Intercultural Connectionalism in a Postsecular Era: Perspectives for Dialogue between Theological Education and Higher Education in the Wesleyan and Methodist Traditions

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Introduction

In its description of the Working Group on Theological Education, the OIMTS asked the following two questions, among others: How has the Wesleyan focus on social grace "*impacted expressions of theological education in different contexts?*" and "*Can theological education institutions draw focus to Wesleyan soteriological identity in broader contexts of secularized higher education?*" This paper attempts to provide an initial answer to these two questions according to three broad steps: First, I will frame the discussion more broadly by appealing to the ancient concept of *modernus*, which was later related to both modern secular and theological education and came to influence the Enlightenment and contemporary views on secularization; secondly, I will offer an alternative reading of the relationship between the European Enlightenment and religion in general, which leads to the idea of a "Wesleyan Enlightenment" and the Wesleyan attempt to unite knowledge and vital piety; thirdly, I will link this discussion to contemporary philosophical issues, proposing that a Wesleyan view of social grace and soteriology can be related to learning processes in both Methodist theological and secular education in different contexts by embracing intercultural and postsecular perspectives.

I. The Tension between Modernity and Secularity as a Theological Starting Point

It has become a commonplace to identify modernity as a secular attitude that privileges human knowledge and rejects traditional religious and theological conceptions. Expressing a disagreement with this supposed incompatibility, Charles Wesley wrote that famous line in a hymn for the inauguration of Kingswood School in 1748: "unite the pair so long disjointed, knowledge and vital piety." I believe we can question this supposed incompatibility and embrace the call for unity if we consider these issues within the broader ecumenical framework of a centuries-old discussion on the meaning of the "modern project." On the one hand, concepts such as *modernus*, modernity, and Enlightenment emphasize an epistemic perspective and imply discussions about secularity and postsecularity that are related to constant multicultural and intercultural challenges. On the other hand, even though traditional religious conceptions may appear as incompatible with these values, expressions such as *modernus*, *devotio moderna*, and *in saecula saeculorum* actually emerged from within theological discourses and had a soteriological dimension.[1] Considering these two dimensions within a broader framework can help us identify not only the historical ecumenical precedents to the goal of "uniting knowledge and vital piety" but also see new possibilities for the promotion of a fruitful dialogue between theological education and higher education in different contexts within and beyond Wesleyan and Methodist traditions.

   The broader framework of a "modern project" and the epistemic and cultural dimensions alluded above have clear theological and soteriological implications. The concepts mentioned above

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[1] Gillespie, M. *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008). Gillespie considers that "the concept of the 'modern' arose in the context of the twelfth-century reform of the church," p. 3. I trace this concept back to Augustine in the 4th century CE. See Freund, W. *Modernus und andere Zeitbegriffe des Mittelalters* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 1957).

have an open-ended character and are recurring themes in discussions about both the theological mystery of God's salvific project [*mysterium salutis*] and scientific developments. Although it may seem ambitious, I would like to trace how these themes emerge in three moments: a) The Augustinian-inspired concept of *modernus* provides an important theological root for modernity at large; b) The European Enlightenment is the historical context for the emergence of Protestantism and the Wesleyan movement; c) A series of contemporary challenges to theological education and higher education can be related directly or indirectly to questions concerning the contemporary meaning of *modernity* and *secularity* which also include current discussions on intercultural and postsecular perspectives.

a) *Modernus* as a theological concept

When considering the modern project and its soteriological implication, Augustine is certainly the best initial reference because he develops his views on salvation by contrasting the eternal time in the salvific dimension with the particularity of the human experience. Notoriously, in the *Confessiones* he explores time [*tempus*] in a variety of ways that include our own individual memory, collective human history, and eternal time.[2] Similarly, in *De Civitate Dei* he defines our human predicament as "our time," opposed to the "Christian time" which, in the history of salvation, came to be translated as *modernus*.[3] Although his references to the concept are rather implicit, he established a clear soteriological and eschatological dimension that is relevant for subsequent usages of the term.

Augustine saw Christianity as the inaugurator of a *tempus modernus* which – in later interpretations of his theology – not only overcome and disregard what is regarded as *secular* but also repress the diversity of ancient cultures and expressions characterized as *pagani*.[4] Although Augustine notoriously insists on the primacy of God's prevenient grace in his soteriology, he also requires human agency – in this case, the free will to convert away from earthly secular and pagan behavior toward an acceptance of God's gracious gift which invites humans to be part of a divine community.

This contrast yields a series of dualistic propositions in Augustine, most notably that between the *civitas terrena* and the *civitas dei*. In order to strictly separate the social, cultural, historical, and contextual contingences from the cosmic and theological hope, he differentiates between Babylon as the "city on Earth" – with its Babelian confusion of diverse languages that cause misunderstandings – and Jerusalem as the eternal "city of God." One is earthly, secular, pagan, and even diabolic while the other represents a communitarian spiritual mode [*Ipsa est Hierusalem eodem modo spiritaliter, unde multa iam diximus. Eius inimica est civitas diaboli Babylon, quae confusio interpretatur*].[5] Interestingly, the concept of *modernus* appears as an expression of this Augustinian "spiritual mode" [*modo spiritaliter*], as a new or current mode [*modus hodiernus*] – i.e., a way of being *modernus* – that represents a contrast to a confusing mode of being that emerges from hybris and falls into idolatry.

Clearly, this way of defining the modern project has not only theological but also cultural and political implications. Thus, another expression of Augustine's dualism can be seen is his interpretation of the internal tensions between the Roman Empire and the Christian Church.[6] The Roman Empire was about to collapse in the 5th century, and Augustine proposes a new polity oriented by Christian values.

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[2] For details on Augustine, see O'Donnell, J. *Augustine: A New Biography* (New York, NY: Ecco, 2006). Augustine, *Confessions*, edited by James O'Donnell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[3] Moorhead, J. "The word '*modernus*'." *Latomus* 65/2 (Avril-Juin 2006)*:* pp. 425-433. He starts by citing Augustine's views on the difference between expressions such as "our times" [*nostris temporibus*] and "Christian time" [*Temporibus christianis*] in *De Civitate Dei*.

[4] Augustine, *Confessiones* , XI.xiv.17.

[5] Augustine, *De Civitate Dei,* XVII, 16.

[6] Orbán, A.P. "Ursprung und Inhalt der Zwei-Staaten-Lehre in Augustinus '*De civitate Dei*'", in *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* XXIV (1980).

Therefore, he maintains that humans can be citizens of two worlds: those under the Roman jurisdiction are not beneficiaries of the rights and duties afforded by the Roman polity but, most importantly, Christians can claim allegiance to the Kingdom of God. This dualism allows citizens to differentiate between their membership in the City of God and the prudential – i.e., strategic – requirement to obey local laws concerning "the necessaries for the maintenance of life" in the City of Men.[7]

Among many authors who followed on Augustine's footsteps, Cassiodorus is probably the one who uses the term *modernus* most often and consistently, also in a very obvious soteriological perspective.[8] A full citation of Moorhead can help us see this dimension:

> Cassiodorus uses the word in a very broad sense in a passage in his exposition of the Psalms. Commenting on the verse "I have hoped for your salvation, Lord, and loved your commandments" (Ps 118 [Vulg]: 166), he observes that it could be made to apply to both ancient and modern believers (*et antiquis fidelibus...et modernis*) by taking it to refer to the two comings of the Lord. The former group could be seen as having hoped for the coming of the incarnation, and the latter the coming of the future judgment (24). Hence, the *moderni* in this case are people living subsequent to incarnation.[9]

Indeed, for centuries the idea of *modernus* was related to the eschatological hope for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ [*parousia*] on Judgment Day, but this has educational implications also, with a direct impact on initial efforts to institutionalize theological education already in the 6th century CE. Based on his experience in Constantinople, Cassiodorus had proposed the creation of a Christian school in Rome and prepared two texts to serve as guidance to students: the *Institutiones* and the *Expositio Psalmorum*.[10] In a certain way, this is a predecessor of the proposal to "unite knowledge and vital piety" in the way he connects liberal arts and theology. In his reflections on education, he follows Augustine in emphasizing subjects that would later be integrated in the curriculum of the medieval liberal arts, based on the *trivium* – the *artes sermonicales* that included grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic – and *quadrivium* – related to a *scientia mathematica* that integrated arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy.[11] In Augustinian fashion, Cassiodorus divides his *Institutiones* in two parts: the first is the theological *Institutiones Divinarum Litterarum* focused on Divinity, the study of the Scriptures; and the second is the *Institutiones Saecularium Litterarum*, which addresses secular subjects related to the Liberal Arts.[12]

As John Mair states, "Cassiodorus realized that the Bible and the works of the Fathers would lose in intelligibility if they were allowed to drift away from what he perceived as their literary and scientific moorings. So, he allows a place for secular studies as a preparation for the *lectio divina*."[13]

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[7] Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XIX 17.

[8] O'Donnell, J. *Cassiodorus* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979), post-print online, accessed on July 11, 2024 at: https://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/texts/cassbook/toc.html.

[9] Moorhead, "The word '*modernus*,'" p. 429.

[10] Cassiodorus, *Institutiones divinarum et saecularium litterarum* available at the *Documenta Catholica Omnia* (Genoa: Cooperatorum Veritatis Societas, 2006), accessed on July 13, 2024 at https://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/30_10_0490-0583-_Cassiodorus_Flavius.html. For the illustrated facsimile of a version published in the 8th century, see digital copy available at the Staatsbibliothek Bamberg, accessed on July 15, 2024: https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:bvb:22-msc.patr.61-0.

[11] Mair, J. "A Note on Cassiodorus and the Seven Liberal Arts," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 26/2 (October 1975): pp. 419-421.

[12] Mair, J. "A Manual for Monks: Cassiodorus and the ΕΓΚΥΚΛΙΟΣ ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑ," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 31/2 (October 1980): pp. 547-551.

[13] Mair, J. "A Manual for Monks," p. 547.

Moreover, even the *Expositio Psalmorum* "is not any strictly theological feature, but rather a pedagogic one," according to James O'Donnell:

> Cassiodorus is visibly interested not only in the spiritual benefits to be derived from an enlightened reading of the Psalms, but also in the didactic benefits. He has made of the Psalter a textbook in the liberal arts.[14]

As we can see, the ancient debates on the meaning of *modernus* between the 4th and 6th centuries CE are very relevant not only for a consideration of salvation but also for questions about secularity, education in general, and theological education in particular. The *modernus* is implicit in modernity, revealing a continuous theological project that, since its early formulations in Augustine and Cassiodorus, present key themes for salvation, theology, and education which keep resurfacing in secular ways. In fact, this shows us an antecedent to the idea of "uniting knowledge and vital piety" that emerges during the European Enlightenment and provides an initial answer to the question concerning how theological education can connect to higher education and be relevant in secularized contexts.

b) From modernity to secularity: Cultural and political Implications of the modern project

Before moving forward, it is important to make more explicit the cultural, intercultural, political, and social dimensions at play in the concept of *modernus*. While the early Christian theologians translated the ancient Greek idea of *cosmos* as *universus*, identified it with the Roman Catholic faith, and connected it to eternity, they also repressed the diversity of languages, cultures, and expressions. Not surprisingly, the full title of Augustine's *magnum opus* is *De Civitate Dei contra paganos* such as the Goths and Vandals who would later invade Rome. Moreover, its opening lines allude to the *tempus modernus*: "*Gloriosissimam civitatem Dei, sive in hoc temporum cursu, cum inter impios peregrinator ex fide vivens* [Habac ii, 4], *sive in illa stabilitatis sedes aeternae, quam nunc expectat per patientiam* [Rom vii, 25] (1.1).[15] We should not forget that Christians had arrived at a doctrinal consensus in the Nicaea Council in 325 CE and Christianity had become the official religion of the Roman Empire after 380 CE, so these theological conceptions were also associated with a new political and imperial unity. Therefore, the plurality of temporal conceptions in ancient Greek philosophy – *chronos, hêmera, semeron, kairós, aíon* – and a variety of cultures were subsumed under the empire by the affirmation of one time, the *tempus modernus* which had a universal claim upon all cultures.

