What Does it *Feel* Like to be Post-Secular?

Ritual Expressions of Religious Affects in Contemporary Renewal Movements

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Abstract

This paper seeks to problematise and complexify scholarly accounts of contemporary emotional repression in Western contexts by presenting counter evidence in the form of two examples of post-secular collective affectivity and their ritual expressions. It argues that both narratives of emotional repression and expression fail to capture the non-linear complexity of processes of cultural transformation, which have resulted in the simultaneous expression and repression of ritualistic affects that are products of our evolutionary embodied history. Drawing on insights from affect theory, this paper seeks to illustrate how contingent yet nonetheless residual ritualistic affects have become repressed in the nominally secular public sphere in modernity. This has presented certain obstacles to the open communal display of religious ritual, and, as a corollary, the expression of certain religious affects, which have subsequently re-emerged in post-secular ritual spaces that are both publically private and privately public, carved by contemporary renewal movements. Two of these 'formations of the post-secular' are explored here: the Sunday Assembly, a secular church, and Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, an international Pentecostal Deliverance church.

Keywords: secularism, post-secularism, ritual, emotion, affect theory, modernity, Pentecostalism, postmodernism

Introduction

In an otherwise comprehensive account of religious emotion published in 2010, Ole Riis and Linda Woodhead put forward the claim that in the contemporary Western context, '"hot" expressions of strong emotion are frowned upon…in most public places'.[1] Riis and Woodhead suggest it has become 'embarrassing and low status to be hot', concluding that

there has been a gradual 'blunting' of emotional expression, resulting in the 'very limited…emotional repertoire of late modernity'.[2] Embedded implicitly in their position is a certain schema of modernity which understands the gradual divorcing of the public from the private to be successful, complete, and universal. As a corollary, 'hot' emotion - which we might assume means enthusiastic and expressive emotion - is presumed to have become privatised, having bowed to the modern regime and suffered the same fate as its counterpart, religion. And yet scholars have for a long time known that the secularising forces of modernity have largely failed in this project, that 'private interests are always leaking into public space' and that religion has gleaned a new visibility in our post-secular age.[3] This observation is not purely sociological; academics operating across the humanities and in critical theory have recently extended invitations to theologians to engage in central conversations reconsidering notions such as gender and representation.[4] Theologians are responding with openness and reciprocity, eager to incorporate social scientific methods into their research.[5] This paper therefore seeks to interrogate and problematise Riis and Woodhead's claim by virtue of its reliance on a particular conception of modernity and its bounded spaces that has become obsolete. This becomes particularly apparent when accounting for recent ritual performances of collective religious enthusiasm that serve to upset the tidy seclusion of the private from the public, or at least the illusion of it. This paper will explore two examples of these post-secular movements: the Sunday Assembly, a self-professed 'secular church' first established in London, and Mountain of Fire and Miracles church, a Pentecostal Deliverance church founded in Nigeria with branches throughout the West. These far-reaching devotional bodies are hardly fringe subcultures; the popularity of the Sunday Assembly has propelled it to launch over seventy chapters in eight different countries, and the Mountain of Fire and Miracles church claims to have re-birthed over half a billion souls that dip in and out of spiritual ecstasy.[6] The large-scale 'worship' sessions

hosted by these movements in metropolitan civic centres straddle the fence between public and private, as they operate as important loci of 'diversity' within the liberal and multicultural habitus of secular modernity.[7] Their proficiency in appropriating the latest communication technologies for evangelistic purposes has allowed them to gain large followings on social media and hence participate in what those working in technology studies call the 'recalibration' of the public/private divide, and its 'complex interpenetration', privatising the 'public' and publicising the 'private'.[8]

In offering a critique of Riis and Woodhead's narrative of emotional repression, I will apply insights emerging from affect theory to these examples in order to argue that collective religious ritual is a medium through which certain religious affects have historically, even evolutionarily, been experienced and expressed. In becoming formally (or, at least, nominally) secular according to the modern rubric, the 'neutrality' of the public sphere has presented certain obstacles to the open communal display of religious ritual, and, as a corollary, the expression of certain religious affects. Contingent yet nonetheless evolutionarily 'intransigent' ritualistic affects have become repressed and subsequently rear their heads in what I am calling 'formations of the post-secular', taking my cue from Talal Asad's 'formations of the secular'.[9] In so doing, I hope to show that late modernity's emotional repertoire is not 'limited', 'blunted' and 'cool', but diverse, sharp and at times hot in character.[10] This, I hope, will further encourage theologians to draw on the valuable tools offered by affect theorists and anthropologists of post-secularity for theorising the interdependency of ritual, emotion and the body in their current writings on sacrament, pathos and the incarnation. If the contemporary post-secular context operates to blur the oppositional divisions between belief and unbelief, public and private, reason and emotion, then those interested in analysing it – whether from a theological or cultural perspective - are

not exempt from the challenge to conceive of ways in which these longstanding analytical dualisms might be overcome, should they no longer serve their purpose.

