

Charles Taylor

**Modernity and Closed World Structures
Talk on the occasion of receiving the Josef Pieper Prize***

I am deeply honoured to receive this Prize, in the name of Josef Pieper. This has a particular meaning for me, because Josef Pieper is a philosopher whose work I admire, and moreover, with whom I feel a profound affinity. He formulated an idea about philosophy which captures the basic intent behind a lot of my often confused and inconclusive reflections: the idea of pursuing philosophy in “counterpoint to Christian theology”.¹ The idea is not that Revelation provides the premisses from which philosophy reasons – a very widespread false conception of the nature of Christian philosophy today, both among believers and non-believers. Philosophy must go its own way, as a conversation which could in principle engage anyone, whatever their starting point. But one reasons in response to, under the inspiration of revealed truth. And this brings new thoughts into the conversation, which one would never have had outside of this contrapuntal relation; even though they must make their way, as with all philosophical ideas, through their own force, in the endless conversation of mankind. Pieper, along with Bakhtin and Ricoeur, are to my mind 20th Century figures who transformed philosophy in this way. (Sometimes, as with the case of Bakhtin, the beneficiaries don’t even realize the extent to which the ideas they have enthusiastically adopted have roots in Christian theology. Here, of course, the ignorance on the part of most Westerners of the Orthodox tradition plays a crucial role.)

My affinity with Pieper goes deeper. I have been engaged for many years in trying to articulate the ways in which modern Western civilization and culture have become closed, or at least deeply resistant, to faith in general and Christianity in particular. It’s almost as though this work of mine could be put together under the title of one of Pieper’s works: *Über die Schwierigkeit heute zu Glauben*.² My approach may be somewhat different, but I think that there are echoes and complementarities throughout to the writings of Josef Pieper. In any case, I should like here to share some thoughts with you today on these issues, and hear the response of people who are deeply conversant with Pieper’s work.

1

Let me say first a few words about the historical framework in which I place my question about faith today. We might start off with a lead question like this:

How did this secular age come about? And closely linked to this, what exactly is this age whose development I’m trying to explain? There are all sorts of ways of describing it: separation of religion from public life, decline of religious belief and practice. But, while one cannot avoid touching on these, my main interest, as I indicated above lies in another facet of our age: Belief in God, or in the transcendent in any form is contested; it is an option among many; it is therefore fragile; for some people in some milieux very difficult, even “weird”. 500 years ago in our civilization, it wasn’t so. Unbelief was off the map for most people, close to inconceivable. But that description also applies to the whole of human history outside the modern West.

* Deutsch in: Wissen und Weisheit (Hrsg. H. Fechttrup, u.a.), Münster 2005, 137-169

What had to happen for this kind of secular climate to come about? 1) There had to develop a culture which marks a clear division between the “natural” and the “supernatural”, and 2) it had to come to seem possible to live entirely within the natural. (1) was something striven for, but (2) came about at first quite inadvertently.

Very briefly, I believe that it came about as the by-product of an attempt to make over the lives of Christians, and their social order, so as to make them conform thoroughly to the demands of the Gospel. I am talking not of a particular, revolutionary moment, but of a long, ascending series of attempts to establish a Christian order, of which the Reformation is a key phase. These attempts show a progressive impatience with older modes of post-Axial religion in which certain collective, ritualistic forms of earlier religions existed in uneasy coexistence with the demands of individual devotion and ethical reform which came from the “higher” revelations. In Latin Christendom, the attempt was to recover and impose on everyone a more individually committed and Christocentric religion of devotion and action, and to repress or even abolish older, supposedly “magical”, or “superstitious” forms of collective ritual practice.

Allied with a neo-Stoic outlook, this became the charter for a series of attempts to establish new forms of social order, drawing on new disciplines (Foucault enters the story here), which helped to reduce violence, disorder, and create populations of relatively pacific and productive artisans and peasants, who were more and more induced/forced into the new forms of devotional practice and moral behaviour, be this in Protestant England, Holland, or later the American colonies, or in counter-Reformation France, or the Germany of the “Polizeistaat”.

My hypothesis is that this new creation of a civilized, “polite” order succeeded beyond what its first originators could have hoped for, and that this in turn led to a new reading of what a Christian order might be, one which was seen more and more in “immanent” terms (the polite, civilized order **is** the Christian order). This version of Christianity was shorn of much of its “transcendent” content, and was thus open to a new departure, in which the understanding of good order (what I call the “modern moral order”) could be embraced outside of the original theological, Providential framework, and in certain cases even against it (as with Voltaire, Gibbon, in another way Hume).

Disbelief in God arises in close symbiosis with this belief in a moral order of rights-bearing individuals, who are destined (by God or Nature) to act for mutual benefit; an order which thus rejects the earlier honour ethic which exalted the warrior, as it also tends to occlude any transcendent horizon. (We see one good formulation of this notion of order in Locke’s *Second Treatise*). This understanding of order has profoundly shaped the forms of social imaginary which dominate in the modern West: the market economy, the public sphere, the sovereign “people”.

My attempts to grope towards some picture of the obstacles to faith today are situated within the above understanding of a profound shift in our background notions of order, social and cosmic. But I think that our attempts to understand this shift, and its consequences for our lives are obscured and impeded by a very powerful master narrative, or family of such narratives, which is even hegemonic in some parts of the academy. These narratives have the effect of making the secular turn look less remarkable than it is; they in a sense “normalize” or “naturalize” it. I will try in the following pages to identify key features of this narration, using the key terms, “death of

God", and "subtraction story". I hope that both a picture of this kind of narrative, as well as of the alternative that I propose, will emerge as I proceed.

2

My aim is to account in particular for what I identified above as phase (2), that is, I want to explore the constitution in modernity of what I will call "closed" or "horizontal" worlds. I mean by this shapes of our "world" in Heidegger's sense which leave no place for the "vertical" or "transcendent", but which in one way or another close these off, render them inaccessible, or even unthinkable.

