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***Secularization in a Global Perspective: The Case
of China and Humanistic Buddhism***

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The Global Force of Modernity and Secularization

The reliance on reasons and rationality have become the basic ingredients in forming our modernized world, and subsequently materialized in the form of industrialization, urbanization, capitalism and the rise of nation-states. This form of modernity then took into another stage with the advancement of the technology in transportation and information transference, resulting in the process of globalization in which the above materialized form of modernity, originated from the West, to spread across the globe to reach every part of the continent. This globalizing force not only spread the process of modernity around the world, it brought upon the engagement and confrontation of different cultures and civilizations. This engagement takes on different forms within different contexts and circumstances, as illustrated by Hans Kung in his model of encounter (Ching & Kung, 1989), no matter it ends with acceptance, mutual respect or intolerance, it would inevitably conjure up the interexchange and communication between different cultures and results in the emergence of plurality within cultural notion. This illustrates how the dual force of globalization and pluralism can be both a product and impetus of modernity.

In examining modernity in more detail, whether in its essence of rationality and reasoning, its product of industrialization and nation-states, or the further extend of globalization and pluralism, undoubtedly the category of religion plays a significant role in the whole process. The whole concept of modernity can somehow view as a development against religion, just as what the Enlightenment was all about. When Emmanuel Kant praised the release of human from the tutelage of religion, Nietzsche's proclamation of the "dead of God", to Marx and Engel's statement of religion of opium of the people, different people from different period stretching back

from the period of the Enlightenment have challenged religion under the influences of modernity. Many other contemporaries might not have criticized religion in such extreme manner, however undoubtedly their perception of the once all-encompassing religion has reduced in different interpretation of their own, most commonly in the form of societal functions and individual subjectivity. This dualism between modernity and religion has resulted in our contemporary concept in which the more modern human became the less religion will play a role in our society. This antagonistic view of modernity and religion has become the dominating view from enlightened men up to our current century, with the side of modernity seems to be gaining consecutive victories.

And truly the emergence of our modern society, or the modernization as a process, is constructed by this new epistemologies as human evolved into the new era. That said, modernization also has an annotation of being something contradicting to human superstition and naiveté towards the cosmos and the world, which has its spear pointing towards religion. As for common people like us it is easy to witness a triumph of modernity over religion, as it seems that more and more of our everyday lives has been occupied by elements of the former, whereas religions and its components seems to comprise only such a small friction of our life; we are now surrounded and constructed by the forces of secularism. But as most of us believed that we are heading towards a total secular society, then emerges the 911 incident, the worldwide activism of Islam Fundamentalism, the political episode of Tibet, and the outbreaks of different religious affairs across the globe in recent years which became one of the main points of our attention. Elsewhere different religious organization are emerging and stretching into all aspect of our society. Many new sects and

denominations are established, different religious-supporting educational and social welfare organizations are coming into service, politicians and governments are drafting their agendas according to religious interests; it seems that suddenly religion is back on the center stage and de-secularized our world. This phenomenon is raising tricky questions for many religious scholars in the subject of the relationship between religion and secularization in the modern society, in which the once convincing secularization theory are now being challenged with its universality and validity it a local and global scale.

The study of secularization has been a focal point of inquiry among many religious scholars, especially in the field of the sociology of religion. However suggestive it seems from the above description that religion is being besieged by different modern and secular forces, current studies from scholars in the past few decades has turn against the old secularization theories which once was dominating the majority perception on the studies of religion. The whole trajectory of the academic inquiry has taking a big twist in the past decade. It suggested that not only the process of secularization does not behave according to a linear process as predicted by these scholars, but most importantly is the refutation of the theory in its validity in the explanation of religious development in many civilization outside the Judeo-Christian paradigm. The criticism against the theory is further undermined when taking in consideration in many parts of the East-Asian societies, in which their religious essence and practice takes on a totally different course from the Judeo-Christian context, in which the theory of secularization is constructed under the latter framework; therefore not applicable in explanation. China, with its prominent influence on surrounding societies, comprises a religious culture that seems to cause

the most difficulty for scholars to explain under the categories and frameworks from the West. The core element of these “religions” takes on a philosophical and ethical inclination with the belief in the supernatural and other-worldly concerns being only a small part of the system. In the eyes of many, it is even questionable to label these systems as "religious" under the Western meaning, in which philosophies and humanisms seems to be a more appropriate term, and therefore the usage of secularism and secularization seems to be difficult for application according to the Western religious paradigm.