Inverted Genealogies of Emotion

Let me begin by examining Riis and Woodhead's claim. Whilst the two are eager to assure readers that Western society has not become '"post-emotional" in the sense that emotions are absent or superficial or universally degraded', they are nonetheless confident that late modernity brings 'certainly both a subduing and blunting of emotion' overall.[11] This implies a change is afoot, which begs two key questions: Were human beings more emotional in the past? And if so, what is behind this process of emotional diminution or repression? In support of their argument, Riis and Woodhead appear to be drawing on a Weberian narrative of 'purposive rationalisation', a Freudian account of the repressive effects of civilisation on the motives of the Id, together with a Foucauldian notion of 'discipline'.[12] They are influenced by Norbert Elias' classic text, *The Civilising Process*, which puts forward the argument that the modern European individual, the Enlightenment man, is more emotionally (and physically) restrained than his medieval counterparts, who were 'wild, cruel, prone to violent outbreaks and abandoned to the joy of the moment'.[13] According to this kind of narrative, Reformation theology served to internalise behavioural sanctions and communal ritualistic expressions which were previously administered by the church. Whilst discourse about controlling the (fallen) passions goes back to Augustine (and, further, to the Stoics), anxiety about inflamed passions played a large role in the puritanical agenda, as did the side-lining of ritual behaviour. Central to these regimes of discipline was the divorcing of the public from the private which set into motion the confinement of emotion to the private realm. Notions of 'privacy' and 'intimacy' developed, which in the seventeenth century served to alter living

arrangements in particular.[14] Charles Taylor describes this 'buffered, disciplined self' as the seat of the 'individual'.[15]

Stjepan Meštrović's *Postemotional Society* brings this account of the progressive marginalisation of emotion into conversation with concurrent developments in the sphere of mass communication technology.[16] Meštrović describes the late modern individual's proclivity for absorbing and rehearsing 'dead emotions from the past' in a synthetic manner, as affectively infused rituals and events become abstracted and de-sensitised from their broader situations and then re-inserted into a 'mass-produced' context.[17] Consumers are drip-fed pre-meditated emotional packages by marketing campaigns that are especially engineered to solicit particular responses, and so 'because the present cannot be a source of spontaneous emotion…inspiration must come from the past'.[18] 'Postemotionalism', Meštrović writes, 'refers to the use of dead, abstracted emotions by the culture industry in a neo-Orwellian, mechanical, and petrified manner'.[19]

These 'repression' narratives are only half the story: historians of emotion are far from unanimous in their conclusions about the affective directions of Western society. In fact, there is a competing and inverted genealogy of emotion, which, according to Riis and Woodhead, highlights 'the triumph of manifold emotional expressivism'.[20] This story speaks of the '"turn to the self" and personal emotions, whose cultural roots can be traced to Romanticism'.[21] Riis and Woodhead explore Cancian and Gordon's account of the 'changing emotion norms' in twentieth century American marriages from an ascetic approach that emphasised 'self-sacrifice, avoidance of conflict, and rigid gender roles', to one that celebrated 'self-development, open communication of negative and positive feelings…and more flexible [gender] roles'.[22] Interestingly, the 'trend toward individualism' is again identified as the source of these changes, mirroring and inverting the role it plays in repression narratives.[23] Bellah et al. lament what they see as the mounting narcissism of the

‘therapeutic’ ethic, which has reconfigured interpersonal relationships into ‘lifestyle enclaves’, through its focus on ‘personal preference’ and the expression of feelings.[24] Gender and queer theorists might enquire whether this bemoaning is in fact a negative reaction to the perception that society is becoming ‘sentimentalised’ and hence ‘feminised’. From this perspective, emotion is ‘leaking’ into the public sphere, forcing men to join women in the ‘cult of sensibility’, and hence threatening modernity’s tidy public/private dualism.

Analysis of the Genealogies

Before we proceed to examine the counter-thesis of this paper, let us properly consider how it is that scholars have come to describe inversely proportionate genealogies of emotion.[25] Both genealogies presuppose that rationalisation processes necessarily affect the extent to which emotions are expressed within a society. In the narratives of repression, reason is roughly inversely proportionate to emotion, in such a way that, as reason triumphs, emotional expression falters. In the narratives of expression, conversely, as reason flourishes, emotion also thrives but this may be because indulging one’s emotions is reconfigured as ‘rational’ under an individualistic regime that places a premium on selfhood. Should we be troubled by the fact that these two narratives are united in locating the cause of the modern emotional regime in rationalisation and individualisation processes, and yet draw diametrically opposing conclusions about the effects of such causes? What does this tell us about the historiography of emotion, as well as its history?