This has become "normal" for us. But we can bring out again how remarkable this is, if we take a certain distance from it, jump back 500 years in our Western civilization (aka Latin Christendom), as I indicated above. At that time, non-belief in God was close to unthinkable for the vast majority,³ whereas today this is not at all the case. One might be tempted to say that in certain milieux, the reverse has become true, that belief is unthinkable. But this exaggeration already shows up the lack of symmetry. It is truer to say that in our world, a whole gamut of positions, from the most militant atheism to the most orthodox traditional theisms, passing through every possible position on the way, are represented and defended somewhere in our society. Something like the unthinkable of some of these positions can be experienced in certain milieux, but what is ruled out will vary from context to context. An atheist in the American "Bible belt" has trouble being understood, as often (in a rather different way) do believing Christians in certain reaches of the academy. But, of course, people in each of these contexts are aware that the others exist, and that the option they can't really credit is the default option elsewhere in the same society, whether they regard this with hostility or just perplexity. The existence of an alternative fragilizes each context, that is, makes its sense of the thinkable/unthinkable uncertain and wavering.

This fragilization is then increased by the fact that great numbers of people are not firmly embedded in any such context, but are puzzled, cross-pressured, or have constituted by bricolage a sort of median position. The existence of these people raises sometimes even more acute doubts within the more assured milieux. The polar opposites can be written off as just mad or bad, as we see with the present American culture wars between "liberals" and "fundamentalists"; but the intermediate positions can sometimes not be as easily dismissed.

And of course, all of this confusion and potential cross-pressures encourages that "inattention" (Unaufmerksamkeit) of which Josef Pieper speaks.⁴ Life within the modern immanent order tends to generate this in any case, but then the pain and complexity involved in addressing oneself to these contested questions easily adds a further motive for "turning off" or "tuning out".

What I want to try is to articulate some of the worlds from within which the believing option seems strange and unjustifiable. But this articulation involves some degree of abstraction – indeed, three kinds of abstraction, with the corresponding dangers.

a) What I shall really be describing is not worlds in their entirety, but “world structures”, aspects or features of the way experience and thought are shaped and cohere, but not the whole of which they are constituents. b) I will not be describing the world of any concrete human beings. A world is something which people inhabit. It gives the shape of what they experience, feel, opine, see, etc. The world of the cross-pressured is different from that of the assured. But what I’m doing is trying to articulate certain world-types (“ideal types” in a quasi-Weberian sense), which may not, will almost surely not coincide with the totality of any real person’s world. c) thirdly, the articulation involves an intellectualization; one has to get at the connections in lived experience through ideas, and very often ideas which are not consciously available to the people concerned, unless they are forced to articulate them themselves through challenge and argument.

Nevertheless, this effort, I believe is very worth while, because it enables us to see the way in which we can be held within certain world structures without being aware that there are alternatives. A “picture” can “hold us captive”, as Wittgenstein put it.⁵ And by the same token, we can gain insight into the way two people or groups can be arguing past each other, because their experience and thought is structured by two different pictures.

What I want to try to lay out is world structures which are closed to transcendence. All of these arise during the slow development in Latin Christendom and its successor civilization of a clear distinction between what came to be called the “natural” and the “supernatural”, as two separate levels of reality (what I called above phase 1). This kind of clear demarcation was foreign to any other civilization in history. There have always been distinctions between, for instance, the sacred and the profane, higher beings and worldly beings, and so forth, but in the “enchanted” worlds that humans have inhabited in earlier times, these two kinds of reality were inextricably interwoven. The sacred was concentrated in certain times, places, acts or persons. The natural/supernatural distinction implies a great sorting out, in which the “natural” becomes a level which can be described and understood on its own. This is the precondition for going the further step, and declaring this the ONLY reality. The “supernatural” can be denied, only from a firm footing in the “natural” as an autonomous order.

So I want to look at some Closed World Structures (CWS), and try to draw from them some of the features of modern experience, in particular the seeming inability to experience the spiritual, the sacred, the transcendent. Of course, this term ‘transcendent’ makes sense most clearly within a world in which natural and supernatural are distinguished; it is what “goes beyond” the natural. It would have been hard to explain this concept to a mediaeval peasant, or it would have slid quickly into other concepts (e.g., the realm of God, as against that of the Saints). But we have to use some terms to discuss these issues, and they are bound to make sense in some epochs and not others. So I use one that does make sense to us.

Our time is full of struggle and cross-purposes on this issue of the transcendent. We are opposed, sometimes bitterly and strongly; but we also often are speaking past each other. I’m hoping that a study of some key CWS will cast some light on the differences, and also the cross-purposes. I want to look ultimately at four, but with rather unequal treatment.

CWS 1: Here I want to introduce the structure of modern epistemology. I am taking this as more than a set of theories which have been widespread, but also at the level of a structure in my sense, that is, an underlying picture which is only partly consciously entertained, but which controls the way people think, argue, infer, make sense of things.

At its most blatant this structure operates with a picture of knowing agents as individuals, who build up their understanding of the world through combining and relating, in more and more comprehensive theories, the information which they take in, and which is couched in inner representations, be these conceived as mental pictures (in the earlier variants), or as something like sentences held true in the more contemporary versions.

Characteristic of this picture are a series of priority relations. Knowledge of the self and its states comes before knowledge of external reality and of others. The knowledge of reality as neutral fact comes before our attributing to it various “values” and relevances. And, of course, knowledge of the things of “this world”, of the natural order precedes any theoretical invocation of forces and realities transcendent to it.

The epistemological picture, combining as it does very often with some understanding of modern science, operates frequently as a CWS. The priority relations tell us not only what is learnt before what, but also what can be inferred on the basis of what. There are foundational relations. I know the world through my representations. I must grasp the world as fact before I can posit values. I must accede to the transcendent, if at all, by inference from the natural. This can operate as a CWS, because it is obvious that the inference to the transcendent is at the extreme and most fragile end of a series of inferences; it is the most epistemically questionable. And indeed, granted the lack of consensus surrounding this move, as against earlier steps in the chain (e.g., to “other minds”), it is obviously highly problematic.

Now I introduce the epistemological picture in order to bring out some features of the way CWS operate in our time, the way they are on one hand contested, and on the other maintain themselves.

The contestations are fairly well known. Taking Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty as paradigm cases of the refutation of epistemology, we can see that this view has been comprehensibly turned on its head. 1) Our grasp of the world does not consist simply of our holding inner representations of outer reality. We do hold such representations, which are perhaps best understood in contemporary terms as sentences held true. But these only make the sense that they do for us because they are thrown up in the course of an ongoing activity of coping with the world, as bodily, social and cultural beings. This coping can never be accounted for in terms of representations, but provides the background against which our representations have the sense that they do. 2) As just implied, this coping activity, and the understanding which inhabits it, is not primarily that of each of us as individuals; rather we are each inducted into the practices of coping as social “games” or activities; some of which do indeed, in the later stages of development, call upon us to assume a stance as individuals. But primordially, we are part of social action. 3) In this coping, the things which we deal with are not first and foremost objects, but what Heidegger calls “*pragmata*”, things which are the focal points of our dealings, which

therefore have relevance, meaning, significance for us, not as an add-on but from their first appearance in our world. Later, we learn to stand back, and consider things objectively, outside of the relevances of coping.

