

Article

Humbling the Discourse: Why Interfaith Dialogue, Religious Pluralism, Liberation Theology, and Secular Humanism Are Needed for a Robust Public Square

Peter Admirand 

School of Theology, Philosophy, and Music, Dublin City University, Glasnevin, Whitehall, Dublin 9, Ireland; peter.admirand@dcu.ie

Received: 12 June 2019; Accepted: 23 July 2019; Published: 25 July 2019



Abstract: Our public square is in need of much refurbishment, if not reconstruction. Access for many seems barred by various ideological platforms and walls. Some are deemed too much of this, another too much of that: liberal, religious, anti-Trump, anti-Brexit, pro-life, anti-gay—whatever the label or brand—and some access points are opened, others closed. Gatekeepers are many, deeming who really counts, who really represents. The public square, of course, should be big, bustling, semi-chaotic “places”, rife with ideas, questions, passion, and curiosity, yet measured by standards of decorum, listening, and mutual respect. Most importantly, it should be characterized by a robust (or spunky) humility, aware of its strengths and its weaknesses. It is fair to say that in 2019, our public square could use a little uplift. While certainly not a miracle cure, nor the only possible salves, interfaith dialogue, religious pluralism, liberation theology, and secular humanism have much in their favor to nuance, challenge, and yes, purify our present polarized, and so sometimes catatonic public square. After a brief overview first explaining the title, along with what is meant in this paper by the secular and humility, it will then be argued how interfaith dialogue, religious pluralism, liberation theology, and secular humanism can liberate and purify our public square discourse—namely by practicing and promoting a robust humility.

Keywords: Interfaith Dialogue; Religious Pluralism; Liberation Theology; Secular Humanism; Public Square

1. Repairing the Public Square

Our public square (or sphere)¹ is in need of much refurbishment, if not reconstruction. Access for many seems barred by various ideological platforms and walls. Some ideas and people are deemed too excessive or too lukewarm, whether liberal, religious, anti-Trump, anti-Brexit, pro-life, anti-gay—whatever the label or brand. Based on claims or perception of identity, some access points are opened, others closed. Gatekeepers are many, deeming who really counts, who really represents. The cost of all these delays is insurmountable; and the cliché of a number of “workers” (read: leaders) standing around while so much needs to be done remains risible. Blaming others is a standard response. The public square, of course, should be big, bustling, semi-chaotic “places,”² rife with hypotheses,

¹ (Habermas 2006). On public reason, see (Rawls 1997).

² Extending the spatial and architectural metaphors of the physical public square with the intellectual and democratic public square under discussion, see, for example, (Osnos 2016). Such a physical space is not only restricted to those who strive to keep alive the memory of victims of the 4 June Massacre, but the Chinese communist government which actively restricts access in expressing, supporting, or asking questions about related issues of freedom, State oppression, and truth inquiries. In this regard, see the testimonies presented in (Liao 2019).

questions, passion, and curiosity, yet measured by standards of decorum, listening, and mutual respect. It should be about encounter and exposure, especially to what seems new, challenging, or oppositional. Such sights should be met and perceived with a robust (or spunky) humility, aware of both strengths and weaknesses. It is fair to say that in 2019, our public square could use a little uplift. While certainly not miracle solutions, nor the only possible salves, embracing interfaith dialogue, religious pluralism, liberation theology, and secular humanism has much in its favor to embellish, touch-up, remodel, and purify our present polarized, and so sometimes catatonic, public square.

After a brief overview, first explaining the title, along with what is meant in this article by the secular and humility, I will then argue how interfaith dialogue, religious pluralism, liberation theology, and secular humanism can liberate and purify our public square discourse. I will also highlight the need to practice and promote a robust humility which adds nuance, greater complexity, deeper transparency, and sincere acknowledgement of our mutual brokenness. This combination can cultivate greater listening and ongoing learning—prerequisites for a healthy public square.

2. Humility and the Secular

At first glance, this article may seem to be arguing, not just for more religion in the public square,³ but a certain kind of religious expression or identity—namely one embedded in the practice of interfaith dialogue, the reality of religious pluralism, and the tenets of liberation theology. The fourth and final piece in the title, secular humanism, can seem like an outlier, though, causing inevitable contradiction, clash, and an ideological cacophony. If this article is arguing for more religion in the public square, how can it also argue for the promotion of atheist ideology, and if advocating a strictly non, or possibly anti-religious secular humanism, why is this position included not only with interfaith dialogue and religious pluralism, but a specific kind of (Christian) theology: liberation theology?

While some may see clash and conflict, I see a wealth of humbling and a call for deeper questioning and doubt. While no one can fully embody all of these areas, there are benefits in keeping them together (in tension), especially both atheist and a particular religious identity, along with the more expansive notions of religious pluralism and interfaith dialogue. There are constant challenges in such pairings. Why, for example, does religious pluralism need specific religious belonging and identity? Why does a specific religious identity need to engage in interfaith dialogue; and why does such interfaith dialogue also need to include secular humanists (and other atheists and nontheists) in the conversations? It is within these checks and balances that claims of any religious or ideational triumphalism can be challenged, a humbling that both encourages and demands greater cooperation and listening to others.

Ultimately, the analysis and dialogue below are, in many ways, just a practice and test for those groups and individuals these pairings would struggle to converse with: especially those deemed conservative, exclusivists, religious fundamentalists, radical New Atheists, and other less dignified titles. For that is the real test of a robust public square: to provide space and voice even to what is antithetical to your argument, hope, and vision.

It is my contention that the four areas promoted in this article can help foster and sustain those more difficult discussions.

What do I mean, then, by the secular, and why promote humility, a rather weak, and easily co-opted virtue?⁴ Fundamentally, promoting healthy doubt and questioning are needed for honest, transparent conversations in the public square, but too often, there are fears of compromising and admitting frailty and weakness. This false rigidity and false claim for wholeness mean truth is manipulated, hidden, or avoided. What gets prioritized is presenting one's supposed strongest, most appealing

³ For pertinent examinations of religion and the public square, see, for example, (Juergensmeyer et al. 2015; Barbieri 2014; Biggar and Hogan 2009). For my analysis of (Taylor 2004), see (Admirand 2010).

⁴ Humility has been rightly challenged in many feminist arguments citing how women have been expected or forced to be silent, submissive, and weak; in a word, humble, though that kind of coerced and spineless humility is obviously challenged and debunked here.

public (Facebook) face. Governments, religious institutions, politicians, generals, and the powerful may momentarily acknowledge some previous mistake (if they do so at all) but carefully distance themselves from any personal backlash or simply hide behind tradition, the Constitution, theological doctrine, and misty phrases like: the past. For example, the Catholic Church, through John Paul II's series of apologies, and as reflected in the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews' 1997 document, "We Remember", on the Shoah, still seemed to separate and disassociate responsibility of the ecclesial, sacramental Church while speaking about the sins and mistakes of individual Christians. We read, for example: "At the end of this Millennium the Catholic Church desires to express her deep sorrow for the failures of her sons and daughters in every age."⁵

