

Gifts without Givers: Secular Spirituality and Metaphorical Cognition

Drew Chastain¹ 

Published online: 10 November 2016
© Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2016

Abstract The option of being ‘spiritual but not religious’ deserves much more philosophical attention. That is the aim here, taking the work of Robert Solomon as a starting point, with focus on the particular issues around viewing life as gift. This requires analysis of ‘existential gratitude’ to show that there can be gratitude for things without gratitude to someone for providing things, and also closer attention to the role that metaphor plays in cognition. I consider two main concerns with gift and gratitude thinking, that the nonreligious justification is too instrumentalist in its approach and that viewing life as gift, whether in a religious or nonreligious way, is simply too optimistic.

Keywords Gift · Metaphor · Cognition · Gratitude · Secularism · Spirituality

Introduction: Locating Secular Spirituality

For the Lakota, acknowledging the gift of life and gifts in life is central to a larger understanding of ‘sacred reciprocity’, a continual balancing of spirit that flows between all that is, including plants, other animals, the earth, the sky, our ancestors, and other categories of beings. Viewing this or that or all of life as a

✉ Drew Chastain
drew_chastain@hotmail.com

¹ Loyola University of New Orleans, 6363 St. Charles Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70118, USA

gift calls for a response of appreciation, gratitude, and humility, inspiring a commitment to give back as a way to participate in the creative power of sacred reciprocity, even in the face of hardship.¹ This spiritual response to life as a gift balances a human tendency toward a profaning kind of egoism that undermines a capacity for human connection and contentment.

The triumph of spirit over ego is an attractive and commonly acknowledged aim among the world's religions, and cultivation of a sense of life as a gift serves this spiritual aim in subtle and complex ways. But there is also a good reason to distance oneself from the recommendations of religions. Many who reflect on the world's religions are wary of their competing claims about the nature of reality and of the good. There is also a concern about the temptation within religious identity toward elitist and exclusivist thinking that so easily undermines the spiritual insight of unity and solidarity found in many of the same religions. This ambivalence towards religion leads to the central questions of this paper: Can something of the approach to life as a gift be retained even as one rejects religious commitments? What exactly are the attractions of viewing life as a gift and what are the challenges for achieving this way of seeing things for those who are disinclined toward religious metaphysical belief and institutional affiliation? How might a 'nonreligious spirituality' or a 'secular spirituality' that allows for understanding life as a gift contribute to a greater sense of social solidarity in an age defined by pluralism of belief and unbelief?

To call what is sought here 'secular' spirituality requires some context and awareness of ambiguity. Charles Taylor opens *The Secular Age* (2007) with a distinction between three families of uses of the term 'secular', beginning with secularity as (i) a distancing of social and political institutions from religion and as (ii) individual or collective loss of faith in God or religion (pp. 1–2). Taylor himself prefers a third understanding of secularity, not as a loss of religious belief but as (iii) a mode in which belief in God 'is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest one to embrace' (p. 3). In describing ours as a 'postsecular' age, Jürgen Habermas is in greater agreement with Taylor than it may seem. Like Taylor, and partly motivating his use of the term '*postsecular*',² Habermas rejects the once commonly accepted narrative that faith in institutionalized religions would inevitably die out as the merits of enlightened atheism gradually dawned upon all of humanity.³ Religious faith appears to be more persistent than this, suggesting to both Taylor and Habermas that religion is a deep and ineliminable source of insight, meaning, and motivation. What's common to Taylor's preferred understanding of secularity and Habermas' understanding of postsecularity is the acceptance that we live in an age of pluralism that will continue to include widespread robust religious faith alongside widespread lack of religious belief and that a tension between these extremes is experienced by nearly everyone.

¹ Joseph Epes Brown discusses the Lakota notion of sacred reciprocity, which he learned during his time spent with Lakota medicine man Black Elk, in (2001, Ch. 6). *The Gift of the Sacred Pipe* (1982), something akin to a Lakota 'Bible', recorded and edited by Brown under the guidance of Black Elk, details the major Lakota rites, including the Sun Dance. These rites consistently feature a personal relationship with all elements in the cosmos, a relationship which pervades day-to-day life for the Lakota.

² At (2008, 111), Habermas describes his understanding of the term 'postsecular society', which he attributes to Klaus Eder. Also see (2003, 104).

³ Taylor describes four facets of this 'secularization' narrative (pp. 573–574).

Taylor describes the experience of being pulled between these extremes as an experience of ‘cross pressures’ felt by those who seek a ‘middle position’ (p. 595).⁴ Here, I am exploring the special issues that arise in the search for a stable middle position that can be located under the label of ‘nonreligious spirituality’ and more specifically ‘secular spirituality’, which can be seen as a subcategory of the former. If we make use of the ‘institutional’ sense of secularity, then to adopt nonreligious and secular spirituality is to be ‘spiritual but not religious’ and so to embrace something resembling religion while operating outside of any particular religious institution or system of belief. To call one form of nonreligious spirituality ‘secular’ readily expresses a commitment to the epistemic value of not claiming more than one can show in public terms. The ‘scientific’ is one mode of public discourse, but, at the same time, secular spirituality need not seek a *foundation* in science. Secular spirituality only needs to show that it operates without faith in speculative doctrine emerging from the extremes of religion or even ‘scientism’.⁵