4) In later Heidegger, these significances include some which have a higher status, structuring our whole way of life, the ensemble of our significances. In the formulation of “das Geviert”, there are four axes to this context in which our world is set: earth and sky; human and divine.

Although all those who follow something like this deconstruction of epistemology do not go along with this fourth stage, it is clear that the general thrust of these arguments is to utterly overturn the priority relations of epistemology. Things which are considered as late inferences or additions, are seen to be part of our primordial predicament. There is no getting behind them, and it makes no sense to contest them. The “scandal of philosophy” is not the inability to attain to certainty of the external world, but rather that this should be considered a problem, says Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit*.⁶ We only have knowledge as agents coping with a world, which it makes no sense to doubt, since we are dealing with it. There is no priority of the neutral grasp of things over their value. There is no priority of the individual’s sense of self over the society; our most primordial identity is as a new player being inducted into an old game. Even if we don’t add the fourth stage, and consider something like the divine as part of the inescapable context of human action, the whole sense that it comes as a remote and most fragile inference or addition in a long chain is totally undercut by this overturning of epistemology. The new outlook can be built into a new CWS, but it doesn’t offer itself as a CWS in the same direct and obvious way as the epistemological picture did.

We can learn something general about the way CWS operate, suffer attack, and defend themselves, from this example. From within itself, the epistemological picture seems unproblematic. It comes across as an obvious discovery we make when we reflect on our perception and acquisition of knowledge. All the great foundational figures: Descartes, Locke, Hume, claimed to be just saying what was obvious once one examined experience itself reflectively.

Seen from the deconstruction, this is a most massive self-blindness. Rather what happened is that experience was carved into shape by a powerful theory which posited the primacy of the individual, the neutral, the intra-mental as the locus of certainty. What was driving this theory? Certain “values”, virtues, excellences: those of the independent, disengaged subject, reflexively controlling his own thought-processes, “self-responsibly” in Husserl’s famous phrase. There is an ethic here, of independence, self-control, self-responsibility, of a disengagement which brings control; a stance which requires courage, the refusal of the easy comforts of conformity to authority, of the consolations of an enchanted world, of the surrender to the promptings of the senses. The entire picture, shot through with “values”, which is meant to emerge out of the careful, objective, presuppositionless scrutiny, is now presented as having been there from the beginning, driving the whole process of “discovery”.

Once you shift to the deconstructing point of view, the CWS can no longer operate as such. It seemed to offer a neutral point of view from which we could problematize certain values – e.g., “transcendent” ones – more than others. But now it appears that it is itself driven by its own set of values. Its “neutrality” appears bogus.

Put another way, the CWS in a sense “naturalizes” a certain view on things. This is just the way things are, and once you look at experience, without preconceptions, this is what appears. “Natural” is opposed here to something like “socially constructed”; and from the deconstructing point of view, you have to tell a quite different story of the rise of this outlook. It isn’t just that one day people looked without blinkers and discovered epistemology; rather this is the way things could be made to look from within a new historical formation of human identity, that of the disengaged, objectifying subject. The process involves a re-invention, a recreation of human identity, along with great changes in society and social practices. There is no simple stepping out of an earlier such identity into the pure light of bare nature.

It is a feature of our contemporary CWS that they are understood by those who inhabit them in this naturalizing way. It also follows from this that those who inhabit them see no alternative, except the return to earlier myth or illusion. That’s what gives them their strength. People within the redoubt fight as it were to the last, and feeblest, argument, because they cannot envisage surrender except as regression. The naturalizing emerges in a kind of narration they proffer of their genesis, which I want to call a “subtraction story”.

4

But to develop this idea I should move to another, richer CWS, or constellation of CWS. It is what people often gesture at with an expression like the "death of God". Of course, this expression is used in an uncountable range of ways; I can't be faithful to all of them, nor even will I be simply following the originator of the phrase (though I think my version is not too far from his),⁷ if I say that one essential idea which this phrase captures is that conditions have arisen in the modern world in which it is no longer possible, honestly, rationally, without confusions, or fudging, or mental reservation, to believe in God. These conditions leave us nothing we can believe in beyond the human - human happiness, or potentialities, or heroism.

What conditions? Essentially, they are of two orders: first, and most important, the deliverances of science; and then secondarily also, the shape of contemporary moral experience.

To take up the first, perhaps the most powerful CWS operating today, the central idea seems to be that the whole thrust of modern science has been to establish materialism. For people who cling to this idea, the second order of conditions, the contemporary moral predicament, is unnecessary or merely secondary. Science alone can explain why belief is no longer possible in the above sense. This is a view held by people on all levels; from the most sophisticated: "We exist as material beings in a material world, all of whose phenomena are the consequences of physical relations among material entities." (Lewontin, NYR, Jan 9, 1997, p. 28); to the most direct and simple: Madonna's "material girl, living in a material world".

Religion or spirituality involves substituting wrong and mythical explanations, explaining by "demons" (Lewontin's article again, quoting from Carl Sagan). At bottom it's just a matter of facing the obvious truth.

This doesn't mean that moral issues don't come into it. But they enter as accounts of why people run away from reality, why they want to go on believing illusion. They do

so because it's comforting. The real world is utterly indifferent to us, and even to a certain degree dangerous, threatening. As children, we have to see ourselves as surrounded by love and concern, or we shrivel up. But in growing up, we have to learn to face the fact that this environment of concern can't extend beyond the human sphere, and mostly doesn't extend very far within it.

But this transition is hard. So we project a world which is providential, created by a benign God. Or at least, we see the world as meaningful in terms of the ultimate human good. The providential world is not only soothing, but it also takes the burden of evaluating things off our shoulders. The meanings of things are already given.

So religion emanates from a childish lack of courage. We need to stand up like men, and face reality.

Now the traditional unbelieving attack on religion since the Enlightenment contains this accusation of childish pusillanimity, but also an attack on religion as calling for terrible self-mutilation, actuated by pride. Human desire has to be checked, mortified. And then this mortification is often imposed on others, so that religion is the source of a terrible infliction of suffering, and the visiting of severe punishment, on heretics and outsiders. This shows that the unbelieving critique of religion is more complex and many-tracked than I'm dealing with here; but on one very widespread version of this critique, the basic reason for resisting the truth is pusillanimity.