The Pope could ask for forgiveness in the name of his fellow Catholics who sullied the mission of the Church in their anti-Judaic actions, but not in the name of the unblemished mystical body of Christ, the Church founded by Jesus, as Pius XII stressed. Even if well-intentioned, the distinction was not only lost on most Catholics, but seemed self-serving for non-Catholics. The Church seemed to admit, but not really admit, any culpability. This failure to hold the entire Church culpable left a residue of innocence and even a space for victimhood then to be claimed, so that any outpouring of disagreement and critique could be deemed anti-Catholic in some Catholic circles—a classic case of the perpetrator now falsely claiming victimhood. More damning, think of the Abu-Ghraib scandals and cited examples of torture and murder, orchestrated by the US government, in their response to 9/11 in the War on Terror. Systemic, fundamental moral and legal failure was never admitted by the upper end of the government and military (even as these policies were clearly planned and orchestrated at the top). Only a few individuals carrying out those policies were punished in any way, and so deemed outliers. Scapegoats.⁶

No one wants to admit culpability, of course, especially if money is involved; or in the case of religious institutions, their foundational, core identity is at stake. It is my contention that no ideology, religion, ethical philosophy, ethnicity, or nation can honestly and transparently portray themselves without a fundamental brokenness and deep sense of historical failure in practicing their ideals and beliefs towards the dignity and rights of others.⁷ Humility is a core virtue in accepting these difficult truths.⁸

Humility is not subservient or servile. Humility is a candid and complete admission of who and what we are, in a co-dependent and intertwined world, that is pithily expressed in the Buddhist concept of interbeing⁹ or the Ubuntu notion that I am because we are.¹⁰ This virtue does not annul personal responsibility or the role of individual moral striving and accomplishment. But it places such accomplishments and setbacks in perspective. Humility can still rejoice in personal success and joys, but these are tempered by an awareness that none of us (following Donne and—of religions—Heschel) is an island. Such awareness helps foster what I call a humbled pride. More significantly, such humility is deeply invested in others, especially partnered with empathy and love, and so is more attuned to acknowledging failures, underdevelopments, missed opportunities, potential bias, and needed growth. Seeing itself as beauty in brokenness, such a humbled perspective recognizes a need for others; for repentance, and learning.¹¹ While such behavior is rarely exhibited positively in the public square, I am proposing such is needed if we desire our public square to be truly democratic, open, and robust.

In terms of the secular, and a secularity governed by the humility sketched above, it is an ideology characterized by respecting, sometimes protecting (more passively, permitting) the practice of all faiths, and none, so long as such beliefs and practices do not impinge and threaten the fundamental human

⁵ (Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews 1998).

⁶ On the wealth of this material, see, for example, (Mayer 2009; Hafetz 2016; Slahi 2015, 2017).

⁷ See, for example, (Admirand 2019).

⁸ On humility, see, for example, (Admirand 2018a; Foulcher 2015; Cooper 2013).

⁹ (Hanh 1987).

¹⁰ (Metz 2014).

¹¹ See, especially, the essays in (Heft et al. 2011).

rights of individuals. It shows no discrimination, or undue favoritism, to individuals or groups based on religious (or non-religious) beliefs, criteria, belonging, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, nationality, class, occupation, or other identity markers. As Taylor and Maclure note, the secular does not replace the religious sphere in “an all-encompassing secular philosophical conception.”¹²

The secular should be seen as a developing, always questioning, and incipient position. The secular, which is really an array of distinctive conceptions, strongly rooted in context,¹³ is not omniscient or infallible. The various implementations of the secular, in, for example, the United States, India, France, and Indonesia, showcase the variety and distinctions, and so a pluralist conception of the secular. The secular, too, must be open to change and growth, which is why the secular needs as diverse an array of opinions and comprehensive doctrines as possible. To bar religions from the public square is the height of hubris and irresponsibility. Likewise, just as the inclusion of religion in the public square requires limits (and sometimes sharp critiques),¹⁴ where beliefs and practice undermine or deviate from standard human rights law and practices, the same standards must be applied to the so-called non-religious. When we speak of multiple secularisms, we acknowledge secularity as a broad conception and field. Some secularities are obviously not conducive to the deeply ethical, dialogical, and humble practices highlighted here.¹⁵ Pol Pot’s Cambodia, Mao’s China, Stalin’s Russia, and Hitler’s Germany all advocated an anti-religious form of secularity that is rightly condemned for its genocidal ideology and disastrous social and political policies.

Nietzsche, to take a classic “secular” philosopher, would scoff at any claim of humility and any genuine attempt at dialogue and commensurability between the supposed great—and all the others.¹⁶ Below I highlight a specific non-religious secularity, namely secular humanism. The secularity advocated here, regardless of claims about the role and influence of Nietzsche’s sister on his work, would not be Nietzschean. Nor, for that matter, would it be Heideggerian, with its unrepentant immersion and links with National Socialism.¹⁷ Again, this does not mean dialogue is not attempted (or learning happens) with a Nietzschean or unrepentant Heideggerian, but I would contend a Levinasian ideology, for example, is a more expansive and ethics-affirming philosophy to promote and teach with the aim of a robust, but humble public square.¹⁸

Thus, when we speak about (re)forming a robust public square, we are also concerned with pedagogy and learning, especially if seeking moral foundations. It is not surprising, then, that I support a secular humanism rooted in social justice—though not claiming all humanisms and secularities are interested in, let alone supportive, of such a moral platform.

Some may then wonder why a specific religious ideology cannot be the overarching foundation, as long as it is open to other ways of being human, upholding human rights and dignity. Why, one could contend, must society’s foundation be strictly non-religious, as opposed to being guided by humble, but still hierarchically conceived theological concerns, and language? Underneath such laws and practices would be a belief in a loving, Creator God for whom, love of God and love of creation, are intertwined. Such love is what fuels social and moral justice and cooperation with one another in seeking justice. Such notions should give non-religious advocates of the secular some pause for thought. While skeptics will note that such a description can seem to resemble what the founding fathers of US government had in mind, they can easily mention the moral failures in vision of that

¹² (Maclure and Taylor 2011).

¹³ For global case studies of the secular, see, for example, (Zuckerman and Shook 2017; Lloyd 2018; Mahmood 2015; Rectenwald et al. 2017; Smith and Baker 2015; Warner et al. 2013; Berg-Sørensen 2013; Bhargava 2012; Bilgrami 2016).

¹⁴ See, for example, (Mill 2000). On Mill, see (Ryan 2012); for critique, see (Ahn 2011).

¹⁵ I thank an anonymous reviewer for pushing me to elaborate further on this idea.

¹⁶ See, for example, (Nietzsche 1978a, 1978b, 1990). As I have noted elsewhere, though, “What we can glean from Nietzsche is the need to balance power and humility and to recognize where humility can be a danger to an already oppressed or humbled people” (*Humbling Faith*).

¹⁷ See, for example, (Patterson 1997; Sherratt 2013; Gordon 2014).

¹⁸ See, for example, (Lévinas 1990, 2007; Shankman 2010).

cohort, especially in regards to slavery. But what of a deeply enlightened theistic ideology, that overlaps with most so-called liberal secular concerns of social justice, and in no way discriminates against atheists or those of other faiths, nor favors those who promote belief in God? Is such an ideology possible in the 21st century?

Ultimately, theists, while infused by their doctrines and practices with a belief in God, should acknowledge that no specific religion, especially theirs, should inhabit the powerful position of ultimate adjudicator, or even be first among equals. Historical precedent alone should lead to this resignation and humble and courageous abdication; however, their voice and commitment are required and needed, and here is where a healthy humility can be beneficial. Rule and decree? no; but contribute as an equal? Yes. What is the secular, then, but a striving for the possibility for full flourishing for as many people as people, always open and attune to being corrected, rectified, and potentially amended? It is often a bumpy road, suffused with gaps, incongruities, and uncertainty. To pretend otherwise, to believe all answers are known, forever fixed and contained within its orbit, and so decree religion (or doubt) has no place, is the first sign of both moral and ideological failure.