Augustine contributes to this view, especially when he claims that there is only one history, the history of salvation which leads to the universal Christian Church. Thus, in the same way he focuses on Rome because "all roads lead to Rome" and its imperialistic claims, he also reaffirms that there is no salvation outside of the Church [*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*].[16] Cassiodorus, in contrast, offers a different perspective. He turns to the East, to Constantinople, which was oriented outwards and exposed to different cultures in Asia, Persia, Egypt, Africa, and other regions. Maybe for this reason, he makes a notorious effort to acknowledge and mediate cultural divides between East and West, Greek and Latin,

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[14] O'Donnell, J. *Cassiodorus*, chap 5, note 28.

[15] Many translations deviate from the text and miss this point. I prefer to translate this passage somewhat literally: "The most glorious City of God, either in this present course of time on its pilgrimage among the impious, based on its faith, or established in its eternal throne, which it now patiently awaits." Compare to *The City of God* [abridged by F. R. Montgomery Hitchcock, D.D.] (London: SPCK/MacMillan, 1922) and *De Civitate Dei / The City of God* [edited, with an introduction, translation and commentary by P. G. Walsh] (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005).

[16] Augustine, *Sermo ad Caesariensis Ecclesia plebem* 6 () which reiterates the famous doctrine affirmed previously by Tertullian and Cyprian of Carthage and uses it against the Donatists in Augustine's debate with Emeritus of Caesarea in 418.

Roman and Gothic – especially in the Balkans – as well as between divine and secular teachings. Thus, in Cassiodorus the diversity of past histories and cultures of the *pagani* is much more visible and integrated into the history of salvation and in the project for both theological education and secular education. [17]

A detailed discussion of modernity is not possible here (and I have attempted to address some of its aspects elsewhere),[18] but we could appeal to Michael Gillespie or Rémi Brague – despite my own reservations to their approach – to summarize the outcome of centuries of discussions on this topic by theologians, historians, linguists, scientists, and philosophers who have informed our contemporary understanding of modernity. Brague discusses how the initial reflections by Cassiodorus on the meaning of *modernus* ended up influencing the vocabulary of modern European languages, including daily expressions derived equally from the Latin term, *modus* – i.e., measure.[19] Thus, we see vestiges of these deeper theological strata in words describing virtues such as moderation, modesty, model, modification, and others. In his celebrated book trilogy on this subject, Brague talks about a "modern project" in Europe, which emerged as these initial ideas received a specialized separate treatment to engender modern science, modern politics, and the modern economy after the 15th century CE. For him, it does not matter much whether this process started in Constantinople (1453) or the "discovery" of the New World (1492) or perhaps the Reformation (1517) but rather the fact that its seeds were first found in the Bible and in ancient Greece, then incubated in the so-called Middle Ages.[20]

Beyond the moments highlighted by Gillespie in the 12th century Europe or by Brague in the transition from the 15th to the 16th century, modernity became an epistemic project, allegedly leading to the 18th century European Enlightenment, to science, education, and secularization. In this transition, a claim emerges that modernity is incompatible with a theological and superstitious understanding of soteriological themes. Both Gillespie and Brague disagree with this incompatibility thesis, and so do I. In discussing the "Nominalist Revolution," Gillespie argues that modernity was not necessarily in opposition to medieval theology but rather the triumph of the nominalist vision of God over scholastic rationalism.[21] When discussing the "modern project," Brague argues against this assumption as well:

> Modernity repudiated these two origins, natural and divine. For modernity, it is man who engenders man [sic], and in order to do so he has need neither of the sun nor of the nature it symbolizes, nor of the God of the covenant. The project of autonomy leads to the idea according to which man is born by spontaneous generation.[22]

Because the space here is limited for any detailed consideration of centuries of development as well as continuities and discontinuities with this modern project, I will simply take Gillespie and Brague

[17] O'Donnell, J. *Cassiodorus* , chap. 5.

[18] See Nascimento, Review of Lyotard, J. *O Pós-Moderno* (Olympio, Rio de Janeiro, 1987) in *Simpósio* 32 (1990), pp. 401-404. "Genealogía de la Postmodernidad en el contexto latinoamericano" in *Dissens - Revista internacional de Pensamiento Latinoamericano* 1 (1995), pp. 63-69; "Die vielfältigen Dimensionen der Rationalität" in Nascimento & Witte, K. (Eds*.), Grenzen der Moderne. Europa & Lateinamerika* (Frankfurt: IKO Verlag, 1997), pp. 21-33; "'Modernismo' e Discursos Pós-Modernos no Brasil" in *Impulso* 29/12 (2001), pp. 169-183; and "Postmodernism" in *The Encyclopaedia of Politics: Right & Left*, edited by R. Carlisle (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005), p. 352.

[19] Gillespie, M. *The Theological Origins of Modernity*, pp. 19-20, and Brague, R. "Introduction. De la modernité," *Modérément moderne: Les Temps Modernes ou l'invention d'une supercherie*, sous la direction de BRAGUE Rémi (Paris, Flammarion, 2016), pp. 11-28. Here, p. 1.

[20] Brague, R. *The Kingdom of Man : Genesis and Failure of the Modern Project* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018) , pp. 1-5, 63-66, 212-214.

[21] Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity*, pp. 29-30.

[22] Brague, *The Kingdom of Man*, p. 215.

with their historical *tour de force* for granted and mention two relative contemporary dimensions that complement and shed light on the idea that the old Latin conception of *modernus* influenced the "modern project," was characterized as modernity, and led an open-ended view of European Enlightenment. One dimension is cultural and aesthetic: as Hans Robert Jauss discusses in detail, modernity has aesthetic and artistic implications, as seen in the "Querelle des anciens et modernes."[23] Another dimension is highlighted by Jürgen Habermas, who shows the socio-political and communicative implications of what he defines as "the philosophical discourse of modernity," a new epoch represented by the Enlightenment project to promote education, human rights, democracy, and justice – a project he sees as remaining valid and unfinished.[24] I will later return to Habermas, after challenging the tendency to believe that modernity and the Enlightenment are intrinsically exclusive and contradictory to religion and theology.

Ulrich Lehner helps us in this task. He questioned the assumption of incompatibility between modernity and religion in relation to Catholicism by providing a detailed argument to contradict Peter Gay's famous verdict in his book, *The Enlightenment*, that the modern Enlightenment and Christianity are irreconcilable:

> Christianity claimed to bring light, hope, and truth, but its central myth was incredible, its dogma a conflation of rustic superstitions, its sacred book an incoherent collection of primitive tales, its church a cohort of servile fanatics as long as they were out of power and of despotic fanatics once they had seized control."[25]

Lehner questions this statement, although he is realist enough to recognize the dark side of ecclesiastic institutions and their colluding with secular authoritarian politics. Yet he adds that there were positive contributions by individual Catholic lay women and men as well as clergy used their roles as politicians, jurists, educators, theologians, and philosophers to promote tolerance, human rights, peace, and gender equality. In his view, already in the 16th century, they anticipated important innovations of the 20th century. Their collective actions can be defined as a Catholic Enlightenment which "had its roots in the Council of Trent and in Renaissance humanism, aspired to integrate modern science and philosophy into a religious worldview."[26] It is not difficult to see traces of Cassiodorus' original compatibilist intention here. Lehner reveals these traces when he shows that, despite secular and Protestant critics, Catholics promoted the unity of "devotion and reason": in 1661 an English priest published the book *Devotion and Reason* in Portugal, and in 1745 exiled English Catholic priests founded a network of scholars, the Society of St. Edmund in Paris, which emulated the Royal Society in London and discussed scientific developments in Newtonian physics and interreligious aspects of Jewish thought – as well as shared governance, philosophical debates, and even discussions on sexuality.[27] What Lehner defines as "unity of devotion and reason" is another precedent to "uniting knowledge and vital piety."

Lehner dedicates a whole chapter to Feminism, showing authors who were inspired by figures such as Theresa of Avila and Queen Isabel of Spain: Benito Feijoo published a book entitled *Defense of Women* already in 1726, Josefa Amar wrote *Discourse in Defense of the Talent of Women* in 1786, and

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[23] Jauss, H. R. *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970).

[24] Habermas, J. „Die Moderne: Ein unvollendetes Projekt" in *Kleine politische Schriften* I-IV (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981), pp. 444-464; also, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985), pp. 13-21.

[25] Lehner, U. *The Catholic Enlightenment. The Forgotten History of a Global Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2016), p. 2, citing Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966), pp. 207-208.

[26] Lehner, *The Catholic Enlightenment*, p. 13.

[27] Lehner, *The Catholic Enlightenment*, pp. 16-30.

Pablo de la Olavide – a Peruvian – was convicted as heretic for defending cosmopolitanism and ecumenism in his book, *El Evangelio en Triunfo o historia de un filósofo desengañado*.[28] Maybe defining this as "feminism" is a stretch, but Lehner shows how these authors defended rights such as women's freedom to marry, independence from authoritarian fathers, access to birth control, and many other topics.[29] He credits these initiatives to education, citing Laura Caterina Bassi and Maria Gaetana Agnesi as two examples of women scientists and theologians. Also, Olavide published a *Plan de Estudios para la Universidad de Sevilla* in 1768, promoting ideas which were later implemented at the University of Salamanca. This helps us see the connection between this Catholic Enlightenment and education.

Another development in relation to modernity and the Enlightenment is found in Protestantism. In his various studies on Sociology of Religion, Max Weber sees Protestantism, especially Calvinism, as a predecessor of the European Enlightenment in the 18th century. He presents this thesis systematically in his studies on the ethics of world religions and reveals Protestantism's contribution to the development of capitalism, modern law, alternative understandings of community, and new forms of rationality.[30] In 1903, while traveling to the United States for three months through the American East, Midwest, and South, he collected much information about cultural and religious life in the United States, leading to an evaluation of the connection between (sacred) religious convictions and (secular) economic behavior. He identifies equivalencies between religious groups in the United States and ascetic Protestants in Europe, finding similar ethical maxims in Calvinism, Pietism, and Methodism. For him, Methodism contributed to the social development of a particular Western economic system, coupled with the rationalism of scientific pursuit, empirical observations, scholarship and jurisprudence, rational systematization and bureaucratic administration. For him, Anglo-American Methodism and Western European Pietism were practically equivalent.

