

"An Enchanted Land - the Enchantment of Personal Flourishing"

Enchanted (Pt. 3)

January 21, 2018

INTRO ...The Slow Shift toward the Individual

- a **'new vocabulary'**: 'self-sufficient humanism', 'galloping pluralism', 'expressive individualism', 'hyper-individuation'; personal human flourishing',

Last Week: The Enchantment of Our Immanent Frame—Our Personal 'Right Here & Right Now'
...we are fixated and mesmerized and consumed with what is 'IMMANENT' and we are less and less aware and concerned and motivated by what is 'TRANSCENDENT'

This Week: ***The Enchantment of "Personal Flourishing"***—referred to as '*The Age of Authenticity*'

"The Age of Authenticity"

"...the Age of Authenticity... we're committed to personal human flourishing and we find that flourishing within ourselves. So our spirituality must be driven by 'authentic' emotions that come from within... our modern secular culture disciplines our hearts to be true to ourselves, to reject all outside intrusions." John Starke, "Preaching to a Secular Age" (from "Our Secular Age", p. 46)

"Authenticness" must be understood as a self-defined dimension that is tethered to one's own sense of origination and coming from within me on my own terms. Personal uniqueness and personal preference weigh heavy in labeling something 'authentic'! Anything that is associated with some tradition or some handed down boundary, definition, or expectation is likely to not be labeled "authentic".

"...what I have called 'the Culture of Authenticity'. I mean the understanding of life which emerges with the Romantic expressivism of the late-eighteenth Century, that each one of us has his/her own way of realizing our humanity, and that it is important to find and live out one's own, as against surrendering to conformity with a model imposed on us from outside, by society, or the previous generation or religious or political authority. ...One can trace the strengthening, even radicalization of this ethos ...a growing sense of the right, even the duty, to resist established codes and standards, to declare openly for the art and the mode of life that they felt inspired to create and live." **Charles Taylor**, "A Secular Age", p. 475

"If we think of the 60's as our hinge moment, we note a widespread critique of our society in the period immediately preceding it... The revolt of young people in the "60's" (which really extended into the 70's) were indeed, directed against a 'system' which smothered creativity, individuality, and imagination. They rebelled against a 'mechanical' system in the name of more 'organic' ties." **Charles Taylor**, "A Secular Age", p. 476

- **'Organic vs Organized'**

...this 'rage against the system' is an extremely ANTI-BIBLICAL Concept that NO ONE Should Welcome or Applaud! ...

Deut 6:4-9

WARNING: This "Spell" upon the land will produce a relationally shallow and convictionally weak church world! ...There will be more church hopping than ever, only rivaled by the outbreak of a more 'personalized (self-authentic)' way of doing spirituality—which will be a de-prioritizing of corporateness and an elevation of personalness in your Christian Life and Practice! ...A diminished view of AUTHORITY and the need for or influence of people who play a God-given role of authority in our lives.

"...there arises in the Western societies a generalized culture of 'authenticity', or expressive individualism, in which people are encouraged to find their own way, discover their own fulfillment, 'do their own thing'. ...This turn has plainly altered the shape of secularity, mainly by shifting the place of the spiritual in human life... The connection between pursuing a moral or spiritual path and belonging to larger ensembles—state, church, even denomination— has further loosened... We are now living in a spiritual super-nova, a kind of galloping pluralism on the spiritual plane." **Charles Taylor**, "A Secular Age", p. 299

ENCHANTED

~ A 'super-nova', a 'galloping pluralism', that is changing the way we pursue our spiritual paths and has loosened our belonging to larger ensembles.

"Personal Flourishing"

"Personal Human Flourishing" ...an enchantment with my individuality
...with my dreams ...with furthering my interests and preferences

This is not just an attitude...it is the Gatekeeper of What Gets in to the Modern Human Soul! ...IF This 'whatever' (this relationship, task, role, activity, time investment, money spending) does not pass the gatekeeper question of 'how does this further my personal prosperity project (my hopes and dreams and desires)—then it won't be welcomed or pursued!!

"The modern person who sees personal human flourishing as his or her highest commitment then sees every relationship or obligation (personal, relational, religious, or communal) as merely and only an enhancement to the primary commitment to personal flourishing. ...Christianity is not a means to human flourishing. In fact, Christianity instructs us to die to self, consider others more important, turn the cheek, offer ourselves as a living sacrifice, enter into weeping and sadness with others. This of course creates a conflict with the modern ...[which] sees God and neighbor as enhancements that we can take or leave when they become burdensome or demand sacrifice. ...our churches are potentially filled with people who see their current church commitments and investments into community as enhancements to their flourishing. When these 'enhancements' begin to impede our 'flourishing' by asking for sacrifice and demanding discomfort, the temptation will be to put off faith as an intolerable intruder... This may not be a conscious or explicitly stated condition, but it is the way hearts are formed in the West today..."

John Starke, "Preaching to a Secular Age", (from 'Our Secular Age', p. 43)

For our achievement culture at its core, powered by the rise of therapy as a kind of secular religion, has elevated feelings as the peak of human flourishing. The greatest good is to feel good. As cultural critic Edwin Schur notes, "Potential and growth are thought of and talked about in strictly personal terms. Their presence or absence is determined in or through the individual's own feelings."² The contemporary life script of the achievement culture is to arrange a life that delivers constant pleasurable feelings, to keep the social and psychic

borders up, to keep negative feelings outside. When positive emotions become the pinnacle of personal growth, a tyranny of feelings is quickly established. Compounded by the belief, communicated from Disney children's movies to self-help literature, that a life free of negative feelings and painful emotions is eminently possible. This belief is confirmed by contemporary parenting styles and dominant educational practices that insulate the young from the painful realities of life, the sting of disappointments and consequences, and the limiting reality of a broken creation. Mark Sayers, Strange Days: Life in the Spirit in a Time of Upheaval (pp. 159-160). Kindle Edition.

- "The greatest good is to feel good" ...and the territory/boundary of that 'feel good' is PERSONALLY DEFINED! ...'the contemporary life script, is to arrange a life that delivers constant pleasurable feelings' ...

"Our modern society has come to embrace 'self-sufficient humanism'. According to Taylor, 'I mean by this a humanism accepting no final goals beyond human flourishing, nor any allegiance to anything else beyond this flourishing. Of no previous society was this true. ...At the same time, we Christians live and breathe in this secular age as well. This self-sufficient humanism becomes part of the muscle memory of our own souls, even if we are often unconscious to its effect. What Taylor tells us about secularists hits awfully close to home in the pews. ...The task of the preacher, it seems, is to aim at this dual temptation. We speak to the longings of those outside the faith and the wanderings of those inside.'" John Starke, "Preaching to a Secular Age" (from 'Our Secular Age', p. 40)

SUMMARY - Enchantment Has 2 Odorless Elements:

- (1) **The Immanent Frame** (a Life ordered around 'Right HERE & Right Now') ...a life that is lite on Transcendent Things and Heavily invested in 'Immanent Things'
- (2) **Personal Flourishing** - The Gatekeeper of Authenticity ...for something to have value to me, it must further my personal flourishing dreams, desires, and values!!

Deut 6:10-14 ...Be Aware of the Fog of Forgetfulness that is over that Land!