Let us now examine how the four areas highlighted in the title can help form a more robust public sphere.

3. The Foundation: Interfaith Dialogue

The public square should be a forum of conversations and various types of dialogues. The practice and field of interfaith dialogue¹⁹ can be an ally and guide in helping to foster such conversations. A few preliminary points. By interfaith dialogue, I include all theist, atheist, and non-theist positions. While some participants may not prefer to have their ideology listed or subsumed as a “faith”, the term still seems preferable from a strictly interreligious dialogue, where the “religious” could be deemed more restrictive. I say seemed because, like Ronald Dworkin, there are many atheists who call themselves religious in various ways, especially through spirituality, deep connections with the universe and creation, and in moral longing and praxis.²⁰

Dialogue should also not be limited to the merely verbal exchange of ideas, beliefs, or information. Interfaith dialogue comprises multiple ways and means of communication. We can begin with the inner-dialogue, the dialogue of the self and then move to the basic, but pervasive dialogue of life. Such a dialogue, rich and varied throughout the world, exhibits itself wherever the reality of religious pluralism plays out, in our daily encounters with one another in shops, on the bus, in parks and recreational activities, and in other neighborly and communal interactions. It need not explicitly involve religious themes and identity. We also have the dialogue of action, especially pronounced in cooperating together in striving for justice, peace, and the good of the most marginalized or poor, or the protection of the environment, and other pressing concerns. Dialogue within our groups is called intra-faith dialogue. Such dialogues can often be the most trying and challenging, as a so-called liberal and so-called conservative Muslim may seem to have less in common than with a Jew who shares one’s conservative or liberal bent. There is also the dialogue among those deemed leaders in various religious and ideational groups, sometimes called institutional dialogue; and the dialogue among religious and theoretical experts, sometimes deemed academic interfaith dialogue. Intermonastic dialogue is a particular type of religious dialogue involving participants from various faith traditions living a monastic life and so sharing and participating in one another’s rituals, feast days, and practices; for example, a group of Catholic Cistercian monks spending prolonged periods in the meditation practices of Buddhists in a Buddhist monastery. Sometimes these types of dialogues and interactions

¹⁹ For some foundational texts, see, for example, (Patel et al. 2018; Cohen et al. 2017; Latinovic et al. 2016; Kujawa-Holbrook 2014; Cormille 2013; Cheetham et al. 2013; Heft 2012; Cormille 2008; Tracy 1990).

²⁰ (Dworkin, Richard 2013; Lightman 2018).

overlap, but all are characterized by a genuine openness to the other, deep listening, mutual respect, and transparency.

A key guide and resource in this area is Leonard Swidler's much-cited "The Dialogue Decalogue: Ground Rules for Interreligious, Interideological Dialogue."²¹ The first principle, for example, states: "The essential purpose of dialogue is to learn, which entails change."²² Too often in the public square, the purpose for dialogue seems to be conversion or proving another position is less sound or not viable. As the other matches this confrontational approach, whatever results is rarely a dialogue. Of course, it can all seem so personal and urgent, but has not the same been the case in interfaith dialogue, where salvation, one's soul, and other religious terminology reveal high, deep stakes? Such dialogue is not only two-way participation (these should not be a series of monologues), but should be "honest and sincere." Especially useful is Swidler's 3rd principle in the call to acknowledge potential future changes in one's position, and also current and past areas of struggle. In the public square, if one's identity is linked to a brand or ideology, then showing any doubt or disagreement with that link can seem to erode one's value. What usually happens is that such failures are covered up or vociferously defended, with no inch to give. But a true dialogue cannot obscure these realities.

Jumping right into a controversial maelstrom: let us imagine you support Trump and the person you are talking with is deeply opposed to the policies of the Trump administration. A true dialogue here would mean both sides are open to learn from the other, practicing an honesty and sincerity that can be self-critical (and justly critical of others), which does not mean a betrayal of one's loyalties. Such a Trump supporter, for example, may defend the majority of Trump's policies without withholding clear criticism or doubt about certain questionable actions (or late-night tweets).

As a Catholic theologian, I save some of my harshest assessments for the institutional church. Such assessments, though, are ultimately guided by my deep hope and love of the moral ideals of the Church as lived by Jesus and his followers like Francis of Assisi and Ignatius of Loyola. Such critiques do not gainsay my rich, but complex, Catholic identity. In this regard, Swidler rightly reminds us in the fourth principle that we only compare our ideals with our partner's ideals, their practices with our practices, not our idealized version of some aspect of our tradition and the on-the-ground failure of our conversation partner.

Consider the final principle: "To understand another religion or ideology one must try to experience it from within, which requires a 'passing over,' even if only momentarily, into another's religious or ideological experience."²³ This is very challenging, especially where we are convinced the other's way of life or views are faulty. If I am a convinced atheist, how can I even try to pass over into a life where a so-called loving God is deemed real, especially if I was raised a theist and fell away or turned away from such a position? Where are the limits? If I believe we need to protect our national borders at all costs, for example, then why should I try to imagine a clearly erroneous, misinformed view is potentially equal or superior to mine? In the next section we will examine what Jewish theologian Irving Greenberg calls a "principled pluralism", where there are limits and lines one does not cross even as one practices a genuine expansiveness and hospitality to the other. But it is crucial to try to see how the other sees and has come to see. Such empathy, coupled with humility, is a crucial step in reminding us of the mirroring humanity of the other, and so the need to address one another with respect, sincerity, and trust.

In terms of the proof of the value of interfaith dialogue, consider, for example, the sea-change in relations between Jews and Catholics since the Shoah. There are Jewish documents like *Dabru Emet*, and the December 2015 "Orthodox Rabbinic Statement on Christianity,"²⁴ praising Catholic growth and development in seeing and respecting Jewish people and beliefs. There are Catholic religious orders

²¹ For his helpful overview on its development, see (Swidler 2014).

²² Ibid. See also: (Swidler 1987).

²³ (Swidler 2013, 2019).

²⁴ (National Jewish Scholars Project 2002, 2015).

like the Sisters of Sion who changed their initial charism from converting Jews to one of partnering, learning with, and dialoguing with the Jewish people. There have been Church pronouncements that, most recently, ended Catholic institutional attempts to convert the Jewish people. In reflecting on such accomplishments, it can seem no ideological gulf or divide is so wide that honest, sincere people meeting face-to-face cannot work towards shortening.

4. Embracing Religious Pluralism

Interfaith dialogue thrives not only where a diversity of faiths and positions is evident, but where the salvific claims of other paths are at least seen as a possibility, if not reality. Practically, in the context of religions portrayed as a marketplace of ideas, such competition can help religious systems to present their most attractive face to the public. In a world where religious choice is limited or non-existent, especially in a context where religious belonging is expected, a religion may not only misuse its power, but show no inclination for change or development. If a community no longer favors one religious faith (or any), the reality of choices and so the need for greater dialogue and discernment with one's followers can aid religions to keep examining the signs of the times and adjust and grow accordingly. This practical religious pluralism can benefit religions, though it may also encourage a myopic, remnant form of faith. Some groups fear and too easily dismiss the plethora and explosion of other faiths and lifestyles and so hunker down, as it were, seeing the world outside as threatening. They prefer a small, so-called loyal group than one accountable to those in the larger, outside world. Consider the general public strand of the papacy during Pope Benedict's tenure, for example, as opposed to the dialogical and inclusive position advocated by his successor, Pope Francis.

