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Man's inherent and insatiable drive to produce has led him to become the most dominant and intelligent creature on this planet. History, and society along with it, as it has progressed, has led us to the historical period in which we reside, a historical period we know as modernity. To understand modernity, we must first understand its characteristics. The key characteristics of modernity are industrialization, urbanization, technological innovation, bureaucratization and globalization. These are the "processes by which the entity 'modern society' was created and by which it continues to be diffused" (Homeless Mind 8). All these processes are the creation of man and society in response to reality. History, and more specifically the historical period of "modernity", is completely rooted in human society. So, at the very heart of modernity is the human condition and at the heart of that is socially constructed meaning. (Without it we wouldn't even be here). Humans are conditioned by society and society perpetuates man, thus giving him a history. Ergo, the study of modernity requires the study of the society that exists within it. To study society we must understand its most crucial entities—man and his consciousness.

All social reality has an essential component of consciousness. Society provides an ordered reality that gives sense to the business of living and it is man's consciousness that navigates him through society; "The consciousness is the web of meanings that allows the individual to navigate his way through the events and encounters of his life with others" (Homeless mind 14). These meanings are referred to as reality definitions, or what is experienced as real in a given social situation. They are important because living in a society an "individual needs overarching reality definitions to give meaning to life as a whole" (Ibid 15). These overarching definitions are in essence created by consciousness of individuals and mutually experienced with others; they "are essential to hold any society together, and for that matter to keep any particular social situation going" (Ibid 15). Humans are "social beings, whose beliefs and values, whose very identities, are produced and maintained in interaction with others" (In praise of Doubt 30). Overarching reality definitions and webs of meaning are comprised of values and beliefs that people either seek out or receive from society's institutions; they form taken-for-granted norms. Individuals need what Berger refers to as nomoi, or

"overarching taken-for-granted views of reality" that are most often supported by and reaffirmed by societal institutions (Title #). These provide meaning, direction and legitimation—they provide order out of the chaos (anomy) that permeates the mundane world. Man and society are by-products of, and mutually dependent upon, one another.

Before looking at how modernity has influenced the dynamic between consciousness and society, we must look at how they related in traditional (pre-modern) societies. It is based upon this backdrop that we investigate the dynamic in modernity. In traditional societies people lived in communities with a high degree of understanding of basic normative values and assumptions that they all more or less shared (Heretical Imperative 20). Strong institutions provided objective and normative value sets against which man was able to direct his life in society: "earlier societies evinced a high degree of integration. Whatever the differences were between various sectors of social life, they would 'hang together' in an order of integrating meaning that included them all" (Homeless Mind 64). This traditional society provided a high degree of objectivity that allowed for man to have certainty, to have a foundation for his individual beliefs. It is a Bergerian notion that man constructs society in order to escape anomy and that he needs a basic structure within which to ground his identity and sense of self. In traditional societies, strong primary institutions provided objective normative reason for human experiences. In traditional societies the definitions of taken-for-granted reality were more or less shared by all. For most of pre-modern history, Religion was the way in which these values were laid down and supported. Religious institutions have provided the normative values and ethical sphere of reason for most cultures throughout history. It will be distinctly critical to remember for our overarching endeavor that religion is one of the most important role players in the consciousness/society dynamic.

Suffice it to say, Modernity has upended the traditional dynamic between society and consciousness. The institutional concomitants of technology-induced economic growth, such as mass communication (email, twitter, cell phones, television), and urbanization have vastly changed the social reality in which we live. So too, the democratizing notions of egalitarianism, equality, liberty and freedom have changed what it means to be an individual living in a society. The most powerful force, the one that has been a result and a benefactor of these previous notions, is the force of pluralism, or pluralization: "Pluralism is a situation in which different ethnic or religious groups co-exist under conditions of civic peace and interact with each other socially" (R&F 4). This is not to say that civic peace neces-

