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THE PLACE OF SPIRIT:

secularization and the geographies of spirituality

Abstract

In this paper, we seek to map out the key coordinates in debates in Human Geography about the secularization and postsecularization of western modern societies. In particular, we spell out the specific geographies through which geographies of religion have been imagined. These commonly involve such spatial metaphors as islands, networks, spheres, and the like. Less attention has been given to spirituality in non-religious contexts. We conclude that adding non-religious spiritualities to the mix of geographies of religion requires rethinking more than the boundary between secularity and religion, but rethinking what we understand by secularity and religion themselves.

Key words: secularization, postsecular society, spirit, spirituality, religion, occulture

1. Introduction: militant secularisation, postsecular society and public life

In February 2012, Baroness Warsi led a UK ministerial delegation to the Vatican to visit His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. Baroness Warsi came with news from the frontline about an apparent battle between religion and the forces of secularization. The news is not good. Indeed, she was afraid the war was not going well:

"My fear today is that a militant secularisation is taking hold of our societies. We see it in any number of things: when signs of religion cannot be displayed or worn in government buildings; when states won't fund faith schools; and where religion is sidelined, marginalised and downgraded in the public sphere. It seems astonishing to me that those who wrote the European Constitution made no mention of God or Christianity" (speech given at the Vatican, 15 February 2012).

Overcoming her fear and astonishment, Warsi presented an alternative vision for a postsecular Europe:

"[...] to create a more just society, people need to feel stronger in their religious identities and more confident in their creeds. In practice this means not diluting their faiths and nations not denying their religious heritages [...] I [argue] for Europe to become more confident and more comfortable in its Christianity. The point is this: the societies we live in, the cultures we have created, the values we hold and the things we fight for all stem from centuries of discussion, dissent and belief in Christianity. These values shine through our politics, our public life, our culture, our economies, our language and our architecture. And [...] you cannot and should not extract these Christian foundations from the evolution of our nations any more than you can erase the spires from our landscapes" (speech given at the Vatican, 15 February 2012).

Her comments drew instant, and predictable, counter-reaction. Thus, her views, according to Andrew Copson, Chief Executive of the British Humanist Association, are "outdated, unwarranted and divisive" (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-17021831>). It is worthwhile spending a little time with Warsi's comments, however, as they paint an apparently contradictory picture of the place of faith and religion in contemporary European culture. On the one hand, religion seems to have been entirely ignored in the political constitution of Europe and in the practices of European States. On the other hand, European culture and landscapes appears to be thoroughly and irreversibly produced in and through faiths of

various kinds: both spired and inspired by religion, especially Christianity. On the one hand, Warsi believes European States have to fight against the hollowing out of faith from politics. On the other hand, faith is ubiquitous elsewhere in culture. Perhaps it is only the State, then, that is suffering this militant secularization. Perhaps not.

The Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science commissioned an Ipsos MORI poll on religious and social attitudes to coincide with Baroness Warsi's speech (<http://richarddawkinsfoundation.org>). The poll was used to prove that Warsi's comments were out of touch with popular opinion. It was widely reported that almost three quarters of people (74%) that religion should be a private matter and should not have special influence on public policy (Q.43) and that 92% agreed that the law should apply equally to everyone (Q.44). Indeed, many answers betrayed a strong sense of equality in the treatment of religion. Such views would not, in fact, contradict Warsi, as she was arguing for a reassertion of faith and not for the privileging of one religion over another.

However, unreported in the poll were some other curious results. In answer to Q.48, 60% said that Christianity was either very or fairly important in their lives. While 22% reported that they had accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour (Q.50), some 44% believed Jesus was the Saviour of Mankind (sic) (Q.25) and 71% believed that Jesus Christ was resurrected in some form, 32% believed physically (Q.24). Question 19 is also revealing: 37% of people believed in God and that Christianity is just one way of knowing him; 17% believe in God and that Christianity is the only way of knowing him; 13% believed that God was to be found in the laws of nature and the universe; 10% did not believe in God but in some other form of supernatural entity; and 9% believed that God was whatever created the Universe. *Only 6% of respondents said they did not believe in God.* That said, such figures can be cut different ways: for example, 54% believe in a Christian God, while 32% of people have some alternative view of God. As a preliminary observation, we can say that respondents' views about Jesus and God appear not to be as clear cut as either Baroness Warsi or Richard Dawkins would have us believe. Indeed, the failure of the militant secularists to defeat religious faith, and vice versa, has an intriguing parallel in debates about the place and social role of religion in Human Geography.

Arguments – taking place mainly in the pages of this journal – between those who assert that society is secularizing (e.g. Wilford 2010) and those who believe that religion retains a significant role in, what is termed, postsecular society (e.g. Cloke and Beaumont, 2012; also see Molendijk, Beaumont and Jedan, 2010) has produced a strange rapprochement. We will

spell out the nature of this rapprochement below. For us, this rapprochement has produced some, perhaps unintended, consequences: *first*, both sides seem to agree that there is a separation between different public spheres; *second*, that these spheres have very particular geographies; and, *third*, that these map out spheres/places where the spiritual is present or not, legitimate or not and/or authoritative or not. In this paper, we will critically explore each of these assumptions.