Modern scholars of the social theory of secularism see this not as an obstacle but an opportunity to take the theory into another level. They believed that not only this theory of secularization is still valid in examining modern religious amidst the resurgence of religiosity in our society, but to expand the theory to a global scrutiny would relish the universality and comprehensiveness of the theory. This paper attempts to follow an investigation according to this framework with an exploration into a modern form of Buddhism in China: Humanistic Buddhism. This modern form of Chinese Buddhism seems to situated in the conjuncture of the force of globalization, in which it remains a concern of life and death and the other-world from their Indian origin, incorporated with the Chinese philosophical and humanistic into their system, and invigorated by the strikes of different Western ideologies during the colonial period. By developing and modifying from the original Buddhism for over centuries, it has transformed into a unique Buddhist system of its own. It too however, cannot avoid the whole wheel of human evolution in the era of modernity. The following paragraphs will attempt to investigate how Chinese religion develops under modernity and using the example of Humanistic Buddhism, examines how it evolves

accordingly and how secularization has played a role in the process. But before that it would be necessary to look into secularization in more details to clarify its usage and implication to avoid ostensible interpretation.

The Theory of Secularism against the Process of Secularization

The topic about secularism has been in vibrant discussion during the 20th century, especially among scholars in the sociological field of religious studies. Before the term has fully grown to be a thesis in the 20th Century, Max Weber in his extensive socio-economical studies on religion has already shed light on the relationship between religion and secularization. In his sociology and religion and his famous work on the Protestant ethics, Weber illustrated how the split of Protestant from the Roman Catholic indicated the force of modernization and secularization. It was the effects of modernization and the growth of rationalization that have spawned the rise of Protestant in proclaiming their autonomous in salvation, and it was the further development of Calvinism that promoted the inner-worldly asceticism in justifying the piety. It was this inner-worldly worldview that consequent on the turning of focus from the transcending world to the secular world. This rationalization of the believers eventually directed towards the disenchantment of the world, in which the myths and mysteries of religion has been somewhat devalued, and the turning of centrality towards the current world. Weber gave this "double-sided rationalization-disenchantment process" in religion the name of secularization (Swatos Jr & Christiano, 1999).

The work of Weber has huge impacts to the field of religious studies among European scholars, and it provided a cogent and intriguing suggestion in the relationship

between the growth of modernity and the corresponding development of Protestants, and the role secularization played in the process. Nevertheless, the works of Weber has drawn the attention on the secular forces of modernity and its influence on the category of religion, and within the academic circle this force had facilitated the emergence of the science of religious studies, in which the scarcity of religion has faded out in the study of religion for the way of objective inquiry and reductionism. Such change in secularity and rationalism has become the interests of religious researchers and even theologians in contemplating the religious situation in modern Christian societies. Among them were Robert Bellah, Niklas Luhmann, Peter Berger, Bryan Wilson, Richard Fenn and others, in which Warren Goldstein (2009) calls them secularism scholars of the old paradigm, who upholds an evolutionary vision of a irreversible development of secularization in our society.

These scholars of the old paradigm uphold the notion that after the beginning of the Enlightenment period and the subsequent societal changes of the industrial revolutions, the fall of monarchies and Empires with the rise of nation states, Christianity has started to crumble in its role and functions within modern Europe. Most noticeable is the separation of the church and the states, in which Christianity's political dominance over Europe has become a history of the past. New forms of political regimes have emerged in forms of nation states and republics and ideologies of nationalism and democracy. The political authority and sovereignty of these new regimes were formulated without the previous influence of the Church and eventually the separation from its political significance. Of course this does not mean a total lost of religious importance in the political sphere in which it still has much influence in many contemporary European nations such as Italy and Ireland, but comparing it has

lost much of its ascendancy in previous centuries. This loss of political influence is the category of differentiation in the theory of secularization, which means the transformation of the religious system and its societal environment in terms of social institutions and social functioning (Beckford, 2003; Goldstein, 2009). This idea of social differentiations suggests that unlike its role on politics, Christianity was once an all-encompassing force that shadows all social aspects economically, socially and culturally all over Europe. Many social functions of Middle Age Europe were either the "exclusive preserve of the Christian Church or were dominated by the Clergy ... education, health care, welfare and social control were once all in the domain of religious institutions" (Bruce, 2002). It also legitimates social institutions by "bestowing upon them an ultimately valid ontological status" (Berger, 1967), thereupon possessed the authority in social control and manipulation. The process of social differentiation secularized many social functions of the Church within the society in which by those forces mentioned above (rationalization, scientism, industrialization, etc), many societal subsystems gain a greater degree of autonomy and independence in escapement from religious domination. The rise of secular political parties in power, the dominating secular economic ideologies of capitalism and consumerism, the autonomy of different social institutions with a new secular constituents, to the loss of religious symbols, rhetoric and rituals in public life; all became the face of many contemporary European societies. And more importantly, according to many secularism academics, it was the decline of individual piety and religious practices that were the most vital under the force of secularism. With growing rationality and the continuous scientific breakthrough, it provided individuals with new understandings towards the cosmos and their world, causing religion to give way in the explanation for human's ultimate concerns, in which Berger outlines this

aspect that "the modern West has produced an increasing number of individuals who look upon the world and their own lives without the benefit of religious interpretations" (Berger, 1967). With the decline of the validity and necessity it resulted in the decline of religious piety and eventually religious practices and habits, such as church attendance and prayer practices. It was both this lost of social function and individual piety, which was evident in many parts of Europe that socio-religious scholars has announced that the Christian world was directing towards a secular age, and enunciated the theory of secularism.