Weber notes that American Protestantism emphasized individualism, insisting on the consequent orientation of individual life according to maxims. He concluded that this religious behavior had a dimension of rationality, i.e., a religious-ethical rationality. He does not affirm – as Augustine, Martin Luther or Immanuel Kant did – that there are two worlds, one sacred or metaphysical and another secular or real. He simply says that we rationalize religion and this rationalization [*Rationalisierung*] provides consistency and meaning [*Sinn*] to regular actions, including religious rituals and economic practices (1922:1ff.). In these terms, Weber explains symbolic actions such as liturgical rituals and artistic performances as something rational. He also mentions how these movements were influenced by and contribute to the Enlightenment, prompting them to promote a charismatic education and influence an "intellectualism of the masses" [*Massenintellektualismus*]. Weber indicates that this feature is based on a particular understanding of education that had a profound impact in the United States.[31]

I hope these historical references make it clear that there is a deep connection between modernity and secularity which shows a deeper connection between the Enlightenment and a rationalized form of religion that insists on the importance of education. This also provides a partial answer to the questions about how religion and theology have actually impacted secular education in various contexts. I therefore conclude that since Augustine and Cassiodorus religion and theology have

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[28] Lehner, *The Catholic Enlightenment*, pp. 38-40, 74-78.

[29] Lehner, *The Catholic Enlightenment*, pp. 84-88, 97-102.

[30] Weber, M. *Die Protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Morh [Paul Siebeck], 1920) and *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen: Morh Siebeck, 1922 [edited by Marianne Weber; here, the revised version edited by Johannes Winckelman (Tübingen: Morh Siebeck, 1985 [5th ed.); there is a newer edition, edited by Hans Kippenberg, in Zusammenarbeit mit Petra Schilm und Mitwirkung von Jutta Niemeier (Tübingen: Morh Siebeck, 2005)].

[31] Gay, P. *The Enlightenment. An Interpretation* (New York: Vintage, 1967) Vol. 1; Weber, M. *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1920), and *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1985).

contributed to modernity and made compatible with the Enlightenment. Moreover, I submit that Methodism was, according to Weber, one of the best examples of this process. Before turning to questions about intercultural connectionalism and postsecularism, I want to connect this discussion more directly with Wesleyan theology and Methodism, showing that Charle Wesley's call to "unite knowledge and vital piety" is related to this same process.

II. The Wesleyan and Methodist Enlightenment: Theology and the Emphasis on Science and Education

Max Weber provides an interesting secular entry point for the inclusion of Methodism as an expression of modernity and as a form of Enlightenment. This can be confirmed by both external historical, sociological, and philosophical studies as well as internal theological and ecclesiastic considerations. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was engaged with the realities of 18th century England, and he also moved constantly between the Augustinian emphasis on divine grace – updated by Martin Luther – and the engagement with secular social, political, and scientific issues. As a result, we can conceive of a Wesleyan Enlightenment and find complementary answers to our initial questions: How has the Wesleyan focus on social grace "*impacted expressions of theological education in different contexts?*" and "*Can theological educational institutions draw focus to Wesleyan soteriological identity in broader contexts of secularised higher education?*"

a) The Wesleyan Enlightenment

Timothy Holgerson develops a systematic argument for the definition of a "Wesleyan Enlightenment."[32] He not only presents the debates on this topic since the 1980s but also reviews key authors in two areas of research – Wesleyan Studies and Enlightenment Studies – to support this thesis.[33]

 First, he provides evidence that the field of Wesleyan Studies – represented by chairs at major Methodist-related institutions such as Duke University, Emory University, Vanderbilt University, and Southern Methodist University – and "Wesleyan studies" in general – i.e., "the study of Wesley by all kinds of scholars" – has opened itself to consider the importance of the Enlightenment.[34] He offers a literature review of the evolution of Wesley Studies, indicating how Albert Outler and Frank Baker reclaimed the historical importance of Wesley in the 1960s,[35] opening the way to many others.

 Second, Holgerson shows that, at first, renowned interpreters of the Enlightenment such as Ernst Cassirer, Paul Hazard, and Peter Gay as well as John Harold Plumb and Edward Palmer Thompson denied any place for religion in the Enlightenment and cited John Wesley only as an anti-rationalist.[36] However, after H. R. Trevor-Roper expanded on Weber's approach and argued that Calvinism contributed to the Enlightenment, many scholars began to find connections between religion and the

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[32] Holgerson, T. *The Wesleyan Enlightenment: Closing the gap between heart religion and reason in Eighteenth Century England* [Doctoral Dissertation] (Manhattan, KS: Kansas State University, 2017), accessed on June 19, 2024, at: http://hdl.handle.net/2097/35416.

[33] For example, Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Hempton, D. "Wesley in Context," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, ed. Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010),

[34] Holgerson, T. *The Wesleyan Enlightenment*, p. 6, note 12.

[35] Holgerson, T. *The Wesleyan Enlightenment*, pp. 24-29. He refers to Outler, A. "Towards a Re-appraisal of John Wesley as a Theologian," *Perkins School of Theology Journal*, vol. 14 (1961): pp. 5-14 and Baker, F. "Unfolding John Wesley: A Survey of Twenty Years' Studies in Wesley's Thought," *Quarterly Review* 1, no. 1 (1980): pp. 44-58 as well as their joint work as editors of *The Works of John Wesley* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975-1983 and Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984ff.).

[36] Holgerson, T. *The Wesleyan Enlightenment*, pp. 49-59.

Enlightenment, especially with the Wesleyan and Methodist movement. Thus, the literature on the Enlightenment became increasingly diversified and progressively included religious considerations. Such considerations involved studies on Jewish Enlightenment and Christian Enlightenment in general as well as Catholic and Anglican versions,[37] to which we can also add a Protestant or Lutheran Enlightenment – based on the theological combination of rationalism and Pietism by Christian Wolff in Halle.[38]

Taking this broader context into consideration, Holgerson is able to clearly include John Wesley as part of the British Enlightenment, relying on the literature that only emerged at the end of the 20th century. He provides a detailed reading of authors who support this point, arriving at the conclusion that, at first, John Wesley was only on the periphery of Enlightenment Studies; but after Jonathan Israel and Roy Porter opened the way to insert Wesley's Methodism into British Enlightenment, it was Gertrud Himmelfarb who actually coined the term "Wesley's Enlightenment" and highlighted four dimensions: "his conversations with Samuel Johnson, his praise of Locke as well as his publishing of extracts from Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, his rebuke of Methodist preachers who overvalued feelings and undervalued reason, and finally, Wesley's published letter in which he claimed that reason and religion must be joined to overcome not only passion and prejudice, but also wickedness and bigotry."[39] These claims would support the brothers Wesley and their views on "uniting knowledge and vital piety." However, many specialists questioned Himmelfarb's assumptions, especially because she did not support her claims with an internalist interpretation of Wesley's theology.

Third, therefore, Holgerson turns to scholars within Wesley Studies and is able to confirm that interpreters of Wesley's theology in the 20th century were arriving at similar conclusions, presenting new arguments that roughly corresponded to the four areas indicated by Himmelfarb. Initially, scholars such as Élie Halévy, Bernard Semmel, and Theodore Weber emphasized socio-political connections, especially Wesley's views on social religion and his support of human rights, anti-slavery, and other causes.[40] In a subsequent step, Frederick Dreyer, John Cammel English, and Randy Maddox focused on epistemology and highlighted Wesley's indebtedness to John Locke.[41] In yet another step, other scholars emphasized the link to Pietism, as seen in W. R. Ward, Albert Outler, and Frederick Dreyer, who connected the Wesleys more directly to the Moravians and to the German debates at the University of Halle.[42] Finally, based on these various trends, there was an attempt to reconcile the Enlightenment with Methodist "Enthusiasm" in the 18th century, with David Hempton, Jane Shaw, Robert Webster, and especially Henry Rack, who argued that John Wesley was a "reasonable enthusiast." [43] In the end,

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[37] Holgerson, T. *The Wesleyan Enlightenment*, pp. 70-77. He cites Outram, D. *The Enlightenment* [3rd ed] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Sorkin, D. *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Rosenblatt, H. "The Christian Enlightenment," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Enlightenment, Reawakening and Revolution 1660-1815* (New York, NY: *Religion and Politics in England and its Empire, 1648-1715* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[38] Carlsson, E. "The Protestant Enlightenment," in Kaplan, G. and Schel, K. (Eds.) *Oxford History of Modern German Theology*, Vol. 1: 1781-1848 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), pp. 80-101, accessed on June 14, 2024 at: https://academic.oup.com/book/46519/chapter/407875429. See also Gierl, M. *Pietismus und Aufklärung: Theologische Polemik und die Kommunikationsreform der Wissenschaft am Ende des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997) and "Pietism, Enlightenment, and Modernity," in Shantz, D. (Ed.) *A Companion to German Pietism: 1660-1800* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 348-392.

[39] Holgerson, T. *The Wesleyan Enlightenment*, p. 100, see pp. 99-103. He cites Himmelfarb, G. *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French, and American Enlightenments* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2004), pp. 116-131.

[40] Holgerson, T. *The Wesleyan Enlightenment*, pp. 105-109.

[41] Holgerson, T. *The Wesleyan Enlightenment*, pp. 110-117.

[42] Holgerson, T. *The Wesleyan Enlightenment*, pp. 117-1325.

[43] Holgerson, T. *The Wesleyan Enlightenment*, pp. 125-133. See especially Rack, H. *Reasonable Enthusiast: John*

however, it is in Rex Matthews' dissertation, *Religion and Reason Joined: A Study in the Theology of John Wesley*, that Holgerson sees the best example of an internal historical and theological reading of the connection between John Wesley and the Enlightenment.[44]

Many other authors are cited and discussed by Holgerson, but what we have reviewed is enough to confirm his point that there has been an approximation between the two fields, Wesley Studies and Enlightenment Studies, which progressively leads to a definition of "Wesleyan Enlightenment." Holgerson goes further in this process, discussing four authors who present "new lenses for defining the English Enlightenment": Roy Porter, John Pocock, Jonathan Sheehan, and William Bulman.[45] Conversely, he highlights how these four scholars offer a new lens for the study of the Wesleyan Enlightenment.[46] Relying on them, one can clearly see the influence of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke on John Wesley, so Holgerson goes to the original philosophical sources in order to trace these influences.

Fourth, Holgerson offers an internal reading of Wesley's own texts, which reveal traces of a "Wesleyan Enlightenment" and its influence upon other Methodists. For instance, Wesley had read Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* as a student at Oxford in 1725, referred to Locke in "An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion" (1743), preached on him in "The Case of Reason Impartially Considered" (Sermon 70), and summarized his ideas in "A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion" (1745) to reject the accusation that he renounced reason.[47] All this was compatible with Wesley's position as an Oxford-educated scholar, formed at Christ Church – the same College where John Locke had studied – and a Fellow of Lincoln College. After establishing this clear connection between Wesley and the British Enlightenment, Holgerson turns to some of Wesley's own exemplary texts in the field of education: his "Scheme of Studies" (1727), *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in Creation or A Compendium of Natural Philosophy* (1763), and the published extracts of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* in the *Arminian Magazine* (1781 and 1784).[48] Similarly, he notes that Wesley made use of references to Hobbes "The Case of Reason Impartially Considered" (1781).