It is our intention, further, to understand the place and role some other dimensions of what we can call modern spiritual life that are all too easily left out of the debate between the militant secularists – as evident in declarations that *God is Dead* (Bruce 2002; also, Brown 2001) – and the postsecularists (e.g. Berger, 1999; Habermas, 2008). We identify two forms of the spiritual that are over-looked: *first*, occulture (following Partridge 2005; see also del Pilar Blanco and Peeren, 2010; Hill, 2011; and, *second*, alternative spiritualities (following Flanagan and Jupp, 2007; Heelas, 2008). To be sure, each of these terms is fraught with difficulties, yet, for our purposes, these difficulties are less a hindrance and more a set of clues towards understanding modern spiritual life and its other-than-worldly geographies. For us, this is about more than debating whether God is dead or alive, it is about attempting a different conceptual model for understanding *spirituality* and its geographies.

For us, what is required to understand the kinds of fuzzy evidence found in the Dawkins survey is a need to "blur" the distinctions between secularism and non-secularism and between different kinds of spirituality, to see better how forms of spirituality circulate, cross-over, feed off, and indeed grate against, one another. This is to give spirituality – or, more accurately, spiritualities – a greater dynamism and fluidity than can often appear in accounts of secularization and postsecular society. There is, further, a need to interrogate the emerging assumptions about the geographies of religion, secularity and spirituality. A task we take up in the latter part of this paper. We begin with geographies of secularity.

2. Secularity and the Persistence of Religion

Preliminary results of the 2011 census were released in December 2012. Headline figures show that 59% of the population (33.2 million) of England and Wales describe themselves as Christian, a marked decline from 72% (37.3 million) in 2001. This accords with the view that formal religion is in decline, perhaps supporting Steve Bruce's (2002) contention that *God is Dead*. For Bruce, processes of

modernization in Western societies present crippling problems for formal religion. These problems include:

"the industrialization of work; the shift from villages to towns and cities; the replacement of the small village community by the society; the rise of individualism; the rise of egalitarianism; and the rationalization of thought and of social organization" (2002, page 2).

Economic processes, such as industrialization, stand alongside social processes, such as individualism and egalitarianism, and geographic processes, such as urbanization, to undermine religion. Religion, in this view, thrives in small, tight-knit, inequitable, irrational rural communities. Religion is, characteristically, pre-modern; the modern is, fundamentally, secular. The exemplary space of the modern is the city. Thus, there is a long tradition in urban theory, evidenced for example in the work of Georg Simmel (1903) and Robert Park (1925), that modern society – and especially the city – with its advances in technology, with its new forms of rationality and with its democratic public sphere, would gradually stifle superstition and religion. Similarly, Peter Berger (1967) has argued that a 'crisis of credibility' arises for any particular religion when its beliefs and practices are seen as one equally valid view amongst many. In today's hyper-diverse cities, not only are there many religions, but many variants. Thus, religion becomes increasingly easy to either opt into or opt out of as their faiths are judged on their effects rather than their fundamental truths. From this perspective, urbanization and the decline of religion – the decline not merely of participation in religious practices (such as church-going), but rather of belief in "higher powers" (that is, in God) – must decline as people's everyday lives turn around the conditions determined, above all, by what (other) people think and do, albeit not in conditions of their own choosing.

On the surface, it may seem that the marked decline in those responding that they are Christian in the recent UK census would confirm that God is at least dying, if not yet dead. Yet, the fact that 33.2 million people – that is, four times more people than live in London – are still prepared to describe themselves as Christian might cause pause for thought. Indeed, the idea that modernization processes, such as industrialization and egalitarianism, are somehow pervasive and progressive seem remarkably quaint in post-industrial, unequal contemporary Britain. On two fronts, then, Bruce's account of the death of God seems suspect: *on the one hand*, there is a questionable description of the transformation of society by processes of modernization; and, *on the other hand*, religion seems to be remarkably persistent in the face of these seemingly irresistible processes. Nevertheless, as Wilford

observes, secularization – that is, the disappearance or absence of religion – is widely assumed within Human Geography (2010, page 330).

As a corrective, Wilford identifies three distinct forms of secularization (following Casanova, 1994). Secularization can mean: (1) the disappearance of religious beliefs and practices; (2) the confinement of religious beliefs and practices to the private sphere; (3) social differentiation that confines religion to its own distinct sphere, with religious beliefs and practices cauterised especially from the state and the economy. As Wilford suggests, there has been a great deal of debate over the numbers of people who "sign up" to being religious, or vote with their feet (through church attendance and the like). Indeed, the numbers game can tend to dominate debates (see Bartolini *et al.*, 2013). However, Wilford correctly points out that it is "secularization as differentiation" that has become the backdrop for discussions of religion in Human Geography. Wilford sums up the argument for us:

"the most common thread holds that as social institutions respond to increasing complexity, they develop and express their own internal rationality and thereby begin to separate themselves from other institutions or sphere. Most importantly, for secularization theory, social differentiation entails the separation of non-religious spheres from the authority of the religious sphere" (2010, page 333)

While this process of social differentiation can involve the transfer of authority to the state (Berger 1967), it is clear that modernization is understood in this context as a whole raft of social transformations, including the "classic" processes of individualization, rationalization, bureaucratization and the like. As these processes are definitively modern, in this view, they appear to hold for society as a whole. Yet, we have also seen that the heartland of modernity is, paradoxically, the city. Thus, for example, Simmel's identification of a blasé attitude towards life implied that city dwellers are increasingly immune to the enchantments of the divine, miracles, the unexplained, superstitions, and the like (see Simmel, 1903). Cities are also where social differentiation is at its most complex, where the distinction between the institutions of the state, the economy, knowledge, the law, and the like, is most in evidence. Intriguingly, the city is also where the sheer variety of different religions can be both visibly seen in the built environment, through their spires, domes, minarets, shrines and halls, as well as directly experienced.