sarily exists in this scenario, but what is of importance is that people of different cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds live together in proximate conditions and are inevitably forced to interact with each other in some way. In the US, this is most clearly a result of immigration, first amendment rights and urbanization. Wherever freedom of belief, speech, and religion is allowed, where you can value anything, pluralism will arise. What is of note is that each and every individual in a pluralist society has his own variety of value sets, beliefs, moral judgments and institutional adherences. There has never before been such a plurality of meanings and values experienced by so many people in the history of man's existence (Heretical imperative 23). Pluralism creates a situation in which where there used to be one or two societal institutions, there now exists fifty or a hundred. The same goes for values, beliefs and worldview; modernity is literally and figuratively, more than anything else, characterized by pluralization, which has caused precarious problems for consciousness and society alike.

Pluralization has seriously complicated the institutional network of society. As we have noted, the result is a vast array of institutions where only a few previously existed. In pre-modern societies, strong primary institutions provided the social nomos for society. There was an objective grounding of beliefs and values in any individual's consciousness, providing certainty in a chaotic world. There were only a few "worlds" of meaning and experience. Now that there are a multitude of institutions, all with their own set of particularities, meaning and experience inhabits a myriad of worlds (Berger). With segregation at the institutional level comes a type of multi-relationality, in which "the individual must keep organized in his mind…a plurality of institutions that are relevant to his own life" (Homeless Mind 71). The process by which institutions are weakened is known as de-institutionalization—traditional institutions or programs are fragmented, and man's consciousness inevitably undergoes some changes. An individual's reality definitions are webs of meanings that arise out of societal institutions and the nomoi they provide. "The institutional pluralization of modernity had to carry in its wake a fragmentation and ipso facto a weakening of every conceivable belief and value dependent on social support" (Heretical imperative 19). This puts a certain strain on man's structured nomos in the world. De-institutionalization creates a problem because the strong, objective, overarching, taken-for-granted views of reality that provide legitimation for human belief and experience are dependent on strong primary institutions. In the presence of so many other institutions, none have primacy; they are equally valid in western modernity because of liberal democratic notions of equality. Man is presented with a multitude of institutions, each

with its own multitude of values, thereby weakening the ability for any individual institution to provide certainty for an individual's beliefs or convictions (or even perhaps one's way of life). Thus modernity causes a problem for an individual's consciousness, one that we will refer to as de-objectification.

Another mark of modernity is the de-objectifying power it has on society and man's consciousness. We have noted that a common set of agreed-upon values and overarching reality definitions are crucial for man in society. With de-institutionalization directly follows de-objectification; the institutions lose their status of providing objective norms for man. Man is left to either seek out, or construct, his own set of meanings and values from his subjective experience of the world. He must now choose between a diverse array of institutions and values. In being presented with a secular and religious pluralistic situation, there is a new complexity to man's situation. Without objective normative values, he must create and condition his own beliefs and values; "Modern consciousness entails a movement from fate to choice" (Heretical imperative 11). Man has to choose from a veritable market of institutional options. All of this has accentuated the importance of the subjective self. In making choices, man has to reflect and make decisions, making him all the more aware of his actions and his role in the world. The outside world, with its innumerable choices and options, becomes questionable. "Certainty becomes harder to achieve" (R & F 6). Pluralism calls into question the overarching taken-for-granted views of reality that were previously objectively available. Individuals no longer have the strong reality definitions that were so crucially supported by societal institutions. Now it is left up to the individual to create and define his own taken-for-granted view of reality; "the individual is thrown back upon himself in constructing his own 'patchwork' of meanings and norms" (Ibid 6). A precarious turn of events, as far as consciousness is concerned. With regard to his taken-for-granted view of reality, "certainty has dissolved into doubt, [and] objectivity into subjectivity" (Ibid 23). It is left up to the self, the consciousness, to navigate the complex world of pluralistic modernity.

Subjectivity, then, becomes a hallmark of the modern situation. Emphasis on the self has changed the way in which people view the world and interact with others. However, this pluralism and subjectivity causes a real precarious situation for man and society. For now, it is of importance to look further into the increased emphasis on the subjective self in a modern pluralistic society.

