, these thinkers have sought to re-narrate modernity, not only by means of illuminating its constructed character, but also by inverting its self-image.

This is especially clear in the work of Foucault, to whom much critical scholarship on "spirituality" is indebted. Throughout Foucault's corpus of research one finds a preoccupation with power—indeed, in his rendering of social life, the only constant is the will-to-power: "The history which bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than that of a language: relations of power, not relations of meaning" (Foucault 1984, 56). Accordingly, for Foucault, claims to truth or knowledge, "are enmeshed in the clash of petty dominations, as well as in the larger battles which constitute our world" (Rabinow 1984, 6). In his scholarship Foucault gives close attention to the way the human sciences, as modern regimes of truth, have served to authorize and exclude specific identities through practices of objectification, classification and normalization. He also theorizes the human body itself as a site of power struggles, arguing that through processes of "subjectification" and the production of "bio-power," subjects are reconstituted on a corporal level, and made to think and feel that which the dominant *episteme* deems true. While Foucault says little in his work about his own normative commitments, it is not difficult to discern that he is radically skeptical of, if not outright hostile to, romantic liberal modernity. Indeed, contra the claims of liberals—rational and romantic—he argues that the emergence of liberalism did not mark moral progress, but rather a shift in disciplinary regimes—from one of "exceptional discipline" to "one of a generalized surveillance" (Foucault 1984, 115). In short, in Foucault's rendering, romantic liberal modernity is interpreted as a social order of unrelenting discipline and normalization, where the rhetorics of freedom and individuality conceal myriad and insidious relations of power that dominate us as much from within as from above (211).

In recent years, the work of Foucault has become incredibly popular for analyzing romantic liberal modernity—and with it, the religion of the heart. For instance, in *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self* social theorist Nikolas Rose applies a Foucaultian schematic to conduct a genealogy of romantic liberal subjectivity. He writes, "Liberal democratic polities place limits upon direct coercive interventions into individual lives by the power of the state" (Rose 1989, 10). Consequently, they covertly maintain control by means of "governmental technologies of the self" (249). One such technology, Rose suggests, are discourses of self-help and "spirituality." This is because their "power lies in their capacity to offer means by which the regulation of selves – by others and by ourselves – can be made consonant with contemporary political principles, moral ideals, and constitutional exigencies" (261). Rose therefore concludes, "the language of autonomy, identity, self-realization and the search for fulfillment acts as a

grid of regulatory ideals," thereby serving to constitute romantic liberal subjects (quoted in Redden 2011, 655).

This is not an uncommon critique. For instance, many other scholars, drawing from post-structuralist thought, have presented discourses of "spirituality" as carriers of romantic liberal regimes of power and discipline (see Nadesan 1999; Rimke 2000; Bell and Taylor 2003; Philip 2009; Binkley 2007, 2014; Erjavec and Volčič 2009; Redden 2011; Martin 2014; Williams 2014; Reveley 2016; Trifan 2016; Tobias 2016; Godrej 2017; Altglas 2014, 2018; Pursuer 2018; LaMarre 2019). While these analyses no doubt differ in their specifics, the following two claims recur almost across the board.

First, that discourses of "spirituality," in naturalizing a self-ethic and endorsing an ideal of self-realization, function as a disciplinary mechanism in romantic liberal modernity. That is, post-structuralist critiques endorse a view of the religion of the heart as deeply normalizing, or as legitimating "prescriptions and rules" and "promot[ing] certain attitudes while discouraging others" (Altglas 2018, 81). The concern is that the freedom heralded by "spirituality" is not what it seems: rather than enabling freedom from social constraints, "becoming one's true self," in fact, entails conformity to collective values and moral ideals. As Altglas (2014, 239) puts it, "'spirituality,' as a quest for self-realization, presents itself as a process through which individuals become the active and autonomous agents of their own regulation."

The second claim is that "spiritual" discourses serve to discipline individuals, through processes of subjectification, into becoming what Ruth Williams (2014) calls "neoliberal subjects"—that is, subjects who are harmoniously adapted to neoliberal economic and political structures. Ronald Pursuer (2018, 2) contends that "spirituality" emphasizes "the sovereignty of autonomous individuals who can navigate the vicissitudes of late capitalist society by becoming self-regulating and self-compassionate, governing themselves, and by freely choosing their own welfare, well-being, and security." Similarly, Majia Holmer Nadesan (1999, 4) submits, "New Age corporate spiritualism and evangelical capitalism promote entrepreneurial views of subjectivity." While Sam Binkley (2014, 4) argues "spirituality" in its humanistic psychological form functions as "one of the chief instruments of neoliberal government, the very leitmotif of neoliberal life itself." Accordingly, these scholars share with neo-Marxists the view that discourses of "spirituality" serve to naturalize the utilitarian individualism inscribed in the economic sphere, thereby extending the moral logic of the market into ever new spheres of social life.

In Defense of Romantic Liberal Modernity

In this chapter I have surveyed the six social-cum-political theoretical traditions that inform the majority of accounts of the religion of the heart in the academic literature. In so doing, I have sought to make clear that scholarship on "spirituality" largely tracks broader debates about romantic liberal modernity:

romantic liberals generally defend this cultural structure, whereas critics contend that it epitomizes and/or exacerbates what they perceive as the crucial failings of post-1960s liberal democracies.

I have eschewed making clear my own theoretical and normative allegiances, because I have assumed that we first need to get clear on what precisely we are arguing about, and indeed what is at stake. But it would be absurd to claim neutrality in these debates. As Bellah et al. (1985, 303) remind us, "if the analyst is within the society he is studying he is also within one or more of its traditions, consciously or not. There is no other place to stand." Moreover, if each social-cum-political tradition supports a different interpretation of our social condition then it matters which we decide to endorse. The reason for this is that the way we understand the society we live in shapes how we understand ourselves, and how we understand ourselves makes an enormous difference to how we live.

The truth is that while I recognize that each of these traditions is not without insight and value, I am nonetheless not equally sympathetic to their foundational presuppositions. In fact, I believe strongly that the moral impulses behind romantic liberal modernity are worth defending—even if romantic liberal societies sometimes fail to live up to their animating ideals. Thus, if Bellah et al. are correct that we all stand, consciously or not, within a tradition, then I cannot deny that my feet find themselves planted firmly within that of romantic liberalism.

And yet I recognize that critics raise legitimate concerns that cannot be ignored. Indeed, should they be correct in their theoretical-cum-normative assessments then there exist compelling reasons not only to be highly suspicious of the religion of the heart, but also to condemn the social order in which it finds a sympathetic and protective home. For their critiques suggest that, for a range of intellectual, moral, and sociological reasons, romantic liberal societies will not, and indeed cannot, realize their own ideals—and what's more, that the religion of the heart serves only to conceal and strengthen these internal contradictions.

It would seem then that we who wish to defend romantic liberal modernity are presented with a challenge: can we muster a social-cum-political theoretical framework that incorporates both the insights of the romantic liberal tradition, while also taking seriously, if not refuting, critics' concerns? I argue that we can, and that we find such a framework in the Durkheimian tradition.[98] This may seem an unlikely source, but I hope to prove that Durkheim's oeuvre furnishes us with a rich array of insights that enable us to reformulate the romantic liberal tradition in a way that, in some instances, serves to resolve what critics deem irresoluble problems, while in others, serves to place their concerns in a new, more ambiguous, light. Indeed, what I find most compelling about the Durkheimian tradition is that it cuts across, both

[98] Of course, as with any great thinker, Durkheim's thought has spawned enormous interpretive variety. Accordingly, I wish to make clear that I interpret Durkheim largely through the brilliant work of Mark Cladis and W. Watts Miller—although I also draw significantly from other secondary sources.

theoretically and normatively, the six social-cum-political theoretical frameworks surveyed in this chapter, thereby illuminating both what is insightful, as well as what is potentially misguided, in each of these venerable traditions. Accordingly, in the next chapter, I reflect with Durkheim on the character and constitution of romantic liberal modernity in light of critics' concerns, as a means of advancing a reformulation of romantic liberalism—and with it, a reinterpretation of our social condition.

Chapter 10

A Durkheimian Reformulation of Romantic Liberalism

> *A society is not constituted simply by the mass of individuals who comprise it, the ground they occupy, the things they use, or the movements they make, but above all by the idea it has of itself. And there is no doubt that society sometimes hesitates over the manner in which it must conceive itself. It feels pulled in all directions.* (Durkheim [1912] 1995, 425)

In the last chapter I surveyed the six social-cum-political theoretical traditions that inform the vast majority of scholarship on "spirituality." I argued that critics of the religion of the heart are, in effect, critics of romantic liberal modernity insofar as they perceive the former as functioning to mask or aggravate those aspects of the latter which they believe warrant criticism. In this chapter I explicate and draw from the Durkheimian tradition in order to, in some cases, refute, while in others, merely refine, the concerns raised by rival traditions. The aims of this undertaking are threefold: first, to advance a Durkheimian reformulation of romantic liberalism that pays due attention to the social and institutional preconditions necessary to realize its animating ideals. Second, to raise doubt about the interpretations of romantic liberal modernity proffered by critics. And third, to use the Durkheimian tradition in order to both flag, as well as reframe, the specific concerns of critics that call out for more careful empirical investigation.

The Durkheimian Tradition

The Durkheimian tradition is immensely fruitful to think with.[99] For one, Durkheim was arguably both a sociologist and political theorist. As a sociologist, he understood that shared cultural structures and sacred forms constitute societies, and thereby advanced what Mark Cladis (1992) refers to as a "communitarian defense of liberalism." Thus, contra the self-understanding of contemporary rational and romantic liberals who contend that liberalism is wholly neutral among "comprehensive doctrines" (cf. Quong 2011) Durkheim maintained that liberalism reflects a tradition like any other. Indeed, according to Durkheim, liberalism represents a distinctive collective representation, rooted in social life and shared institutions, which sacralizes the ideals of individual liberty and moral equality (Turner 1993, 11; Watts Miller 2003, 208). However, while committed to the liberal settlement, Durkheim was also sensitive to the risks

[99] I thank Tim Jenkins for this wonderful turn of phrase.

associated with individualism and unfettered capitalism, spending much of his career warning of the dangers of egoism and anomie—which he saw as the central pathologies of modernity. He therefore championed the existence of voluntary associations in civil society, which he argued must serve as sources of social integration and moral regulation for liberal citizens by means of collective rituals and shared moral norms. At the same time, he also endorsed institutional differentiation and pluralism, as he saw these as critical to preserving individual freedom and individuality. Finally, as a political theorist, Durkheim was a left-liberal or social democrat who envisioned the good society as one characterized by social justice and a healthy balance between private and public life. In sum, Durkheim combined both sociological and philosophical insights in order to advance a unique defense of the liberal tradition, as well as an inspiring vision of the good society.

Of course, Durkheim did not live to see romantic liberal modernity, and as a product of his time it remains possible (perhaps even likely) that he would have struggled to comprehend the character and constitution of post-1960s liberal democracies. But I nevertheless believe that the tradition that bears his name, when minimally supplemented by complementary theories, enables those of us who seek to defend the animating ideals of romantic liberalism to pre-empt, and in some cases, resolve, the concerns raised by critics.

And yet, while this is no doubt a vital task, what is most useful, and indeed valuable, about a Durkheimian reformulation of romantic liberalism, in my view, is that it reveals the stunning degree to which the self-understanding of so many romantic liberals today is deeply at odds with their social condition. In other words, by failing to appreciate the degree to which their most cherished moral convictions, political liberties, and even their social identities emerge from, and depend upon, the moral traditions, institutions, and collective rituals they partake in, romantic liberals—which of course includes adherents of the religion of the heart—have conspired with their critics to reify a conception of romantic liberal modernity that is both sociologically inaccurate and profoundly limiting.

Thus, in adopting a Durkheimian lens in this chapter I seek not merely to call attention to certain features of romantic liberal societies that all too often remain unseen and undervalued, but also to fulfill the public role that Durkheim himself proclaimed for sociologists: “It is our function to help our contemporaries know themselves in their ideas and in their feelings” (Durkheim quoted in Bellah 1973, 59). Accordingly, in what follows I advance a Durkheimian reformulation of romantic liberalism, and contrast this social-cum-political theoretical framework with the rival traditions I surveyed in the previous chapter. In so doing, I make evident that when perceived through the interpretive lens afforded by the Durkheimian tradition romantic liberal modernity does not resemble the unattractive caricature presented by its detractors, nor square with the self-understandings of most romantic liberals.

It is imperative to keep in mind that in critically assessing these traditions, I am not yet concerned with whether or not the respective conclusions they draw about the religion of the heart are accurate or not. In other words, if, as Taylor (1985, 110) suggests, social-cum-political theories provide "maps of the terrain," then we must not confuse the maps with the terrain itself, for different maps might get us to the same destination by radically different routes. Of course, this is not to suggest the two can be fundamentally separated. But the point nevertheless stands: my critiques of these traditions rest at the theoretical level, rather than the level of application.[100] I am therefore primarily concerned with the vision of the good society, as well as the theoretical-cum-normative presuppositions, they implicitly espouse, and the degree to which these lead them to distort or obscure important features of romantic liberal modernity.

1. Rational / Romantic Liberal

In championing liberalism, Durkheim identified the liberal tradition with the moral individualism inscribed in the legal-political sphere—which he saw embodied in France's 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (see Chapter 7). He did this because he believed an autonomous and robust legal-political sphere is required to counterbalance the utilitarian individualism inscribed in the economic sphere, as well as serve as a basis for political solidarity in liberal democratic societies. Accordingly, Durkheim would have had great sympathy for the critiques proffered by rational liberals of romantic liberal modernity. Indeed, he would have feared that in coming close to "subsuming the public under the private" (Cladis 2003, xlvi), Rorty and other romantic liberals risk severely weakening the moral individualism inscribed in the legal-political sphere. Moreover, he believed that a just liberal society requires an enduring and resilient rationalist ethic within the public sphere in order to ensure the healthy functioning of democratic institutions (e.g. public deliberation grounded in the rule of reasons, public trust in the empirical sciences, and an impartial rule of law).

However, there is reason to think that Durkheim's rational liberalism requires supplementing. Indeed, Durkheim himself gave surprisingly short shrift to the need for private enchantment—that is, the "continuing need that human beings have to make their worlds meaningful" (Alexander 1995, 2). This seems to me a serious omission. Romantic needs are in fact *needs*, which cannot be rationalized away, nor wholly fulfilled by means of participation in a moral community. Moreover, given the necessity of bureaucracy and rational-legal authority in differentiated and pluralistic societies it seems unavoidable that the public sphere will remain somewhat alienating and fragmenting in nature.

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[100] I focus on the level of application in Part IV.

Accordingly, on this issue I believe we must supplement the Durkheimian tradition with the insights of Rousseau, as interpreted by Cladis (2003, 221): "In Rousseau, we find two kinds of religious vocabularies—the religion of the heart, which addresses the inwardness of the private life, and civil religion—which addresses the public life of the citizen." This vision, it seems to me, sums up the best of romantic liberalism: aware of the fact that a comprehensively rationalist society would be a "science-fiction nightmare" (Berger et al. 1973, 204), romantic liberals advocate for a clear separation of private and public spheres—with romantic needs for enchantment, aestheticism, and self-realization confined to the former. Thus, I agree with romantic liberals such as Rorty and Heelas that modernity is disenchanting, and accept that the private sphere must remain the site of enchantment, where individuals seek meaning, refuge and intimacy. And for this reason, I see no problem *ceteris paribus* with the religion of the heart serving to imbue private life with cosmic meaning in romantic liberal modernity. In fact, this seems to me a vital social function.

Yet rational liberal concerns are not wholly misplaced. In light of Durkheim's recognition that liberal democracies require an autonomous rationalist legal-political sphere it is appropriate and warranted to fear the colonization of the public by the private, as pure privatism and subjectivism cannot uphold just institutions. Thus, a Durkheimian reformulation of romantic liberalism would reframe the rational liberal concern as follows: to what degree do discourses of "spirituality" and the expressivist ethic they naturalize function in romantic liberal modernity to colonize those institutional spheres that require a rationalist ethic, such as the legal-political sphere?

2. Communitarian / Conservative

Communitarian critiques of liberal political theory are, as I see it, basically correct. Rawlsian liberal theorists have generally espoused sociologically naïve conceptions of the self, and claimed a degree of neutrality that does not exist. Nevertheless, as we have seen, liberalism need not be understood so narrowly: Durkheim, by contrast, took a communitarian view of liberalism, conceiving of it as a tradition of moral individualism, deeply collective in nature. This is important because it makes evident that when conservatives claim that liberalism is an "anti-culture" or that it lacks "any appeal to common good" (Deneen 2018, 20, 29), they are confusing empirical description with normative judgment. Indeed, as Bernard Yack (1988, 157) points out, while Rawlsian theory might presuppose an unencumbered self, "The unencumbered self's real-world analogues are as much socially constituted—fully encumbered—individuals as all others." That is, "Members of liberal societies must be constituted, like other real individuals, by their shared sentiments and institutions" (149). Ironically, this observation follows naturally from the core premises of communitarian thought, which stresses our social nature. Accordingly, in accepting these premises, political philosopher Stephen Macedo (1990, 18) observes: "in

becoming more permissive a society may not be disintegrating at all, nor its members drifting apart. It may simply be changing and acquiring a new, more liberal morality." Durkheim would agree. As we have seen, romantic liberal modernity is not without shared cultural traditions, social practices, or moral norms. On the contrary, within each institutional sphere a distinctly liberal moral tradition reigns supreme.

It follows that conservative (and in some instances, liberal communitarian) portrayals of romantic liberal modernity are profoundly misleading because they tend to conflate romantic liberal theory and romantic liberal practice.[101] And this criticism also applies to conservative portrayals of "spirituality." In fact, conservatives make the same mistake as secularization theorists and broad cultural approaches in the study of spirituality (see Chapter 2), insofar as they theorize the spiritual turn as consisting of a shift from an institutionalized form of religiosity to one that is free-floating, bereft of institutional support, and lacking any internal consistency. It also follows that in rejecting romantic liberal modernity, conservatives "are actually rejecting one form of community for another, rather than recommending community per se over dissociated individualism" (Yack 1988, 159). And if this is true, then it warrants asking whether the normative vision preferred by conservatives merits *dis*embedding denizens of romantic liberal modernity from their already existing social forms.

From a Durkheimian perspective the problem with the conservative vision of the good society is that it is utterly incompatible with the pluralistic and differentiated character of twenty-first century liberal democracies. Indeed, there is often a deep sense of "nostalgia for the pre-modern moral community" running through the writings of conservatives (Macedo 1990, 15). Of course, this is not in itself condemnable, but I believe conservative rhetoric about community largely masks a quite parochial conception of the good society, which cannot account for, or cope with, "the ideological complexity of modern states" (24) (see also Kymlicka 2002, 260). Consequently, it is hard to imagine how a comprehensive conservative ideal could be instated in the twenty-first century without a significant reduction in individual freedom (and simultaneous increase in human misery).

Yet despite the aforementioned criticisms, Durkheim would nevertheless concede that conservatives flag important areas of concern. For instance, they are not wrong to suggest that romantic liberal modernity encourages "loose connections" (Deneen 2018, 34). This is, in part, a byproduct of institutional differentiation, but it also derives from the degree to which expressive individualism and the religion of the heart sacralize autonomy, self-expression, and self-realization. No doubt, for this reason romantic liberal modernity will never satisfy those who long for a state of *Gemeinshaft*. But this does not mean romantic liberals have nothing to fear.

Durkheim's *Suicide* is an "exploration of the pathologies of the modern world," that is, the

[101] For an excellent philosophical study that advances this very argument see Stout 1988.

pathological forms of individualism that are central to liberal democratic societies (Watts Miller 2003, 110). In this study Durkheim identifies four distinct types of suicide, each of which he argues represents a different social pathology: anomie, egoism, fatalism, and altruism. However, the two most common pathologies in modernity are *anomie* and *egoism*, which he suggests, "spring from society's insufficient presence in individuals" (Durkheim [1897] 1951, 220). Durkheim's use of these terms can sometimes confuse,[102] thus for the sake of simplicity we can think of *anomie* as referring to a *lack of social integration*, while *egoism* refers to a *lack of moral regulation*. According to Durkheim, these pathologies derive from different social origins. Anomie stems from a lack of communal belonging and is specific to modernity; its symptoms include feelings of social isolation, loneliness, and a pervasive sense of meaninglessness. Egoism, on the other hand, is deeply human, but is naturalized and intensified by the utilitarian individualism inscribed in the economic sphere, and amounts to a kind of excessive selfishness, or preoccupation with advancing one's own self-interest at the expense of everything else. Moreover, Durkheim maintained that egoism tends to engender an irrational desire for more—which he called a "malady of infiniteness" (Durkheim [1961] 2002, 43)—such that if our egoistic desires are not curbed, they become insatiable and thereby tortuous (Durkheim [1897] 1951, 208).

Throughout his life Durkheim consistently argued that anomie and egoism were the key threats to liberal democratic societies, holding the potential to exacerbate injustice and engender untold human suffering. Yet, in charting these social pathologies he also proffered a potential solution. While he championed moral individualism as the basis for political solidarity, Durkheim was well aware that the state was too distant from individuals to combat these pathologies. Consequently, he looked to civil society, arguing that it is the role of associational or voluntary groups to socially integrate and morally regulate individuals in liberal democracies (Durkheim [1957] 2003). Within such groups, Durkheim maintained, individuals will derive a sense of identity, meaning, and purpose, thereby staving off anomie, while also having their egoism curbed; for by internalizing the group's norms, their egoistic desires would be tempered and the malady of infiniteness would be avoided (Marske 1987, 9).

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[102] For Durkheim ([1897] 1951, 219), egoistic suicide results "from man's no longer finding a basis for existence in life" whereas anomic suicide results "from man's lacking regulation." Thus "egoism", as it is understood in *Suicide*, is to be distinguished from the kind of "egoism" which Durkheim writes about in other contexts. As W. Watts Miller (2003, 4) makes clear, when Durkheim speaks of egoism in other contexts he is referring to "the unfettered, morally unconstrained pursuit of self-interest," however, in *Suicide* it is the pathology referred to as *anomie* that implies this meaning. Anomic suicide, then, results from insatiable desires that ultimately lead to misery. In contrast, egoistic suicide is the result of something else entirely—"egoism" here refers to "a disease of the intellect, a self-absorbed withdrawal that numbs feelings of attachment to our milieu." Egoistic suicide results when one withdraws from society, causing one's life to lose meaning. Given the way Durkheim uses these terms variably at different times, I use them in their popular forms.

A useful way of understanding the conservative critique of romantic liberal modernity, then, is through the Durkheimian lenses of anomie and egoism. Conservatives fear that, given the expressivist ethic inscribed in the private sphere, romantic liberal societies cannot provide the moral or religious resources necessary to stave off the threats of meaninglessness and moral disintegration, and that what is required instead is that biblical religion function as a comprehensive sacred canopy.

Liberal communitarians share this fear, but propose a less drastic solution: rather than reject the tradition of expressive individualism, they simply seek to limit its scope. As Steven Tipton (1986, 171) explains, liberal communitarians "wish to correct the biased view that individual interests, feelings, and rights in their utilitarian and expressive sense can tell the whole truth about the meaning of a good society and a good way of life." In this, we see the significant debts *Habits* owes to Durkheim. However, while liberal communitarians may accept that expressive individualism is inscribed in the private sphere of romantic liberal modernity, they also lament this fact in a way that romantic liberals do not. This is chiefly because they believe this moral tradition remains incapable of staving off the threats of anomie and egoism. Indeed, it is for this reason that they criticize "Sheilaism"—which they correctly conceive as the religious expression of expressive individualism—and instead champion the tradition of biblical religion. But in making this claim, I would argue, Bellah and his coauthors fail to fully heed the Durkheimian tradition. Let me explain.

Recall from Chapter 3 that, according to Durkheim, religion always consists of two elements: *représentations collective* (or collective representations), and *ritual*. While I have refrained from discussing it until now, it is difficult to overstate the importance of ritual in Durkheim's thought (Marshall 2002; Weiss 2012). Indeed, in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim challenges the cognitivist (Protestant) conception of religion, which holds that religious belief precedes ritual. He argues, by contrast, that religious (as well as moral) conviction is a *byproduct* of ritual participation. Accordingly, from a Durkheimian perspective, discourses—religious or otherwise—require rituals in order to become intellectually plausible and morally persuasive. Furthermore, recent cultural sociological thinking has extended this Durkheimian inheritance, arguing that cultural structures and the discourses they inform "are polysemous," in that they "sustain a range of interpretations" (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003, 736, 757). Of course, this does not mean cultural structures are meaningless; their ideational structure limits the interpretive variety they allow. But empirical studies nevertheless demonstrate that "the same symbol or collective representation can take on different meanings in different contexts" (736). Thus, in combining these insights, we can conclude that the same discourse can encode different meanings and collective values by means of different collective rituals and social practices.

It follows that from a Durkheimian perspective a crucial limitation of the analysis of both expressive individualism and "Sheilaism," offered in *Habits* is that Bellah et al. focus narrowly on

discourse or language, without any regard for how these are encoded through ritual and everyday practice (Lichterman 1996; Wilkinson 2010). And the import of this limitation becomes apparent when we consider the reason why they prefer biblical religion to the religion of the heart: taking at face value the emic self-understanding of their interviewees Bellah et al. presume that the religion of the heart, or "radical religious individualism," as they prefer to call it, "delivers not the autonomy it promises but loneliness and vulnerability instead" (1985, 247). Thus, like conservatives, the authors of *Habits* conflate theory (or in this case, discourse) and practice, presuming the latter mirrors the former. But given the Durkheimian insights outlined above, there is good reason to doubt this.

Accordingly, the question becomes: to what degree is the communitarian characterization of "spirituality" empirically accurate? That is, are communitarians correct in asserting that the religion of the heart fails to mitigate the pathologies of anomie and egoism? Or might their inattention to ritual and practice distort social reality?

3. Civic Republican / Civil Society Theory

In the last chapter I distinguished between an Aristotelian civic republicanism, and that of an instrumentalist or liberal variety. It is not always easy to differentiate the two within specific accounts, but I believe Durkheim would have objected to the former perfectionist conception on the following grounds.

While Durkheim may have maintained that the tradition of moral individualism should serve as a kind of civil religion for liberal democracies, he did not believe it should reign supreme across institutional spheres (Watts Miller 2003, 88). This was for the following two reasons. First, because he recognized that it is a rare few in liberal democracies who hold the view that the good life is one of active political participation. But more importantly, he felt that what is most commendable about liberal societies is the degree to which they allow for moral pluralism, or what Nancy Rosenblum (1998, 17) calls "the possibility of shifting involvements." In fact, Cladis (2005, 400) even suggests that Durkheim welcomed the presence of diverse moral communities, as he "defended their vital role in providing a variety of moral homes for individuals and in contributing diversity and dynamism to the political community." While Irving Horowitz (1982, 371) contends that central to Durkheim's political thought is the belief that "democratic institutions will be strong to the degree that society is pluralist in nature." Thus, while he certainly believed a liberal community requires a common "faith"—in the form of a shared commitment to moral individualism—Durkheim did not champion a totalizing civil religion, and would have agreed with Rosenblum (1994, 557) that perfectionist civic republicans risk the "colonization of social life by political culture." Instead, he sought only to protect the autonomy of the legal-political sphere, for that way citizens in liberal democracies would have a shared basis for solidarity (Cladis 1992, 165).

In this way, the Durkheimian tradition holds much in common with neo-Tocquevillian theorists who accept the romantic liberal settlement. Yet it would be wrong to view their theories of liberal democracy as identical. As M. J. Hawkins (1994, 477) notes, unlike Durkheim, "Tocqueville's theory of intermediary bodies laid considerable stress on their participatory and educational aspects," and in fact, Tocqueville generally saw the proliferation of voluntary groups as an "intrinsically healthy process." By contrast, Durkheim held a less sanguine view of the potential of associational groups to produce the kind of solidarity that would enhance national unity. This is because he recognized that voluntary associations within civil society are just as likely to foster the kinds of qualities and forms of commitment that impede democratic and civil deliberation in a pluralistic society (Chambers and Kopstein 2001), or that they will have no civic impact at all (Rosenblum 1994, 539). Indeed, in Durkheim's view, any honest look at civil society reveals that, "Anomie and aggressive self-interest coexist alongside powerful solidaristic social groups, whose members do not have the psychological latitude to look outside and identify as citizens" (546). He therefore would have suggested that civic republicans and civil society theorists demand too much of voluntary associations "in expecting them to be the main school for, or a small-scale replica of, democratic citizenship" (Kymlicka 2002, 306).

Additionally, while Tocqueville may have considered religion the first political institution in America, Durkheim would likely argue that such a view is no longer appropriate. As we have noted, the neo-Tocquevillian tradition tends to evaluate all religious forms with reference to an ideal of voluntaristic Protestantism, which is expected to serve as a social glue, moral framework, sacred canopy, and source of civic virtue simultaneously. The problem with this model, from a Durkheimian perspective, is that in the increasingly differentiated, pluralistic, and "porous" nature of romantic liberal modernity (Wuthnow 1998b), where a wide range of public institutions that did not exist in Tocqueville's time serve various civic and social functions (for instance, the welfare state), it may well be "rather out of date" (Alexander 2006a, 99).

Here, again, we see where a more thoroughly Durkheimian perspective departs from the neo-Tocquevillianism of *Habits.* Unlike Bellah et al., Durkheim would not look to religious groups in order to provide civic virtue or stoke political consciousness in romantic liberal modernity. As we have seen, while Durkheim would agree with them that religious associations continue to play a crucial function in romantic liberal modernity, he would frame their roles differently. Rather than viewing such associations as the seedbeds of democratic life he would conceive of these associations as what Peter Berger (1976) calls "mediating structures," which serve to stave off anomie and temper egoism in individuals—in other words, as key sites of social integration and moral regulation.

And yet I do not wish to downplay the apparent need for political solidarity and civic-mindedness. But, once again, a Durkheimian reformulation of romantic liberalism would hold that the

majority of voluntary associations in civil society—including religious groups—should not be looked to supply this. Rather, we must look to the legal-political sphere, and rest our hopes in a robust conception of national citizenship, which reflects the tradition of moral individualism. In other words, Durkheim was well aware of the degree to which "the spread of liberal individualist values goes hand in hand with the strengthening of an identification with national community" (Yack 1988, 161), and therefore maintained that political solidarity ought to find its roots at the national level.[103]

Still, it remains the case that Durkheim said relatively little about how this is meant to occur. Thus, in recent years, Jeffrey Alexander has extended and refined this Durkheimian line of thought in the formation of what he calls Civil Sphere theory. Alexander fundamentally rejects the tenets of civil society theory, which holds that all voluntary associations should serve as schools of civic virtue. Instead, Civil Sphere theory recognizes that many voluntary associations, including religious groups, "play no effective role in society's civil sphere" (Alexander 2006a, 2013). However, Alexander makes sure to add, "they may perform important functions in their respective noncivil spheres" (103). According to Alexander, the "Civil Sphere" (what I have been calling the legal-political sphere) comprises a range of regulative institutions (law, voting, parties, office) and communicative institutions (public opinion, mass media, polls, civil associations, and social movements), which collectively serve to create and sustain a "solidary sphere, in which a certain kind of universalizing community comes to be culturally defined and to some degree institutionally enforced" (31). In other words, it is within the Civil Sphere where the tradition of moral individualism finds an institutional home.

Importantly, the institutional order that comprises the Civil Sphere is quite distinct from what I call the romantic liberal institutional order—the series of secondary and primary institutions that inscribe an expressivist ethic, and constitute the religious sphere in romantic liberal modernity. While the former institutional order belongs to (and is largely commensurable with) the legal-political sphere, the latter is primarily oriented towards the private sphere. Thus, a Durkheimian romantic liberalism would postulate the following as an ideal: while the Civil Sphere serves the need for political solidarity and civic-mindedness, the romantic liberal institutional order serves the need for private enchantment.

Of course, whether or not this ideal is reflected in reality is unclear, and indeed the issue cries out for empirical investigation. But the point I wish to stress is that a Durkheimian reformulation of romantic liberalism would take seriously the civic republican concern, but reframe it differently. In fact, once we reframe it in light of Durkheimian insights we see that it takes a quite similar form as those of rational liberals, albeit with a slightly different emphasis: to what extent do discourses of "spirituality" colonize or

[103] Thus Durkheim pre-empts the more recent scholarship on "liberal nationalism" (see Miller 1995; Tamir 1993; Soutphommasane 2012; Kymlicka and Banting 2017).

invade the legal-political sphere (or Alexander's Civil Sphere), thereby impeding the cultivation of civic virtue and political solidarity? It would seem, then, that we need a better understanding of when and where the religion of the heart erodes the legitimacy and power of this competing institutional sphere.

4. Neo-Marxist / Ideology Critique

In assessing the neo-Marxist tradition, it is once again crucial to distinguish between distinct types. As noted in the previous chapter, Marx was a perfectionist, committed to a distinctive humanism, and it was on this basis that he criticized capitalism and the institution of private property. Moreover, as a result of his commitment to historical materialism he presumed that the liberal state served only to legitimate capitalist relations, and therefore rejected the need for a juridical community founded on a tradition of moral individualism (McMurtry 1978, 103). It is on these grounds that the differences between neo-Marxist and Durkheimian traditions become apparent.

Durkheim did not agree with Marx that capitalist relations of production are inherently alienating or exploitative. In fact, he believed that the institution of private property was a necessary, and indeed moral, feature of modern life, seeing in it an extension of the sacralization of the individual (Vogt 1993, 84). Yet, as Paul Vogt notes, "While Durkheim believed in the sacredness of the right of property, this belief by no means led him to a laissez-faire individualism of the sort advocated by classical economists and political conservatives of his day." On the contrary, "he was clearly an advocate of what was called at the time 'the new liberalism'—a kind of liberalism that was perfectly willing to accept state intervention in social and economic life in order to strengthen individual rights and liberties" (83).

In fact, a century before the term "liberal egalitarian" was coined, Durkheim was articulating this philosophical doctrine's basic tenets. As Kymlicka (2006, 14) notes liberal egalitarians such as John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin, much like Durkheim, view inequalities that are morally arbitrary—that is, the result of brute luck—as unjust and therefore in need of rectification. In a strikingly similar spirit, Durkheim argued economic arrangements should be structured so that individuals are rewarded for what they merit (Filloux 1993, 208). And yet Durkheim would have disagreed with the means by which contemporary liberal egalitarians derive their conclusions (Herzog 2018, 116). In Durkheim's view, when contemplating what justice requires we should not reason abstractly, but rather begin by reflecting upon the moral traditions we have inherited (Durkheim 1993, 69-70). In other words, for Durkheim, "Justice is relative to social meanings," not universal principles (Walzer 1983, 312). Thus, Durkheim came to endorse left-liberal (or what we might call social democratic) economic arrangements because he believed that they were necessary in order to realize the normative ideals of individual liberty and moral equality contained in the tradition of moral individualism (Vogt 1993, 85).

Despite their differences, then, Durkheim and Marx held quite similar commitments to equality and social justice. However, Durkheim, unlike Marx, refused to reduce the good society to particular economic arrangements. Indeed, as a result of his conception of social life Marx tended to see all modes of domination and oppression as the result of class-conflict, and therefore assumed that once capitalism was transcended, there would be no need for a state (Lukes 2015). But Durkheim disagreed. In his view, state institutions such as the rule of law and rights regimes will always be necessary in a differentiated and pluralistic society in order to resolve disputes among individuals and ensure relative peace. Durkheim was therefore adamant that just economic arrangements were necessary but far from sufficient to realize a good society, arguing in *Socialism and Saint-Simon*: "the social question … is not a question of money or force; it is a question of moral agents" (Durkheim [1928] 1959, 129). It is for this reason that a Durkheimian reformulation of romantic liberalism would not see the ideals of individual freedom and moral equality—and the institutions that support then—as mere ideological guises to legitimate the interests of the bourgeoisie, but rather as much-needed sources of moral inspiration and solidarity.[104]

It also follows that, unlike neo-Marxist frameworks, the Durkheimian tradition does not presuppose that social life in romantic liberal modernity is fundamentally and inalterably conflictual. While Durkheim would certainly concede that egoism fuels a significant part of social life, he would nevertheless contest the claim that all action is instrumental and self-interested—or, as Craig Martin (2013, 402) puts it, that "the way people talk and think about the social world is rooted in material interests and social domination." He would instead highlight what is arguably a deep tension between neo-Marxist theoretical presuppositions and their normative commitment to a society of equals.[105] For, as

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[104] Given his communitarian defense of liberalism, it goes without saying that the Durkheimian tradition offers a quite different approach to social criticism than that pioneered by Marx. Eschewing ideology critique, which implicitly espouses a position of radical detachment and remains "suspicious of everything people say" (Latour 2004, 229), Durkheim did not believe common sense, or *doxa*, merely serves to camouflage the domination of the ruling class. But nor did he believe that common sense is always correct. Rather, a Durkheimian form of social criticism is akin to what political theorist Michael Walzer (1987) calls the "path of interpretation" whereby the social critic appeals to what he or she considers the best in their society's traditions in order to criticize the status quo, while simultaneously encouraging their fellows to live up to their own ideals. Indeed, it is very much in this spirit that I seek to offer a Durkheimian reformulation of romantic liberalism—which I believe captures the very best of romantic liberal modernity.

[105] Some scholars who employ neo-Marxist concepts and categories claim they do not, in fact, endorse any normative vision of the good society. But as I have sought to make clear, this is deeply misleading. For the theoretical lens we choose—categories and all—brings with it normative presuppositions which are integral to the perspective it offers. Nor am I alone in thinking this. Marx himself understood his analyses of social life as themselves playing an emancipatory role. And Bourdieu (1989, 23), too, shared this view: "To change the world, one has to change the ways of world-making." Thus the claim that one cannot read a moral or political position off of an academic gaze is a kind of legerdemain.

we saw in the previous chapter, within Bourdieu's neo-Marxist schematic, everything from cultural taste to moral convictions is rooted in a (often unconscious) quest for dominance and social distinction. But if this is true, Durkheim would assuredly ask, then how could a just society ever be realized or sustained without resorting to violence or severe top-down enforcement? And if romantic liberal modernity is solely characterized by class-conflict, and individuals are essentially egoistic, how do we explain the existence of cross-class solidarity throughout history (Houtman 2003; Kymlicka and Banting 2020)?[106]

In posing these questions Durkheim would seek to draw attention to the following oversight: by universalizing the utilitarian individualism of the economic sphere in their theories, neo-Marxist approaches fail to account for the fact of institutional differentiation, and the existence of plural moral traditions in romantic liberal modernity. No doubt, it may be theoretically neater to presume that "Late capitalism provides people with their values" (Martin 2014, 74), but such a claim, Durkheim would argue, conceals more complex realities. For if we take seriously Durkheim's suggestion that distinct moral communities in civil society encode through collective ritual distinct values and sacred forms, then a neo-Marxist framework which presumes an underlying utilitarian individualism may obscure more than it reveals. As Alexander (2006a, 33) aptly puts it, "We are no more a capitalist society than we are a bureaucratic, secular, rational one, or indeed a civil one."

And yet, Durkheim was not naïve to the pitfalls of capitalism. In fact, we find a trenchant critique of capitalism embedded in his conception of human nature. According to Durkheim, humans have two opposing natures or selves—one "natural," the other "social" (Durkheim [1960] 1965). Our "natural self," he submits, is fundamentally *egoistic*, while our "social self" derives from society, is the source of morality, and reflects "the best part of us" (Durkheim [1951] 1953, 27). While it is not clear whether or

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[106] A neo-Marxist might claim in response that any seeming cross-class solidarity in romantic liberal modernity is merely apparent, hiding a strategic will-to-power. But if so, then it is perhaps worth asking what happens if we apply a neo-Marxist social schema *to* neo-Marxist accounts *themselves*? If it is true that "Social theory at its best explains how individuals or individual choices are *products* of social forces," and that "subjects seeking distinction in such a system may not experience themselves as constrained by the system that determines their actions" (Martin 2014, 22, 50), then could we not argue that endorsement of a neo-Marxist critique of romantic liberal modernity merely reflects a scholar's class habitus? In other words, could we not contend that neo-Marxist scholars are merely utilizing Marxist categories and concepts in their strategic (yet unconscious) quest for dominance and social distinction within the academic field? On this view, just as religious bricolage and a stated commitment to expressive individualism are "ultimately about social positioning and mobility" (Altglas 2014, 326), so too is a commitment to neo-Marxist concepts, categories, and critiques. If this sounds deeply cynical, it is because it is. And, in fact, Durkheim would not accept it as a viable explanation because he would argue we ought not assume that the moral, political, and intellectual commitments of neo-Marxist scholars are disingenuous, or that they are unconsciously motivated by lesser motives. But it seems to me that if you conceive of "social life as if ethics were a superficial, marginal, illusory, or fraudulent dimension of it" (Laidlaw 2014, 2)—as neo-Marxist presuppositions would seem to imply—then this remains a wholly viable interpretation.

not Durkheim, in discussing our "natural self," actually meant natural (in the sense of asocial) (see Fish 2013; Bowring 2016),[107] the important point is that he identified it with the tradition of utilitarian individualism. In other words, according to Durkheim, the moral logic of the economic sphere, if left unchecked, exacerbates the pathology of egoism, thereby engendering within individuals an irrational and insatiable desire for more, and undermining human flourishing. Thus, Durkheim evidently recognized the dangers of capitalism. In fact, he spent much of his life railing against those who sought to expand its scope.[108] Yet, as we have seen, he did not agree with Marx that capitalist relations of production are inherently alienating, nor that they should be abolished. Instead, he advocated that utilitarian individualism be tightly circumscribed within the economic sphere, and that it be counterbalanced by competing institutions and moral traditions (Cladis 1992, 146).