Unbelief supposedly has the opposite features. The unbeliever has the courage to take up an adult stance, and face reality. He knows that human beings are on their own. But this doesn't cause him just to cave in. On the contrary, he determines to affirm human worth, and the human good, and to work for it, without false illusion or consolation. So he is counter-mortification. Moreover, he has no reason to exclude anyone as heretic; so his philanthropy is universal. Unbelief goes together with modern (exclusive) humanism.

So goes one story. The crucial idea is that the scientific-epistemic part of it is completely self-supporting. That's something the rational mind will believe independent of any moral convictions. The moral attributions to one side or the other come when you are trying to explain why some people accept and others resist these truths. The connection between materialist science and humanist affirmation comes because you have to be a mature, courageous being to face these facts. As to why mature courage embraces benevolence, which figures here in the portrait of this humanism, the answer can simply be that left to ourselves we do want to benefit our fellow humans; or that we have developed this way culturally, and we value it, and we can keep this going if we set ourselves to it.

From the believer's perspective, all this falls out rather differently. We start with an epistemic response: the argument from modern science to all-around materialism seems quite unconvincing. Whenever this is worked out in something closer to detail, it seems full of holes. The best examples today might be evolution, sociobiology, and the like. But we also see reasonings of this kind in the works of Richard Dawkins, for instance, or Daniel Dennett.

So the believer returns the complement. He casts about for an explanation why the materialist is so eager to believe very inconclusive arguments. Here the moral outlook just mentioned comes back in, but in a different role. Not that, failure to rise to which makes you unable to face the facts of materialism; but rather that, whose moral attraction, and seeming plausibility to the facts of the human moral condition, draw you to it, so that

you readily grant the materialist argument from science its various leaps of faith. The whole package seems plausible, so we don't pick too closely at the details.

But how can this be? Surely, the whole package is meant to be plausible precisely **because** science has shown etc. That's certainly the way the package of epistemic and moral views presents itself officially; that's the official story, as it were. But the supposition here is that the official story isn't the real one; that the real power that the package has to attract and convince lies in it as a definition of our moral predicament.

This means that this ideal of the courageous acknowledger of unpalatable truths, ready to eschew all easy comfort and consolation, and who by the same token becomes capable of grasping and controlling the world, sits well with us, draws us, that we feel tempted to make it our own. And/or it means that the counter-ideals of belief, devotion, piety, can all-too-easily seem actuated by a still immature desire for consolation, meaning, extra-human sustenance.

What seems to accredit the view of the package as epistemically-driven are all the famous conversion stories, starting with post-Darwinian Victorians but continuing to our day, where people who had a strong faith early in life found that they had reluctantly, even with anguish of soul, to relinquish it, because "Darwin has refuted the Bible". Surely, we want to say, these people in a sense preferred the Christian outlook morally, but had to bow, with whatever degree of inner pain, to the facts.

But that's exactly what I'm resisting saying. What happened here was not that a moral outlook bowed to brute facts. Rather it gave way to another moral outlook. Another model of what was higher triumphed. And much was going for this model: images of power, of untrammelled agency, of spiritual self-possession (the "buffered self"). On the other side, one's childhood faith had perhaps in many respects remained childish; it was all too easy to come to see it as essentially and constitutionally so.

Of course, the change was painful, because one could be deeply attached to this childhood faith, not just as part of one's past, but also to what it promised. But even this pain could work for the conversion. It has been noted how many of the crop of great Victorian agnostics came from Evangelical families. They transposed the model of the strenuous, manly, philanthropic concern into the new secular key. But the very core of that model, manly self-conquest, rising above the pain of loss, now told in favour of the apostasy.⁸

So I am less than fully convinced by the major thrust of the "death of God" account of the rise of modern secularity; its account in other words of the modern conditions of belief. What makes belief problematical, often difficult and full of doubts, is not simply "science".

This is not to deny that science (and even more "science") has had an important place in the story; and that in a number of ways. For one thing, the universe which this science reveals is very different from the centred hierarchic cosmos which our civilization grew up within; it hardly suggests to us that humans have any kind of special place in its story, whose temporal and spatial dimensions are mind-numbing. This, and the conception of natural law by which we understand it, makes it refractory to the interventions of Providence as these were envisaged in the framework of the earlier cosmos, and the connected understanding of the Biblical story. Seen in this light, "Darwin" has indeed, "refuted the Bible".

For another thing, the development of modern science has gone hand in hand with the rise of the ethic of austere, disengaged reason I invoked above. But all this still doesn't amount to an endorsement of the official story, that the present climate of unbelief in many milieux in contemporary society is a response to the strong case for materialism which science has drawn up during the last three centuries.

Of course, a strong reason for my lack of conviction here is that I don't see the case for materialism as all that strong. To state just why would take me much too far afield, and lead me away from the enquiry I want to pursue. But I acknowledge that this a loose end in my argument which I won't be able to tie up. I hope however that this lacuna in my case can be partly compensated for by the plausibility of the explanation I offer in place of the official account, and which sees the attraction of materialism arising not so much from the conclusions of science as from the ethic which is associated with it.

But, one might object, why shouldn't bad arguments have an important effect in history, as much if not more than good arguments? In a sense, this objection is well taken; and in a sense, therefore, the official story is also true. Since lots of people believe that they are atheists and materialists because science has shown these to be irrefutable, there is a perfectly good sense in which we can say that this is their reason.

But an explanation in terms of a bad reason calls for supplementation. We need an account of why the bad reason nevertheless works. This is not necessarily so, of course, in individual cases. Individuals can just take some conclusion on authority from their milieu. Just as we laypeople take the latest report about the micro-constitution of the atom from the Sunday paper, so we may take it on authority from a Sagan or a Dawkins that Science has refuted God. But this leaves still unexplained how an authority of this kind gets constituted. What makes it the case that we laypeople, as also the scientific luminaries, get so easily sucked into invalid arguments? Why do we and they not more readily see the alternatives? My proffered account in terms of the attraction of an ethic vision is meant to answer this deeper question.