The work of pluralizing and subjectivizing forces is not only hard at work on our consciousness' interaction with institutions, but also at the level of interactions with others in normal, everyday society. This interaction with others calls into

question one's taken-for- granted reality in a similar manner to de-institutionaliza-
tion; "What takes place under conditions of genuine plurality can be subsumed
under the category "cognitive contamination" (In Praise of Doubt 10). As we
emphasized earlier, man's consciousness is formed through interaction with oth-
ers. When people of different background and beliefs converse with each other,
they begin to influence each other's thinking and in turn consciousness. One
reflects upon other people's views and thinks "maybe these other people have
something to their beliefs too" (R&F). All in all, one's previously taken-for-granted
view of reality further becomes destabilized. "A typically large body of definitions
of reality that are generally unquestioned" now come under reflection and are
questioned by the self (In Praise of Doubt 11). One's subjective self has to wrestle
with an onslaught of foreign information. This cognitive contamination happens
at the individual level, yet it is also readily at work between collectivities. To re-
iterate, plurality causes cross-cognitive contamination, a process by which one's
taken-for-granted reality is called into question due to interaction with people
who embrace dissimilar values. In the process of these interactions with oth-
ers, cognitive dissonance plays a major role. Cognitive dissonance is information
that contradicts previously held views in which an individual has had stake (Ibid
32). Thus, because we live in a pluralistic society, what an individual believes to
"know," what an individual understands or "values," what an individual "believes
in" with any kind of certainty, is no longer so black and white. Again, it is left to
the subjective self, to consciousness, to identity, to figure out the modern situation
more or less on its own.

Modernity and its array of modernizing processes has increased the fore-
ground and decreased the background of human consciousness. The area of life
in which one must make choices is aptly named the foreground. The background,
one could imagine the area in which choices are preempted or provided for you.
Background behavior can be carried out automatically without much reflection
while the foreground requires much emphasis on consciousness (Ibid 15). These
notions were originally developed and should be attributed to Galen. The back-
ground often used to be provided by strong institutions that functioned as if they
were instincts. As we have mentioned, with the onset of modernity and plurality,
de-institutionalization, leaving the foreground wide open as the arbiter of exis-
tence and reality, increasing the need for decision making, choice, and in turn,
reflection. Modernity literally has "shaken [people] out of their unreflected ac-
ceptance of a particular institution [or value system]" (Ibid 29). In a sense, this
has caused modern man's identity to become a project in which he is the ultimate

creator of his identity; man's consciousness is in overdrive with a lack of provided legitimating forces. "Modernity suffers from a surfeit of consciousness" (Ibid 15). Gehlen's discussion of foreground/background is almost synonymous to the objective/subjective dynamic that Berger argues is definitive of modernity. There inevitably begins a process of cognitive bargaining for the normal individual, in which certain beliefs and values are reconciled in an attempt to find some sort of certainty in the face of a weakened taken-for-granted view of reality. A conversation on the particularities of modern man's identity becomes relevant for the discussion.

Modern identity takes on a variety of peculiar characteristics relative to previous historical periods. Berger mentions four of these peculiar characteristics, characteristics to which we have already alluded. The first characteristic is that "modernity is peculiarly open". As man migrates through various social worlds, there is the successive realization of a number of possible identities (In Praise of Doubt 77). Individuals come into contact with various institutions; all with separate and distinct locuses of consciousness. Man must move between different areas that have dissimilar reality definitions. Secondly, "modern identity is peculiarly differentiated." This refers to the shift from objectivity to subjectivity. In a sense, then, modern identity is peculiarly de-objectified. The self knows itself as definitive from any other self. Third, "modern identity is peculiarly reflective." This refers mostly to the increased consciousness and choice, in which man must make decisions and in turn reflect upon them through a lens of uncertainty. Finally, "modern identity is peculiarly individuated" (Ibid 79). To expound, Berger argues that "individual freedom, individual autonomy, and individual rights come to be taken for granted as moral imperative of fundamental importance" (Ibid 79). A definitive characteristic of modernity is that the self has the prime significance. It is crucial to keep this in mind as we move forward. Why? Because we live in a society, and society requires some consensus and cohesion. Too much emphasis on individuality and problems could arise. Identity nonetheless remains significant because the "subjective realm of identity is the individual's main foothold in reality" (In Praise of Doubt 78). One of the problems of modernity as relates to consciousness, is the fact that modern identity is "open-ended, transitory and liable to ongoing change" (In Praise of Doubt 78). There is a sense to the subjective self of being alone, lost, or homeless in the presence of such plurality. These are the peculiar particularities that are distinctive of the subjectivity that characterizes the modern pluralistic position.