In the face of different forms of authority, what modernity does, especially in cities, is to separate the social into distinct spheres. These spheres have their own forms of authority,

control and influence. Thus, religious authority, control and influence is increasingly confined to its own sphere (Chaves, 1994). From this perspective, secularization is a by-product of modernization (understood as a social process) and urbanization (which is the geographical manifestation of social and economic processes). There are two pertinent consequences of this argument. First, paradoxically, this model of secularization creates a distinct religious sphere in which religion is both legitimate and has authority. The question is, then, whether this sphere is beyond the reach of, or subject to the influence of, processes of modernization and urbanization (or not). Second, the machine of secularization – as of modernization – is the city: it is in cities that the decline and disappearance of religion – its beliefs, practices and authority – should be registered. This is not, however, Wilford's view.

For Wilford, the persistence of religion within modern societies is not some social or geographical quirk that history will eventually sort out. Rather, he argues that religions can offer people something that modernity cannot: a "plausible and relevant enchantment of the modern world" (2010, page 335). In this argument, Wilford takes seriously the idea of spirit: thus, religion is (or could be) the social sphere where spirit is given a proper place. To be sure, Wilford does not discuss spirit as such, but it is clear that he believes that spirit cannot, and will not, be simply eradicated by social processes of differentiation and modernization (favourably citing Marx's comments along these lines in his essay on *The Jewish Question*, 1843). Importantly, modernity appears susceptible to re-enchantment – and it is here that religion offers something that other social institutions cannot: spirit itself, the spiritual, and spirituality. Thus,

"far from spelling the end of religion, personalization, fragmentation, and compartmentalization serve as the social context *within* which religious organizations *in* civil society must adapt" (2010, page 336, emphasis added).

Modernity, in this view, provides the social umbrella under which religion must find a place. Religions must find ways to offer modern individuals something that they cannot find elsewhere in society. As society becomes every more complex, ever more differentiated, ever more fluid, religion can provide the individual, the family and the community with a stable core of beliefs and values that permit them to ride out the rough seas of social transformation. For Wilford, this means that religions will act as sacred islands – his term is *archipelagos* – in the profane oceans of modernity, which are oftentimes found in rural areas, small towns, and suburbs (see also Dwyer, Gilbert and Shah, 2012). Wilford's geography of religion, then, is not about a backward rural that has yet to suffer the full force of modern social

transformation, but about the small islands of religious authority, control and influence. This is not simply a metaphor: although churches can reach out through a variety of media, over great distances, the church nonetheless acts to *localize* congregations in particular sites of religious social interaction. The geography of religion is local – a local that can be stretched in a variety of ways, and indeed can encompass thousands upon thousands of people – as it is contained *within* global modern society. To be clear, churches can "jump scale" to become regional, national and international phenomena, but at no scale can they escape the social context of modernity. Thus, the proper scale of religion remains the body, the home and the community (2010, page 339).

Wilford's model of secularization, then, differs from the more common 'secularization as differentiation' model in two key respects. *First*, by attending to the geographies of secularization, Wilford is able to provide a more nuanced and subtle reading of the geographies of religion. Instead of seeing religion as some kind of "rural rump" – persisting in cities only as an anachronism and in the rural because it is premodern – Wilford is able to see a variety of scales at which religion can properly and plausibly work. *Second*, Wilford shows that religion can do more than simply resist social processes that undermine it from every direction. In his model, it is possible for religion to thrive. This is because, he hints, religion can offer something that modernity cannot: that is, *spirit*. It is on these two grounds that Wilford opens the opportunity for a rapprochement between secular and religious Human Geography.

3. Islands of Religion in a Godless Sea?

Even while Wilford allows a space for religion, these spaces are island chains in a vast ocean of modernity. It is in cities that the question of religion's persistence is held to be most acute. The city has become the geographical scale at which questions of the continued vitality and validity of religion are to be assessed. For a variety of reasons, many now see the city as postsecular in direct opposition to arguments that see cities as machines of modernity that with their sharp teeth – of rationalization, relativization, differentiation, individualization, and the like – will chew up religion and spit it out as a premodern curiosity.

In his preface to Justin Beaumont and Christopher Baker's recent collection of essays on postsecular cities (2011), for example, David Ley points to a number of factors that have centred religion at the heart of lively, and sometimes acrimonious, public debate. These

include (but are not confined to): the role of religion in wars, conflicts and acts of terrorism, both on a domestic and global scale; the role of faith groups in providing a safety net for those who are not being helped by the welfare state; the significance of religion amongst immigrants; and, the "militant mutations" of religion (2011, page xiii). Following Habermas (2006), Ley's argument is not that secular society has become desecularized (and that society is now religious), but rather that there is a new accommodation for religious practices and belief in modern Western societies.

Thus, Beaumont and Baker assert (2011b), assert that

"In this century [...] religion, faith communities and spiritual values have returned to *the centre* of public life, especially public policy, governance, and social identity" (page 1, emphasis added).

In stark contrast to Wilford's suggestion that religion persists in personal beliefs, in families and in communities, Beaumont and Baker are suggesting that there has been a radical shift in the role and place of religion in modern public life. This is more than simply a re-balancing of the relationship between secular and non-secular society – and more than the persistence of some sphere in which religion still holds legitimacy, influence and authority – rather modernity has, once again, become centrally engaged with questions of faith and spirit.

For Cloke and Beaumont (2013), the return of religion, faith communities and spiritual values creates new possibilities for relating that emerge out of both a new rapprochement between the secular and the sacred and also specific social and political responses to crises in neoliberal societies, with their increasing inequalities, their endemic economic crises, and their ceaseless rolling back of the welfare state. In a variety of places, they observe,

"there has been a coming-together of citizens who might previously have been divided by differences in theological, political or moral principles – a willingness to work together to address crucial social issues in the city, and in doing so to put aside other frameworks of difference involving faith and secularism" (Cloke and Beaumont, 2013, page 28).