With their content stripped away, the skeletons of these arguments tell a ‘grand narrative’ of the sweeping forces of modernity that have swiftly done away with centuries of habitual emotion patterns and ritual behaviour.[26] Barbara Rosenwein writes that the ‘Middle Ages serve as a convenient foil for modernity’ when it comes to the history of emotion.[27] By reconceiving the pre-modern as a largely homogenous stretch of time, history appears to be

loosely divided into three largely discrete time-periods: the pre-modern, the modern and the postmodern. Bruno Latour would insist that this is where they take a wrong turn. 'Our modern mythology', he argues, 'consists in imagining ourselves as radically different' to the premoderns, or indeed other cultures.[28] On the contrary, 'we have never been modern', being the creatures of habit that we are.[29] Manuel de Landa's 'non-linear' historical methodology draws inspiration from Deleuze and Guattari to artfully demonstrate how 'human history is not marked by stages of progress but by coexistences of accumulated materials of diverse kinds'.[30] Cancian and Gordon's focused account of emotional expression in twentieth-century American marriages in fact draws a nuanced conclusion that is dealt rather lightly by Woodhead and Riis. Cancian and Gordon explicitly state, 'if we consider the entire twentieth century, instead of decades, we find a *zigzag* pattern of change associated with political liberation and oppression, not a *linear* trend' (italics mine), even if we can deduce some broader normative shifts.[31]

If we proceed to dispose of a singular, linear notion of time, then it becomes easier to understand that the effects of these processes are at least as multifarious and complex as the causes themselves. The anti-ritualism of Reformation theology may have functioned to internalise religious emotions and inhibit their collective expression, but, in turn, these second-order processes may also have encouraged those privatised emotions inscribed onto bodies to re-emerge in unexpected ritual 'formations'. Cultural shifts take place at different rates, in such a way that at any one point we are harbouring a mishmash of inconsistent, and at times incoherent emotional configurations and cognitive propositions, Tylorian 'survivals', Enlightenment ideals and post-Enlightenment reservations about those same ideals.[32] It is only our lingering and misguided belief in the rationality, transparency and coherence of Enlightenment man that serves to obfuscate these processes or sees them as overwhelmingly problematic.[33]

It is not just the structure of these narratives of modernity that require complexification, but the understandings of 'reason' and 'emotion' which they share and rely upon. Both narratives posit an unhelpful causal relationship between the two, and the concomitant sense they are antipodean to one another. Antonio Damasio's research in the field of neuroscience has demonstrated that even quotidian processes of decision-making rely upon emotional input. He concludes, along with other scholars like Solomon and De Sousa, that emotion is essential in order for us to navigate through our lives.[34] Affect theorist Silvan Tomkins inverts a Kantian approach when he writes, 'reason without affect would be impotent', and 'affect without reason would be blind'.[35]

Riis and Woodhead also acknowledge that language allows us to 'imagine that "emotion" and "reason" are "things" that can be located and measured and neatly compartmentalised', whereas, in reality, 'emotion' and 'rationality' are both 'collective' terms that direct 'attention to a range of processes and phenomena'.[36] For example, whilst for most Protestants (and, indeed, Catholics), *religious* affects, i.e. spiritual emotions carry value, it is those passions emerging from the body that are often regarded with suspicion. Religious affects can be broken down further too: consider the difference between a serene emotion of gratitude that emerges from 'cool' contemplative prayer and a 'hot' emotion of fear or desire that arises following a controversial sermon.

Theologian Simeon Zahl has argued that the scholarly focus on Luther's anti-subjectivist polemic against 'enthusiasm' has overlooked the fact that there are 'unresolved tensions' in Luther's own thought between a 'cold Protestant confessionalism', and an 'affectively-oriented' theological anthropology, the latter taking on 'particular significance'

alongside ‘contemporary renewal movements, which tend to be deeply affectively-oriented’ (and reflect the emotional extravagance of early Protestant offshoots like the Shakers and Diggers).[37] The Protestant history of religious affects is, then, complex enough, let alone the history of emotion in general, and so this paper limits itself to commenting only on the collective ritual expression of ‘hot’ religious affects in two contemporary renewal movements.

This casual treatment of ‘emotion’ and reliance on an epistemology of modernity which understands processes like individualisation, rationalisation and public/private differentiation to be complete, is the methodological reason why scholars have picked up on a large amount of evidence that supports both the repression and expression of emotion in late modern society. And yet even repression narratives that emphasise discontinuity in our emotional history do not go so far as to suggest ‘rationalised’ individuals would stop feeling emotions entirely or cease to carve spaces for their collective expression. The privatisation of emotion is not the expiration of emotion; the very notion of emotional repression paradoxically draws attention to its ongoing attendance. Meštrović explicitly draws attention to this when he writes, ‘emotions did not really disappear’, but a new set of ‘mechanical, mass-produced emotions’ became the order of the day.[38] Therefore, despite the substantial differences between the two narratives, both cannot avoid conceiving of emotion as a *steady, embodied technology of the self* that is permitted more or less scope for expression in different cultural environments. Communal ritual has historically been an important medium for the public expression of certain ‘hot’ religious affects. Although the modern project has sought to privatise, secularise, and ultimately repress their public and communal expression, they nonetheless ‘leak out’ in unexpected ritual ‘formations’ in post-secular post-modernity (to use a hydraulic metaphor). This has eventually forced the surrounding climate of secular

liberalism to accommodate these post-secular movements as examples of diversity within unity, rather than suspicious subcultures.