I am not arguing that an account of someone's action in terms of erroneous belief always needs supplementation. I may leave the house without an umbrella because I believe the radio forecast to be reliable, and it predicted fair weather. But the difference between this kind of case and the issue we're dealing with here, is first, that the weather, beyond the inconvenience of getting wet today, doesn't matter to me in anything like the same way, and second, that I have no alternative access to this afternoon's weather than the forecast.

This latter is not simply true in the question of belief in God. Of course, as a layperson, I have to take on authority the findings of paleontology. But I am not similarly without resources on the issue whether what science has shown about the material world denies the existence of God. Because I can also have a religious life, a sense of God and how he impinges on my existence, against which I can check the supposed claims to refutation.

I want to draw the Desdemona analogy. What makes Othello a tragedy, and not just a tale of misfortune, is that we hold its protagonist culpable in his too ready belief of the evidence fabricated by Iago. He had an alternative mode of access to her innocence in Desdemona herself, if he could only have opened his heart/mind to her love and devotion. The fatal flaw in the tragic hero Othello is his inability to do this, partly induced by his outsider's status and sudden promotion.

The reason why I can't accept the arguments that "science has refuted God", without any supplement, as an explanation of the rise of unbelief is that we are on this issue like Othello, rather than the person listening to the forecast as he hesitates before the umbrella stand. We can't just explain what we do on the basis of the information we received from external sources, without seeing what we made of the internal ones.

All this doesn't mean that a perfectly valid description of an individual's experience might not be, that he felt forced to give up a faith he cherished, because the brute facts of the universe contradicted it. Because once you go this way, once you accept unbelief, then you will probably also accept the ideology which accords primacy to the external sources, which depreciates the internal ones as incompetent here, indeed, as likely sources of childish illusion. That's how it now looks *ex post facto* - and how it looked to Othello. But we who have seen this happen need a further account why Desdemona's testimony wasn't heard.

Thus, once one has taken the step into unbelief, there are overwhelming reasons why one will be induced to buy into the official, science-driven story. And because we very often make these choices under the influence of others, on whose authority we buy the official story, it is not surprising that lots of people have thought of their conversion as science-driven, even perhaps in the most dramatic form. Science seemed to show that we are nothing but a fleeting life-form on a dying star; or that the universe is nothing but decaying matter, under ever increasing entropy, that there is thus no place for spirit or God, miracles or salvation. Something like the vision which Dostoyevsky had in the picture gallery in Dresden before the Crucifixion by ?, of the absolute finality of death, which convinced him that there must be something more, might easily have the opposite effect, of dragging you down and forcing an abandonment of your faith.

But the question remains: if the arguments in fact aren't conclusive, why do they **seem** so convincing, where at other times and places God's existence just seems obvious? This is the question I'm trying to answer, and the "death of God" doesn't help me here; rather it blocks the way with a pseudo-solution.

So my contention is that the power of materialism today comes not from the scientific "facts", but has rather to be explained in terms of the power of a certain package uniting materialism with a moral outlook, the package we could call "atheist humanism", or exclusive humanism. But this doesn't bring me to the end of my search; rather, the further question arises: how in turn to explain something like the power of this package?

5

Here's where we might invoke the second level of the "death of God" account, the one which starts from our contemporary moral predicament. The conclusion here is the same as with the argument from science, that we can no longer rationally believe in God; but the starting point is now the ethical outlook of the modern age.

Now it is true that a great deal of our political and moral life is focussed on human ends: human welfare, human rights, human flourishing, equality between human beings. Indeed, our public life, in societies which are secular in a familiar modern sense, is exclusively concerned with human goods. And our age is certainly unique in human history in this respect. Now some people see no place in this kind of world for belief in God. A faith of this kind would have to make one an outsider, an enemy of this world, in

unrelenting combat with it. Thus one is either thoroughly in this world, living by its premisses, and then one cannot really believe in God; or one believes, and one is in some sense living like a resident alien in modernity. Since we find ourselves more and more inducted into this world, belief becomes harder and harder; the horizon of faith steadily recedes.⁹

Now this adversarial picture of the relation of faith to modernity is not an invention of unbelievers. It is matched and encouraged by a strand of Christian hostility to the humanist world. We have only to think of Pius IX, fulminating in his Syllabus of 1864 against all the errors of the modern world, including human rights, democracy, equality, and just about everything our contemporary Liberal state embodies. And there are other, more recent examples, among Christians as well as believers in other religions.

But this convergence between fundamentalists and hard-line atheists doesn't make their common interpretation of the relation of faith to modernity the only possible one. And it is clear that there are many people of faith who have helped to build and are now sustaining this modern humanist world, and are strongly committed to the modes of human well-being and flourishing that it has made central. Once again, the "death of God" account leaps to a conclusion which is far from being warranted. It is possible to see modern humanism as the enemy of religion, just as it is possible to take science as having proved atheism. But since the conclusion is in neither case warranted, the question arises why so many people do so. And that brings me back to the central issue I've been raising.

This moral version of the "death of God" account seems plausible to many people, because they make an assumption about the rise of modernity, which helps to screen from them how complex and difficult this quest is. The assumption is what I have called "the view from Dover Beach": the transition to modernity comes about through the loss of traditional beliefs and allegiances. This may be seen as coming about as a result of institutional changes: e.g., mobility and urbanization erode the beliefs and reference points of static rural society. Or the loss may be supposed to arise from the increasing operation of modern scientific reason. The change may be positively valued - or it may be judged a disaster by those for whom the traditional reference points were valuable, and scientific reason too narrow. But all these theories concur in describing the process: old views and loyalties are eroded. Old horizons are washed away, in Nietzsche's image. The sea of faith recedes, following Matthew Arnold. This stanza from his Dover Beach captures this perspective:

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.¹⁰

The tone here is one of regret and nostalgia. But the underlying image of eroded faith could serve just as well for an upbeat story of the progress of triumphant scientific

reason. From one point of view, humanity has shed a lot of false and harmful myths. From another, it has lost touch with crucial spiritual realities. But in either case, the change is seen as a loss of belief.

What emerges comes about through this loss. The upbeat story cherishes the dominance of an empirical-scientific approach to knowledge claims, of individualism, negative freedom, instrumental rationality. But these come to the fore because they are what we humans "normally" value, once we are no longer impeded or blinded by false or superstitious beliefs and the stultifying modes of life which accompany them. Once myth and error are dissipated, these are the only games in town. The empirical approach is the only valid way of acquiring knowledge, and this becomes evident as soon as we free ourselves from the thralldom of a false metaphysics. Increasing recourse to instrumental rationality allows us to get more and more of what we want, and we were only ever deterred from this by unfounded injunctions to limit ourselves. Individualism is the normal fruit of human self-regard absent the illusory claims of God, the Chain of Being, or the sacred order of society.