However this seems-to-be irresistible theoretic prediction of secularism on modern Christian societies has somewhat become a paradox by different scholarship revisions and most importantly, hard-empirical evidence which suggesting otherwise. It was seen in many Christian societies that the advancement into modernity did not necessarily result in a decline of religious belief or practice, and to the utmost surprise to many secular scholars, there seems to be a religious revival comparing to the late Enlightenment period in many of these community. As in America, one of the most modern Christian countries in our world, there seem to be a vibrant growth of religious participants among the population. As evident in a national survey dating from the late 1940s to present days, the data has proven a increase both in individual beliefs and practices among Americans. In *Religious Change in America* where a poll was conducted in almost 50 years in the late 20th Century across America, Andrew Greeley (1989) reported that 90% of the respondents claimed that they believes in God, and the same percentage of respondent prays to God. America is now one of the most active hubs for different religious activities, including the development of different New Religious Movements (NRM), and the spawn of numerous

denominations and sects. Many scholars have then reevaluated and revised their view on the theory of secularization and questioned the haste and arbitrary conclusion previous scholars have made on the validity of the theory. Rodney Starks, one of the most blatant critic against the theory, have suggested not only that the secularization theory was proven wrong and ineffective in the study of religious development in our modern time, but that the theory was plainly useless and that it should be carried "to the graveyard of failed theories" (Starks, 1999)

The debate on the secularization theory to this day has become rather settled down, not least because the evident of religious revival was so undeniable that it was impossible to insist on the theory. Most of the formal supporters of secularism have altered and reevaluated their previous claims, as illustrated by Peter Berger when he stated that "I think what I and most other sociologists of religion wrote in the 1960s about secularization was a mistake ... most of the world today is certainly not secular. It's very religious"(Berger, 1997). However this theory has seemed to be wrong in its predictive implications, it would be unwise to refute the theory all together.

Undoubtedly the process of secularization indeed has played a major role in our modern time and in the matter of fact, religion did retreat from its dominating status. Therefore what makes a difference of the old paradigm of the secularization theory and the new paradigm is the different emphasize in the form of its predictive and descriptive power. In Peter Beyer's (1999) article on secularization and globalization, he concludes handsomely on this debate in aspect of secularization which has been point out by many current scholars in revising on the theory. While the versions of secularization theory which upholds the predictive aspect of a linear and irreversible development of human society into modernity and the necessary decline of religion

were proven wrong and hence abandoned, the aspect of the secularization thesis in its descriptive significant on the consequences of religion from social development and functional differentiation is still valuable and valid. Beyer concludes that:

"the institutional or societal dimension of secularization continues to be a way of gaining insight into what is happening to religion not only under modern, but also under global conditions ... its value is not and never has been in predicting outcomes, but rather in offering a useful description of the societal situation in which we find ourselves with respect to religion"
(Beyer, 1999)

The New Paradigm of the Secularization Theory: Global Perspectives and Pluralism

What Beyer point out of the “global conditions” is also what differentiates the secularization scholars of the new paradigm from the old. The whole secularization investigation up to this moment of our discussion is surrounded on the Western framework and on Christian societies. Beyond question the emergence of the whole secularization theory was based on the religious and societal development according to the West and Christianity, inevitably the essence and the intrinsic structure of the thesis would be formulated by this origin. Beyer suggests in the same article that in our current globalized society, "if we ... ask the question of secularization of global society, one of the main consequence is that we will take the world as a whole as our empirical testing-ground and subunits of it only in the context of that whole" (Beyer, 1999). Indeed, regardless of the discussion concerning the predictive and descriptive significance of the secularization theory, the relevance and validity of secularization

could not be based upon a limited boundary within the Christian societies, but to be considered and apply through a global scale. What modernity has brought upon our contemporary society is the feasibility to transgress the limit of boundaries in the effect of globalism and relativism, in which on the other side of the same coin, it would also be necessary for any assumptions and investigations to be scrutinize within a global framework. Thus the investigation in the understanding of the current religious situation ought to be done under this notion. In Beyer's words, "from a global perspective the notion that 'local' factors are sufficient for understanding the religious situation in any region, country, or other geographical division is no longer a justifiable assumption ... the theory of secularization will stand, fall, or transform in a field of vision that includes not only Europe ... and North America, but also all of Asia ..." (Beyer, 1999). With that said, the process of secularism should no longer be limited in the application of the Judeo-Christian society in the consideration of religious situation, but to expand globally towards different cultures and societies. This also suggests that in during such global inquiry it is necessary to avoid the application of the secularization theory from the original Western framework, but to explore and widen the theory in relevant to the unique cultural setting of the targeted subject. This would certainly enhance the universality and validity of secularization in a global perspective, and can also tackle the questioning of the theory in its application on different social and cultural paradigms outside the Christian framework.