Any position comes with risks, but advocating religious pluralism, while nurtured by humility (and the social justice requirements of liberation theology), deftly positions one's faith to hone its rich resources and traditions, cull failures that exposure to the Other has unearthed, and inspire how and where improvements, deeper self-inspection, and future goals are expected.²⁵ Informed, humbled, and challenged by the face-to-face dialogues with others in interfaith dialogue, religious pluralism reflects on one's conversation partners and friends with a renewed sense of hope and trust. Humbled by the examples of solid moral living (this will especially be evident to religious believers observing the moral lives of many secular humanists) tempers the easy judgment of seeing the other in darkness, ignorance, or sin. It provides a more nuanced, complex picture of the named person before you. In this regard, I also challenge religious believers (and anti-religious ideologues) to immerse themselves in the lives and memories of what I call "testimonies of mass atrocity," memoirs and accounts from horrors like the Shoah, Rwandan genocide, gulags, and laogai.²⁶ These layered, brutal, and both hopeless and (sometimes) hopeful realities also paint historical and present failures fueled by our own faith or ideological systems or practitioners. No one is exempt, as all religious, ethnic, and national systems have unduly and unjustly harmed others. This reality is also part of humility and of being humbled.

Religious pluralism is the celebration of this otherwise despairing reality: for in a world limited to only our flawed way of life, only our (broken) pronouncements and rituals, how resonant could be our hope for moral growth and gaining closer to truth? We need the full flourishing of others. Celebrating religious pluralism enables that flourishing.

But are there no limits? As noted, I advocate what Jewish theologian Irving Greenberg and others call a "principled pluralism." As he writes: "In principled pluralism, practitioners of absolute faiths do not give up their obligation to criticize that which is wrong (or what they believe to be wrong) or that which leads to less than full realization of truth, found in other faiths."²⁷ A key, sometimes irresolvable, and often painstakingly frustrating area is how to interpret that adjective, "principled."

²⁵ See, for example, (Phan 2017; Schmidt-Leukel 2017; Gillis 1998; Tracy 1987; Goodman 2014).

²⁶ See, for example, (Admirand 2012, 2014).

²⁷ (Greenberg 2004).

Based on what principles, by whom, and how? For some, this limit is rooted in basic human rights and dignity, but as the moral impasse over abortion and euthanasia legislation shows, how one interprets what is a life, or how and whether to affirm a meaningful life, or terms like dignity or the soul, can be very arduous. My deeper concerns are focused on social justice, not doctrinal issues. This means I am not overly concerned that there are myriad interpretations on the meaning and life of Christ, even as I would privilege some christologies over others. The Qur'anic and Markan interpretations of who Jesus was, for example, take a lot of theological gymnastics to try to reconcile, for at its basic level, the Qur'an stresses that Jesus is only a human prophet and Mark's gospel (in my reading) proposes a human Jesus who is also miraculously and mysteriously divine, the Incarnation of God. Both interpretations cannot be fully correct, but here is where religious diversity is a blessing, challenging each group to clarify, re-clarify and sharpen one's views and interpretations. This religious pluralism, despite the reality of some dogmatic and scriptural differences, still hopes that the core life praised and guided by these traditions can be equally healing and so salvific. Pope Francis telling Christians in Morocco that their witnessing as Christians is more important than trying to convert Muslims is a key example of this idea.²⁸ If a Muslim's soul or future existence was so tied to verbal and sacramental commitment to the Church, then evangelizing at all costs (as in the pre-Vatican II Church) would have to be heralded if a Catholic truly loved and cared for their Muslim brother and sister. The same would be expressed towards the Jewish people. That the Catholic Church is now rethinking and reformulating such institutional mission shows how even in these more controversial dogmatic issues, there is much change in the air. Again, interfaith face-to-face dialogue, learning with and from one another, along with a deeper honesty and humility, have been essential for such developments.²⁹

Because social justice issues, and not dogma, are my main concern,³⁰ I particularly highlight liberation theology as a key resource which should not be overlooked.

5. Focus on the Poor: Liberation Theology

Liberation Theology was all but (officially) vanished and silenced by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith under Joseph Ratzinger, who continued airing his distaste for that theology during his papacy. A relatively young Mario Bergoglio, meanwhile, finding himself Jesuit Superior in Buenos Aires in the early 1980s, touted the Vatican line, according to Paul Valley, and removed all liberation theological books from the Jesuit schools and libraries he oversaw.³¹ Where some of his fellow Jesuits advocated radical forms of social justice advocacy, challenging societal, government, and especially military law and practice (at a time of military juntas and in the wake of 30,000 desaparecidos in Argentina, for example),³² the young Bergoglio called for caution, if not more traditional advocacy—prayers, mass, quiet acts of kindness and mercy.

What makes Francis so inspiring, though, is not that he is without faults and mistakes. Across the left-right divide in the Catholic Church, plenty of individuals would claim he is not doing enough for Church reform, others that he is doing too much, or does not fully understand the feminist and women advocacy issues, or has failed to address comprehensively the child sex abuse crisis, and so on.³³ Despite these critiques, he exemplifies a religious leader who promotes and practices humility.³⁴ He is constantly calling for repentance and deep self-examination among the clergy and admits some of his own areas require greater diligence and faith. He is not afraid to admit where the Church needs

²⁸ (Pullella and Eljehtimi 2019).

²⁹ See, for example, (Cunningham 2015).

³⁰ In this regard, I am deeply influenced by Paul Knitter's ethical model of pluralism that focuses on praxis, peace, dialogue, and liberation. See (Knitter 2017).

³¹ See, for example, (Valley 2013). For an analysis of Pope Francis from a Chilean-born theologian, see (Aguilar 2014).

³² For a powerful memoir of an activist/victim of the attempted genocide during the military junta in Argentina, see (Partnoy 1986).

³³ See, for example, (Ellacuría and Sobrino 1993; Cardenal 2010; Claffey and Egan 2009; Espin 2015).

³⁴ (Brockhaus 2018).

to reform and where such reform remains lacking. Although some of this reform can be subtle, or privilege actions over verbal pronouncements (where a clear pronouncement may have been more controversial), his deeper, more recent advocacy of liberation theology is particularly noteworthy. Consider, for example, his invitation to Gustavo Gutiérrez to the Vatican (and co-celebrating a mass with him at the behest of former head of the CDF, Gerhard Ludwig Müller)³⁵ which testifies to the deep change in how liberation theology is now deemed in the Church. Consider also the sudden rise in the status of Oscar Romero, the great Salvadoran Archbishop, killed while saying mass,³⁶ but whose martyrdom and sainthood status seemed stuck in limbo in the papacies of John Paul II and especially Pope Benedict, but was ‘expedited’ fairly quickly during Francis’ papacy.³⁷

I have some issues with Francis speaking about highlighting a purified liberation theology while perhaps not sufficiently stressing a purified Church because of liberation theology, but no one can deny both needed purifying. Liberation theology had much to learn about the role of women in the Church, a more open discourse on sexual orientation, and a deeper interfaith focus and study.³⁸ Liberation theology still has the qualities and features that can heal the institutional church—namely: the preferential option for the poor; its advocacy for social, legal, and this-world praxis for the most downtrodden and marginalized; condemning and seeking to dismantle structural injustice that promotes inequality and worsens the lives of the poor and oppressed; and its advocacy of base communities, church groups built from the ground up. Such practices are rich and deeply beneficial to wider society, too.