To call it ‘spirituality’ will continue to trouble those who think this requires belief in a special ontology of spirit. It’s important to observe here, though, that ‘mind’ has naturalistic application that does not require metaphysical dualism, so, in parallel fashion, it should not be assumed that ‘spirit’ is an unambiguous term that functions to refer only to something supernatural.⁶ But I think the choice of terminology here needs little defense. Rather, the language is already there in our culture, and the acknowledgement of spirituality without religion has become commonplace, so the question is what more precisely is this option of being spiritual but not religious and of secular spirituality? I appreciate Robert Solomon’s direct, plain-spoken characterization of what he calls ‘naturalized spirituality’ (xvi) in *Spirituality for the Skeptic* (2002):

spirituality does not mean and is not restricted to belief in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic God, and belief in God does not constitute spirituality. ... it is not necessary to be religious—much less to belong to an organized religion—to be spiritual. We all know people who claim and believe themselves to be devout, but are as devoid of spirituality as an empty Styrofoam cup. ... This is not to say that spirituality is not at home in organized religion. Of course it is. ... But I am sure that I am not alone

⁴ Taylor also seems to suggest that the ‘middle condition’—a term that appears to be interchangeable with ‘middle position’ (p. 6)—is not satisfying, because the diminution of belief involved correlates with a diminution of a religious or spiritual experience of ‘fullness’ (pp. 4–14; cf. p. 595). If this is Taylor’s view, or at least a deep and important question in Taylor’s thought, I suggest that the approach to secular spirituality being developed here can help us to understand how there can be a certain kind of unbelief with something like fullness, if there can be gift and gratitude thinking without a transcendent gift giver. However, I do not believe that the metaphor of fullness is helpful ultimately as a guide for understanding the full range of spiritual experience.

⁵ Habermas labels this latter option ‘radical naturalism’ (2008, 140–141). Alex Rosenberg (2011), who gladly accepts the ‘scientism’ label, is a recent example of a theorist taking it to this extreme.

⁶ After noting a commitment to materialism (p. 287), Santayana (1955) expresses a similar sentiment: ‘It would be a pity to abandon this consecrated word ... especially as there is the light of intuition, the principle of actuality in vision and feeling, to call by that name. The popular uses of the word spiritual support this definition of it; because intuition, when it thoroughly dominates animal experience, transmutes it into pure flame, and renders it religious or poetical, which is what is commonly meant by spiritual’ (p. 288).

in thinking there is also a home for spirituality outside the walls of the world's established religions ... (xii).

Solomon goes on to state his search 'for a nonreligious, noninstitutional, nontheological, nonscriptural, and nonexclusive sense of spirituality, one which is not self-righteous, which is not based on Belief, which is not dogmatic, which is not antiscience, which is not other-worldly, and which is not uncritical or cultist or kinky' (xii). To be clear, by 'naturalized spirituality', Solomon does not mean to *derive* spirituality and its justifications from a naturalistic worldview, but rather to live spiritually without belief in the supernatural, transcendent, or otherworldly. John Bishop (2010) views Solomon's work as the basis for a possible spiritual 'amplification' (p. 530) of the scientific worldview, but it's an independent question whether scientific naturalism should serve as an orienting baseline approach that would then be 'amplified' by spirituality.

Though not everyone who would identify as 'spiritual but not religious' could be expected to agree with exactly the sort of spirituality Solomon describes, I believe Solomon captures a middle position of sorts that many gravitate toward and which could use greater clarification as an option apart from the extremes.⁷ That is the aim here, with focus on the particular issues that emerge with viewing life as a gift. This exploration begins in section 2 with analysis of 'existential gratitude'⁸ to show that there can be gratitude *for* things without gratitude *to* someone for providing things, and also that this gratitude plays a special role apart from the related attitudes of feeling pleased and lucky. In section 3, I give closer attention to the role that metaphor plays in cognition in order to show that adopting existential gratitude just is to adopt a gift metaphor, and also that metaphor should be expected to play a major role in making possible various spiritual approaches, including what I call 'gift and gratitude thinking'. In section 4, I consider two main concerns with gift and gratitude thinking, that the nonreligious justification is too 'instrumentalist' in its approach and that viewing life as a gift, whether in a religious or nonreligious way, is simply too optimistic.

⁷ John Dewey's *A Common Faith* (1934) also outlines a rationale for secular spirituality (which he refers to as 'the religious' without 'religion'). As with Solomon, one of Dewey's primary motivations for pursuing spirituality outside of religion is avoidance of the supernaturalism common in religion. Dewey views the 'religious' mode (as a mode of experience that can exist outside of the dogmatic and supernaturalist institution of religion) as a pursuit of an imaginative ideal that unifies the self, an individual or collective social striving that requires no supposition of extraordinary entities, but which does require 'faith' in our imaginative ideals (see Ch. I). This emphasis on the 'imagination' also connects to some suggestions presented in this article, in that I am appealing to the imaginative resources of metaphor for use in spiritual living, which is not the same as engaging in make-believe. Concerned to show that 'the religious' is consistent with a scientific worldview, Dewey states concisely that the 'aims and ideals that move us are generated through imagination. But they are not made of imaginary stuff' (p. 49).