Accordingly, while Durkheim would share with neo-Marxists a fear that discourses of "spirituality" are "fundamentally shaped by an economic ideology" (Carrette and King 2005, 17), he would also argue that such a claim ought not be presumed without empirical evidence, given the fact of institutional differentiation and the existence of plural moral logics. Thus a Durkheimian romantic liberalism would hold only that there is cause for concern to the extent that the religion of the heart serves to naturalize the utilitarian individualism of the economic sphere, and thereby exacerbates egoism in romantic liberal modernity.

Additionally, in conceiving of social life as replete with both conflict and solidarity, Durkheim would reject the neo-Marxist belief that ideas, morals, or religious convictions, are ever merely ideological, and that therefore identifying their class-character is a tenable form of social criticism. Whether a cultural structure or moral tradition is popular among the lower, middle, or upper classes reveals, from a Durkheimian perspective, relatively little about its substance, for we must assess its value based on its social function, not its class character.

Finally, given his commitment to social justice, Durkheim would share the neo-Marxist concern regarding the degree to which discourses of "spirituality" impede the quest for justice by means of

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[107] There are reasons to suppose that Durkheim did not think the egoistic self was wholly natural in the biological sense, but rather was merely another kind of socialization (that is, socialization into utilitarian individualism, characteristic of the economic sphere) (see Giddens 1971, 225). I actually think this is the more likely reading and therefore have placed "social self" and "natural self" in quotations in order to signify the constructed nature of this dualism. Having said this, I do not think Durkheim believed egoism could be *reduced* to capitalism, only that market institutions serve to naturalize and exacerbate it (see Durkheim [1897] 1951, 216).

[108] Upon reading the works of the English utilitarians who praised egoism for the sake of prosperity he lamented, "The doctrine of the most ruthless and swift progress has become an article of faith" (Durkheim [1897] 1951, 218).

deflecting criticism of unjust social conditions or social structures. But he would frame this concern differently: rather than viewing methodologically individualistic discourses as inherently problematic, he would focus on the degree to which they are totalizing in individuals' lives—that is, the extent to which they impede the adoption, when called for, of competing discourses. This is because Durkheim held that different social situations and dilemmas demand different moral logics for their resolution (see Walzer 1983). Indeed, this is another reason why he championed pluralism and shifting involvements—for Durkheim, the good society can only be realized if citizens have access to multiple social perspectives and moral traditions, and are able to summon these when necessary.

5. Feminist Theories

While Durkheim may have given insufficient attention to the female subject in his scholarship (Cristi 1992), the Durkheimian tradition, as I understand it, shares with the feminist social-cum-political theoretical tradition a commitment to gender and sexual equality. Yet we must distinguish between those feminist approaches that can be squared with romantic liberalism and those that cannot.

As outlined in Chapter 6, romantic liberal modernity is, to a significant extent, a byproduct of the second-wave feminist movement, which successfully expanded the scope of freedom for women and many other previously disenfranchised persons. Of course, this is not to suggest that romantic liberal societies always live up to their animating ideals. But as I have repeatedly stressed, these ideals remain worthy of striving for nonetheless. Accordingly, I agree with romantic liberal feminists that there is much to celebrate about the foundational ideals of the current social order. Moreover, a Durkheimian reformulation of romantic liberalism would concur with these scholars that to the extent that discourses of "spirituality" serve to raise the public standing of traditionally feminine qualities, as well as enable previously disenfranchised social identities to receive public recognition, they serve a laudable function. Indeed, given the romantic liberal commitment to moral equality it seems only fair that women should have equal access to "forbidden discourses of fulfilment."

Interestingly, critical and post-structuralist feminist approaches that reject gender essentialism and seek to problematize the category "woman" share much theoretical ground with Durkheim. For to the extent that these types of feminist thought do not outright reject the category "woman" but rather relativize it, demonstrating its historical contingency, they seem to me quite Durkheimian. The notion that ideals of masculinity or femininity are fixed, or significantly rooted in our biological natures, flies in the face of Durkheim's sociological conception of the human condition. Thus, he would happily accept that gender norms are never universal, and vehemently resist biological forms of gender essentialism. Yet he would not embrace these theoretical frameworks to the extent that they claim romantic liberal modernity

is patriarchal and sexist at its core due to the fact that gender norms continue to exist. This is for the following reasons.

First, as a sociologist, Durkheim understood that norms are an integral part of any society, as they serve to enable communication, the construction of social identities, and commonality. Indeed, norms make possible inclusion and solidarity, just as often as exclusion and domination. Resultantly, Durkheim would argue that the abolition of norms—be they gendered or otherwise—promises anomie, not freedom. Second, the Durkheimian tradition would hold that unless one embraces some notion of the female subject, the romantic ideals of social and moral equality become very difficult to realize, for "despite the instabilities associated with woman, and the male/female opposition, abandoning them effectively removes the ground for feminist struggle" (Shilling and Mellor 2001, 142).[109] Finally, as we have already noted, Durkheim championed moral pluralism, and the need for shifting involvements. That is, he believed that individuals should have the freedom to identify with the norms of their respective moral communities, just so long as doing so does not erode their commitment to the moral individualism inscribed in the legal-political sphere (Rosati 2009, 139).

This last point allows us to translate critical and post-structuralist feminist concerns into a Durkheimian register. While Durkheim advocated that citizens in liberal democracies be members of smaller, more local, moral communities within civil society, he also feared that too much social integration and moral regulation into a single group could stifle individuality and erode individual liberty. Indeed, he recognized that voluntary groups are just as likely to become what sociologist Lewis Coser (1974, 4) refers to as "greedy institutions"—that is, social institutions that "seek exclusive and undivided loyalty" while attempting to "reduce the claims of competing roles and status positions" on their members. While greedy institutions integrate individuals into a moral community that is often personally fulfilling, they simultaneously serve to undermine the possibility for shifting involvements. Accordingly, while a Durkheimian romantic liberalism would not share with post-structuralist feminists the view that gender norms are inherently oppressive, it would share with them a concern about the degree to which specific gender norms are totalizing in individuals' lives, thereby stifling their ability to shift involvements and experience moral pluralism. And such a reframing also serves to incorporate the fear that discourses of "spirituality" deflect criticism of unequal power relations between the sexes in romantic liberal modernity, as the issue once again comes down to whether they enable or impede the adoption of competing social perspectives and moral traditions.

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[109] Additionally, to the extent that critical and post-structural feminists conceive of social action as wholly strategic and social life as a stage for gendered or sexual conflict Durkheim would argue that they merit the same criticisms as those he would advance against neo-Marxists.

6. Post-Modern / Post-Structuralist / Neo-Nietzschean

While it is quite clear from their choice of rhetoric that post-modern and post-structuralist scholars remain profoundly suspicious of romantic liberal modernity, they remain strikingly reticent about their own normative commitments and moral motivations. This is especially the case in the work of Foucault. As Ronald Beiner (1995, 350) observes: "What is interesting about Foucault's unique rhetoric is that he steadfastly resists pronouncing explicit moral-political judgments, yet of course he is judging all the time." Beiner suggests this is because, given Foucault's social schema—which holds that social life is shot through with relations of power and domination—"one must avoid at all costs spelling out a normative vision, since it would ineluctably become the ground for a repressive regime of 'normalization'." No doubt this is true, but the question then becomes: why does Foucault reject processes of normalization—whereby external ideals serve to regulate the actions of individuals through their willing consent—so vehemently?

In his earlier scholarship Foucault says little about this, but in his later work, and in candid interviews, we are given some indication. In discussing *La Familistère,* a palace in France developed by Jean-Baptist André Godin, Foucault laments the fact that it has likely "served as an instrument for discipline and a rather *unbearable group pressure*" (Foucault 1984, 247 emphasis added). He then remarks, "Let's imagine a community of *unlimited sexual practices* that might be established there. It would once again become *a place of freedom*" (246 emphasis added). Also revealing are Foucault's thoughts on Stoic ethics: "In antiquity, this work on the self with its attendant austerity is not *imposed on the individual* by means of civil law or religious obligation, but is a *choice* about existence *made by the individual*" (361 emphasis added). Thus, according to Foucault, there is no normalization within this Greek ethical doctrine, since it is "centered on *a problem of personal choice*, of *aesthetics of existence*" (348 emphasis added).

Leaving aside the dubious character of this historical claim (cf. Seigel 1999, 307), as well as the strikingly untheorized nature of "personal choice" in this statement, I believe the normative commitments that lead Foucault to resist processes of normalization so stridently begin to shine through. Following philosopher Seyla Benhabib (1992, 16), I maintain that Foucault is ultimately committed to something like "super-liberalism," which values, along with *radical individual freedom*, diversity, heterogeneity, eccentricity and otherness (for a similar critique see Beiner 1995, 352; Seigel 1999, 284; Berkowitz 2000, 184). That is, Foucault and the neo-Nietzschean tradition to which he belongs champion an ideal of "pure untrammeled freedom," which implies that all social norms are constraining, coercive and ultimately

oppressive (Taylor 1989, 489).[110] Indeed, it seems to me that only by espousing such a conception of freedom can Foucault fail to see the difference between medieval forms of discipline and those of liberal democratic societies (Walzer 1988, 200).[111]

In turn, I would argue much is illuminated when we contrast Foucault's conception of freedom with Durkheim's. According to Durkheim, to act *freely* is to act morally, and to act morally is to heed one's "social self."[112] Our "social self," as we have seen, has its roots in the moral communities we belong to (Durkheim [1951] 1953, 17). Yet while our "social self" may derive from society, it exists *in* us, and ultimately constitutes *who we truly are*. Indeed, for Durkheim—contra the self-understanding of contemporary romantic liberals and adherents of the religion of the heart—our identities are comprehensively shaped by the moral traditions we imbibe, and the strength of our moral convictions depends in large part upon our participation in the collective rituals associated with those traditions.

Moreover, the reason Durkheim argues that our "social self" reflects "the best part of us" is because it counters the egoism of our "natural self": "Everything which is a source of solidarity is moral, everything which forces man to take account of other men is moral, everything which forces him to regulate his conduct through something other than the striving of his ego is moral" (Durkheim quoted in

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[110] Defenders of Foucault might argue that this misunderstands his conception of subjectivity, which holds that power does not repress, so much as, constitute subjects (Wood 2007, 44). But this view is untenable in light of Foucault's choice of words. For to the extent that he wishes to speak coherently about the "disciplining" and "dominating" dimensions of romantic liberal modernity, Foucault must presuppose an ideal of a free subject that can be disciplined or dominated. Taylor (1995, 174) explains, "the notion of power or domination requires some notion of constraint imposed on someone by a process in some way related to human agency. Otherwise the term loses all meaning… Otherwise, it is not clear that the imposition is in any sense an exercise of *domination.*" In other words, if one is to claim, as Foucault does, that within modernity, "panopticism, constituted the technique, universally widespread, of *coercion*" (1984, 211 emphasis added), it goes without saying that one must espouse some ideal of a *noncoerced* subject—otherwise the claim remains incoherent.

[111] Moreover, once we presume such a commitment, much that seems contradictory within Foucault's scholarship suddenly makes sense. For instance, the reason Foucault stubbornly avoids advocating on behalf of a specific "regime of truth" is because, given this normative commitment, every public truth-claim is perceived as a potential source of normalization—that is, as an impediment to creating "ourselves as a work of art" (Foucault 1984, 351). Likewise, the underlying purpose of Foucaultian genealogies becomes apparent: rather than replace one vision of the good with another, they are meant to subvert, destroy, or disrupt the normative visions that serve to shore up existing norms: "The aim of such genealogies is a kind of destabilisation or de-fatalization of our present" (Rose 1989, xii).

[112] Durkheim was deeply influenced by Immanuel Kant, for whom morality entails identifying and following one's moral duty, which is understood to be dependent on, and legitimated by, one's rational nature. Indeed, like Kant, Durkheim recognized "the need for individuals to 'reach beyond' their natural selves if they [are] to become moral" (Shilling and Mellor 1998, 195). Yet, he also criticized Kant for endorsing a rationalist moral psychology. In *Moral Education* Durkheim ([1961] 2002, 64) writes, "we are moral beings only to the extent that we are social beings." Thus, for Durkheim, all moral action stems, not from rational deliberation, but from attachment to a community, and is the byproduct of collective ritual.

Bellah 1973, 136). This is why he opposed the classical liberal or libertarian presumption that freedom amounts to a mere lack of external constraints. Given his conception of human nature, Durkheim argued that individuals wholly governed by their "natural self"—their egoistic desires—are, in important respects, unfree. Thus, for Durkheim, it is only by submitting to our "social self" that we become truly free: "The individual submits to society and this submission is the condition of his liberation" (Durkheim [1951] 1953, 37).

And lest we fear that Durkheim's positive conception of freedom could legitimate an authoritarian regime that "forces individuals to be free" it is important to keep in mind two claims. First, that moral motivation, for Durkheim, must not stem from external coercion but rather from attachment to the collective through periodic ritual. And second, Durkheim was a liberal. In other words, while he may have advanced a positive conception of freedom, politically, he defended human rights—especially the right to negative liberty. Thus, unlike Foucault, Durkheim recognized the very real differences between self-discipline, whereby one legislates *oneself*, and the kind of discipline that is *imposed by others* through force—and on this basis advocated for the liberal protection of individual rights against state authoritarianism.

What fundamentally distinguishes Durkheim from Foucault, therefore, is that Durkheim recognizes the crucial difference between *power* and *authority* (Seligman 2000, 25). As Massimo Rosati (2009, 35-36) observes, authority can be understood as legitimate power, such that "If power works through coercing our will, moral authority works through the voluntary subjugation of our will." Foucault's inability to make this distinction leads him to suppose that individuals who willingly submit to a regime of normalization are merely coerced by other means. But from a Durkheimian perspective this is deeply misleading. For, in actual fact, "community and authority are two sides of the same coin, two aspects of the same phenomenon" such that one presupposes the other (40). Indeed, for Durkheim, there is a world of difference between being forced to conform to a community's standards because there are no other options (power), and deciding to conform because one identifies with the community (authority). What's more, if one is to have solidarity one must have an authority that individuals submit to. Foucault's social-cum-political theoretical analysis can only deny the latter by rejecting the former.

It follows that Durkheim does not conceive of the moral traditions indigenous to a society as oppressive regimes of normalization, which impede individual freedom, but rather as *enabling* true freedom, or autonomy, through moral action. For, in his view, all that we are we owe to society, thus it makes no sense to seek escape. And yet, crucially, Durkheim did not embrace social determinism. Rather, he rejected both social determinism as well as the radical freedom championed by Foucault, instead promoting a conception of "freedom as voluntary responses to one's own socially constituted beliefs and loves" (Cladis 1992, 30). Cladis usefully sums up this view: "autonomy, for Durkheim, no longer refers

to being free from influences. It refers, rather, to the freedom to understand how one has been influenced, and then to go on to influence others, often in novel and critical ways" (40). Indeed, Durkheim's conception of real freedom paradoxically entails both submission to society (in the form of heeding one's "social self") while simultaneously developing a critical attitude towards it—which he referred to as "enlightened allegiance" (Durkheim [1961] 2002, 116).

With this position established, the differences between neo-Nietzschean interpretations of romantic liberal modernity and those of a Durkheimian ilk become apparent. For theorists indebted to Foucault, the moral tradition of expressive individualism and discourses of "spirituality" insidiously serve as disciplinary mechanisms, by means of processes of subjectification and normalization. Thus Altglas (2018, 101) laments that, "'spirituality' makes the self the locus of discipline and conformity to collective values and incentives," while from a Durkheimian perspective this fact does not necessarily warrant criticism. Indeed, given the importance of shared norms and moral traditions to the good society this should be expected and potentially encouraged.

Romantic liberalism at its best seeks to balance the value of individual freedom with the need for solidarity. The problem with the neo-Nietzschean tradition, from a Durkheimian perspective, is that it gives ultimate weight to the former and none to the latter—the exact opposite error conservatives make. Durkheim would contend that the radical individualism implicit in post-modern and post-structuralist thought is premised upon nothing short of a vision of the good society comprising wholly unencumbered and atomistic individualists—where a society does not in any meaningful sense exist. A world without overarching moral traditions may, for Foucault, embody absolute freedom, but from a Durkheimian perspective it is more likely to mean chronic anxiety, moral disorientation, and anomie.

All the same, while Durkheim would not accept the neo-Nietzschean depiction of romantic liberal modernity, he would share with post-structuralists, as with neo-Marxists, a concern about the degree to which discourses of "spirituality" function to produce "neoliberal subjects"—that is, "social selves" comprehensively constituted by the utilitarian individualism inscribed in the economic sphere. But here too the concern would be reframed: rather than viewing processes of normalization and moral regulation as inherently problematic, Durkheim would scrutinize the substance of the specific moral traditions used to constitute subjects, as well as the degree to which subjects are capable of shifting involvements.

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In this chapter I have drawn from the Durkheimian tradition to defend romantic liberal modernity against the criticisms launched from within six rival social-cum-political theoretical traditions. In the process, I have sought to problematize, and in some cases dispute, many of the claims critics make about the current

social order, and the social functions they allege the religion of the heart does or does not fulfill within it. But I have also identified a number of unresolved concerns, which a Durkheimian reformulation of romantic liberalism cannot afford to ignore or dismiss. Indeed, to the extent that these concerns are legitimate, accurately capturing social reality, romantic liberals like myself have reason to worry. Accordingly, it is important that these concerns be made as clear as possible.

It seems to me that we can boil down the core challenges to the religion of the heart, and its place in romantic liberal modernity, to the following two concerns:

> (1) To what extent does the religion of the heart mitigate or exacerbate the pathologies of romantic liberal modernity—anomie and egoism?
>
> (2) Does the religion of the heart lead to a colonization of competing social spheres, thereby impeding shifting involvements and the adoption of rival social perspectives and moral traditions?

Consider: rational liberals fear a distinct version of (2): the colonization of the rationalist public sphere by the expressivist private sphere. Communitarians, for their part, are chiefly concerned with (1), as they tend to give primacy to the threats of anomie and egoism, understood as a lack of social integration and moral regulation, charging the religion of the heart with dissolving moral community in romantic liberal modernity. The civic republican concern, when reframed by the Durkheimian tradition, ultimately amounts to (2): though we ought not expect the religion of the heart (or any religion for that matter) to serve as a source of civic virtue and political solidarity in romantic liberal modernity, it is imperative that it not impede citizens from retaining a commitment to the moral individualism inscribed in the legal-political sphere (or Alexander's Civil Sphere). Furthermore, neo-Marxist and post-structuralist critiques, which contend that "spirituality" serves to produce "neoliberal subjects" raise both concerns. In submitting that the religion of the heart conceals a utilitarian individualism behind expressivist language they highlight (1)—specifically, the dangers of unfettered egoism. While their fear that the religion of the heart undermines the possibility for deflecting criticism of unjust social structures points to (2), for it implies that this methodologically individualistic religious discourse is so totalizing in individuals' lives that they remain incapable (or at least very unlikely) of adopting competing social perspectives or moral traditions. And finally, once we translate the post-structuralist feminist criticism into a Durkheimian register we see that it amounts to a distinct version of (2)—that is, a fear that specific gender norms are so "greedy" that they prohibit identification with alternative norms and moral traditions, as well as impede both social critique and shifting involvements.

These two unresolved concerns call out for empirical investigation. But as should be clear by now not merely any methodological approach shall do. For if we are to take seriously the insights contained in the Durkheimian reformulation of romantic liberalism that I have outlined above then we must heed the following guidelines.

First, in accepting the facts of institutional differentiation and moral diversity, we should resist the tendency to paint romantic liberal modernity with too broad a brush. As sociologist Gary Alan Fine (1979, 744) puts it, "Culture, like all aspects of social life, is situationally grounded and, thus, sociologists should bracket grand theorizing about culture in favor of examining it in situ." Indeed, we ought not assume that we know, prior to our investigation, what moral traditions or collective values are dominant.

Second, given the pivotal role ritual plays in Durkheimian thought, attending to discourse without ritual or practice will not suffice. For cultural structures and the discourses they inform are powerless without concomitant rituals to encode them with distinctive meaning and sacred value. Moreover, it is through participating in collective ritual that our "social self" is constituted. This insight is particularly salient given the distinctive character of the religion of the heart, which champions a teleology of self-realization, while positing an absolute distinction between the true inner self and the outer world of social norms and institutions. As I argued above, one of the limitations of the otherwise brilliant analysis advanced in *Habits* is the degree to which Bellah et al. take for granted that the "true self" is emically conceived as ontologically prior to society. In so doing, I argued, they conflate discourse and practice, and fail to be sufficiently Durkheimian. For Durkheim would contend that however much we phenomenologically experience our true self as emerging from deep within us, it is fundamentally *social* in nature, intimately and profoundly shaped by the discursive contexts we traverse and the social practices we engage in. Accordingly, he would argue that any responsible empirical investigation of the religion of the heart should focus on the sites and spaces within which distinctive conceptions of the true self are socially constructed and meaningfully encoded through collective ritual and shared practice.

It should be clear, in turn, why such an inquiry requires participant observation. It is only by means of prolonged study using ethnographic methods that we can discern the social contextualization of the religion of the heart. Thus, Part IV consists of an ethnographic investigation guided by critics' unresolved concerns regarding the pathologies of anomie and egoism, and the issue of shifting involvements. Of course, no ethnographic inquiry can resolve these concerns decisively. But I believe such an approach can garner lessons and insights that will ultimately prove illuminating.

An Overview of the Institutional Ethnographies

The notion of an institutional ethnography was coined by sociologist Dorothy Smith in the 1980s (see Smith 2005). Drawing from the feminist and Marxist traditions, Smith conceived of institutional

ethnography as a sociological approach that explores institutional processes by foregrounding the concerns and everyday realities of individuals located within specific institutions. Inspired by Smith, yet departing in important ways from her methodological prescriptions, I define an institutional ethnography as an ethnographic investigation that documents the various ways social and discursive environments serve to produce and privilege specific *institutional identities*. Institutional identities refer to "locally salient images, models, or templates for self-construction," which individuals use to (re)constitute their social selves (Gubrium and Holstein 2001, 11). Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein write, "Identities don't develop from within us as much as they emerge from the circumstances of self-construction" (7-8). Thus, "If we are to understand the self … we must turn directly to the environments in which selves are constructed" (16). Heeding these Durkheimian insights, in the following chapters I advance, respectively, three institutional ethnographies, each of which analyzes a different voluntary association within the romantic liberal institutional order where the religion of the heart is discursively encoded, and ritually authorized, thereby producing a particular institutional or collective identity.

While each of my three field sites is located in downtown Toronto and primarily attracts young adults, on first impression they would seem to have little else in common.[113] For instance, Chapter 11 examines a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous, which I pseudonymously refer to as New Life Fellowship, a group that is arguably best thought of as belonging to the holistic milieu. Chapter 12, by contrast, centres on a neo-Pentecostal church, C3 Toronto, which squarely belongs to the Charismatic wing of the congregational domain. And Chapter 13 analyzes a Toastmasters public speaking club that I pseudonymously refer to as Tomorrow's Leader's, and which arguably straddles a range of institutional fields. One could therefore be forgiven for wondering why I chose such seemingly disparate comparative case studies. However, it is precisely this superficial diversity that interests me. In fact, one of the reasons I chose these field sites is because they powerfully illustrate how the religion of the heart circulates across both "religious" and "secular" social spaces. In other words, they help me to drive home the argument that I advanced in Chapter 8: that the religious sphere of romantic liberal modernity is not what it used to be.

As a means of assessing the legitimacy of critics' unresolved concerns I analyze each of these sites as independent moral communities, which not only institutionalize a particular discursive iteration(s) of the religion of the heart, but also instantiate a distinct collective identity on the basis of an idealized and unique construction of the true self. In other words, I pay close attention to the socio-moral character of the institutional identity each group produces and privileges.

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[113] For more on the nature of my fieldwork and the methodological frameworks I espouse see Appendix A.

Each of the following three chapters begins with a brief ethnographic and historical description of the specific field site, which is then followed by a mapping of how the ten tenets of the religion of the heart take discursive form at each of them. Next, I systematically delimit the nature, and individual components, of the collective rituals institutionalized at each group, as well as the ways in which these serve to encode and enflesh a specific conception of the true self. I then revisit critics' unresolved concerns in light of my empirical findings, making clear both where and when their criticisms are warranted, as well as where and when they are not. I conclude each chapter with a discussion of aspects of my empirical findings, which suggest that even when critics are correct, their renderings of the religion of the heart often obscure or overlook significant issues, thereby oversimplifying what is, in reality, far more complex.

Part IV: The True Self in Social Context

Chapter 11

Recovering Authenticity:

Moral Reform and Shifting Involvements at a Twelve Step Group

This chapter consists of an institutional ethnography of New Life Fellowship (NLF), a weekly meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). I begin by offering a brief history of both AA as well as NLF. I then outline, in systematic form, how the ten tenets I introduced in Chapter 5 are given discursive expression at this weekly Twelve Step meeting—which I call *Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) discourse*. Next, I draw from the Durkheimian tradition in order to illuminate how this discursive iteration of the religion of the heart is encoded and enfleshed at NLF.[114] To do this, I treat this weekly Twelve Step meeting as a collective ritual, which enables the creation of moral community via the reconstitution of members' selves in light of its collective values. Finally, I revisit the unresolved concerns regarding the pathologies of anomie and egoism, and the question of shifting involvements, in light of my empirical data. In so doing, I demonstrate why critical accounts mislead, and make clear what they miss.

A Brief History of Alcoholics Anonymous and New Life Fellowship

AA began in the 1930s as a branch of the Oxford Group, an American evangelical and ecumenical movement started in the early twentieth century, whose members saw themselves as transcending denominational ties and preaching pure Christianity. They boiled the Christian message down to four "absolute principles": absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, and absolute love (Pittman 1997). Theologically, the Oxford Group owed much to Pietism, with its emphasis on experiencing the Holy Spirit as a prerequisite for salvation. Though in his history of the movement, Bill

[114] Due to the AA requirement that members' shares in meetings remain anonymous and confidential, I refrain from quoting individuals directly, unless they explicitly offered their consent. As a result, not only are names pseudonymized, but I also draw primarily from formal interviews conducted with NLF members outside of meetings, and significantly rely on existing scholarship on AA in order to provide a detailed picture of the discursive context one encounters in group meetings.

Pittman (1988, 122) remarks that the Group's closest historical precedent can be found "in the sweeping enthusiasm of the Methodist movement, begun by the Wesleys in the eighteenth century."[115]

In 1935, Bill Wilson, the co-founder of AA, joined the Oxford Group. A failed stockbroker from Akron, Ohio, Wilson had been struggling desperately with his problem drinking. In the hopes that the Group could help him stay sober he threw himself into it, eventually starting what in Akron became known as "the alcoholic squadron of the Oxford Group" (Jensen 2000, 30). Though Wilson remained a member of the Oxford Group for some time, he eventually absconded. He found the emphasis on absolutes difficult to accept, and instinctually resisted overtly Christian language. According to AA lore, the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous began when Wilson met a man named Robert Holbrook Smith (known to AA members as "Dr. Bob").[116] Wilson and Smith connected immediately, which they took to be the result of having shared similar experiences struggling to control their drinking. In developing the basic teachings of AA—which were eventually distilled into the fellowship's basic text, *Alcoholics Anonymous*—they adopted many of the principles of the Oxford Group, while tailoring them to problem drinkers. For instance, they retained the importance of honesty and unselfishness in recovering from alcoholism, but ditched the explicit connotations to Christ and salvation. They also drew from a number of other sources for inspiration. After reading the work of Carl Jung, Bill came to believe alcoholism was a disease that could only be cured by means of a "spiritual experience" (Kurtz 1979, 33). In fact, it was arguably AA that began the trend of drawing a sharp symbolic boundary between "spirituality" and "religion," thereby popularizing the phrase, "spiritual but not religious" (Fuller 2001, 112). A seeker by nature, Wilson was also significantly inspired by William James (see Lattin 2012). While detoxing in a hospital Wilson read James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, which proved, for him, revelatory. He took from James the primacy of personal experience, the authority of religious feeling, and a basically pragmatist orientation to religion. Apparently, James was such an important influence that in his autobiographical writings Wilson claimed that he was a founder of AA.

Though AA has always sought to present itself as religiously neutral, it clearly combines Pietist strands with liberal Christian or humanistic ones. In short, AA is thoroughly Protestant in tone and structure (Oden 1972). No doubt, in its early days the AA fellowship held obvious traces of a specifically American version of evangelical Pietism, but it has proven far more adaptable than one might expect. Its prescribed program of recovery, the Twelve Steps, have been combined with Transcendentalist, Unitarian, Buddhist, New Age, Quaker, Jesuit, and even Indigenous thought and practice (see Sanders

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[115] Thus, AA's genealogy reflects a tributary of the variegated history of the religion of the heart outlined in Chapter 4.

[116] For an insider account of AA's early history see *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age: A Brief History of AA*.

2006). Moreover, they have spawned an astounding array of sister fellowships, giving life to what Trysh Travis (2014) calls the "recovery movement."[117] Yet, as a carrier of the religion of the heart, we can conclude with Robert Fuller (2001, 115) that "AA has perpetuated the unique blend of mysticism and pragmatism propounded by such major contributors to unchurched American religious thought as Ralph Waldo Emerson and William James."

Although in its early years Wilson ran AA unofficially out of the organization's New York Headquarters, today there are no official leaders, and authority is extremely decentralized (Kurtz 1979, 107). When there are issues that affect the fellowship globally, decisions are made at the group level and gradually communicated upwards to what is called the AA General Services Office, still located in New York. Moreover, all groups, in order to make any changes to their meeting, must produce a "group conscience," achieved only after group deliberation and a vote. In this, AA is fundamentally democratic. Moreover, individual AA groups have significant autonomy as regards how they operate, which allows for manifest diversity at the group level. As Ernst Kurtz and William White (2015, 60) observe, "there really is no single entity as 'Alcoholics Anonymous'—only AA members and local AA groups that reflect a broad and ever-increasing variety of AA experience." Similarly, George Jensen (2000, 58) writes, "the culture of AA varies widely from group to group, because the organization is actually many discrete units held together by the Twelve Traditions." This is all the more striking in light of the fact that AA boasts over 2 million active members and 120,000 groups in approximately 175 countries (A.A. General Service Office 2019).

Thus we might ask how these myriad groups, structured in such a decentralized manner, retain anything in common. This is made possible in the following two ways. First, no matter where it exists AA remains expressly apolitical. By this I mean that it is a core AA tradition that each group has only one primary purpose: "to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers." Accordingly, "outside issues," such as religion or politics, are not to be discussed in meetings. As I discuss below, this tradition is generally enforced through the construction of speech norms, which powerfully discourage individuals from breaking it. Indeed, as Jensen (2000, 63) observed in his study of AA groups, "they do not talk politics." In this, AA both assumes the romantic liberal separation of private and public spheres, while identifying itself expressly with the former.

Second, all AA groups consider the text of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, or the "Big Book" as it is known among members, as canonical (Antze [1987] 2003). This is not to say that members cannot be, or are not, critical of it. But it does mean that becoming a committed member of AA presupposes a basic

[117] Examples include Narcotics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Cocaine Anonymous, Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, and Co-Dependents Anonymous.

acceptance of the conception of alcoholism as a "spiritual disease," AA's program of recovery (the Twelve Steps), and the importance of doing "AA service." Of course, different groups, along with their members, interpret these variously, thereby giving life to "different styles of recovery" (Kurtz and White 2015, 61). In fact, each AA group exhibits what Gary Alan Fine (1979, 734) calls an "idioculture"—that is, "a system of knowledge, beliefs, behaviors, and customs shared by members of an interacting group." In other words, distinct idiocultures emerge among groups that share allegiance to a more general cultural structure or symbolic system, while nevertheless adapting these to their specific *conscience collective*. As we shall see, NLF encodes and enfleshes AA discourse in its own unique way. At the same time, AA discourse nevertheless remains authoritative, giving discursive expression to the AA version of the religion of the heart, and ensuring some semblance of unity across the manifest diversity of the AA fellowship.

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New Life Fellowship (NLF) began over a decade ago as an AA service meeting that catered to the young adult members of a large regular (non-special interest) group in Toronto. Today, it is known as one of the city's primary "young person's meetings," with nearly all of its core members under the age of 35.[118] In some ways, NLF's weekly meeting differs little from other AA meetings. It takes place in the basement of a local church located in the heart of downtown Toronto. In meetings, members sit in rows on old metal chairs, facing a table where the chairperson and speaker sit. One hears many of the same readings—generally excerpts from the Big Book—read aloud, along with a collective recitation of the Serenity Prayer, at both the beginning and end of the meeting. A group secretary hands out colourful chips to those new members who have achieved various periods of sobriety. And like many other Twelve Step groups, NLF presents itself as officially "spiritual but not religious" (McClure and Wilkinson 2020).[119] Indeed, all of this is run of the mill at AA groups wherever you go.

However, local differences do exist. Despite the coherence of AA discourse, embodied in its written and oral traditions, we nevertheless find "different cultural expressions of core AA elements" (Westermeyer 2014, 159). In order to map NLF's idioculture we need to examine the dramatic changes in demography that transformed it into the group it is today.

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[118] In the AA fellowship, members are encouraged to join a homegroup, which is meant to serve as a kind of primary community within the program. Although AA members might attend many different meetings, they are expected to limit their membership to one homegroup. This is what I mean when I speak of "core members."

[119] A popular slogan heard at NLF is, "Religion is for those who don't want to go to hell. Spirituality is for those of who have been there."

Roughly five years ago, a large number of young queer- and trans-identifying people began visiting and getting involved with the meeting. These individuals eventually took on service positions, establishing themselves as core members of the group. As Pat, a trans person and one of the early members recalled, because it was a young person's meeting NLF attracted many of the queer youth with addictions in the city. They also explained that specifically gay meetings in Toronto tend to be majority gay male, which, in their view, makes it difficult for a lot of queer individuals who aren't cis-gay men to identify. Another early member, Robin, shared that as Pat and Hal—the first two explicitly trans-identifying members at NLF—began showing up regularly to the meeting, it became known as a safe space for the trans community in Toronto. Queer and trans alcoholics and addicts found in NLF a meeting where they could share about their experiences being trans, and where they did not need to hide their gender or sexual identities. NLF soon developed a reputation for welcoming those who belonged to the LGBTQ+ community with open arms.

There is undoubtedly a sense in which AA groups tend to reflect their surrounding environments (see Cahn 2005; Christensen 2010; Westermeyer 2014). Thus, as Toronto transformed in the wake of the 1960s from being a "bastion of Britishness and Protestantism" (Levine 2014, 88) to "the world's most diverse city—and one of the trans-/queer-friendliest" (Raj 2017, 154), Toronto AA groups have changed with it. Indeed, for many young queer and trans people, the city serves as a kind of sanctuary, an escape from what they have experienced as an unaccepting and hostile world. Though Toronto is certainly not without prejudice, Kristyn Wong-Tam (2017, 10) argues that, "queer culture is interwoven into Toronto place-making," while Steven Maynard (2017, 19) highlights, "the remarkable upsurge in transgender organizing in the Toronto of our own day." Indeed, there is an undeniable sense in which the city is far more "Toronto the Queer" than the "Toronto the Good" of yesteryear. Thus, the changes witnessed at NLF reflect in many ways larger social and demographic changes that have swept across the metropolis in recent decades.

With the influx of queer and trans members at NLF many of those who initiated the group began to leave, thereby imbuing members like Pat and Hal with the moral authority that comes with sobriety and seniority (Hoffman 2006, 676). In turn, they began to remake the group in order to cater in both explicit and implicit ways to the queer and trans community. This shows up, for instance, in the group's decision to change all male pronouns (He, Him) contained in the Big Book to genderless ones (They, Them) when read aloud. They also changed the wording of the "AA Preamble," which is read aloud at almost every meeting, so that rather than reading, "Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women…" they instead read, "Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of people..." Additionally, the group included in the chairperson's statement, also read aloud at every meeting, the following disclaimer: "There are members

of the LGBTQ community here tonight," along with the suggestion that individuals ask members before they hug them upon receiving a sobriety chip.

Still, the group's idioculture is most evident, not in the explicit inclusion of statements, or changes in recited literature, but rather in what might be called the performative force contained in the core members' public statements and self-presentations. To give some illustrative examples: one member, Fran, regularly refers to her higher power as "She" during her shares, while another confidently refers to theirs as "Goddess." Further, it is not uncommon to hear members share things to the effect of, "You can call your higher power whatever you want," "The basic text of AA is so patriarchal," and "We are a bunch of weirdos and freaks at this group"—with resolute earnestness, humour, and sincerity. And what's more, there is a distinctive normative aesthetic at NLF: among core members, body piercings and tattoos in abundance, peculiar hairstyles, and eccentric fashion styles are the norm. Here are some representative examples, observed at random during one of the weekly meetings: one member dons large silver moon boots, a fanny-pack, sunglasses, and a tattered t-shirt that reads, "Blame Society." Another has their hair dyed blue and green, a number of facial piercings, and a series of arm tattoos. Another has both their arms covered in tattoos, as well as a range of face and neck tattoos, and is dressed only in black attire. And, finally, one member has a mullet-like haircut and a beard, while also wearing lipstick and a t-shirt that reads, "High Anxiety Queer." Thus nearly all of the core members of the group don clothing, wear their hair, and decorate their bodies in ways that defy the norms of professional society. Moreover, these aesthetic displays make the individual in question's gender identity quite difficult to discern. The force of this kind of self-presentation is crucial to understanding NLF's idioculture—which I call its *queer subcultural identity*.

Because its core members share a common identification with the LGBTQ+ community, loaded with its own political commitments and discursive understandings, they exert a considerable degree of influence over the NLF's idioculture and overall sense of itself. In other words, because these queer- and trans- identifying members are, by all outward indications, the unspoken leaders of the meeting, they set the group's tone and authorize its norms. And this is true despite the fact that they make up a numerical minority. Indeed, while NLF sees between 60-100 visitors every week, its actual membership is quite small—only about 20 in total. However, of these core members, the vast majority identifies as queer or trans. And they wield significant power within the meeting—modeling what "good sobriety" looks like, and exhibiting, by their examples, how one ought to "work the program." Nevertheless, NLF members remain steadfastly committed to the AA program, taking as authoritative the various dimensions of the fellowship I outlined above. Indeed, despite its unique idioculture, there is a sense in which NLF remains very much par for the course as far as contemporary AA goes.

The Religion of the Heart at New Life Fellowship

I have argued that while AA groups are relatively autonomous in terms of determining their idioculture, they are nevertheless bound together by an overarching AA discourse. In this section I make evident the way this discourse embodies a particular iteration of the religion of the heart. My explication of the AA discourse is based on my fieldwork at NLF, my interviews with its core members and the particular interpretations of AA literature and its oral tradition they advance, and existing scholarship on the AA fellowship.

1. Experiential Epistemology

Historian Ernst Kurtz (1979, 191) writes, "At the very heart of all the experience of Alcoholics Anonymous lay experience." This is exhibited at NLF in a number of ways. First, it is an unspoken rule that one must always speak from experience and restrict their shares to "I" statements. Members commonly preface their shares with, "*I* am not an expert and *I* only have my experience, but this is what works for *me*." Indeed, in AA there is no greater authority than personal experience—it is what Kurtz calls the program's "first principle" (104). Crucially, then, AA institutionalizes an experiential epistemology whereby members are expected to give authority to their own subjective experiences.

Second, it is generally accepted within the fellowship that rationality, or scientific truths, are not useful when it comes to recovering from alcoholism. As Robin put it, "the biggest fallacy is that I can think my way out of my problems." Similarly, Liam asserted that the most common "spiritual activity" he does in AA is "surrender." When asked what he meant by this he replied, "I mean, be willing to give up my own opinion, my own sense of rightness, my own sense of knowing. So that I can experience something else. That's when I feel something bigger than myself." For these AA members, working the Twelve Steps allows them to *experience* what they need to stay sober, and meetings are where they "*feel* God's presence."

Third, the truth of the program ultimately derives from its efficacy in helping the alcoholic to stay sober. As Kurtz explains, "Faithful to the pragmatic criterion of truth, most members of Alcoholics Anonymous come to an understanding of their God through His felt rather than believed effect in their lives." He concludes, "Insofar as it [God] is perceptible, it is known best if not only by its possessor" (175).

It might be asked how this prioritizing of subjective experience does not produce solipsism, leaving each member trapped in their own personal experiences. To answer this question we need to recall that all experience requires *interpretation*. Thus, it is a crucial aspect of AA discourse that it provides a particular heuristic with which newcomers learn to interpret their experiences. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to suggest that unity in AA is predicated upon a *shared interpretation of the alcoholic*

identity and experience. This interpretation is naturalized in the official literature as well as the extensive oral tradition that has grown up around it, both of which serve to legitimate a distinct conception of alcoholism. By reading AA literature and listening to experienced members share newcomers learn that as "alcoholics," their experiences were the result of a "spiritual disease." Thus, they are socialized into AA discourse by *identifying* with the experiences described (and indeed prescribed) by veteran members (those who have internalized the AA discourse). This process is such that once the newcomer begins to interpret their experiences through AA discourse they begin to actually have new experiences which lend credence to its plausibility.

For instance, in our interview Farouk described listening intently at his first visit to NLF to veteran members share their experiences with alcoholism. The narratives they recounted—what they had done, how they felt, what they aspired to—all "resonated" with him in such a way that he identified with them, and as a result, began to accept as true the AA heuristic they used to interpret their experiences. What occurred in this moment was that Farouk granted their testimonies authority by virtue of the way they helped him make sense of his own past experiences and subjective feelings. Put another way, Farouk's *experience of identification* gave plausibility and thereby moral authority to AA discourse. As the weeks went by, Farouk continued to listen to members share about having "God-thoughts" and "spiritual experiences," and soon enough he too began to experience these. And in time, he learned that as an alcoholic he experiences life in a way that nonalcoholics do not. Farouk's case enables us to see that while an experiential epistemology is institutionalized at NLF, AA discourse serves as a means of framing experiences in such a way that it feeds and supports a particular collective identity.