The investigation of secularization in a global perspective would also inevitably engage in the category of pluralism. Within our discussion of religion and secularization, the role and importance of pluralism seems to be somewhat ambiguous

and obscure. Our entrance into the modern and globalized world would by no mean caused the intensification of pluralism in many aspect of humanity, and its effect on religion and secularity can take on very different course by different interpretation and under different contexts. On one hand there is the possibility of the pluralization of different epistemologies, and "entailed corresponding shifts of emphasis in global explanatory structures or bases upon which we attribute credibility or truth" (Swatos Jr & Christiano, 1999), which like the epistemologies of scientific positivism and Marx Communism, confronts societies and individuals worldwide against their original epistemological or religious explanatory ability; on the other hand pluralism brought different religious system into face to face confrontation, creating a contestation among differing religious epistemologies themselves. Many secularization theorists viewed this pluralism as a mechanism in undermining the essence of absolute certainty and truth claims of these religious system in which there are now many other epistemologies (religious or not) in declaring the same claim, hence resulting in the questioning of credibility and assertion of different religious beliefs. Peter Berger was once the originator and supporter for this claim, suggesting that pluralism entails a plurality of "plausibility structure" (Berger, 1967) and the "corrosive of religious faith because the juxtaposition of diverse religions induced the belief that there could be no single source of absolute truth" (Beckford, 2003). This resulted in a loss of authority and credibility of religions, the consequent in the social differentiation by different competing social epistemologies, and religious competition and freedom resulting in a religious marketplace and *bricolage* (Swatos Jr & Christiano, 1999; see also Luckmann, 1967); all leading to secularization. However other scholars has taken pluralism into another stance and inverted it towards an opposite direction, viewing pluralism increases religious activities. Finke

and Stark states that religious pluralism and the resulting competition among religions provides more options for people to choose, therefore an increase of religious activities. This is evident in the co-relationship between the spawn of different religious organizations in American and the rise of religious responds in the area, so much so in leading Berger to revise his previous suggestions and admitted that he "misunderstood the relation between the two: the latter [pluralism] does not necessarily lead to the former [secularization] ... In other words, I would now say that pluralism affects the how of religious belief, but not necessarily the what"(Berger, 1999). What pluralism casted onto religion is how it brought different religious system in confrontation between each other and other social forces (globalization, secularization and other epistemologies), and how these religious system mutates and changes itself in adaptation. This is the leverage for the emergence of all kinds of new religious forms and New Religious Movements worldwide, as suggested by Stark that we should turn our attention to "focus our work on religious change" (Stark, 1999; see also Swatos & Christiano, 1999)

In combining the above discussion we approached the essence of the new paradigm of secularization theory: the refutation of the mutually exclusiveness of religion and secularity and the linear process of modernity encroachment onto religion; to the descriptive significant of secularization under the glance of a global and cultural determine perspective; and the force of pluralism onto religious changes under modernization and secularization. Under this framework of modernization, globalization and pluralism, we could see how different religious systems in different social and culture setting worldwide have responded and developed under the process of secularization. Alike the rise of Protestant in taking a more secular and inner-

worldly theological approach, different NRM and sects are directing in the same trend in Christian societies of America and Europe. Islamic societies are incorporating secularity into their culture and religion in accordance to the modern world; recent uprising in India illustrates a mix of Hinduism and nationalism has a touch of secular relish under the influence of Gandhi in embracing secularity and tolerance within its religious system (Van Der Veer, 2008). Other East-Asian societies also illustrates a revive in religious activities, especially in contemporary China, there are many opportunities for different religious organizations to expand after the failure of secularism in Communist China. Once again there are debates about the usefulness and validity of secularism in the Chinese context among scholars due to a different religious nature and essence in comparison to other religious systems, but the trend of secularization within current China and different Chinese religious organizations is also significant and conspicuous that we cannot deny the existence of secularization in the region. But on the other hand there is a thrive of different religious activities including Christian, Buddhism and many other folk religion within the region in the past century which seems to contradict the secular trend. In taking this peculiar setting of China as an example, the following will attempts to investigate the multiple relationship between the social development of modern China and the emergence of Humanistic Buddhism, and ultimately test the new-paradigm-secularization theory in demonstrating how it incorporates secularization in the current trend of religious revivalism in a non-Western context.