Forged within the Exodus and especially Jesus stories, the most important aspect of liberation theology is its zealous focus on this world and inequality, of a total commitment to discipleship in healing and partnering with the outcasts of our world. It acknowledges that any spiritual liberation needs to be joined with social justice advocacy and engagement.³⁹ Such theology provides standards and principles through which traditional religious expression—through dogma, sacraments, mass, ritual, evangelizing—must be weighed and prioritized, best summed up in the Beatitudes and in Jesus’ saying: “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matt 25:40). It is this moral and social justice pivot that should be the fulcrum upon which interfaith dialogue turns; and liberation theology sets the bar for where principled pluralism resides. As Jon Sobrino writes: there is a “limit on pluralism” in our responsibility to the poor and oppressed, which always takes precedence as any “partnership cannot conceal or minimize such suffering.”⁴⁰

Must it be liberation theology that is advocated, though? Could not one promote feminist theology, especially as women, and particularly poor women of color, remain the most stigmatized and marginalized group? Or might not postcolonial theology be preferred with its reminder and focus of how the vestiges of colonial domination and discrimination continue to play out in supposedly post-colonial societies? What about black liberation theology, minjung theology, or Dalit theology—all demanding identification and partnering with the outcast? Would not all these types of theologies have great resonance for reforming the public square? While I would see liberation theology as a foundational root of those other important branches, a type of umbrella theology in the same way as the secular in wider society that incorporates all the religions of our world, I think there is no need for division so long as the aims and agendas are fairly consistent. Liberation theology is primarily a contextual theology, rooted historically in the Latin American landscape of the later decades of the twentieth century, characterized by repressive governments, mass poverty and discrimination, and compared to Asia, a less religiously diverse landscape.

³⁵ (Wooden 2019).

³⁶ (Eisenbrandt 2017).

³⁷ We are also seeing movement and beatification for the martyrs in Argentina from the military junta and paramilitary forces noted above. See (Martín 2019).

³⁸ (Cooper 2013; Petrella 2005, 2006).

³⁹ See (Admirand 2018b).

⁴⁰ (Sobrino 1993; Dube 2000).

This limitation is true, although in the areas I advocate for reforming the public square, I include religious pluralism to compensate for such weaknesses. Regardless, no one theology or ideology will be enough. And what of Christ? Jesus is at the heart of liberation theology, for it is in his image and actions, where the theology gets its energy and purpose. Is this not another case of a religious advocate promoting his particular branch of faith as the most important or cathartic piece for liberation or transformation of the public square?

Let us recall that the public square is not an anodyne place where viewpoints will all harmonically fall in line and no one is without subjectivity or bias. It should expect what I will call ‘informed, fair bias, and subjectivity’ because no one can credibly claim for these personal, subjective elements to be utterly washed away. Nor should they be; even where religious doctrine may be translated in the public square, the original language (footnotes and all) should not be concealed. Part of the searching and questioning for a truly robust public square entails elements of believing and belonging, personal judgements, hopes, and affiliations. While the first two pieces advocated here are general, this third piece (liberation theology) renders my argument more provincial and identifiable. I am open to the real possibility that the aims of liberation theology may be better expressed for others in a different system; perhaps the secular humanism discussed shortly. Liberation theology, especially humbled by a feminist or post-Holocaust theology,⁴¹ still offers great promise when developed within interfaith dialogue. While it will be chastened by the reality of religious pluralism, it can also help to refine and challenge one’s conception of interfaith dialogue and religious pluralism.

If some kind of Christian theology is being promoted, though, why then advocate secular humanism, too?

6. Secular Humanism

A number of years ago, atheist philosopher Jeffrey Stout famously argued for the need for religious expression and participation in the public square.⁴² My argument here is related, but flipped on its head. As a Catholic theologian, I am calling for a deeper partnership and commitment with and to secular humanism in the public square and in issues of interfaith dialogue and religious pluralism more broadly. As I have expressed elsewhere,⁴³ there is no greater humbler to religious theistic faith than a purely secular humanism committed to alleviating injustice and suffering in this world. Such a commitment (and sacrifice) does not stem from hope for some post-mortem reward or to avoid some kind of post-mortem punishment. The good of others drives secular humanists, if not purely altruistically, then certainly without the many trappings, guilt-trips, and arguments from religions.

Including secular humanism as a key facet for reforming the public square is to remind religious proponents that such voices are also needed, that these voices are unique and worth hearing, however they call themselves: atheists, agnostic, lapsed believer, misotheist, and so on.

Too often religious proponents, believing (pun intended) that they are God’s gift to the world, dismiss atheists and undermine atheist social justice activism by implying or saying that such atheists need religion for their moral actions and advocacy to have some credible moral bedrock. Meanwhile, most atheists shrug and just keep healing the poor or trying in their own way to minimize useless suffering. Again, this should all be humbling for theists and remind them of the importance of atheist-theist dialogue. Currently, for example, I am involved in fleshing-out a potential book with secular humanist Andrew Fiala that seeks to promote the commonalities and points of convergence among atheists and theists, without of course denying the obvious differences, or withholding relevant, honest critique where desired or needed. In many recent texts of atheists seeking meaning in our world

⁴¹ See, especially (Pollefeyt 2018).

⁴² (Stout 2008).

⁴³ See the forthcoming essay from (Admirand and Fiala forthcoming).

(while also seeking to promote well-being and justice for many), I continue to see deep overlap, room for dialogue, learning, and humbling, with theists and religious believers.⁴⁴

In Fiala's 2017 book, *Secular Cosmopolitanism, Hospitality, and Religious Pluralism*, he advocates hospitality, as a secular humanist, that is truly open to learn and engage with those of religious faith. As he writes, such "hospitality is grounded in modesty and openness."⁴⁵ In this regard, he joins a number of post-New Atheist Atheists who have distanced themselves from the more pejorative, confrontational, and often disrespectful, or inelegant presentation of religious faith that was the hallmark of Hitchens and Dawkins. The result is not a softening or diminishing of truth but mutual challenges and respect on both sides leading to deeper penetration and examination of truth questions.

The only way you really know if you have fairly presented another's views and beliefs is when those others respond to your words with "Amen". When Fiala, Michael Ruse, Philip Kitcher, Louise Anthony, Timothy Crane, Chris Steadman, and others present (and critique) religious, and specifically Christians beliefs and views, I can respond with a nod of agreement. Such is a sign that the dialogue can now begin as we start truly to see where the other resides.

Secular humanists resonate with Engaged Buddhists (who may also have a nontheist or atheist ideology) who commit themselves to alleviating suffering.⁴⁶ At their best, they are also deeply committed to ecological issues, and so view their role as human beings with a profound responsibility for all species, if not focusing on life more generally as what needs to be protected.⁴⁷

7. Conclusions: Humbling the Discourse

There is a lot of bravado in the public square, especially politically, with talk of walls, provincial government policies, and protectionism. Borders are getting tighter. The public square, many complain, is almost helplessly vitriolic, as cooperating with the other side is looked upon with suspicion. While there are always individuals who benefit from such political malaise and chaos, the poor continue to suffer and the middle class get further squeezed and ignored. How to revitalize and reconstruct the public square is no easy task. The areas promoted above, again, are no panacea, but they are ones that both the religious believer and nonbeliever can support. Individually, but especially in tandem, they promote a virtue—humility—that is too often ostracized, concealed, or misunderstood, and yet is deeply needed in our public square.