2. Immanence of God or the Superempirical

The third step of the Twelve Steps reads, "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him." While the wording of this step clearly reflects AA's evangelical roots, NLF members take seriously the qualification, "*as we understood Him*." During their shares in meetings members speak of "God" variably in terms of a "higher power," "Spirit of the Universe," "Force," "Divine Energy," "Creator," "Goddess," "God-X," "She," "Invisible Sky Friend," and even "Whatever word you are comfortable with." How NLF members label God or the superempirical seems less important than the fact that it is considered a power greater and other than their selves, and that it is something that can be experienced directly (Rudy and Greil 1989, 45). As anthropologist Maria Gabrielle Swora (2004, 188) puts it, "The Twelve Steps move the alcoholic toward an understanding of the world as sacred, or in AA's terms, as spiritual." Moreover, as outlined in Chapter 5, God or the superempirical is conceived by NLF members as not categorically separate from humans, but rather as accessible *through* the self. By "through," I mean simply that NLF members assume they can access divine guidance by

going within and listening for "God-thoughts" or intuitions. In this way, AA discourse posits access to an immanent divinity.

3. *Benevolent God/Universe*

It is perhaps not surprising that AA members—many of whom have suffered from experiences of childhood abuse, emotional neglect, trauma, anxiety, or depression—yearn for a loving and benevolent higher power in their lives. It is common to hear at NLF that members struggled with the "God-thing" upon entering AA because of the negative associations they held towards "religion," but that once they learned their "higher power" did not have to be judgmental or vengeful they embraced it. As one trans member of NLF, Lars, put it: "my God loves me for exactly who I am." Lars went on to describe their higher power as "the most loving and forgiving thing I can think of." They added, "God must be this way in order for me to be able to feel okay with myself." Here we see the heavy debts AA discourse owes to William James. Recall that it was James who championed the "optimistic type," for whom, the divine, "if you will only trust her sufficiently, is absolutely good." In a sense, members of NLF carry forward this Jamesian legacy of a religion of the healthy-mindedness. However, rather than aim for the "wonderful inner paths to a supernatural kind of happiness," as James tantalizingly put it, NLF members seek merely a higher power that does not wish for them to suffer or struggle in vain.

4. Redemptive Self as Theodicy

I argued in Chapter 5 that the religion of the heart presupposes a theodicy, and that it is the character of its theodicy that sustains commitment to it. In its broadest form, AA discourse presupposes what I earlier called, following Dan McAdams, the redemptive self. This refers to a way of narrating one's life such that all suffering serves a redemptive purpose. Put otherwise, AA discourse teaches that every event in life is meaningful. As one member put it, "I had to go through what I went through in order to get to this place." While another explained, "I am able to accept what happened to me because I can now see the lessons in them." NLF members learn to narrate their lives in a way that imbues all of their past experiences (especially those with negative connotations) with "spiritual" significance.

In fact, after listening to a number of AA speakers, one learns to detect a clear narrative structure or script: in early childhood the feeling of being "different" plagues the alcoholic. Alcohol becomes a means of quelling or coping with this feeling. However, as a result of their alcoholism the individual experiences a series of increasingly dire negative consequences. This ends only when the alcoholic "hits bottom" and "surrenders," upon which they have a "spiritual experience" and commence to rebuild their lives under the guidance of their "higher power" (see Rudy and Greil 1983, 9). This is a deeply redemptive life narrative, which every committed AA member learns to adapt to their past and present

circumstances. Moreover, AA discourse teaches members that their negative experiences were necessary in order to help those who continue to suffer from alcoholism "outside of the rooms." This is because only those with experiences of alcoholism are said to be able to reach the alcoholic. Thus, anthropologist Paul Antze (2003, 173) observes, veteran AA members see their experiences with alcoholism "as having 'elected' them to a unique therapeutic mission."

Finally, in adopting this narrative as their own, AA members are also taught to look out for signs of their higher power's presence in their lives. Swora (2004, 203) explains, "For many AA members, nothing in the world happens arbitrarily or by mistake; there are no coincidences in God's world. Many members believe that what happens in their lives is the direct result of the action of their higher power, and they have been persuaded to attend to the world in which they live in a sacred manner." In short, AA discourse enchants the alcoholic's world, by imbuing even the most mundane personal events with cosmic significance.

5. Self-Realization as Teleology

As with all carriers of the religion of the heart, AA discourse postulates self-realization as the end suffering serves, and the ultimate purpose of the alcoholic's life. Thus members commonly say things such as, "In pain and suffering you find growth," and "My worst moments taught me the most valuable lessons." Yet realizing one's true self is given a distinct discursive framing at NLF. Members often distinguish between who they were when they were in active addiction—what they refer to variously as their "alcoholic self," "ego," or "when I was sick"—and who they are now that they are clean and sober—what they refer to as their "true" or "recovering" self (Pollner and Stein 2001, 47). As Amara shared in our interview, upon getting sober she asked her sponsor whether she needed to seek forgiveness from her higher power for what she had done while drinking. Her sponsor replied that she didn't need to because her higher power knew that she wasn't really her true self when she was drinking—that who she is *truly* is who is she when she is sober. Similarly, I have heard members share during meetings, "I'm more me than I ever was when I was drinking," and "I get to be authentically myself here." In this framing, one's journey of recovery from alcoholism becomes a journey of self-realization.

Furthermore, for many NLF members, the "alcoholic self" is understood to be a byproduct of an oppressive society and culture. They describe their descent into addiction as the result of heteronormativity, homophobia, materialism, and other societal sources. NLF members learn to interpret their life prior to getting sober as a fall from grace as a result of corrupt socialization, which they must now take responsibility for. Thus "getting sober," for members of NLF, amounts to far more than remaining abstinent. It entails a life-long quest to become who they were meant to be, or who they truly are (Young 2011, 710). Indeed, NLF institutionalizes an expressivist ethic whereby members are expected

to seek out their true self and live accordingly. This is understood to require engaging in various forms of self-work, the most important of which is attending AA meetings. Indeed, AA discourse presupposes the ever-present threat of the alcoholic self—though one's alcoholic self can be subdued, it can never be annihilated. This assures that the task of self-realization will last a lifetime.

6. Self-Ethic (Voice from Within)

We have seen that AA discourse at NLF presupposes the existence of a higher power that is readily accessible to the alcoholic. In this, members assume that they can become inwardly connected to an immanent divinity. This has been a staple of AA since its inception. As Fuller (2001, 113) notes, "For him [Bill Wilson] spirituality has to do with recognizing that there is a Higher Power, God. He believed that our highest good comes from letting go of our personal will and finding inner harmony with this fulfilling Other." It is generally accepted at NLF that one is "being true to oneself" or "living one's truth" when one is attuned to, or following the will of, one's higher power. As a result, members spend much time trying to distinguish their alcoholic self from their recovering self. As we shall see, veteran members model this skill when they share in meetings. By listening to these members share about how they distinguish the voice of their "higher power" or their "recovering self" from that of their "alcoholic self" newcomers learn to do so as well. Moreover, much time and effort are expended by members in conversation with one another, in attempts to discern whether a desire they have is reflective of their alcoholic or recovering self—that is, whether it derives from their "ego" or their "higher power." But what a Durkheimian analysis demonstrates (and what I will expand on below) is that the voice of a member's higher power—one's true self, is significantly shaped by the group's idioculture.

7. Virtue is Natural

It is a staple of the redemptive self that although individuals may have struggled and committed wrongful acts, at the beginning, "goodness was there" (McAdams 2006, 235). At NLF it is apparent that in realizing one's "recovering self" one is assumed to simultaneously reconnect with, and embody, that inner core. This follows from NLF members' association of the "ego" of the alcoholic as the byproduct of a corrupt society. Nevertheless, NLF members also accept the AA precept that alcoholism is essentially a *disease of egoism*—or as one member put it, a "disease of more."

Here I think we can see how NLF members challenge and revise the evangelical underpinnings of AA. Rather than viewing the alcoholic as innately selfish (which would resemble something like original sin), these young people tend to view their egoism as a byproduct of the culture and society they were raised in. Yet while acknowledging its social roots, they nevertheless accept that they, as individuals, acted selfishly and must therefore take responsibility. In turn, to undertake the AA program of recovery is

not merely to remain abstinent, but also to cultivate the virtues of honesty, tolerance or open-mindedness, and selflessness. Indeed, members encourage one another to cultivate these virtues in both subtle and overt ways.

And yet, despite the moral dimensions of "getting sober," most members of NLF shy away from invoking explicitly moral language. Instead, they prefer framing their personal transformations in medical terms—as a process of "healing," "recovering," or "becoming whole." Fran offers a demonstrative example. Fran recalled feeling at a very young age that something was wrong with her: "I didn't feel at home in my own skin. I had a lot of insecurities, especially around eating and food. I had weight problems. So I ended up developing an eating disorder at fourteen. It was pretty bad." Soon afterward Fran began smoking marijuana and drinking alcohol to quell her negative feelings. "I felt like when I was drunk and high I had found an answer to all my self-loathing and all my insecurities." She admitted that as a teen she desperately wanted to be famous, and she craved other's admiration, even their envy. But her addiction took her down a path of misery and self-destruction. Although Fran struggled to stay clean, she eventually found her way to NLF and has not relapsed since. When asked why she continues to go to AA meetings she replied, "It's my medication. I need it. It's where I go to heal." Among NLF members, it is assumed that in heeding the voice of one's higher power, and in recovering from alcoholism, the alcoholic will simultaneously learn to live a virtuous life.

8. Sacralization of Individual Liberty

Given the centrality of personal experience at NLF, it should be apparent how foundational the value of individual liberty is. Members are adamant that individuals must freely choose to join the fellowship, that no member has the authority to offer anything more than "suggestions" to another, and that the fellowship itself must operate according to the principle of "attraction rather than promotion." Thus AA discourse takes seriously the value of negative freedom: NLF members rail against the external authorities they perceive to be trying to constrain or discipline their true selves. We might say for these young adults a life not lived from the inside is no life at all.

At the same time, AA discourse also endorses a conception of positive freedom, which emerges directly out of members' experiences with addiction. In interviews members asserted, "My experience with the Twelve Steps is that I have freedom from debilitating fear and anxiety today," "I'm more free in sobriety than when I was drinking," and "I finally have the freedom to choose how to live my life." For members of NLF, a life of complete self-determination was experienced as a nightmare. Under the influence of their addictions, they experienced a radical unfreedom, despite a relative lack of external constraints. In turn, AA discourse holds that real freedom, or autonomy, comes from dependence upon one's higher power, for only in this way can the alcoholic avoid the clutches of their alcoholic self (Kurtz

1979, 216). This was made manifestly clear when Pat declared, “I’ve found freedom through God.” Moreover, this conception of positive freedom is the basis upon which conformity to collective norms is implicitly enforced. While external sanctions are prohibited within the program, the promise of “real freedom” serves to motivate newcomers to heed the counsel of their sponsors, and take seriously the suggestions offered by veteran members.

9. Mind-Body-Spirit Connection

As I mentioned in Chapter 5, the mind-body-spirit connection is arguably the most ambiguous of all dimensions of the religion of the heart, such that it allows for manifold interpretive variety. Yet it remains central to AA discourse. “Alcoholism” as understood by founder Wilson, is a “disease” which affects mind, body, and spirit (Kurtz 1979, 164). Indeed, the Big Book outlines in systematic fashion how each of these dimensions are interconnected: the alcoholic’s mind is said to be plagued by an obsession with alcohol, leading to a compulsion to drink. Meanwhile, the alcoholic’s body is said to have an allergy to alcohol such that when alcohol is consumed they immediately crave more, thereby leading to a vicious cycle. And finally, the alcoholic is said to suffer from a “spiritual malady,” which only a “spiritual experience” can cure (and only contingently at that). Thus, Kurtz observes, “AA teaches that the physical, mental, and spiritual components of each alcoholic’s individual life are mutually connected” (204). In a sense, the AA program is a clear example of alternative medicine, as it presumes human health is dependent upon individual alignment with a larger spiritual reality. Fuller (2001, 111) therefore concludes, “the many twelve-step recovery movements spawned by Alcoholics Anonymous are striking examples of how holistic healing movements introduce people to new spiritual philosophies.”

10. Methodological Individualism

As with all other iterations of the religion of the heart, AA discourse focuses on personal transformation rather than structural change. In this, it carries forward the legacy of the Oxford Group, which Linda Mercadante (2015, 615) observes, “privatized morality, seeing individual choices, rather than social problems, as the proper focus for their efforts.” Though NLF members might view their alcoholic self as a byproduct of a corrupt and oppressive society, they nevertheless believe that they must take personal responsibility for their recovery upon entrance into AA. What this means is that members learn to accept that if they are to “get sober,” they must refrain from focusing on society’s ills, and, as they say in the program, “sweep their own side of the street.” Thus, AA discourse presupposes an ideal of self-responsibility and a methodological individualism. This is, of course, reinforced by the injunctions not to share about politics, as well as the need to speak solely from personal experience. It is a fundamental tenet

of AA discourse that recovery from alcoholism is an individual process, which can only be achieved by means of personal, not societal, reform.

AA Meetings as Collective Ritual

We have seen that AA discourse, a discursive variant of the religion of the heart, is authoritative at NLF. But as I have repeatedly stressed, a Durkheimian perspective holds that discourses are powerless without concomitant collective rituals. Importantly, this does not mean that rituals merely play one key role among many in socializing individuals to accept specific symbolic systems and moral traditions. Rather, it means that, for Durkheim, processes of meaning-construction, socialization, identity acquisition, and moral formation have their foundations in ritual—that is, the entirety of social life is only made possible because of ritual.[120]

It will be useful, then, to examine Durkheim's theory of ritual in more detail. For Durkheim, all rituals begin with human assembly. The reason for this is that when individuals gather together their collective presences produce a kind of social energy or "electricity" which Durkheim refers to as *collective effervescence* (Durkheim [1912] 1995, 217). Sociologist Randall Collins (2004, 35) usefully analogizes this to a "condition of heightened intersubjectivity." Of course, mere assembly is not sufficient to produce this state—shared action and awareness, as well as shared emotion, are also required: collective attention strengthens shared emotion, which in turn increases individual emotional energy, thereby intensifying the shared experience. Thus we might say rituals are patterned and coordinated forms of human behaviour which, by channeling and orienting collective attention and emotion, enable the construction, and indeed reaffirmation, of a *conscience collective*. As we shall see, different rituals accomplish this differently; we can therefore distinguish between types of rituals, as well as their internal components. But from a Durkheimian perspective, what all rituals share is a propensity to produce collective effervescence, which in turn makes possible the following ritual effects.

First, the collective representations or discourses that structure the ritual are sacralized as a result of their association with the emotional arousal and heightened intersubjectivity experienced by participants. At the same time, the ritual encodes these shared symbols with meaning, such that they come to define reality for the group—giving life to its *conscience collective*. Second, through ritual the "social self" is (re)constructed and strengthened. This is because the experience of collective effervescence transforms members "through a emotional structuring of their sensory and sensual being," in light of that which the group holds sacred (Shilling and Mellor 1998, 196). Third, rituals reify and affirm the group's

[120] It follows that a Durkheimian conception of ritual is far broader, and indeed more fundamental, than colloquial definitions of the term.

moral standards. This occurs because ritual participants feel moral when they are "acting with the emotional energy derived from the heightened experience of the group" (Collins 2004, 39). Thus, the byproduct of ritual is that the collective representations held sacred by a moral community are reaffirmed and strengthened in the minds of the participants, strengthening their attachment to the group itself. Paolo Ceri explains:

> The sacred stems from the communion as well as from the need for the identification that this communion produces. So a collective identity—that is, a corpus of moral criteria to assess the interests and actions of the group and of the individuals belonging to it—is formed or reconstituted. These representations are binding because of the authority given them by the fact of being common and by the sacredness with which they are invested. (Ceri 1993, 143-144)

Furthermore, according to Durkheim, without regular and repeated ritual participation, commitment to the group and its moral ideals—and with them, the "social self"—eventually dissipate. Indeed, sacred symbols are only respected to the extent that they are "charged up with sentiments by participation in rituals" (Collins 2004, 37). Resultantly, "When the practices stop, the beliefs lose their emotional import, becoming mere memories, forms without substance, eventually dead and meaningless" (37).

It should now be apparent why I place ritual centre stage in my empirical analysis of NLF. The religion of the heart, as a cultural structure, will hold little private or public significance unless repeatedly revivified through collective ritual. Thus, in this section, I analyze NFL's weekly AA meeting as a specific type of public ritual, identifying and delimiting its key components: first, the erection of symbolic boundaries; second, the demarcation of a distinct social environment; and third, the performative uses of storytelling. I argue these three components work in unison to successfully produce collective effervescence and consequently reconstitute members' identities in light of AA discourse, as it is encoded at NLF. I focus on weekly meetings because it is at these where NLF members assemble, thereby reaching a heightened condition of intersubjectivity. In other words, weekly meetings are, in my view, the primary site of socialization and identity reconstitution as regards AA discourse. However, I also acknowledge that this public ritual is not the sole source of moral (re)formation for NLF members. Indeed, weekly meetings are often supplemented by private or micro rituals, which enable members to bolster their commitment to one another and the moral community they belong to (Durkheim [1912] 1995, 214). Thus, I conclude with a discussion of this fourth component, which I refer to as practices of self-cultivation.

1. Erection of symbolic boundaries

All rituals draw boundaries between insiders and outsiders (Giesen 2006, 343). NLF does this in a number of ways. First, AA discourse makes a categorical distinction between "alcoholics" or "addicts" and "normal people" or "social drinkers." This symbolic boundary is constantly reinforced as members are expected to introduce themselves as "alcoholics" whenever they speak in meetings. AA discourse, in demarcating and reifying a distinct collective identity, serves to enable a deep bond among members that is kin-like: "They see themselves as sharing both a legacy of suffering and bodily substance and thus social identity" (Swora 2011, 5). Crucial, then, is the symbolic role "alcoholism" plays in the construction of moral community in AA. Not only does this heuristic serve to distinguish insiders from outsiders, but in its formulation at NLF, it presupposes an entire moral order; the alcoholic is believed to suffer from excessive egoism or selfishness, which can only be diminished by means of working the Twelve Steps. This is why acceptance and internalization of AA discourse is so critical to the formation of community at NLF—until members view themselves as suffering from a "spiritual malady" that only AA can cure, they will likely feel no need to commit to the group.

2. *Demarcation of a distinct social environment*

But how is acceptance of this discourse achieved? I think the answer to this lies in the social environment AA groups such as NLF create. It is significant that meetings take place in an enclosed and private setting, and where individuals remain anonymous. Both this physical separation and the principle of anonymity serve to enable the creation of a distinct social environment, where the speech norms and codes of behaviour differ radically from those that pervade elsewhere in romantic liberal modernity.

Newcomers at AA meetings are almost always plagued by shame; the struggling addict is used to feeling as though they have to hide aspects of who they are and what they have done. Indeed, it is not uncommon for alcoholics to feel stigmatized in their societies (Jensen 2000, 105). In turn, it is noteworthy that, in the rooms of AA, members are not merely allowed, but in fact expected, to divulge these hidden aspects of their lives. This no doubt reflects an expressivist ethic, but it takes a distinct form in AA. That is, within the rooms, "members invert public reality by making stigma the norm" (Young 2011, 713). Time and again I have heard at NLF how relieved and inspired newcomers were to listen to others share about things they have said, thought, or done while in active addiction—things that might be considered taboo or even immoral outside the rooms of AA. Thus events that would likely be met with horror in public life are listened to without condemnation in meetings.

Of course, this also occurs in talk-therapy. But what distinguishes the AA meeting is its publicness (O'Reilly 1997, 166). Telling a paid therapist one's darkest secrets is quite different from having a room full of strangers affirm their validity and perhaps even identify. Jensen (2000, 108) explains, "As alcoholics confess their most hidden secrets to their higher power and other alcoholics, the

secrets begin to lose their power." Furthermore, it is a peculiar feature of the social environment found at NLF that those who have behaved in the most egregious ways can acquire celebrity-like status in the program. As Heath Hoffman (2006, 677) reports, "in a somewhat strange twist of fate, the sordid trials and tribulations that members experienced during their active alcoholism enhances their status in sobriety."

Indeed, I once listened to a member share in a jocular fashion about his experiences drinking and driving, stealing cars, and getting arrested—all of which was met with riotous laughter. This was made possible due to the particular speech norms one finds in the fellowship. As noted above, members are expected to share from personal experience alone, and restrict themselves to "I" statements. Second, the meetings consist of a series of monologues, so "cross-talk"—that is, commenting on another person's share—is prohibited. This serves not only to prevent potential conflicts, but also to reinforce the value of individual liberty—members must not be preached at, as assent must come from within. Finally, laughing at one's past misdeeds serves to distance one's present self from the "alcoholic self" who committed them, thereby enabling moral reform (Pollner and Stein 2001, 48).

In interviews with NLF members it was made clear that initial attraction to the AA program largely derived from their experiences seeing others who looked and spoke like them share in this way. Similarly, in his study of AA, Jensen (2000, 77) found, "those who have been in the program for a while frequently comment on how they feel that they are able to be honest at meetings." He adds, "While it can certainly be argued that we can never be completely honest … people nonetheless feel that they find a greater degree of honesty in AA meetings. They feel that they can make controversial comments without offending others or without being judged." Again, NLF institutionalizes a distinctly AA version of an expressivist ethic, which contrasts sharply with much of public life in romantic liberal modernity. For members, AA meetings are experienced as a kind of haven, where masks can be set aside and authentic selves can engage in intimate emotional exchanges. For individuals who are suffering from shame and self-loathing the degree of emotional honesty found at NLF is experienced as exhilarating and energizing. This is critical, I believe, to the production of collective effervescence in AA, as this emotional energy is harnessed in order to strengthen members' commitment to both AA discourse and the group itself. In turn, we might say that by creating a social environment where members can identify with one another, and where the public confession of one's "bad behaviour" is made normative, each meeting serves to galvanize NLF members, reinforcing their commitment to the program and reconstituting their selves in light of AA discourse.

3. The performative uses of storytelling

Storytelling is endemic to human life. As Charles Taylor (2016, 317) observes, we are language animals, thus "through my story, I define my identity." Narrative psychologists have extended this insight, arguing that "we ultimately make meaning out of our lives through stories" (McAdams 2006, 289). The religion of the heart, as a cultural structure, only gains plausibility and force when encoded in the narratives individuals tell about themselves and their lives. Indeed, this is why groups like NLF are so critical to study, for they serve as the sites of collective storytelling, where shared narratives are internalized by individuals in order to make sense of their pasts, presents, and futures. As Robert Wuthnow (1994, 301) observes, "People in groups do not simply tell stories—they become their stories."

We cannot make sense of how NLF serves as a site of moral (re)formation without understanding the key role stories and storytelling play. As previously stated, there is a distinct script that structures life narratives told in AA. Newcomers learn this script by listening to it reiterated at every meeting. Indeed, veteran members learn to adopt the script as their own, retaining its structure while fitting it to the specific circumstances of their lives. As Carole Cain notes, AA stories "are part of the process of cultural transmission" and serve a number of functions. First, they reframe AA discourse into a narrative form, naturalizing the religion of the heart. Second, they encode what it means to be an alcoholic, enabling individuals to identify themselves as alcoholics and also label others. Third, the "AA story is a cognitive tool" or "a mediating device for self-understanding," meaning the AA member "learns to tell and to understand his own life as an AA life, and himself as an alcoholic" (Cain 1991, 215). What Cain is pointing to is the way storytelling, when performed in the distinct social environment offered by AA meetings, serves to reconstitute members' sense of self in light of AA discourse. In a similar vein, Jensen (2000, 45) writes, "the culture of AA can hardly be understood by reading the Big Book apart from its ritualized practice and its oral hermeneutic tradition. Learning to interpret the text within its oral tradition is an important means of 'reworking the self.'"

How does this work? To understand this we must recognize the performative nature of storytelling at NLF. That is, stories are not merely told, but *lived* (Alexander 2006b, 38). Put another way, in narrating their lives according to AA discourse, members of NLF literally *re-interpret* (and therefore *re-constitute*) their selves. Jensen (2000, 115) explains, "Every telling of one's story involves a number of acts of identity. The speaker reaffirms an identity with his or her former self (I am the person who did these things, the person who takes responsibility for these things) even as he or she creates (with each retelling) an increased sense of distance from that self." Thus, we might say, "Speakers come to know themselves and others as they speak" (113).

I am here describing the way storytelling at NLF serves to "make up" people (Weegman and Piwowoz-Hjort 2009, 273). Each time a member shares publicly they construct and reinforce the pure and pristine true recovered self they now identify with, as well as the contaminated or polluted alcoholic self

they reject (Pollner and Stein 2001, 47). Moreover, as members share their stories in meetings they learn to model forms of behaviour that embody the latter—they literally perform their recovering self. Thus, every public share is a performative act. Additionally, telling one's story is not merely descriptive, but also *prescriptive*. For each telling is an act of self-constitution in light of the moral ideals and collective values encoded at NLF. As Jensen (2000, 113) observes, "as [AA members] speak, sharing the stories of their lives, constructing heroes, they do so by taking on the values of the community." He adds, "Each time they speak, they reinforce those values. So they construct heroes that are like the heroes of the community."

At NLF the heroes are those veteran members such as Pat and Hal who have achieved long-term sobriety, belong to the queer and trans community, and embody the AA virtues. These members come closest to embodying the group's distinct idioculture, which comprises a combination of liberal Christian ideals—humility, selflessness, honesty, and tolerance—and a queer subcultural identity. And yet, these veteran members do not stand above the rest; because their moral authority derives from their ability to exemplify NLF's sacred values, should they fail to live up to them their moral authority could be undermined. Moreover, they do not wield external power over other NLF members. Rather, their power lies primarily in the normative force of the example they set for others.

Of course, stories are not merely *told*, but in a very real sense *enfleshed*. What I mean by this is that the act of telling stories does not merely reconstitute the speaker's sense of self, but quite literally how they experience the world. As Paul Antze (1976, 325) puts it, "active participants tend to absorb group ideas not just as a creed or set of beliefs but as a living reality that is reconfirmed in each day's experience." Again, Durkheim's notion of collective effervescence is critical in this regard. By stoking emotional energy within individuals and orienting and affixing this energy to those sacred forms that are central to the collective identity of the group, rituals serve to reconfigure individuals on a bodily level. Chris Shilling (2005, 215) explains, "It is through this transfer of energy that the *inner lives* of individuals are structured in accordance with collective symbols, and that a group becomes conscious of itself, and is bound together, as a moral community."

This helps us to understand how the ideal of self-realization can serve well-defined collective ends. Though certainly amenable to individual interpretation, as Durkheim would expect, the true self at NLF is very much socially constituted, fundamentally reflective of the group's *conscience collective*. Thus, as members begin to internalize AA discourse as encoded at NLF they quite literally come to experience the world in a way that reaffirms its plausibility. "God-thoughts," which members interpret as emanating from a source beyond the group, in fact, reflect the distinct moral ideals of the group itself, and the lessons individual members learn to distill out of the day's events are similarly shaped by the

collective values of the group itself. In turn, active engagement in NLF meetings serves to produce commitment to the group by means of identity reconstitution.

4. Practices of self-cultivation

NLF's weekly meeting stands out as the primary locus of socialization, where members' "social selves" are born and reaffirmed. Yet, upon introduction to the AA program, members quickly learn that merely going to meetings is not sufficient to achieve "emotional sobriety." On the contrary, according to veteran members "working the program" requires engaging in various forms of self-work or practices of self-cultivation in order to stay in "fit spiritual condition" and realize one's true self.

The first of these is remaining abstinent from alcohol and mind- or mood-altering drugs. Indeed, from a Durkheimian perspective alcohol serves as a kind of totem for AA members. Thus, outside of meetings members must remain ever vigilant, making sure not to ingest this substance. Interestingly while some medical professionals view this as an extreme measure, from a sociological perspective, it is clear that the requirement of abstinence is crucial to securing both solidarity and commitment, as it serves to bolster the "alcoholic" identity and strengthen the bond between alcoholics.

The second is the practice of psychological identification. I spoke above about the effect storytelling has on the speaker, but we must not forget the role it plays in socializing listeners. Jensen (2000, 98) remarks, "As they identify with others in the program, newcomers take on a new persona" (98). As a result, "listeners, also alcoholics, commune with speakers and are transformed by their stories" (24). Indeed, identification is critical to the process of identity reconstitution in AA (Cain 1991, 244). Moreover, this is very much a learned skill. Even if newcomers have experienced similar experiences as those they listen to, they might not identify. For listening in this way is quite different than, say, the kind of listening normalized in an academic setting, where one should identify inconsistencies, contradictions, or factual errors. Instead, newcomers are encouraged by their sponsors and veteran members to "ignore the differences" and "focus on the similarities," which amounts to disregarding those aspects of their biography that clash with AA discourse, and highlighting those aspects of their life (especially the emotional states) that can be related to the narrative told by the speaker. Again, this is critical to community-formation, for it is only by means of members collectively identifying as "alcoholics"—as "being in the same boat"—that solidarity is made possible. While members first learn this skill in meetings, they are encouraged to practice it with other alcoholics "outside of the rooms." When NLF members meet with one another for coffee during the week, they might reaffirm their connection and commitment to the program by exchanging stories and identifying with one another. As A. Javier Trevino (1992) notes, merely talking to other alcoholics may itself constitute a ritual of sorts.

Accordingly, the most important practices of self-cultivation found in NLF are abstinence, storytelling and psychological identification. Yet there are others, which members variously engage in between weekly meetings. These include practices of "recalling the last drink," "helping the newcomer" (often called "Twelfth Stepping"), prayer and meditation in order to connect with one's higher power, and monitoring one's thoughts and feelings for traces of the alcoholic self. Members learn to lookout for polluted thoughts and feelings of resentment, fear, and self-centeredness, as they are taught that "the alcoholic who is not drinking but taken over by these dangerous emotions is not truly sober but is merely 'dry', on an 'emotional binge'" (Swora 2001, 13). Members also regularly consult with each other in order to discern whether or not a particular desire they might have is selfish or reflective of their true recovered self. In all of this, NLF members engage in regular forms of self-cultivation, or piety, in order to revivify and reaffirm their commitment to one another and to the group.

In sum, by erecting symbolic boundaries to construct a collective identity, demarcating a distinct social environment, offering a specific narrative script through which members learn to interpret their lives, and authorizing a range of practices of self-cultivation that function to enable individuals to reconstitute themselves in light of the moral ideas of the group, AA groups such as NLF function as sites of collective ritual that successfully produce collective effervescence.

The Pathologies of Romantic Liberal Modernity and New Life Fellowship

We can now take-up the first concern regarding the religion of the heart: whether or not it can offer a corrective to the pathologies of romantic liberal modernity—anomie and egoism. Recall that communitarians and civic republicans tend to view "spirituality" as lacking any effective social discipline, and thereby producing anomic and/or egoistic individuals. They argue that by sacralizing individual freedom, "religious individualism" gives too much authority to the individual, producing moral relativism and social atomism. For instance, Bellah et al. (1985, 232) criticize what they call "communities of personal support" where "community and attachment come not from the demands of a tradition, but from the empathetic sharing of feelings among therapeutically attuned selves." And they further criticize the religiosity championed by the "spiritual but not religious" on the grounds that it allegedly "lacks any effective social discipline" (246). Similarly, Jeremy Carrette and Richard King's (2005, 58) neo-Marxist account presents Twelve Step programs like AA as "not a cure for our sense of social isolation and disconnectedness but … in fact, part of the problem." They argue groups like NLF have "played into the hands of a neoliberal ideology of religion" in that they have "removed the social dimension of religion and created a spirituality of the self – of the *consuming* self" (68). Carrette and King have in mind an analysis akin to that of psychologist Bruce Alexander in *The Globalization of Addiction*. Alexander (2006, 3) argues, "today's rising tide of addiction to drug use and a thousand other habits is the

consequence of people, rich and poor alike, being torn from the close ties to family, culture, and traditional spirituality that constituted the normal fabric of life in pre-modern times." He further argues these ties are being torn apart because "virtually every aspect of human existence is embedded within, and shaped by, minimally regulated competitive markets" (60). Alexander calls his a "dislocation theory of addiction," which holds that addiction is a natural response to a "lack of psychosocial integration" (58). Translating these terms into a Durkheimian register, we can say critics fear that with the rise of neoliberalism, and the accompanying spread of utilitarian individualism, individuals in romantic liberal modernity are solely being socialized by the economic sphere.

It seems to me useful to distinguish between two distinct criticisms contained in the above accounts. First, critics argue groups such as NLF, which naturalize and legitimate "spirituality," cannot produce robust moral community and thereby stave off anomie. Second, critics argue that AA groups like NLF, even when they can create moral community, do so by naturalizing the utilitarian individualism of the economic sphere, thereby exacerbating egoism. In what follows I consider each of these in light my Durkheimian analysis of NLF.

Regarding the problem of anomie, it is not difficult to see what would give critics this impression. At NLF the value of individual liberty is firmly entrenched; members take their own subjective experiences as authoritative, there exist minimal overt social norms or regulations, moral language is eschewed, and members join the group on the basis of instrumental self-interest (e.g. to stay sober). Moreover, the lack of explicit authorities and the extensive negative freedom members have to decide for themselves what their recoveries require would seem a recipe for weak attachment and commitment. It is therefore not by any means obvious how a place such as this could serve as a site of social integration and belonging.

And yet, as we have seen above, it does. This process begins once the newcomer commences identifying as an "alcoholic," which entails internalizing AA discourse. By actively participating in meetings, NLF members reconstitute their selves in light of the collective values and virtues encoded in the narratives shared. In this, we can see Durkheim's conception of human nature at work. As members internalize the values of the group, they begin to identify with them (which they call their "recovering self") such that they eventually *desire* to abide by them. As a result, doing "what feels right" or listening to "one's inner self"—ostensibly self-interested and void of communal obligation—in reality, reflects the *conscience collective* of the group at work *within* the individual—their "social self." Thus, the normative tasks of healing, becoming whole, and self-realization—all of which smack to communitarians of rugged individualism—are, contrary to critics' claims, deeply moral and collective in nature.

One of the primary reasons why I think communitarians and civic republicans have tended to miss this is due to their assumptions about the relationship between the individual and community—

which sociologist Paul Lichterman calls the "seesaw model." On this view, it is assumed that the good of the individual is necessarily at odds with the good of the community, such that the advancement of one implies erosion of the other (1996, 11). Thus, when NLF members proclaim, "AA is a selfish program," or make statements such as, "I go to meetings because it helps me stay sober," it is simply assumed that such rhetoric reflects a lack of commitment to the group. However, as Durkheim recognized, it is in fact when the individual *identifies* with the good of community, such that he or she perceives their self-interest as existing in harmony with it, that commitment is strongest (Rosati 2009, 37). Therefore, at NLF, the practice of self-help ought not be understood as being at odds with an other-oriented way of being. As one NLF member asserted, "the opposite of addiction isn't sobriety, it's connection."

This leads us to the second concern: is AA discourse, as encoded at NLF, a mere "capitalist spirituality"? Carrette and King (2005, 42) single out AA for contributing to "a new cultural malaise – the loneliness and isolation of contemporary individualism." Instead, they call for a revival of "the religious traditions," which encourage "identification with others" along with the moral ideals of "selfless love and compassion toward others" (83, 171). I find this baffling in light of the fact that egoism is considered within AA discourse a primary symptom of the disease of alcoholism. For instance, within the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*—a text whose authority in AA is second only to the Big Book—the alcoholic is described thus: "we have demanded more than our share of security, prestige, and romance…. Never was there enough of what we thought we wanted" (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* 1952, 71). It goes on: "We had lacked the perspective to see that character-building and spiritual values had to come first, and that material satisfactions were not the purpose of living" (71). And finally, in sketching out a normative vision for the recovering alcoholic, the text reads: "Our desires for emotional security and wealth, for personal prestige and power, for romance, and for family satisfactions—all these have to be tempered and redirected. We have learned that the satisfactions of instincts cannot be the sole end and aim of our lives" (114).

But more importantly, this normative vision persists in the testimonies of NLF members, and in the personal stories they shared in meetings. For example, in our interview Laurie, who had just graduated from teachers college, explained, "If I'm living spiritually, if I'm living my higher power's will, I am not struggling. Like I'm not struggling to get more money. I'm not struggling with the world as much. I mean, there's obviously the 'I want the fancy clothes,' or 'I want more money,' or whatever. But that, for me, is just ego. That's just my addiction. It's not really a huge struggle to have because I ultimately know I don't need it." Similarly, Hal shared, "our society doesn't have any meaning, and it tells us to value things that don't matter." They then added, "I was addicted to *more*. Nothing was ever enough. So I was always miserable."

These examples make vivid that "getting sober" necessarily entails limiting one's insatiable desires, and becoming more selfless—precisely the *opposite* of egoism. Indeed, most NLF members describe their trajectories in recovery in terms of a shift away from an egoistic life towards one that is guided by the moral ideals Carrette and King champion. Nor is this unique to NLF. As Kim Bloomfield (1994, 33) reports, "one of AA's main actions is its opposition to utilitarian individualism. The 'Big Book', the basic text of AA, is replete with references to the dangers of egotism and the pursuit of one's own interests without concern for others or one's higher power…. The fellowship is a primary source in today's society voicing the need for limits against the limitlessness of utilitarianism." In turn, AA discourse challenges, much more than legitimates, the "lifestyle of self-interest and ubiquitous consumption" that Carrette and King contend reflects the status quo in romantic liberal modernity.

We have seen, then, how NLF serves to mitigate the pathologies of anomie and egoism. In accepting an "alcoholic" identity and learning to narrate one's life using AA discourse, NLF members are brought into a robust community that staves off the threat of anomie. Thus when asked why she continues to attend NLF meetings, having been clean and sober for many years, Amara responded: "I'm not a joiner. I never have been. So it's very hard for me to feel like I'm part of a community. But I'm a sober weirdo now. So it's my community." At the same time, rather than encouraging the egoism of the market, its members are taught that "working the program" requires challenging the utilitarian individualism they once accepted as authoritative (Trevino 1992, 194). Accordingly, active participation in meetings serves to morally regulate members, curbing their egoism.

Shifting Involvements at Newfound Fellowship

We can now take up the second concern raised by critics: does the religion of the hear at NLF lead to a colonization of competing social spheres, thereby impeding shifting involvements and the adoption of rival social perspectives and moral traditions? Let us first re-examine the issue of shifting involvements.

Talk of moral community and moral regulation might lead critical feminists and post-structuralists to fear that NLF traps its members in their identities as "alcoholics," stifling their ability to express or develop other potential selves. For instance, sociologist Micki McGee (2005, 187) argues that the "requirement of anonymity [in AA] cuts off the individual from any of his or her other identities." These critics fear that AA is a greedy institution whose members "must be so fully and totally committed to [it] that they become unavailable for alternative lines of action" (Coser 1974, 8). At the same time, others fear that the symbolic boundaries legitimated at AA between "alcoholics" and "social drinkers" could fuel a kind alcoholic chauvinism. This issue has been raised by scholars who perceive in the AA fellowship a "sectarian" character (e.g. Jones 1970; Unterberger 1989; Staddon 2005).

At the base of these criticisms seems to rest a concern about the degree of freedom members have to hold other commitments or to leave their groups. McGee (2005, 187) critically notes that the narrow emphasis placed on discussing one's alcoholic identity in meetings "separates his or her 'addict' identity from his or her other social roles." No doubt this is true, but it is important to point out that this also plays a central role in the cultivation of moral community. Indeed, this is the unavoidable paradox of solidarity: exclusion is intrinsic to unity. Durkheim would therefore argue that the strength of moral community at NLF would be far weaker without this emphasis, increasing the risk of anomie significantly. Thus, while McGee is correct that competing social identities are given far less priority in AA meetings, I would argue this ought not to be lamented. Rather, what ought should us is the degree to which the alcoholic identity is totalizing in members' lives.

Based on my fieldwork I believe while newcomers may seek in AA a comprehensive identity, the longer members stay in the program the more they are able and willing to invest in other social spheres. The reason for this is that in the early days of recovery from addiction members are often searching for structure and order in their daily lives. As a result, they seek in AA discourse a totalizing identity. But the norm seems to be that this changes as time elapses. This was illustrated well by Pat who asserted, "AA is not my whole life; I come to AA so that I can live a good life outside of these rooms." Accordingly, despite their constitutive nature, groups such as NLF are not greedy institutions. Indeed, I have found that for most NLF members, AA discourse is primarily circumscribed to private life, thus being an alcoholic is far from totalizing in their lives. Furthermore, though alcoholics might be taught to view themselves as having a kin-like relationship to one another, they are not taught to distinguish themselves from those outside the rooms on any other basis. For this reason, being an alcoholic does not by any means detract from, or conflict with, one's identity as, say, a citizen, a sexual minority, or a parent. And given its limited scope it is difficult to imagine AA discourse inspiring groups to separate themselves from society or fueling social divisions. Indeed, the more reasonable concern is that groups such as NLF incline members to accommodate themselves to the status quo (which I discuss below). It therefore seems to me the fear of sectarianism is misplaced.