The degree to which pluralism has led to a pluralization of values, a weakening of institutions, and an increase in subjectivity is an issue that cannot be

understated. It is true that "the self has become the primary point of reference for life and lifestyle decisions" (Heelas 49). Part of Berger's argument, however, is that "the self left to itself and thrown back on its own subjectivity is insufficiently substantial, plausible or meaningful to provide the basis of a good life" (Ibid). The subjectivity coupled with the de-objectifying forces of institutional pluralization has created the precarious problem that faces man; his consciousness and the future of society in a pluralistic world. Modernity has caused the lack of a cohesive set of ethical normative values upon which our society can agree. Without such basic values, society cannot function properly. The lack of objectivity, solid nomoi, and overarching reality definitions can be seen as what Berger argues to be the crux of the modern situation—relativizing forces. With the onset of relativizing forces, there now remains "no single, universally valid, ethical system…there is no such thing as objective truth" (In Praise of Doubt 63). This is the most problematic situation that modernity poses to man. The pluralization and de-objectification of values, the lack of objective truth in society, is of major concern to man because beliefs, values and convictions are the basis for morality; morality is necessary for any notion of common good and collective future in a pluralistic society—a state which we are seeking. Thus, relativism, as we have noted before, plays a crucial role and becomes an important new phase in the history of society and of religion.

There have been two particularly unique ways of dealing with or responding to the trends that Berger argues is caused by the modern situation. These two distinct ways of dealing with the peculiarity of modernity are relativism and fundamentalism, and an investigation into what exactly they entail is a constructive way of highlighting the particulars of the modern situation, and the way in which religion plays a role in dealing with the modern situation. There exists today a polarity within our society that has framed and addressed this precarious issue of the modern world (Berger). This polarity is the one that exists between one extreme; religious fundamentalism, and the other; moral relativism. Moral relativism, of course, cannot be defined as a religious form of thought, but it contributes greatly to the cause of uncertainty and lack of objective knowledge in the modern world. This is simply because pluralism relativizes. Relativism affirms that there is no set of absolute truth or value that exists in the world. "It denies the very possibility of objective criteria of truth or even validity (F & R 11). Everyone's beliefs and values are equally valid because there is no such thing as truth. On the other side of the modern religious polarity we see religious fundamentalism, as yet another way to deal with the striking blow of confusion that modernity has dealt us. Fundamentalism, in essence, is the rejection of the secular world whilst "attempting to restore

or create anew a taken-for-granted body of beliefs and values" (Ibid., F & R 7). It wants to reaffirm a traditional autonomous religious institution in direct confrontation with the secular world. It is a reactionary response to modernity, expressed in ideologies that look to the past for meaning, while perceiving the present situation with antipathy and reproach. "Fundamentalism, at its core, is defined and shaped by the present world order; it is a natural expression of the very world it rejects" (Hunter, F & R 17). We can see how the modern situation has caused panic in some people, and a sense of lonely, vacuous, emptiness, in others.