⁸ Richard Colledge (2013) defines 'existential gratitude' as 'gratitude for one's existence as such' and states a preference for the term 'ontological gratitude' as gratitude 'for the many aspects of lived being in its often tumultuous richness' (p. 32, fn. 3). I am here using the term 'existential gratitude' more generally to mean any gratitude *for* something, close to what McAleer (2012) labels 'propositional gratitude'.

Existential Gratitude

In a section entitled ‘Gratitude: The Idea of Life as a Gift’ (pp. 103-106), Solomon presents his reflections on gift language, connecting the importance of viewing life as a gift to the acceptance of fate and the expression and cultivation of gratitude and humility. For Solomon, accepting fate is not about accepting spookily unavoidable events, but about ‘embracing a larger narrative in which one’s actions and fortunes have meaning and make sense of one’s life. Part of that meaning and making sense, an essential aspect of that acceptance, is our willingness to feel and show our gratitude’ (p. 104). Viewing an event in one’s life as fated in this sense is to treat it as ‘more than just luck. It is clearly out of our hands, but it becomes a *gift*, in effect, something to be *thankful* for, a good reason for humility mixed with our good fortune and our pride’ (p. 103; emphasis in the original). Solomon suggests that this complex attitude present in viewing life as a gift is available to those who have no belief in a gift giver and should be embraced by the naturalist as well:

Insofar as one personifies fate, for instance in the personality of God or some guardian angel, there is a straightforward interpretation of gratitude. One is grateful to God or one’s angel because he (or she) has done something for which gratitude is appropriate. But it seems to me that we naturalists have given up a great deal by relegating gratitude to the supernatural dump just because there is no particular person to feel grateful to. This does not mean that there is no need for gratitude. (p. 104)

Solomon’s insights on fate and humility⁹ are worth exploring, but I’ll restrict my efforts here to consideration of gratitude’s central role in gift thinking. A first step in the case for the nonreligious use of gift language is to make clear that there can be gratitude even if there is no one to whom one is grateful, a form of gratitude which I will refer to here as ‘existential gratitude’. A second step is to show that the cultivation of this very important attitude is not replaceable by attitudes such as feeling pleased or feeling fortunate. A third step (performed in the next section) is to make clear that to adopt existential gratitude is to adopt metaphorical gift framing, and then to pursue further implications of this metaphorical framing.

⁹ Theorists commonly identify humility as a value connected to gift of language or gratitude. Humility is loosely defined by Sean McAleer (2012) as ‘a matter of properly appreciating the value of one’s character and accomplishment’ (p. 59) rather than a matter of undervaluing one’s achievements, as humility is sometimes understood by its critics. One may wonder whether it’s possible to conceive of a ‘proper’ understanding of one’s value, powers, and limitations without reference to an intelligent designer who assigns roles or comparison to some greater nonhuman entity (divinity and nature) in relation to which we find our proper place. In a thorough semantic and historic analysis of humility, James Kellenberger (2010) observes that a traditional ‘religious’ account of humility does set up such a metaphysic, but by no means does the idea of humility in itself (or in its many uses) requires a definite place for humanity in the overall scheme of things. It’s important to note, however, that viewing something as a gift—literally or metaphorically—can inspire the *opposite* of humility. For instance, a child receiving a literal gift can develop a swelled sense of self-importance out of this, a response adults can have to perceived metaphorical gifts as well. I do not believe that non-humility is clearly an improper response to a gift based in a misunderstanding of what it means to receive a gift. Ingratitude, on the other hand, is more clearly an improper response to gifts.

Motivating a consideration of these steps, Solomon's view that there is a place and purpose for gratitude for life has not gone unchallenged. For instance, Guy Kahane (2011)¹⁰ points the following critique at Solomon:

just as it cannot make sense for an atheist to pray to a God above, it cannot make sense to treat life as *literally* a gift. Such practices and attitudes *aren't* theism-neutral. This isn't to deny that when a great good unexpectedly lands in our hands, this can occasion a distinctive kind of gladness; we can call such gladness 'gratitude' if we wish, but this is more likely to mislead than to illuminate. (p. 366, fn. 41; emphasis in the original)

Kahane says we cannot make sense of treating life 'literally' as a gift in a way that is theism-neutral. If by 'theism' is meant belief in a perfect omniGod, even viewing something *literally* as a gift would not require theism—one could be a polytheist or animist or believe in gifts provided by deceased ancestors.¹¹ But if we are to more generally deny (or not rely upon) 'supernaturalism' or 'paranormalism', we *would* need to abandon the literal approach in favor of metaphorical gift framing. The key to the metaphorical approach is that an important mode of gratitude—existential gratitude—is included in the metaphorical framing. Also, existential gratitude is significantly different from what Kahane calls 'gladness', in which case metaphorical gift language does not mislead, but instead illuminates something quite distinct.