That said, AA discourse does constrain its members—at least as far as personal conduct is concerned. Indeed, it would not serve as a successful site of social integration and moral regulation if it did not. This has led some critics to contend the fellowship is inappropriate for women or gay men (among other minority groups), for whom "admitting powerlessness" may mean something quite different than it did for economically privileged white men such as founder Bill Wilson (Sered and Norton-Hawk 2011). There is no doubt truth to this. The Big Book reflects its time and period. At the same time, the accounts of NLF members demonstrate just how malleable AA discourse is; they regularly re-interpret passages from the Big Book in order to accord with the group's queer subcultural identity. And this is not

unusual. In her study of women's AA groups Jolene Sanders (2006, 4) found that "women in AA actively define the nature of their recovery experience in gender-specific and self-empowering ways." And Robert Kus (1987, 262) similarly found in his study of gay male AA members that "by conscientiously working the Twelve Steps, they begin to see being gay as a positive aspect of self rather than a negative one." These empirical investigations offer support to the argument that animates this chapter: groups adapt AA discourse to form a distinct idioculture. Or, as Rachel Kornfield (2014, 417) puts it, "practice of AA across communities is not static or rigidly defined, illustrating instead how members interpret AA's principles to make them coherent within their broader cultural and social worlds."

Structural Critique and Generative Institutions

The question remains, however, whether or not AA discourse impedes the quest for social and economic justice by means of naturalizing a methodological individualism. Critics of Twelve Step fellowships tend to zero in their "apolitical" character, as well as their anti-structuralism. For instance, Bruce Alexander (2006, 299) lambasts Twelve Step groups because they "do not address the social causes of addiction." While Micki McGee (2005, 182) contends that AA discourse "derails the opportunities for individuals to understand injuries or grievances as part of systematic social problems," further criticizing the program for endorsing "a worldview that is precisely the inverse of the 'sociological imagination'." And in his critique of "spirituality," Craig Martin (2014, 88, 81) suggests that by assigning "responsibility to individuals rather than institutions or social structures" discourses such as that found at NLF endorse "the miracle motif," which holds that "social change begins not with social structure but with an attitudinal transformation of the individual." Indeed, it is by obscuring "the structural causes of individual suffering," argues Martin, that AA discourse functions as "an ideology of the status quo" (157). In sum, these critics advance the claim that, as a result of their institutionalized methodological individualism, groups such as NLF hamper their members from identifying and addressing the structural causes of romantic liberal modernity's social ills, and thereby legitimate social and economic injustice.

Of course, critics are right to contend that AA discourse is methodologically individualistic, and that it consequently foregrounds the actions of individuals in its heuristic. As I have previously suggested, "spirituality" is primarily concerned with private (or personal) life, and as an discursive expression of this cultural structure, AA discourse is no different. In meetings NLF members are given a space within which they can realize their true selves, not engage in overt civic engagement or discuss public policy. And as Edmund O'Reilly (1997, 108) makes clear, "the role of social pathologies in the genesis of individual alienation will never become a powerful theme in AA." This is ensured not only by AA discourse's anti-structuralism but also by the taboo placed on talk of politics in the rooms—a norm which serves as much to facilitate inclusive diversity as it does to quell social criticism. As Jensen (2000, 63) observes, "one

finds in any given group a wide range of values and beliefs without arguments about who is right. Catholics, Baptists, Hews, and Muslims talk about God or their higher power. Republicans, Democrats, and Libertarians talk about their struggles with sobriety."

Yet, as O'Reilly (1997, 108) points out, "This is not to suggest that AA members are incapable of, or enjoined from, social activism, only that platforms for it must be found outside of the boundaries of the program." In fact, "Nothing in AA precludes activism of any sort, provided it is not chemically buttressed." This is a crucial insight, especially as regards NLF. Nearly every one of the members at NLF was engaged in some form of political activism outside the rooms.[121] For instance, Pat, one of the most longstanding members with 12 years of sobriety, talked at length about their experiences with community organizing, public protest, and political work in the queer and trans community. But more than this, Pat had no problem drawing on sociological discourses when discussing these issues. They were even willing to frame addiction as a result of an "oppressive" and "patriarchal" society, not altogether distinct from the critiques offered by Alexander, McGee, and Martin. When asked how Pat squared this structuralist framing with their commitment to AA, they responded that unless they accepted responsibility for their sobriety, they could not stay sober. In other words, when it came to their recovery, they wholeheartedly accepted the AA discourse of personal responsibility and self-realization. Yet, if asked to offer a structural critique they had no trouble doing so.

Another illustrative example is offered by Neil who, like Pat, had been involved with a wide array of political organizing. Neil grew up queer in a small Ontario town, where he experienced extreme bullying. When we spoke he was just finishing up a doctorate in the humanities, though he was only a year sober. Neil told me he had accrued two years of sobriety some years ago, but then decided to "go out"—which he reflected on with regret. I asked him what he thought of the claim that his commitment to NLF might preclude him from engaging in structural critique or taking political action. Well versed in social theory he responded, "I can have all the most radical ideas about social justice, but unless I get sober I can't help anybody." Neil found that unless he internalized AA discourse, he was incapable of overcoming his addiction. Moreover, I heard some version of this perspective from nearly every other member of NLF I spoke to.

I think what NLF members such as Pat and Neil are spotlighting is the utter uselessness of sociological or structuralist discourses in the face of acute and present suffering (especially when it is one's own). Faced with the pain of their addictions, outsourcing responsibility to "the system" simply does not make sense. Thus they have learned to invoke religious (individualistic) discourses with respect

[121] The only exceptions to this were those who were relative newcomers to AA, and who were in the early stages of their recovery (e.g. still within the first six months of their sobriety).

to certain aspects of their own lives and secular (structuralist) discourses with respect to certain aspects of those of others.[122] Their examples also demonstrate the veracity of Robert Wuthnow's (1998b, 28) observation that "self-help groups may provide some people with an opportunity to refashion their identity so that they can function more effectively as spouses and parents and citizens." Indeed, in his comprehensive study of civic engagement in America Wuthnow reports, "across the nation many people who have participated in twelve-step groups have become involved in helping other people or working on civic projects." He concludes, "Personal repair work is likely to go hand in hand with civic engagement, rather than conflicting with it" (217).

In line with these observations I argue that not only do groups such as NLF not preclude shifting involvements and the experience of pluralism, but they also function as *generative institutions*.[123] We can best understand the nature of a generative institution by contrasting it with a greedy institution. If greedy institutions demand exclusive and undivided loyalty, generative institutions encourage shifting involvements and multiple social attachments. If greedy institutions serve to close the opportunities available to members to express other aspects of their selves or participate in competing institutional spheres, generative institutions encourage this, while at the same time serving as a source of psychic stability and communal belonging for their members. Finally, if greedy institutions risk obliterating "the private person as an autonomous actor" (Coser 1976, 18), generative institutions bolster autonomy and independence, while also staving off the threat of anomie.

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[122] Critics might object on the basis that NLF is a unique, and therefore far from representative, AA group. They might contend that while NLF members may be able to invoke methodologically individualistic discourses from the first-person perspective and structuralist discourses from the third-person, we should assume that they are exceptions to the rule. Though NLF is certainly unique, it might be useful to consider precisely what is assumed in such a claim. There is a sense in which these critics are committed to the proposition that to the extent that a discourse is not *structuralist* or *sociological* in nature, it is, *by definition*, at odds with justice. Recall that for Carrette and King "capitalist spirituality" displaces questions of social justice by "masking the social dimension of human existence," while for Martin, it does so by "assigning responsibility to individuals rather than institutions or social structures." It would seem that for these critics, to the extent that we do not perceive the world as social theorists in every waking moment we are tacitly accommodating ourselves to "the regnant mode of production." Truth be told, it is difficult to imagine what life would be like if only structuralist or sociological discourses were available to draw from. This would preclude any appeal to individual agency, freedom, responsibility—indeed, pretty well every concept that enables us to lead self-directed lives. Of course, critics might be willing to accept the consequences of their critique. But I would argue this move is bound to be a performative contradiction. In fact, I would argue even the most radical progressive theorists are likely to invoke anti-structuralist discourses *with respect to their own lives*. Accordingly, I suspect that the varied and purposive appeal to structuralist *and* methodologically individualistic discourses is not nearly as exceptional as these critiques seem to suggest.

[123] I thank Simon Coleman for this formulation.

Critics who narrowly focus on the existence of apolitical and anti-structuralist discourse at Twelve Step meetings have paid little attention to the degree to which they serve to catalyze social and civic action far beyond the church basements they take place in. They have therefore dismissed their generative character. And while AA discourse may not highlight the structural sources of suffering, it does not preclude the adoption of social perspectives that do. Thus, in espousing a Durkheimian perspective we are required to step back and capture the wider complexity alive in romantic liberal modernity—and in so doing, we shall undoubtedly find that "one experience of associational life offsets others" and that "The lessons of one affiliation may provide countervailing force to the formative effects of another area of social life" (Rosenblum 1998, 49).

Romantic Liberal Modernity and Communities of Redemption

In concluding this institutional ethnography, I want to highlight an aspect of social life that I believe critics of the religion of the heart from all camps tend, to their detriment, to either overlook or dismiss—the need for what I call *communities of redemption*. As we have seen in the accounts of NLF members, newcomers arrive at the proverbial doors of AA filled with shame and self-loathing. Whether the causes of this shame and self-loathing are partly (or even entirely) structural does not detract from the fact that these feelings exist, and often plague individuals, stifling them from forming healthy relationships, engaging in projects, and enjoying life. As Wuthnow (1998b, 25) remarks, "Before they can be effective citizens, they have to relearn to be effective persons." Of course, this is easier said than done. Often newcomers at AA are so haunted by their pasts that they remain stuck in a cycle of addiction and self-destruction. McAdams (2006, 228) therefore argues, "for many addicts the only way to break the cycle is to create a new life story." However, the new story must be "more than just a few new words. It must instead integrate the addict in a caring and productive social environment." Moreover, he notes that, in some cases, "a religious meaning may be the only kind of meaning that is powerful enough to exert the kind of redemptive force that the reform narrative seems to demand" (237).

As I argued in Chapter 8, I think a crucial reason for the appeal of the religion of the heart in romantic liberal modernity is its ability to give meaning to suffering. The accounts of AA members exhibit this most powerfully. Accordingly, we might say groups such as NLF serve as sites of private enchantment, where individuals' personal lives are imbued with cosmic meaning and purpose, and where they can achieve a sense of redemption. By internalizing AA discourse, members learn to re-interpret their pasts in order to make possible brighter futures. And in being redeemed, they learn to face the world outside the rooms with a sense of integrity and dignity, which helps to "buffer them from public shows of disrespect, cultivate a sense of self-worth, and reinforce inner resources" (Rosenblum 1998, 183). In turn, groups such as NLF serve as communities of redemption, where feelings of shame and self-loathing can

be confronted and overcome in the presence of supportive others. As Lars put it, “I came to AA and I felt like these broken pieces of me started getting fixed.”

Is this only necessary for alcoholics and addicts, or for those, like them, who have tested the limits of their capacity for suffering? I doubt it. As human beings we can all feel guilty for wrongs we have committed or mistakes we have made. Aside from the most ardent of post-structuralists, for most of us redemption is a felt need. Moreover, redemption is something that implies public recognition; redemption is not real unless it is sanctioned by a community we hold to be authoritative. Thus, groups such as NLF serve a vital human need, one that I doubt even the most just society could eradicate.

In this chapter I have tried to make the case that groups such as NLF, which institutionalize the religion of the heart, are considerably mischaracterized by critics. Contrary to popular criticisms, they do in fact serve as sites of social integration and moral regulation, staving off egoism and anomie. Yet they also serve as generative institutions—enabling their members to participate in shifting involvements and adopt rival social perspectives. Of course, this is not to deny that members sometimes leave the group, quit the program, or fail to experience the necessary psychological identification for belonging. Because the alcoholic identity is not totalizing, and often restricted to private life, there is no guarantee that NLF members will not lose attachment to their group. No doubt, some critics will perceive this as evidence of romantic liberal modernity’s communal deficiencies. And in some ways, they would be right. Anomie and egoism will always remain a potential threat in romantic liberal modernity, where the economic sphere institutionalizes utilitarian individualism and expressive individualism is institutionalized in the private sphere. But this is the price we must pay for the freedom to shift involvements and enjoy the benefits of pluralism.

Chapter 12

Embodied Enchantment: Prosperity and Positivity at a Greedy Institution

In this chapter I advance an institutional ethnography of C3 Toronto (C3T), a neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic Christian church, which belongs to the wider C3 Church movement. I begin by offering a brief history of C3 Church and C3T. Next, I outline, in systematic form, how the ten tenets that comprise the religion of the heart, are given discursive expression at C3T—which I call *Charismatic Christian (CC) discourse*. Drawing from Durkheim, I then analyze C3T's Sunday service as a public ritual that serves to encode and enflesh CC discourse according to the church's *conscience collective*, engendering identity reconstitution and moral transformation. My analysis focuses primarily on the church's worship services because I believe it is primarily (though not solely) through this public ritual that CC discourse achieves plausibility among members. Finally, as with the previous chapter, I revisit the two unresolved concerns in light of my empirical findings. I argue a complete analysis of CC discourse as it is encoded at C3T, while vindicating critics' fears regarding neo-Pentecostalism's affinities with neoliberalism, also illuminates social complexities that have been obscured by critics' one-dimensional focus on economic explanations for its appeal.

A Brief History of C3 Church and C3 Toronto

C3T belongs to the larger neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic Christian church movement, C3 Church, founded by Phil and Chris Pringle, high school sweethearts born and raised in Masterton, New Zealand. In 1980, after converting to Christianity, the Pringles moved to Sydney, Australia, and started "Christian Centre Northside." Phil and Chris eventually renamed it "Christian City Church," which was rebranded in the 2000s as "C3 Church." As of early 2019, C3 Church boasts over 500 churches in 64 countries, with more than 112,000 members worldwide.[124] And in addition to church planting, C3 owns and operates a Creative Arts and Bible College, a television program ("Your Best Life with Phil Pringle") and a grammar school in Sydney. Next to Hillsong Church, C3 remains one of the largest evangelical church movements based in Australia (Shanahan 2019).

Although C3 Church claims to be nondenominational, it belongs to the Pentecostal and wider Charismatic movements that in the twentieth century began to sweep across the globe. As we saw in Chapter 4, scholars have argued that the Charismatic revivals find their origins in German Pietism,

[124] See https://c3churchglobal.com/home.

puritanism, and Methodism (Coleman 2006; Young So 2009; Neuhouser 2017). Other precursors include liberal theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (Walker 1997, 36), and the Holiness movement of the nineteenth century, whose grandfather was John Wesley (Hollenweger 1986, 4). What these carriers of the religion of the heart shared was an interest in "finding the supernatural in the fabric of everyday life," as well as a penchant for "putting Bible before doctrine and emotional experience before rational argument" (Martin 2002, 8, 41). Indeed, according to sociologist Stephen Hunt (1995, 269) Pentecostals were "the earliest articulators of 'emotionalism'," which "marked a revolt against the spiritual 'deadness' and 'worldiness' of the mainstream churches."

Nevertheless, contemporary scholars distinguish between classical Pentecostalism and the wider Charismatic movement (Hunt et al. 1997, 2). Though C3T, and C3 Church more generally, certainly share much with classical Pentecostalism, their theological and cultural debts partake of a wider set of influences insofar as they belong to a particular wing of the Charismatic revival, known as the "Faith Movement" or what some call the "prosperity gospel" (Coleman 2000, 27). Therefore not only can we find traces of Methodism, Pietism, the Holiness movement, and Schleiermacher's inductive theology at work, but we also find substantive linkages to American metaphysical religious traditions such as Christian Science and New Thought. As Kate Bowler (2013, 24) reports, "New Thought lit the fuse of Pentecostalism's psychological dynamite."

Scholars contend that the faith movement developed between the 1940s and 1970s in America when "roving Pentecostal preachers sought to promote faith, in part by stressing the importance of spiritual healing" (Schieman and Jung 2012, 739). During this period Pentecostal practices were combined with ideas derived from New Thought and the emerging field of "positive thinking," pioneered by Methodist minister Norman Vincent Peale (Bowler 2013, 55). Following Peale, the neo-Pentecostal movement saw the likes of Oral Roberts, Kenneth Copeland, and Pat Robertson rise to prominence. Additionally, the 1960s counterculture played a critical role as it gave rise to what Simon Coleman (2000, 24), borrowing from sociologist James Davidson Hunter, calls "the 'Californication' of conservative Protestantism," whereby conservatives "accommodated to the anti-institutional, therapeutic, cultural preferences of the baby boomers." According to Hunter (1982, 43, 44), it was during this era that conservative evangelicals embraced a "psychological Christo-centrism," which stresses "the potentiality of the human individual who is 'under the lordship of Jesus Christ'." In agreement, Bowler (2013, 7) contends that the prosperity gospel reached maturity "in the ripe individualism of post-1960s America." Thus it was only in the latter half of the twentieth century when the Pentecostal "emphasis on spirituality rather than religious institutions" (Poloma 2003, 15), combined with an American obsession with physical and material prosperity.

Though Pentecostalism in Australia did not originate directly from the United States, C3 Church borrows much from the American faith movement (Shanahan 2019, 3). For instance, we find in C3 theology both traces of what Bowler (2013) refers to as a "soft" prosperity gospel, which stresses the physical and psychological benefits of channeling or harmonizing with the Holy Spirit, as well as "hard" prosperity rhetoric, which promises material blessings through the faithful enactment of Biblical principles. But perhaps the most manifest theological inheritance is the C3 conviction that church growth is proof of divine blessing. As Mairead Shanahan (2019, 5) observes, "C3 Church's growth narrative is a key part of C3's brand development."

C3 Church, like other "growth churches" (Maddox 2012), operates much like a transnational corporation, in both style and function. As Elizabeth Miller (2016, 298) informs us, "they have warehouse-like buildings, large numbers of highly trained staff, large capital investments, and an eye for new markets, locally and internationally." They also take "full advantage of the technologies of electronic communications" in missionizing and marketing their global brand (Coleman 2000, 232). Moreover, in a very real sense Phil and Chris serve as C3 Church's entrepreneurial CEOs, who demand top-down management and strict "obedience to an organizational culture" (Maddox 2012, 152). Ultimate decision-making authority rests solely with them, with no existing procedures to challenge their dominance, as power and spiritual authority are intimately intertwined. Thus John Connell (2005, 326) rightly concludes that churches such as C3 are "autocratic, non-democratic and hierarchical."

Scholars have noted the degree to which growth churches reflect what sociologist George Ritzer calls "McDonaldization." "The term describes the rationalization of society—the places and spaces where people live, work and consume—using the fast-food restaurant as a paradigm." McDonaldization is associated with the following four processes: "a push for greater efficiency, predictability, calculability, and replacement of human with non-human technology" (Ritzer and Stillman 2003, 34). Thus, despite the stress placed on spontaneity, subjective feeling, and emotional ecstasy in CC discourse, C3 church and the wider church growth movement to which it belongs largely exhibit standardized features. According to J. B. Watson and Walter H. Scalen these include: an emphasis on quantitative measures of success such as worship attendance and number of new converts; a focus on contextualization, where "a church delivers its message within the context of the culture"; the application of modern marketing techniques; and the value of networking with like-minded churches (2008, 172). They conclude, "The essential model for church growth … is that churches should be well-managed organizations, pursue organizational excellence, and learn from the business sector" (173).

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According to senior pastor Sam Picken the seeds of C3 Toronto were planted when he began attending C3's Bible College in Sydney at the age of eighteen. It was as a student in college that Sam met Jess, his wife and co-pastor, and conceived of planting a C3 Church in North America. Sam and Jess soon moved from Sydney to Canada, where they initially served as youth pastors at C3 Calgary. Determined to realize what he believed to be God's vision for his life, Sam grew frustrated with their limited role in Calgary, so within only a few years, he and Jess, along with 4 others, traveled to Toronto to plant the city's first C3 Church. Their inaugural service was a prayer meeting, attended by only 11 people. Five years later, C3 Toronto boasts a membership of over 1500, with three "campuses" across the city.[125]

It was at C3's Bible College that Sam and Jess learned the fundamentals of church planting. In addition to classes in theology Sam studied marketing, branding, telecommunications, church management, leadership, and budgeting. Sam has said in interviews with media that he aspires to "make Jesus famous." Indeed, personal fame and social status are conceived within C3 theology as useful means to missionize and spread the gospel (Martí 2012, 144). The basic idea is that the more Instagram followers a pastor has, the larger their audience, and the more likely they are to sow the seeds of God. Thus, as is customary with growth churches, C3T's approach to evangelization involves utilizing the most innovative and up-to-date methods in digital marketing. Of course, it helps that many of the church members work in the creative industries—marketing, photography, public relations, and the arts. In fact, the congregation is almost entirely made-up of university or college-educated (aspiring) middle class millennials, who belong to the "creative class" (Florida 2002). The church's team of volunteers comprises entrepreneurs, models, marketers, publicists, hospitality workers, and filmmakers, all of who donate their resources, time and effort to growing C3T's "brand."

Toronto media have dubbed C3T the "Hipster Church," picking up on its popularity with hip millennials in the city.[126] Public commentators have frequently remarked that C3T members normalize their own version of "Sunday best." On the men, ripped skinny jeans, tight shirts, lumberjack shirts, and arm tattoos are the norm, while on the women the clothing styles range but almost all don extensive makeup, styled hair, and dress fashionably. At the same time, the demographics of the church are ethnically and racially varied. One finds whites, blacks, and Asians scattered across the auditorium on any given Sunday. Attracting a significant number of first- or second-generation immigrants, C3T in many ways reflects the "hyper-diverse environment" of Toronto itself (Reimer et al. 2016, 498). And, as discussed in Chapter 8, the vast majority of members were raised in conservative Christian households

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[125] See https://c3toronto.com.

[126] C3T has received widespread media attention as a result of its publicity campaigns. For instance, the church has had profiles in *Toronto Life*, *The Globe and Mail*, *The Toronto Star*, and *Global News*.

where they experienced strict familial religious socialization. Most describe being attracted to C3T as a result of its emphasis on the "Holy Spirit," which was not a staple of their childhood church.

In media interviews, Sam has reiterated that C3T is not about "religion" but rather about "faith," thus he seeks to remove, "Whatever will make someone cringe." In his view, his only job, as senior pastor, is to connect people with God such that they can develop a relationship with Jesus Christ, so he eschews making any political statements or taking a stand on controversial issues—both from the pulpit and in public interviews. Moreover, C3T members tend to speak of the type of Christianity found at C3T as "relational" —which they contrast with "rule Christianity"—whereby members can figure out for themselves, in relationship with Christ, how they ought to live. C3T therefore embodies the wider trends occurring within conservative evangelicalism across North America.

As sociologists Brian Steensland and Eric Wright (2014, 713) note, "Evangelicals of the millennial generation hold more liberal views" than their parents. Similarly, Justin Farrell (2011, 519) observes, "today's young evangelicals are becoming more liberal." These trends are evidenced by the statements of C3T members, who almost always claim to value expressive freedom more than their parents. Yet we should not presume C3T members hold outright progressive views on social issues. C3T does not belong, for instance, to the "Emerging Church" (Bielo 2011). Indeed, many C3T members (although not all) espouse socially conservative views on issues such as abortion, marriage, and homosexuality. Moreover, every C3 Church is led by a heterosexual couple that serves as the senior pastors of their congregation, and gender roles are clearly distinguished in church teachings. Thus social conservatism is a constitutive feature of C3 Church culture. At the same time, C3T members believe individuals should have the freedom to choose for themselves how they wish to live. That is, according to these young charismatics, relational Christianity implies that individuals ought to be allowed to work out their own views in relationship with God, as opposed to being externally coerced by others into conforming. In short, while socially conservative, C3T members nevertheless seem to endorse the romantic liberal settlement.

And yet the expressivist ethic naturalized by CC discourse sits in uneasy tension with the church's larger social structures, as C3T's social hierarchies mirror those of the larger C3 movement. All decisions are ultimately made by Sam and Jess, who endorse what Coleman (2000, 95) calls the "One Shepherd principle," that is, the notion that the "congregation 'is' its pastor" and therefore the senior pastor "does not have to answer to higher ecclesiastical structures or a body of elders." Indeed, all decision-making power resides with Sam and Jess, and the closer one is to them the more power and moral authority one has—which veteran members referred to as belonging to the "inner circle."

Finally, though C3T has only existed for just over 5 years, the church has amassed over a million dollars in property and capital assets, most of which derives from members' voluntary donations. Thus, as

is the norm for growth churches, C3T strongly encourages tithing. In fact, according to C3 theology giving financially to the church is considered a demonstration of faith: the more one gives, the more faith one exhibits. As Phil Pringle puts it in his *Keys to Financial Excellence*, "Cheerful obedience in giving our one-tenth tithe isn't much to ask; it stands as an indication of our true heart toward God" (2003, 29). And because the church predominantly relies on members' voluntary labour, this is also true of service: newcomers are instructed that "getting involved" and "going all in" are necessary prerequisites for achieving their full potential as Christians. Thus upon completing "Next Steps," the church's newcomer initiation program, new members are directed to join a service team as well as one or more of C3T's "Connect Groups."[127] And after a few months they are strongly encouraged by peers, and leadership, to increase their "investment" in the church by taking on leadership roles and more demanding service positions.

The Religion of the Heart at C3 Toronto

In this section I re-construct the version of the religion of the heart institutionalized at C3T, which I call CC discourse. Though I do not claim that CC discourse, as I define it, is characteristic of the Charismatic Christian movement writ large, I believe it captures C3 theology, along with that of similar growth churches, quite accurately. My explication of this discourse is based on my fieldwork at C3T, interviews with church members, and discursive analysis of books authored by Phil Pringle, the leader of C3 Church. I also draw significantly from existing scholarship on neo-Pentecostalism and the Faith movement.

1. Experiential Epistemology

In sermons and interviews with C3T members it was consistently emphasized that *divine truth is revealed solely in personal experience*. These Charismatics are adamant that we should not merely seek to *know about God* but should also (and primarily) seek to *know God* directly by means of ecstatic and overwhelming experience (Poloma and Pendleton 1989). As Phil Pringle puts it in *Faith: Moving the Heart and the Hand of God*, "Faith and feelings go hand in hand" (2005, 31). On this view, Jesus or the Holy Spirit is not a distant figure, ever out of reach, but rather one made wholly accessible to the ordinary believer. According to CC discourse Jesus must be "made real" through worship, praise, and faith. Moreover, though C3T members accept that the Bible is inerrant, they conceive of it "not as a text to be

[127] Teams include: Muscle Crew, C3 Kids, Guest Services, Worship Team, First Impressions and Host Team, Team Production Team, Creative Team, and Administrative Team. Examples of Connect Groups include: "For the Love of Jog" (a running group), "Soup's On" (a group that meets in order to eat soup and discuss spirituality), "Coffee + Jesus" (a group for those interested in talking about Jesus over coffee), "Boys + the Biblehood" (an all-men's Bible study), and "All my single ladies" (a group for women to discuss how to build healthy relationships). The term before I left featured 84 connect groups.

memorized but as a personal document, written uniquely for each" (Luhrmann 2004, 523). This was made clear when a newcomer asked in Next Steps whether C3T takes the bible literally. The campus pastor responded, "I believe God gave us the Holy Spirit in order to interpret the bible. This means that everything in the Bible is there for a reason, but that we need to let the Holy Spirit speak to us when we are reading and relating to our Bibles." Jesse Davie-Kessler (2016, 7) aptly summarizes this view: "Without inspiration from God channeled by the Holy Spirit into the born-again reader … the Bible [is] meaninglessness."

As we saw in Chapter 5, the religion of the heart views ecstatic experiences as authoritative, as the foundation upon which divine truths sit. Yet what is deemed an experience of God is by no means obvious. Distinct discourses narrate and label experiences in different ways. Commitment at C3T depends largely on members having certain kinds of visceral experiences, which they interpret as affirming the veracity of the church's teachings. This explains the importance of the worship service: worship at C3T is designed not only to elicit particular embodied responses, but also to disseminate the discursive framework through which elicited bodily stimuli are to be interpreted/experienced. Thus by provoking certain kinds of sensations, and providing a discourse with which to interpret those sensations, C3T creates the basis for what Stephen Hunt et al. (1997, 6) call "an experience-led fundamentalism."

2. Immanence of God or the Superempirical

Of neo-Pentecostalism Philip Richter (1997, 100) writes, "The God of the Charismatics is above all an immanent God who acts in the world." "One of the attractions of Charismatic churches has been their offer of a direct, unmediated and unpredictable encounter with a God who is anything but dead" (108). Indeed, according to CC discourse "human experiences (humanity) can be evidence of God's presence and, at the same time, God (divinity) can be immanent in human experiences" (Young So 2009, 249). The following testimony by Lee is illustrative:

> So I put my headphones on and threw on a track, an album that I'd listened to maybe a thousand times. It's a punk band. Anyway, I start walking and the lyrics are literally like talking to me about my situation right now in a way where I was like, 'What? Oh my Gosh! God is talking to me through this song!' I mean, I've sang this song a million times and all of a sudden it sounds like God is talking to me about where I'm at, and where I need to be looking.

Later in the interview Lee explained: "I do truly believe that He talks to people in their own way. So for me, it was that." For this young Charismatic, God chose to intervene in her life in the form of a song she had heard many times over. In Lee's interpretation, this was God's loving way of helping her identify an area of her life she had until then failed to adequately attend to. This example gives credence to the

widespread observation that Charismatics "view divine experiences or events as sources of vitality that mediate God with human lives" (250).

3. *Benevolent God/Universe*

Sandra recounted, "I grew up believing very much that God was a condemning God, whereas the whole thing here is: 'No, He is a loving God. He is a loving God, and He loves you, and that's it'." As we can see, talk of "relational Christianity" at C3T signals a move away from the judgmental and condemning God Sandra recalls growing up with, to one that wishes that she be happy and achieve her full potential. As Harvey Cox (1995, 201, 259) puts it, according to Charismatics, "God is more lover than judge," and it is widely believed that Christians "have a powerful cosmic ally and a secure standing in God's eyes." This is precisely what I think Michael, the worship team leader at C3T, was referring to when he proclaimed, "I am so grateful to have a God in my life who relentlessly wants relationship with me," which he then contrasted to a "distant God." Pastor Jess offered another example when she preached, "He is not a bad God. He wants you to find life. He wants you to find fulfillment," adding, "I don't think we are ourselves when we are in fear, when we are angry, or anxious. Those are not God's desires for you." These testimonies vindicate Hunter's (1982, 42) observation that, within evangelicalism, "if one is spiritual, one is by and large, happy and contended." However, CC discourse goes further: faithful Christians are promised not just emotional well-being but prosperity. As Phil Pringle (2005, 148) proclaims, "God sees you in a particular way…. He sees you as totally forgiven. He sees you as completely righteous before God. He sees you healthy, happy, and prosperous."

4. Redemptive Self as Theodicy

The redemptive self is a staple of CC discourse. For instance, Phil Pringle preached one Sunday, "Jesus is going to grow in your weakness more than your strength," "You can turn your worst situation into something marvelous," and "It seems to be one of the ways of God that you have to travel through death to get to resurrection." And similarly, one regularly hears pastor Sam preach, "God created you for a purpose, for a reason," "If you step out in Faith, you will see a God story in your life," and "Those who endure trials will become the most effective." On this view, all pain and suffering serve a redemptive purpose thereby imbuing negative experiences with cosmic meaning. C3 members are taught that if they are struggling it is because God has a lesson for them to learn, or because they need this in order to achieve their potential. "Our faith grows through trial. As God passes faith through a test, it is purified, strengthened, and enlarged" (Pringle 2003, 173). Yet, in CC discourse the redemptive self is almost always narrated in the form of a conversion narrative, which follows a particular script. In unpacking this script Coleman (2000, 119) writes, "The convert learns that their previous life was one of 'darkness' as

opposed to present enlightenment and revelation. 'Something lacking' has been replaced by plenitude, as identity is discovered through the 'full Gospel' and 'in Christ'. God, indeed, 'has a plan' for every believer's life." And as Lee's example illustrates, once the believer has internalized this canonical narrative as their own, they eventually learn to look for (and find) evidence of God's intervention in their lives.

5. Self-Realization as Teleology

One hears over and over again at C3T slogans such as: "Whoever you are, you are beautiful, you are unique," "Don't try to be someone else," "God wants to change you, so you can go from being in the place of victim, to victor," "We should never feel bad about wanting growth," "God has a bold and courageous, alive and active, version of you on the other side," and "God has created you for a unique purpose." In *Faith* Pringle writes, "People are on a desperate search to find out who they are. It's in Christ that we find ourselves" (2005, 148).

In their study of Hillsong Church, Matthew Wade and Maria Hynes (2013, 176) report that members were drawn to it because of its "potential for a superior kind of self-actualization through the subsumption of the self within a cause greater than themselves." Indeed, while growth churches may be theologically conservative, they nevertheless embrace an expressivist ethic, with its attendant ideal of authenticity. The underlying belief is that Christian piety leads to self-realization—or what Gerardo Martí (2012, 140) refers to as becoming one's "prosperous self." This was made abundantly clear during my interview with pastor Sam. When asked what frustrates him most as a pastor he responded, "Complacency. Mediocrity…. So a huge thing that frustrates me is someone that sits across from me and doesn't care about realizing their potential. I want to shake them. I'm like, 'What's the matter with you?'" He went on, "Sin is missing the mark. And I think the hugest way that the devil still kills and destroys, and the biggest way that we miss the mark as people, is by wasting our potential." Sam's conflation of failing to meet our potential with sin evinces poignantly the seriousness with which the ideal of self-realization is taken by these Charismatics. In short, according to CC discourse, "God helps people realize their true or potential selves" (Stromberg 1986, 77).

6. Self-Ethic (Voice from Within)

David Martin (2002, 168) writes, "Pentecostalism, like Methodism, is about finding your voice." Indeed, C3T members are constantly seeking to distinguish between the authentic voice within—equated with the "Holy Spirit"—and the false self—equated with "the Devil" or "the enemy." This is because the voice of the Holy Spirit is believed to not only reflect one's own best interest, but is also perceived as a source of limitless power. Thus Phil Pringle preached one Sunday, "The God inside of you is bigger than anything

you are facing." Similarly, C3T's West campus pastor preached at a service, "get more of God in you. More of God in you means more power. And more power means more of you." The logic here is that the more one aligns one's words and actions with the Holy Spirit within, the more one becomes both like God as well as true to oneself. In short, "More God, more power, more you." And yet, as I have previously intimated, the norm of self-realization at C3T is harnessed to organizational purposes. Thus, below I examine how the conception of positive freedom naturalized within CC discourse serves to maintain the social order, and legitimate the inordinate power possessed by pastors Sam and Jess.

7. Virtue is Natural

Bowler (2013, 14) argues that the prosperity gospel is characterized by "an optimistic theology of human capacity." In this way, CC discourse reformulates the doctrine of original sin to mean, "failing to realize one's true self." This has implications for how C3T members conceive of the relationship between Christian identity, health, and virtue. As Phil Pringle once preached, "Jesus promises freedom from anxiety, depression and mental illness." And in *Faith* he writes, "The Devil is always attempting to place black visions of despair, visions of impurity, angered visions of conflict, and anxious visions of fear" (Pringle 2005, 110). Bowler translates these theological proclamations into the following principle: "people share in God's healing power by activating their faith and tapping into God's spiritual laws" (Bowler 2013, 142). According to CC discourse, then, in realizing one's true self through cultivating faith one comes to have all of the attributes of God—health, virtue, and even wealth. Moreover, C3T members tend to echo the romantics before them in offering critiques of the wider culture, which they view as the source of disorder and fecklessness. For instance, in his sermons Sam often frames C3T as an antidote to the social isolation and nihilism that he believes pervades the secular city. Thus, while orthodox Christians may view humanity as eternally plagued by original sin, CC discourse as encoded at C3T posits a corrupt society replete with demonic powers, which serves as the primary obstacle preventing Christians from realizing their true prosperous selves.

8. Sacralization of Individual Liberty

One of the most striking aspects of CC discourse is the degree to which it is both theologically conservative while simultaneously sacralizing individual liberty. As we have seen, relational Christianity presupposes a God who respects the autonomy of all believers. As one of the campus pastors explained, "I feel like there's a door in our heart, and the handle is on the inside. God is a gentleman, so will never barge in. He will keep knocking, but we have to be the ones to let him in." Thus, at C3T, as with other

neo-Pentecostal churches, individual commitment must rest upon the believer making a conscious and autonomous choice to continually "accept Jesus,"[128] and members regularly sing the praises of "freedom."

For instance, west campus pastor, Sarah, once preached, "Christianity here is not about rules, it's about freedom." While her husband, pastor Mark proclaimed, "I'm so glad to be a part of a church that prioritizes a relationship with God over religious duty." And yet, at the same time, just as with NLF members, the ideals of self-sufficiency and independence are perceived by C3T members as misplaced in that they lock individuals into a state of dependence on their temporary whims and desires. Accordingly, for these Charismatics, real freedom comes only from aligning oneself with God's will—that is, the authentic voice within.

This helps to explain how social order is maintained at C3T. CC discourse postulates that real freedom is only attained by following God's will, and God's will demands submission and obedience to leadership. As one member put it, "you must submit to leadership, because you're serving God, and your doing God's work, when you serve your leader." While another informed me that submission to one's senior pastors' "vision" demonstrates the virtues of "obedience and faithfulness." As a result, members need not be externally sanctioned in order to comply with church teachings. Rather, they willingly submit as they learn to equate the desires of their leaders with those of their true self.

9. Mind-Body-Spirit Connection

Coleman observes that the prosperity gospel emerges from "distinctive theological tenets and linguistic ideologies," by which he means, "charismatics frequently emphasize the illocutionary function of speech, which turns utterances that describe reality (e.g. discourses about money) into performative speech acts that bring reality into being" (2006, 27-28). He uses the term "positive confession" to describe this phenomenon, meant to capture the belief that "words spoken 'in faith' are objectifications of reality" (28). This underwrites much of what is said at C3T. For instance, pastor Sam regularly preaches, "You will reproduce what you repeat," "If you want to see blessing in your world, you need to speak blessing into your world," and "You need to be speaking about the good things that God is doing in your world." On this view, "affirmative repetition, visualization, imagination, mood redirection, and voice scripture" are conceived as "prayerful habits" that can "achieve results" (Bowler 2013, 60). As Phil Pringle put it at C3 Canada Conference, "Language is a creative force. If we want to active the power of God, we just need to speak his words."

[128] As mentioned above, I suspect it is this shift towards valuing individual subjective choice that informs the romantic liberalization of millennial evangelical's attitudes (see Thomas and Olson 2012).

Though Christianity is rarely associated with the mind-body-spirit theme, it is clear upon examination just how similar CC discourse is to that found in New Age circles.[129] In both milieus, the relationship between mind, body, and matter is rendered holistic and interdependent (Hollenweger 1986, 6). Bowler (2013, 144) explains, "Believers conceptualize faith as a causal agent, a power that actualizes events and objects in the real world. Faith acts as a force that reaches through the boundaries of materiality and into the spiritual realm, as if plucking objects from there and drawing them back into space and time." Thus, according to CC discourse bodily healing can occur through the faithful recitation of scripture, while mental illness may simply signal a lack of faith.

10. Methodological Individualism

In his study of American evangelicals sociologist Christian Smith characterizes their approach to social change as what he calls the "personal influence strategy": "working through personal relationships to allow God to transform human hearts from the inside-out, so that all ensuing social change will be thorough and long-lasting" (quoted in Lichterman 2005, 143). Similarly, Bowler (2013, 255) argues that proponents of the prosperity gospel hold that all social, cultural, institutional barriers to change can only be overcome by means of personal transformation. We see this view reflected in Phil Pringle's proclamation that, "Circumstances don't need to change, we need to change." Characteristic of the religion of the heart, then, CC discourse endorses a methodological individualism that views the individual (Christian) as the primary (and sole) unit of social change. The prescription for social ills is simple: more faith. Of course, discourses of charity are common at C3T, as members are expected to "do good" by means of tithing and volunteering their time for the church. But one rarely, if ever, hears a sermon that ventures beyond discussions of charity and personal development. And social or political issues are actively avoided in connect groups and other church-related activities. In this sense, CC discourse never strays beyond the personal, even when it is forced to confront the political.

C3 Services as Collective Ritual

Ronald Schouten (2003, 29) notes that, "Charismatics and Pentecostals tend to call themselves 'anti-ritualistic'," yet the reality belies this self-image. According to Schouten, what distinguishes Charismatic Christian rituals from those of mainline Christianity "is the primacy of experience" (32). Durkheim would undoubtedly agree. Thus in this section I examine how Sunday worship services function as experience-based public rituals in order to legitimate and reinforce CC discourse as it is encoded and enfleshed at

[129] This is done by replacing the "spirit" category with that of "faith" (thus we might speak of *mind-body-faith connection*).

C3T. I identify three ritual components, which work in unison, to successfully produce collective effervescence and re-constitute members' identities in light of C3T's version of the religion of the heart: first, worship, atmosphere, and aesthetics; second, language ideology, conversion narratives and symbolic boundaries; and third, the role of pastors in modeling the "prosperous self."

I focus on the role of worship services because I agree with Margaret Poloma and Brian Pendleton (1989, 417) that religious experiences play a central role in establishing and revitalizing neo-Pentecostal religious institutions. In fact, I would argue that worship services serve as the principal plausibility structures for CC discourse at C3T, such that members' initial and sustained commitment depends significantly upon the ability of the church to enable members to "encounter the Holy Spirit." At the same time, as with my analysis of NLF in the preceding chapter, I recognize that much depends upon private rituals and practices that take place outside of the church, thus I also outline a fourth component: a range of specific practices of self-cultivation which members utilize to transform their selves in accord with the value-sets sacralized at C3T. However, I nevertheless argue that the effectiveness of these practices depends considerably upon the experiences of collective effervescence achieved at Sunday services.