Interfaith dialogue, in all its various manifestations and levels, promotes what has become increasingly overlooked—the value of extended face-to-face interactions that promote honesty and sincerity. Moving far beyond the medieval aim to convert and prove another wrong, these dialogues are rooted in mutual learning, listening, and development. They also come with a rich pedigree, especially if one examines the great strides in post-Shoah Jewish–Christian dialogue. Such dialogue is never easy, especially in areas of past or ongoing military conflict, where crimes and atrocities have been, or still are being, committed. Yet, ultimately, if one truly wants to face the past, such dialogue, especially following the principles of Leonard Swidler's Dialogue Decalogue, seem indispensable.

Embracing religious pluralism is also both a deep humbler and a purifier. Again, the fact of religious diversity is not merely what is accepted, but takes joy and hope in such multifaceted expressions of belief and belonging—which also in many ways overlap, as seen with Hans Kung's global ethic or examinations of the golden or silver rule.⁴⁸ The landscape of religious pluralism not only means most faiths must be attuned to developments and strengths in other traditions, but

⁴⁴ See, for example, (Carroll and Norman 2017; Dworkin, Richard 2013; Hedges 2017; Kitcher 2014; May 2015; Antony 2007; Ruse 2015; Steadman 2012; Crane 2017).

⁴⁵ (Fiala 2017).

⁴⁶ On Engaged Buddhism, see (Hanh et al. 2019).

⁴⁷ See, for example, (Shook 2010).

⁴⁸ On the golden rule in world religions, see (Neusner and Chilton 2008). On the global ethic, see (Küng 2004). For an examination of the viability of ordinary moral virtues in the context of globalization, see (Ignatieff 2017).

provide resources and opportunities for what Krister Stendahl rightly called “holy envy.”⁴⁹ Such envy can inspire groups to emulate and practice what they find so appealing or challenging in other traditions, or which may have been overlooked in one’s traditions. Consider again the development of Engaged Buddhism (in many ways inspired by Christian liberation theology’s focus on social justice) or Christianity’s more recent awareness and teaching on environmental ethics, inspired by the Asian religions and indigenous faiths.⁵⁰ Such envy is not only a healthy means of humbling but a path towards greater wholeness and hope.

Liberation theology’s total focus on the poor and oppressed should remind all of us what is most at stake and important in many of the issues examined and debated in the public square—the plight of billions in our world with failing healthcare, lack of food and clean water, and other basic human rights. It also highlights the gross inequalities in many first-world countries where urban blight or exurban and rural neglect co-exist with places of inordinate capital⁵¹ and wealth. And the gap is only growing, as many economists note. Why the Catholic Church silenced and marginalized liberation theology will remain another of its great failures, but a testament to the Church’s history of rebirth and regeneration is currently on view with liberation theology’s resurrection under Francis. The same man who once followed Vatican orders and removed liberation theology books is now promoting the theology in his talks, sermons, and actions. While talk of a “purified” liberation theology must be clarified both by how liberation theology needed to develop (as noted, especially in its promotion of gender equality and interfaith dialogue) and how liberation theology has helped to purify the Church in its focus and devotion to social justice, the language of purification is a shrewd way to help reunite both left and right behind liberation theology. Again, other theologies resembling or branching off from liberation theology are also means of humbling and of giving clear guidance and principles to the dialogue and pluralism advocated.

Finally, as a further means of humbling and purifying, secular humanism is praised as an essential partner and piece in any hope of regenerating the public square. This is especially important as a vocal though minority discourse often argues for the removal of religion from the public square or against any employment of its full, comprehensive doctrine. While this form of exclusivism has been challenged in this article, secular humanism is a means of maintaining and focusing on human rights and social justice issues,⁵² in partnership with, or separately from, religious motivations and language. Especially if challenged by an ecological ethic, secular humanism (and again I include within its purview human rights discourse) presents a unifying force across religious and nonreligious lines. What is John Rawls’ difference principle,⁵³ for example, if not a secular preferential option for the poor? Does secular humanism need the other areas? Of course, our world is deeply, inherently religious. Silencing or barring the religious voice is self-defeating, but those voices also need to be purified and humbled. Dialogue and partnership with secular humanists can support that crucial role.

While such areas have already borne much fruit in our world, is this enough to purify and humble much of the discourse in the public square? If implemented further at all levels of education, even becoming part of standard corporate ethical manifestos and legal language, would it help a Brexit and

⁴⁹ For a multi-religious interpretation of the term, see (Gustafson 2018).

⁵⁰ This interfaith learning and the need for interfaith dialogue and cooperation is especially evident in Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si’*. http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_encyclica-laudato-si.html.

⁵¹ See (Piketty 2014).

⁵² By social justice, I am restricting meaning here to the laws, policies, and systematic structures which impact the lives and dignity of the most marginalized: economically, socially, politically, culturally, and spiritually. A call for social justice is thus to implement policies and laws that support the human rights, dignity, and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. Could this be a form of socialism, as one anonymous reviewer, opined? It seems most likely, but not necessarily required. See (Stevenson 2015). If social justice is deemed as basic moral respect and kindness to all sentient beings, especially as some form of the golden rule, then it is deeply present in all religions. The ends are generally complementary (a more just, compassionate, kind world), but the methods, especially in terms of political involvement and engagement, will differ in scale and scope. Regarding social justice and Asian religions, see, for example, (Tsomo 2004; Kim 2017; Yuan 2019; Lande 2013).

⁵³ (Rawls 2003).

anti-Brexit advocate to sit down over coffee and talk sincerely, or a deep red Trump supporter with an AOC-supporting independent, a backer of Pope Benedict's theology and a Catholic convinced Pope Francis is not doing enough to reform the Church; a pro-choice and pro-life advocate? If you have (reasonable) doubts about such prospects, then despair could seem the only option at more intransigent examples (the Israeli-Palestinian crisis; Ukraine/Russia; Tibet/China; ISIS and the West, and so on). Cleaning up and restoring our public square will take a lot of effort, intellectual machinery of all sorts, and a large dose of humility.