Contemporary China and the Development of Humanistic Buddhism

Alike the development of the Christian societies in Europe during the modern era, China has also been greatly influenced by the idea of secularism starting from the late

19th Century. What is different is that this trend of secularism was like a kind of foreign import into the Chinese society during the Western invasion and imperialism. Nevertheless this does not imply to suggest that China was once a religious society before the 19th Century which existed a paradigm shift from a religious society into a secular one similar to Enlightenment Europe. This requires a study of the religiosity and secularity of historical China through a thorough examination which would comprise of a paper elsewhere. Our present intention is only to exam the socio-religious development and the process of secularization in the past century, the nature and culture of Chinese religiosity would not be explained in detail but as we precede in investigation the current religious and secular development, the determination of the former as a significant factor will loom. The following investigation into Humanistic Buddhism will be enunciated in reference to Karel Dobbelaere (1981), in which we would briefly look into the current religious development of China in two levels of secularization: the global (society) level in illustrating the social background of modern China and meso (institutional) level to elaborate the emergence of the organization of Humanistic Buddhism in line with the process of secularization within the social and cultural framework. ¹

Macro level: Religious Revivalism in 20th Century China

The secular trend in the 19th Century was a reaction towards the notion of political and militant backwardness and national humiliation of foreign invasion and imperialism. Especially among the Chinese elites and intellectuals, they believed that religion is a cause of superstition and a leash towards modernization. Social and

1 Formally Dobbelaere's model consists of three levels of secularization including the individual level. While I acknowledge the importance of the significance in an individual level but for our situation a look into the societal and institutional aspect would be enough to accomplish our purpose.

intellectual campaigns had triggered in many parts of China as it stepped into the 20th Century and with slogans such as "smash temples, build schools", different temple cults and religious specialists became the targets of this cultural reformation and were being driven out of the mainstream society. This reformation in attempt of modernization was also supported by the emperor of the late-Qing dynasty. Led by reformist Kang Youwei the Chinese conduct their reformation by the notion of a necessity in learning and incorporating the West into their own system, and the promotion of education and to get rid of religious superstition. This implies a form of scientism and rationalism facilitated by Western importation against the superstitious, scientific backwardness and illiterate Chinese public and the outdated feudalistic system. These views were commonly shared among intellectuals in all convictions including the nationalists and communists, and also many reformist religious thinkers. Regardless of the significance and outcomes of these reforms, these changing thoughts have seeded the change towards secularization among the Chinese intellectuals.

On the path towards modernity and secularism in the early 20th century China, it somehow unexpectedly end up into extreme secularism as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Mao Zedong took control of China in the mid-century. During the cultural revolution in the 1950s and 60s the perception of religions as superstitious and backward were further intensified by Mao's regime. Yang (2004) suggests that during the CCP rule it followed the hardline of militant atheism as advocated by Lenin and the Russian Bolsheviks, in which it treats religion as the dangerous opium and narcotic of the people, a wrong political ideology, and an anti-revolutionary force. This was the rational for all kinds of anti-policies against religious practice and

principle towards a secular society during the revolution. Various forms of religious beliefs and activities were banned and numerous temples, mosques and churches were converted and redistributed for secular uses. Those that escaped elimination were under strict control under the Party: folk religions were considered to be superstitious and were vigorously suppressed; cultic sects were regarded as reactionary organizations therefore resolutely banned; foreign missionaries, considered as a kind of Western imperialism, were expelled; and the remaining major world religions, including Buddhism, Islam and Christianity were coerced into "patriotic" national associations under close supervision; individuals who dares to transgress these policies were banished to labor camps, jails or executed (Yang, 2004). What remains in Maoism China was the teleology in the secular belief of Marxist socialism and communism, in which all aspect of Mao-China society was brought under the framework of such secularism, be it politics, religions, science, or any social and cultural dimension.

With the end of the Cultural Revolution and the following death of Mao in 1976, the policy towards religion was considerably relaxed as new mode of consciousness and governmentality emerged. The new CCP leader Deng Xiaoping stepped up and launched different economical reforms and the "open-door policies". His views towards religions were indifferent, as "political pragmatism was prevailing over ideological dogmatism" (Yang, 2004). And in order to achieve the central task of economical development religion was view as a necessity in stabilizing the population, therefore beginning from 1979, limited amount of churches, temples and other religious sites were reopened in bringing religious life back into the Chinese public. A significant breakthrough happened in 1982 when the CCP Central

Committee formulated "The Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Religious Affairs during the Socialist Period of Our Country", or best known as "Document 19". The document was the basis in the recognition of religious beliefs and practices in China in which it clearly stated that "in assuring the normalizing of religious activities, from hereupon the Party will work according to legal procedures, and with adequate communication with the religious communities, in formulating practical and practicable religious regulations" (Zhuo [卓新平], 2008). Although the Party still impose strict controls and surveillance on religious activities and practices, religion received much greater legitimacy, tolerance and freedom. The last 20 years have witnessed a great religious revival in China. There were large scale restoration of different religious activities and organization, rebuilding of varies temples, mosques and churches, and most evidently in the growing number of religious population in the country. A recent survey conducted by a Shanghai based university has estimated an astonishing 300 million religious believers in China, or 31.4% of the total population. This comprises of an approximation of 200 million in Buddhist, Taoists and other folk religious believers, 40 million as Christians and Islam between 20 to 100 million, comparing to around 100 million (Buddhist, Taoists), 14 million (Christianity) and 19 million (Islam) respectively in older Chinese estimations around the 1950s (Wu, 2007). This rebound in religiosity among the Chinese population has been seen as a reaction towards the strict regulation and repression of previous decades, and from this point of view it seems that there is a desecularization in process. This societal swift towards religious fervent has been illustrated by the flourish of different kinds of religious organization with China. We now turn into the institutional (meso) level in examining the development of the religious organizations under the current trend of religious revivalism in China. Using the example of the new-form Humanistic