Insights from Affect Theory

Put another way, the distinction between the genealogies of repression and expression pivots on the tension between socially constructivist accounts of emotion which suggest that the possibility of being affected, and the textures of these affects, are infinite and purely culturally predicated, and new materialist accounts that wish to emphasise the more 'intransigent' and 'semi-stable' nature of emotion on, say, evolutionary grounds.[39] Naturally, the constructivist/essentialist debate has also found its way into discussions in affect theory and is useful in fortifying my argument that emotion is a steady, embodied technology of the self which, when repressed, will find another space for self-expression.

In *Religious Affects,* Schaefer identifies and categorises two streams of affect theory; the Spinozistic-Deleuzian and the phenomenological.[40] In the former, the emphasis is on affect as 'always in flux, the plasticity and endless reshaping of substance through the reformation of its infinite attributes'.[41] Brian Massumi brings a Spinozistic understanding of emotions as a 'question of lines, planes and bodies' into conversation with contemporary neuroscientific experiments via Deleuze, presenting an understanding of the body as indefinitely variable.[42] Massumi states that in the body, 'the levels at play could be multiplied to infinity'; affect is the 'point of emergence' where only one of the 'multiple and normally mutually exclusive potentials' are 'selected'.[43]

Using a Deleuzian motif, Schaefer likens this understanding of the body to 'sand castles, granulated conglomerates that are susceptible to radical reformation by the action of multidirectional waves washing over them'.[44] This 'biological hyperplasticity' hence corresponds to a social constructivist account of affective discontinuities, and the genealogy

of emotional repression.[45] This kind of understanding is useful to the extent that it allows for endless possibilities and combinations of personal and social emotional transformation; affect emerges as 'the space of becoming'.[46] On the other hand, however, there is a sense in which social constructivism has gone too far, producing theories that are difficult to buy into on the level of common sense, and could only have come out of the academy.[47] The sand castle may take infinite shapes, but each grain of sand is the same, an agglomeration of molecules of silicon dioxide. There is hence an inescapable atomistic essentialism to even the most plastic of models.

This lingering essentialism is perceptible in Deleuzian affect theory's attempt analytically to separate affect from emotion.[48] Affects, it is said, are 'irreducibly bodily and autonomic', whereas emotion is 'the socio-linguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal'.[49] When an affect rises to the level of awareness, and 'attains the level of conscious reflection', it becomes an 'emotion' that can be described.[50] Schaefer, Ahmed and others are sceptical of this attempt to cut off emotion from affect, on the grounds that it presupposes that there is, in fact, a clear moment between awareness and non-awareness of emotion, conscious and subconscious, public and private.[51] When does affect become emotion? Could such a moment be pinpointed? In reality, these divisions are rather fuzzy. The system confines affect to the 'prephenomenological sphere', presupposing 'in advance that structure and awareness can be comfortably set aside from the prestructured or preconscious forces that make them up'.[52] It imports a 'distinctly liberal ontology' which 'sees bodies as starting from a uniform position of epistemic and experiential neutrality' rather than 'fused to a biological history', Schaefer writes.[53] As such, it continues to draw strength from a kind of Enlightenment, and presumably Lockean notion of personhood that views the self as 'a free man, a blank slate', another Tylorian 'survival' that endures beyond its usefulness. [54]

For Ahmed, the separation of emotion and affect also 'risks cutting emotions off from the lived experiences of being and having a body'.[55] In rejecting the naturalistic and the materialistic, tropes which have historically been attached to the female, there is a sense in which an over-exaggerated social constructivism is counterproductive to feminist objectives, denying to women that which appears to make them women, sterilising and 'rationalising' (hence, masculinising) their physicality. The materialist shift seeks to address this 'sort of overcorrection', this 'sharp swing of the pendulum from biological determinism to biological hyperplasticity', which has been branded a 'hygiene of current antiessentialism'.[56]