Since the 1990s, they claim that boundaries between the secular and the religious have been eroded and become porous, such that moral and political principles can *cross-over* the divide between the secular and the religious. Indeed, changes in neoliberal governance have

themselves fostered new opportunities for the coming-together of citizens in voluntary activities that are defined less by what they believe and more by what they do (see also Baillie Smith *et al.*, 2013). In this view, the practice of caring and making a difference has become more important than the issue of whether one cares or makes a difference according to the right theological, political and moral principles (or not). Significantly, activists are now allowed to have, even valued for having, spiritual reasons for becoming socially and/or politically engaged with the ills of modern city life (see also Jamoul and Wills, 2008).

Indeed (as Wilford hints), Cloke and Beaumont argue that religion – unlike the secularism – can provide a set of discourses that can weave hope, nurturing, spirituality and prophecy together:

"This can embrace the role of spiritual interiority in diagnosing powers of good and evil that reside beyond material manifestations, and foster alternative discernment which can enable ruptures in the seemingly hegemonic spaces of the current order. In this way new spaces of hope and new lines of flight can be released into the politics and poetics of postsecular resistance in the contemporary city" (2013, page 44).

Far from being the machine that eats religion alive, the city is, rather, a state of emergency that calls religion to arms, witnessed in practices such as, most famously, the soup kitchen, but also a range of other kinds of support for the destitution and homeless (Cloke, May and Johnsen, 2007; Williams, Cloke and Thomas, 2012; also Jamoul and Wills, 2008 and Cloke, 2011). It is religion's eternal moral compass that enables the proper diagnosis of the city's, and modernity's, social and moral ills. Far from being the first place and foremost space where religion is expelled from modern social life, or exists in small islands, the city is rather a battlefield between good and evil, between material existence and that which lies beyond material manifestation. In this view, religion's geographies are less tied to the spaces of the personal, the family and the community than to the very real struggles of, and over, place and space in modernity. Indeed, these struggles can, they believe, lead to ruptures in the very fabric of modern social life, by creating an alternative vision of the future, and of life itself. As proof, Cloke and Beaumont cite the wide range of new churches that are emerging in modern cities, the proliferation of new faith practices, and radical politics driven by faith practices (2013, page 44).

In many way, Beaumont, Cloke and Wilford share a view of the city as containing polar opposite world-views: science and religion; the material and the immaterial; the political and

the moral. Strangely, this maps neatly onto Robert Park's view. While their opinions of the fate of science and religion differ, what remains relentlessly intact is a clear separation between science and religion. Modernity is always placed in the side of science. Religion, meanwhile, seems to exist, or persist (even as a premodern residue), *in* cities, but is not seemingly *of* the city. We will return to these presumptions later in this paper. For now, however, it is important to note that divorcing science and religion almost entirely occludes any consideration of the existence of alternative spiritualities. This is not simply an oversight, but, we believe, the symptomatic blind spot of a dichotomized model of modernity and religion.

In this context, it is not inconsequential to note that there is no evidence to suggest that religion and its practices are in fact increasing in any quantitative way in the so-called postsecular city. So, the signs of cultural transformation point in opposite directions: towards the greater significance of religion in contemporary society at the same time as there is a decline in the number of people involved in religion and its practices; towards a radical accommodation between religion and secular society at the same time as there are long continuities in the nature of that accommodation. For Heelas and Woodward (2005), cultural transformation is not turning around questions of religion, but around a change in the nature of spirituality itself. We are not moving inexorably towards a postsecular society as Beaumont and Baker would have it, but towards a society with many new forms of spirituality.

4. The Rise of New Spiritualities?

In Human Geography, debates about secularization and postsecular society are dominated by the presence or absence of religion from public life, but especially in Western cities (see especially Beaumont and Baker, 2011). Religion (usually in the guise of Christianity and Islam) remains the basic model through which spirituality has been understood in Geography: for recent reviews, see Yorgason and Della Dora, 2009 or Kong, 2010. Critical studies of religion, influenced by broader questions of social diversity and discrimination, tend to be dominated by the (contested) effects of the location of religious buildings and rituals on neighbourhoods, communities and the landscape, especially where minority religions struggle for space (see Holloway and Valins, 2002). Privileged in these studies are, unsurprisingly, the major world organized religions: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Judaism. However, if Cloke and Beaumont are right to argue that the modern city provides

fertile ground for new "lines of flight" and new "spaces of hope" for developing alternative spiritualities that engage with the ills of modern social life, then it seems an oversight to focus only on those religions that (strangely) pre-date modernity (wherever its start date is) by several centuries or more. Studies of other, alternative spiritual ideas – of the kind identified by Paul Heelas and others (Heelas and Woodward, 2005) – have only been conducted sporadically by geographers.

Exceptionally, there have been studies of yogic practices (Lea, 2008, 2009a and 2009b), of a 'new age' group visiting Egypt (Rose, 2010), retreat sites (Conradson, 2012), and the significance of affect in spirituality, including Taoist Tai Chi (Finlayson, 2012). Of these, Rose's study is worth highlighting as it dwells, specifically, on questions of *sacredness* itself: a question largely avoided in the literature on religion, perhaps because this focus attends to personal beliefs, rituals and experiences. Significantly, although not concerned with sacredness, Finlayson's sensitivity to affect and emotions in religious and spiritual practices highlights people's spiritual experiences. Meanwhile, there is even less work on the occult phenomena and occulture (though see Bartolini *et al.*, 2013; Dixon, 2007; Holloway, 2006, 2010; MacKian, 2012; and Pile, 2005, 2006). Nonetheless, it is these margins – in the 'alternative' spiritualities of modern Western culture – that we believe proffers the best perspective from which to launch a different understanding of the place of spirituality in modern social life. Let us first map out these alternative spiritualities. But, first, a word of caution: clearly, what is alternative and what is mainstream will differ from place to place. Indeed, what is alternative not only depends on where you are, but at where you think the mainstream is. Put another way, it opens up a fundamentally a geographical question about the place of spirit.