To pursue these points in response to Kahane's kind of objection, it's important first to challenge an assumption that seems implicit in it—that one cannot have gratitude *for something* without having gratitude *to someone* for providing it. Working in the empirical psychology of gratitude, Watkins (2014) is also among those who holds the view that being grateful must involve some sort of agential targetting, through personification if there is no person (p. 18). But Sean McAleer (2012) convincingly argues that '*propositional* gratitude'—gratitude *that* something is the case, or gratitude *for* something—is a perfectly intelligible attitude to adopt, not requiring an agent to whom one is grateful. Noting that 'Expressions of propositional gratitude occur every day' (p. 64), McAleer clarifies that whether or not gratitude is targeted is a matter of

¹⁰ Kahane is more proximately responding to Michael Sandel's 'gift argument' against enhancement (2007). I agree with Sandel's critics that the gift argument fails to operate against enhancement, that is, without religious metaphysical support, like that made more explicit in (Sandel 2005), which has not received as much attention from critics. Ruiping Fan's Confucian response to Sandel establishes this critical conclusion most effectively (2010), given that, in a Confucian religious framework, children could be viewed as gifts, yet this would not produce a general prohibition against enhancement of children. At the same time, critics of Sandel such as Carson Strong (2005) and Guy Kahane (2011) fail to see that metaphorical gift language, with its appeals to gratitude and humility, does not *in itself* commit one to metaphysical assumptions that violate secular norms. But the failure of Sandel's gift argument helps us to see that a justification of gift and gratitude thinking does not justify all applications of it. In other areas of bioethics, Laura Simonoff and Kata Chillag (1999) have observed that gift language can be used to exploit a sense of obligation among organ recipients, causing unnecessary psychological anguish, while Elizabeth Anderson (1990) criticizes commercial surrogacy brokers for exploiting the surrogate's sense of altruism by framing the surrogate's service as a gift.

¹¹ John Bishop (2010) makes a point like this (p. 532). But Bishop is apparently interested in the view that gratitude for life might imply the existence of someone to be thanked for life, suggesting, however, that this need not be understood as an omniGod (that is omnipotent, omniscience, omnibenevolent, etc.). A point I'm making is that the existence of an agent to whom one is thankful is not necessary at all in a justification of existential gratitude.

scope or syntax, not semantics, so that ‘distinguishing targeted and propositional gratitude does not require different senses of ‘gratitude’’: ‘Just as one can believe there are spies without believing of any particular person that she is a spy, one can be grateful that there are heroes without being grateful to a particular hero’ (p. 57). But, for McAleer, not only is propositional gratitude easily intelligible, such gratitude is appropriate because it is ‘an important way in which humility shows itself in the world’ (p. 61). McAleer can also make sense of saying that one is grateful *to* a non-agent (p. 63) in that gratitude acts as a proper response to the good being acknowledged through gratitude.

Clearly, appeal to semantic intuition does not converge on a rigid agent-targeting requirement for gratitude, so that those who sense this requirement cannot simply insist on it, leaving it open for anyone to accept existential gratitude. A more important semantic issue concerning the appropriateness of existential gratitude is the contrast between gratitude and the neighboring attitudes of feeling glad (or ‘pleased’¹²) and feeling fortunate. In the case, for instance, of hoping to get home before it begins storming, I suggest that there are important differences between feeling pleased, feeling fortunate, and feeling grateful about arriving home dry. What gratitude has that being glad or pleased do not is the sense of receiving something *one was not entitled to*. This is not to say that, when grateful, one believes oneself to *deserve less than* what one gets, nor does it mean that being pleased or glad always involves a feeling of entitlement. It is just that being pleased or glad does not *commit* one to the idea that one has received something to which one was not entitled. To move in the direction of this commitment is to move from feeling glad or pleased to feeling gratitude. Against Kahane, it does not mislead to describe one’s attitude as gratitude—it clearly adds a content to one’s attitude not found in gladness. Or, if we want to view gratitude as a ‘distinctive kind of gladness’, what’s distinctive is the addition of this sense of not being entitled (with, again, clear connections to humility), which amounts to transforming gladness into something more.

Likewise, as Solomon observes, being thankful for something is to acknowledge ‘more than just luck’. Fortunate feelings are more like existential gratitude than feeling pleased or glad in that fortunate feelings more specifically acknowledge what is out of one’s control. But framing one’s circumstances as ‘lucky’ also contrasts with gratitude framing. What one is grateful for may be fragile, but fortune is fickle. Fortune is nothing to rely on, while gratitude points to what we do rely on in good times and bad. In this way, gratitude helps to support an attitude of ‘cosmic trust’ that Solomon (Ch. 3) sees as central to naturalized spirituality. To foster this kind of trust is not necessarily to view the world as ‘benign’, as Solomon suggests (p. 51), a point on which Bishop (p. 527) properly critiques Solomon. Rather, to trust is more minimally to acknowledge that there is support in one’s life and that no one is entirely self-supporting. Gratitude clearly provides a frame for cultivation of this kind of trust through grateful appreciation of that which we rely on. One can be grateful for luck, and gratitude can be expressed by saying ‘I’m so lucky’, and good fortune is surely part of what we

¹² Bishop (2010) and McAleer (2012) both acknowledge ‘being pleased’ as a cousin to gratitude that serves as an important contrast, helping to bring out what is essential to gratitude.

acknowledge in gratitude. But gratitude goes beyond mere acknowledgement of luck, helping us to see and appreciate what is there as support in life, even in unlucky times.¹³