Clearly, this kind of religious affirmation can have no constructive influences on a pluralistic society. Fundamentalism is bad for civility. It produces irresolvable conflict with those who do not share in the same beliefs; "Fundamentalism can point to no creative achievements; it offers no constructive proposals for the everyday problems that trouble most people. And it provides no vital solutions to the problems of pluralism and change" (Hunter, F & R 33). It represents a bitter irony in the modern world: In the face of uncertainty it does not base its ideology in certainty, rather "the stridency of fundamentalism is itself inspired more by doubt than confidence, more by fear than by quiet faith and settled conviction" (Ibid, F & R 34). It is an unhealthy option in our present scenario. Although fundamentalists claim to be seeking answers from within its traditions past, they are more or less targeting outsiders as enemies against whom they define themselves. Fundamentalism inevitably can only function within a sub-cultural group that shelters itself as much a possible from public life.

Relativism as an ideology is destructive in a different way. It does not frame outsiders as evil and does not look to reject modernity. It does, however, give one the ability to "question everything and the capacity to affirm nothing" (Patrick Diggins). "Relativism itself has no ethical coherence and it provides no language or vision for a common future and therefore it offers few if any resources for collective action" (Hunter, F & R 32). It literally allows no way for people to come to a consensus on any sort of truth. It leaves behind it an absence, an empty space. It undermines the idea of a moral consensus, of strong overarching taken-for-granted views of reality, of objective reality definitions without which, a collective society could not exist.

All these modern trends, these themes resulting from pluralism, are part of an important element of modernity that Peter Berger alludes to as doubt. Doubt can be explained as "the question of whether something is reliable, trustworthy and meaningful" (In Praise of Doubt 15). Clearly then, our earlier discussion of man's precarious position can be seen as one of doubt. Doubt becomes the very essence

of our everyday life: "The human condition consists of doubt that doubts itself" (Ibid 107). Berger further alludes to the fact that doubt plays a middle ground between knowledge and ignorance, belief and unbelief. "Knowledge can foster unbelief, and ignorance can foster belief or faith…The middle ground of all this is doubt—a basic uncertainty that isn't prepared to let itself be crushed by belief or unbelief, knowledge or ignorance" (Ibid 106). Doubt is a type of uncertainty that has inherent defenses against the troubles with which modernity weighs down on man. "Doubt faces knowledge and belief, but it knows ignorance and unbelief at its back" (Ibid 107). The pluralizing and relativizing trends of modernity have caused man to consider doubting his own beliefs and values. But, as we mentioned earlier, this causes him to reflect and consider just what his values and beliefs really are: "Sincere and consistent doubt is a middle ground" (Ibid 113). Why? With doubt there is a unique emphasis on the conscience of individuals. Other traditions and beliefs presenting themselves require an individual to reflect on their own values while also reflecting on the values of others, of strangers. With doubt, ultimately truth cannot be denied; it is only called into question. Similarly, with doubt truth is not rejected, it is simply not fully known. Other people's truth claims and value sets soon become equated with a similar level of plausibility allowing for people to understand others, to ultimately be tolerant of each other. Those who embody doubt ultimately become relativists. Those who fully deny doubt ultimately become fundamentalists. Those who embrace doubt hold the middle position. It is this basic uncertainty that provides a cushion against fanatical trends.

Additionally, Berger mentions the idea of an inclusivist position as possibly representing a middle position. The inclusivist position finds itself located between an exclusivist (fundamentalist) and a pluralist position. Pluralist, by name, seems as though it would be a good fit to address the problems posed by modernity. This is not quite the case, however. "The pluralist position goes as far as possible in conceding to other traditions the status of truth, and in giving up any number of historical doctrines in [the] process of cognitive bargaining" (Ibid 39). In describing this phenomenon, Berger mentions a John Hick metaphor of considering one's own faith "as one of many planets circling around the sun of absolute truth—a truth which remains inaccessible to us in its fullness…which we can only grasp partially (Ibid 39). There are inherent problems with this. It subsumes any kind of "truth" and turns everyone's values and beliefs into just another set of equally valid or equally plausible perspectives. It's almost as if exclusivism is relativism, and we have already discussed its dangerous potential. Berger mentions though, that

the inclusivist position represents a middle ground. "The inclusivist continues to affirm strongly the truth-claims of one tradition, but is willing to go quite far in accepting possibilities of truth in other traditions, and is willing to abandon elements of the affirmed tradition in making various cognitive compromises" (Ibid 39). This is a position that would easily open the doors for modern scholarship and has an underlying theme of tolerance and progressivity while retaining what one would consider the true heart of one's own tradition. We must remember that our overall focus will be on how religion is affected by, and how it deals with, the different modernizing forces that we have been discussing.