In a classic study, Heelas and Woodhead's own map of alternative spiritualities is firmly located in Kendal, England (2005): Kendal is a small market town of about 27,000 people, situated in Cumbria, in England's north-west. It is probably better known for its mint cake than its religiosity. Rather than study towns with strong reputations for New Age spiritualism, such as Glastonbury and Totnes (in England's south-west), Ceredigion (in Wales) or Findhorn (in Scotland), Heelas and Woodhead deliberately choose a place that is (they argue) demographically typical for England as a whole. Kendal is, for them, England in a nutshell. Heelas and Woodward's premise is that (in opposition to the idea that we are now living in a postsecular society) is that Christianity is not only in decline, but also has declining influence (2005, page 1). This, however, does not lead them to conclude that society is in the throes of

militant secularization. Instead, they wonder whether religion is being replaced by new forms of spirituality.

Just as those who argue that the rise of postsecular society is connected to wider social trends (geopolitics, the roll back of the state, migration), Heelas and Woodhead are careful to situate the rise of New Age spiritualities within its contexts: these include increasing consumerism and a move from industrial towards soft capitalism (Thrift, 1997). Of particular significance, they argue, is "subjectivization": an increasing concern for people's well being, happiness, states of mind, bodily experiences, emotional states and so on. What Heelas and Woodward discover is a dramatic rise in alternative spiritualities that promote personal wellbeing, health and happiness. These included (but are not limited to):

" 'body, mind and spirit', 'New Age', 'alternative' or 'holistic' spirituality, and which include (spiritual) yoga, reiki, meditation, tai chi, aromatherapy, much paganism, rebirthing, reflexology, much wicca and many more" (page 7).

Perhaps unexpectedly, given the clear evidence for a rise in new spiritual beliefs and activities, Heelas and Woodward argue that no broad spiritual revolution could be found in Kendal, nor was there any reason to think there might be one in England as a whole. Importantly, they could not envisage new spiritualities overtaking religion in the foreseeable future, even while anticipating further decline of Christianity (pages 149-150). Indeed, the recent 2011 census for England and Wales has proved Heelas and Woodhead correct: while the numbers declaring themselves as Christian has fallen from 37.3 million (72%) in 2001 to 33.2 million (59%), there are about as many Buddhists (247,743) as those saying they follow 'other religions' (240,530) (see Bartolini *et al.*, 2013, page 11). It is also worth noting that those responding that they have 'no religion' increased from 7.7 million in 2001 (14.7%) to 14.1 million (25.2%) in 2011: after over a century of so-called militant secularization, this result might be considered a little disappointing for those who believe God has died.

Surprisingly, perhaps, Heelas and Woodhead argue that the significance and influence of new spiritualities has *nonetheless* had a transformative effect at the level of culture. At this point, there is a striking resemblance between arguments about the significance of new spiritualities and arguments for the repositioning of religion in postsecular society. For both, spirituality has – despite evidence of decline in Christianity and numerically small numbers formally identifying with alternative belief systems – nonetheless shifted from the margins of modern social life to become the soul of such archetypally modern spheres as medicine and education.

More than this, as has been noted, what is on offer in alternative spiritualities, as with institutionalized religions, is a discourse of spiritual wealth, happiness and peace that is seemingly beyond the reach of the modern institutions of science and the state.

Significantly, Holloway points out that alternative spiritual practices have long experimented in antidotes to injuries of modern everyday life (2003). Further, Holloway's paper also offers a challenge to a dichotomized view of modern social life that sees the everyday profane world as separate from sacred, spiritual life (on this, see also Kong, 2001, 2002). Holloway asks:

"to speak of a set of beliefs that enter into the realm of the everyday and transform the ordinary into the extraordinary, or the normal into the paranormal, seems somewhat counterintuitive: in a disenchanted world of secular pressures and processes, where and when does the spiritual and the religious appear?" (2003, page 1961).

All of this seems to suggest that the place of spirit, spirituality and the spiritual is not as clear cut as some might assume. Is the spiritual really outside of modernity, science and the state, only offering a counter-narrative from some sphere differentiated from, and by, modernity? Is modernity only to be enchanted by processes that lie outside of modernity? It would seem, from the assumptions of Beaumont, Wilford and Cloke that the answer is a resounding "yes". Spirituality and religion must exist in conceptual and actual spaces that are, seemingly contradictorily, both within and outside of ordinary modern life. Indeed, this would also appear to be Heelas and Woodhead's stance, except with alternative spiritualities entering from a third space (conceptual and actual) outside of religion and modernity.

Holloway's stance is radically different. He argues that maybe modernity is not quite so disenchanted, and not so secular, as is commonly presumed. By focusing on an "everyday sacred" (as he puts it), Holloway hopes to show up the mundane and ordinary ways in which modern life is infused with the spiritual (2003, page 1961; see also MacKian, 2012). Indeed, new and alternative spiritualities rarely mark themselves off into discrete spaces – with identifiable buildings, such as churches – but rather are infused into ordinary spaces, such as living rooms, kitchens, bookshops, bric-a-brac stores, public meeting rooms, sports centres, council buildings, schools, village/town halls and the like (MacKian, 2012), exactly as Heelas and Woodhead showed in Kendal.