Once the viability of an attitude of existential gratitude in its unique functioning is made clear, one naturally wonders whether one could simply proceed with the adoption of existential gratitude without viewing what one is grateful for as a gift. If it is not the gratitude that requires belief in someone to whom one is grateful, talk of ‘gifts’ retains the interpersonal reference derived from our social practices of gift giving, so perhaps we could simply eliminate the gift framing while retaining the gratitude in order to remove the perceived awkwardness of metaphor. But I do not believe this works—to adopt existential gratitude is the same as adopting metaphorical gift framing. I want to press this point in order to make the more general point that secular spirituality should be expected to require various kinds of metaphorical framing. What’s more, it is arguably an ‘advanced’ form of spirituality, *even within religion*, to explicitly acknowledge the use of metaphorical (and symbolic and narrative) framing for spiritual purpose. When such frameworks are taken purely literally, the deeper meaning is lost, while metaphorical framing releases meaning, and this meaning cannot be preserved if the metaphor is dropped altogether.

Along these lines, in the foreword to *The Psychology of Gratitude* (2004), Solomon criticizes the use of God or luck or fate as proxy targets for existential gratitude, seeing this as ‘a limp way out of the quandary’ (viii) of fostering non-targeted gratitude. Solomon suggests that, instead, there is something spiritually important about cultivating a form of gratitude that is *not* targeted. As Solomon puts it, if one does not target the gratitude toward someone real or imagined, one at the same time cultivates a general state of openness: ‘opening one’s heart to the universe is not so much personifying the universe as opening one’s heart, that is, expanding one’s perspective’ (ix).¹⁴ Gratitude for particular elements in life can be deepened into a more sustained ‘open’ state of existential gratitude for broader elements in life or for life in general, which is to view life as a gift without a giver.

The Gift Metaphor

Metaphor is not a choice. It is a powerful cognitive tool pervading our reasoning processes without which we could not make sense of reality so extensively. This is a central point made in *Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999), in which George Lakoff and Mark Johnson bring together the deeper insights of their cognitive scientific approach

¹³ I thank Benjamin Bayer for pressing me to make more clear the difference between feeling grateful and feeling lucky.

¹⁴ This fairly vague passage ties in with Solomon’s understanding of spirituality as a way to get beyond oneself or expand the self, as he discusses throughout *Spirituality for the Skeptic*. For instance: ‘When I say that spirituality is the enlargement and not the negation of self, it is this communal sense of self as soul, instantiated in its most immediate form as compassion, that I have in mind. But it need not just be negative, a painful awareness of the suffering of the world. It can also be the positive sense of the joy of the world, the euphoric sense of sharing life and sharing in the happiness of others. Soul and spirituality find their natural base in this concept of an enlarged and enhanced sense of the compassionate ordinary self’ (p. 139). I’m largely in agreement with this way of characterizing spirituality, similarly understanding spirituality as a set of values that balances a self-important, self-absorbed, and self-aggrandizing *ego*.

to metaphor,¹⁵ summed up by them in a few sentences: ‘The mind is inherently embodied. Thought is mostly unconscious. Abstract concepts are largely metaphorical’ (p. 3). *Philosophy in the Flesh* identifies the metaphorical underpinnings of abstract concepts like time, event, causation, mind, self, and morality, and also of historically important philosophical approaches like that of the pre-Socratics, Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, and more recent analytic philosophy. More fundamentally, the idea is that metaphorical framing shapes our everyday experience and reasoning, as when we think ‘affection is warmth’, ‘important is big’, ‘happy is up’, ‘similarity is closeness’, and ‘time is motion’.¹⁶ To say that these metaphors are ‘embodied’ is not just to say that such reasoning processes are instantiated in the neural process of the brain, but that the concepts we use ‘are created as a result of the way the brain and body are structured and the way they function in interpersonal relations and in the physical world’ (p. 37). To say that abstract concepts are largely metaphorical is to say that comprehension of one concept area is aided by another concept area through a ‘mapping’ process. It is typically those concepts that are harder to ‘grasp’ that invite shaping through more easily grasped concept domains developed out of the ‘basic level’ (pp. 28–30) of our embodied experience with the world of tangible things around us. We do this unconsciously, largely unaware that we are performing metaphorical mappings in our everyday reasoning processes.¹⁷

Lakoff and Johnson emphasize that for many abstractions important in life, there really is no way to grasp it *without* metaphor. An example used to illustrate this is the idea that ‘love is a journey’, described as a complex metaphor allowing for a reasoning process around component metaphors such as ‘lovers are travelers’, ‘common life goals are destinations’, ‘a relationship is a vehicle’, and ‘difficulties are impediments to motion’. This metaphorical understanding informs ordinary expressions like ‘look how far we’ve come’, ‘it’s been a long, bumpy road’, ‘we’re at a crossroads’, and ‘the marriage is on the rocks’ (pp. 63–66). Close attention to the ‘love is a journey’ metaphor and hundreds of other common cases of metaphorical framing shows that metaphor is not just a form of novel or poetically decorative language that can be replaced without loss by more literal language (pp. 122–126).