Given these shortcomings, I follow Schaefer when he advocates the 'phenomenological' model of affect, (and argues that 'affect' and 'emotion' should be used interchangeably). Schaefer introduces the notion of 'intransigence' which suggests that 'emotions are built into our bodies – that they are artifacts of an embodied evolutionary history' that persist 'across bodies' and create 'species-specific, embodied universals imprinted at birth'.[57] Schaefer calls this account 'postessentialist', drawing on Sedgwick when she writes, 'there is not a choice waiting to be made between essentialism and no essentialism. If there's a choice it is between differently structured residual essentialisms'.[58] This insight is useful when read alongside the conclusions made in this paper concerning the genealogies of emotion. The evidence for both expression and repression illustrates the multiplicity of different types of emotional effects and counter-effects simultaneously, but also the 'intransigent' nature of the human capacity to experience emotion more generally, which in the face of repression, will flow into new spaces and create novel formations for self-expression. Phenomenological affect theory therefore allows us to 'map the lines linking biologically grounded emotional responses – for example, fear – to religion and other systems of power'.[59]

Ritual is not dead. It is Born Again!

Armed with some understanding of phenomenological affect theory, let us now apply this model to post-secular renewal movements. In the public spaces of secular modernity, the communal expression of 'hot' religious affects is formally or at least nominally prohibited. Yet because of their intransigent and residual nature, these affects nonetheless irrupt at the surface of our socially-entangled bodies, forcing the emergence of new spaces for self-expression in unpredictable and often intense 'formations of the post-secular'. The expectation that their privatisation would be successful appears to be hinged on the 'assumption that emotions are a private matter, that they simply belong to individuals, or even that they come from within and then move outward toward others'.[60] However, this model assumes 'the objectivity of the very distinction between inside and outside, and between the individual and the social', an objectivity that can no longer be sustained. [61] In other words, emotions neither originate from inside the body travelling outward, nor do they emerge from the social body and proceed inward (a Durkheimian model). Therefore, rather than attempting to locate emotion in *either* the private individual *or* social body, affect is that which 'involves an interweaving of the personal with the social, and the affective with the mediated'.[62] Biologically embedded emotions are therefore contiguous and 'economic', aligning 'individuals with communities – or bodily space with social space – through the very intensity of their attachments'.[63] The economy of affect is contagious and generative, 'sticking' what Rosenwein calls 'emotional communities' together, as they are transmitted from one body to the next (even across a virtual platform like social media).[64] Randall Collins observes how the 'emotional energy' produced in affectively-infused rituals is circulated time and time again, creating a kind of 'ritual chain'.[65]

The Sunday Assembly is a 'secular church' that seeks to emulate and revive the affective economies of institutionally religious ritual behaviour without the ontological

theism towards which communal ritual is ordinarily directed. Its website states that the movement seeks to 'inject a touch of transcendence into the everyday' taking an atomistic approach that seeks to separate the 'good bits' of religion from the 'bad'.[66] The yearning for the kind of 'emotional energy' that is produced in communal 'ritual chains' is what draws in adherents: its charter declares, 'just by being with us you should be *energised*, vitalised, restored…' (italics mine).[67] A 'communal visceral response' is generated through ritual behaviour like group singing, which emulates the collectivising function hymn-singing serves by attuning and syncing individuals' auditory senses together. [68] Comedy routines replace sermons, 'sticking' adherents together through sharing the experience of laughter (the kinaesthetic manifestation of the emotion of humour or joy). 'Genuine human connection' is promised as a solution to the ills of 'modern society' with its demands upon individuals to project a kind of de-emotionalised self that serves to cut one off from one's 'inner self, alienated, bored and unhappy, in a society which feels fake and artificial'.[69] Drawing on the discourses of Jungian psychology and popular philosophy, Sanderson suggests that the yearning for 'ecstasy' and 'catharsis' that characterises our contemporary anomie is only overcome through the embodied collective experience of a kind of intersubjective affectivity that has therapeutic qualities.[70] The psychocultural thematic tensions of control/spontaneity, authenticity/falsity and distance/intimacy that preoccupy late modern rhetoric can hence be seen to permeate the narrative of purpose constructed by the movement.[71]

As a self-proclaimed 'house of love', the Sunday Assembly secularises the notion of agape, meeting the emotional desire for a love greater than eros, a love that comes from beyond a single person. Theologically-speaking, this outpouring of love is the outcome of Jesus' kenosis and points to the ontological reality of the transcendent; in the Sunday Assembly, it is provided by the immanent presence of the community of individuals. Item three of its online charter declares, 'we don't do supernatural', which implies that in counter-

defining itself as atheistic, the Sunday Assembly is operating with a Tylorian definition of religion that privileges belief in the supernatural.[72] If we are to draw on, for instance, Smart's 'dimensions of religion' instead, then the Sunday Assembly can be understood as a post-secular 'religious' renewal movement without theistic ontology.[73] Rather than serving as evidence for the essentialist nature of 'religion', it constitutes evidence for the thesis that ritual expressions of embodied affects continue to take new and interesting 'formations' under a formally secular banner.[74]