Even while Holloway argues to the contrary, it remains the case that the dichotomy between the secular and the sacred is entrenched in analyses of religion, while, in secular geography,

spirituality is completely ignored in favour of assuming that social life is profane (as Wilford argues, 2010). As a direct consequence, some trends in social life have been almost entirely overlooked by geographers – one of these being the appearance of what Chris Partridge has called "occulture". It is from the seeming margins of occulture that we might glimpse a new ways of understanding the place of spirit in modern societies; yet, we should also note that these margins are at the centre of trends in popular culture. So, while popular, everyday culture is often marginalised in Human Geography, we argue that it is a mistake to dismiss occulture as ephemeral – after all, so-called occulture has been around for a very long time. Indeed, the Gothic (as much as its recent occultural offspring) is intriguingly coincident with modernity (as has long been pointed out: see Mighall, 1999 or Riquelme, 2008). Maybe this is not actually a coincidence?

5. Occulture and Modern Western Culture

At the outset, we mentioned that the evidence for secularization is not as unequivocal as the secularists would like. We referred to the poll commissioned by the Richard Dawkins Foundation in support of their case that belief in religion is on the decline. Yet, buried in their poll, and passed over without discussion by all commentators, are some other curious results. In it, we can glimpse evidence that suggests it is reasonable to attempt a more complex reading of faith, religion and spirituality in contemporary British society. For example, let us take a look at Question 18, which is about personal beliefs in various otherworldly or paranormal phenomena. Adding together those who said they completely believe or believe to some extent: 63% believe in heaven, though only 41% in hell; 27% believe in astrology, but 64% in fate; 37% believe in ghosts and 27% in reincarnation; and, 63% believed in the power of prayer. So, while only 17% reported that they attended church services once a week or more, there appears to be a high degree of belief in a wide range of more-than-natural, more-than-worldly phenomena.

Interestingly, while some beliefs, such as the power of prayer, may be linked to religious rituals, others might not be, such as for example the widespread experience of ghosts or belief in UFOs (and the like). What such evidence opens up is not the question of who is winning the war between faith in God and faith in science (on these figures, it is still religion), but (at the very least) how different occult, divine, otherworldly, superstitious, supernatural, paranormal and spiritual (etc.) ideas (from whatever source) continue to spread and weave through modern society. Indeed, for Chris Partridge, modern culture is actually better

described as *occulture* – which is readily witnessed in all popular cultural forms, from music to cinema, from literature to the visual arts (2004). You would have to have had your head in the sand to be unable to list your own examples of what Partridge is talking about: vampires, werewolves, wizards, witches, zombies, faeries, ghosts, demons are seemingly unavoidable in today's (most) popular movies and books. No sooner has one popular series of books appeared (e.g. the Harry Potter books and films) than it seems to be replaced by another (e.g. The Twilight series), which is then replaced by yet another (e.g. The Caster Chronicles; The Mortal Instruments series).

Annette Hill is similarly convinced that these occultural forms mark a fundamental shift in popular culture (2011). She argues that

"there is a paranormal turn in popular culture. Beliefs are on the rise in contemporary western societies. Almost half the British population, and two-thirds of American people, claim to believe in some form of the paranormal, such as extrasensory perception, hauntings and witchcraft" (2011, page 1).

The list of new forms of paranormal experience is ever-growing (see also Williams, 2010 and Burger, 2010). There are: vampire tours, ghost hunter TV shows, TV psychics, angel divination cards, spiritual retreats, tarot readings, psychic theatre performances, shamanic drumming courses and more, much more. The point here is that it is unhelpful, as Wilford attempts, to separate modernity into distinct spheres, be they religious, economic, cultural, or political (and so on). This is especially evident when we consider the bleed of occulture and culture into one another. For example, the "zombie walk" has now become a widespread phenomenon closely linked to other forms of resistance to neoliberalism.

One such walk took place in December 2011, *during* the now famous Occupy Protests in New York. A plague of "corporate zombies", wearing blood soaked suits and clutching in their cold dead hands fistfuls of money, shuffled ominously towards Wall Street. Zombies also gathered in Seattle and Los Angeles. These were not the first zombie walks: zombies have been walking for over a decade – and, like the zombie plagues they emulate, they have gathered mass and spread. In November 2012, organizers estimate that 30,000 zombies plagued the twin cities (Minneapolis - Saint Paul), although the Guinness Book of Records' estimate is nearer 8,000. Zombie walks have been used to highlight the modern evils of corporate greed, world hunger, and mass consumerism.

Such experiments echo those identified by Cloke and Beaumont as "cross-over" initiatives, between the secular and the sacred. Yet, they remain largely unexplored by Human Geographers precisely because they do not fit the model (attempts at zombie-based learning notwithstanding: www.zombiebased.com): they are neither secular, nor sacred, but a different kind of profane – a product of its enchantments. Now, to be clear, there are probably as many reasons to turn up to zombie fests dressed as a zombie as there are zombies. Such expressions of occulture or paranormal popular culture do not necessarily point to a belief in the occult or the paranormal. However, the point is that distinctions between modernity and magic, between the paranormal and politics, between the sacred and the profane, become porous and mutable when viewed from within occulture and alternative spiritualities.