Buddhism, we try to examine how this religious revivalism in the macro-society has affected on the growth and development of new forms of religious organization, and how the effects of modernity and secularization plays a part in the mist of religious resurgence.

Meso level: Humanistic Buddhism and its Modern and Secular Adaptations

In going into Humanistic Buddhism it is essential to take a brief account of the background of the emergence of Engaged Buddhism in Asia. A broad definition of engaged Buddhism describes a contemporary form of Buddhism with a concern towards an extend orientation of social engagement in “caring and service, social and environmental protest and analysis, nonviolence as a creative way of overcoming conflict, and ‘right livelihood’ and similar initiatives toward a socially just and ecologically sustainable society” (Jones, 2003). This emphasis on the secular environment and social justice is the religious metamorphosis of engaged Buddhism in responding and conforming to the force of modernization/secularization they faced starting from the 19th century, “it is ... an actual new form of Buddhism that is the result of a process of modernization, westernization, reinterpretation, image-making, revitalization and reform ... deeply engaged in creating Buddhist response to the dominant problems and questions of modernity” (McMahan, 2008). In examining the emergence of Engaged Buddhism, McMahan argues that these “problems and questions of modernity” include what Charles Taylor describes as the main cluster of modernity: western monotheism, rationalism and scientific naturalism and Romantic expressivism (McMahan, 2008; see also Taylor, 1989). Although these clusters of modernity are rooted in a western framework, they are essential to understanding the development of Buddhist modernism as their impact has been on a global scale

facilitated by imperialism and colonialism in the past centuries. The infiltration of these modern clusters resulted in a cultural interpenetration between the Asian local Buddhism and these western modern ideologies, and inspired diverse social reactions among the Asian Buddhism community which eventually invigorated the formation of Engaged Buddhism in the region. Christopher Queen describes this historical process as a phenomenology of a Buddhist liberation movement (Queen & King, 1996). The ground of modernity has provided the opportunity for different reformers and leaders of the modern engaged Buddhism movement: Thich Nhat Hanh, Col. Henry Steel, Olcott, Anagarika Dharmapala, B. R. Ambedkar, Dalai Lama, etc, to incorporate ideologies and concepts of the west into their local system in a form of a hybrid cultural mixture, and leading them to introduce different social and philosophical reforms within their local Buddhism structure adapting to these western modern discourses. Some scholars view the present form of engaged Buddhism as so heavily indebted to these western modernities that they termed it a “Protestant Buddhism”, in which they “consider the Buddhist revival in South Asia in purely Buddhist terms” and “acknowledge and to trace the ways in which Buddhist and Christian ... traditions have become inextricably intertwined in the brief history of socially engaged Buddhism” (Queen & King, 1996; see also Obeyesekere & Gombrich, 1988).

The rise of Engaged Buddhism has resulted in an orientation towards individualism, egalitarianism, liberalism, democratic ideals, an impulses to social reforms, and more importantly a stress of a world-affirming stance and the locus for a meaning in this-life, the everyday life (McMahan, 2008; Taylor, 1989). Engaged Buddhism manifests this secular reorientation by a new interpretation of its traditional scriptures and philosophies on the readings of ancient *dharma* and *dukkha* and redefinition its

religious attention from the transmundane (*lokuttara*) to the mundane (*lokiya*). This has contributed to a rise of a contemporary Buddhist liberation movement that sets their foundation on a value on social engagement and a practice in forms of social activism, social services and participation. Such mutation in a modern Chinese context is expressed by a form of engaged Buddhism known as Humanistic Buddhism. This Chinese form of engaged Buddhism was formed by the endeavor of consecutive reforms of Taixu and Yin Shun by incorporating and expanding the early philosophy of engaged Buddhism with the Mahayana Buddhist. Like all engaged Buddhism they reinterpret the traditional scriptures and redirected the attention towards the secular world, proclaiming the worldly-bodhisattva “according to the core of Buddhism in accommodating the thoughts and cultures of the modern trend” (Chan & Tang [陳兵, 鄧子美], 2003). It embraces different clusters of secularism (Beckford, 2003; Lambert, 1999) of rationalization, demythologization, institutionalization, bureaucratization, scientism and technological advancements which many contemporary western scholars has attributed to the metamorphosis process of the modern religious institutions.