Another fascinating instantiation of post-modern and post-secular affective formations can be found in the spaces for ritual expression carved by the Pentecostal movement. Jon Bialecki has observed that Pentecostals 'foreswear' ritual, which functions not to 'remove ritual but rather allows it to grow stronger'.[75] The democratisation of the Spirit amongst believers allows both pastor and congregation to 'initiate ritual in most settings', Joel Robbins notes.[76] Ritual interaction thus 'serves as an excellent fount for Durkheim-like effervescence, an affective surge produced and conveyed in one moment of synchronized, intersubjective activity that can serve as the motor for another ritual moment farther down the line'.[77] Under the 'nominal rejection of overtly marked ritual…endless small, affectively charged interactions' mushroom, affording Pentecostal services their vitality and power.[78] For Pentecostal academic theologians Amos Yong and James K. A. Smith, this power gestures towards the Spirit's unique capacity to indwell in material substances and 'embrace human nature in ways that make Christian life holistic and even, in a peculiarly Pentecostal way, sacramental'.[79] The role of other worshipping bodies in the ritual setting is essential in summoning the Spirit, or, more accurately, in making the congregation 'ready to receive it'.[80] In joining these bodies together, the immanent experience of the Spirit is not a private experience but becomes publically constituted and economic, 'sticking' adherents together.[81] There is therefore an underlying parity between what anthropologists might label

‘communitas’ here, and theologians might recognise as ‘koinonia’ (see e.g. Acts 2:42; Gal.2:9).[82]

In rendering the affective and socially-entangled body a crucial site of ritual activity that is directed towards the divine, Pentecostalism acts to recalibrate the subject’s various sensory modalities, and bring them all into focus. This explains why Pentecostals so often use kinaesthetic language to describe the Spirit’s ‘touch’, and erotic ‘embrace’, and also express an embodied and affective fear of demonic intrusion. Holy laughter may ‘spread contagiously in waves through the congregation’, according to Thomas Csordas, as believers experience ‘the comfort and joy of the Spirit’, (rather than of the comedian, as per the Sunday Assembly).[83] Interestingly for our argument, the sensory content of this joy is often described thermoceptively as ‘warmth’ or ‘heat’, and resonates with the fire symbolism associated with the Holy Spirit in the New Testament (and beyond).[84] Pentecostal systematic theologian, Stephen Land observes that ‘“signs” and “groans”…express and shape the affections’ in services.[85] It is ‘in and through the community’ that these passions are ‘formed and expressed’, Land writes, through singing, dancing, tears and clapping.[86] Glossolalia and ecstatic experience are non-linguistic expressions of affect which are experienced as spontaneous as they appear to arise independently of the will, but are pre-empted through the structure of liturgy: key changes in the backing music and shifts in mood expressed on participants faces act as affective signs that point to transitions in phases of worship.[87] The more these signs ‘circulate, the more affective they become, and the more they appear to “contain” affect’, which, for Pentecostals, points to the Spirit’s immanent presence during worship.[88] Glossolalic rituals in particular generate an affectively-oriented, rather than, or in addition to, a linguistically or cognitively-oriented community. As such, these communities are equipped to transcend the particularities of regional vernaculars, as glossolalia serves as the globalised non-verbal language of Pentecostal discourse.

The collective deliverance rituals of the international Pentecostal church, Mountain of Fire and Miracles (MFM), are emotively suffused with a 'ritual language dosed with a certain tone of verbal aggression and militarism'.[89] This affectively-charged ritual discourse derives from a Manichean epistemology that understands the universe as 'polarised by benevolent and malevolent spiritual entities'.[90] Under this cosmology of conflict, prayer becomes a 'powerful military strategy' that is most effective when accompanied by bodily practices like fasting, according to the General Overseer, Daniel Olukoya.[91] Afe Adogame observes that the rituals of prayer in this context become 'performative' acts, containing a kind of energy: they 'not only say things, they also do things', those 'things' being the expulsion of malevolent spirits.[92] Although a relatively new Deliverance church, the comparatively emotive and aggressive style of worship in MFM has garnered a reputation for being 'extreme' and 'frightening'.[93]

The 'Do-It-Yourself' prayer strategy that is directed towards the laity serves to democratise ritual power and thereby encourage the transmission of affect, as adherents take matters into their own hands. The strategy prescribes a technical and precise set of eight prayer stages to follow in order to secure one's deliverance. These begin with, for instance, the 'hot', 'loud confession of scriptures promising deliverance' (e.g. 2 Timothy 4:18), progressing to the laying on of hands which is to be recognised by worshippers 'swaying' and 'staggering' with emotion.[94] The ritualistic 'climax' is a display of exorcism, but it is the affective contributions of the worshippers that secure the success of the deliverance ritual by forcing the 'supersensory entities' to 'grant their petitions and requests'.[95] Moreover, such ritual performances are frequently broadcast live on the MFM website, allowing online viewers around the world to both absorb, and participate in the 'sticky' collective affective economy.[96] For those worshippers present during the service, the knowledge of it being broadcasted nurtures this affective allegiance, as the far-reaching powers of their prayers