In other words, we moderns behave as we do because we have "come to see" that certain claims were false - or on the negative reading, because we have lost from view certain perennial truths. What this view reads out of the picture is the possibility that Western modernity might be powered by its own positive visions of the good, that is, by one constellation of such visions among available others, rather than by the only viable set left after the old myths and legends have been exploded. It screens out whatever there might be of a specific moral direction to Western modernity, beyond what is dictated by the general form of human life itself, once old error is shown up (or old truth forgotten). E.g., people behave as individuals, because that's what they "naturally" do when no longer held in by the old religions, metaphysics and customs, though this may be seen as a glorious liberation, or a purblind enmiring in egoism, depending on our perspective. What it cannot be seen as is a novel form of moral self-understanding, not definable simply by the negation of what preceded it.

In terms of my discussion a few pages ago, all these accounts "naturalize" the features of the modern, liberal identity. They cannot see it as one, historically constructed understanding of human agency among others.

On this "subtraction" view of modernity, as what arises from the washing away of old horizons, modern humanism can only have arisen through the fading of earlier forms. It can only be conceived as coming to be through a "death of God". It just follows that you can't be fully into contemporary humanist concerns if you haven't sloughed off the old beliefs. You can't be fully with the modern age and still believe in God. Or alternatively, if you still believe, then you have reservations, you are at last partly, and perhaps covertly, some kind of adversary.

But of course, as I have argued at length elsewhere,¹¹ this is a quite inadequate account of modernity. What has got screened out is the possibility that Western modernity might be sustained by its own original spiritual vision, that is, not one generated simply and inescapably out of the transition. But this possibility is in fact the reality.

The logic of the subtraction story is something like this: once we slough off our concern with serving God, or attending to any other transcendent reality, what we're left with is human good, and that is what modern societies are concerned with. But this

radically under-describes what I'm calling modern humanism. That I am left with only human concerns doesn't tell me to take universal human welfare as my goal; nor does it tell me that freedom is important, or fulfilment, or equality. Just being confined to human goods could just as well find expression in my concerning myself exclusively with my own material welfare, or that of my family or immediate milieu. The in fact very exigent demands of universal justice and benevolence which characterize modern humanism can't be explained just by the subtraction of earlier goals and allegiances.

The subtraction story, inadequate though it is, is deeply embedded in modern humanist consciousness. It is by no means propounded only by the more simplistic theorists. Even such a penetrating and sophisticated thinker as Paul Bénichou subscribed to a version of it in his Morales du grand siècle: "L'humanité s'estime dès qu'elle se voit capable de reculer sa misère; elle tend à oublier, en même temps que sa détresse, l'humiliante morale par laquelle, faisant de nécessité vertu, elle condamnait la vie."¹² Modern humanism arises, in other words, because humans become capable of sloughing off the older, other-worldly ethics of asceticism.

Moreover, this story is grounded in a certain view of human motivation in general, and of the well-springs of religious belief in particular. This latter is seen as the fruit of misery and the accompanying self-renunciation is "making a virtue of necessity". Belief is a product of deprivation, humiliation and a lack of hope. It is the obverse of the human desire for flourishing; where we are driven by our despair at the frustration of this desire.

Thus human flourishing is taken as our perennial goal, even though under eclipse in periods of misery and humiliation, and its content is taken as fairly unproblematic, once one begins to affirm it.

We see here the outlines of one version of an account of modern secularity, which in its general form is widely and deeply implanted in modern humanist culture. It tends to have four connected facets: a) the "death of God" thesis that one can no longer honestly, lucidly, sincerely believe in God; b) some "subtraction" story of the rise of modern humanism; c) a view on the original reasons for religious belief, and on their place in perennial human motivations, which grounds the subtraction story. These views vary all the way from nineteenth Century theories about primitives' fears of the unknown, or desire to control the elements, to speculations like Freud's, linking religion to neurosis. On many of these accounts, religion simply becomes unnecessary when technology gets to a certain level: we don't need God any more, because we know how to get it ourselves.¹³ These theories are generally wildly and implausibly reductive.

They issue in d) a take on modern secularization as mainly a recession of religion in the face of science, technology and rationality. As against the nineteenth Century, when thinkers like Comte confidently predicted the supersession of religion by science, as did Renan: "il viendra un jour où l'humanité ne croira plus, mais où elle saura; un jour où elle saura le monde métaphysique et moral, comme elle sait déjà le monde physique",¹⁴ today everybody thinks that the illusion has some future; but on the vision I'm describing here it is in for some more shrinkage.

These four facets together give an idea of what modern secularization often looks like from within the humanist camp. Against this, I want to offer a rather different picture.¹⁵

In order to develop this alternative picture, I want to explore another domain of CWS, which I think is more fundamental. This is the domain in which the moral self-understanding of moderns has been forged. Here I want to invoke the enframing story that I told at the outset (my own “master narrative”: I confess to this cardinal sin of the post-modern canon!) The account centred on the development of an ascending series of attempts to establish a Christian order, of which the Reformation is a key phase. This ended up issuing in an understanding of a “polite”, civilized order, which could be understood in completely immanent terms. The rejection of the transcendent arose in close symbiosis with this sense of a moral order of rights-bearing individuals, who are destined (by God or Nature) to act for mutual benefit.

This ideal order was not thought at first to be a mere human invention. Rather it was designed by God, an order in which everything coheres according to God's purposes. Later in the eighteenth Century, the same model is projected on the cosmos, in a vision of the universe as a set of perfectly interlocking parts, in which the purposes of each kind of creature mesh with those of all the others.

This order sets the goal for our constructive activity, insofar as it lies within our power to resist it, or realize it. Of course, when we look at the whole cosmos, it can seem to us that the order is already realized; but when we cast our eye on human affairs, we see how much we have deviated from it and upset it; it becomes the norm to which we should strive to return.