Humanistic Buddhism (人間佛教), or Engaged Buddhism, emerged out from Chinese Buddhism in the early 20th century. It was a kind of reaction, or even a revolution, under both the trend of scientism as a backlash from foreign invasion and the two World Wars, and the corruption of late-Buddhism and its lost of social functions in Chinese communities (Chan & Tang, 2003). It was a necessity for Chinese Buddhism to head for a new direction in modern time to avoid gradual decline or even elimination, and it was Taixu who reinvigorate Chinese Buddhism in the blending of Buddha origins and the modern trends and provided the initial impetus for the

development of Humanistic Buddhism.

The most important feature of Taixu's thoughts is the redirecting and reinterpreting the emphasis and attention towards the secular world. He stressed that the Buddhism *dharma* is the ultimate truth which transcends all things historically and existentially, and that it encompasses all spheres of human civilization ahistorically. Therefore the *dharma* comprises of all truth and knowledge in different period of human history including the present period of scientism and positivism of modernity. Therefore Buddhism do not have any conflict with the present situation and that in the modern society of individualism, materialism, practicality and capitalism, the *dharma* could provide the framework in accordance to these development of human society. Under such reasoning Taixu suggests to overcome the traditional perception of world-weary and world-casting but an active participation and integration into the world, and proclaiming the worldly-bodhisattva (今菩薩行), achieving through worldly participations of social service and altruism. In later years in the 1940s and 50s, Taixu deify these concepts of this new form of worldly Buddhism and edited different important texts in explicating the methods, procedures and objectives in achieving an humanistic Buddhism, and demonstrated how this can have an ethical impact on the society and achieving Pure Land in the world. In addressing these modifications within Buddhism, Taixu also emphasized on issues in upholding the originality of Buddhism. He reminded that in taking the approach of worldly participation it should also be caution not to go into extreme secularism. Taixu accentuated that this reformation was implemented "according to the core of Buddhism in accommodating the thoughts and cultures of the modern trend" add if "this core of Buddhist thought and religiosity is lost, it will result in extreme secularity and the lost of value of the

existence of Buddhism" (Chan & Tang [陳兵, 鄧子美], 2003).

Although this humanistic approach suggested by Taixu has attracted many attentions and supports within and outside China, it was not without doubts and resistance.

Different organizations within the Chinese Buddhism community, owing to different reasons, hesitated and questioned the necessity in taking such modifications. Taixu

also saw this difficulty in spreading this humanism across the whole Chinese

Buddhism community, and accommodating different branches in accepting such

approach. To achieve this it was also necessary to implement certain degrees of

institutional and structural reforms within the community in modernizing Chinese

Buddhism, which Taixu had also addressed but failed to complete. And it was later by

Yin Shun and Zhao Puchu who succeeds the legacy of Taixu in bringing Humanistic

Buddhism into the center stage of modern Chinese Buddhism.

The adaptation in embracing the world and the secular is an illustration of how this

new form of Buddhism has transformed itself as a necessity under modernity. It also

takes on the approach of rationalization and bureaucratization alike Max Weber's

system on religion. Taixu's has long been concerned in organizing and

institutionalizing the religious system within Humanistic Buddhism and also among

different branches of Chinese Buddhism in a whole. Yin Shun in particular, put his

effort in suggesting the role of rationality as an important and necessary element

within Buddhism, at least in this new form. Tang (2004) has emphasized that one of

the main interpretation of Yin Shun's on the topics of the Buddha belief and the

religiosity of Buddhism is the focus on the de-traditionalization and

demythologization in the way for rationality, in which he stated that the intention of

Humanistic Buddhism is the "reinvigoration from the tutelage and hypnosis of tradition, and to strive according to the genuine *dharma*" (Yin Shun [印順], 1985). See how this statement resembles to Kant's claim that the "Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage ... [and to] have courage to use your own reason"(Kant, 1999). Both suggest the release from men's traditional 'tutelage' and the praise for the reliance on human rationality. In further explication on this form of rationality and Buddhism, Yin Shun precisely explained that:

"Buddhism and its *dharma* is not a belief, but a religion of rationality. Therefore the enlightenment of truth, or the directions for practice, are all conduct through rationality in obtaining a rich and proper content. Through this freedom, autonomous and random rationality, the genuine *dharma* is rich and plentiful"

(Yin Shun [印順], 1985; see also Tang [鄧子美], 2004)

This rationality and plenitude of Buddhism resembles the two core features of modernity of rationalization and pluralism, and that it illustrated that how this new interpretation of the Buddhism philosophy has incorporate the elements of modernity into its own system. In short, in Deng Zimei's book on modern society and Buddhism, he concluded the following features of Humanistic Buddhism that provides an account on its modification towards secularity and this-worldliness:

1. The alternation of emphasis on the dead: Humanistic Buddhism rejects the overt emphasis and the services to the dead in late Qing period, and reinvigorates the attention on the alive and this life. This led to the emphasis

on humans apart from the Gods and spirits, and rejects the traditional mythologization on the dead and spirits;