cannot be constrained by geographical limitations. Whilst the church has its headquarters in Nigeria, those who have migrated elsewhere continue to tune into services online; in theory, anywhere with internet access can henceforth become a site for the ritual expression of religious affects. In this sense, worshippers of all types and places are *both* participants *and* observers, insiders and outsiders engaging in the exchange of emotional capital. By harnessing the power of mass communication and social media in particular, they make use of an already public-private platform for a kind of evangelism that operates by creating an affective allegiance to the group. This kind of proselytising uses emotional signalling to transcend localities and furnish its members with a globalised and affectively-imbued discourse that can be communicated across a multitude of physical and virtual mediums. The collective affective economy of Pentecostalism thus serves as testament to the thesis that the public/private divide is disintegrating rapidly in the post-secular context, and raises questions about whether the global/local binary continues to serve as a useful heuristic tool for scholars more generally. As James Sweeney puts it, 'religion's re-emergence does more than reclaim an empty stall in the public square; it raises questions about the public square itself'.[97]

Conclusion

Scholarly narratives of both emotional repression and expression veil an overly optimistic estimation of modernity's success in its project. The formal or at least nominal secularity of late modernity has typically attempted to confine the communal and enthusiastic expression of religious ritual to the private sphere, a move predicated on certain assumptions about the boundedness of this domain, of the nature of emotion and of the self that can no longer be sustained. This process of confinement has served to repress certain residual and embodied religious affects, which have subsequently *and* simultaneously re-emerged through the ritual practices of post-secular movements, two examples of which have been explored here. These movements gain their energy from the rich emotional repertoire – joy, power, aggression, and

so on - which they are able to offer adherents who (whether consciously or unconsciously), feel that secular modernity fails to afford them socially acceptable spaces for collective, emotional ritual expression. The new tributaries they carve are both determined by this hostile context and serve to shape it in turn, as they demonstrate the inadequacy of the public/private heuristic whilst participating in its very demise. As such, these movements represent an attempt to escape the disenchanted immanence of secular modernity, which has little choice but to accommodate them by virtue of its fragile commitment to liberal multiculturalism. It is ironic, then, that the non-violent co-existence of all post-secular renewal movements is perhaps dependent upon the very cultural relativism secularism produces, to begin with.[98] By distancing god from the world, secularism has created a kind of parity between all religions through an implicit assumption that none are true. In this way, all religions are both valid and yet paradoxically false.

Insights from affect theory assist us in illuminating these processes and supplying us with a critical vernacular with which to theorise them, demonstrating the scope for its application to theology, as well as to the anthropology of (post-)secularism. Whether we call it ritual or sacrament, incarnation or embodiment, affect or pathos, those working in theology and those working in religion so often ask the same questions, even if they speak different academic languages. But in a world where there are those who are secular and yet have faith in atheism, and those who are religious and yet have faith in secularism (or, at least, its scope for religious pluralism), it seems there is less and less use in maintaining the oppositional nature of belief and unbelief, public and private, reason and emotion, and more use in problematising them. By parsing these academic languages and their dichotomies we might find further common ground between them, and between us all.

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[1] Riis and Woodhead, *Religious Emotion*, 186.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ward, *Unbelievable*, 177; Casanova, *Public Religions*, Ward and Hoelzl, *New Visibility of Religion*.

[4] Ward, *Theology and Contemporary Critical Theory*, viii.

[5] Although, as Davies notes, 'theology has utilized anthropology more frequently than anthropology has taken any interest in theology'. For a recent example of a theological attempt to engage anthropology, see Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 12; Davies, *Anthropology and Theology*, 2.

[6] 'Our Story – Sunday Assembly'; Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism*,1.

[7] Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries serves Nigerians in diaspora and held its annual 'Deliverance, Prayer Quake and Anointing Service' at the Excel Centre in London on the 22nd September 2017. It also claims to be the 'largest single Christian congregation in Africa', although this may be an exaggeration. The Sunday Assembly holds its London meetings at Conway Hall. 'Goals of MFM – Mountain of Fire & Miracle Ministries', accessed 9th January 2018, http://www.mfmleyton.co.uk/goals-of-mfm/.

[8] Van Dijck, 'Facebook as a Tool for Producing Sociality and Connectivity',161.

[9] Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, 36-59; Asad, *Formations of the Secular*.

[10] Riis and Woodhead, *Religious Emotion*, 186.

[11] Ibid., 187.