This order was thought to be evident in the nature of things. Of course, if we consult revelation, we will also find the demand formulated there that we abide by it. But reason alone can tell us God's purposes. Living things, including ourselves, strive to preserve themselves. This is God's doing. As Locke put it:

God having made Man, and planted in him, as in all other Animals, a strong desire of Self-preservation, and furnished the World with things fit for Food and Rayment and other Necessaries of Life, Subservient to his design, that Man should live and abide for some time upon the Face of the Earth, and not that so curious and wonderful a piece of Workmanship by its own Negligence, or want of Necessities, should perish again: God ... spoke to him, (that is) directed him by his Senses and Reason, ... to the use of those things which were serviceable for his Subsistence, and given him as the means of his Preservation. ... For the desire, strong desire of Preserving his Life and Being having been planted in him, as a Principle of Action by God himself, Reason, which was the voice of God in him, could not but teach him and assure him, that pursuing that natural Inclination he had to preserve his Being, he followed the Will of his Maker.¹⁶

Being endowed with reason, we see that not only our lives but that of all humans are to be preserved. And in addition, God made us sociable beings. So that "every one as he is bound to preserve himself, and not quit his Station wilfully; so by the like reason when his Preservation comes not in competition, ought he, as much as he can, to preserve the rest of Mankind."¹⁷

Similarly Locke reasons that God gave us our powers of reason and discipline so that we could most effectively go about the business of preserving ourselves. It follows that we ought to be "Industrious and Rational".¹⁸ The ethic of discipline and improvement is itself a requirement of the natural order that God had designed. The imposition of order by human will is itself called for by his scheme.

We can see in Locke's formulation how much he sees mutual service in terms of profitable exchange. "Economic" (that is, ordered, peaceful, productive) activity has become the model for human behaviour, and the key for harmonious co-existence. In contrast to the theories of hierarchical complementarity, we meet in a zone of concord and mutual service, not to the extent that we transcend our ordinary goals and purposes, but on the contrary, in the process of carrying them out according to God's design.

This understanding of order has profoundly shaped the forms of social imaginary which dominate in the modern West: the market economy, the public sphere, the sovereign "people".

This is the key entry point to modern secularity. Within this somewhat stripped down notion of Providence and divinely sanctioned order, one which made ordinary human flourishing so central, it became more and more conceivable to slide towards forms of Deism, and ultimately even atheist humanism. The order which was first seen as providential could be located in "Nature" (this was not a big step, since God created Nature), and then later further relocated as one of the effects of "civilization".

As such it becomes connected with narratives of its genesis in history, out of barbarism and religion.¹⁹ "Polite" society involves the evolution out of earlier phases in which war was the paramount activity to a mode of life in which commerce and production are the most valued activities. The economic dimension assumes crucial importance. At the same time, it requires the evolution of religious forms which accept this paramountcy of this kind of order in society.

Seen from this perspective, religion could be portrayed as a threat to this order. We see this in the critique offered by Gibbon and Hume for instance. Key terms of opprobrium were: "superstition", by which was meant continuing belief in an enchanted world, the kind of thing which modern Reform Christianity had left behind it; "fanaticism", by which was meant the invocation of religion to justify violations of the modern moral order, be they persecutions, or any other type of irrational, counter-productive behaviour; "enthusiasm", by which was meant the claim to some kind of special revelation, whereby one could once more challenge the norms of the modern order. One might say that "superstition" was the specialty of Catholics, and "enthusiasm" of extreme Protestant sects; but "fanaticism" was a sin of which both were capable.

The rooting of the Enlightened critique in this modern idea of moral order can be seen again if one looks at the two lists of virtues which Hume lists in the *Enquiries*, those he considers properly virtues, and the "monkish" ones for which he has no use.²⁰

We can see how this understanding of civilized order and "polite" society could function as a CWS, if not excluding all religion, at least ruling out as unacceptable

“fanatical” forms of it. Enconced within this understanding of order, and situated in the narratives of its genesis, certain other forms of life appear as “barbarian”, and (at least certain forms of) religion as unacceptable.

Here we have one of the most powerful CWS in modern history. Religion was to be severely limited, even in some versions banned, because it ran against the natural order itself. From within the acceptance of this order as the end of history, nothing could seem more obvious and secure, even if this could also accommodate milder positions which espoused Deism, or some carefully controlled and parsimoniously dosed religion. This is a very widespread CWS in our time, except that it has been radicalized to marginalize the intermediate positions available in the 18th Century, like Voltairean Deism.

And we can also see how this CWS exists in a kind of relation of mutual support and symbiosis with the others evoked above. The modern conception of social order, starting with individuals, reinforces and is reinforced by the primacy of the ego in epistemology. The stance of disengaged reason is also essential to the range of disciplines by which a social reality was built in which the norms of the order – disciplined and productive individuals whose activity tends to mutual benefit – can seem a plausible description of “human nature”. For from within this perspective the modern moral order is fully “naturalised”. It is the way humans are, and were meant to be. Indeed, disengaged scientific understanding, the highest ideal of epistemology, is one of the achievements of “civilization”.

At the same time, the narrative of the emergence of polite civilization confers the status of adulthood on those who inhabit it, in relation to the immaturity of barbarians and the superstitious, or enthusiastic or fanatic. It therefore helps to anchor the various CWS of the “death of God”, and indeed, gives its full weight to the moral superiority of adulthood from which the “refutation” of religion by science draws much of its strength.

7

But it was also this CWS of polite civilization which inspired the most bitter controversies. Because this understanding of order was and is hotly contested; and this from a host of directions. Some saw it as insufficiently inspiring and uplifting; others as poisoned by forms of discipline which repress and crush the spontaneous or the emotional in us; others as rejecting true human sympathy and generosity in condemning “enthusiasm”. But others again rejected it because it turned its back on violence, and hence heroism, and hence greatness; because it leveled us all in a demeaning equality. We find some of this latter kind of reaction in Tocqueville, for instance; but most famously in Nietzsche.

As this latter name reminds us, the remarkable thing about this wave of protests, which begins in the latter half of the 18th Century, is that they each can be taken in more than one direction. The sense of the moral order as unliveable and reductive could either lead back to a more full-hearted religion (e.g., Wesley, the Pietists), or it could lead beyond to modes of unbelieving Romanticism. Similarly, the “tragic” dimension could be invoked for a return to a real sense of human sin; or it could justify a rejection of Christianity as the original historical source of modern morality, the trail blazed by Nietzsche. Again, dissatisfactions with existing forms could lead to more radical and

utopian versions of order, as we see with Jacobinism, later communism and Marx; or it could justify abandoning it, as with the Catholic Reaction after 1815; or again, in a quite different way, with Nietzsche.