So far, no one working within this theoretical approach seems to have taken up analysis of the gift metaphor (I’ll suggest a reason why below), so I’d like to fill in this gap to see how a closer analysis of the metaphorical ‘mechanics’ can help us to understand the dynamics of a gift metaphor in its spiritual functioning. In the theoretical language used by Lakoff and Johnson, and suggested by the Greek root *metapherein* (meaning ‘to transfer’), a metaphor involves the ‘mapping’ of a conceptual ‘source domain’ onto a conceptual ‘target domain’, so that the source domain transfers its own

¹⁵ This theoretical approach had been developing since at least their 1980 book *Metaphors We Live By*.

¹⁶ See Table 4.1 (pp. 50–54) for a long list of examples.

¹⁷ ‘It is the rule of thumb among cognitive scientists that unconscious thought is 95 % of all thought—and that may be a serious underestimate. ... Our unconscious conceptual system functions like a ‘hidden hand’ that shapes how we conceptualize all aspects of our experience. This hidden hand gives form to the metaphysics that is built into our ordinary conceptual systems. It creates the entities that inhabit the cognitive unconscious—abstract entities like friendships, bargains, failures, and lies—that we use in ordinary unconscious reasoning. It thus shapes how we automatically and unconsciously comprehend what we experience. It constitutes our unreflective common sense’ (p. 13).

structure of inferences to the target domain. Serving as an analysis of the source domain of the concept of gift, here are just three ‘commonplaces’¹⁸ of literal gifting¹⁹:

- (i) The gift is at first a surprise or in some way unknown by the recipient or out of the recipient’s control. (*A gift is unwilling by the recipient.*)
- (ii) The gift giver hopes that the recipient likes or can make use of the gift. (*A gift is beneficial to the recipient.*)
- (iii) The gift recipient should express gratitude for the gift, in that the gift is not a mere form of compensation. (*A gift merits the recipient’s gratitude.*)²⁰

In the case of the gift metaphor, the target domain can be any aspect of life or life itself, in that we can potentially view *anything* as a gift, while the source domain is structured by the commonplaces of literal gift language, something like the three above. The aspects of our lives (the ‘target domain’) that most readily attract a metaphorical mapping of gift language are those aspects that are out of our control and at the same time seemingly or potentially meaningful or beneficial to us (from the first two items in the above analysis). Such aspects of our lives have this conceptual ‘resemblance’ to a literal gift.²¹ At the same time, with a fuller mapping of the source domain onto the target domain, gift language can introduce to these aspects of our lives the appropriateness of the recipient’s gratitude in response (from the last item of the analysis).

Using Lakoff and Johnson’s conceptual mapping approach makes clear that metaphorically viewing something as a gift functions primarily as an attitudinal directive, unsurprisingly recommending the sorts of attitudes we have towards gifts. Gratitude is central here, but along with gratitude, related attitudes like humility and appreciation and even commitment to the care of things are also naturally inspired. If this kind of attitudinal directive is what centrally characterizes the cognitive functioning of a gift

¹⁸ This is Max Black’s (1962) term in early metaphor theory for connotative associations with a word that may not be true of its reference, but which are taken to be true, whether generally or idiosyncratically, by the user of a metaphor (see especially pp. 40–47). As Black writes, ‘Imagine some layman required to say, without taking special thought, those things he held to be true about wolves; the set of statements resulting would approximate to what I am here calling the system of commonplaces associated with the word “wolf”’ (p. 40). It’s worth noting that Black’s language-oriented ‘interactionist theory’ of metaphor parallels in numerous ways Lakoff and Johnson’s later concept-oriented theory.

¹⁹ These are not intended to be a complete list or to act as definitional necessary and sufficient conditions for use of the word ‘gift’. Also note that I am not adopting the formal style of analysis applied by Lakoff and Johnson, which does not alter the substance of the analysis.

²⁰ The idea of a gift *not being* compensation is separate from the issue in ‘gift theory’ of whether a gift *demand*s compensation, or whether there is really any such thing as a ‘pure’ gift between people which is not just a market exchange. For more on the controversies in recent gift theory, see Mark Osteen’s editorial introduction to (Osteen 2002), and see Godbout (1998) for a compelling, extended rejection of the bare economic view of interpersonal gift giving. Although there is surely much more to say in this regard, I’m not here exploring the connections between how we must scientifically understand literal gifting and how we use metaphorical gift framing.

²¹ A resulting consensus of the late twentieth century debate in metaphor theory is that not all metaphors are based on resemblance, or the ‘is like’ relation of simile, as Black was among the first to observe (p. 37). If this were the case, then metaphors would be symmetric, but they are not (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 126–127). It matters which way the mapping is directed, and it is not clear in some metaphors that the mapping is motivated by similarity at all.

metaphor, then we should accept what was asserted in the previous section: if one is adopting existential gratitude and related attitudes, then one is using the gift metaphor, whether or not one acknowledges this metaphorical framing explicitly or consciously. The appropriateness of a gift metaphor would then be mainly a matter of the appropriateness of gratitude and related attitudes toward whatever is being viewed metaphorically as a gift.