What is presented is a way forward for regeneration and revitalization of our public square, a further means for as many people as possible to be involved in the conversation, and to help facilitate deeper and humbler conversations. While always a work-in-progress, such full participation and conversation should always be at the heart of the public square.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- Admirand, Peter. 2010. Embodying an 'Age of Doubt, Solitude, and Revolt': Christianity Beyond 'Excarnation' in A Secular Age. *The Heythrop Journal* 51: 905–20. [CrossRef]
- Admirand, Peter. 2012. *Amidst Mass Atrocity and the Rubble of Theology: Searching for a Viable Theodicy*. Eugene: Cascade Books.
- Admirand, Peter, ed. 2014. *Loss and Hope: Global, Interreligious, and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Admirand, Peter. 2018a. Seeking Humility and Self-Critique: A Christological Analysis of *A Common Word*. In *The Future of Interfaith Dialogue: Muslim-Christian Encounters through A Common Word*. Edited by Yazid Said and Lejla Demiri. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 144–61.
- Admirand, Peter. 2018b. Why Liberation Theology Should Be Taught in Catholic Secondary Schools. *International Studies in Catholic Education* 10: 156–69. [CrossRef]
- Admirand, Peter. 2019. *Humbling Faith: Humbling Faith: Brokenness, Doubt, Dialogue—What Unites Atheists, Theists, and Nontheists*. Eugene: Cascade Books.
- Admirand, Peter, and Andrew Fiala. forthcoming. The Believer-Nonbeliever Dialogue: Nurturing Trust. *SEARCH: A Church of Ireland Journal*.
- Aguiar, Mario I. 2014. *Pope Francis: His Life and Thought*. Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press.
- Ahn, Ilsup. 2011. Utilitarianism. In *Beyond the Pale: Reading Ethics from the Margins*. Edited by Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas and Miguel A. De La Torre. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, pp. 81–90.
- Antony, Louise M., ed. 2007. *Philosophers without God: Meditations on Atheism and the Secular Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Barbieri, William A., Jr., ed. 2014. *At the Limits of the Secular: Reflections on Faith and Public Life*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Berg-Sørensen, Anders, ed. 2013. *Contesting Secularism: Comparative Perspectives*. Surrey: Ashgate.
- Bhargava, Rajeev. 2012. How Should States Deal with Deep Religious Diversity? Can Anything Be Learned from the Indian Model of Secularism? In *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs*. Edited by Timothy Samuel Shah, Alfred Stepan and Monica Duffy Toft. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 73–84.
- Biggar, Nigel, and Linda Hogan, eds. 2009. *Religious Voices in Public Places*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bilgrami, Akeel, ed. 2016. *Beyond the Secular West: Religion, Culture, and Public Life*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Brockhaus, Hannah. 2018. Pope Francis: To Pray, Begin with Humility. Available online: <https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2018/12/05/pope-francis-to-pray-begin-with-humility/> (accessed on 23 July 2019).
- Cardenal, Ernesto. 2010. *The Gospel in Solentiname*. Translated by Donald D. Walsh. Maryknoll: Orbis.
- Carroll, Anthony, and Richard Norman, eds. 2017. *Religion and Atheism: Beyond the Divide*. New York: Routledge.
- Cheetham, David, Douglas Pratt, and David Thomas, eds. 2013. *Understanding Interreligious Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Claffey, Patrick, and Joe Egan, eds. 2009. *Movement or Moment? Assessing Liberation Theology Forty Years after Medellín*. Oxford: Peter Lang.
- Cohen, Charles L., Paul F. Knitter, and Ulrich Rosenhagen, eds. 2017. *The Future of Interreligious Dialogue: A Multireligious Conversation on "Nostra Aetate"*. Maryknoll: Orbis.

- Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. 1998. We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah. Available online: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_16031998_shoah_en.html (accessed on 23 July 2019).
- Cooper, Julie E. 2013. *Secular Powers: Humility in Modern Political Thought*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Cooper, Thia, ed. 2013. *The Reemergence of Liberation Theologies: Models for the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cornille, Catherine, ed. 2013. *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Cornille, Catherine. 2008. *The Im-Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue*. New York: Herder & Herder.
- Crane, Tim. 2017. *The Meaning of Belief: Religion from an Atheist's Point of View*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Cunningham, Philip A. 2015. *Seeking Shalom: The Journey to Right Relationship between Catholics and Jews*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Dube, Musa. 2000. *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. St. Louis: Chalice, pp. 193–94.
- Dworkin, Richard. 2013. *Religion without God*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Eisenbrandt, Matt. 2017. *Assassination of a Saint: The Plot to Murder Óscar Romero and the Quest to Bring His Killers to Justice*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Ellacuría, Ignacio, and Jon Sobrino, eds. 1993. *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*. Maryknoll: Orbis.
- Espin, Orlando O., ed. 2015. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Fiala, Andrew. 2017. *Secular Cosmopolitanism, Hospitality, and Religious Pluralism*. New York: Routledge, p. 185.
- Foulcher, Jane. 2015. *Reclaiming Humility: Four Studies in the Monastic Tradition*. Collegeville: Liturgical.
- Gillis, Chester. 1998. *Pluralism: A New Paradigm for Theology*. Leuven: Peeters.
- Goodman, Lenn E. 2014. *Religious Pluralism and Values in the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gordon, Peter E. 2014. Heidegger in Black. In *New York Review of Books*. Available online: <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2014/10/09/heidegger-in-black/> (accessed on 23 July 2019).
- Greenberg, Irving. 2004. *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth: The New Encounter between Judaism and Christianity*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, p. 208.
- Gustafson, Hans, ed. 2018. *Learning from Other Religious Traditions: Leaving Room for Holy Envy*. Cham: Palgrave.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 2006. Religion in the Public Sphere. *European Journal of Philosophy* 14: 1–25. [CrossRef]
- Hafetz, Jonathan, ed. 2016. *Obama's Guantánamo: Stories from an Enduring Prison*. New York: New York University Press.
- Hanh, Thich Nhat. 1987. *Interbeing: Fourteen Guidelines for Engaged Buddhism*. Berkeley: Parallax.
- Hanh, Thich Nhat, His Holiness The Dalai Lama, bell hooks, Bill McKibben, Gary Snyder, Maha Ghosananda, Charles Johnson, Bhikkhu Bodhi, and Matthieu Ricard. 2019. *True Peace Work: Essential Writings on Engaged Buddhism*. Berkeley: Parallax Press.
- Hedges, Paul. 2017. *Towards Better Disagreement: Religion and Atheism in Dialogue*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Heft, James L., ed. 2012. *Catholicism and Interreligious Dialogue*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Heft, James L., Reuven Firestone, and Omir Safid, eds. 2011. *Learned Ignorance: Intellectual Humility among Jews, Christians, and Muslims*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ignatieff, Michael. 2017. *The Ordinary Virtues: Moral Order in a Divided World*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Juergensmeyer, Mark, Dinah Griego, and John Soboslai. 2015. *God in the Tumult of the Global Square: Religion in Global Civil Society*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Kim, Heup Young. 2017. *A Theology of Dao*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Kitcher, Philip. 2014. *Life after Faith: The Case for Secular Humanism*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Knitter, Paul. 2017. *Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian*. London: Oneworld.
- Kujawa-Holbrook, Sheryl A. 2014. *God Beyond Borders: Interreligious Learning among Faith Communities*. Eugene: Pickwick Publications.
- Küng, Hans. 2004. Global Ethic: Development and Goals. In *War and Peace in World Religions*. Edited by Perry Schmidt-Leukel. London: SCM, pp. 183–98.
- Lande, Aasulv. 2013. Shinto-Buddhist Dialogue. In *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*. Edited by Catherine Cornille. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 261–78.
- Latinovic, Vladimir, Gerard Mannion, and Peter C. Phan, eds. 2016. *Pathways for Inter-Religious Dialogue in the Twenty-First Century*. Hampshire: Palgrave.
- Lévinas, Emmanuel. 1990. *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*. Translated by Seán Hand. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