I believe these various steps corroborate the thesis of a Wesleyan Enlightenment. In what follows, I would like to explore how this broader framework informs the Wesleyan views on science and education in general and were combined with theological reflection as John Wesley clearly held the possibility of "uniting knowledge and vital piety" in the 18th century, very much in the spirit of what Augustine and Cassiodorus had attempted to do in the 4th and 5th centuries BCE. This shows how the Wesleyan views impacted education during the Enlightenment, were in dialogue with secular education, had a particular way of connecting "devotion and reason," and updated older pedagogical models.

b) The Wesleyan emphasis on science and education

The impact of the Enlightenment on John Wesley's writings and his conception of science are well documented in a series of his texts, such as his *Compendium of Logic* (Bristol, 1750), *Electricity Made Plain and Useful* and his *Compendium of Physic*. However, he at the same time seems to contradict the Enlightenment when he insist on the importance of affirms religion and social justice.[49] One possible reading is to assume that he subsumes logical and scientific rationality into theological concepts. This

Wesley and the Rise of Methodism (London: Epworth Press, 1989).
[44] Holgerson, T. *The Wesleyan Enlightenment*, pp. 133-136.
[45] Holgerson, T. *The Wesleyan Enlightenment*, pp. 153-174.
[46] Holgerson, T. *The Wesleyan Enlightenment*, pp. 175-200.
[47] Holgerson, T. *The Wesleyan Enlightenment*, pp. 203-206. For Wesley sermons, see *The Works of John Wesley – Sermons* [Vols. 1-4], edited by Albert Outler (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984f.). See edition of *The Sermons of John Wesley* [ed. by Th. Jackson] (London: Wesley Conference Office, 1872) at https://wesley.nnu.edu/
[48] Holgerson, T. *The Wesleyan Enlightenment*, pp. 212-214.
[49] Halévy, É. *Growth of Philosophic Radicalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960 [1955]).

can be seen in his sermons "The Imperfection of Human Knowledge"[50] and "The Case of Reason Impartially Considered".[51] A series of other interests can be mentioned, in order to show how Wesley applied the same approach to several areas:

First, we may find traces of the Enlightenment in Wesley's studies and writings. As evidenced by his library and the donations he made to Kingswood School, Wesley read the *Works* of Joseph Addison, was interested in history and, had access to the works of René Descartes, David Hume, Edmund Burke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Voltaire.[52] Although Wesley also engaged with the scientific work of Pierre Boyle, Benjamin Franklin, and Isaac Newton,[53] these general references suffice to indicate the traces of the Enlightenment. His letters, sermons, magazine publications, and extracts reveal not only an explicit connection to modernity and the British Enlightenment, but also his own contributions, thus allowing us to conclude that there is indeed a "Wesleyan Enlightenment."

Second, on medicine, he studied the works of Boyle and collected a series of medicinal prescriptions, published in *Primitive Physick, or an Essay on Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases*.[54] In social history, he compiles a *Digest* with Locke's ideas, writes *A History of England* and a *Compendium of Social Philosophy*, and holds abolitionist positions in his *Thoughts upon Slavery* (1774). In fact, his concern with slavery is constant – as evidenced in his criticism of David Hume and his reflections after reading *The interesting narrative of the life of O. Equiano, or G. Vassa, the African ... written by himself* (1789). Readings such as these would later provide the basic categories for his famous letter to William Wilberforce on African slavery.[55]

Third, another expression of Wesley's adoption of modernity and the Enlightenment can be seen in his opinions in the field of economy. One example is the famous sermon *The Use of Money* (1763),[56] in which one can read his famous formula: "gain all you can, save all you can, and give all you can".[57] In other sermons, such as "The Danger of Riches", "Heavenly Treasure and Earthen Vessels", "Riches" and "The Danger of increasing Riches", he criticizes Adam Smith and argues against the idea of accumulating riches. Certainly, these reflections had an impact on the Wesleyan movement, for Wesley was himself a very good administrator, who designed in detail a system for the management, financing, loans and investments to be applied by the different Methodist groups.[58] Surely, many of the ideas he propagated by these means were based on an eclecticism that attempted to make faith compatible with natural science by means of a physico-theology. For instance, after the earthquake in Lisbon in 1755,

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[50] Sermon 69 in *Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 568-586.
[51] Sermon 70 in *Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 589-600.
[52] MacMillan, K. "John Wesley and the Enlightened Historians," *Methodist History*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (2000), pp. 121-132; Maddox, R. "John Wesley's Reading: Evidence in the Kingswood School Archives," *Methodist History*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (2003), pp. 49-67.
[53] Schofield, R. "John Wesley and Science in 18th century England," *Isis*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (1953), pp. 331-340; English, J. "John Wesley's Scientific Education," *Methodist History*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (October 1991), pp. 42-51.
[54] See *The Works of John Wesley – Medical and Health Writings* [Vol. 32], edited by James Donat and Randy Maddox (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2018). For other details check Vaux, Kenneth *This Mortal Coil* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), p. 39-46; Ott, Phillip "John Wesley on Health: A word for sensible regimen" in *Methodist History*, April 1980, p. 193-204; e Jeffrey, F. "John Wesley's 'Primitive Physic'" in *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, Broxton (UK), XXI, (3): 60-67, 1980. See also Heitzenrater, R. *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), p. 166-167.
[55] Wesley, J. *Works*, Vol. 1, p. 89.
[56] Wesley, J. "Sermon 50" in *Works*, Vol. 2, p. 266-280.
[57] Weber, M*. Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus*, introduction; for a different vision see Tawney, R.H*. Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (New York: New American Library, 1926), p. 161; Warner, W. *The Wesleyan Movement in the Industrial Revolution* (London: Longman's Green & Co.), 1930. Cf. also Thompson, E.P. *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon, 1964), pp. 38-44, 362-363.
[58] Halévy, É. *The Birth of Methodism in England* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1971).

Wesley – like many other intellectuals in Europe – studied about earthquakes, volcanoes, electricity and astronomy, trying to find a common logic linking these different natural events.[59]

The reading of Enlightenment philosophers and the emphasis on science naturally leads to education. In fact, John Wesley was inspired mainly by Locke's *Some Thoughts concerning Education* , using Locke's ideas to develop his own pedagogical principles in a similar fashion, insisting on the importance of rationality in contrast to emotion and eroticism, but not necessarily contradictory to spirituality.[60] Wesley tried to combine his rules for spirituality and scientific methodology as a way to guide the development toward perfection without necessarily subsuming religion to science. It is in this light that we can understand Wesley's attempt to unity "knowledge and vital piety" as an implicit updating of the model initially presented by Augustine and Cassiodorus for the conditions of the 18th century. Notoriously, this was done through a more pragmatic approach, and we can now focus on how Wesley develops his ideas in relation to the education of children, university students, lay leaders, pastors and preachers – i.e., theological education – as well as the population at large.

c) Varieties of Wesleyan educational methods

Gary Best states that the attempt to promote knowledge and vital piety is key to Wesley's theological views on perfectionism, because for him education has the function of improving humanity and helping humans acquire a proper knowledge of God. Thus, the role of education is "'to restore our rational nature to its proper state,' 'to discover every false judgment of our minds,' 'to subdue every wrong passion in our hearts,' 'to turn the bias from self-will, pride, anger, revenge and the love of the world, to resignation, lowliness, meekness, and the love of God'.[61] In what follows, I want to illustrate how the Wesleyan Enlightenment had an impact on various levels of education.

First, Wesley affirmed the importance of family education in the sermon "On Family Religion," based on the premises of two key biblical passages: "I and my house will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24: 15) and "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22: 6). For Wesley, one of the key family responsibilities, especially of parents, is to educate their children "early, plainly, frequently, and patiently,"[62] very much like his own mother, Susanna Wesley, did to educate her ten children in the Puritan and Pietist traditions. In "On the Obedience to Parents," he then admonished children to follow the lead of their parents, according to the passage, "Children, obey your parents in all things," (Colossians 3: 20). This had been Wesley's own experience, as he followed the instructions of his mother and father for many decades.[63] Therefore, he considered this practice as the foundation of children's religious education.

Second, in "On the Education of Children" (Sermon 95) Wesley also insists upon the fact that at some point children need to leave their families and be sent to schools because as they age one can observe the "wickedness" of children due to "the fault and neglect of their parents." This requires a

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[59] Wesley, J. in *Survey of the Wisdom of God in Creation: Or, A Compendium of Natural Philosophy*, 5 vols., 1777. The expression cited can be found on Vol. 3, p. 328.

[60] On religious enthusiasm, eroticism and Methodism (e.g. the Love Feasts, etc.) see Rack, Henry *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992); and Swollett, Tobin *Humpry Chinker* [ed. by James L. Thorson] (New York: Norton, 1983). It is also important to see how this leads to Romanticism: Simpson, D. *Romanticism, Naturalism and the Revolt against Theory* and Brantley, R. *Locke, Wesley and the Method of English Romanticism*.

[61] Wesley, J. *Thought on Educating Children* [1783] in Jackson, T. *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 13, pp. 476-477 quoted by Best, G. "Education from a Methodist Perspective."

[62] Wesley, J. "Sermon 94" in *Works*, Vol. 3, p. 341-346.

[63] Wesley, J. "Sermon 96" in *Works*, Vol. 3, p. 361-372. Bowden, M. "Susanna Wesley's Educational Method" in *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* XLIV (2002), pp. 52-65.

transition away from home. Then he asks, and then answers: "For what end do you send your children to school? 'Why, that they may be fit to live in the world." However, this transition is full of risk because according to him some schools were "nurseries of all manner of wickedness."[64] Therefore, in many passages of his *Journal* he considers it important to counterbalance learning to be prepared to live in the world with learning in the pursuit of perfection and holiness to be prepared for God's Kingdom. In *Instructions for Children*, he translates a French catechism and adds an introductory note, inspired on his mother's method, saying that children should be "taught the knowledge of God and the knowledge of Letters at the same time."[65] Thus, we can see the Wesleyan Enlightenment at play here, as he tries to compatibilize two dimensions that are often seen in opposition to each other. Now we need to see how this is applied more specifically in the schools established by John Wesley.

Third, because Wesley did not think that other schools were providing this kind of education, he decided to develop his own pedagogical project and re-establish the Kingswood School in 1748 – to continue a project initiated by George Whitefield in 1739 in a region of poor miners – and continuously update its curriculum. Charles Wesley later produced a collection of songs for this school, *Hymns for Children* (1763), and included "At the Opening of a School in Kingswood (June 24, 1748)," whose poetry synthesizes the scientific, pedagogical and theological ideas we are discussing.[66] The wording of this

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[64] Wesley, J. "Sermon 95" in *Works*, Vol. 3, p. 347-360.