2. The redirection on the focus towards this-world, and aim for ethical and spiritual enhancement of the general public through the participation in politics, economics, education and technological advancements. This further led to the caring of the society and environment in a whole, conceptualized in the Pure Land in this world and altruism.
3. The institutionalize of Humanistic Buddhism and the implementation of different organizations to the secular, in which the former was advocated by Yin Shun as a necessary step in upholding the long term development of the reformed Buddhism. The latter is best illustrated by this passage from Hsing Yun:

"the Buddhism of the pass encourages the believers to leave their home and family to practice in remote isolation, which resulted in the lost of humanity and the fall of Buddhism"; "Humanistic Buddhism is the incorporation of the classical time of the Buddha and the modern Buddhism"; "Buddhism of the post-industrial era should focus on this-world and transform the wit of the Buddha from the temple to everyone's industries"; "modern Buddhist industries should comprise of factories, farm, banks and offices"; and the deify of modern Buddhism by "interpreting *dharma* by modern language; modernize and technologicalize missionary methods; modernizing and life-orienting of Buddhism practices; and the modernizing of temples"

(Chan & Tang [陳兵, 鄧子美], 2003; see also Hsing Yun [星雲], 2007)

By adapting these principles, Humanistic Buddhism has successfully incorporating modernity and secularity into its religious system, which in echoing Yves Lambert's model of modern new forms of religious mentioned above, expresses a kind of attitudes towards this-worldly, self-spirituality, parasceintificity, and pluralism. However we should not over-exaggerate or misinterpret the role of secularism in Humanistic Buddhism, or any other forms of religious systems that adapted according to modernization. The process and adaptation of secularity among them does not necessarily leads to a decline of sacrality of its religious core, nor does it affects the essence of the religious nature, in which "the rationalization and secularization does not necessarily undermines its power and potential of ultimate meanings within the society" (Dai [載史宗], 1995; Chan & Tang [陳兵, 鄧子美], 2003), and that the performance in terms of secularity is only an expression and attitude of the inherent sacrality and the concerns beyond this world. From the above brief illustration of Humanistic Buddhism in modern China, it demonstrated how a religious organization incorporates the force of modernity and secularity into their system in the metamorphosis of itself in accordance to the contemporary societal situation and need. This also gives an account on viewing the contrast of the process of secularization in the present form apart from the naïve secularization theory which many have already abandoned, to the notion that the investigation of secularization in different cultural and societal system still has a degree of relevant in description and examination.

In deducing from the arguments from the above trajectory of the secularism thesis, it could be said that secularization and religion are not a mutually exclusive category, but one that can co-exist and led to a "secularized sacred" and a "sacralized secularity" in a form of secularization within the religious systems. Secularization is a force that

is inevitable under the modernization of our society, and the respond of religion upon this secular tide is the embracement of the secular into their system, and renavigate its organization towards a secular direction. This embracing of secularity causes an internal dialectic within religious organization, resulting a change and reinterpretation of religious doctrines, practices and objectives. This results in the emergence of different forms and structure of religious organizations and denominations with new emphasis and approaches under a secular-inclined imperatives based on subjective religiosity and social participation in different societies, such as the spawn of numerous of different new religious institutions and sects in the Christian societies of America and Europe which incorporates modern thoughts of individualism, subjective religiosity and world participation; Islam's incorporation of secularity into their culture and religion in accordance to the modern world; the recent uprising of a mixture of Hinduism and nationalism in India with a touch of secular relish under the influence of Gandhi in embracing secularity and tolerance within its religious system (Van Der Veer, 2008); and the resurging of religious organizations in China in taking a more secular form as the Humanistic Buddhism shown above. This metamorphosis or religious organizations can be best illustrated by Yves Lambert's descriptions on the new religious forms under modernity, including (a) this-worldliness, (b) self-spirituality, (c) dehierarchization and dedualiation, (d) parascientificity, (e) pluralism, relativism, (f) loose network-type organizations (Lambert, 1999). What Lambert suggests is that in approaching the question of modernity, and the associated force of secularization, religion will somehow respond to such alternation of human evolution and that the effects of modernity will be absorbed and digested into their own system. Therefore as we approach the question of modernity, and the associated force of secularization, we can see that religion will somehow respond to such alternation of

human evolution and that the effects of modernity will be absorbed and digested into their own system. In short, no matter we are dealing with Christianity or Buddhism, looking in the context of Europe or China, under our globalized world we are all under the same forces that shapes and mold the contour of our societies, be it the force of modernization, secularization or any other kind. What religious scholar of today ought to, as Stark states, is to look into the variations in religious expressions according to different cultural and societal dimensions, from that it could made our reference for theories like secularization useful and meaningful.

Notes

The above English citations from Chinese texts are translated by the student of this paper and therefore a chance of mis-translation and wrong terming. Please refer to the original texts for exact wordings and best understandings.

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