1. Worship, atmosphere, and aesthetics

There is nothing more central to guaranteeing ritual success at churches like C3T than the roles worship, atmosphere, and aesthetics play in provoking particular kinds of sensations in their members (see Cox 1995; Jennings 2008; Riches and Wagner 2012; Meyer 2010; Brahinsky 2012; Inbody 2015). Yet this tailoring of experience begins long before one enters the church, and is the product of meticulous forethought on the part of the leadership team.

On any given Sunday passersby will find an array of ten-foot tall signs that stream in bright green lettering, "C3 Church," at each corner of the block surrounding the church, as well as a large sign that reads, "Welcome Home," plastered across the main entrance. And as visitors near the church, members of the "First Impressions Team"—each of whom have been selected because they embody the "C3 personality," which pastors Phil and Chris describe in a popular C3 promotional video as "fun, playful, bright, colourful, energetic, youthful, hospitable, attractive, beautiful, authentic, creative, generous, and compelling"—bombard them with boundless smiles and cheerful greetings. The aim of these fixtures is both to impress, as well as to make visitors feel desired each step of the way into the church. And they undoubtedly work. Nadia recounted her first experience at C3T: "Everyone was so nice! They genuinely seemed interested in me—they wanted to know my name, and why I was there. They lavished me with attention. It felt so good."

While pastor Sam has ambitions to purchase property for the church, C3T's main west campus, where I conducted fieldwork, currently operates out of a secondary school that they rent on Sundays. As a result, throngs of church members spend hours prior to Sunday services transforming the staid school hallways into vibrant scenes of leisure and comfort. As Miranda Klaver (2015b, 431) informs us, the aim is to signal to visitors that, "church is a place different from the busy and stressful everyday lives of visitors." Thus, upon entering the foyer of the school one encounters a coffee and tea bar, colourful C3 displays, a stylized literature table, an ATM machine, and an array of fashionable young adults dressed in hipster garb. James Wellman et al. (2014, 654) persuasively argue that this atmosphere and aesthetic functions to decrease "cultural membership capital barriers that prevent outsiders from participating." In other words, by borrowing "sensate strategies from pop culture," C3T reduces the potential for alienation, especially among those who have no religious memory (Brahinsky 2012, 225). Indeed, it is no coincidence that C3T's foyer resembles other common sites of leisure in romantic liberal modernity such as the shopping mall, the sports arena, or the movie theatre, all of which are designed to provide a "feeling of worry-free comfort" (Maddox 2012, 153).

Yet I would argue these aesthetic trimmings serve chiefly to prime individuals to be receptive to experiencing the Holy Spirit—which periods of worship are strategically and indeed powerfully designed to elicit. Thus the real power of the Sunday service as public ritual lies in periods of worship, where state-of-the art-technologies, professionally produced music, and emotional regimes work together to produce feelings of ecstasy and awe, while simultaneously enforcing a particular discursive framework (CC discourse) with which to interpret them (Meyer 2010, 754).

To begin, consider the role of lighting and stage design. As one enters the auditorium, where the service takes place, the lights on the audience are dimmed, whereas the stage is illuminated by a colourful lightshow, and it is not uncommon for a fog machine to run in the background. This allows the congregation to rest in relative anonymity during worship, thereby facilitating what Ibrahim Abraham (2018, 15) calls "self-forgetfulness." Meanwhile, onstage one always finds a six to eight person band that not only produces the blaring worship music that resounds throughout the room, but simultaneously "model the correct way to experience the presence of God" (Jennings 2008, 163). These onstage performers enthusiastically jump up and down with the rhythm of the music, and the singers often hold their arms out high in the air with eyes closed and faces directed upwards toward the ceiling. In the audience, church members both watch this spectacle as well as actively participate in it, mimicking the contagious displays of affect before them. Meanwhile the song lyrics display in the foreground of billowing and multi-coloured clouds, projected on massive screens that float at the back of the stage.

Much like NLF, then, C3T creates a distinct social environment, however it does so less by normalizing distinct speech norms than by normalizing distinct behavioural norms. As Bobby Alexander

(1989, 117) observes, "the defiant behavior of ecstatic display is a rejection of behavioral standards to which mainstream society subscribes, for example, poise, dignity, and composure." Indeed, C3T worship services are sites of what Shilling and Mellor (2011, 23) call "embodied intoxication," or better yet, *embodied enchantment*, where individuals are both allowed and expected to act on their spontaneous bodily impulses and "reach beyond their individual selves." One member recounted their experience in worship thus: "I started lifting my hands, and the more you do it the more you actually start feeling the love. Because it's just me and Him. And it's funny, because others things can't snap back in. You almost step into a new world when you're in it—where it's God's world."

Also critical to producing collective effervescence is the role of music. Mark Jennings (2008, 171) contends, "music is the most important technology for creating a space in which an experience understood as a divine-human encounter can take place" (see also Goh 2008). The leaders of C3T would certainly agree, hence why members of the "Muscle Crew" are instructed to wake up each Sunday morning at 5:30am in order to complete the extensive setup of the school auditorium, which includes lugging and rigging numerous heavy speakers, microphones, musical instruments, and other sound equipment onstage. However, not just any type of music would do the trick. What distinguishes contemporary worship music from the hymnals of old is that it taps into widespread cultural tastes, while endorsing what Joel Inbody (2015, 351) calls a "specialized vocabulary" (CC discourse) through which individuals learn to interpret their bodily sensations. This is a powerful combination, for it promises ritual participants not merely the emotional energy derived from listening to the type of music they already enjoy, but also "allow[s] [them] to feel as though they are channeling and experiencing the divine" (Wellman et al. 2014, 654). And insofar as the music is successful in this task it "effectively dislodges the ability to critique and question because it immerses worshippers in an enthralling entertainment experience" (Sanders 2016, 80).

Of course, the similarities shared between worship music and secular popular music poses risks, for unless worship music is interpreted through a distinctly Charismatic Christian lens, the distinction between a worship service and rock concert collapses (Jennings 2008, 168). Moreover, this linking of "the somatic to the spiritual" is not easily achieved (Brahinsky 2012, 227). As anthropologist Birgit Meyer (2010, 742) remarks, "Having such sensations of divine presence does not happen unexpectedly but requires the existence of a particular shared religious aesthetic, through which the Holy Spirit becomes accessible and perceptible." This is why CC discourse plays such a critical role in securing the "proper" interpretation. Let me offer an illustrative example.

One Sunday service, at the end of a worship song, pastor Jess unexpectedly walked onstage and asked the congregation in a rhetorical manner: "Why do we worship?" The room fell silent. "It is because God loves worship. Jesus desires that we worship him. And you know that feeling you get in worship?

That's Jesus coming in, entering your heart." In this moment, Jess was instructing church members how to interpret their bodily sensations, naturalizing a CC discursive framework by which to label and categorize their experiences of worship. Members were being taught that when they feel most alive, when the music is bringing them to uppermost emotional heights, they are experiencing "Jesus."[130] Tanya Luhrmann (2004, 519) refers to this process as "metakinesis," referring to the ways believers "learn to identify bodily and emotional states as signs of God's presence in their life." Indeed, much effort is made at C3T to ensure that members leave confident that they have had an encounter with the divine.

In sum, from a Durkheimian perspective, the importance of embodied enchantment produced in worship cannot be overemphasized. In agreement, Inbody (2015, 338) contends that it is in worship where Charismatics experience a "socially derived emotional energy … [which] makes the individual feel not only good, but exalted," leading them to interpret these experiences as "spiritual phenomenon." He concludes, "It is the shared experience of [emotional energy], which increases solidarity, is attributed to religious symbols or entities, and entices individuals to return for subsequent interactions." I would therefore argue that the legitimacy and plausibility of the religion of the heart at C3T hinges significantly on the success of worship to invoke certain sensations, and persuade their members to interpret these as signs of God's presence.

2. Language ideology, conversion narratives and symbolic boundaries

In the previous chapter I discussed the performative nature of storytelling and its significance for identity-reconstruction at NLF. Much that I spoke of there can be applied here. Though what distinguishes C3T from NLF, I wish to suggest, is the language ideology that underwrites CC discourse, which holds that what one speaks becomes manifest in the material world.[131] For as a result of this language ideology speech of any kind takes on increased importance for remaking the self.

Coleman (2000, 118) identifies four different ways that language is applied to the self within Charismatic Christianity: narrative emplacement, referring to the production of self-descriptions whereby believers locate themselves "in terms of a landscape of evangelical action, ideals and characters." For instance, one member described her conversion as follows: "I started noticing things that are unique to me because I'm reading creation. And I'm reading God's character in the Bible and I'm realizing He's actually always been in my life." The second, dramatization, implies acting out church sanctioned ideals—performing the "prosperous self." The third, internalization, refers to refashioning oneself through

[130] This is akin to the role listening practices play among revivalist Muslims in Cairo in achieving piety (see Hirschkind 2001).

[131] A language ideology, Joel Robbins (2012, 15) explains, refers to "ideas about the nature of language, how it works, and how people following should use it."

performative utterances. And the fourth, externalization, refers to the deployment of language as a means of altering the material world. Thus CC discourse holds that prayer, when done with a "faithful heart" is sufficient to overcome any conceivable difficulty (Pringle 2005, 22). These various applications of language together serve to fuel "rituals of rupture" whereby C3T members make a complete break with their pasts, primarily by recounting over and over again their conversion narratives (Robbins 2012, 12). With each telling the "false" or "worldly" self is identified and transcended in lieu of the "true" or "prosperous" self. In his study of conversion narratives anthropologist Peter Stromberg (1993, 3, 15-16) remarks, "the conversion narrative itself is a central element of the conversion" insomuch as "the believer learns over time to construe herself and her life in terms of the canonical language."

Undoubtedly, we find such rituals of rupture at NLF, but because AA discourse is not informed by the same language ideology as that of CC discourse, storytelling serves quite different, if marginally overlapping, functions at each moral community. For instance, while negative talk is considered the norm within the rooms of AA, at C3T it is vehemently avoided. And because there is no impulse to proselytize in Twelve Step fellowships, NLF members limit sharing their AA stories to their interactions with other AA members. It follows that a fundamental difference between NLF and C3T revolves around when and where to share one's story: NLF works on a principle of "attraction rather than promotion," thus the telling of one's story is generally confined to AA meetings. By contrast, C3T implicitly espouses a principle of "attraction and promotion," so members are encouraged to share their testimony at every available opportunity in order to enlarge the kingdom of God. This is why Manual Vasquez (2003, 162) identifies in Charismatic thought a "certain narrative compulsion," as they seem "compelled to share with others their testimonies of conversion." Unlike NLF, then, storytelling at CT3 is construed as both a means of demonstrating faithfulness as well as engaging in proselytization.

Yet conversion narratives do much more than reconstitute believers in light of CC discourse, and aid them to evangelize. They also serve to erect and sustain symbolic boundaries that demarcate the church as a distinct community—both real and imagined—thereby shoring up its subcultural identity. CC discourse serves to separate "believers" from "nonbelievers" in a categorical sense, binding members to one another and solidifying a collective identity. Indeed, Brian Starks and Robert Robinson (2009) argue that evangelicals thrive in pluralistic societies primarily because they are adept at constructing a collective identity which perceives itself as wholly Other as well as embattled. While the rhetoric found at C3T may not be as hostile to the secular world as that found among, say, orthodox or fundamentalist groups, we should not discount the role this symbolic boundary drawing plays in bolstering commitment and solidarity among members. C3T members are adamant that as "faithful servants of Christ" they are epistemically and morally different from those who are "not saved" or "have not met God." For instance, Nadia asserted, "There's so many people in this city that are broken. And I know because I was one.

Unfortunately, the enemy, the devil, He knows how to lure you in. That's why people don't believe in God. Because they're so far away from the truth. But I can tell you that the only thing is the living God. Jesus Christ is the only way to get to God." Thus, adopting CC discourse at C3T entails initiation into a moral community where membership is not only exclusive, but where the outside world is perceived as both wholly Other and in need of saving.

3. The role of pastors in modeling the prosperous self

We have seen how the religion of the heart at C3T serves to enable a radical break with one's false self in order to realize one's true or prosperous self. Yet, as with NLF, what is considered authentic and how members learn to construe their true selves is considerably socially constructed, and significantly shaped by the group's *conscience collective*. I argued in the previous chapter that the recovered self at NLF was largely informed by a combination of expressivist-cum-liberal Christian values (humility, selflessness, emotional honesty, tolerance, acceptance of limitation, etc.) and a queer subcultural identity, which the veteran members of the group embodied. By contrast, the prosperous self at C3T is enfleshed and modeled by the senior pastors, Sam and Jess Picken, and reflects a synthesis of the following value-sets.

First, CC discourse as encoded at C3T sacralizes the values of today's celebrity and fashion cultures. These include: physical beauty, charm, sex appeal, fame, novelty, and personal magnetism. Indeed, these qualities are reconceived within CC discourse as virtues that enable members to attract converts and grow the church. As Gerardo Martí (2010, 53) notes, within growth churches, the pursuit of personal celebrity is not conceived as self-serving egoism, but rather "faithful fulfillment of a religious duty." Indeed, this is why Marion Maddox (2013, 111) contends that within a Charismatic Christian heuristic "one's body, image and lifestyle are a walking evangelistic billboard." Moreover, as Miranda Klaver (2015a, 156) observes, there exists a clear "performative style" that Charismatic pastors share: "church websites present the pastor and his wife together as the leading couple of the church. They always look happily married; have both a sparklingly white set of teeth; the pastor's wife is, usually good looking, thin, blond." Sam and Jess's ability to embody these performative standards works to legitimate their moral authority, as they are seen to "have the right look," as one member put it. Moreover, C3T members regularly cite Sam's charisma as evidence of his leadership capabilities, and it is widely agreed upon that he and Jess embody authentic Christian leadership.

Second, CC discourse sacralizes the values of growth and prosperity—emotional and material. Emotional prosperity entails conformity to a specific "emotional regime" (Woodhead and Riis 2010, 10), which I call *relentless positivity*. Phil Pringle preached one Sunday, "Get out of dismay, defeat, discouragement and depression," making sure to remind the congregation, "God hates whining!" According to CC discourse, fear, dullness, and anxiety are the work of the devil and therefore to be

weeded out as soon as they crop up. This emotional regime is closely tied to the language ideology naturalized at C3T. Within C3 theology negative self-talk is believed to be the cause of depression and failure, thus even entertaining a negative thought is tantamount to conspiring with "the enemy." As Pringle (2005, 146) asserts, "When we believe the negatives, we diminish in size. When we diminish in size, we move backward. When we move backward, we move toward destruction."

Among Charismatics, money is conceived as an index of faith, so it is expected that a prosperous self is one who enjoys material abundance (Coleman 2006, 178). But material prosperity entails more than simply getting rich. As Pringle (2003, 47) avows, "To prosper is to do well in every area of your life and achieve your goals." It is therefore not sufficient to amass wealth—one must, in every facet of life, be a victor, not a victim (Sødal 2010). Pastor Sam articulated the gist of this powerfully: "I hate the option of moving backward. I have to continually keep moving forward. So while I'm pushing people into their potential all the time, I'm also achieving too." In making this statement Sam revealed an awareness of the degree to which his moral authority depends upon what Bowler (2013, 193) calls a "performance of victory." His ability to attract followers, to grow the church, to accrue wealth and fame, and to "raise sensibilities that invoke the divine presence in such a way that is recognized and persuasive" (Klaver 2015a, 151) is what proves his worthiness. This is a necessary corollary of growth church theology: those who prosper are those who merit authority, while those who do not merit none. Maddox (2012, 151) is therefore undoubtedly correct that for these Christians, "becoming wealthier and more successful is not merely desirable, but a moral duty."

Lastly, CC discourse at C3T sacralizes social conservatism: members are encouraged not to engage in sex before marriage, have abortions, or abuse drugs or alcohol. Traditional marriage and the nuclear family are valorized in church teachings, and within C3 churches one finds a gendered division of labour, where women, even when in leadership, are expected to "submit" to their husbands (Miller 2016, 3009). Moreover, while C3T refrains from taking a public stance on homosexuality, the ethos is unapologetically heteronormative.

It follows that the idioculture of C3T reflects a combination of celebrity culture, market values, and a strain of social conservatism. That is, C3T members are expected to pursue fame, fortune, and victory, all while remaining sexually disciplined, hard working, and self-responsible. And as I mentioned above, this idioculture is powerfully enfleshed in the figures of Sam and Jess. In fact, I would argue these senior pastors exert an influence upon the church far beyond the influence the veteran members at NLF exert upon their AA group. The reason for this largely has to do with the fact that CC discourse enjoins submission to leadership as a means to achieving faithfulness and positive freedom. But it also has to do with the role charismatic authority plays at C3T.

Many sociologists associate the concept of charismatic authority with Weber, for whom it refers to "a collective belief that a person [the leader of the group] is embodying the sacred, the extraordinary, the divine" (Giesen 2006, 352). However, a complementary notion can be found in the work of Durkheim, for whom charismatic authority refers to a "special relational structure between an individual who is able to 'put in play', so to speak, and to articulate the strong emotions, the aspirations, the pent-up feelings of the collectivity" (Tiryakian 1995, 273). In other words, charismatic authority, from a Durkheimian perspective, derives from the production of collective effervescence. Accordingly, worship services play a critical role in securing the outsized moral authority of pastors Sam and Jess, as it is through the cultivation of embodied enchantment that they become "sacred persons" (Durkheim [1912] 1995, 412). That is, by virtue of their role as mediators of divine-human encounters pastors "become sacred objects of congregations and serve as representations of the group" (Wellman et al. 2014, 664). And as a result, Sam and Jess significantly contribute to "feelings of morality—standards of right and wrong that are approved by the group, giving members a sense of purpose through service and a set of normative standards by which to guide their lives" (668).

4. Practices of self-cultivation

While worship services play a central role in securing and sustaining the plausibility of CC discourse, they are not sufficient to reconstitute C3T members' selves. A comprehensive conversion requires members to voluntarily engage in a wide array of practices of self-cultivation outside of the church. The first of these is donating financially to the church, often (though not only) in the form of tithing. According to Phil Pringle (2005, 164), "Tithing, in the truest sense, is not actually giving. The tithe belongs to God, not to us." It follows that tithing at C3T is less an option than a necessary condition for realizing one's prosperous self. For, as Pringle warns, "We cannot expect a financial breakthrough in our lives if we are stealing from God or withholding from Him what He has requested from us" (Pringle 2003, 76). It should be no surprise then that almost every C3T member I spoke to tithed, both in order to demonstrate their faithfulness, as well as to sow the seeds of future prosperity: "As we give the tithe, He commands a blessing upon us" (Pringle 2005, 165).

In addition to tithing, members willingly engage in a wide array of practices outside of worship services in order to refashion their selves in conformity with the church's *conscience collective*. For instance, it is common for members to read their bibles daily, engage in regular prayer, and listen to the church's podcast, along with worship music, as a means of reconnecting with the Holy Spirit. Many members I spoke to also consider it normative to attend or lead connect groups, serve on a team, and attend one or more of the church's weekly prayer meetings. Additionally, the church frequently holds leadership retreats, conferences, socials, and community events which members are encouraged to partake

in. Moreover, members are expected to participate in these activities in conformity with the emotional regime of relentless positivity, and to closely monitor their thoughts and feelings for evidence of "the enemy" in the process.

For instance, when I attended a connect group I found that C3T members avoided all talk that could be construed as negative, doubtful, or lacking in faith. And in interviews, I similarly struggled to elicit from members critical thoughts about the senior pastors or C3T more generally. In fact, it was not until I interviewed members who had left the church that my suspicions that much was being left unsaid were confirmed. As one ex-member, Madge, explained: "You're not supposed to talk about that stuff. That's why people don't talk. I mean, it took a long time before I even felt comfortable unloading this stuff. So, yes, self-censoring—that's the perfect word for it."

Accordingly, each of these practices of self-cultivation serves to reform the internal life of C3T members, eliciting certain affective-volitional states while repressing others (Brahinsky 2012, 217). And it is for this reason that external sanctions are not necessary—C3T members willingly remake themselves in light of the church's *conscience collective*. And finally, because church growth is given such pride of place within CC discourse, members regularly evangelize acquaintances, coworkers, and even non-Christian family members, though this is often done surreptitiously, without any stated intention. Indeed, it became clear to me early on in my fieldwork that C3T members were eager to accept my request to interview them because it provided an opportunity to share their conversion narrative, and in so doing, potentially convert me.

In sum, through the use of digital technologies, sophisticated interior and exterior design techniques, and a professionally tailored worship experience, C3T successfully produces embodied enchantment. Moreover, the emotional energy aroused in worship, by being transferred and affixed to the figures of Sam and Jess imbues them with charismatic authority. And with the support of a range of practices of self-cultivation, CC discourse functions to reconstitute members' selves in conformity with the value-sets that are sacralized at C3T, and which these senior pastors embody.

The Pathologies of Romantic Liberal Modernity and C3 Toronto

How does the religion of the heart institutionalized at C3T relate to the pathology of anomie? Interestingly, despite sharing the same cultural structure CC discourse and "spiritual" discourses associated with the holistic milieu have elicited quite different responses. While critics have been quick to perceive the latter as symptomatic of atomistic individualism, they have generally reserved more tame criticism for the former. Yet there do exist those who fear that churches such as C3T cannot stave off feelings of anomie as a result of the value they place on individual freedom and the primacy they give to subjective experience. For instance, of neo-Pentecostalism Bryan Turner (2011, 282) contends, "These

religious orientations place few ethical demands on their followers." Stephen Hunt et al. (1997, 10) suggest the religiosity found at Charismatic churches "is not essentially rooted in any sense of community." Martyn Percy (1997, 223) submits, "neo-Pentecostalism is founded on the shifting sands of religious experience and charisma," thereby concluding it is "a shaky commodity." And Marion Maddox (2013, 109) writes, "Rather than fostering the virtues of solidarity and community … Pentecostalism stresses the individual virtues of initiative, aspiration, self-belief and self-motivation."

Of course, it is wholly accurate to suggest CC discourse focuses on individuals, rather than community, given the value it places on personal experience. Yet, as we have seen, an emphasis on subjective experience—provided experiences are interpreted in line with the canonical discourse—can motivate intense commitment. As Shilling and Mellor (2011, 34) explain, "revivalism involves an emotive form of sacred intoxication: an *embodied* intoxication individuated at an experiential level, yet able to promote strong patterns of community." That said, it is no doubt the case that community at C3T is far from traditional. For within CC discourse self-advancement is reconceived as corporate advancement, and doggedly pursuing status, fame, and wealth is reframed as a form of spiritual vocation. But what critics fail to recognize is the degree to which the prosperous self "can only be rooted and supported within a face-to-face, voluntary community of believers who face an uncertain world together" (Martí 2012, 148). In other words, members come to depend upon their real church community as well the "imagined world community of Christians" to which they belong (Brison 2017, 660).

This dependence takes the following two forms. First, C3T members conceive of their church, and their attachment to it, as an irreplaceable source of moral and spiritual strength. As one member phrased it, "They speak life into you at C3." While another asserted, "I don't know where I'd be without the church. Everything I have I owe to C3 Toronto." Moreover, if members begin to struggle, either emotionally or financially, CC discourse holds that this is either due to a lack of faith or a weak service life. One ex-member even recounted being asked by a campus pastor, after breaking with church norms and disclosing that she was facing financial hardship, "How much are you giving? Are you still leading your connect group? How often are you praying?" This illustrates that because members learn to view their own well-being and prosperity as bound up with their commitment to the church the fulfilment of communal obligations is considered a precondition for self-advancement. While it may be paradoxical, it would be wrong to see the virtues of self-belief and self-motivation as antithetical to those of commitment and community.

Second, because churches such as C3T promise direct access to the Holy Spirit, members come to rely on them as sources of both cosmic meaning and unconditional love. For instance, Choral recounted her first year at C3:

> I arrived at C3 with very low expectations because I had never had an earthshaking experience at church. But my first time was intense and very emotional. And it felt like every single sermon I walked in I was being shaken by God. And it was just very profound and very moving. So I dusted off my Bible, and would listen to podcasts every day, and I was just really consumed by what I was felt was a deepening intimacy with God that I'd never felt before.

Likewise, in our interview, Sage explained her continued commitment to C3T as follows: "So the biggest thing for me is God's love. Before C3 I never knew that was a thing in my life. I never knew it existed. And now it is my life source." Nadia echoed this sentiment: "Every other church I'd ever gone to in my life I didn't feel like I belonged. I didn't feel there was God there. At C3 I felt the presence of God. I felt loved."

Time and again members spoke of the importance of the "Holy Spirit encounter" as the reason why they remain C3T members. What's more, in an interview with an ex-C3T member, they described being terrified to leave the church out of fear that it was the only place where they could access the Holy Spirit. These testimonies make clear the degree to which community at C3T depends upon the church's success in providing access to an all loving and powerful God. But they also highlight the central role religious experience plays in stimulating individual commitment and mitigating anomie. In agreement, Luhrmann (2004, 527) argues that the human-divine encounter normalized at C3T functions "to protect [members] against the isolation of modern social life." And Gerardo Martí (2010, 69) observes that growth churches command intense devotion in large part because they enable their members to believe that "when they go out into the world they are never truly alone."

Thus despite the fact that CC discourse sacralizes values that many consider anathema to communal obligation, C3T manages to integrate its members into a cohesive and comprehensive moral community in the following ways. First, by convincing members that their own prosperity is contingent upon their faithfulness, members willingly submit to leadership, contribute to the church both financially and otherwise, and regularly engage in normalizing practices of self-cultivation. And second, by providing access to an all-powerful God, which members can viscerally experience, feelings of anomie are dissipated as the believer comes to inhabit a cosmically meaningful universe where every event, interaction, or experience is full of divine possibility.

Enchanting the Market Mentality

Does CC discourse as encoded at C3T mitigate the pathology of egoism? In order to answer this question we should first re-examine what we mean by egoism. Recall from Chapter 10 that, according to Durkheim, egoism entails utilitarian individualism, the moral tradition inscribed in the economic sphere. In other words, the ideal-typical egoist is tantamount to *homo economicus*—he or she who lives according

to what Robert Heilbroner (1992, 89, 26) calls "the market mentality," that is, "the drive to get ahead, to make money, to accumulate capital." Moreover, as we saw in Chapter 8, one of the perennial problems with utilitarian individualism is that it tends to disenchant; the drive to maximize one's utility for its own sake serves as a poor theodicy, hence why it has historically spurred interest in expressivism (e.g. the Romantic movement). I restate this because it helps to illuminate a dimension of CC discourse that is both astounding and alarming: C3T seems to have succeeded in staving off the threat of anomie, not by challenging the market mentality but by *enchanting* it. What I mean by this is that CC discourse, rather than countering the utilitarian ethic of the economic sphere, *adopts it as its own* and *provides an expressivist theology to legitimate it.*

Recall that at C3T self-advancement is reconceived as a form of community advancement, such that "the pursuit of personal celebrity" is reinterpreted as "faithful fulfillment of a moral imperative" (Martí 2010, 60). The effect of this conceptual transformation cannot be underestimated. For by reframing egoistic behaviour as a form of divinely sanctioned altruism CC discourse overcomes the inherent limitations of utilitarian individualism as a moral tradition. No longer is material advancement the ultimate end of life; rather, the pursuit of individual prosperity is reconceived as the means by which members become "ambassador[s] of the kingdom of God" (Martí 2012, 137). Birgit Meyer (2007, 12) is therefore correct when she contends that neo-Pentecostals "have not only embraced the logic of the market, but also form part of it." Indeed, what we find at C3T is a robust moral community that is founded upon a *sacralization of market values* and the *Christianization of homo economicus.*

Recall the role money plays as a symbol of faith at C3 Church. According to Phil Pringle, "Faith is the currency of heaven," and "when we give in the God economy, the return on investment is insane." And in a sermon on money pastor Sam preached one Sunday that his own financial success was simply the result of his faithful giving. Furthermore, money metaphors are everywhere in CC discourse, as is a preoccupation with measurement and numbers. Thus, pastor Phil once preached, "Good Shepherds count sheep," and "Growth, multiplication, and reproduction are the outcomes of pure motives." One could even boil C3 Church's core message down to "the bigger the better." If churches are not gaining in size, if the number of souls saved is not increasing, or if the church's capital assets have not grown since the year before, the consensus is that it is in a state of spiritual decay.

It follows that churches such as C3T, rather than serving to mitigate egoism, in fact, naturalize and exacerbate it by offering a theology and theodicy that legitimates it. Of course, this does not mean we do not find any forms of moral regulation at these churches. On the contrary, there is intense moral regulation. As we have seen, the call to realize one's prosperous self is stringent and totalizing, demanding constant and vigilant discipline. In fact, the stress on material prosperity as a sign of faith arguably reshapes C3T members into Christian utility-maximizers, who fervently believe pursuing their

own economic self-interest is aligned with God's will. It also follows that critics are correct to draw attention to the intimate connections between the religion of the heart, in its Charismatic Christian form, and neoliberalism. There is an obvious sense in which churches such as C3T take their "values from corporate capitalism" (Carrette and King 2005, 178), and "sell the religion of corporations" (Maddox 2012, 155). And Isabelle Barker (2007, 409) is certainly right to contend that CC discourse, "exists in a harmonizing, even symbiotic, relation to neoliberal capitalism." Mary Wrenn (2019, 426) therefore sums things up well: "The Prosperity Gospel is thus a spiritual articulation of neoliberalism."

C3 Toronto as a Greedy Institution

I have agreed with critics who contend that CC discourse, like that institutionalized at C3T, rather than challenging the egoism of the market, exacerbates it in an unprecedented way. But the question remains: do churches such as C3T impede shifting involvements and the adoption of rival social perspectives or moral traditions?

It might be useful to remind ourselves why a Durkheimian reformulation of romantic liberalism couches the concern in this way. Though Durkheim would certainly fear that in normalizing egoism, CC discourse is bound to produce a malady of infiniteness in its adherents, he also recognized that utilitarian individualism has a rightful place in the economic sphere of liberal democracies. It follows that we need to distinguish between the personal and political consequences of CC discourse.

Durkheim would no doubt contend that by naturalizing egoism, C3T is bound to have deleterious personal consequences for its adherents, as their desires will always exceed that which they possess. But it does not necessarily follow that CC discourse entails accommodation to the status quo, nor precludes challenging social or economic injustices. Indeed, this follows logically from what I argued in the previous chapter. There I suggested that simply because NLF members *qua* members of AA, take as authoritative anti-structuralist discourses which, by their very nature, encourage political quietism and accommodationism, this should not lead us to think they are incapable or unwilling to engage in social critique. Thus, it was perfectly acceptable in the eyes of NLF members to speak in a methodologically individualistic way when discussing their recoveries from addiction, while using a structuralist framework to discuss socio-political issues. This, I argued, is because being a member of NLF is not wholly constitutive of their selves, and therefore enables shifting involvements. Of course, we can distinguish between the religion of the heart at NLF and that found at C3T by their varying relationships to egoism—while the former challenges it, the latter legitimates it. But my point is simply that we must distinguish analytically between the problem of egoism and whether or not a particular discourse legitimates economic and social injustice. Indeed, in order to determine the latter, we need to know the degree to which membership precludes other attachments and perspectives.

With this established, I want to make the case that C3T is a greedy institution, which significantly reduces the likelihood of committed membership in other institutional spheres or the adoption of rival social perspectives. We can best make sense of this by contrasting the "alcoholic" identity as normalized at NLF, with the identity of "Christian" as normalized at C3T.

First, the former is restricted to the private sphere, whereas the latter is comprehensive, that is, C3T members are expected to live as faithful Christians in all areas of their lives, with their identities as Christians always holding primacy. As Paul Lichterman puts it,

> To be an evangelical is to carry a kind of identity, one that sustains strong boundaries between Christian truths and other religious or secular beliefs. To be evangelical is to make religious *certainty* a core part of one's identity—certainty about what one's beliefs are, and that they are true. Evangelicals usually think of their Christian identity as their most basic, life-defining one—an identity that grows not from birth but from the moment when an individual explicitly states the intent to commit his life to Jesus Christ. (Lichterman 2005, 35)

Indeed, the totalizing nature of the Christian identity at C3T encourages members to apply CC discourse across both "secular" and "religious" contexts, and conceive of every interaction as an opportunity to either evangelize or demonstrate their faithfulness. Thus, believers do not separate their identities at work from those they adopt at church. On the contrary, work is conceived as a vocation, a means by which one uses one's spiritual gifts and talents for God's purposes. Gerardo Marti (2010, 71) writes, "separation between work and belief is not possible within evangelicalism. True believers who are evangelical are especially pressed to find points of integration in all aspects of life lest they find themselves as 'straying' from the faith."

One might argue that C3T is merely "rhetorically greedy" and that in fact members do not close themselves off to competing commitments and perspectives. But this view is strongly challenged by the testimonies of ex-members—those who have, in their own words, "got out." For instance, when I asked one ex-member, Kwame, how much time and energy he saved for himself outside of church commitments while he was a member he replied, "I didn't save any for myself." And evincing the fact that C3T, like other greedy institutions, encourages members to weaken their ties with rival institutions, as well as persons that might "make claims that conflict with their own demands" (Coser 1974, 6), another ex-member, Julia, shared that when she was a member of C3T she only spent time with fellow C3T members, and became emotionally estranged from her immediate non-Christian family because she feared they would weaken her faith.

Furthermore, it is a central feature of greedy institutions that they typically do not enforce conformity by means of external coercion, but rather "rely on voluntary compliance" (Coser 1974, 6). As we have seen, C3T members willingly submit themselves to the disciplines demanded of them,

reconstituting their selves in light of the church's *conscience collective*. But as the interview accounts of Madge and Dan demonstrate, the ideal of submission allows little room for critical thought or questioning. Madge explained, "We've found that as you get more and more in, you can't think for yourself. And you're so clouded by a lot of the propaganda—I guess that would maybe be the word." Dan agreed: "I think when you're doing it, when you're in it, you don't question it. You can't." Both Madge and Dan expressed relief at "being one of the lucky ones to get out." They also described leaving C3T as a process of "deprogramming ourselves." And when asked what that entailed Dan replied, "I've been able to broaden the voices that I was listening to."

In short, while it is certainly the case that not every single church member becomes a committed devotee, I would nevertheless contend that churches such as C3T, generally speaking, function as greedy institutions. In agreement, Matthew Wade (2016, 668, 665) draws attention to the way growth churches like C3T erect "psychological walls" in their adherents, thereby inspiring a "curious form of sectarianism." He further contends that they seek "to replace any void community groups, labour unions, more conventional faith-based collectives and the like [members] might otherwise have occupied" (668) Indeed, few of the C3T members I spoke to were involved in nonchurch activities that were not expressly concerned with professional development—itself conceived within CC discourse as spiritually salient. This is because there is intense pressure placed on newcomers to "get involved" and "go all in," becoming more than just a "casual attendee" (672). Wade also notes, "The Church's contributions to global causes also entails that the devotee need not go outside of the institution in order to contribute to wider society, as all desires for altruism can be satiated from within" (672). While certainly true, we can say more. Due to the comprehensive scope of CC discourse all social ills—from poverty, to racism, to sexism—are construed as the result of a lack of faith. Thus Phil Pringle's (2003, 186) assertion that "Poverty is more a *state of mind* than a state of life" receives little resistance among C3T members because to challenge this claim would require threatening their faithfulness, and potentially undermining their own quest for prosperity. In this way, CC discourse as it is encoded at C3T severely restricts the ability of its adherents to embrace anything other than a theologized utilitarian individualism, which conceives of all structural or systemic solutions as misguided since all problems are fundamentally "spiritual" in nature.

It follows, therefore, that rational liberals are correct to fear that CC discourse may serve to impede the rationalist ethic within the public sphere, as C3T members are taught to trust "God's Word" over "the 'facts'" (Pringle 2005, 23). And civic republicans have every right to be alarmed that churches such as C3T tend to endorse pure privatism, turning their members into passive citizens who, if they think of citizenship at all, do so in purely Christian-cum-economic terms. As a result of the moral hybrid naturalized at CC discourse all issues—be they political, social, and economic—are made sense of via a utilitarian ethic. Indeed, Jean Comaroff (2009, 28) captures the situation well when she asserts that

Charismatic churches such as C3T "break down the separations between moral, economic, and political institutions" and "threaten the relative autonomy once enjoyed by each of these distinct spheres." Furthermore, I agree with neo-Marxists, critical feminists, and post-structuralists that the religion of the heart as institutionalized at C3T serves to legitimate unjust social and economic conditions by prohibiting the adoption of counter discourses or alternative identities. For what we find at C3T is a Christianized market fundamentalism that can only perceive of social ills through the lens of Christian salvation, such that what the poor, the hungry, and the disenfranchised need is nothing more than a stronger faith.

Explaining the Rise of Charismatic Christianity

In this chapter I have demonstrated that CC discourse is ideologically allied to neoliberalism. I therefore agree wholeheartedly with neo-Marxist and post-structuralist critics that an important reason for the attraction of CC discourse among the creative classes is that it aids them to work in highly competitive and often unregulated industries where they are forced to compete under conditions of economic precarity. However, we might still ask: is the rise of neoliberalism sufficient to explain the recent popularity of CC discourse? Or put otherwise: can we reduce the C3T's success to the fact that it harmonizes well with the post-industrial service economies of the twenty-first century?

Admittedly, few critics have made this claim explicitly. For instance, Isabelle Barker (2007, 413) contends CC discourse "reflects yet another social response to neoliberal economic restructuring." Marion Maddox (2012, 153) draws attention to the way growth churches such as C3T exhibit "a conscious and consistent effort to align the church's activities and message not with any national culture but with the culture of global capitalism." And William Connolly (2005, 874) simply suggests, "The right leg of the evangelical movement is joined at the hip to the left leg of the capitalist juggernaut." Rather than reducing CC discourse to neoliberalism these critiques instead highlight the legitimating role the religion of the heart in its Charismatic Christian form plays in romantic liberal modernity, pinpointing the elective affinities this religious discourse shares with neoliberalism's economic and political structures. Presumably, then, these critics would not rule out the possibility that there is more to the Charismatic Christian success story than its affinities with neoliberalism. Indeed, breaking with the norm, Barker asserts as much: "I do not mean to interpret Pentecostalism's growth solely as a reaction to neoliberal globalization" (Barker 2007, 413).

And yet, there has been relatively little effort to provide complementary non-economic explanations for the surge in attraction to CC discourse. I believe the reason for this stems from the nature of neo-Marxist and post-structuralist frameworks, which are so often used to study this phenomenon. While scholars indebted to these traditions may not endorse a "reduction to neoliberalism" stratagem, their analyses nevertheless theorize out of sight alternative, if supplementary, explanations. The problem

with this, I believe, is that the full picture is thereby obscured. Accordingly, in what follows I outline three reasons for the popularity of CC discourse in romantic liberal modernity that extend beyond the economic. These are as follows: (1) the need for totalizing communities of enchantment, (2) the desire for personal empowerment, and (3) the burdens of negative freedom.

1. The need for totalizing communities of enchantment

I have spoken at length in this study about the many sources of disenchantment; the disciplines of civilized life can be experienced as stifling and alienating, the processes of rationalization and bureaucratization—necessary for the functioning of a modern state—can produce crises of meaning (which are only exacerbated by pluralism), and in a differentiated liberal democracy individuals remain ever vulnerable to anomie and identity crises. Picking up on this Hunt et al. (1997, 7) have noted that churches such as C3T provide a subculture in which people can "retreat from the impersonal modern world." Indeed, I described above how C3T brands itself as a haven in heartless world, where individuals can finally feel like they belong. But the church does more than merely offer emotional support. It also serves as both a community of redemption (see the previous chapter) as well as a *totalizing community of enchantment.*

By a totalizing community of enchantment I mean the following: by institutionalizing the religion of the heart C3T legitimates a theodicy, which enables its members to make sense of their suffering and gain a sense of purpose. Communities of enchantment re-enchant the world by assuring their members that they live in a meaningful universe, that what they subjectively experience is not false, and that their lives matter. Of course, all communities that institutionalize the religion of the heart do this to some extent, but C3T stands out because of its "greediness." In short, the greedier, the more totalizing, and the more totalizing, the more enchanting.

At C3T I encountered a degree of certainty about the meaningfulness of life among members that was unmatched at my other field sites. I therefore believe that one of the sources of its attraction is that, as a result of the success of worship services in producing embodied enchantment, it enables its members to leave each Sunday with a high degree of confidence that the world is meaningful and that God loves them. As Luhrmann (2004, 527) explains, "the experience of faith for these Christians is a process through which the loneliest of conscious creatures comes to experience themselves as in a world awash with love." And because of the comprehensive scope of the Christian identity at C3T, members do not need to cope with the epistemic and moral difficulties institutional differentiation throws up. In other words, totalizing communities of enchantment overcome the sense of inner fragmentation that is a staple of romantic liberal modernity, protecting their members from role-conflict, identity troubles, and the specter of disenchantment. And given the deeply human desire to inhabit a meaningful universe,

attraction to totalistic groups may be an irrepressible instinct in some (Rosenblum 1998, 99). Indeed, conservatism is animated by this selfsame drive.

If I am correct about this, then we are confronted with what might be called the *paradox of enchantment*: in demanding a comprehensive scope in the lives and minds of members C3T successfully enchants the world. However, it does so only at the expense of wider solidarities across social spheres. Or, put in more general terms, the more the threat of anomie is mitigated by a single community of enchantment, the less likely its members will be willing to question their closely-held beliefs, and the less they will feel a sense of identification with those outside of their community.