[65] Wesley, J. *Instructions for Children* (London: M. Cooper Print, 1745) [accessed online on July 28, 2024, through the Hathi Trust: https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/102632949]

[66] It is worth quoting the famous lyrics at length (*A Collection of Hymns*, 461 in *Works*, Vol. 7):

> Come Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
> To whom we for our children cry!
> The good desired and wanted most
> Out of thy richest grace -
> The sacred discipline be given
> To train and bring them up for heaven.
>
> Answer on them the end of all
> Our cares , and pains, and studies here;
> On them, recovered from their fall,
> Stamped with the humble character,
> Raised by the nurture of the Lord,
> To all their paradise restored.
>
> Error and ignorance remove,
> Their blindness both of heart and mind;
> Give them the wisdom from above,
> Spotless, and peaceable, and kind;
> In knowledge pure their minds renew,
> And store with thoughts divinely true.
>
> Learning's redundant part and vain
> Be here cut off, and cast aside,
> But let them, Lord, the substance gain,
> In every solid truth abide,
> Swiftly acquire, and ne'er forego
> The knowledge fit for man to know.
>
> Unite the pair so long disjoined,
> Knowledge and vital piety:
> Learning and holiness combined,

hymn reveals the Enlightenment premises mentioned in the previous section, showing that "knowledge" and "piety" refer to an explicit articulation between a secularized scientific and educational project in the Enlightenment with a theological education that is not necessarily limited to clergy, but starts in teaching Christian principles based on Puritanism and Pietism in early childhood. Also, John and Charles Wesley emphasize, quite literally, the virtues of methodical discipline based on the practices and good habits listed in the examples of Locke's *Some Thoughts concerning Education*.[67]

John Wesley reiterates these principles in *A Short Account of the School in Kingswood, near Bristol* (1749) and in *Plain Account of the People Called Methodists* (1749). Kingswood became a model for further initiatives and Wesley registered his thoughts on the school – including a fire that destroyed the building – in his *Journal*. The interesting point to raise is about how he does not limit himself to the religious aspect but includes pedagogical, administrative and strategic considerations – also related to economic rationality –, so that the project could succeed. Also here, we can quote him at length.[68]

And truth and love, let all men see
In the whom up thee we give,
Thine, wholly thine, to die and live.

Father, accept them through thy Son,
And ever by thy Spirit guide!
Thy wisdom in their lives be shown,
Thy name confessed and glorified;
Thy power and love diffused abroad,
Till all the earth is filled with God.

[67] Locke, J. *Some Thoughts concerning Education* [Introduction and Notes by R. H. Quick] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913) where he states, for example, in § 66: "This method of teaching children by a repeated *Practice*, and the same action done over and over again, under the eye and direction of the tutor, till they have got the habit of doing it well, and not by relying on rules trusted to their memories."

[68] Wesley, J. *Plain Account of the People Called Methodists* in *Works*, Vol. 9, pp. 277-279.
"1. Another thing which had given me frequent concern was the case of children. Some their parents could not afford to put to school. So, they remained like 'a wild ass's colt'. Others were sent to school and learned at least to read and write. But they learned all kind of vice at the same time, so that it had been better from them to have been without their knowledge than to have bought it at so dear price.
2. At length I determine to have them taught in my own house, that they might have an opportunity to read, write, and cast accounts (if no more) without being under almost a necessity of learning heathenism at the same time. And after several unsuccessful trials I found two such school-masters as I wanted - men of honesty, and sufficient knowledge, who had talents for, and their hearts in, the work.
3. They have now under their care near sixty children. The parents of some pay for their schooling, but the greater part, being very poor, do not; so that the expense is chiefly defrayed by voluntary contributions. We have of late clothed them, too, as many as wanted. The rules of the school are these that follow:
    First, no child is admitted under six years of age.
    Second, all the children are to be present at the morning sermon.
    Thirdly, they are at school from six to twelve, and from one to five.
    Fourthly, they have no play-days.
    Fifthly, no child is to speak in school, but to the masters.
    Sixthly, the child misses two days in one week, without leave, is excluded the school
4. We appointed two stewards for the school also. The business of these is:
    To receive the school subscriptions, and expend what is needful.
    To talk with each of the masters weekly.
    To pray with and exhort the children twice a week.
    To inquire diligently whether they grow in grace and learning, and whether the rules are punctually observed.

I hope it has become clear that the Wesleyan Enlightenment tried to address the double tension we identified earlier, by developing a very pragmatic approach to education. So far I have emphasized more the teaching of Christian religion as an important step in the process aiming at the cultivation of moral virtues in the exercise of secular activities and, in this way, the pursuit of holiness and Christian perfection.[69] However, it is also important to see how this was complemented by practical, pedagogical, technical, and professional elements that helped to prepare children to master several professions. Wesley's educational method is very consistent in this regard, for here he applies the same demands in the education for science, arts, medicine, music and religion in a rationalist and pragmatic – perhaps even utilitarian – way. This is clear in an announcement of Kingswood and the call for matriculation:

> "Whereas it has been long complained of, that Children generally spend seven, eight and ten Years in learning only two or three Languages; and that together with these they learn such Vices as probably they never unlearn before:
> This is to give Notice,
> That in the Forest of Kings-Wood, near BRISTOL, in a good clear air a BOARDING-SCHOOL is now opened, wherein are taught, at 14*l.* per Annum - *English, French, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, History, Geography, Chronology, Rhetoric, Logic, Ethics, Geometry, Physics*; together with Writing in all the useful Hands; *Arithmetic*, Vulgar, Decimal, and Instrumental; *Merchants' Accompts* by Single and Double Entry; *Trigonometry*, Plain and Spherical; *Surveying* and *Mapping of Land*; *Gauging* in all its Parts; *Mensuration* of all Superficies, Solids &c. at much less Expence of Time than usual: Where particular Care is also taken of the Morals of the Children, that they may be train'd up at once to LEARNING and VIRTUE.[70]

Despite the temptation to dwell longer on the observations, rules and disciplinary remarks made by John Wesley and their pedagogical impact – including their conflict with contemporary pedagogical approaches –, I will not pursue this here.[71] Rather, I will call the attention to the fact that Wesley's efforts echo Cassiodorus' compatibilist curriculum. In his view, religious education was complementary to secular education. Clearly, he complements religious education with technical matters, designing a new model, which is publicized in several existing manuals he compiled for use at Methodist schools.

Fourth, we need to include the education of adults. Wesley observed with interest the experiences of Moravian communities, especially at Herrnhut, and the pietistic tradition of the Universität Halle, trying to apply their model at various levels, thus moving from children's education to adults, especially lay leaders in the Methodist movement. When turning to the education of lay leaders, John Wesley continues to stress religion, coupled with rationality. In the sermon "The Case of Reason Impartially Considered", based on I Corinthians 14:20, he starts by pointing out the silliness of certain

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Every Tuesday morning, in conjunction with the masters, to exclude those children that do not observe the said rules.
Every Wednesday morning to meet with, and exhort their parents to train them up at home in the ways of God.
5. An happy change was soon observed in the children, both with regard to their tempers and behavior. They learned reading, writing, and arithmetic swiftly; at the same time they were diligently instructed in the sound principles of religion, and earnestly exhorted to fear God and work out their own salvation
6. For an account of the Grammar School in Kingswood I refer to you to the tract lately published."

[69] Heitzenrater, R. *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, pp. 168f..
[70] Cited by G.M. Best, *Wesley and Kingswood [1738-1988, 250th Conversion Anniversary]* (Bridgwater, Bigwood & Staple Ltd, 1988).
[71] Ryan, L. *John Wesley and the Education of Children: Gender, Class, and Piety* (London: Routledge, 2017) offers a detailed critical analysis of Wesley's attitudes toward children's education, especially the education of girls.

behaviors and their childish character, insisting that one should always pursue a mature understanding: "Brethren, be not children in understanding: in wickedness be ye children; but in understanding be ye men".[72] This emphasis on understanding led him to found the *Christian Library*, the *Arminian Magazine*, and other publishing initiatives which he promoted among Methodists by creating courses of study and subscription programs. This was one of the most important editorial programs in 18th century Europe.[73] He develops a methodical discipline which is conducive to spiritual perfection and sanctification.

Fifth, this has applications in the ministry to young adults in the context of higher education also, especially university students at the University of Oxford. In his publications between 1726 and 1751, John Wesley always identified himself as a Fellow of Lincoln College at the University of Oxford. He was involved in the education of young adults, responsible for teaching New Testament, logic, and rhetoric, and had several pupils which would later become associated with the so-called "Holy Club" and serve as leaders of the Wesleyan movement in Oxford.[74] In more general terms, his incipient philosophy of higher education can be revealed in the extracts he published from the Oxford philosopher John Norris's *Reflections on the Conduct of Human Life*. Although Wesley is simply copying what Norris had said before, including the admonition that the pursuit of learning and knowledge should aim less at intellectual pursuits and more toward moral improvement, he is implicitly approving his thoughts. Thus, the tract concludes by the author saying that he "had spent about 13 Years in the most celebrated University in the World; in pursuing both such Learning as the *Academical* Standards require" but was still in search of the best light for the soul, which is the "Love of God."[75] This was put into practice by Wesley in the "Holy Club" at Oxford University. Sanctification, for Wesley, was a type of practice, as one needs continuous exercises to become strong and coherent, for it could not happen solely based on inspiration or enthusiasm. Reading of the classics and access to materials he published in his *Christian Library* is part of this strategy. It is upon this same basis that Wesley transitions to theological education.

Sixth, there are also applications to pastoral education – i.e., theological education. Certainly, the art of argumentation and speech are fundamental to a preacher! This can be seen clearly in Augustine and Cassiodorus, who insist on the importance of the *artes sermonicales*, especially rhetoric. John Wesley, a notorious public speaker, addressed this issue, as evidenced by a *System of Rhetoric* he prepared, which he left unfinished. To mention just one aspect of his views on this subject, we can show the emphasis on discipline in the advice he gives to preachers in 1747:

(4) Choose the plainest texts you can.
(5) Take care not to ramble from your text, but to keep close to it, and make out what you undertake.
(6) always suit your object to your audience.
(7) Beware of allegorizing or spiritualizing too much.[76]

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72 Wesley, J. "Sermon 70" in *Works*, Vol. 2, p. 589.
73 Heitzenrater, R. "John Wesley's A Christian Library, Then and Now," in American Theological Library Association Summary of Proceedings, 55 (2001).
74 Rivers, I. "John Wesley as Editor and Publisher" in Maddox, R. and Vickers, J. (Eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 144-159; Rivers, I. (Ed.), *Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, NY: Leicester University Press, 1982); River, I. *Vanity Fair and the Celestial City: Dissenting, Methodist, and Evangelical Literary Culture in England: 1720-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
75 Wesley, J. *Reflections on the Conduct of Human Life: With reference to Learning and Knowledge* [extracted from J. Norris by J. Wesley] (London: Printed by W. Strahan, 1741), available online through the Hathi Trust at https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/102632948. English, J. "John Wesley's Indebtedness to John Norris" in *Church History*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (Mar. 1991), pp. 55-69.
76 Wesley, J. *Minutes*, June 18, 1747, in *Works*, Vol. 1, p. 24.