Just as it was alluded to in the above discussion of doubt and an inclusivist religious approach, the pertinent question facing man in modernity is whether there is constructive middle ground within religious tradition that provides helpful answers or directions to his precarious problem. A middle ground is crucial for traveling the path to preserve society in which diverse people can live in civic peace while still being able to affirm their own personal religious beliefs. It can also be seen as a much needed declaration of civil moderation and understanding within society. Part of the main goal here is to find a religiously founded basis (within a variety of traditions) that allows for objective truth to exist in plurality: "The middle course has to be directed against a moral "anything goes" attitude and the second, against the temptation to isolation or opposition on principle that leave little room for civil interaction" (Gabriel, F & R, 128). Put differently, there must be a way of reading our various religious traditions in a way that in the face of uncertainty and pluralism of choice enhances relationships with others and provides reality definitions, legitimation, and objective normative understanding in modern society. This can be tough, especially because of the lack of objective norms and the prevalence of subjective values and tendencies in the modern situation.

Berger makes an ambitious attempt to make a list of the "prerequisites of a worldview that presents itself as a middle position," in which he discusses some very important themes for our topic of this "middle-way" that we continue to discuss. Albeit a good list, we can by no means call this list comprehensive. Furthermore, we must reiterate that this is a middle way most specifically in reference to religious traditions. In regards to firmly held beliefs about scripture or tradition, Berger first mentions "A differentiation between the core of the position and the more marginal components" (In Praise of Doubt 116). This allows us to mark the outer limits of compromise we can have with another person. Secondly, Berger refers to "An openness to the application of modern historical scholarship to one's own tradition" (Ibid116). Put differently, it is coming to terms with, or at least rec-

ognizing, the historical context of a particular tradition. The third precondition is "the rejection of relativism to balance out the rejection of fundamentalism" (Ibid 117). We need to remain against an "anything goes" attitude when it comes to the realm of morals. If truth ceases to exist, man's position becomes completely arbitrary. The fourth prerequisite is "the acceptance of doubt as having a positive role in the particular community of belief" (Ibid 118). There is a need to embrace and use doubt in a constructive manner rather than rejecting it or completely embodying it. Fifth, in our traditions, we must retain a "definition of 'others', those who don't share one's worldview, that doesn't categorize them as enemies" (Ibid 118). This raises the question of whether we can categorize everyone in a positive light, because there still remain some morally abhorrent actions by some individuals in the world. One's "community of belief," needs the ability to act civilly in the public sphere. Peaceful interaction and engagement is what we are seeking here. And following directly from that so too is "the development and maintenance of institutions of civil society that enable peaceful debate and conflict resolution" (Ibid 118). There needs to be what Berger would refer to as "mediating structures" (Name #). These will be enormously important for any positive future. And finally, the last prerequisite is coming to terms with choice: "The acceptance of choice, not only as an empirical fact but as a morally desirable one" (Ibid119). Choice can be seen as a burden, but it also allows for man to create himself an even better set of moral values that might have been provided by strong institutions in the past.