2. The desire for personal empowerment

One of the core characteristics of CC discourse is the stress it places upon personal empowerment. Indeed, I have been amazed by the degree to which C3T members are convinced that "faith conquers everything" (Coleman 2006, 181). One reasonable explanation for this is the role self-efficacy—"the belief that one has mastery over the events of one's life and can meet challenges as they come up" (Goleman 1995, 89)—plays in a meritocratic society, be it neoliberal *or* social democratic. Those who believe in themselves are likely to perform better, while those who believe themselves incompetent tend to produce self-fulfilling prophecies. It is therefore not difficult to see how CC discourse might serve to bolster individuals' chances of economic success in romantic liberal modernity (Berger 2008), even while obscuring the various ways in which equality of opportunity remains far from a social reality.

Yet there is more to the story than this. For a sense of self-efficacy is not merely useful in the economic realm. Consider, for instance, Nel, who during our interview discussed the problems she once had with "desperately needing validation from men." For this young Charismatic developing a relationship with God allowed her to realize she "didn't need the validation of men in order to feel loved." Another example is offered by Chinara, who reflected on her struggles with social anxiety for many years prior to joining C3T. "God completely healed me of that. I thought I would suffer with it for the rest of my life. And I feel so free now." These examples shed light on the way in which CC discourse grants these young people a sense of agency, the feeling that they are not simply at the mercy of brute circumstance.[132] This is a powerful feeling, one that comes in handy when faced with hardship. Of course, the source of this hardship may lie in conditions of injustice or inequity that can only be remedied by systemic change. But it may also have more personal origins—trauma, relationship troubles, or illness—

[132] One of the great ironies one encounters when studying Charismatic Christians and their critics is the degree to which their respective conceptions of agency could not be more polarized: as C3T members naively endorse a conception of agency which takes no account of social constraints, neo-Marxist and post-structuralist critics often radically reduce the scope of individual agency in human life.

which cannot be overcome, when they can, without the kind of resilience and resolve that C3T impressively musters. Thus, we cannot ignore the fact that CC discourse often functions as a "tool of empowerment" (Chestnut 2012, 219), the applications of which are not only economic in character.

3. The burdens of negative freedom

In her work on Latin American Pentecostals sociologist Bernice Martin (1995, 117) writes, "the most important aspect of the inner-worldly asceticism of the Pentecostal ethic is its ban on alcohol, tobacco, drugs, gambling, violence and sexual promiscuity, in short, the 'maschista' vices." "It deploys the moral core to re-establish personal integration, self-discipline and family stability for those ravaged by the excesses of bohemianism," concluding, "it would not be an overstatement to claim that an indispensable part of the appeal of Pentecostalism is its ability to save the men from 'machismo; and put the family back together as an effective unit of economic co-operation as well as of stable personal relationships" (116, 107). Martin's observations have been echoed by a number of other scholars of Latin American Pentecostalism (see Brusco 1995; Cucchiari 1990; Dawley 2018). Of course, it could be contended that in Latin America where, especially in poorer areas, machismo culture is pervasive, there is far more need for the kind of rigid social conservatism found in Pentecostal churches. Although this is probably true, I nevertheless believe that Martin's observations apply to C3T.

While conversion narratives among C3T members follow a similar format, I found the life narratives of male and female members were markedly distinct. From the men, I often heard *a story of excess*, which included struggles with excessive drinking and drugs, compulsive consumption of pornography, failing to connect with other men, and other problems generally associated with toxic masculinity. For these young men the world beyond the church was experienced as one of perpetual temptation and hostility, which enabled them to readily adopt the narrative of spiritual warfare they heard at C3T upon arrival. From the women, I often heard *a story of disappointment*, largely revolving around struggles with men, romance, and the perils of dating. Female members recounted stories of deception, insecurity, and abuse, such that the world outside the church was experienced as one of perpetual dissatisfaction.

If the stories of C3T members are any indication it would seem that the impetus towards social conservatism found at C3T may be fuelled, in part at least, by negative experiences living in romantic liberal modernity—or what conservatives call our "permissive society." These young people, men and women alike, seek in C3T a moral community where gender roles are clearly divided, where sexual and romantic expectations are explicit, and where future ideals are flexible yet prescribed (e.g. heterosexual marriage with children). As I noted above, this is not a return to the traditionalism of their parents, however, it is safe to say that it far from embraces the romantic liberalism embodied in the liberation

movements of the 60s. I have little doubt that critical feminists and post-structuralists will find these developments disturbing. While I sympathize with this view I believe they call for more than mere denunciation. For it may be that the conditions of romantic liberal modernity (including increasing gender and sexual equality) stoke in certain individuals the desire for moral order, not so much because they are hostile to difference (although this may be the case), but rather due to the heavy burdens posed by negative freedom in an open society.

With the shift to romantic liberal modernity social norms, especially within the private sphere, have become far less clear. This can lead to confusion and anxiety. Moreover, young people can experience a lack of fetters on their private lives as both liberating and imprisoning depending on their social circumstances and levels of self-control. Finally, as individual autonomy has become sacralized, both men and women have the freedom to choose their mates, producing a dating scene that resembles the neoliberal economy, characterized by a few big winners and manifold losers. Although this certainly does not apply universally, the appeal of C3T may have something to do with the way it institutionalizes a culture that challenges "toxic masculinity" and "machismo" by encouraging males to become respectful and dutiful young men who take care (economic and emotional) of their female partners. This undoubtedly serves to reinforce a conservative gender ideology and overall social conservatism, but the point is that such ideologies may derive some of their appeal simply as result of the burdens and challenges thrown up by life in romantic liberal modernity.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that while communitarians are wrong to think churches such as C3T do not stave off anomie, rational liberals and civic republicans are quite right to fear their civic consequences. C3T not only integrates its members into a moral community but also enfolds them into a totalizing community of enchantment that naturalizes a moral hybrid, which hides a rugged utilitarian individualism behind expressivist language. Furthermore, I have argued that progressive critics (neo-Marxist, post-structuralist, and critical feminist) are correct insofar as they characterize CC discourse as an ally to neoliberalism, and as an impediment to social change. Because C3T functions as a greedy institution, demanding undivided loyalty and commitment from its members, members' willingness to shift involvements and adopt rival social perspectives is drastically reduced. Yet I have also sought to shed light on various non-economic reasons for the appeal of CC discourse, for I believe doing so helps us to better understand important, if complex, features of romantic liberal modernity that we have failed to adequately reckon with.

Chapter 13

Romantic Liberal Subjects:

Public Performance and Political Ambivalences at a Public Speaking Club

This chapter consists of an institutional ethnography of Tomorrow's Leaders (TL), a public speaking club that belongs to the secular nonprofit educational organization, Toastmasters International. As I did in the two preceding chapters I begin by offering a brief history of both Toastmasters International and TL. Next, I make the case that the religion of the heart finds discursive expression in a secular (or psychological) form at TL—which I call *Self-Help (SH) discourse*. In contrast to AA discourse or CC discourse I argue that SH discourse affords wide interpretive variety, such that there exists only a "thin" consensus at TL regarding the particular set of ideals or values it encodes, as members import and reaffirm their pre-existing conceptions of the true self in club meetings. Nevertheless, TL remains a site of identity reconstitution, if less comprehensive in scope. I therefore draw from the Durkheimian tradition in order to delineate how TL club meetings, as sites of collective ritual, serve to (re)produce romantic liberal subjects—subjects for whom autonomy, self-expression, and self-realization are moral ideals. I then revisit critics' concerns in light of my empirical findings, identifying where and when they are justified, and where and when they are not. I conclude that examining sites such as TL reveals much about the risks that come with the rise of the religion of the heart and romantic liberal modernity more generally, but that the reality is not as dire, nor insurmountable, as critics contend.

A Brief History of Toastmasters International and Tomorrow's Leaders

Toastmasters began unofficially in 1905, when a man by the name of Ralph C. Smedley, the Director of Education at a YMCA in Bloomington, Illinois, came up with the idea of hosting a series of workshops in order to teach young Christians how to speak publicly, conduct meetings, and plan educational programs.[133] However, Toastmasters International was not formally established until 1924, when Smedley organized the first official club meeting at a YMCA in Santa Ana, California.[134] By 1930, nearly 30 Toastmasters clubs had formed across the U.S., with one in British Columbia. And in 1932, Toastmasters International was incorporated as a California non-profit organization. As with Alcoholics Anonymous,

[133] Smedley wrote an insider account of the history of Toastmaster's, see *The Story of Toastmasters: Reminiscences of the founder.*

[134] See https://www.toastmasters.org/about/history.

Toastmasters began catering solely to white men, however, it was forced to diversify its membership in the wake of the rights revolutions and cultural upheavals of the 1960s. In 1970, Toastmasters began admitting female members, doubling its membership (Bremen 1998, 13). And today the organization boasts over 16,000 clubs with more than 358,000 members across 143 countries.[135]

Though many outsiders hold the impression that Toastmasters International is exclusively devoted to improving public speaking, it presents itself as offering much more. For instance, the Toastmasters International website promises members they will, "Enjoy unlimited personal growth," "Build self-confidence and self-awareness," and "Maximize [their] potential." In *Toastmaster*, the organization's flagship magazine, one of the feature articles was titled, "On realizing one's potential and teaching others to do the same" (Glozek 2018, 26). And in promotional videos veteran members attest: "Toastmasters is really the best kept secret for self-development," "If I could say one thing about Toastmasters it would have to be personal growth," and "I've gained so much confidence and belief in myself after being a part of Toastmasters."

Anthropologist Amir Hampel (2017, 445) writes, "the practice of public speaking has been historically central to self-help," adding, "public speaking courses are a lively sector in a broad self-help universe." Indeed, Dale Carnegie's bestseller, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, grew out of his public speaking classes. Moreover, while Toastmasters may have promoted its own educational programs, it has long relied on the self-help publishing industry to both fuel demand for its services, as well as provide the cultural texts that give it legitimacy. I therefore think it both reasonable and useful to locate Toastmasters International within the longstanding tradition of self-help in North America and the Human Potential movement of the 1960s.

In *Self Help, Inc.* McGee (2005, 31) traces the history of self-help to the writings of Benjamin Franklin, "the quintessential self-made man" in American lore. Yet she also identifies Ralph Waldo Emerson, whom she argues advocated "self-culture," as a forefather of the self-help tradition. In fact, McGee's history of self-help in North America overlaps considerably with the history of the religion of the heart that I traced in Chapter 4, as she contends Transcendentalism, Christian Science, and New Thought have each played a pivotal role in shaping contemporary self-help discourse. McGee also points out that a significant semantic shift took place during the mid-twentieth century: classic self-help literature, which previously spoke in traditional Christian terms (invoking concepts such as "mission," "individual calling," and "vocation"), was translated into the secular register of humanistic psychology (invoking concepts such as "self-actualization" and "self-realization") (40). She draws attention to how, in the wake of the 1960s, popular self-help books like Stephen R. Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly*

[135] See https://www.toastmasters.org/about/all-about-toastmasters.

Effective People and M. Scott Peck's *The Road Less Traveled* took traditional religious and theistic concepts and presented them in "popular secular language" (48), while books such as Tony Robbins's *Awaken the Giant Within* translated into secular terms a Christian Science preoccupation with "the power of mind over matter" by "fusing a rhetoric of science with scripture and divine revelation" (60).

Fuller (2006, 222) writes, "The key to understanding the cultural history of American psychology is thus not assuming that psychology has altered the nature of America's symbolic universe, but rather trying to understand how it has provided new vehicles for sustaining this symbolic universe." In other words, Fuller contends that psychological discourse often carries forward the religion of the heart by "secular" means. As I outlined in Chapter 4, this process has a long and varied history. Since William James, it has been remarkably difficult to identify the line that separates psychology from religion. But this line was made near impossible to identify after the emergence of humanistic psychology and the wider Human Potential movement, as "third force" psychology provided a secular and seemingly scientific language with which to disseminate and legitimate the religion of the heart (Campbell 2007, 96). Eschewing traditionally religious terms while receiving ratification from academic institutions humanistic psychologists such as Maslow and Rogers propagated the romanticism of Emerson and James in new (psychological) wineskins (Stone 1976, 102; Fuller 2001, 142). Thus Fuller (2006, 224) remarks, "one of the principal cultural reasons that psychology has so successfully reached wider audiences is its capacity to function as an unchurched source of American spirituality."

Here Fuller is drawing on the insights of Don Browning and Terry Cooper offered in *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies*. Browning and Cooper (2004, 6) persuasively demonstrate that modern psychologies, especially those belonging to the tradition of humanistic psychology, are "actually instances of religio-ethical thinking." By this they mean that humanistic psychologies, contra the claims of their secular proponents, "are frequently quasi religions with faith assumptions about the ultimate context of our lives and the goals of human fulfillment" (249). While acknowledging that much humanistic psychology "do[es] not provide answers to life's meaning" Browning and Cooper nevertheless argue that it often serves to transmit "concepts and technologies for the ordering of the interior life" (2). Central for these scholars are the "deep metaphors" embedded in particular humanistic psychological frameworks, which they argue circumscribe specific "religious and moral horizons" (7). In other words, concepts such as "self-actualization," "growth," "energy," and "flow," according to Browning and Cooper, are not value-neutral terms, but rather "metaphors of ultimacy" that implicitly "tell us something about the ultimate conditions of the world in which we live" (69).

Furthermore, as Fuller (2006, 231) reminds us, "It is quite possible that Rogers's influence on Americans' self-understanding was greater than any other twentieth-century American psychologist, reaching as it did not just into the burgeoning counseling movement, but into education and pastoral care

as well." And, as McAdams (2006, 20) observes, "Contemporary American society is suffused with the rhetoric of psychotherapy, and today many laypeople speak knowingly of personal transformation and growth, fulfillment and self-actualization, individuation and reintegration, and the development and the perfection of the self" (see also Parsons 2010). Indeed, every TL member I interviewed was a consumer of self-help and/or "spiritual" literature. Thus, I would argue there has been no cultural tributary more influential in shaping SH discourse as encoded at TL than humanistic psychology. Moreover, the historical development of Toastmasters International follows an identical trajectory to that of the self-help tradition: one of increasing *psychologization*. While Toastmasters may have begun as a Protestant organization—implicitly and explicitly endorsing the classical self-help tradition—at some point during the mid-twentieth century it sought to secularize its brand, embracing the humanistic psychological language of "realizing your potential," "building self-awareness" and "achieving personal growth." The changes that have occurred at Toastmasters therefore parallel the wider developments that have swept across liberal democracies in the last half-century: a once publicly acceptable language of traditional biblical religion has gradually been replaced by that of romantic expressivist psychology and its (hidden) metaphors of ultimacy.

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Tomorrow's Leaders (TL) was started by two white middle-aged businessmen in 2002. In the early days, membership was limited to their colleagues but within a few years the membership dried up and they were forced to open the club to all interested parties. When I arrived to conduct fieldwork the club founders had left years prior, and the ethos had changed drastically. The young male and female entrepreneurs who inherited the club (though no longer members) sought to rebrand it in order to cater to a younger demographic—for instance, they renamed the club "Tomorrow's Leaders" as a means of signaling a future-facing spirit.

TL meetings follow a standardized structure that is virtually the same at all Toastmasters clubs (Bremen 1998, 25). Meetings consist of four parts: the business portion, formal prepared speeches, table topics, and speech evaluations. Meeting roles are always assigned the week prior, with executive team members (those who hold office positions) taking on the more demanding roles. And much like AA groups, Toastmasters clubs are organized democratically. As Hampel (2017, 446) observes, "everyone studies speaking together as formal equals and office positions rotate through elections." Thus, unlike C3T, there is no clear hierarchy of command.

TL meets every Thursday for just over an hour and a half. Toastmasters clubs range in their degrees of professionalism and overall strictness. Some competitive clubs require prospective members to

audition before being accepted, whereas others are run simply for the purpose of entertainment. TL views itself as lying somewhere between these extremes. Club members aim to push one another in order to improve as speakers, but also do not take themselves too seriously. Meetings begin at 6pm so that members can come straight from work. Most club guests live in Toronto, though some commute from nearby suburbs. Over the course of my fieldwork, TL held one social event, a Christmas dinner at a nearby restaurant, which most of the members attended. However, aside from this there was little encouragement to socialize with fellow members outside of meetings. So, while I did spend time with members outside of meetings the club never organized these plans. When I joined TL, total membership sat at 15, and the average number of guests on any given week ranged from 5 to 8. But over the course of the year membership numbers oscillated dramatically. At various points the club had fewer than 7 paid members, leading executive team members to worry that they might not be able to afford the boardroom rental fee. Six months into my fieldwork I was asked to be the club's secretary. In business meetings the executive team would regularly discuss how to increase membership and attract new members, but rarely took concrete steps. Most were busy juggling other responsibilities, so had limited time to donate to the club.

TL attracts a diversity of visitors, yet it is highly skewed towards the educated and those who belong to the middle class. Most members are entrepreneurs, graduate students, or work in lower management. It is worth noting then that, unlike NLF or C3T, membership at TL is not free. Guests are allowed to attend three meetings free of charge, but are then asked to either pay for membership or not return.[136] An interesting (and arguably unique) aspect of TL is that it attracts a large number of first-generation immigrants seeking to hone their English skills in a public setting (these members primarily come from China, India, and the Middle East).

Unquestionably, the appeal of Toastmasters clubs is related to the shift from an industrial to post-industrial economy: in the wake of a declining manufacturing sector and a growing service sector, the ability to negotiate, manage relationships, and give polished presentations has risen in economic value (McGee 2005, 40). But economic advancement is not the sole reason members join. Rather, the motivations for becoming a member fall into two general categories: professional advancement or personal growth (though these reasons commonly overlap). Those seeking the first often explained their decision to join in the following ways: "I have to give lots of presentations at work and want to get better at it," "I want to build my self-confidence so I can give off a better first impression at work," and "My job requires me to speak with customers on a daily basis and I want to improve." By contrast, those seeking the latter explained their interest as follows: "I am looking to grow personally," "I need a change in my

[136] In order to join TL I had to pay 90 Canadian dollars every six months.

life," and "I want to become more self-confident." These two motivations are equally reflected in the Toastmasters International mission statement, read aloud at each TL meeting: "We provide a supportive and positive learning experience in which members are empowered to develop communication and leadership skills, resulting in greater self-confidence and personal growth." I think it fair to suggest then that nearly all members join Toastmasters owing to a pre-existing desire for personal change. That is, they are hoping to "work on" some part of themselves, and they view membership at TL as a means to this end. And, as mentioned above, most arrive at TL with some previous exposure and attraction to SH discourse, which is itself premised upon (as well as produces) a desire to improve oneself (Dunn 2016, 122).

TL presents itself in promotional materials as "nonreligious" or "secular" in nature. However, this is not to say members do not identify as "religious" or as "spiritual but not religious." In fact, as we shall see, a number of the TL members I interviewed identified as such. But there exists a club mandate that members not "talk about religion" in club meetings. In this sense, TL meetings function and mirror in important respects the public sphere in romantic liberal modernity. Members generally feel it appropriate and right to keep their religious identities and commitments private in order to avoid confrontation, and visitors seem instinctively to recognize this as proper custom. Yet, as we shall see, this should not lead us to think members' religious or moral commitments are left at the door. On the contrary, members filter SH discourse through their pre-existing ideals and the meaning systems they subscribe to. It is just that this tends to occur internally, so is not obvious from the outside. Here, again, we see an analogy to the romantic liberal public sphere: SH discourse as encoded at TL enables a kind of "overlapping consensus" across members' varying social identities and moral commitments (cf. Rawls 1993).

The Religion of the Heart at Tomorrow's Leaders

In the previous two chapters I argued that institutionalized at both NLF and C3T are distinct discourses that encode their own variants of the religion of the heart. I believe we find something quite similar at TL. Yet there are two important differences between these sites.

First, TL can be distinguished from both NLF and C3T to the extent that there exists little in the way of a canonical text or tradition with which individual members can collectively identify and refer to. Recall that NLF members often reference the Big Book and the Twelve Steps, while C3T members appeal to the Bible and the moral authority of senior pastors. There exists no such canonical text or tradition at TL. As a result, it allows for a greater degree of individual interpretation and negotiation regarding what ideals or values SH discourse ultimately serves to naturalize.

Second, to the extent that SH discourse is indebted to humanistic psychology it remains, in a way that AA discourse and CC discourse arguably do not, amenable to both secular and religious

interpretations. Fuller (2006, 229) writes, "cultural historians must pay attention not only to how psychological theories are constructed, but also to how they are consumed," adding, "even many psychological concepts that are themselves devoid of deep metaphors invoking an ultimate horizon are nonetheless sometimes appropriated as technical instruments for achieving religiously significant goals." Fuller's emphasis on how psychological discourses are *consumed* is critical to understanding how and when the religion of the heart finds a home at TL. For I believe SH discourse—couched in the secular psychological register that it is—only signals or transmits the religion of the heart among TL members who have been socialized in other corners of the romantic liberal institutional order (for instance, the holistic milieu or the Charismatic wing of the congregational domain) to embrace this cultural structure. Thus whether or not SH discourse is interpreted in a religiously meaningful way depends upon members' pre-existing attachments and affiliations.

In this section I outline, in systematic terms, how and when this occurs. My explication is based on my fieldwork at TL, formal and informal interviews with members, and existing scholarship on humanistic psychology and self-help.

1. Experiential Epistemology

Given the variety of speeches one hears at TL it would be wrong to suggest "the belief that there is no authority external to the individual qualified to judge the nature of truth" (Campbell 2007, 134) is axiomatic at the club. For instance, I have listened to speeches that invoke a staunch scientific materialism, and have at other times heard speeches that appealed solely to reason and our rational faculties. Yet the fact is these discourses are quite rare at TL, while SH discourse, which appeals to personal experience, intuition, and subjective feeling is commonplace.

For instance, in one of her speeches Marie, an entrepreneur who regularly reads "spiritual" books, explained, "I believe in intuitions. Most of the time I *feel* that I am right, even though I might not *know* why." She went on, "Listen to the messages that your body is sending you, be aware of the sensations, and follow your intuition. Always." Another example is offered by Greg, a German-born entrepreneur who began his speech, "How to Find Your True Self," with, "To me, to learn about the universe you don't go out, you go in." And finally, in her first speech at the club, Sandra, an accountant with a long history of engagement in the holistic milieu, shared that she has learned to always "listen to what my heart is telling me" because "it has never let me down."

Of course, some in the room may have been skeptical of these claims, but upon conducting subsequent informal interviews it was clear that these members' various appeals to the epistemic authority of experience received wide affirmation. I think this can be explained by noting the way TL members, in

order to be relatable and comprehensible to their peers, speak in the language of expressive individualism. And because of the secular nature of Toastmasters they adopt SH discourse to do so, which coats romantic expressivism in a nonreligious veneer. In this way, members of TL carry forward the legacy of Maslow and Rogers, who each believed personal growth is to be found in the pursuit of particular kinds of experiences. Indeed, what sociologist Donald Stone (1976, 113) views as a central tenet of the Human Potential movement—"the authoritative basis of direct experience without necessary reference to God or revelation"—is a staple of SH discourse.

2. Immanence of God or the Superempirical

According to Browning and Cooper (2004, 75) the "horizon" of humanistic psychology is replete with "images of harmony" which are communicated by "monistic metaphysical metaphors." By this they mean, "symbols and metaphors that are used to paint an image of the world whose apparently independent parts are so interrelated, interdependent, and harmonious that they are all identified with one another and identical with the divine itself." For Browning and Cooper the metaphors of "flow," "energy," and "source," gesture toward, if not signify, this metaphysical system. It is therefore noteworthy that in the same speech discussed above, Marie also shared, "I have done a lot of energy clearing to work on the blockages from my past. Through psychotherapy and other activities I have tried to rid myself of those blockages." And on another occasion, Sandra gave a speech about her struggles trying to "attune to the source," and how she has the ability to "feel other people's energies." Finally, in our interview, Greg professed, "I would say I have always had a spiritual inkling. I mean, it feels to me sometimes that I tap into sources of knowledge that don't just come from this place and time, you know?"

While I rarely heard the words "God," "supernatural," or "the divine" during TL club meetings in interviews it was made clear that metaphors, such as those outlined above, were often understood by those who invoked them as reflective of a larger metaphysical picture whereby "God" (or some other equivalent term) was conceived as "an immanent spiritual power continuously available to those with proper metaphysical awareness" (Fuller 2001, 145). Moreover, it is useful to remember, "The conception of divine reality as an impersonal flow of spiritual energy works to equalize all religious traditions as well as to validate internal experience as the apotheosis of religious authority" (Porterfield 2001, 16). In other words, appeals to direct experience tend to favour, if not legitimate, an immanent conception of the superempirical.

Of course, this is not to suggest that all TL members subscribe to such a metaphysical picture. Assuredly, SH discourse is coherent without it (Swan 2010, 13). But, again, interviews conducted outside of meetings revealed that for a significant portion of TL members, SH discourse—with its harmonious

and deep metaphors of "energy," "growth," and "source"—signaled the religious meaning system characteristic of the religion of the heart.

3. Benevolent God/Universe

While overt references to the benevolence of "God" or even the "Universe" are few and far between at TL, much that is said in meetings presupposes the notion that life is fundamentally good and that the natural state of things is one of peace and personal wholeness. As Greg once put it over coffee, "I feel like all you need to do is keep saying 'Yes' and life will pay off." Or as Tenzin, the club's president, asserted in a speech, "Life is on our side, we just need to believe it." In this way, SH discourse endorses a rugged optimism, which holds that "If you follow the plan and stay true to the inner self, you can have, be, or do almost anything" (McAdams 2006, 126).

As we have seen, the religion of healthy-mindedness has a long history, but it took off in the wake of the 1960s. Following in James's footsteps, Maslow rejected the obsession among Freudians with guilt, aggression, human unhappiness and mental illness, in lieu of joy, love, creativity and psychological health. As psychologist Peter Morea (1997, 67) puts it, "Maslow's psychology is concerned with personal growth and achieving a fulfilled personality." We see a similar preoccupation at TL and within Toastmasters International more generally. For instance, in *Toastmaster* I came across an article titled, "Mind matters," endorsing the practice of mindfulness. The article reads, "mindfulness is a concept that can help improve not only public speaking, but also listening, leadership—and living" (Neile 2018, 20). This orientation towards the positive dimensions of life is fundamental to SH discourse, and while it may not require the existence of a benevolent God or Universe, many TL members nevertheless presuppose one. Accordingly, Sandra explained in our interview, "I know that if it hurts it is not God's plan. Because if it is God's plan it is always good." For Sandra, among other TL members, SH discourse presupposes a loving and caring God or Universe. Again, this is not to say that for all TL members SH discourse, with its focus on "achieving your potential" entails metaphysical commitments. But, as I gleaned from interviews, for many this discourse was made cosmically meaningful as they interpreted it within the context of a benevolent God or Universe.

4. Redemptive Self as Theodicy

One evening in the spring TL hosted an inter-district speech competition. One of the guest speakers, Tim, gave a speech titled, "Be a Light." He began by sharing that his father was difficult to live with when he was growing up, that he was "not a nice guy," and that he had held this against him for many years. He then disclosed that his father was recently diagnosed with Alzheimers. "And if this wasn't enough, I've

had a bunch of huge personal challenges come my way." Tim went on to explain how these hardships taught him that he needed to forgive his father—which he analogized to "being a light in someone else's life." In essence, Tim's speech was a story of redemption, one where his suffering and negative experiences were redeemed in light of the lessons they eventually procured.

This narrative structure is characteristic of many of the speeches at TL. I was even told by a veteran speaker of a rival club that unless one's speech follows this structure one has little chance of winning speech competitions: "People want to know how you overcame your personal trials. It's inspiring, they learn something, and it makes them feel good. So, it's what everybody wants to hear." Offering empirical support for this observation McAdams (2006, 20) found, "The burgeoning popular literature on self-help offers a cornucopia of redemption tales." It should therefore come as no surprise that it is commonplace to hear TL members share of how their personal hardships ultimately served redemptive purposes, making them stronger, wiser, or better off than they were before. And in interviews I became accustomed to hearing members narrate their lives in redemptive terms, often endorsing some or other version of the idea, "everything happens for a reason."

For example, Marie explained, "I look for external signs, like getting a phone call, or when someone tells me something and I have a certain sensation, or when I read something in the news that attracts my attention. This is the universe trying to get my attention, trying to tell me something." Or Sandra, who in a speech titled, "Finding Your Life's Purpose," proclaimed, "I have heard a voice deep down saying, 'If you are alive then that means there must be a purpose'." Or Vivaan, a Muslim who identified as "spiritual but not religious" and described his daily prayer practice: "For me, prayer is like, Somebody created me, but that Somebody has to tell me what my purpose is, why I'm here. And when I pray, I ask God to show Himself to me, to reveal Himself to me. And when I do this, I start finding symbols. I start finding those small indications that guide me." For these members SH discourse holds that everyday occurrences, if we become receptive to them, hold both personal and cosmic meaning.

5. Self-Realization as Teleology

There is perhaps no concept more central to SH discourse than "personal growth." As one article in *Toastmaster* puts it, "Toastmasters is a great place if you want to continue growing" (Dewey 2018, 6). According to Tenzin it is simply commonsense that "we all come to Toastmasters in order to become the best version of ourselves." So, when a decorated member visited from another club, he challenged TL members by asking: "What is one thing you can do to make sure you continue growing?" Browning and Cooper (2004, 61) argue that the concept of personal growth reflects an "organic model of self-actualization," which was both secularized and systematized by humanistic psychologists such as Maslow

and Rogers. In agreement, Morea (1997, 66) contends, "Secular humanistic psychology maintains that individuals can find values which give meaning to their lives by actualizing their true selfs [sic]." He further remarks, "For Rogers, becoming our true self does not involve becoming a new and different person. Quite the contrary. For Rogers and other humanistic psychologists, the change involved in self-actualization involves moving away from a false self, which one is not, to the real self, which one truly is" (70). Talk of personal growth, becoming one's true self, and realizing one's potential are ubiquitous at TL and central to SH discourse. The ideal of self-realization is arguably one of the least contested of those regularly circulated at TL. What this reveals is that TL, as a part of the romantic liberal institutional order, institutionalizes an expressivist ethic. Yet, as we shall explore later, while becoming one's true self may be widely considered a desirable normative ideal, what authenticity consists of remains open to interpretation.

6. Self-Ethic (Voice from Within)

The cover of a Toastmasters International pamphlet reads: "Find Your Voice. Where Leaders Are Made." SH discourse, in holding self-realization as the ultimate end of life, presupposes the existence of a true self which, if attuned to, promises great power. Thus, in the first speech I ever heard him give Tenzin declared, "Always be true to yourself and you will never be let down." In our interview, Tenzin spoke of listening to the voice inside of him, which he felt was connected to "Something bigger, though I don't know what." A regular consumer of self-help, pop psychological, and business literature Tenzin was well versed in SH discourse. For, as Fuller (2001, 148-49) notes, "Books extolling the powers of the hidden self have become a staple of the consumer book trade." Indeed, many TL members celebrated in speeches the inner resources we all allegedly have within us to conquer the obstacles we face (both inner and outer), and which are just waiting to be unleashed. Importantly, SH discourse does not necessarily propose that we all have within us an inner divinity. But it does imply that within us lies "an infallible source of inspiration and guidance" (128).

Furthermore, given the expressivist ethic institutionalized at TL, it should not surprise us that a majority of speeches centered on the perils and pitfalls of social conformity. SH discourse implicitly endorses the notion that society and its institutions cannot be trusted, for they are the cause of alienation from one's true self. TL members' speeches regularly invoked the ideal of "challenging the system," "breaking the rules," and "finding one's own voice." Teasing out the horizon of meaning latent in such metaphors, McAdams (2006, 125) writes, "the outer world cannot be trusted. The social environment is fundamentally alien to the self and filled with temptations, constraints, threats, and dangers. Although

love and collaboration with others are essential to growth, the norms and strictures of society typically work to inhibit your growth and suppress the self."

7. Virtue Is Natural

SH discourse is articulated through what Browning and Cooper refer to as "implicit metaphors of harmony," which are central to humanistic psychology and which are implicit in notions like "self-realization," "achieving your potential," and "finding one's purpose." These metaphors, they argue, "depict an image of the world where conflict can occur only if humans are somehow untrue to their own deepest selves" (Browning and Cooper 2004, 31). Importantly, I have on occasion witnessed these ideas be contested both in and outside of club meetings, so they are not accepted as fact at TL. But it nevertheless became clear upon conducting interviews that a large portion of members endorsed the high anthropology that undergirds this view. Thus, in our interview Sandra affirmed that to the extent that individuals realize their true selves, she sees no reason why they would harm, discriminate, or mistreat others. And similarly, according to Vivaan, if one attunes to what God or the Universe is telling them at any given moment one could not fail to do the right thing. In these statements these TL members endorse the view that becoming virtuous and realizing one's true self are one in the same.

As McAdams (2006, 124) observes, this is a central tenet of much contemporary self-help. In romantic fashion, these books propose, "the inner self is good, true, and innocent," such that one's sole responsibility is to reconnect with one's true self. According to Browning and Cooper (2004, 61) this perspective endorses a "culture of expressive joy" which holds that "Through a simple process of discovering one's own potentials and expressing them, individual fulfillment can be experienced and social harmony achieved." Again, while not all at TL endorse this aspect of SH discourse, interviews with members made evident that a significant number do, and because of this they often find confirmation of their views at club meetings, be it in speeches or informal conversations.

8. Sacralization of Individual Liberty

If there is any single value that is considered sacred at TL and which goes wholly uncontested it is individual liberty. This is made evident not merely in the statements often made by members (e.g. "I want to live my own life," "I am looking to become more independent," "I am searching for more freedom"), but also in the rationales offered for joining (and leaving) the club, the egalitarianism inherent in the meeting structure, and the taboo surrounding giving unsolicited suggestions or commands to others. In short, we can say that SH discourse naturalizes and normalizes the romantic liberal notion that our lives go better when lived from the inside.

In support of this claim, Browning and Cooper (2004, 59) write, "the cultural power and attractiveness of humanistic psychology are partially explained by its continuity with significant strands of individualism that have characterized American history." While McAdams (2006, 278) notes that self-help and humanistic psychological ideas flourish in "individualist cultures" which "prioritize personal autonomy." I therefore argue below that if TL serves to constitute any form of collective identity it is fundamentally a "thin" romantic liberal one, which conceives of individual autonomy—understood as both freedom from external constraint as well as freedom to express one's true self—as a necessary condition of the good life.

9. Mind-Body-Spirit Connection

I argued in Chapter 5 that there is no more complicated concept as regards the religion of the heart as the notion that the mind, body, and spirit are in some sense interdependent or interrelated. I also suggested there exists no consensus as to which specific dualisms are necessarily opposed or supported by the religion of the heart. Of all three sites I studied, this ambivalence was most evident at TL. Upon conducting interviews with members I learned that SH discourse is amenable to a remarkable variety of interpretations on this score.

For instance, according to Vivaan, "The moment you say, 'I can'—believe me or not—something happens in your brain. Your brain gets wired differently. Unique information flows into your brain that you cannot understand. It makes things happen." Here Vivaan couches the mind-body-spirit connection in neurobiological terms, endorsing something like the idea that believing in oneself increases self-efficacy. By contrast, Sandra impressed upon me, "Mind is only a small piece. There needs to be a heart, soul, mind connection if we are to find peace. So heart, soul and mind need to be in alignment." For Sandra, SH discourse holds that we need to "be in alignment" if we are to find health and happiness. Finally, Marie once gave a speech titled, "Thoughts Become Things," wherein she echoed New Thought teachings that resemble a secularized version of positive confession: "Are you interested in creating an awesome life? When we hold something in our mind, we can manifest it. If you think negative thoughts, guess what? You will have negative impacts in your life. See it in your mind, and you will have it!" Thus while each of these TL members subscribes to some version of the mind-body-spirit connection, it is not obvious that they would agree on its specifics. This, I believe, makes evident another way in which SH discourse affords diverse interpretations as a result of its ambiguity.

10. Methodological Individualism

While I did, over the course of a year of fieldwork, hear a handful of speeches and informal conversations which made reference to social structures as sources of constraints, as well as the need for collective solutions to societal problems, SH discourse—with its emphasis on individualistic solutions—was nevertheless dominant. Exemplifying this trend Tenzin declared during an impromptu speech, "If you want to change the world, become the change you want to see." Similarly, Shahed, a grad student in the natural sciences asserted, "If you want a cleaner environment, don't litter. And if you want to change the world, start by making your bed." And finally, Zamir, an Iranian engineering student offered his own spin on this theme in a speech: "You will change the world for the better by finding and pursuing your passion." This anti-structuralist bias should not shock us, given that both the traditions of self-help and humanistic psychology have tended to view the individual as the sole unit of social change. Thus in their assessment of humanistic psychology Browning and Cooper (2004, 71) argue that implicit is the view that "Social justice and harmony … are automatic by-products of people living according to their *daimons.*" In turn, SH discourse holds that social progress is possible only when individuals take responsibility and seek to realize their true selves.

Toastmasters Club Meetings as Collective Ritual

Paul Lichterman (1992, 443) argues that self-help books work to produce a "thin culture," by which he means that "readers read books believingly yet loosely, defining and redefining aspects of lived experience with a variety of partly discountable terms, and readers read in ongoing relation to a larger cultural arena—a repertoire of everyday reference points that orient one's sense of self." He concludes, "describing the readers as subjects in the thrall of ideology would connote far too much a homogeneous, cumulative 'effect' of these books." While Lichterman may speak narrowly of reading practices, I believe we can analogize this to the experience of attending and participating in a TL meeting. For, in a sense, when members encounter SH discourse at TL meetings, either through speeches or informal conversations, much in the same way as Lichterman's readers, they interpret this discourse "in ongoing relation to other frameworks for situating personal selfhood in a social context" (422). In other words, to the extent that SH discourse is made meaningful to members, it is only through their pre-existing attachments and moral commitments.

And yet, despite this discursive negotiation, it would be wrong to suggest SH discourse is not, to some extent, normative or structuring. We saw in Chapter 9 that post-structuralist thinkers have presented "spiritual" discourses as carriers of romantic liberal regimes of power and discipline. Not surprisingly, then, SH discourse and humanistic psychology have been construed by these critics as regimes of normalization and subjectification through which romantic liberal states "create individuals who do not need to be governed by others, but will govern themselves, master themselves, care for themselves" (Rose

1993, 291). Heidi Rimke (2000, 63, 73) writes, "these discourses and technologies contribute to the invention and scripting of selves," which are "remarkably congruous with the political programmes of liberal democratic society." Rebecca Hazleden (2014, 433) similarly contends, "Political selves are, therefore, *produced* by (inter alia) self-help." And Brigid Philip (2009, 161) argues that SH discourse "encourage[s] readers to judge their behaviour against distinctively liberal virtues." According to these scholars, working with a Foucaultian schematic, SH discourse serves as a "technology of the self" that privileges and produces, broadly speaking, romantic liberal subjects—that is, subjects defined and delimited by the discursive ambit naturalized and enforced in romantic liberal modernity (see also Rose 1993; Miller and Rose 1994; Philip 2009; Tobias 2016; Trifan 2016; Binkley 2014; LaMarre et al. 2019).

While I disagree with its normative connotations (see Chapter 10), I think this post-structuralist account is empirically accurate. Moreover, I think attendance at a Toastmasters meeting is far more normalizing than simply reading a self-help book to the extent that it involves participation in collective ritual. Accordingly, in this section I examine how TL meetings function as public rituals, identifying and analyzing the three key components that work together to (re)produce subjects who are well adapted to the basic structures of romantic liberal modernity: first, shared social norms; second, public performances; and third, personal narratives and psychological identification. The reason I do not include a discussion of specific practices of self-cultivation is because there are no agreed upon or club-sanctioned practices at TL (unless one includes the preparing of speeches). However, as we shall see, there is little need for TL to authorize specific practices of self-cultivation, for to the extent that membership at TL entails only that individuals become romantic liberal subjects, the club can rely on the socializing impacts of myriad other sites and attendant practices across the romantic liberal institutional order.

1. Shared social norms

TL lacks many of the features of NLF and C3T that make them successful sites of socialization and identity reconstruction. The meeting takes place in a generic office boardroom, and speech norms differ little from what one finds in "polite society." There is nothing clandestine about the weekly gatherings, and little is done to manufacture a sensory environment that will excite or overwhelm the senses. Moreover, there is no attempt by TL members to delineate or promote a distinct "Toastmasters" identity, thus there are few, if any, symbolic boundaries demarcating insiders from outsiders. In fact, the social environment of TL meetings is aesthetically and atmospherically indistinguishable from other common spaces in romantic liberal modernity. Thus, rather than serving to encode or enflesh a distinct collective identity or idioculture, TL institutionalizes many of the same social norms that pervade the romantic

liberal institutional order. However, owing to the pervasiveness and dominance of SH discourse, TL reifies and intensifies these norms, making explicit what often remains only implicit at other locales.

For instance, in meetings members and guests are always addressed *as* individuals (one never sees a collective speech), rather than members of specific identity groups. They are given the freedom to come and go as they please, with few expectations placed upon him, and they are repeatedly encouraged to make decisions according to, as Tenzin put it, "what's right for them." The implicit message communicated in club meetings is that individuals are distinct and bounded entities, thereby reifying and normalizing the romantic liberal "ideal of persons as self-determining and unpredictably self-transforming creatures" (Macedo 1990, 204). That is, members learn to think of their selves and others as separated (or in need of separation) by boundaries. Indeed, Hampel (2017, 433) contends Toastmasters clubs "promote a liberal ethos by setting up interpersonal boundaries within families, while advocating civil and equitable relations with strangers." In other words, they "dismantle logics of kinship" by helping members to "experience themselves as autonomous individuals" (459).

We see this illustrated powerfully in the case of Sandra. Born in Shanghai an only child, Sandra immigrated to Canada with her parents at the age of sixteen. In our interview Sandra recalled the difficulties she faced adjusting to Canadian culture: she felt out of place, confused, and ill equipped to make friends. Soon after arriving she became anorexic, an eating disorder she struggled with for the next few years. Reflecting on these experiences Sandra blamed her cultural upbringing, which she described as her parents' emotionally stunted and characteristically Chinese approach to child rearing.