It may be surprising to read that one should not spiritualize too much! Wesley's thinking brings us to a central and final point: rationality and spirituality are in constant contrast, demanding a method that combines both approaches, and this implies an educational aspect which applies to children, college students, adults, and theologians, serving as a path toward perfection and, thus, to salvation.[77] This insistency on education is inspired on the Enlightenment. All things considered, we see also here the tension between elements that are often seen as opposite and irreconcilable, and Wesley's efforts to bring them together. For him, there was a possibility of finding a balance between these poles. We can conclude that the attempts at articulating scientific rationality and religious enthusiasm are integrated in an educational project inspired by the "Wesleyan Enlightenment."[78]

In conclusion, the background of Enlightenment ideas and the emphasis on education allows us to identify some specific ideas advanced by John Wesley in relation to different types of education mentioned above: education of children, young adults, lay leaders, university students, pastors and preachers, and the general public. In all these cases we see connections of modern science and secularity with religion and spirituality. In an article on "Connectionalism and College" Russel Richey confirms this point when he states that Methodism has always nurtured a connection between church and education.[79] I just want to emphasize that this is the result of a "Wesleyan Enlightenment," which combined religious enthusiasm with rationality, scientific method, and political engagement as well as a new economic behavior and engaged social practices – as indicated by both Weber and Holgerson.[80] Moreover, this was applied differently to various levels. Therefore, we can conclude that John Wesley's view of modernity upholds some key ideas from the past but also updates them in more pragmatic terms. He tries to mediate between religion and secularity by adopting a modern framework – the Enlightenment – based upon which he can establish rules for making spirituality consistent with rationality, thus connecting faith and reason more methodically. Holiness and perfectionism, in this view, are practical ways of living which need continuous exercise to become strong and coherent as they are expressed in society, in the real world, and in the engagement with secular issues, thus connecting knowledge and vital piety.[81]

Based on this conclusion, I can now move to the next part, in which I will try to respond to offer a third round of answers to the questions asked at the beginning by arguing that this Wesleyan model – inspired by modernity and the Enlightenment – can help us address contemporary issues in education in general and theological education in particular. In what follows, I will connect this discussion with the

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[77] Heitzenrater, R.P. *John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists: 1725*, pp. 231-286, 332-408; *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, pp. 176-178; Heitzenrater, R. "John Wesley's Principles and Practice of Preaching" in *Methodist History* Vol. 37, No. 2 (Jan. 1999), pp. 89-106.

[78] Maddox, R. "'Honoring Conference': Wesleyan Reflections on the Dynamics of Theological Reflection," *Methodist Review*, vol. 4 (2012): 77-116; "John Wesley's Precedent for Theological Engagement with the Natural Sciences," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, vol. 44, no. 1 (Spring, 2009): 23-54; "Wesley's Engagement with the Natural Sciences," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, eds., Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 160-175.

[79] Richey, R. "Connectionalism and College" in *The Quarterly Review*, Vol. 8/4 (Winter 1998-1999), p. 332.

[80] This is reaffirmed by Abraham, W. *Methodism: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 80: "'The impact of Methodism' considers Methodism's impact on and contribution to social movements, politics, education, and healthcare. Social movements that were deeply influenced by Methodism include the abolition of slavery in the 19th century and the Temperance Movement in the 20th century."

[81] Here I presuppose a vast literature I already mentioned on this theme, including Gay, P. *The Enlightenment. An Interpretation* [2 Vols] (New York, Vintage, 1967) and Weber, M. *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (Tübingen, JCB Mohr, 1920). See also Weber, M. *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1985).

idea that Methodist theological and secular education in different contexts today may be able to rely on and at the same time update this attempt to mediate divinity and secular studies by embracing a more contemporary effort to engage with intercultural and postsecular perspectives, thus addressing some of the issues we identified already in our discussion of Augustine and Cassiodorus, issues that emerge again in relation to the European Enlightenment – especially due to the limitation of Eurocentric views that deny rationality and modernity to other contexts around the world.

III. Education in intercultural and postsecular perspectives

Let me start this part by repeating the guiding questions: How has the Wesleyan focus on social grace "*impacted expressions of theological education in different contexts?*" and "*Can theological educational institutions draw focus to Wesleyan soteriological identity in broader contexts of secularised higher education?*" To answer these questions, I engaged in two rounds of discussions and conceived of a modern project in very broad terms, postulating that this "modern project" has a theological dimension which corresponds to an ongoing salvific project that has been updated in many ways, from the times of Augustine and Cassiodorus through the connection of "devotion and reason" in the Catholic Enlightenment to the Wesleyan Enlightenment and its goal of "uniting knowledge and vital piety" by means of a multi-facetted educational program! How can we update these perspectives in the contemporary world to update our answers to the two questions mentioned above?

So far, I may have given the impression that the modern project evolved in a linear way, leading to a progressive amalgamation of important theological themes that are now sedimented, open, and available for our reflection. The problem, however, is that there is a growing critique of this narrative. The historical progression I painted in broad strokes is far from a positive consensus. First, as I noted earlier, if we interpret *modernus* through Augustine's lenses, he does indeed seem to require the negation of diversity in order to affirm a universal perspective expressed in terms of a unique time, the *tempus modernus* of the Roman Catholic Church, which rejects the plurality of the *pagani* who represent diverse cultures, languages, and understandings. The same is true regarding our understanding of modernity, for I mentioned how it was defined in multiple ways, different dates, and a plurality of applications in science, culture, history, and politics. Finally, this applies to the Enlightenment, for although this term is often associated with the European philosophical discourse, there is a plurality of expressions within and beyond the European Enlightenment. Internally, we can identify the Spanish and Italian *Iluminismo*, the German *Aufklärung* and the Dutch *Verlichting* as well as the Scottish and British *Enlightenment*, and the French *Lumière*; moreover, this plurality is also visible in religion, as expressed by the Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran and Pietist as well as Wesleyan forms of Enlightenment. This plurality, first seen among the ancient *pagani*, can be found in modern Europe, and beyond Europe as well, including in Methodist expressions around the world.

a) The importance of plurality

To address the issue regarding how secularity leads to the recognition of a plurality of perspectives that were rejected or repressed in theological terms, we now reach a third round in which I would like to start by focusing on plurality. This theme will help us introduce two other topics: the importance of intercultural communication and the emergence of a postsecular condition. I will start by reconnecting some of the points made previously to introduce and address the tension between universalism and plurality. In fact, many theological and intellectual debates express a critique of the way how the modern project was identified with an imperialistic universalism, which was exacerbated by the negative impacts of globalization and the need to affirm cultural contextuality. In my view, the best way to

address this tension is by establishing a broad intercultural and postsecular framework for a dialogue between theological education and higher education under contemporary conditions.

If we focus on the theological undercurrent that accompanies this historical unfolding, we need to turn to liberation theologies as they clearly question the universalist and Eurocentric views in Augustine, modernity, and the Enlightenment. As one of the representatives of Latin American liberation theology, Gustavo Gutierrez presents one of the first contemporary direct critiques of this historical understanding of modernity by affirming that in many contexts around the world which fell under the oppression of European colonialism, there is an "underside of modernity."[82] This critique focuses on a theological – and, more specifically, soteriological – dimension, expressed clearly in Gutierrez' *Teología de la Liberación*, when he argued – against Augustine – that history should not be conceived dualistically but as a common history which includes the expression of diverse cultures all at once: "there is one history" [*la historia es una*].[83] Moreover, this critique implies the eschatological hope to establish heaven on earth! Therefore, Gutierrez offers a direct and powerful critique of Augustine's soteriology and the implicit salvific assumptions of the modern project.

This point is expanded by another Latin American liberation theologian, Enrique Dussel, who initially discusses this issue in relation to secularism, criticizes the persistence of Augustinian modern dualism, then sees the Latin American reality as *postmodern*.[84] He later expands these thoughts in the idea of *transmodern* condition, but then agrees with Gutierrez that there is an "underside of modernity" which needs to be revealed. Dussel saw this in the event of the so-called "Discovery" of the Americas, which is a "Conquest" that enabled Europe to place itself at the center of the world map and – rather than "discover" – actually "cover" the plurality of cultures in the underside of modernity.[85] Similarly, Africa contributed to modernity by being subjugated and forced to provide enslaved labor for the construction of modern systems while Asia was actually the goal of European trade, which required the extraction of gold and silver from the Americas, thus creating a "world-system" as defined by Immanuel Wallerstein.[86] Gutierrez and Dussel share a critical impetus that questions the traditional theological universalist view on modernity and reveals the variety of expressions repressed by Eurocentrism. They identified what Shmuel Eisenstadt called "multiple modernities" – that is, that the *tempus modernus*, modernity and the Enlightenment had differentiated expressions in different parts of the world.[87] Similar programs emerge in other contexts also, where *minjung*, *dalit*, feminist, Womanist, and Latina theologies offer poignant critiques against the Eurocentric view of the modern project.[88]

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[82] Tombs, D. *Latin American Liberation Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2002). Also, Gutierrez, G. *Teología de la Liberación* (Salamanaca: Sígueme, 1972), p. 21. For a background in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, see Fern, D. *Third World Liberation Theologies* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004).

[83] Gutierrez, G. *Teología de la Liberación* (Salamanaca: Sígueme, 1972), p. 21. See also *La Fuerza histórica de los pobres* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1979), and chapter "Desde el reverso de la historia," pp. 215-276.

[84] Dussel, E., "From Secularization to the Secularism of Science," *Concilium* 47 (1969): 91-113; *El dualismo en la antropología de la Cristiandad* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Guadalupe, 1974), pp. 79-84; *Filosofía de la Liberación* (Mexico: EDICOL, 1977), pp. 10, 96-99.

[85] Dussel, E. *1492: El Encubrimiento del Otro: Hacia el Origen del "Mito de la Modernidad"* (La Paz: Plural, 1992).

[86] Dussel, E. *Ética de la Liberación en la edad de la globalización y la exclusión* (Madrid: Trotta, 1998).

[87] Eisenstadt, S. "Multiple Modernities," in *Daedalus* 129 (2000): pp. 1-29.

[88] This same critique is expressed in the philosophical idea of *postmodernity*. This is not only related to the critique of the "dialectic of the Enlightenment" offered by members of the Frankfurt School such as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, but also to French philosophers such as Jean-François Lyotard – who was inspired by the artistic and architectural *avantgarde and* then turned to the anthropological emphasis on a plurality of heterogeneous cultures, which he identified as *pagani*. In all these cases we see precisely the negation of the ideas we tried to reconstruct and rescue.

How does this relate to Wesleyan theology, the idea of a Wesleyan Enlightenment, and the motto "unite knowledge and vital piety"? These critiques of the modern project, Eurocentrism, and colonialism impacted Wesleyan and Methodist theologies as well. In Latin America, José Miguez Bonino, a Methodist liberation theologian from Argentina, contributed to this discussion from the perspective of systematic theology and had to come to terms with Augustine. In *Ama y haz lo que quieras*, he implicitly reassesses this old Augustinian expression and its reinterpretation by Martin Luther by showing that in a modern world where we face a plurality of complex issues and cannot find easy answers on what to do, this biblical principle helps us to discern our course of action.[89] This informed the dialogue between theological education and higher education in the Wesleyan and Methodist traditions also, for it became evident that both theological education and higher education are challenged by the same issues that plagued the original conception of *modernus*, the idea of modernity, and the Enlightenment: a negation of plurality. From a Wesleyan Filipino perspective, Emerito Nacpil, works not only to insist on contextualization but also on the need to address issues of secularity. Thus, he proposes that theology must be in dialogue with the secular world – thus reaffirming an important *Leitmotif* in our discussion – and especially with contemporary science to be relevant. Building on Wesley's attempt to unite knowledge and piety, Nacpil promotes a secularity that is compatible with spirituality as well as "a spirituality that secularizes."[90]

This brings us back to the beginning. So far, we have seen that the concepts of *modernus*, modernity, and the Enlightenment were originally seen as theological concepts that questioned a plurality of perspectives – defining them as pagan – to affirm one value and one history as universal. This enabled the development of a somewhat unified theology. However, this universalism was later criticized by a new plurality of perspectives represented already within the European Enlightenment – which not only affirmed the primacy of science and education which led to a "new paganism," but also to internal theological expressions – including the idea of a Wesleyan Enlightenment. Moreover, with liberation theologies – Latin American, *minjung*, *dalit*, and other expressions, including Feminist, Womanist, and Latina theologies – we began to uncover an "underside of (European) modernity" that revealed the plurality of "multiple modernities." In light of these developments, I can now consider intercultural and postsecular perspectives.

b) Secularity, interculturalism, and the postsecular condition

The broad etymological, philosophical, and theological discussion on the concepts of *modernus*, *modernity* and Enlightenment in the first part, led to a rehabilitation of the plurality of *pagani* cultures which were occluded and the recognition of multiple modernities which were implicit and repressed by the Enlightenment in the second part. Now one may ask whether it is actually relevant to contemporary society, to the specific theme of the relationship between theological education and higher education today. In other to address this concern, I would like to take up Nacpil's initial impulse and transition from the recognition of plurality and secularity to questions concerning the intercultural and postsecular predicament affecting theological education and higher education.