In the end, there is very good reason for such a comprehensive study of Berger's pluralistic modernity and what consequences it has on man, his consciousness, and his society. It frames our reference for the dilemma—the quandary— that modernity has posited. Berger is concerned with the lack of objectivity that a pluralistic situation throws at us. Again, to reiterate, modernity has with its relativizing and pluralizing forces brought along forces of de-institutionalization, de-nomification, de-objectification, and of course subjectivization. Man is left with an enormous market of options for every phase of life, for every concern one might have. He has a new sense of choice. However he also no longer has a solid socially based nomoi, reality definition, or system of taken-for-granted beliefs. In the face of uncertainty he must choose, create, and reflect on just what he wants his value sets and any other part of his identity to be. This requires decision and contemplation, the seeds of doubt. The self is thrown back onto itself for the majority of experience. The result of the interworking of all of these parts is that there, to a certain extent, no longer exists a single set of overarching, objective, normative values, beliefs, or morals to which humans can readily adhere in their

daily navigation of society and the greater world. Society needs some sort of objective truth, some notion of taken-for-granted reality in order to function properly and provide its subunits (individuals) with a sense of ordered reality—to combat anomy, to ward off chaos. (As we know, chaos for Berger is what humans actively work against in their experience of the world. As God split form from void, so man orders chaos with structure.) Without this objective truth, we can already see the effects of the denigrating worldviews that arose in response—or in congruence in the case of relativism—to modernity. Berger makes it clear that fanaticism is absolutely no help in addressing the modern problem. However, neither is sitting back and watching these "forces of modernity" ravage any sense of the collective sense of taken-for-granted reality. What our inevitable goal in modernity should be, then, is an investigation into a constructive middle way in which we might attempt to order our own modern anomy; to reinstitute normative reality definitions in the face of modernizing trends. It is an attempt to see if we can make sense fully of the modern situation and reconcile its differentiating, pluralizing, and relativizing forces.

There is, interestingly enough, a completely different historical period, that is distinguished by its own historical phenomenon, in which there are similar forces in action as there are today in modernity. This period, coined by Karl Jaspers, is known as the "Axial Period," or Axial Age, a period in time spanning roughly from 800 BCE until 200 BCE. It was the time period from which many of the dominant religions in the world today arose. It was the "axis" of our world history "which gave birth to everything which, since then, man has been able to be" (Jaspers 1). The seeds of all we know about spirituality, science, philosophy, notions of rationalism and of morals, all come from this time period. It is during this "axial age" that "man becomes conscious of being as a whole, of himself and his limitations. He experiences terror of the world and his own powerlessness. He asks radical questions" (Jaspers 2). It was a time where hitherto unconsciously accepted ideas and customs became under scrutiny. Jaspers continues to characterize the Axial Age in similar ways as Berger describes modernity. As Jaspers notes, it was a time when "The unquestioned grasp on life [was] loosened, the calm of polarities [became] the disquiet of opposites and antinomies. Man [was] no longer enclosed within himself. He [became] uncertain of himself and thereby open to new and boundless possibilities." The Axial age was a time of socio-political strife, violence, shifting hegemonies, new spiritual awareness and a rediscovering of what it meant to be human in the world. It was indeed a turning point in the history of mankind. Although we cannot do a full investigation here, the Axial Age has

striking correlations to our own modern time period, especially in the way it had an effect upon man's consciousness.

An investigation of the Axial Age and, in turn, man's response to it, can provide for us an interesting launch-pad for understanding how a religious tradition, in this case the dominant western tradition, addressed its own precarious pluralistic, relativistic situation. It provides a context from which we might analyze our own situation. Any search for a positive agenda that can hopefully help us in trying to provide objective, normative truth, value, belief, and or conviction for our society, our consciousness and its experience in said society, is the next step towards solving—or perhaps addressing—man's precarious position thrust upon him by modernizing forces. The Axial Age was a time of profound change in the way man understood himself and his relationship with the world. The change was real and it quite literally gave birth to what we know as "human history." Our modernity and the Axial Age are much similar to each other than we see at face value. If there was a time period previous that changed the course of human history, who is to say that we cannot, or perhaps are not, undergoing a period of profound change as I am sitting here and writing this essay? Questions aside, the problem of modernity is an exceedingly real one. If we value society and the welfare of that society, our next endeavor must be to find that something that speaks to the precarious human condition we experience in modernity.

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