So, what exactly counts as Christian breaks down very quickly when we consider the significance of angels. For Doreen Virtue, author of over fifty books on angels, and other forms of spiritual healing, and a designer of angel oracle cards,

"angel therapy is a non-denominational spiritual healing method that involves working with a person's guardian angels and archangels, to heal and harmonize every aspect of life" (www.angeltherapy.com/about_at.php).

Far from being confined to Christians, everyone gets their own personal guardian angel. The main question, then, is how to communicate with your guardian angel, not whether you believe in the right kind of God or not. Indeed, Doreen confesses that initially she ignored the voices of her guardian angel and this almost, fatefully, led to her being attacked by two armed men. Fortunately, when confronted, her angel advised her to scream with all her being, so loudly that passers-by came to her aid. Whatever one makes of such a tale, trying to distinguish between the Christian, spiritual, secular and mundane elements of this story is to miss the point – the point is that they are indistinguishable. This indeterminacy is equally as acute when considering what is often called *reality*, often seen by science as its exclusive preserve.

Writing in a leading UK spiritual magazine *Kindred Spirit*, punk scientist Dr Manjir Samanta-Laughton uses the phenomenon of Hawking radiation – a phenomenon predicted by quantum physics involving the emission of black body radiation near the event horizon of black holes – to argue that black holes are a creative phenomenon. She suggests, indeed, that black holes are the source of infinite light and that this light spirals through all dimensions of reality. Beyond this infinite light

"resides the 90 per cent of the universe that we cannot account for – so-called dark matter and dark energy. It is also the realm of mystical experience; the bright light seen by people who meditate and even in Near Death Experiences" (July/August 2012, page 33).

Nor are new spiritualities solely concerned with personal growth, a criticism often levelled at them (see Carrette and King, 2005). Examples can easily be found of collective, political action on spiritual grounds. It is possible to point, for example, to how Tibet functions as a spiritual and political touchstone. This is very much Matteo Pistono's experience. Recalling his 1999 pilgrimage to Tibet to *Kindred Spirit* (Nov/Dec 2011, pages 22-25), Pistono says that it began initially as a spiritual journey, motivated by personal development and the desire to immerse himself in mystical philosophy. However, this journey led him to the question of human rights within Tibet and to human rights activism. The Tibetan people, he discovered, were not interested in discussing mystical and esoteric questions, but in addressing the very real political situation presented by Chinese occupation.

"So I found my pilgrimage took this very sharp turn to the political. During my upbringing, my father was a labour activist and my mother was politically active and I had worked on some political campaigns in America, so it wasn't difficult for me to look through that political lens and to see what was happening on the ground" (Pistono in Gillman, 2012, page 22).

Nor do sharp distinctions between the spirituality and the economic hold (Bartolini et al., 2013). Elizabeth Villani argues that tapping into one's spiritual side can be effective in the workplace (Sept/Oct 2012). Her particular blend involves a mixture of magic, alchemy and intuition. From personal experience, she says, it is possible to turn around a life of failure and become a success:

"I left my well-paid corporate job nine years ago to become a coach (a life coach at first, now I teach and coach internationally). So yes, I have strived to get clients. I have been penniless and desperate. I have made mistakes. I have trusted the wrong people. I have had to depend on others to support me – all of which is not easy, I know. But actually I have now discovered that rather than looking to others, the universe, fate, the angels, my business plan to work, that I make it work. I am an instrument of alchemy and magic – and so are you" (page 32)

We would not wish to exaggerate any claims that some fundamental transformation is taking place in modernity on the basis of such examples (although they are far from uncommon, see MacKian, 2012). We are not even claiming, as Heelas and Woodhead do, that some kind of mini-spiritual revolution is taking place or that occulture is now the dominant form of culture. But we do want to conclude on the implications of all this for the secular and post-secular models of society and geography that currently dominate Human Geography. In particular, we wish to challenge the presumption that modernity is somehow a-religious and a-spiritual and, consequently, that religion and spirit somehow come from some place, conceptually and actually, outside of Modernity and modern social life.

6. Conclusion: the geographies of spirituality – beyond the local, networks and spheres

As we have seen, accounts of secularity and post secular society in human geography have been created against a backdrop of modernity as comprised of processes of rationalization, social differentiation, individualization, pluralization and neoliberalization. Whether this leaves a place for religion, or eradicates it, is very much the nub of the debate.

As we saw, in Wilford's hands, secularization takes on a differentiated form, allowing for different social spheres, each with their own forms of legitimacy, authority and influence. Religion gets its own sphere. This enables Wilford to witness a variety of religious forms that now have a place, in not in, then alongside, modern society. The "natural" scales for religion, he argues, are the individual, the family and the community. Following examples of evangelical Christian churches in the United States of America (see for example Dittmer and Sturm, 2010), he shows that these churches can form communities over "stretched" distances, reaching out to thousands, if not millions, of people through media such as television and the like. Nonetheless, religion must necessarily subsist on islands in the great sea of modernity.

While Beaumont and Cloke agree that islands of religion persist in modern social life, their stance alters both the form and function of religion and its spaces. While for Wilford religion persists as a premodern enchantment of unenchanted modern life, Beaumont and Cloke see religion performing "cross-over" functions that align it with both a radical critique of modern social life as well as a range of practices of care that are designed to ameliorate the excesses of neoliberal crisis. Instead of a geography of spheres and islands, Beaumont and Cloke open up an account of religion involving networks and discourses, which are mobile and shift, and

talk to one another. The prime location for these overlapping networks is the city, which is a dense gathering point for many different kinds of network, both secular and non-secular. Religion, even so, still stands outside of modern social life, observing its catastrophes (*as if*) from outside.