So while the modern ideal of moral order can be the centre of one of the most influential CWS of modern society, the attempts to criticise it, to denounce its self-“naturalisation”, can also be a source of new and more profound CWS. After all, the source whence the expression “death of God” flows into general circulation is the *Gay Science*. Modern culture is characterized by what we could call the “nova effect”, the multiplication of more and more spiritual and anti-spiritual positions. This multiplicity further fragilizes any of the positions it contains. There is no longer any clear, unambiguous way of drawing the main issue.

But a crucial reference point in this swirling multiplicity is the modern idea of order; in the sense that our stance to that is an important defining characteristic of our position, as much as our stance, positive or negative, on transcendence. The dimension in which interesting new positions have arisen is that which combines severe criticism of the order with a rejection of the transcendent. This is where we find what we might call the “immanent Counter-Enlightenment”, following Nietzsche;²¹ as well as new ways of invoking paganism against Christianity. This is as old as the Enlightenment in one sense; Gibbon clearly had some sympathy for what he saw as the skeptical, very unfanatical ruling class of Rome, puzzled by the rush to martyrdom of this obscure sect of Christians; Mill spoke of “pagan self-assertion”; Peter Gay has even described the Enlightenment as a kind of “modern paganism”.²² But we find more recently attempts to rehabilitate precisely what was suppressed by monotheism. There is a discourse of “polytheism” (Calasso, Spinoza), which profoundly rejects the notion of single, dominant moral code, an essential feature of the modern moral order. One can even hope to erect a novel CWS on this basis.

Among these new forms, Heidegger deserves a mention. I said above that he is one of those who have contributed to undoing the CWS of epistemology, but also that of scientism, and the belief that “science has shown” that there is no God. He even has a place for “the gods” in some sense in his notion of *das Geviert*. And yet there seems to be a rejection of the Christian God here; or at least some unwillingness to allow that the Christian God can ever escape the dead end of onto-theology. “auch der Gott, wenn er ist, ist ein Seiender”²³

In this talk, I have been trying to explore the modern landscape of belief/unbelief, in the main by laying out some of the principal world structures which occult or blank out the transcendent. I believe that I have been talking about the same many-sided reality, another facet of which was evoked in an arresting image by Josef Pieper. He speaks of the “dome” of the workaday world, and the way in which spurious forms of philosophy and poetry “combine ... to screw down the dome more firmly than ever, to close every window”.²⁴ My closed world structures are (some of) the anchors of this dome.

The main intellectual struggle around belief and unbelief turns on the validity/invalidity of these CWS. It is clear that modern society generates these, but not in any consistent fashion. Some of them only can define our horizon through our rejecting others. Many of them have already shown that they are grounded on a false and over-hasty naturalisation. The crucial question at stake in the debate is, are they all similarly

invalid? It may be beyond the reach of any single set of arguments to show this. And even if it were determined, it wouldn't by itself decide the question whether there is a God or not, whether there is transcendence. But it could open this issue for a more active and fruitful search.

NOTES

¹ From "The Philosophical Act", published in English Translation in *Leisure, The Basis of Culture*, New York: Pantheon 1952, p. 117.

² München: Kösel Verlag 1974.

³ See Lucien Fevre, *Histoire de l' Incroyance*

⁴ *Über die Schwierigkeit*, p. 18.

⁵ "Ein Bild hielt uns gefangen" *Philosophical Investigations*, Part I, para 115.

⁶ *Sin und Zeit*,

⁷ The "death of God" reference is from *The Gay Science*, para 125. Later on, Nietzsche says: "Man sieht, **was** eigentlich über den christlichen Gott gesiegt hat: die christliche Moralität selbst, der immer strenger genommene Begriff der Wahrhaftigkeit, die Beichtväterfeinheit des christlichen Gewissens, übersetzt und sublimiert zum wissenschaftlichen Gewissen, zur intellektuellen Sauberkeit um jeden Preis. Die Natur anschn, als ob sie ein Beweis für die Güte und Obhut eines Gottes sei; die Geschichte interpretieren zu Ehren einer göttlichen Vernunft, als beständiges Zeugnis einer sittlichen Weltordnung und sittlicher Schlussabsichten; die eignen Erlebnisse auslegen, wie wir fromme Menschen lange genug ausgelegt haben, wie als ob alles Fügung, alles Wink, alles dem Heil der Seele zuliebe ausgedacht und geschickt sei: Das ist numehr **vorbei**, das hat das Gewissen **gegen** sich, das gilt allen feineren Gewissen als unanständig, unehrlich, als Lügneri, Feminismus, Schwachheit, Feigheit", para 357. It will be clear later on where my interpretation agrees with Nietzsche's.

⁸ See Stefan Collini,

⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, para 125, the famous passage about the madman who announces the death of God, also makes use of this horizon image.

¹⁰ *Dover Beach*, 21-28.

¹¹ *Sources of the Self*, Harvard U. P. 1989.

¹² *Morales du grand siècle*, Paris: , p. 226.

¹³ There is a more sophisticated version of this in Steve Bruce, *Religion in modern Britain*, OUP 1995, pp. 131-3.

¹⁴ Quoted in Sylvette Denèfle, *Sociologie de la Sécularisation*, Paris-Montréal: l'Harmattan 1997, pp. 93-4.

¹⁵ If I can manage to tell this story properly, then we will see that there is some, phenomenal, truth to the "death of God" account. A humanism has come about which can be seen, and hence lived, as exclusive. And from within this, it can indeed seem plausible that science points us towards a materialist account of spirit. The "death of God" is not just an erroneous account of modern secularity on a theoretical level; it is also a way we may be tempted to interpret, and hence experience the modern condition. It is not the explanans I am looking for, but it is a crucial part of the explanandum. In this role, I am very far from wanting to deny it.

¹⁶ *Two Treatises of Civil Government*, I.86.

¹⁷ Op. cit., II.6; see also II.135; and *Some Thoughts concerning Education*, para 116.

¹⁸ Op. cit, II.26.

¹⁹ I have drawn on the very interesting discussion of John Pocock in his *Barbarism and Religion: The Enlightenment of Edward Gibbon*, Cambridge University Press 1999.

²⁰ David Hume, *Enquiries*

²¹ See "The Immanent Counter-Enlightenment" in Ronald Beiner, eds

²² Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment*

²³ Quoted in Jean-Luc Marion, *Dieu sans l'être*, Paris: PUF 1991, p. 105. I have found Marion's discussion of this issue extremely enlightening.

²⁴ "The Philosophical Act", in *Leisure*, pp. 74-5.