First, we will need to move from the recognition of plurality to the need for intercultural dialogue. After the critique of theological universalism, two other steps are needed to address the questions concerning the relationship between theological education and secularized higher education, stated at the beginning. On the one hand, following the same pattern of revealing the plurality implicit underneath the modern project, we need to interrogate whether Wesleyan theology can make room for the diversity of cultures in the various contexts where it has been present. On the other, we need to ask

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[89] Bonino, J. M., *Ama y haz lo que quieras* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1972), pp. 58-79.
[90] Nacpil, E., *A Spirituality that Secularizes* (Makati City: Katha Publ., 2013), vol. 1, pp. 1-25.

how the original Wesleyan integration of secular themes – such as science and social issues – as components of a broad understanding of education – i.e., the education of children, laity, and clergy – is being applied and developed in this plurality of contexts. To answer these questions, I would like to propose the idea of a continuous "learning process" capable of updating and articulating the traditional complementarity of secular and theological education – as seen in Cassiodorus and Wesley – with recent discussions on intercultural connectionalism and the postsecular condition.

The tension between universalism and plurality can be observed in various disciplines today, and it can be interpreted in multiple ways – both positive and negative. We can focus on the moral universality of human rights, the political aspiration of world citizenship, legal claims for global justice, and scientific descriptions of climate change trends as well as psychological ways to motivate a change in human behavior. On the other hand, there is greater awareness of a greater multiplicity of perspectives, as implied in ideas and practices such as diversity, identity politics, pluralism and multiculturalism, intercultural dialogue, and others. If we take these two dimensions into account, it becomes clear that there is a tension between universality and plurality which is not merely descriptive but normative also. It implies a moral demand for the acknowledgement of specific contexts while motivating us to move beyond our idiosyncrasies, particularities, and prejudices. How can we maintain both plurality and universality in this normative sense? I believe that a practice of intercultural communication in the context of postsecular conditions can be helpful in this regard.

Second, we need to transition from secularity to a postsecular society. The description I provided in the first part may give the impression that the question about modernity should be framed as a tension between the imperial universalism propagated by European theologies in their justification of the *mission civilizatrice* and the plurality of contextual and liberation theological perspectives emerging in different parts of the world. While this is an important dimension to be considered, today this issue emerges in relation to a series of secular challenges such as post-pandemic realities, technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), continuous wars contradicting the hope for peace, growing political polarization in various nations, and the struggle for social justice – to mention just a few. When talking about challenges to both theological education and higher education today, we need to provide more space for the consideration of secularity.

This approach is very similar to Elaine Graham's argument that many assumptions that have guided the modern project are now being overturned, and indicators of secularization such as religious decline as expressed in terms of membership in traditional institutionalized churches in modernized societies cannot be considered simplistically as a triumph of the Enlightenment. As we have seen, the Enlightenment includes religious expressions within itself. Thus, while many insist on affirming the decline of religion, irrelevance of theological issues, and loss of spirituality, there are compelling signs of the emergence of religious life in many social spheres, resembling the revival experienced by modern Europe during the Wesleyan Enlightenment. Graham proposes a revision of the secularization thesis and suggests a move from "secular" to "post-secular" conditions. To support this thesis, she points to the revival of faith-based engagement in public sphere "alongside the continuing – perhaps intensifying – questioning of the legitimacy of religion in public life."[91] Due to this predicament, she argues that theological education and theological reflection must rethink how to engage with the public in new ways.

Third, I would like to note that similar diagnoses have been presented in even more detail by philosophers such as Charles Taylor and Jürgen Habermas. Therefore, I would like to consider their intellectual contributions to this discussion in more detail.

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[91] Graham, E. "How to speak of God? Towards a postsecular apologetics," in *Practical Theology* 11/3 (2018): pp. 206-217.

Charles Taylor was involved in debates on secularization since the 1960s, but later on developed a more confessional and even apologetic approach to Christianity. He started by insisting on plurality, stating that instead of relying only on one's own tradition, we need to expand our horizons to embrace *multiculturalism*, a point inspired by his own engagement in the particular case of Québec and the proposals for a multicultural Canada. For him, multiculturalism is as a way to recognize distinctions, oppose assimilation, and create affirmative policies within a particular country to avoid or rectify oppression.[92] Eventually, Taylor expanded his views to talk about *interculturalism* as a form of recognition of different cultural, religious, and philosophical worldviews beyond one's own tradition, engaging in a broader dialogue to learn about values which are open and available for renewed interpretation, appropriation, and renewal.[93] By promoting the intercultural interaction among different communities and cultures, he envisions the acceptance and implementation of different values, including conceptions of human rights worldwide.

Taylor then brings all these elements together in his account of religion and secularity. In an earlier lecture, "A Catholic Modernity?," he had anticipated the application of his previous points on multiculturalism and interculturalism to religion, especially Christianity and the Roman Catholic Church: "Redemption happens through Incarnation, the weaving of God's life into human lives. But these human lives are different, plural, irreducible to each other." [94] Then, in *A Secular Age*, he presents challenges to secularism and secularization theories to propose a concept of secularity which he defines as follows: "secularity 1" corresponds to the privatization of religion, "secularity 2" is the decline of religious practice in general, and "secularity 3" is the recognition that religious beliefs can be challenged and, therefore, need to be justified in relation to the "whole context of understanding in which our moral, spiritual, or religious experience and search takes place."[95] Another aspect of his discussion about the "secular age" is what he describes as an evolution of worldviews as "social imaginary." On the one hand, he sees the "disembedding" process through which a particular Protestant conception of individuality began to influence society in such a way that "society itself comes to be reconceived as made up of individuals";[96] on the other, he offers a historical reading of Latin Christendom, with an emphasis on the development of Catholicism as a theology oriented toward community. His point is to show that there is a transition from a view of a community of saints constituted by a select few living according to austere commitments to Christian life based on the medieval cosmovision to a more egalitarian community as proposed by Protestantism, which brings new challenges. One challenge is that it leads to the "rise of 'individualism' at the expense of 'community'";[97] another challenge is the "providential Deism" and a new impersonal order driven by the Enlightenment, which affirm the belief in a more distant God that does not intervene so directly in the world. Thus, Taylor cites Wesley as an example of a turn to a religion more concerned with disciplining one's conduct, thus becoming a form of moralism.[98] Most importantly, however, is the emergence of a "Nova Effect" based upon which humans are now exposed to multiple choices regarding religion, with denominationalism as one of its expressions and three stages of secularity 3 in the 19th century: the rise of a humanist alternative to Christian faith, multiple critiques of orthodox religion, and a fracture of communities.[99]

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[92] Taylor Ch. *Multiculturalism and the 'Politics of Recognition': An Essay* [edited by Amy Gutmann] (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 36, 58.

[93] Taylor, Ch. "Interculturalism or Multiculturalism?" *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 38/4-5 (2012): 413-423.

[94] Taylor, Ch. "A Catholic Modernity?" [Marianist Award Lecture] (Dayton, OH: University of Dayton, 1996), p. 7.

[95] Taylor, Ch. *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 2-3.

[96] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 146.

[97] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 168.

[98] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 224-226.

[99] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 299-300.

Taylor's historical description follows very much the historical line I have pursued here, but he insists much more on how this process leads to individualism, especially in what he calls "the age of authenticity" in which "communities are eroding, families, neighborhoods, even the polity" are breaking-up.[100] Beyond these particularities, and as an alternative to these forms of buffered identity and secularization, he suggests that we take the "immanent frame" into account and keep it open in order to make space for transcendence as well.[101] For Taylor, this is the wider "context in which we develop our beliefs."[102] In all this, Taylor concentrates on his own culture as an example, discussing Latin Christianity and the Anglo-American philosophical tradition in more detail, and he has been criticized for this, including for not realizing that "Latin Christendom" is the result of the encounter and often the conflict with heterogeneous cultures victimized by imperialism and colonialism. In fact, Taylor himself had offered an alternative to these problems, especially in his proposals for multiculturalism and interculturalism, so the question is how to make his points about secularity more compatible with his views on interculturalism. This critical point brings us back to the discussion on the connection between plurality and secularity which are, in turn, opposed to the universalist claims of the Roman Catholicism inspired on the concept of *modernus*.

Jürgen Habermas develops his views in dialogue with Taylor but goes from a definition of the "secular" to a new systematic understanding of "postsecular." His writings on religion can be traced to texts published in the 1950s, including his doctoral dissertation, *Das Absolute und die Geschichte: Von Zweispältigkeit in Schellings Denken*, in which he discusses Schelling's soteriology.[103] He then expanded his views in *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, where he relates religion and solidarity to the sociological categories proposed by Max Weber, Émile Durkheim, and George Herbert Mead as well as his own concept of communicative action.[104] In other publications such as *Nachmetaphysisches Denken* and *Texte und Kontexte*, Habermas sees religion through a political lens to criticize a conservative return to metaphysics and religion in contemporary society and engage in a dialogue with progressive theologians from Germany and the United States, including Johann Baptist Metz and Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza – among others. His proposal of a "postmetaphysical thinking" emerge from these discussions and at first it implies a strong defense of secularization.[105] Although he increasingly identifies implicit tensions between religious discourses and questions about multiculturalism, morality, democracy, and human rights in his writings of the 1990s,[106] it is only after 2001 that he makes an explicit "religious turn" in his philosophy.

After the tragic events on September 11, 2001, in the United States Habermas publishes a short text on faith and knowledge, *Glauben und Wissen*, in which he notices how religious fundamentalism is linked to political activism and plays a new role in the transnational public sphere in ways that contradict democracy and human rights. In this context he offers an initial definition of the concept of postsecular to indicate that, despite the modern development of secular societies, there is a "persistence of religious communities, though surrounded by a continuous secularization" [*Fortbestehen religiöser Gemeinschaften in einer sich forwährend sekularisierten Umgebung*].[107] Moreover, in a book on religion

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[100] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 473.

[101] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 544.

[102] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 549.

[103] Habermas, J. *Das Absolute und die Geschichte: Von Zweispältigkeit in Schellings Denken* [Doctoral Dissertation] (Bonn: Philosophische Fakultät der Universität Bonn, 1954).

[104] Habermas, J. *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981), 2 volumes.

[105] Habermas, J. *Nachmetaphysisches Denken* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988) and *Texte und Kontexte* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991).