> My parents are not the best models of self-love, so I never learned that. I just learned how to please them, so basically I sacrificed myself for my parents. I also think I internalized a lot of their trauma. I absorbed their emotions and fears. They don't have their own awareness. They are trapped in themselves so they avoid pain. They fought all the time, and I found there was no space for me. And I think I developed the eating disorder because I wanted to basically disappear. You know, I didn't want to be here. Physically, emotionally, psychologically, I unconsciously looked for ways to hide, looked for ways to not be here, looked for ways to cover myself up.

In order to cope with her eating disorder Sandra sought help from "spiritual" and self-help literature. She regularly read books by popular authors such as Deepak Chopra, Tony Robbins, and Don Miguel Ruiz. While working for a university degree in accounting at the behest of her parents, she continued her "spiritual" exploration. "Even though I was away from my parents there was so much struggle, all their voices in my head. I was trying to run away from it." Much of Sandra's interest in "spirituality" and SH discourse reflects an attempt to create psychic and cultural distance between she and her parents: "I realized at some point that I can't take on all of my parents' emotions, pains, and struggles. I have to kind

of set a boundary between myself and them." Membership at TL functions to help her become more autonomous, loosening the constraining influences of her parents in her life.

Central to SH discourse is a message of personal agency: "until you accept responsibility for your life, nothing is going to change." In this way, members learn at TL meetings to habitually think in terms of an ideal of self-responsibility, as beings that must be responsible. Of course, this emphasis on responsibility is a staple of liberal thought—in both its rationalist and romantic forms (Galston 1991, 230). Furthermore, due to the dominance of SH discourse TL members speak often about the importance of becoming the "best version" of oneself. This suggests a normative ideal whereby the self must be regularly worked on, for to realize one's true self, however one might conceive of it, requires discipline, effort, and practice (LaMarre et al. 2019, 241). Thus, while TL may not privilege any specific practices of self-cultivation (members engage in everything from meditation, visualization, yoga, reading, watching documentaries, exercise, and more), a work ethic remains normative—members are encouraged, if not expected, to engage in self-work in order to realize their potential. And while Hampel (2017, 450) may be right when he contends Toastmasters clubs appear "to be less about discovering one's psychological depths than about feeling one's surface," interviews with members revealed that, over time, SH discourse becomes a dominant language with which members understand and speak about their lives. In this way, developing self-awareness remains normative—that is, developing sufficient self-awareness to be able to identify one's true self is widely seen as a desirable ideal.

While a "thick" collective identity or idioculture is not produced at TL, the club nevertheless engenders a "thin" culture, or *conscience collective*, on the basis of shared social norms. These norms derive from the nature of SH discourse, and naturalize a romantic liberal conception of the self, as well as what Macedo (1990, 4) refers to as "liberal virtues": "those forms of excellence appropriate to citizens in liberal regimes and conducive to flourishing in the kind of society liberalism creates." These include: broad sympathies, a self-critical attitude, a willingness to experiment and try new things, tolerance, openness to difference, self-control, and active autonomous self-development (272). TL therefore resembles many sites across the romantic liberal institutional order, institutionalizing an expressivist ethic and naturalizing the romantic liberal ideals of autonomy, self-expression, and self-realization.

2. Public Performances

Still, a Durkheimian perspective would hold that SH discourse and the romantic liberal norms it legitimates derive their moral force as a result of being rooted in shared experiences of collective effervescence. Of course, it is likely that, given the ubiquity of these norms in romantic liberal modernity, TL members arrive at the club having already been socialized to accept them, at least to some extent. But

it is nevertheless worth considering how club meetings might themselves serve to solidify or strengthen members' allegiances to SH discourse.

Aside from securing a discursive environment where SH discourse is privileged, what distinguishes TL from other sites across the romantic liberal institutional order is its emphasis on public performance—that is, the giving of speeches. It is a central feature of TL meetings that every member in attendance will, at some point, have the proverbial spotlight directed on them, receiving the gaze of all. It is notable then that fear of public speaking is one of the most common phobias (Ebrahimi et al. 2019). Most people are terrified of speaking before strangers in public, as it tends to conjure up threats of humiliation, psychic pain, and intense self-consciousness.

Recall that SH discourse holds that we have within us the inner resources (potentially divine in nature) to overcome the obstacles before us and realize our true selves. The ritual of public performance serves to give credence to this conviction by creating conditions where individuals are, first, obliged to muster the courage to speak in front of the group (rely on their inner resources); second, to endure the experience of facing their fear of public speaking (which can, for some, entail intense bodily and emotional disruption); and finally, where they are met with positive affirmation and applause (thereby being reassured that their fears of humiliation and embarrassment were misplaced). In short, by creating a controlled social environment where experiences of personal triumph are made highly likely, the ritual of public performance arouses in members considerable emotional energy, while vindicating a key tenet of SH discourse: that we have more power within us than we know, and that should we rise to the occasion God/the Universe is on our side.

Andrew, who credited Toastmasters for helping him to overcome his "learned helplessness," offers an illustrative example. He described his first Toastmasters meeting in the following way: "I realized after giving that impromptu speech that I had control of my life, that if I wanted to do things I could do them. And after that, I walked out of the library that day, the sun was setting, and I just remember this feeling of freedom and liberation." Part of the power of the ritual of public performance at TL derives from the fact that it invokes intense feelings of anxiety (in the lead up to giving a speech) followed by a great sense of relief and joy (after having completed one)—which Andrew above refers to as a "feeling of freedom and liberation." Moreover, the more this ritual is completed the more "self-confidence" or "self-belief" one seems to develop. Again, the ritual of speaking publicly serves to arouse within individuals feelings of collective effervescence, thereby granting plausibility to SH discourse: for with every speech members successfully give they learn that they have agency and a powerful inner resource (self-ethic), that fears and doubts are merely mental obstacles (mind-body-spirit connection), and that they are capable of personal change (self-realization).

3. Personal Narratives and Psychological Identification

In giving speeches, TL members inevitably end up sharing personal narratives. We have already seen in the previous two chapters just how important public storytelling is to reconstructing one's identity. At both NLF and C3T, members learn to narrate their life histories in light of the canonical discourses encoded at each moral community. I argued in Chapter 11 that the "recovered self" at NLF is informed by a combination of liberal Christian values and a queer subcultural identity. And in Chapter 12 I suggested that C3T's senior pastors, given their charismatic authority, model the prosperous self—which sacralizes the values of celebrity culture, growth and prosperity, and social conservatism. What does the true self look like at TL? Because TL lacks a thick *conscience collective*, how talk of the true self is interpreted remains indeterminate. Indeed, rituals of pubic performance provide an opportunity for members to reaffirm their pre-existing attachments and moral commitments, within the discursive ambit set by SH discourse.

Consider again the example of Sandra. Upon graduating from university Sandra, following the instructions of her parents, found a job as an accountant in the corporate sector, which she described as "ego driven, cutthroat, and closed-minded." She soon moved into the not-for-profit sector, where she found welcome respite. Over the past few years, her familial and personal lives have followed quite different tracks. With her parents she is quiet, deferent, and soft-spoken, while in her private life she takes dance classes, reads palms, and blogs about the importance of living a "spiritual" life. Accordingly, for members such as Sandra the invocation of SH discourse in club meetings serves to reinforce her commitment to the religion of the heart in a New Age form. And when she gives speeches at TL she affirms her true self—the roots of which lie, not in her familial context, but in her longstanding participation in the holistic milieu.

Angela offers a second, somewhat different, case. 32 years old and of Polish descent, she studied sociology in undergrad, and then completed a Master's degree in sustainable international agriculture in Germany. Though she was happy to identify as "spiritual but not religious" Angela confessed to having little involvement in the holistic milieu, though she had read and enjoyed books such as *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle. After her Master's Angela found a communications job with the UN, which strengthened her commitment to green causes. After a year, she decided to move back to Canada in order to be closer to her parents, eventually joining TL as a means of overcoming her shyness and social anxiety: "I felt so uncomfortable in the spotlight and I didn't like that about myself." An environmentalist and vegan, Angela aspires to give talks about what she learned in her Master's: "I want to speak about how I became interested in plastics and chemicals, and I want to empower people to care more about the food that we eat." Accordingly, for those like Angela, who have minimal familiarity with the holistic milieu, SH discourse is interpreted in secular terms. And when she speaks of her true self in meetings she

summons her environmentalist commitments, rooted in her academic research and employment at the UN.

Of course, while members share their stories, structured as they often are by SH discourse, others may well come to *identify* with them. I argued in Chapter 11 that such practices of identification are strongly encouraged at NLF in order to ensure a stable and shared alcoholic identity. But this is not the case at TL. While members may identify with one another, they also may not. In fact, interviews with members suggest that failure to identify with others tends to be the norm. Yet there are occasions when one member, for whatever reason, identifies with another, and it is in these instances when identity (re)constitution takes place.

We see this in the example of Vivaan, who emigrated from Pakistan to Canada in 2013. Having completed a degree in computer engineering prior to arriving in Canada Vivaan was fortunate enough to quickly find a job working for a telecom company in downtown Toronto. Two years later, his wife and three children left Pakistan to join him in Canada. In our interview Vivaan referenced a specific speech Angela gave on the importance of setting goals if one's wishes to grow. This had a significant impact on him. "When I heard her give that speech I said to myself, 'I don't have a goal. I just live day by day. So maybe I should do something?'" This realization led Vivaan to embark on what he called a "project of self-development": he began waking up two hours earlier in order to have time to himself in the morning, and he also started going to the gym regularly—something he had never done before. Vivaan was inspired by Angela, who invoked SH discourse to discuss how she engages in self-development, and in turn adopted it as his own.

These examples illuminate what distinguishes Toastmasters club meetings from other locales in romantic liberal modernity. First, SH discourse is both privileged and pervasive in a way that it is not at other sites. Second, Toastmasters clubs give individuals a chance to narrate their lives publicly through the ritual of public performance. This is crucial because self-help discourse is, after all, *discourse* and therefore needs to be *spoken* and *heard*. As I emphasized in Chapter 11, the sites where individuals' narrate their lives to an audience are key sites of identity (re)construction because the act of telling stories reconstitutes a speaker's sense of self, and even how they experience the world. Thus speeches provide TL members the opportunity to apply SH discourse in order to strengthen their commitments to the moral ideals they cherish. And by structuring their speeches according to SH discourse, and producing collective effervescence, members make it possible for others to adopt this discourse as their own—while adapting it to their own pre-existing commitments.

The Pathologies of Romantic Liberal Modernity and Tomorrow's Leaders

It should be clear that there exists little in the way of a "thick" collective identity or *conscience collective* among TL members; none identify as "TL members" in a formative sense, and subscription to SH discourse, though common, does not require sustained or robust commitment to the club. And because members import their own conceptions of authenticity into meetings, while SH discourse may serve as a shared vernacular, its meaning is multiple, undercutting the cultivation of solidarity and mutual obligation among members. Thus, despite the fact that TL serves to (re)produce romantic liberal subjects, it is not much of a *community*, largely failing to stave off anomie.

This would likely not surprise communitarians. Recall from Chapter 9 that Michael Sandel (1996) argues that romantic liberalism undermines community as a result of the conception of the self it endorses. Similarly, Patrick Deneen (2018, 74, 78) contends that romantic liberal modernity "makes humanity into mayflies," such that "Our default condition is homelessness." I argued in Chapter 10, following Bernard Yack, that communitarians such as Sandel and Deneen mistakenly conflate romantic liberal theory and romantic liberal practice, and that those inhabiting romantic liberal modernity are indeed more socially constituted than their self-image lets on. Yet, as Yack (1988, 158) reminds us, while unencumbered selves may be a fiction of communitarian thought, "Socially constituted individuals with little sense of community are a distinct possibility." In turn, given the degree to which TL fails to integrate individuals into a cohesive moral community communitarians are right to raise concerns about the degree to which SH discourse can exacerbate feelings of anomie. At the same time, the issues are more complex than their criticisms allow.

Recall that for romantic liberals such as John Stuart Mill freedom requires some distance and detachment from inherited and fix hierarchies and customs. Offering a modern translation of this view Macedo (1990, 207) writes, "one of the great attractions of liberal politics and its view of man is that they liberate persons from inherited roles, fixed hierarchies, and conventions that narrowly constrain individuality and scope of choice." Putting this into practice, we saw above how Sandra applies the religion of the heart in SH form—which holds that the true self is *presocial* in nature—to become a self-directed autonomous individual, able to distinguish her own self from that of her parents. She describes what appeals to her about this discourse thus: "You don't have to be the conditioned you, you can choose to put your energy and efforts into something else, and you can change your conditions. You can change your awareness, and you can change your mind. You can always change your mind. I love that."

According to communitarians this cultural structure leads to an anomic and anti-social way of being in the world. While this might be true in some cases, it is far from axiomatic. For while Sandra might adopt the rhetoric of being an "unencumbered self," the sociological reality is otherwise. The truth is she has not, in fact, dispelled the influence of her parents in her person or life. At the age of 30 she continues to live with and care for them, and allows them to exert considerable influence on her, both

internally and externally. Moreover, she is firmly rooted in a circle of friends and work colleagues both in and outside of the holistic milieu—and who, *whether she realizes it or not*, constitute what she thinks of as her true self. Thus, Sandra's talk of shedding her false self—represented by the voice of her parents in her head—should not be construed as serving to ontologically unmoor her from all social ties. Rather, it simply allows her to feel like an autonomous self-directed individual, whose parents' expectations are not wholly definitive of her identity. Or put otherwise, SH discourse aids Sandra not to rid herself of all constitutive attachments, but rather to question and revise those attachments that she did not herself choose—a foundational principle of romantic liberalism. Of course, this fact may not be reflected in Sandra's own self-understanding, but it remains a reality regardless.

Recall also the case of Vivaan, who explained his motivation for joining TL as follows:

> Before I joined Toastmasters, I was not feeling whole. I had everything. I had a beautiful family. I had a job. I had a house. I had cars. Whatever I wanted I had it for a decent living. But I was not fulfilled. I kept thinking, 'If this is all that I wanted then, you know, I have it. So, what now?' I mean, more money is not going to make me happy. And my kids are here. I have everything, you know? I didn't seem to be missing anything in my life.

He continued,

> But then I realized that I needed free time for myself. I did not have free time. Free time is when you have completely disconnected all the thoughts from your head, so your head is not compounded, you know? It's clear. You see, I was rushing. I was in a rush always: wakeup, run for breakfast, run for train, run for job, run to come back, shopping, groceries, kids, playtime, volunteer time, prayer time. My parents live with me, so I have to take care of them. You know, doctor appointments, listen to my mum, so many things. But where am I? I was not there. I had no unique identity. So, I needed to find myself.

We saw above how Angela's speech had a significant impact on Vivaan, leading him to begin waking up early and exercising regularly. Just like in the case of Sandra, Vivaan's quest to "find himself" did not entail shedding all of his constitutive attachments. On the contrary, Vivaan remains firmly rooted in his familial and religious communities—which give shape to his conception of the true self. Thus, his adoption of SH discourse served not to strip him of communal obligations, but rather merely to carve out enough space in his private life to allow him a semblance of authentic self-expression.

This is also true of Fatima, a Syrian refugee who joined TL in order to become, in her words, "more independent." In our interview Fatima shared that she was raised to be a "rule follower," but now wishes to think for herself, and she sees membership at TL as instrumental to this process. She also disclosed that she recently divorced her husband, who abused her emotionally and physically. So, when Fatima spoke in our interview of "trying to focus on my own wants and needs, and not others" she was

primarily referring to independence from an abusive ex-husband—reflective of a desire for autonomy and self-determination. Moreover, it was quite evident that she did not aspire to shed all of her constitutive attachments, which included commitments to her cultural and familial communities, and which inform what she considers her true self.

These examples make clear that it is wrong to presume, as communitarians have, that expressive individualism, the religion of the heart, and SH discourse entail an anomic and anti-social existence, liberating individuals from all of their constitutive attachments. In actual fact, talk of shedding one's "false self" and realizing one's "true self" entails shifting from one set of constitutive attachments to another.

Having said this, there is nevertheless a sense in which communitarians' fears remain legitimate. The fact that TL does not stave off anomie is not a problem in the cases of Sandra, Fatima, and Vivaan because they find social integration and formative attachments in other social spheres. Sandra has her family, friends, and place of work; Vivaan has his family and religious community; and Fatima has her family and cultural community. Thus, their true selves find their origins in their respective constitutive communities. But what of those who arrive at the doors of TL without such thick attachments and moral associations?

While Durkheim praised modernity for emancipating individuals from oppressive associations, affiliations and hierarchies, he nevertheless contended that liberal citizens must balance the desire for individual emancipation with the need for social rootedness. As Will Kymlicka (1989b) notes, twentieth century liberals have tended to presume that human nature is such that citizens in liberal democratic societies will naturally seek formative attachments and communal affiliations. But communitarians may be right to think this naïve. And more recent liberal theorists have expressed similar concerns. For instance, William Galston (1991, 225) identifies what he calls "a basic fact of liberal sociology: The greatest threat to children in modern liberal societies is not that they will believe in something too deeply, but that they will believe in nothing very deeply at all." Indeed, communitarians are right to see expressive individualism, the religion of the heart and SH discourse as potentially encouraging individuals to shed *all* pre-existing social ties, thereby leaving them in a state of utter anomie, lacking any form of social integration.

Moreover, while Sandra, Vivaan, and Fatima may have been protected from the threat of anomie owing to being rooted in their respective communities, their romantic liberal self-understanding—naturalized by SH discourse—obscures the social origins of their true selves. That is, none of them recognized that the contours and substance of the true self they championed has its roots in their respective formative communities, and depends on their continued participation in these for its survival. Indeed, each was convinced that the content and authority of their respective conceptions of authenticity

derived not from the communities to which they belonged, but rather a *presocial* source, which made itself known in personal experiences and private reflection.

It is this social fact that leads communitarians to contend, "the loosening of social bonds in nearly every aspect of life—familial, neighborly, communal, religious, even national—reflects the advancing logic of liberalism and is the source of its deepest instability" (Deneen 2018, 38). Yet while this might be true, I argue that it need not be the case. Indeed, what is required is that these romantic liberals come to recognize that which they have refused to see: that society and its institutions are not antithetical to the task of self-realization, but rather the foundation for its successful achievement. In other words, the animating ideals of romantic liberalism need not be rejected, nor must the tradition of expressive individualism (and with it the religion of the heart) be let go of, as communitarians would propose. But rather a more Durkheimian self-understanding is needed. This would protect these romantic liberal subjects from seeking the kind of unattainable radical freedom that inspires the critiques of romantic liberal modernity advanced by post-structuralists. For as I argued in Chapter 10, this ideal of radical freedom, if realized, promises not autonomy, but rather anomie and disenchantment.

SH Discourse and the Romantic (Neo)Liberal Order

We have seen how SH discourse can exacerbate the pathology of anomie by inducing its adherents to shed their formative attachments, leaving them wholly bereft of community and belonging. In these instances, the religion of the heart can be said to provide neither social integration nor moral regulation, proving communitarian critiques correct. Yet, as we have seen, this is not a concern shared by neo-Marxist and post-structuralist critics, for whom "spirituality" signals unrelenting and insidious moral regulation. Indeed, according to these critics the real problem with SH discourse is not that it produces anomic selves but rather that it produces *comprehensively egoistic* selves (such as those at C3T).

For instance, Andrada Tobias (2016, 142) contends that SH discourse serves "as a technology of neoliberal governmentality." Andre LaMarre et al. (2016, 249) submit that it produces "neoliberal subjects" (249). Elena Trifan (2016, 50) writes, "personal development … is closely related to the neoliberal project." And Sam Binkley (2011, 94) maintains that SH discourse, "summon[s] the individual to a highly autonomous task of psychological self-realization within a distinctly individualistic therapeutic regime. In short, this is a vision of psychological life as enterprise, one centered on the individual pursuit of well-being as one of calculating self-interest, and a project of repudiation centered on the inherited dependencies of social government." And elsewhere Binkley (2007, 119) writes, "Individuals are discouraged from seeing life in terms of any collectivist obligation or shared purpose, and encouraged to undertake their lives as projects of heightened individuality, self-reliance, and opportunity maximization." These critics fear that clubs such as TL, which institutionalize SH discourse,

serve to (re)produce *romantic neoliberal subjects* who are hostile to government interventions, endorse personal over political solutions, and view achievement and inequality solely through the lens of personal responsibility. And in so doing, they echo wider social-cum-political theoretical critiques that see in romantic liberal modernity nothing but a neoliberal order, where utilitarian individualism "governs as sophisticated common sense" (Brown 2015, 35).

In light of what we find at TL, are these critics concerns justified? In order to answer this question we must first note that TL, unlike C3T, does not preclude shifting involvements and is about as far from a greedy institution as one can get; members are not locked into their roles as Toastmasters members, TL demands minimal psychological or time investments, and members are active in other social spheres. Moreover, because talk of the true self is interpreted according to members' pre-existing commitments, which find their social origins elsewhere, it would seem that much depends on the nature of these pre-existing attachments and affiliations. How then does TL fare?

Critics are not wrong to be concerned. Consider, for instance, Marie, who shared in a speech that "her Bible" is a book titled *The Science of Getting Rich* by Wallace D. Wattles, a well-known nineteenth century proponent of New Thought. We saw earlier that Marie endorsed a kind of secularized version of positive confession, whereby thoughts are presumed to produce the reality they describe. It is on this basis, Marie explained in our interview, that she rejects governmental interventions to cure poverty. In her view, poverty is best dealt with by teaching the poor to "think rich," enabling them to manifest the reality they desire. Tenzin, the club's president and a digital marketer by trade, offers a similar example. In one of his speeches Tenzin invoked SH discourse to make the case that success is simply a matter of mindset: "You can be whatever you want to be, as long as you work hard enough." And in informal conversations he made clear his overriding allegiances to the market mentality: "I want to be rich, successful, all that. I want to wear nice clothes, have nice cars, you know. I mean, who doesn't?" Tenzin also voiced that his idols were figures such as Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk, entrepreneurs who "took big risks" and therefore "deserve the money they make." And like Tenzin, Greg heaped praise on wealthy entrepreneurs, and stressed the overriding importance of willpower and ingenuity in becoming successful. This is why he had spent thousands of dollars on self-development seminars and workshops: "I want to become invincible, even super-human." Greg also voiced his disdain for governmental taxation schemes and the welfare state more generally: "I feel like people should be able to keep what they earn. Otherwise, what's the point of working?" He also expressed a striking lack of interest in the political process: "I don't care who wins. I'm apathetic to it because I have no control over it. So why be invested?"

In their own ways, Marie, Tenzin, and Greg approximate the "neoliberal subject" that neo-Marxists and post-structuralists describe. Rather than suffering from anomie, these individuals have been formatively shaped by their occupations in the economic sphere, such that when they arrive at TL, they

come with their true selves having been comprehensively constituted by the tradition of utilitarian individualism, albeit couched in expressivist rhetoric. And because of the degree to which the market mentality is all encompassing in their lives, outside of club meetings they remain closed to rival social perspectives and competing moral traditions. Thus, they approach questions of justice, equality, and citizenship through the moral logic of the market, viewing the purpose of government as enforcing the rule of law and facilitating ripe conditions for market competition and economic investment, while reconceiving of civic engagement as "responsibilized entrepreneurialism and self-investment" (Brown 2015, 210). And because of the hegemony of methodological individualism in their lives, they fail to recognize the myriad ways in which social structures impede the realization of genuine equality of opportunity—an ideal they endorse, at least in the abstract.

Yet, as we saw above, not all TL members have been comprehensively constituted by the economic sphere. For instance, when Sandra speaks of her true self in meetings, she invokes her participation in the holistic milieu and the post-materialist values she subscribes to. When Angela hears talk of realizing her true self this signals her environmentalist commitments, rooted in her time at the UN. And Vivaan's true self derives its substance from the Muslim community he belongs to. For each of these members, SH discourse does not signal a full-throated egoism, but rather—much like AA discourse does for NLF members—a set of collective values that offer a counterbalance to the utilitarian individualism inscribed in the economic sphere. It follows that the degree to which TL exacerbates or mitigates egoism is highly variable. For as a result of the diversity of members' pre-existing attachments and moral commitments, SH discourse serves, in some instances, to encourage egoism, whereas in others, it tempers it.

Competing Visions of Romantic Liberal Modernity

Yet while SH discourse might serve for members such as Sandra, Angela, and Vivaan as a source of moral regulation, its methodological individualism nevertheless obscures the structural sources of suffering, and thereby holds the potential to legitimate unjust social and economic conditions. Thus critics may still be right that clubs such as TL serve to produce romantic *neo*liberal subjects, simply by virtue of "deflect[ing] attention away from structural inequalities" (Dickel 2016, 129), and leaving their members "caught in a cycle of seeking individual solutions to problems that are social, economic, and political in origin" (McGee 2005, 177).

But this is not what one finds. For, much like AA discourse at NLF, while SH discourse may have been dominant in TL meetings, members such as Sandra, Angela, and Vivaan had no problem drawing on rival social perspectives, and indeed moral traditions, outside of club meetings. For instance, Vivaan asserted during our interview,

> The people before us paid taxes so that Canada would become a better country. I mean, imagine those years when Canada was being developed. They worked for countless hours, sacrificing for us and our families in order to make this country great. So, they did not think selfishly. If those people would have thought, 'Oh, I don't want to pay my tax money to build these roads, or to make these cities, or to have healthcare for all,' none of this would be here. So, this is all about giving back. It is what has made this country so beautiful.

Vivaan went on to describe his vision of the good society as one where individuals are treated equally and with dignity, where their basic needs are met, and where diversity is celebrated. Moreover, he stressed that his project of self-development, which included joining TL, does not nullify his civic obligations, such as voting and staying informed. Similarly, in our interview Angela voiced her approval of a strong welfare state, high taxes, and the need for bold governmental action on climate change. And drawing from her sociological background, she spoke at length about the systemic problems that, in her view, have stifled achievement of these goals: "We won't see real change until new laws are passed, and governments are held to account." And in our interview, Sandra criticized what she called "hyper capitalism," which she described as encouraging us "to consume more and more," instead of "looking within for happiness." In her view, the good society is one where individuals recognize their "interdependence" and where laws "work for the many, not the few." She concluded, "We're all in this together, right?"

While these TL members spoke in the language of SH discourse in TL meetings, they freely adopted other vocabularies outside of them. Indeed, just like NLF members, their commitment to SH discourse and its methodological individualism in their private lives, did not preclude these TL members from adopting a more sociologically-sensitive perspective with regard to public issues, enabling them to discern the background social conditions that shape individual opportunities and advantages, as well as the structural changes needed in order to realize a just society.

Critics might argue that members such as Vivaan, Angela, and Sandra are far less representative than members such as Marie, Tenzin, and Greg as adherents of SH discourse, and perhaps even the religion of the heart more generally. For instance, political theorist Wendy Brown (2015, 47) paints a picture of romantic liberal modernity wherein neoliberalism has become hegemonic, having "taken deeper roots in subjects and language, in ordinary practices and in consciousness." On this view, neoliberalism has colonized popular consciousness in romantic liberal modernity, crowding out all rival visions of the good society.

But recent empirical studies suggest otherwise. For instance, sociologist Franz Höllinger (2004, 294) found that many individuals interested in "spirituality" support "ecological and left-liberal parties," as well as exhibit "an affinity to post-materialist values, environmentalism … and a certain tendency to

civic engagement" (Höllinger 2017, 310). And in his treatise on the "new spirituality" Gordon Lynch (2007, 19) observes "a fundamental sympathy to notions of democratic society, gender equality and a welcoming of diversity" as well as "a sympathy with, and often active engagement in, green and left-of-centre political concerns." Thus, it would seem, contra critics like Brown, that while neoliberalism may have dictated the policy agenda in liberal democracies since the 1980s (Berman 2018), it is simply not the case that this shift has been equally totalizing at the level of individual consciousness.

Furthermore, the conflation of expressive individualism, the religion of the heart, or SH discourse with neoliberalism belies the fact that the animating ideals of romantic liberalism have long inspired two competing visions of the good society. TL members like Marie, Tenzin, and Greg carry forward a neoliberal vision of the good society whose roots can be roughly traced back to Benjamin Franklin, the original spokesperson for utilitarian individualism. In their accounts they champion the Franklin-inspired ideal of the "self-made" businessperson who gets rich by dint of their own ingenuity and cunning, and endorse a vision of the good society as one where each vigorously pursues their own self-interest (a vision that finds its Christian counterpart at C3T). On this view, citizenship amounts to nothing more than contributing to the national economy, either by means of innovative production or hedonistic consumption.

Conversely, Vivaan, Angela, and Sandra carry forward the left-liberal vision powerfully articulated by Ralph Waldo Emerson, the original spokesperson of expressive individualism, and a champion of what Leigh Eric Schmidt (2012, 286) refers to as the "spiritual left." For these members, the good society is one where the principles of equal concern and respect are enshrined in legal-political *and* economic institutions, and where private life and public life exist in a healthy balance. In other words, the vision espoused by romantic left-liberals seeks a middle-way between pure privatism and all-encompassing public duty, embracing, "both humanity and citizenship, morality and politics, individuality and social cooperation" (Cladis 2003, 196). While I am mindful of the fact that these are analytic categories that do not perfectly capture the content of individuals' subjectivities, I would argue that rather than reflecting *romantic neoliberal subjects*, members such as Vivaan, Angela, and Sandra more accurately reflect *romantic left-liberal subjects*—that is, subjects who fluently draw from the tradition of expressive individualism in the private sphere, while adopting the tradition of moral individualism when in the public sphere. Or, framed in Rousseauian terms: they adopt the religion of the heart with regard to their personal lives, and adopt the language of civil religion when speaking as citizens.

Conclusion

In sum, neo-Marxist and post-structuralist critics are wrong to suppose that the religion of the heart in SH form necessarily signals a neoliberal subjectivity. The basic structures and animating ideals of romantic liberal modernity are compatible with both neoliberal and left-liberal visions of the good society, and we find both of these embodied and defended at TL. Of course, given the normative commitments of these critics, this distinction may mean little. But, in line with Durkheim, my own sympathies lie squarely with the latter. Yet, as they stand, I believe both of these visions are limited by the self-understandings they engender. For even while Vivaan, Angela, and Sandra were able to speak in eloquent terms about the social structural causes of poverty, inequality, and injustice, they failed to see the degree to which *their own* left-liberal convictions drew their substance and authority from the moral individualism inscribed in the legal-political sphere of their society. In other words, just as they did not recognize the social character of their true selves in club meetings, so too did they fail to see the degree to which the shape and strength of their left-liberal commitments depends not merely on their individual willpower, but also on the survival of the legal-political institutions that make them possible. As a result, while I celebrate the romantic left-liberal vision they champion, I also fear it remains fragile due to the self-understanding it too often legitimates. And thus, once again, I reiterate that while the animating ideals of romantic liberalism remain potent with promise, what is required is a shift in self-understanding. That is, in Durkheimian fashion, I ask of my fellow romantic liberals that they acknowledge and appreciate that which is already there, but which they take for granted.

Chapter 14

Conclusion: In Search of the Good Society

The ideal society is not outside the real one but is part of it. (Durkheim [1912] 1995, 425)

In this study I have followed in the footsteps of recent cultural sociologists, contending that the shift from "religion" to "spirituality," otherwise known as the spiritual turn, signals the ascent of an enduring cultural structure in Western modernity, which I call the religion of the heart. In Part I, I drew from a wide array of sociological and historical studies, supplementing these with my own empirical research, in order to offer a brief history of this longstanding cultural structure, and delineate its core tenets. And in Part II, I synthesized the contested and fragmented scholarship on "spirituality," tracing the rise of the religion of the heart to the 1960s. In Chapters 6 and 7 I argued it was during this period when a romantic liberal social imaginary crystallized in popular consciousness and swept across liberal democracies such as Canada, the U.S., and the U.K, eventually reforming their institutional spheres and giving birth to a new social order—romantic liberal modernity. I argued in Chapter 8 that not only does the religion of the heart hold deep elective affinities with this romantic liberal social imaginary, but it also finds support and plausibility across the romantic liberal institutional order—a series of primary and secondary institutions that collectively comprise the religious sphere of post-1960s liberal democracies. I therefore concluded that the religion of the heart should be thought of as the spirit of romantic liberalism, or the preferred religious option among romantic liberals. With this established, in Chapter 9 I brought clarity to the fault lines that divide scholars of "spirituality," and which have covertly fueled the field's fragmentation, illuminating the striking degree to which debates about "spirituality" track debates about romantic liberal modernity and its discontents. Of course, in undertaking this genealogical and explicative foray, my aims have not merely been to contribute to the historical record or to clarify for its own sake. Rather, I have also sought to defend romantic liberal modernity against its detractors. Thus, in Chapter 10 I drew from the Durkheimian tradition in order to challenge some of the core theoretical and normative presuppositions contained in the social-cum-political theoretical traditions that inspire the dominant critiques of "spirituality," identifying where these traditions either misconceive social reality or fail to appreciate important normative values. In doing so, however, I identified two concerns raised by critics that I argued warrant further empirical investigation—those regarding the pathologies of anomie and egoism, as well as the question of shifting involvements. In light of the differentiated and pluralistic nature of romantic liberal modernity, as well as the stress Durkheim placed on ritual in his understanding

of social life, I proposed that in order to properly assess the validity of these concerns, we must avoid impressionistic and abstract theorizing and instead examine the locales where this cultural structure is encoded and enfleshed through collective ritual. Accordingly, in Part IV, I advanced institutional ethnographies of three sites where the religion of the heart is institutionalized in a specific discursive form. In this closing chapter I sum up the key lessons that these ethnographies impart—especially as they pertain to those who, like myself, seek to defend the animating ideals of romantic liberal modernity. Indeed, while I have spent considerable time and energy in this study contesting the often sharp censures of both "spirituality" and the social order in which it finds a welcome home, this work of retrieval has been doubly motivated by a quite different objective: to engender within romantic liberals a shift in self-understanding, toward a heightened awareness of both the potential perils alive in romantic liberal modernity, as well as a deeper acknowledgment of our social and institutional debts.

The Potential Perils of Romantic Liberal Modernity

Though the institutional ethnographies advanced in Part IV only offer a glimpse into life on the ground, as it were, in romantic liberal modernity, they nevertheless make evident that grand theorizing about post-1960s liberal democracies, while perhaps useful in some instances, drastically fails to account for the rich complexity, ambiguity, and diversity of contemporary life. In light of what we find at these voluntary associations within civil society I would argue that we in romantic liberal modernity inhabit a culture of narcissism and selfishness no more than one of sainthood and selflessness, find pockets of community and commitment no less than zones of apathy and alienation, and experience moral disorientation no more than moral certitude. In truth, we inhabit not a world of black and white, but rather an uneven mural of vibrant colour. Charles Taylor (2007, 727) is most certainly right that when grasped in its totality our social order can only be described as "deeply cross-pressured." Of course, these three case studies have only scratched the surface, and for this reason much will be gained from future study of the many other sites across the romantic liberal institutional order where the religion of the heart is encoded and enfleshed. But despite their limitations, they nevertheless help us to identify some key tensions that arguably remain inherent in our social condition, and yet are not well understood or appreciated.

The first of these centres around the nature of romantic liberal modernity itself. Differentiation and pluralism, in tandem with the bureaucratic, legalistic, and rationalist character of public life, make inevitable a certain degree of alienation, fragmentation, and disenchantment. Indeed, it is for precisely this reason that conservatives, nostalgic for a condition of *Gemeinshaft*, have long railed against the shift from pre-modernity to modernity. But as I argued in Chapter 10, I think the implementation of a conservative vision would engender profound human suffering, and would produce far worse consequences than those it seeks to overcome. This is why I defend the romantic liberal ideal, which conceives of the private

sphere as the appropriate site of enchantment. Still, it cannot be denied that this solution reflects a compromise, or better yet, a "middle way," maintaining, as it does, "a commitment to both public and private spheres, even in light of conflict" (Cladis 2003, 189). Indeed, ensuring only a limited space of refuge from the disenchanting impacts of rationalization, the fragmenting nature of institutional differentiation, and the disorienting effects of pluralism may not suffice for some. We saw in Chapter 12 how the burdens of negative freedom and a craving for existential and epistemic security led C3T members to seek solace in a totalizing community of enchantment, where they could be enfolded into a coherent and stable moral order, protected from the specter of meaninglessness and the pain of identity crises. While this may be unfortunate, as it prohibits these individuals from shifting involvements and adopting rival social perspectives, it is also understandable. The desire to inhabit a meaningful order, free of doubt, is arguably deeply human, and it cannot be denied that romantic liberal modernity makes this difficult (though clearly not impossible) to achieve. Yet, given what we find at both NLF and TL, it would seem that the desire for a totalizing community of enchantment is not a human necessity. While differentiation and pluralism may create existential difficulties for some, many experience them as liberating, or at least not so disenchanting as to provoke crises of meaning. Perhaps, then, we must accept, given the paradox of enchantment, that there will always be a faction of individuals who find life in romantic liberal modernity hard to cope with, and will therefore seek solace where they can find it.

The second tension centres on the pathology of anomie. By sacralizing the values of individual freedom, self-expression, and self-realization, romantic liberal modernity affords unprecedented freedom from oppression, hierarchy, and tyranny, as well as the flowering of human diversity, while simultaneously disrupting entrenched patterns of social life, loosening communal attachments, and threatening its inhabitants with social isolation, loneliness, and purposelessness. Moreover, the experience of shifting involvements, while necessary in order to realize a just society and enable the blossoming of individuality, can also weaken formative attachments and the ties that bind individuals to one another. Importantly, this is not to suggest that the selves of romantic liberals are unencumbered. In Chapter 13 we saw that post-structuralists are correct that romantic liberal norms and values impinge themselves on us, relentlessly remaking us in their image. Rather, it is to acknowledge that while becoming a romantic liberal subject may entail normalization and subjectification, these processes do not ensure social integration or communal belonging. Indeed, it is for precisely this reason that Durkheim contended that individuals in modernity must be rooted in constitutive communities in civil society, actively and regularly partaking in the collective rituals of the social groups they belong to. Only in this way, he maintained, shall they be protected from the threat of anomie.

Aware of this Durkheimian insight, liberal communitarians such as Bellah et al. in *Habits* raise alarm bells about the increasing dominance of expressive individualism, and the attendant shift from

"religion" to "spirituality," which they argue work in tandem with utilitarian individualism to produce "a way of life that is neither individually nor socially viable" (Bellah et al. 1985, 144). As we saw in Chapter 9, these critics presume that a religion for which self-realization is considered the telos of human life, and wherein the true self remains the source of ultimate meaning and moral guidance, cannot muster sufficient commitment to either integrate individuals into a cohesive moral community, or temper their selfishness. But as I sought to make clear in Chapter 11, this is plainly wrong. Groups such as NLF, which institutionalize the religion of the heart do, in fact, serve to socially integrate and morally regulate their members. Moreover, they do so while encouraging their members to shift involvements and adopt contrasting social perspectives—functioning as what I called generative institutions. What this reveals is that, to the extent that the true self is shaped and informed by the collective ideals of the group itself, the religion of the heart can indeed fulfill the function that Bellah et al. claim it cannot.

Having said that, liberal communitarians are right to be concerned. As we saw in Chapter 13, to the extent that the religion of the heart is not institutionalized in a specific moral community it is likely to be impotent, and therefore unable to stave off anomie. And if not this, then it may well become a vessel for utilitarian individualism, as we saw in Chapter 12.

This leads us to the third, and final tension, which centres on the pathology of egoism. Neo-Marxists are undoubtedly correct that the economic sphere inscribes an imperial moral logic of its own, and that if left unchecked it will wreak havoc upon rival social spheres and undermine human flourishing. As we saw in Chapter 8, utilitarian individualism tends to disenchant, as it produces within individuals a malady of infiniteness that not only leads them to take more than they need, but also become miserable in the process. This is, I repeat, what makes C3T both unique and extremely disconcerting. While the desire to inhabit a totalizing community of enchantment is understandable, if lamentable, what is most striking about CC discourse is the way it enchants what should, by its very nature, disenchant. Moreover, by providing a theology to legitimate the market mentality, as well as functioning as a greedy institution, C3T not only stifles shifting involvements, but also sacralizes and intensifies one of the most potent sources of economic inequality: an unrelenting and insatiable desire for more, without any regard for, or recognition of, reasonable limits.

Indeed, this is why I share with neo-Marxist critics a concern about the nature and impact of neoliberalism. But, in Durkheimian fashion, I do not believe abolishing capitalist institutions will solve the problem. Rather, I contend, like left-liberals before me, that what is needed is that the autonomy of spheres be protected and preserved. In other words, the economic sphere must be prevented from colonizing either the private sphere or the legal-political sphere. Of course, neo-Marxists might argue that, given the primacy of economic interests in determining social life, this is a false hope. But I would argue this cynical perspective obscures the complexity of our social condition. We are not merely *homo*

economicus—or at least not yet. As we saw in Chapter 11, by sacralizing the qualities associated with selflessness and polluting those associated with selfishness, NLF works to temper the egoism of its members. And as we witnessed in Chapter 13, TL members such as Vivaan, Angela, and Sandra drew from the moral individualism inscribed in the legal-political sphere in order to champion a romantic left-liberal vision of the good society—a vision that is markedly different from that which falls under the banner of neoliberalism.