The question is not whether it is appropriate to use metaphor. As Lakoff and Johnson have demonstrated with abundant clarity, there's no sense in attempting to remove metaphor from our approach to life and reality. Still, it does seem to be that some metaphors are more of a choice than others, and in this, there is an important difference to address between a gift metaphor and the metaphorical mappings on which Lakoff and Johnson focus their attention. When it comes to our ordinary conception of time, we may have no choice but to understand time metaphorically as 'moving forward', as if along a line through space, if we are to 'grasp' time at all in our day-to-day reflections on temporality. But viewing life as a gift would appear to be more of a cognitive option than this. Lakoff and Johnson give most attention to conceptual metaphors having target domains that *require* metaphor in order to be made more comprehensible. By contrast, it might seem that whatever it is we can metaphorically view as a gift would not lose its native comprehensibility if we did not view it as a gift. We simply would no longer be viewing whatever it is as something warranting gratitude and related attitudes.²² If so, only those independently interested in cultivating or expressing existential gratitude and related attitudes would see the appropriateness of gift framing, while those not seeing the need for these attitudes would not feel cognitively compelled to use a gift metaphor.

However, I believe there is something about some experiences in life which virtually everyone has at some time or another that makes a gift metaphor more essential than adventitious. A full account of gift and gratitude thinking should show that this kind of thinking is not always a matter of purely voluntary application, but is in some way a 'proper response to reality'. In their follow-up essays on Solomon's account of spirituality, John Bishop (2010) and Richard Colledge (2013) both treat this question as central, though neither pay close attention to the role that metaphor plays in a grateful response to reality.²³ I suggest that the metaphor of gift is called for in the

²² This may account for why Lakoff and Johnson do not pursue an analysis of gift metaphor. But I am about to suggest that the gift metaphor does track an abstract conceptual target domain for which the gift mapping is uniquely suited to help us grasp. This target domain likely gets overlooked owing to the difficulty of identifying it in the first place.

²³ Bishop is seeking something more like 'epistemic' justification, though I think this is mainly because he does not seek out the specific attitude of *existential* gratitude that, again, requires appreciation of *metaphorical* gift framing. In his reflections on the 'thankfulness spiritual attitude', Bishop writes: 'In one sense, an epistemic sense, it is to say that thankfulness is what we ought to feel in recognition of some feature of the real—and, arguably, that feature must be a really existing proper object of thanks. In a second sense, however, thankfulness may be a proper response to reality just because it is a fact that having, adopting, and cultivating the spiritual passion of thankfulness is instrumentally useful in achieving certain goals to which we are committed' (p. 532). Considering the instrumental angle, he writes: 'It is important to consider what kind of a goal it is with respect to which having and cultivating global spiritual attitudes such as thankfulness and trust may count as instrumentally valuable. ... That goal can only be, I think, attaining fulfilment as the kinds of beings that we are' (pp. 532–533). However, it seems to me that the value of gratitude can be made sense of without understanding it in (purely) instrumental terms (about which more in the next section) and without appeal to the fulfilment of human nature.

case of a particular kind of abstraction that acts as the gift metaphor's target domain. In reflecting on the peculiarity, strangeness, and wonder of the existence of things, and of oneself among things in life, there is produced a moment of abstraction that one seeks to grasp conceptually. In this case, the 'target domain' of the gift metaphor is not so much the *thing* being viewed as a gift but the *wondrous foundation* (or wondrous *lack* of foundation) for its existence. If we are feeling positively about this fundamental strangeness of life, this is when we are faced with a decision between feeling fortunate and feeling grateful. While 'feeling fortunate' is appropriate, this attitude does not fully capture what it is one is contemplating in such a moment of abstract wonder at life. Feeling grateful is not so entirely about one's own good fortune, but is also directed toward the *nature* of that for which one is grateful. Framing life as gift is most resonant with the more spontaneous experiences in life, when we feel ourselves to be audience to life's creative wellspring, as with the spontaneity—or unforced thriving—of children, nature, and art, or even the spontaneity of one's own energetic feelings and motivations, experiences that cannot truly be *appreciated* or even *acknowledged* as wonderful without allowing oneself to feel gratitude for them. When we reject metaphorical gift framing, we reject existential gratitude, and if we reject gift and gratitude thinking, we ignore—at least in words if not in practice—the profound wonder of life.

Tracking this kind of analysis, Colledge's 'hermeneutic of ontological gratitude' highlights the way in which gratitude for life includes acknowledgement that 'the appearance of the self in the world is absolutely mysterious; it is an utterly gratuitous gift that one cannot "get behind" in order to conceive of its coming, or rationalize its possibility. The self simply *finds itself* in the midst of the world (amongst others)' (2013, 34; emphasis in the original). In his very insightful *The World of the Gift*, Jacques Godbout similarly observes that 'The gift is a renewed contact with the source of life and universal energy': 'The gift is a reflection arising from an experience. One must share that experience for the reflection to take on meaning. The gift is of those phenomena that analysis and breaking down into discrete parts makes disappear, as pornography makes eroticism disappear' (1998, 221).²⁴ While identifying this experience that especially attracts a gift metaphor, Colledge and Godbout do not say anything with precision about the functioning of metaphor in this process. I believe that a secular spirituality clear about its own aims and processes needs to be explicit in its understanding of the role of metaphorical framing, if it is to shake the tired *ad hominem* objection that those seeking to adopt spirituality without religion are simply too weak in character or intellect to accept the implications of God's death. If, within its repertoire, spirituality involves metaphorical gift framing, it is not owing to inability to let go of the idea of God. Through gift framing, spirituality strives to be true to this experience of wondrous foundation(lessness), recognition of which surely comes prior to theistic belief. Belief in gods often serves as superstitious, speculative distraction from a core spirituality partly supported by metaphorical gift framing, a core spirituality seen more clearly through the lens of secular spirituality.