[106] Habermas, J. ［*Faktizität und Geltung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1992), *Die Einbeziehung des Anderen* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1996) and *Wahrheit und Rechtfertigung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1999).

[107] Habermas, J. *Glauben und Wissen* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2001), p. 13.

and naturalism as well as in his dialogue with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger – who later became Pope Benedict XVI –[108]—he observed a revitalization and politization of traditional religious traditions. This leads to an important lecture on "Religion in the Public Sphere" as well as to dialogues with Charles Taylor, Judith Butler, and Cornell West on *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, where Habermas concludes that there is a "change in the form of religious consciousness that can be understood as a response to the challenges of modernity, whereas the secular awareness of living in a postsecular society gains a sophisticated articulation in a post-metaphysical mindset," because "term *secular* took on a different meaning at the very moment when subjects had to reach a political background consensus across the boundaries of the Christian Community" and engage in an interfaith dialogue with fellow citizens in the Jewish or Muslim traditions.[109] It is precisely this link between secular, intercultural, and postmetaphysical understandings that yields a more precise expression of the *postsecular*.

Yet Habermas expands this definition even further. Initially he requires individual religious citizens in a postsecular society to adapt their discourses and translate their views into secular political constitutional language, but later he expresses more clearly that a postsecular society is the object of change as well because it may have to question its secularism and learn from faith communities. This idea is presented in *Nachmetaphysisches Denken II*, where Habermas articulates multiple dimensions of the postsecular. On the one hand, he sees the possibility for religious citizens to adapt themselves to this postsecular condition by recognizing that their religious expressions need to accept plurality, autonomy, and universal values related to human rights;[110] on the other, he provides a "sociological description of a tending awareness of change in secularized or 'de-churched' [*entkirchlichten*] societies which have realized the continuity of religious communities and their influence in the national public spheres as well as in the world political stage" through alternative forms of spirituality.[111]

All this would be enough for our reflections, but after decades of reflections on these topics, Habermas publishes *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie* [Also a History of Philosophy], where he synthesizes these various ideas and proposes a systematic genealogical inquiry of the historical relationship between faith and knowledge as well as between philosophy and theology.[112] In this *opus magnum*, he summarizes two decades of research and reflections on the meaning of secular, secularity, secularization, secularism, and other notions – including "desecularization" and "dechurching" [*Entkirchlichung*] – to come to his definition of a "postsecular society" by defining it as a "worldwide intercultural discourse" [*eines weltweiten interkulturellen Diskurses*] that involves a learning process between religion or theology as well as science or philosophy.[113] I believe that Habermas succeeds in offering a new and broader framework to connect religion and secular social issues – including politics, morality, epistemology, and law – in a way that brings us back to connect the initial points we found in Augustine and in the Wesleyan Enlightenment. He discusses Augustine's theology in detail in order to show how his views on salvation influenced the establishment of universities and the concept of

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[108] Habermas, J. *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion: Philosophische Aufsätze* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005) and Habermas, J. and Joseph Ratzinger, "Jürgen Habermas im Gespräch mit Kardinal Joseph Ratzinger am 19.1.2004 in München." In *Zur Debatte* 34(1): 2–4, [https://www.kath-akademie-bayern.de/dokumentation/debatten/debatte/joseph-ratzinger-und-juergen-habermas-im-gespraech.html, last visited on July 26, 2024]. Reprint as Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *Dialektik der Säkularisierung: Über Vernunft und Religion*. Freiburg: Herder, 2005).

[109] Habermas, J. "Religion in the Public Sphere," in *The Holberg Prize* (Bergen: University of Bergen, 2005), p. 12, see pp. 10–19; and Habermas, J., Taylor, Ch., Butler, J. and West, C., *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2011), pp. 65-66.

[110] Habermas, J. *Nachmetaphysisches Denken II* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012), pp. 77-78, 108-111.

[111] Habermas, J. *Nachmetaphysisches Denken II*, p. 121.

[112] Habermas, J. *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2019), 2 vols.

[113] Habermas, *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 1., p. 126 and pp. 478-479.

modernity with an imperialist claim to universalism [*Universalanspruch*] against the pagans.[114] He does not mention Cassiodorus or Wesley, but dedicates considerable attention to Martin Luther, who is seen as both a heir of the Augustinian tradition as well as the inaugurator of a new tradition that influences the British Calvinists.[115] Habermas does not mention Methodism explicitly, except in a passage in which he echoes Max Weber and affirms that "Revival movements of the Jansenists, the Methodists and the Pietists […] also echo the criticism of the official church and absorbs the impulses of the Enlightenment."[116] Therefore, we can conclude that Habermas corroborates my points and also affirms the importance of the Enlightenment in general – and Wesleyan Enlightenment in particular –, thus shedding light on Wesley's attempt to unite knowledge and vital piety.

Conclusion

I can now return to the two questions that guided these reflections and, finally, try to offer a more complex answer. The questions were: How has the Wesleyan focus on social grace "*impacted expressions of theological education in different contexts?*" and "*Can theological education institutions draw focus to Wesleyan soteriological identity in broader contexts of secularized higher education?*" I have already offered three rounds of responses, in which I amplified and expanded the frame of reference, so that I could include not only historical and theological aspects but also some philosophical terms in my discussion. This allowed me to integrate intercultural and postsecular perspectives into the discussion. Let me now connect the dots.

In a first round, I proposed to address these questions in relation to the "modern project." I started with the theological idea of *modernus*, which was expanded to modernity, and showed how it reemerges in the Enlightenment. With this broad historical spectrum, I concluded that the modern project always had an implicit theological dimension which was put in contrast and complementarity with secularity, as proposed by Augustine and, even more specifically, by Cassiodorus. Cassiodorus followed in the footsteps of Augustine and was one of the first to propose an educational project that would not be afraid of the secularity expressed by multiple cultures. Rather, he articulated theological education and secular education as part of the salvific project inaugurated in the *tempus modernus*. For him, this was simply a division of labor: theological education would focus on biblical interpretation while the secular disciplines would help theology connect the Bible with the real world. This idea was expanded as the modern project evolved.

In a second round, I focused on the Enlightenment, discussed its compatibility with religious approaches, and defended the idea of a "Wesleyan Enlightenment." This allowed me to argue – at least indirectly – that the Enlightenment is not monolithic, but is expressed in plural ways: first, there is plurality within the European cultures; secondly, there is a plurality of religious, confessional, and theological expressions which are compatible with the Enlightenment; and thirdly, there is the plurality of perspectives in different parts of the world, which question Eurocentrism. John Welsey was at the center of all this, and the point of a "Wesleyan Enlightenment" was to propose a mediation between "knowledge and vital piety" as a way of updating the early reflections by Augustine and Cassiodorus regarding the need to mediate theological and secular education as complementary parts in the path toward salvation to the conditions of the 18th century. John Wesley provided a detailed account of a methodical education for children, for laity, and for clergy – always insisting that religious education

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[114] Habermas, *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol 1., pp. 154-157, as well as pp. 491 and pp. 558-583 (see his discussion of Augustine's soteriology on pp. 566-571 and 596-616).
[115] Habermas, *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 1., pp. 163-164; vol. 2, pp. 9-12 and 16-59. For his discussion on how Luther and Calvin influenced later confessional movements in England, see pp. 71-81.
[116] Habermas, *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 2, p. 222.

without a secular and pragmatic application could be dangerous. This idea, however, was limited to the 18th century and the conditions of secularity have changed since then, especially due to the modern secularization process that questioned many of the assumptions of institutionalized religious practices.

In a third round I engaged in a more philosophical and contemporary discussion of the two questions presented at the beginning. The first question was about contextuality in theological education, and this is not possible without a multicultural or intercultural attitude that asks about who is being forgotten or repressed. Therefore, I relied especially on Charles Taylor to reflect on new processes that emphasize intercultural dialogue. This also led to a questioning of the secularization thesis, secularism, and secularity. Transitioning from Taylor to Jürgen Habermas, I presented his discussion of a postsecular condition. I tried to show that in order to understand this new predicament we also need to consider the challenges and opportunities offered by multicultural and intercultural dynamics that emerged as part of the modern project. As religion continued to have social, political, and legal implications, it also exposed people to different traditions, demanding from them a questioning of their own limitations and a decentering of their own cultures.

This new predicament also revealed a constant tension that we had observed already in Augustine's theology, which was the attempt to affirm a particular view as universal while repressing the diversity of cultures of those considered *pagani* and secular. The different cultures that emerge at different historical moments – in ancient Rome, during the European Enlightenment, and currently – brought about a plurality of perspectives that included new relations to science, art, politics, and also religions (in plural). This brings us to the second question, which is related to secularity. In view of this new postsecular predicament, our challenge today is to question the strict separation between devotion and reason, knowledge and piety, faith and science, to rehabilitate impulses of the "Wesleyan Enlightenment" and apply them by promoting a new dialogue between Methodist theological and secular education in a plurality of contexts.

In the end, however, it is not enough to be reminded of the theological underpinnings of the modern project or repeat the motto "unite knowledge and vital piety" without delving into its implications. We need to upgrade our understanding and embrace a new framework that is open to intercultural and postsecular perspectives. If theological education has done dialogue with different contexts by means of a multicultural and intercultural approach, this also means that it needs to be open to what was considered pagan and secular. In a postsecular condition, we do not need to be afraid of the secular anymore. This intercultural and postsecular framework implies a new pedagogy that can be applied to both (so-called) theological and secularized education.

I hope to have showed that there is now a reversal movement which cannot be reduced or criticized to a retrograde return to religion, but rather to a new learning process that progressively opens society to be curious about different religious expressions and theological reflections because this is how we educate ourselves about the world. After these considerations, we can conclude that there has been a long historical dialogue between theology and philosophy – as well as science and multiple social contexts – which yields two necessary postures that help us answer the initial questions: on the one hand, we need to be open to the ancient *pagani* and contemporary *nones* who are – despite all appearances – still expressing elements that have religious and theological implications. On the one hand, we need to adopt an intercultural attitude as a movement that goes in both directions and prompts us to be open to learn from others; on the other, a postsecular perspective invites us to be open to learn new contents, and this requires openness to science, dialogue with contemporary politics, discussion of current social issues, and humility to recognize that we may find "knowledge and vital piety" in these areas. Conversely, there is a complementary process – more obvious today – which is the growing interest of society in religious matters – even if this is prompted by radical politics, belligerent groups, or new religious movement that are very loud and visible in the public sphere.

A reassessment of the Wesleyan Enlightenment will need to consider this predicament, so that we can provide more precise answers to the questions asked at the beginning. I believe, nevertheless, to have proposed a framework broad and open enough to help us motivate this mutual learning and accommodate the differences in an intercultural dialogue. If I am right, the Oxford Institute can be an important platform for this process, as it may encourage more dialogue, not only among theologians, but also with scientists, laity, and other people who are being exposed to this intercultural and postsecular condition and open to learn from it. With this very broad perspective and the corresponding steps I explored here, I conclude that it is possible to promote a greater and meaningful dialogue not only among Wesleyan and Methodist traditions of theological education and higher education, but also an ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue. For this to happen, we need to understand, define, and put into practice a more dynamic intercultural and postsecular "learning process." This will certainly have a positive impact on Wesleyan and Methodist connectionalism.