Reconceiving the True Self

Yet, despite these encouraging facts, there still remains cause for concern. For while the collective rituals at NLF, in tandem with AA discourse, may have staved off the threats of anomie and egoism, this occurred *in spite* of the fact that NLF members largely failed to acknowledge their dependence upon the group itself. In other words, by conceiving of the recovered self as deriving its substance from a *presocial* source, they devalued, if not dismissed, both its social character as well as the principal role public ritual and practices of self-cultivation play in sustaining it. Similarly, while TL members like Vivaan, Angela, and Sandra movingly drew from the moral individualism inscribed in the legal-political sphere in order to articulate a left-liberal vision of the good society, their self-understanding blinded them to the fact that, in so doing, they were invoking a *distinct tradition* to which they equally subscribed, and which exists only because of the norms, rituals, and institutions that give it life. In other words, they failed to grasp the extent of their commonality—and more pointedly, the preconditions of their shared convictions.

This is, of course, one of the animating insights of *Habits*. Bellah et al. (1985, 334) recognize that expressive individualism, along with its religious variants, in construing the true self as antithetical to social institutions and norms, encourages their adherents to shed their constitutive attachments. And they correctly point out that if this "ontological individualism," as they call it, is pursued to its logical conclusion it will inevitably lead to anomie, and in some cases, an intensified egoism. Thus, instead, they champion the tradition of biblical religion, which they argue holds that, "society is as real as individuals."

The example of NLF members in Chapter 11, I believe, gives some indication of the ubiquity of the sociological imagination in romantic liberal modernity, and therefore the degree to which "ontological individualism" is not the only social perspective individuals readily adopt. Indeed, many today seem to have little trouble shifting from an individualistic perspective in their personal lives to a structuralist or sociological perspective when discussing either the lives of others, or public issues more generally. It therefore seems to me mistaken to suppose that the language of individualism is so hegemonic that few recognize the larger social structural contexts that determine the distribution of benefits and burdens in society.

But, of course, this does not settle the matter. For I agree with Bellah et al. that the self-understanding naturalized by both romantic liberalism and the religion of the heart leave their adherents increasingly vulnerable. That is, by obscuring their social and institutional debts, the possibility that they shall willingly shed their constitutive attachments remains far too likely. Yet while I agree with the diagnosis proffered in *Habits*, I do not accept their prescription. Instead, I prescribe a shift in self-understanding—a new lens through which romantic liberals and adherents of the religion of the heart might understand themselves.

We whose vision of the good society finds its roots in the romantic liberal tradition, whose ideals have been shaped by the legacies of the 1960s, and whose identities have been comprehensively constituted by romantic liberal modernity rest largely unaware of our social and institutional debts. As we have seen, romantic liberalism and the religion of the heart in its various discursive guises encourage this self-understanding, engendering a kind of self-imposed amnesia that obscures from sight the origins of *who we are* and *where we came from*. As Jeffrey Stout (1988, 237) aptly puts it, "We have so little sense of common purpose in part because we have become so accustomed to a picture that hides the actual extent of our commonality from view." While this self-understanding has, thankfully, not yet undermined the social conditions that give life to our shared romantic liberal social imaginary it has nevertheless prevented us from fully realizing its animating ideals.

The reasons for this are powerfully articulated in Durkheim's, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, wherein he makes the case that human beings are fundamentally *social*, and therefore rely on the existence of traditions, collective rituals, and institutions in order to realize the "best part of us." According to Durkheim ([1912] 1995, 425), "it is in the school of collective life that the individual has learned to form ideals." Moreover, not merely the shape, but also the strength, of our moral convictions depend on collective life: "The only hearth at which we can warm ourselves morally is the hearth made by the company of our fellow men; the only moral forces with which we can nourish our own and increase them are those we get from others" (427).

It goes without saying that this study was only made possible due to the excellent and vast scholarship on "spirituality" that preceded it. I would have been lost without the cumulative efforts of the many who came before me. Additionally, in undertaking this sociological analysis of religion I thereby belong to, and partake in, a tradition of scholarship that has unquestionably shaped my moral ideals and, I am grateful to admit, instilled in me a deep sense of moral purpose—a benefit I have accrued as a result of active participation in the community of scholars (both real and imagined) to which I belong, and its unique collective rituals and practices of self-cultivation. Of course, this is only one of the many set of social, institutional, and indeed intellectual debts that I have amassed—each of which serves to give life and form to what I consider my true self.

Following Durkheim, I have come to see that the pursuit of authenticity does not—cannot—entail an escape from norms and institutions, for the true self is not antithetical to society, but rather its creative expression. Were adherents of the religion of the heart to adopt this self-understanding, the risk of their shedding all of their constitutive attachments in the pursuit of self-realization would be significantly mitigated. For they would recognize that becoming *who they truly are* does not require that they shed all of the layers of cultural conditioning that they have internalized, but rather discernment of what is best within them and their society.

Accordingly, NLF members would come to appreciate their dependence upon the tradition of AA, their homegroup and its collective rituals, and their fellow members in a way that would significantly reduce the chances of their taking these for granted. Among C3T members, this shift in self-understanding might awaken them to the deep affinities their theology shares with the moral logic of the economic sphere, as they would be more sensitive to the social character of their convictions. This may also spur the neoliberal subjects at TL to a similar realization. Of course, this is far from guaranteed, but such a shift in self-understanding would make this a possibility. And TL members such as Vivaan, Angela, and Sandra, would recognize the socially constituted character of the true selves they import into club meetings, thereby ensuring that they each remain firmly rooted in their respective formative communities. Moreover, this self-understanding, if extended beyond the private sphere, would awaken them both to their commonality, as well as the considerable extent to which their left-liberal vision of the good society relies on the existence of an autonomous legal-political sphere, the institutions that uphold and enshrine the tradition moral individualism, and their participation in the civic rites of their society.

Living Up to Our Own Ideals

This last point warrants further explication, given its relevance not merely to adherents of the religion of the heart but to romantic liberals more generally. As Durkheim makes clear, whether we realize it or not, the degree to which we feel motivated to live up to our own ideals depends considerably upon our active and repeated participation in the collective rituals that give them life. Unfortunately, the self-understanding naturalized by romantic liberalism has obscured this, leading many of us to assume that the strength of our moral convictions depends wholly on factors internal to us. But this could not be more mistaken. Our true selves are also our "social selves," and these require regular renewal, through ritual, in the constitutive communities we belong to—be they, our families, our voluntary associations, and indeed our national society. Consequently, if we have failed to live up to our own ideals this may be, in part, because we misunderstand what makes this achievement possible. In writing this study, therefore, I have sought to aid those who, like myself, once remained unaware of their social and institutional debts to

reckon with our mutual dependencies. For by doing so, I submit, we shall come to know ourselves—and in knowing ourselves, we may be able to realize the "best part of us."

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In challenging the self-understanding encouraged by the religion of the heart, which conceives of the true self as *presocial* in nature, one could argue that my proposal foolishly misconstrues the source of this cultural structure's appeal. For is not the enchanting nature of the religion of the heart the fact that it promises direct and unmediated access to God, Nature, or some other divine source? And if this is true, then does it not follow that a Durkheimian self-understanding undermines the very ability of this religion to enchant the world?

We are here confronted with a defining tension of our time, which I have admittedly put off addressing: the disenchanting nature of social science itself. Indeed, as outlined in Chapter 3, in this study I have followed social scientific custom and espoused methodological agnosticism, conducting my analysis of the religion of the heart without assuming either the truth or falsity of this cultural structure. But given that I am here advocating that its adherents reform their self-understanding, I recognize that I can no longer feign impartiality.

In the closing pages of *The Elementary Forms* Durkheim writes of religion, "While *exercising the right to go beyond science*, it must begin by knowing and drawing inspiration from science" ([1912] 1995, 433 emphasis added). Though many have called Durkheim a positivist atheist, he was in actual fact well aware of the epistemic limitations of science, and even argued that science itself "presupposes faith." However, as I argued in Chapter 10, I think Durkheim's rationalist disposition led him to undervalue our abiding desire to inhabit a meaningful cosmic order. He therefore saw little problem with equating what many call "God" with "society." While I suspect this remains true of sundry others, I also recognize that for my informants this would likely not suffice as a source of ultimate meaning. Thus, it is worth asking: can a Durkheimian self-understanding be reconciled with the religion of the heart?

It seems to me, if we accept Durkheim's dictum that religion can exercise the right to go *beyond* science so long as it draws inspiration *from* science that, in principle, they can. For perhaps the true self, while constituted by the social groups we belong to, is also simultaneously reflective of some larger (divine?) force? That is, perhaps God/the Universe works *through* society, fashioning the traditions, rituals, and institutions that give our true selves shape? I raise these questions in a spirit of apprehension and speculation, for I am not a theologian. But I raise them nonetheless because we do not know what we do not know, and as Bellah et al. (1985, 296) eloquently put it, "human life is lived in the balance between faith and doubt."

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Appendix A: Research Process and Methods

I begin by narrating, in chronological order, how my research process unfolded. I then describe and explain my choice of research methods and methodological frameworks.

Research Process – From Start to Finish

In 2013 I was a fourth-year undergraduate student. By then I had had some, although not much, experience as a participant in the holistic milieu. While I likely would not have called myself "spiritual but not religious," I had certainly engaged with, and at times enjoyed, a number of popular texts, practices, and materials that are often associated with "spirituality." But it was only upon reading *Habits of the Heart* early that year that I became aware of the semantic shift from "religion" to "spirituality" as both a widespread cultural phenomenon and academic subject. By locating the shift in wider cultural, social, and political changes *Habits* opened my eyes to its significance. Moreover, Bellah and his coauthors' analysis of expressive individualism and "Sheilaism" disturbed me. I was emboldened to know more.

In 2014 I began a two-year Master's in cultural studies with the aim of identifying what exactly individuals meant when they self-identified as SBNR. In 2015 I devised an online survey and started conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews with SBNR Canadian millennials.[137] Between 2015 and 2016 I conducted 20 interviews. I also read a significant amount of popular "spiritual" texts in order to familiarize myself with the ways "spirituality" was being represented in public discourse (secondhand bookstores became a second home). It became clear during my interviews how important this literature was for supplying the words, metaphors, and tropes used to narrate the "spiritual." I also felt it important to have a comprehensive understanding of how "spirituality" was being used in different social contexts, thus I treated as "data" any other information I came across that I thought related to the SBNR phenomenon including internet sites, social media posts, television programs, films, and advertising.

Early on in the interview process something I found difficult to make sense of was the way my informants drew from teachings that, on the surface, seemed not only different from each other, but almost entirely opposed. It was not uncommon to find during interviews that they saw no issue with combining, for instance, the ideas found in Tibetan Buddhism and Dale Carnegie's *How To Win Friends and Influence People*, or Hindu conceptions of karma and Tony Robbins's *Awaken the Giant Within*, or

[137] I ended up with 128 completed anonymous surveys. However, the survey was not itself the primary source of data for this project. Instead, it was primarily used to locate interview participants. Nearly all those I interviewed informed me that they decided to be interviewed only after having completed a survey. For more information on the survey see Watts 2016.

Eckhart Tolle's *The Power of Now* and lyrics written by their favourite artist. I found myself asking: what enables these seemingly disparate materials and practices to be combined so seamlessly?

These questions led me to conduct an extensive review of the academic literature on the topics "spiritual but not religious" and "spirituality." Although much of it came out of the fields of religious and cultural studies and the sociology of religion, I read a significant amount in philosophy, health studies, medicine, psychology, education, history, literary criticism, and theology. Upon conducting this review, I was struck by two seemingly inconsistent trends: scholars lamented that the concept of "spirituality" lacked any clear meaning and that the field needed more analytic precision, and yet simultaneously had no problem forming strong normative judgments about it. This discovery only deepened my initial confusion. However, I eventually came across what seemed to be a minority consensus in the field, but which fit well with what I was observing in my interviews.

As outlined in Chapter 3, according to contemporary cultural sociologists what goes by "spirituality" is not as diffuse as many have imagined, but rather exhibits a striking underlying unity. With this theoretical framework in mind, I was suddenly able to make sense of my empirical data in a sociologically coherent way. Moreover, I was able to see the degree to which disagreements within the academic literature lay at the level of normative presuppositions. Accordingly, I argued in my Master's thesis that the "spiritual but not religious" cohort largely subscribes (albeit unknowingly) to a particular discourse or metanarrative, which gives cultural coherence to both their choice of activities and experiences, and their ultimate meaning (see Watts 2016). Following Paul Heelas (1996) I called this discourse "self-spirituality," and situated it within what Charles Taylor calls the massive subjective turn of modern culture.[138] I even published a number of academic articles wherein I presented data from my Master's thesis (see Watts 2018a, 2018b).

Despite completing my thesis and publishing these articles I was convinced I had only identified part of the story. For instance, though I was quite confident I had identified a coherent discourse, I was not yet sufficiently familiar with the discipline of cultural sociology and so did not have the necessary intellectual resources to theorize it in a comprehensive manner. Additionally, though I had become aware of the degree to which disagreements among scholars lay at the normative level, I was not knowledgeable enough of the variable social-cum-political theoretical frameworks they were drawing on to accurately map the fault lines. Finally, I feared my sample size was too small, and would detract from my ability to generalize.

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[138] I have also called it "holistic spirituality," following the lead of Houtman and Tromp 2018 (see Watts forthcoming).

So, in 2016 I decided to begin a doctoral project, which would serve as an extension of my Master's project. For my doctorate I read extensively in religious studies, social history, and cultural sociology, familiarizing myself with important debates and the range of approaches and methods available. I also read extensively in social and political theory. Although I knew that debates about "spirituality" reflected debates about the good society, I had little sense of what these amounted to. Finally, I decided to enlarge my interview sample size, increasing the total number of interviewees to 50.[139] From 2017-2018 I interviewed another 30 Canadian millennials who self-identified as SBNR. Conducting these interviews allowed me to further develop and refine the cultural sociological framework I had been working with. I was now able to discern strong cultural patterns from weak ones, and separate what was essential from what was merely contingent. I was developing a much clearer cultural sociological picture of what lay behind the SBNR moniker.

However, something occurred early on in my doctorate that led me to expand the scope of my research to include the worlds of Charismatic Christians and neo-Pentecostals—groups I had no intention of researching when I initially set out. By 2017 I was able to articulate the nature of the unifying discourse that informed the accounts of my SBNR interviewees. Thus, when out and about I knew what to look for, and sought to identify traces of it beyond the limited confines of these accounts. One day, while perusing an Indigo Bookstore in downtown Toronto, I happened upon one of the main display tables, labeled, "Self-Help." A quick glance at the titles on display revealed books by authors such as Deepak Chopra, Neale Donald Walsch, and Eckhart Tolle, as well as life coaches such as Tony Robbins and Robin Sharma—all names that had come up at different points in my interviews—sitting next to titles by authors I had never heard of, like Joel Olsteen and Joyce Meyer. I would eventually learn that these authors are famous evangelical pastors, and that they preach a gospel that, in uncanny ways, resembles what I had become accustomed to hearing from my SBNR interviewees, if only framed in a more theistic register.

It was at this point that the analytic distinction between a cultural structure and a discourse became invaluable. I began to wonder whether what I had been calling self- or holistic spirituality was, in fact, only a particular discursive iteration of a more general cultural structure. It seemed highly plausible, but I would need evidence. I therefore began conducting an extensive literature review of Charismatic Christianity. Although I found the field to be relatively insular (much like that of New Age studies), I nevertheless found a number of scholars who had picked up on the affinities between Charismatic Christianity and the New Age (see Chapter 4), and others who had made this specific argument (e.g.

[139] As expanded on below, I also continued conducting interviews with the original 20 participants on an annual basis.

Campbell 2007). Given the close connection between SBNR and the New Age, it now seemed necessary to include Charismatics in my study, for despite their differences they nevertheless shared much with my SBNR informants.

But how might this be done? This revelation (for me at least) regarding the deep affinities between the "spiritual but not religious" and neo-Pentecostals dovetailed with another critical insight: the normative assessments of "spirituality" found in the literature failed to account for its *lived* nature. In other words, by mid-2017 it was clear that most normative assessments of "spirituality" were not only politically value-laden, but that the scale at which evaluations were being conducted often distorted social reality. Moreover, my burgeoning admiration for the Durkheimian tradition—in tandem with an increasing familiarity with innovative scholarship on how to conduct research on "spirituality" (e.g. Bender and McRoberts 2012)—had by this time led me to view group participation and ritual as fundamental to any accurate assessment of this cultural structure. These insights merged in such a way that ethnographic fieldwork became the only viable option. Cultural sociology could help me to bring analytic clarity to the term "spirituality," but only participant observation would allow me to discern its social and political implications. Including a fieldwork component to my study became a way of investigating the lives of Charismatic Christians, whilst making possible an accurate normative assessment of "spirituality."

Admittedly, I struggled deciding where to conduct fieldwork, as the possibilities seemed almost limitless.[140] Nevertheless, in the Fall of 2017 I began conducting participant observation at three sites in downtown Toronto—a Twelve Step group, a nondenominational neo-Pentecostal church, and a Toastmasters International club meeting. My reasons for selecting these specific field sites are as follows.

First, after multiple site visits I became confident that something like what, at the time, I was calling self- or holistic spirituality was present in both overt and covert forms. Of course, it took time to work out precisely how "spirituality" was institutionalized at each site, and how each group privileged a particular discursive expression. But once this was established, it was clear I had found three comparable case studies.

Second, it was important to me that each site presented itself, and was generally located by members, at different points across what might be called the "religious-secular spectrum": the Twelve Step group presented itself as "spiritual but not religious," the non-denominational church as "religious" (notwithstanding members' stress on "faith" rather than "religion"), and the Toastmasters club as "secular." This allowed me to make vivid the degree to which the religion of the heart operates without

[140] At various times I considered joining or regularly attending a yoga studio, a meditation workshop, a fitness class, a theater group, a coffee shop, as well as a "spiritual development" workshop. All of these remain, in my view, viable locales, which I hope others will explore in future.

respect for the traditional religious/secular divide, as well as highlight the underlying cultural similarities these seemingly disparate groups and memberships shared.

Third, each of the groups I studied belongs to a larger organization that boasts many thousands of members across the globe. This meant that I could not only avail myself of the many excellent previous studies done of these organizations, but also that in studying these popular groups I might be able to discern more general lessons about romantic liberal modernity. Moreover, I found it fascinating (though not surprising) that each of these organizations has Christian roots. Having learned from Ernst Troeltsch and Charles Taylor, among others, that both the liberal tradition and the religion of the heart are significantly indebted to Christianity, it dawned on me that these three sites could provide a useful means by which to capture the lived diversity of, as it were, contemporary Christian offspring.

Finally, I selected these specific sites because I believe they usefully illustrate, in various ways, the common social functions the religion of the heart serves in romantic liberal modernity—those relating to private enchantment, self-cultivation, and personal renewal. Thus, I purposefully did not seek out civic groups of the kind Paul Lichterman (1996) researched, which adopt the tradition of expressive individualism in order to advance civic aims, for one, because I believe these are comparatively rare, but also owing to the fact that I do not believe highlighting the civic character of expressive individualism is the only available means to defend it.

In sum, the research process that produced this study unfolded with few premeditated plans. One insight or observation led to another, which subsequently required familiarity with a new field of inquiry. Moreover, each step along the way demanded a distinct theoretical and methodological approach. Of course, as mentioned in the Introduction, much of what I present in this study is not original. While the choice to invoke the moniker the religion of the heart was my own, my presentation of its ten core tenets is significantly indebted to previous scholarship conducted by sociologists and historians such as Paul Heelas, Linda Woodhead, Wouter Hanegraaff, Dick Houtman, Stef Aupers, Colin Campbell, Gordon Lynch, Robert Fuller, Leigh Eric Schmidt, Matthew Hedstrom, and Amanda Porterfield, among many others. Moreover, the cultural sociological framework I utilize owes much to the innovative work of Jeffrey Alexander and others at the Yale Center for Cultural Sociology. And the theoretical assessment of the dominant social-cum-political theoretical frameworks that I advance in Chapters 9 and 10 relies significantly on the political theoretical work of Will Kymlicka, Bernard Yack, Michael Walzer, Stephen Macedo, Nancy Rosenblum, and many others. Finally, it cannot be forgotten that my normative assessments of the religion of the heart, advanced in the ethnographic case studies that comprise Part IV of this study, rely significantly upon the Durkheimian tradition—especially as interpreted by Mark S. Cladis and W. Watts Miller. But as should be clear, I knew none of this at the outset, nor could I have

predicted it. Each step along the way insinuated the next, allowing successive insights to be integrated with one another.

Delimiting a Field of Study

In order to locate my field sites, I first had to conduct interviews, and in selecting a sample of interviewees I had to make selective choices. I ultimately decided to conduct research with a sample of Canadian millennials (born 1982-2000) who self-identified as "spiritual but not religious." In this section I discuss the implications this holds for my research findings.

On the Canadian Context

The reader will have noticed that I give relatively little attention to national differences in this study. This is particularly apparent in Part II, where I chart the making of romantic liberal modernity with only minimal regard for the obvious differences that surfaced across national contexts. But the truth is this obfuscation of national idiosyncrasies features throughout the study. One might therefore reasonably ask: what justifies this? How can I possibly claim to speak of romantic liberal modernity *in toto* when in fact my sample derives solely from my own native Canada?

My gut reaction is to wholeheartedly agree with this skeptical position, and to apologize profusely for my hubris. Admittedly, much nuance is lost in the historical account I advance in Part II, which will undoubtedly frustrate many. But despite this qualification, I nevertheless wish to suggest that a somewhat sweeping historical narrative of the kind I have advanced is useful, if only because it enables us to capture large-scale patterns that I would argue do in fact exist, yet which more particularistic accounts omit.

Of course, the other aspect of this skeptical position targets my use of a Canadian sample—both in terms of interviewees and field sites—in order to identify and assess a religious form that I, perhaps overzealously, contend is a staple of twenty-first century life in both liberal democracies (and beyond). Here again I feel a bit squeamish. But I take comfort in the fact that numerous empirical studies make evident that many of the current religious trends taking place in Canada find close parallels across liberal democratic states—a fact that I have sought to highlight repeatedly throughout this study.

Indeed, how else would I—a Canadian—be able to find myself so lucidly presented (if negatively valenced) in the pages of *Habits*? As I argued in the Preface, though *Habits* was undoubtedly a study of the *American* character, I do not believe it thereby only holds relevance to Americans. On the contrary, I would argue much that Bellah and his coauthors discuss in that book (notwithstanding their regular appeals to distinctly American figures and historical events) is equally edifying and illuminating of the cultural, religious, and political developments ongoing in other liberal democracies. And if I am right

about this then it seems to me not unreasonable to suppose that a study of how these developments have shaped the Canadian consciousness likely contains much that can be generalized to these other contexts. Accordingly, my aim in this study has been less to highlight the undeniable and quite real differences between say, Canada, the U.S., and other liberal democracies, than to give concerted attention to what, in my view, makes them similar—shedding light on how these common characteristics afford certain kinds of opportunities, while also forcing them to confront comparable challenges.

Having said this, there is a sense in which, especially in the institutional ethnographies that comprise Part IV, the Canadian national context (and arguably the post-industrial context of downtown Toronto) conspicuously exerts its influence. In earlier drafts I had given far more weight and attention to what might be called, for lack of a better term, the "urban Canadianess" of these case studies. But I ultimately decided to move this feature from the foreground to the background because, again, my focus lay elsewhere: in clarifying the dynamics and features of social and moral life that, I argue, show up, to some extent, in all romantic liberal societies. I have no doubt some will fault me for this. But I stand by my decision nonetheless.

On the Middle Class and the Millennial Generation

Still, given that my research sample comprised not just Canadians, but in fact Canadians who belong to both the middle class and the millennial generation (born between 1980-2000), the skeptical position seems to gain renewed life. How then do I account for this?

It is certainly the case that my interview sample, along with the majority of informants at my field sites, belong to an educated elite, as almost every one of them had either graduated from a post-secondary institution, or was currently enrolled in one. Moreover, the majority had a middle class background, and among those who did not, they either aspired to join the middle class or had already done so. One could therefore argue this skews my findings.

Admittedly, it is regrettable that I was not able to interview those who belong to the working class, or those who reside in the upper echelons or elite classes of society. I would happily support future studies of this kind. But it is worth pointing out that "spirituality"—among both critics and defenders—has been characterized as a distinctly middle class phenomenon, as well as associated with having a high level of education (Bloch 1998; Possamai 2000; Mercadante 2014). Thus, it is perhaps not a weakness of this study that its sample belongs to this cohort. Moreover, as intimated in Chapter 7, it was not by mere happenstance that *Habits* focuses on the middle classes; Bellah and coauthors were well aware that "individualism and its ambiguities have been closely linked to middle-class status" (Bellah et al. 1985, 148). Indeed, as Richard Madsen (2002, 110, 111), one of the coauthors of *Habits*, reminds us, "a middle class is a necessary condition for the development of modern liberal democracies," thereby making them,

"most crucial to a democratic society." Madsen also suggests that we should "expect that everywhere one finds the development of a broad, fluid, mobile middle class, one will see the development of relatively individualistic religious practices" (117). If these observations are correct, then it would seem that a study of religion of the heart—given its close ties to expressive individualism—is bound to be centred on the middle class, for it is among this cohort that it is likely to be most popular. Of course, "middle class" is a somewhat ambiguous term, sometimes denoting a strict economic bracket, while in others a certain kind of mentality, concerned with upward social mobility. In speaking of my informants as middle class I have admittedly cast a wide night, including what neo-Marxist refers to as the "petit bourgeoisie," the creative classes, entrepreneurs, lower management workers, as well as university students whose parents' economic background places them within middle class status.

The age of my informants, however, poses a quite different dilemma: might the analysis of the religion of the heart that I present in this study be reflective of an exclusive generational experience? There is little doubt that millennials are, in some ways, distinctive as a generation. First, as noted in Chapter 6, studies show that they are more ethnically diverse, socially progressive (I would say romantic liberal) and digitally aware than any generation in history (Greenberg and Weber 2008; Winograd and Hais 2011; Milkman 2018; Pew Research Center 2018). Second, millennials are the most educated cohort in history (Lipka 2015). And third, they have grown up in comparatively difficult economic circumstances, saddled with unprecedented levels of student debt, and facing lowers levels of wealth and personal income than their two immediate predecessor generations faced at the same stage of life (Drake 2014). Still, I remain suspicious of the claim that something like a "millennial religion of the heart" exists.

For one, as *Habits* makes clear, the cultural structures we inherit have long preceded us, and while we might adapt them to our circumstances in unique and idiosyncratic ways, we never invent them from scratch. Thus, while expressive individualism and the religion of the heart might hold distinctive resonances among the young adults I interviewed, they are clearly not unique to them. In fact, to reiterate a claim I made in Chapter 6, millennials are far from alien to other generations. Culturally speaking, they are quite similar to their parents, the baby boomers (Bibby 2017, 34), such that we can think of them, as Tom Sherwood (2016, vii) puts it, as "the Echo from the Boom." Accordingly, my reason for studying the voices and lives of this generation rests on the fact that millennials have come of age in the wake of the 1960s—and have therefore, more than any other cohort to date, been shaped by romantic liberal modernity. Indeed, it is undoubtedly for this reason that the debates surrounding millennials predictably mirror those of "spirituality"—with millennials, like those who embrace "spirituality," being called excessively individualistic (Twenge 2006) (even called the "Me Me Me Generation" by *Time* magazine), as well as fundamentally shaped by neoliberalism (Harris 2017). Given the distinctly romantic liberal

character of their generation, I would argue it makes good sense to ground an analysis of the religion of the heart in a sample comprised of millennials.

Methods and Methodological Frameworks

Method 1: Semi-Structured In-Depth Interviews

In early 2015 I began conducting qualitative research consisting of in-depth semi-structured interviews with Canadian millennials who self-identify as "spiritual but not religious" in both Toronto and Kingston. 25 of these 50 interviewees were interviewed a second time, one year later, and 15 of the 25 were interviewed a third time one year after that. Unfortunately, due to an excess of data and a limited amount of time, I was only able to transcribe and analyze the first round of interviews.

Interviewees were recruited by multiple means, which included online recruitment notices, email list-servs, posters placed on university campuses, coffee shops, local community centers, and through word of mouth, in both Kingston and Toronto. Most of the interviews took place in person, with the specific location chosen by the interviewee, although some were conducted over Skype. While generally well educated and for the most part middle class, as mentioned above, my interviewees belonged to a diversity of ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds. Many were brought up in a religious tradition, although not all of them were. I have interviewed individuals who were raised in traditions as wide ranging as Protestant, Anglican, Catholic, Jewish, Buddhist, Ba'Hai, Hindu, and Muslim, as well as Atheist and Agnostic. I have also interviewed men, women, and trans persons, heterosexual, homosexual, and polyamorous persons.

I devised an in-depth semi-structured structured interview format, which I used for all 50 interviews. The interviews were loosely structured in three parts: the first part consisted of asking the interviewee about their life history: asking them to recount formative experiences as they related to their "spirituality," inquiring into their childhoods, family life, friendships, leisure activities, and private life. I did not pry but rather let the interviewees guide the conversation as they saw fit. This part of the interview encouraged narrative responses, where I listened for the most part, allowing the interviewee to think and reflect out loud without interruption. The second part of the interview, which usually began about 45 minutes to an hour into it, centred on exploring what "spirituality" was to the interviewees—in other words, how they conceptualized "spirituality." How they distinguished "religion" from "spirituality," what "spirituality" was and what it was not, and what values, philosophies and/or principles they believed informed their "spirituality" were among the questions asked during this time. The third and final part of the interview centred on uncovering how "spirituality" appeared or was experienced in their everyday lives. I often asked the interviewees to give specific examples of "spiritual" experiences, or to recount

times when and how "spirituality" played a role in their decision-making, if ever. I also asked what "spiritual practices" they engaged in, if any, and where and when "spirituality" was most prevalent for them, and why. Although this was the pre-structured format, I began every interview with, on many occasions the interviews developed into something much more exploratory, heuristic and improvised—as is expected from an in-depth approach. Especially after the interviewee's life history had been disclosed, if something of interest was said, I would ask them to elaborate on it. Or if they felt compelled to speak about a specific topic or event, I would let them do so. Heeding the advice of sociologists Lori Beaman and Peter Beyer (2013, 130) I paid careful examination to personal narratives about "spirituality" and meaningful life events.

Interview Methodology: Grounded Theory and Interpretivist Sociology

I approached and analyzed my interview data using a grounded theory method (see Strauss and Glaser 1967). Grounded theory is a particular style of qualitative analysis that emphasizes the generation of theory grounded in primary data. Importantly, though most grounded theory begins without reference to existing theories in the field, this need not be the case. As pioneer of the method Anselm Strauss (1987, 306) makes clear, "there is no reason not to utilize extant theory from the outset – *providing* only that it too was carefully grounded in research – to direct the collection of new data in the service of discovering a new (and probably more encompassing) theory." Accordingly, I utilized contemporary cultural sociological accounts early on in the analysis process (notably Heelas 1996; Heelas and Woodhead 2005; Houtman and Aupers 2006, 2007; Campbell 2007), given their efficacy for making sense of my data.

My approach followed the following steps: I delimited my research scope to the study of "spirituality." Next, I collected primary data through interviews while simultaneously conducting an extensive literature review. I then transcribed all 50 interviews using Trint. This AI software transcribed my interviews, which I subsequently went through manually, making corrections and taking extensive notes. Next, I engaged in a process of open coding, followed by a stage of more selective coding. These codes were generated with reference to, though not determined by, existing cultural sociological accounts as well as my own discursive analysis of popular "spiritual" literature. Moreover, all coding was done manually, without software; I read over each transcript individually and marked codes by hand. Throughout the entire process I was constantly comparing my own observations with those in the existing literature.

Strauss (1987, 27) notes, "data collection never entirely ceases," therefore the analyst's theory must always remain sensitive to new observations. Indeed, past the mid-way point of my project I was forced to enlarge my understanding of "spirituality" to include the worlds of Charismatic Christians, which required adjusting the original theory in light of new data. Throughout this process, I continually

tested my cultural sociological account of the religion of the heart against competing accounts in the literature, attempting, whenever possible, to create "cumulative integration" (282).

In adopting a cultural sociological approach to the study of religion I espouse an interpretivist conception of social research, which assumes that "the individual and society are inseparable; the relationship is a mutually interdependent one rather than a one-sided deterministic one" (O'Donoghue 2007, 16). In other words, such a framework allows for the acknowledgment of both individual agency and social structure in influencing human action by placing subjective meanings and their interpretations at the heart of social life (Wray 2013, xxii). Moreover, interpretivist sociology is distinguishable from positivist and post-modern approaches insofar as it offers "as an alternative a human science that embraces, theorizes, and struggles with the humanity of both researchers and those they study" (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006, 388).

Method 2: Ethnographic Fieldwork

Though my first site visits took place in the Fall of 2017, I began officially conducting fieldwork in January 2018 and completed my last site visit on December 28, 2018. I was a participant observer at three sites located in downtown Toronto. In what follows I outline each respectively.

1. Newfound Fellowship, Twelve Step Group

Newfound Fellowship belongs to the wider Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) fellowship. The group met once a week, in the evening, for one hour. Because AA is an anonymous program, and because of its vulnerable population, I do not disclose the specific day or time of the meeting. Moreover, due to the risks involved I had to take extra precautions not to interfere with the group's activities while conducting fieldwork. For instance, I could not make my presence as a researcher known. In order to avoid engaging in deception I do not quote anyone who did not give me their express consent to do so, nor do I include observations from meetings that could in any way be traced back to particular members. Most weeks during my fieldwork I would sit in the back of the meeting room, listen intently, and wait until the meeting was finished to write down my observations. I never took notes in meetings in order to avoid offending members or making them uncomfortable. In addition to attending the weekly meeting, I read an array of AA approved literature, and listened to numerous AA speakers and podcasts. I also conducted formal interviews with 10 of Newfound Fellowship's members outside of meeting hours. Generally, we would meet for coffee one-on-one, where I would follow the same interview format as outlined above, only I would add a supplementary section discussing their views of Newfound Fellowship. I also attended a few of the group's business meetings, where I was able to witness how members interacted with one

another. Owing to the sensitivity surrounding the principle of anonymity at AA, and the content often discussed in meetings, I have changed the name of the group, as well as provided pseudonyms for all of my informants.

2. C3 Toronto, branch of C3 Church Global

C3 Toronto belongs to a larger para-church movement called C3 Global, a nondenominational neo-Pentecostal church based out of Sydney, Australia. Over the course of the year I attended C3 Toronto's weekly Sunday service, participated in their "Next Steps" program—the program designed to introduce newcomers to the church, attended one Thursday prayer service, and joined one of the summer term "connect groups," which ran for 8 weeks. I also attended C3 Canada Conference, a three-day event held in downtown Toronto. I conducted formal interviews with 17 members of C3 Toronto, including the senior pastor, Sam, and many other informal interviews. Most interviews took place at a local coffee shop, though my interview with Sam took place at C3 Toronto's office. With C3T members the interviews were less structured, more improvised and unscripted. While I made sure to ask members to describe their journeys in faith, as well as the reasons for their initial attraction to the church, I ultimately allowed the conversations to flow wherever the interviewee saw fit. Unlike NLF and TL, C3 Toronto is not a pseudonym. The reason for this is that there is only one C3 church in Toronto, thus it did not make sense to provide one, as readers could quite easily identify the church, along with the senior pastors, through a quick online search. Accordingly, while all of the members I quote directly are provided pseudonyms, this is not true of the senior pastors. In addition to interviews and field notes taken at C3-related events, my analysis of C3 Toronto treated as data C3 Toronto publicity (newsletters, emails, podcasts, Instagram posts, YouTube videos, and online marketing campaigns), as well as books authored by C3 Church founder and senior pastor, Phil Pringle.

3. Tomorrow's Leaders, Toastmasters International Club

Tomorrow's Leaders belongs to the nonprofit educational organization, Toastmasters International. The club held their weekly meeting on Thursday's from 6-7:40pm. I socialized with members outside of the group on a number of occasions; about once every fortnight I would go for coffee either before or after club meetings with either a single member, or a group of no more than 3 members. I was also an active participant in the club, eventually sitting on the executive committee as the secretary. As a result, I was privy not only to what occurred during meetings, but also how the executive team handled club business. I attended two Toastmasters International events outside of the club. The first was a training workshop for executive team members that had just acquired their role, and the second was a regional conference held

in North York. Over the course of the year I formally interviewed 8 club members, and informally interviewed many more. These interviews, much like others, took place in coffee shops or restaurants, selected by the members. While I made sure to ask members about their life histories, what led them to join Tomorrow's Leaders, and what their reasons were for remaining at the club, I also allowed interviewees to discuss whatever was of interest to them. I treated as "data" the field notes I took in club meetings, Toastmasters International publicity (both in print and online), *Toastmasters* magazine, and the official Toastmasters communication manuals.

A Reflexive Moment

The social researcher who leaves home to study the distant Other, far removed geographically and culturally from them, to my mind, is engaged in a quite different endeavour than the one who stays home and studies those "like them." Moreover, the stakes become especially high when one recognizes that in studying those back home one is implicitly taking an evaluative stance towards one's society, one's peers, and even oneself. It became apparent early on in the research process, when sitting down and listening to my informants—very much my peers—that I could not separate myself from them, even if I wished to. I was implicated in one way or another, being a member of their generation, inhabiting the same society, and inheriting many of the same traditions and institutions. Of course, this is not to deny our differences, which both matter to us personally and also have real-world consequences. Rather, it is to admit that I was never (nor could ever be) a disinterested party. Indeed, I have been quite cognizant throughout this research that in studying the traditions we inherit we are inescapably deliberating about the kinds of people we are and ought to be. And as *Habits* made clear to me, these debates rage on not only within our society but also within us. The truth is I chose to undertake this study because, like all of those I spoke to and spent time with I, too, have a stake in tomorrow. I therefore wish to contribute to the public conversation about our future. And because the good society can only be realized collectively, I encourage others to do the same.

Appendix B: GREB Clearance



February 19, 2015

Mr. Galen Watts
Master's Student
Cultural Studies
Queen's University
Kingston, ON, K7L 3N6

GREB Ref #: GCUL-036-15; Romeo # 6014841
Title: "GCUL-036-15 The Spirituality and Social Justice Project"

Dear Mr. Watts:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled **"GCUL-036-15 The Spirituality and Social Justice Project"** for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS) and Queen's ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) and Senate Terms of Reference (article G), your project has been cleared for one year. At the end of each year, the GREB will ask if your project has been completed and if not, what changes have occurred or will occur in the next year.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB, with a copy to your unit REB, of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Adverse Event Report). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To make an amendment, access the application at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Amendment to Approved Study Form. These changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Gail Irving, at the Office of Research Services or irvingg@queensu.ca for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,



Joan Stevenson, Ph.D.
Chair
General Research Ethics Board

c: Dr. James E Miller, Faculty Supervisor
Dr. Jane Tolmie, Chair, Unit REB
Ms. Danielle Gugler, Dept. Admin.



February 08, 2017

Mr. Galen Watts
Ph.D. Candidate
Cultural Studies Program
Queen's University
Kingston, ON, K7L 3N6

GREB TRAQ #: 6014841
Title: "GCUL-036-15 The Spirituality and Social Justice Project"

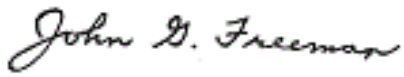
Dear Mr. Watts:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB) has reviewed and cleared your request for renewal of ethics clearance for the above-named study. This renewal is valid for one year from February 19, 2017. Prior to the next renewal date you will be sent a reminder memo and the link to ROMEO to renew for another year. You are reminded of your obligation to submit an Annual Renewal/Closure Form prior to the annual renewal due date (access this form at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html/; click on "Events"; under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Annual Renewal/Closure Form for Cleared Studies"). Please note that when your research project is completed, you need to submit an Annual Renewal/Completed Form in Romeo/traq indicating that the project is 'completed' so that the file can be closed. This should be submitted at the time of completion; there is no need to wait until the annual renewal due date.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period. An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants orsituation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours. To submit an adverse event report, access the application at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html/; click on "Events"; under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Adverse Event Form".

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example, you must report changes in study procedures or implementation of new aspects into the study procedures. Your request for protocol changes will be forwarded to the appropriate GREB reviewers and/or the GREB Chair. To submit an amendment form, access the application at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html; click on "Events"; under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Request for the Amendment of Approved Studies".

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.



Yours sincerely,
John Freeman, Ph.D.
Chair, General Research Ethics Board

c.: Dr. James Miller, Supervisor
Dr. Dorit Naaman, Chair, Unit REB
Ms. Danielle Gugler, Dept. Admin.



January 16, 2018

Mr. Galen Watts
Ph.D. Candidate
Cultural Studies Program
Queen's University
Kingston, ON, K7L 3N6

GREB Ref #: GCUL-073-17; TRAQ # 6022557
Title: "GCUL-073-17 The Spirituality Project - Fieldwork Component"

Dear Mr. Watts:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled **"GCUL-073-17 The Spirituality Project - Fieldwork Component"** for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS 2 (2014)) and Queen's ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (Article 6.14) and Standard Operating Procedures (405.001), your project has been cleared for one year. You are reminded of your obligation to submit an annual renewal form prior to the annual renewal due date (access this form at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html/; click on "Events"; under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Annual Renewal/Closure Form for Cleared Studies"). Please note that when your research project is completed, you need to submit an Annual Renewal/Closure Form in Romeo/traq indicating that the project is 'completed' so that the file can be closed. This should be submitted at the time of completion; there is no need to wait until the annual renewal due date.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html/; click on "Events"; under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Adverse Event Form"). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example, you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To submit an amendment form, access the application by at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html; click on "Events"; under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Request for
the Amendment of Approved Studies". Once submitted, these changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Ms. Gail Irving, at the Office of Research Services for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Sincerely,



Joan Stevenson, Ph.D.
Interim Chair
General Research Ethics Board

c: Dr. James Miller, Supervisor
Dr. Dorit Naaman, Chair, Unit REB
Ms. Danielle Gugler, Dept. Admin.