[12] Ibid., 183.
[13] Ibid., 186, 35; Elias, *The Civilising Process*, 241. Barbara Rosenwein observes that this account likens the 'medieval stage to that of childhood, the modern to that of adulthood'. Rosenwein, 'Medieval Emotions', 829.
[14] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 540.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Meštrović, *Postemotional Society*; cf. Adorno, *The Culture Industry*.
[17] Meštrović, *Postemotional Society*, 2, 26.
[18] Ibid., 64.
[19] Ibid., 26.
[20] Riis and Woodhead, *Religious Emotion*, 183.
[21] Ibid., 184.
[22] Ibid., 37; Cancian and Gordon, 'Changing Emotion Norms', 309.
[23] Cancian and Gordon, 'Changing Emotion Norms', 309.
[24] Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*.
[25] Woodhead and Riis acknowledge the inverted nature of these 'apparently contradictory narratives', and even suggest briefly some possibilities of their reconciliation. By and large, however, their conclusions concerning the 'cooling' of emotion suggest they are persuaded by the narratives of repression rather than expression. Riis and Woodhead, *Religious Emotion*, 184.
[26] Rosenwein, 'Worrying about Emotions', 827.
[27] Ibid., 828.
[28] Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 116.
[29] Ibid.
[30] De Landa, *Nonlinear History*, 266.
[31] Cancian and Gordon, 'Changing Emotion Norms in Marriage', 337.
[32] Tylor, *Primitive Culture*.
[33] Kyriakides instead advocates we understand ourselves as 'opaque subjects'. Kyriakides, 'Minimal Ontology'.
[34] Damasio, *Descartes' Error;* Solomon, *The Passions;* De Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotion*.
[35] Tomkins, *Shame and Its Sisters*, 37.
[36] Riis and Woodhead, *Religious Emotion*, 16.
[37] Zahl, 'The Bondage of the Affections', 252.
[38] Meštrović, *Postemotional Society*, 26.
[39] Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, 36–59.
[40] Ibid., 23.
[41] Ibid., 41.
[42] Spinoza, *Ethics*, 69 [II/138]; Deleuze, *Spinoza*.
[43] Massumi, 'The Autonomy of Affect', 94, 93.
[44] Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, 41.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid., 40.

[47] Elizabeth Grosz, *Time Travels*.
[48] Massumi, 'The Autonomy of Affect', 88–89.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., 92–93; Spinoza, *The Collected Works*.
[51] Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, 24; Sara Ahmed, 'Collective Feelings' 39, n.4, Tomkins, *Shame and Its Sisters*.
[52] Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, 32.
[53] Ibid., 44.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ahmed, 'Collective Feelings', 39 nt.4.
[56] Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, 41, 31; Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 111.
[57] Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, 14, 13.
[58] Ibid., 13, 44; Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 114.
[59] Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, 51.
[60] Ahmed, 'Collective Feelings', 25.
[61] Ibid., 28.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ahmed, 'Affective Economies', 119–20.
[64] Ibid., 130; Rosenwein, 'Medieval Emotions', 832.
[65] Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, 44.
[66] 'Our Story – Sunday Assembly'.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ahmed, 'Collective Feelings', 26.
[69] Jones, 'The Need For Real Human Connection'.
[70] Jones, 'The Need for Real Human Connection' cf.; de Botton, 'Why You Will Marry the Wrong Person'; Evans, *The Art of Losing Control.*
[71] Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity;* Ferrera, *Modernity and Authenticity;* Csordas, *The Sacred Self*
[72] 'Our Story – Sunday Assembly'.
[73] Smart, *The World's Religions*. See also, Smith, 'The Sunday Assembly'.
[74] Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 25;
[75] Bialecki, 'Angels and Grass', 699.
[76] Robbins, 'Pentecostal Networks', 60.
[77] Bialecki, 'Angels and Grass', 699.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Smith and Yong, *Science and the Spirit*, 28.
[80] Reinhardt, 'A Christian Plane of Immanence?' 420.
[81] Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, 39; Ahmed, 'Affective Economies'.
[82] Davies, *Anthropology and Theology*, 126.
[83] Csordas, 'Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology', 18; Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 172.
[84] Blom, 'Joy, Joy, Joy', 224.
[85] Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 172.

[86] Ibid., 178.
[87] Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination,* 24. Miller, 'Routinising Charisma'.
[88] Ahmed, 'Affective Economies', 120.
[89] Adogame, 'Dealing with Local Satanic Technology', 89.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Olukoya, 'Prayer as a Military Strategy'.
[92] Adogame, 'Dealing with Local Satanic Technology', 95.
[93] Data was collected during ethnographic fieldwork in MFM branches in London, Los Angeles and Nigeria during multiple visits between 2014-2017.
[94] Adogame, 'Dealing with Local Satanic Technology', 98-99.
[95] Ibid., 99, 96. See, for instance, MFM Virginia, 'How to obtain personal deliverance', http://mfmvirginia.org/how-to-obtain-personal-deliverance/.
[96] 'MFM Livestream TV', http://live.mountainoffire.org/
[97] James Sweeney, 'Secularization', 24.
[98] Casanova, 'Secular and Secularisms'.