The same impression of "outsideness" can be gained from accounts of New Age and alternative spiritualities. They also function as radical critiques of modern social life, yet, as Heelas and Woodhead observe, much of their focus is on personal spiritual development as a response to the ills of society. Four different kinds of geography dominate, here. First, there are personal geographies, involving ideas such as the personal journey. It is these spaces that have attracted most attention from geographers. Second, there are niche spaces, where alternative spiritual practices find small spaces to express themselves in spaces dominated by other functions, whether its the shop window or the temporary use of rooms in Council buildings or in living rooms. Third, there are retreats and spiritual communities. Finally, there are transcendental spaces, which are spaces of the mind, the spaces "beyond". The implications of these geographies for thinking about geographies of religion have been, for the most part, entirely overlooked.

Accounts of occulture, and the paranormal turn in popular culture, invert the common analysis that modernity is somehow free of divine, spiritual, mystical, supernatural, superstitious ideas. Instead of being outside modern social life, occulture is a description of it, both as a form and as a lived experience. To be sure, this is a cultural analysis of modern social life, but this analysis also suggests that the occult and the paranormal seeps from every pore of modernity. That said, the prime sites for witnessing occulture and the paranormal turn in modern social life are confined to sites of cultural consumption: cinema, music, television, theatre and the like. Even so, *contra* Wilford, this suggests that modernity is perfectly capable of generating its own enchantments. Logically, then, religion is not just a resource for modern enchanted thinking, it is also its product.

Moreover, the existence of many ideas of faith, belief and spirit, side by side, in the modern city, has been seen as a problem for any one religion, as each struggles to assert its truths over and above the truths of other (competing) religions. However, this is not simply a problem for a particular religion, it is by extension also a problem for science and reason – which themselves must also be seen as one option amongst others, which can be as easily disbelieved as believed. Once religion, science and superstition are placed on an equal footing (with neither being able to sustain claims to absolute authority), and once both seem equally

as mystical as the other, then the city – and modernity – is best seen a breeding ground for new faiths and practices.

Such an idea is close to Beaumont and Cloke's sense that there are cross-over narratives, but what this model does is question the idea that, *on the one hand*, there are religious spheres or discourses that are somehow un-modern and that, *on the other*, there are spheres and discourses that are somehow free of spirit, superstition, magic and the like. Even so, it is possible to argue that religion, spirituality, superstition, magic and the like are actually the "stuff" out of which modernity has been built, alongside the more usual suspects of reason and science. If in modernity, as Marx and Engels suggested, "all that is solid melts into air" (*The Communist Manifesto*, 1848), then modernity actually becomes a form of alchemy: it is less about Progress than about *the creation of ever new combinations of already existing elements* (see Pile, 2005, 2006).

If we follow a model of modernity that sees it as already enchanted, magical, occult and spiritual, where expressions of the divine and the occult are already folded through modern social life, then this undermines cut and dried geographies of the secular and the post-secular; of spheres, networks or islands of anything; of beliefs, faiths and truths that are somehow outside one another, especially where these are held to be either modern or premodern. This is *not* to say that analyses of the geographies we have outlined above are useless or inaccurate. It is however to argue that they must be supplemented by more geographies. Where are the geographies of the transcendental spaces? Where are the occult geographies of city life? Indeed, where are the geographies of Christian evangelical churches outside of America?

If modernity is produced by, and productive of, all kinds of ideas about spirit, then these will subtend people's mundane practices and lives – at least as much as they will Church-going or watching *Supernatural* on TV. It is this mundane geography of spirituality – of all the myriad things people have faith in and how these faiths weave in and out of their lives – that is most absent in current discussions of secularity and postsecularity. This argument clearly parallels recent calls to take account of religion – especially under the banner of 'vernacular religion' – in people's everyday lives (see McGuire, 2008; Bowman and Valk, 2012; and, in geography, Olson, Hopkins and King, 2012; MacKian, 2012). But we are also suggesting something a little more.

Holloway has recently argued, the boundary between the religious and the non-religious is "increasingly fuzzy and fluid" (2012, page 204). Without undermining Holloway's point,

from our perspective, it has always been fuzzy and fluid. At this moment, though its fuzziness and fluidity is taking on new forms – and new geographies – which are barely perceptible because they remain "under the radar" of geographies of both religion and secularity. Yet, they are unquestionably there (see Bartolini et al, 2013).

Rather than simply stirring in more forms of spirituality to the soup of geographies of religion and spirituality, we are suggesting that we need to rethink the lines drawn between the secular and religious, to look beyond their divided geographies. In this, we wish to push further in the direction set out by *both* Julian Holloway *and* Paul Cloke. In some ways, this might seem perverse: after all, neither of them are given to engaging with each other's work. Yet, Cloke's argument about the cross-over between religious and secular activism and Holloway's fuzzy and fluid boundaries surely speak to one another. In some ways, we wish to provoke this conversation. However, there also seems to be an inadequacy of the conceptual and spatial assumptions that are being made about the separate realms of spirituality, religion and modernity, especially as cities appear to be as much machines for producing superstition and religion as reason and science. As Marx points out, modernity turns solids into air – and this includes the solids of science as well as those of religion.

Where does this leave us? Our answer to this question is to focus on the fuzzy and fluid boundaries between superstition, religion and modernity. Unquestionably, geographies of religion have focused – entirely reasonably – on the religious, especially on Christianity and Islam. Yet, what this misses is practices, forms of spirituality and spiritual experiences that lie on the margins. It is perhaps in what Cloke would call the cross-over spaces or in what Holloway would call the fuzzy borders that we are most likely to generate new ways of thinking about the place of spirit in modern Western societies.

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[To be written]

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