- Lévinas, Emmanuel. 2007. *In the Time of Nations*. Translated by Michael B. Smith. London: Continuum.
- Liao, Yiwu. 2019. *Bullets and Opium: Real-Life Stories of China after the Tiananmen Square Massacre*. London: Simon & Schuster.
- Lightman, Alan. 2018. *Searching for Stars on an Island in Maine*. London: Corsair, pp. 8–9.
- Lloyd, Vincent W. 2018. *Religion of the Field Negro: On Black Secularism and Black Theology*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Maclure, Jocelyn, and Charles Taylor. 2011. *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience*. Translated by Jane Marie Todd. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 15.
- Mahmood, Saba. 2015. *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Martín, Inés San. 2019. 'Argentina's Romero,' Three More Casualties of 'Dirty War' to Be Beatified. Available online: <https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-americas/2019/04/27/argentinas-romero-three-more-casualties-of-dirty-war-to-be-beatified/> (accessed on 27 April 2019).
- May, Todd. 2015. *A Significant Life: Human Meaning in a Silent Universe*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mayer, Jane. 2009. *The Dark Side: The Inside Story of How the War on Terror Turned Into a War on American Ideals*. New York: Anchor.
- Metz, Thaddeus. 2014. Dignity in the Ubuntu Tradition. In *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Edited by Marcus Düwell, Jens Braarvig, Roger Brownsword and Dietmar Mieth. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 310–18.
- Mill, John Stuart. 2000. On Liberty. In *'On Liberty' and Other Writings*. Edited by Stefan Collini. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, chp. 4. pp. 75–93.
- National Jewish Scholars Project. 2002. *Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity*. Available online: http://www.jcrelations.net/Dabru_Emet_-_A_Jewish_Statement_on_Christians_and_Christianity.2395.0.html (accessed on 23 July 2019).
- National Jewish Scholars Project. 2015. Orthodox Rabbinic Statement on Christianity. CJCUC. Available online: <http://cjcuc.com/site/2015/12/03/orthodox-rabbinic-statement-on-christianity/> (accessed on 3 December 2018).
- Neusner, Jacob, and Bruce Chilton, eds. 2008. *The Golden Rule: The Ethics of Responsibility in World Religions*. London: Continuum.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1978a. *The Anti-Christ*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Middlesex: Penguin, no. 44.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1978b. *Twilight of the Idols*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Middlesex: Penguin, no. 26, no 31 and no. 848.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1990. *Beyond Good and Evil*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin, no. 260.
- Osno, Evan. 2016. Tiananmen Square, Beijing: In Search of Heavenly Peace. In *City Squares: Eighteen Writers on the Spirit and Significance of Squares around the World*. Edited by Catie Marron. New York: HarperCollins, pp. 151–65.
- Partnoy, Alicia. 1986. *The Little School: Tales of Disappearance and Survival*. Translated by Lois Athey, and Sandra Braunstein. San Francisco: Cleis.
- Patel, Eboo, Jennifer Howe Peace, and Noah Silverman, eds. 2018. *Interreligious/Interfaith Studies: Defining a New Field*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Patterson, David. 1997. Nazis, Philosophers, and the Response to the Scandal of Heidegger. In *Ethics after the Holocaust: Perspectives, Critiques, and Responses*. Edited by John K. Roth. St. Paul: Paragon, pp. 148–17.
- Petrella, Ivan, ed. 2005. *Latin American Liberation Theology: The Next Generation*. New York: Orbis.
- Petrella, Ivan. 2006. *The Future of Liberation Theology: An Argument and Manifesto*. London: SCM Press.
- Phan, Peter. 2017. *The Joy of Religious Pluralism: A Personal Journey*. Maryknoll: Orbis.
- Piketty, Thomas. 2014. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Pollefeyt, Didier. 2018. *Ethics and Theology after the Holocaust*. Leuven: Peeters Press.
- Pullella, Philip, and Ahmed Eljechimi. 2019. Conversion Is Not Your Mission, Pope Tells Catholics in Morocco. Available online: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pope-morocco/conversion-is-not-your-mission-pope-tells-catholics-in-morocco-idUSKCN1RC0EI> (accessed on 31 March 2019).
- Rawls, John. 1997. The Idea of Public Reason Revisited. *The University of Chicago Law Review* 64: 765–807. [CrossRef]
- Rawls, John. 2003. *A Theory of Justice*, rev. ed. Cambridge: Belknap Press, pp. 65–72.
- Rectenwald, Michael, Rochelle Almeida, and George Levine, eds. 2017. *Global Secularisms in a Post-Secular Age*. Boston: De Gruyter.

- Ruse, Michael. 2015. *Atheism: What Everyone Needs to Know*®. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ryan, Alan. 2012. *On Politics: A History of Political Thought from Herodotus to the Present*. London: Penguin, pp. 695–728.
- Schmidt-Leukel, Perry. 2017. *Religious Pluralism and Interreligious Dialogue: The Gifford Lectures—An Extended Edition*. Maryknoll: Orbis.
- Shankman, Steven. 2010. *Other Others: Levinas, Literature, Transcultural Studies*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Sherratt, Yvonne. 2013. *Hitler's Philosophers*. New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 104–28.
- Shook, John. 2010. Is There a Place for Environmentalism in Humanism? Available online: https://centerforinquiry.org/blog/is_there_a_place_for_environmentalism_in_humanism/ (accessed on 21 December 2010).
- Slahi, Mohamedou Ould. 2015. *Guantánamo Diaries*. Edited by Larry Siems. Edinburgh: Cannongate.
- Slahi, Mohamedou Ould. 2017. *Guantánamo Diaries: The Fully Restored Text*. Edited by Larry Siems. Edinburgh: Cannongate.
- Smith, Buster G., and Joseph O. Baker. 2015. *American Secularism: Cultural Contours of Nonreligious Belief Systems*. New York: New York University Press.
- Sobrino, Jon. 1993. Communion, Conflict, and Ecclesial Solidarity. In *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*. Translated by Margaret D. Wilde. Edited by S.J. Jon Sobrino and S.J. Ignacio Ellacuría. Maryknoll: Orbis, p. 629.
- Stedman, Chris. 2012. *Faithist: How an Atheist Found Common Ground with the Religious*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Stevenson, Bryan. 2015. *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*. New York: Spiegel & Grau.
- Stout, Jeffrey. 2008. 2007 Presidential Address: The Folly of Secularism. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76: 533–44. [CrossRef]
- Swidler, Leonard. 1987. Interreligious and Interideological Dialogue: The Matrix for All Systematic Reflection Today. In *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion*. Edited by Leonard Swidler. Maryknoll: Orbis, pp. 5–50.
- Swidler, Leonard. 2013. The History of Inter-Religious Dialogue. In *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*. Edited by Catherine Cornille. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 3–19.
- Swidler, Leonard. 2014. The Dialogue Decalogue: Ground Rules for Interreligious, Interideological Dialogue. Available online: <https://www.gvsu.edu/cms4/asset/843249C9-B1E5-BD47-A25EDBC68363B726/dialoguedecalogue.pdf> (accessed on 23 July 2019).
- Swidler, Leonard. 2019. Dialogue Decalogue. Available online: <https://dialogueinstitute.org/dialogue-principles> (accessed on 23 July 2019).
- Taylor, Charles. 2004. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge: Belknap Press.
- Tracy, David. 1987. *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Tracy, David. 1990. *Dialogue with the Other: The Inter-Religious Dialogue*. Louvain: Peeters Press.
- Tsomo, Karma Lekshe. 2004. *Buddhist Women and Social Justice: Ideals, Challenges, and Achievements*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Vallely, Paul. 2013. *Pope Francis: Untying the Knots*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Warner, Michael, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun, eds. 2013. *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Wooden, Cindy. 2019. Pope Reflects on Changed Attitudes toward Liberation Theology. Available online: <https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2019/02/14/pope-reflects-on-changed-attitudes-toward-liberation-theology/> (accessed on 14 February 2019).
- Yuan, Lijun. 2019. *Confucian Ren and Feminist Ethics of Care: Integrating Relational Self, Power, and Democracy*. Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Zuckerman, Phil, and John Shook, eds. 2017. *The Oxford Handbook of Secularism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