²⁴ Ann Game and Andrew Metcalfe (2010) apply this gift thinking to the experience of learning and exchange in the classroom, while Genevieve Vaughan (2013), who also accesses the work of Lakoff et al., sees it in the experience of the maternal and even in the basic experience of sharing words.

Concerns about Gift and Gratitude Thinking

A defense of the appropriateness of existential gratitude and metaphorical gift thinking is not committed to the view that such an approach to things is *always* appropriate. Likewise, physical exercise is generally advisable, but not *constant* exercise, and there are occasions when exercise is definitely inappropriate, given other considerations, like considerations of respect during a funeral. Gift and gratitude thinking can be inappropriate when, for instance, it is important to acknowledge the role of one's own voluntary effort in bringing about a success, or when it is important not to accept with quietism some negative or unfair aspect of one's situation, although even under such conditions there can still be an altogether appropriate tendency to view life more generally as gift.²⁵ Gift and gratitude thinking does tend to elevate us to the more global assessment that 'life is a gift', which is entailed if some element in life is understood as a gift, because, without life, there could not be that element in life. But this is not the same as saying that *everything* in life is a gift. Also, someone who is inclined to accept the proposition that life is a gift need not be understood as always operating in this framework throughout the day in all situations. Likewise, to be a 'spiritual person' more broadly is not to be someone who is *always* applying spiritual reasoning—has there ever been *anyone* like this, buddhas, messiahs, and saints included?—but rather to be someone who sees the value in spiritual reasoning with a tendency to apply it.

Of course, there are those inclined to believe that metaphorical gift framing is *never* appropriate. Beyond the concerns about belief in the transcendent and the use of metaphor addressed in previous sections, another general concern is that one may be engaging in existential gratitude simply for the resulting benefits. The real benefits of cultivating gratitude are receiving extensive empirical confirmation in 'positive psychology', as recently summarized by Philip Watkins (2014). In his overview of the empirical support for a large growing set of acknowledged benefits of gratitude, including the treatment of depression, Watkins presents a theory of the general value of gratitude that sees gratitude as a way to support a 'sense of abundance' (p. 76):

I propose that gratitude enhances well-being because psychologically it *amplifies the good* in one's life. Just as an amplifier magnifies the sound going into a microphone, so gratitude amplifies the information that it feeds off of. ... In the case of gratitude, it should function to increase the signal strength of the good in one's life. I submit that gratitude helps people live well because it clearly identifies who and what is good for individuals, and in this way gratitude amplifies the good in one's life. (p. 8; emphasis in the original)

But, when it comes to what I'm calling 'existential gratitude', Watkins expresses a version of the concern just mentioned that, once we appreciate all of the benefits of gratitude, 'we may see people engaging in gratitude exercises primarily to enhance their

²⁵ This sort of point about inappropriateness can apply to spirituality overall, which Bishop (2010) rightly observes in a criticism of Solomon's naturalized spirituality: 'Though Solomon himself employs the term spirituality so that having spirituality is good per se, in fact the possibility of bad, worthless, or perverse, spirituality needs to be accommodated' (p. 527).

own happiness' and that approaches to gratitude 'that foster self-preoccupation are bound to backfire' (p. 238). He calls this approach 'extrinsic gratitude' as opposed to 'intrinsic gratitude' which 'will always be focused on the giver'. Watkins does not give empirical support for the claim that self-preoccupation is 'bound to backfire', and it seems intuitive that someone who is less prone to feelings of entitlement owing to cultivation of (genuine) existential gratitude would also be more likely to exercise targeted gratitude toward others. The attitude of existential gratitude cultivated would seem to counteract the problems with solipsism that Watkins has in mind. It is certainly conceivable that someone could pursue existential gratitude without ever exercising targeted gratitude, but this would not be a problem with adopting existential gratitude so much as a problem of *not* adopting targeted gratitude when occasion warrants it.

Another version of this concern, which might be driving Watkin's suspicion of existential gratitude, is that the motivation of deriving personal benefits is simply not in the spirit of gratitude, in that this attitude is internally at odds with a tirelessly acquisitive nature that can never appreciate what it already has. Gratitude does appear to be good for one's well-being, and while there is nothing wrong in itself with pursuing one's own well-being, adopting gratitude solely for the sake of one's own well-being would surely miss something about the value of gift and gratitude thinking. But if this is the case, our conclusion should be that it is *incoherent* to adopt gift and gratitude thinking *only* for the sake of one's own well-being, because in this case one would not be keen to the internal meaning of gratitude. I think it has become clear in what's been said so far that the value of existential gratitude cannot be wholly understood in terms of its 'results'. Gratitude is also *constitutive* to a good it fosters, constitutive of what Watkins calls a 'sense of abundance' or of what Solomon calls a state of 'openness' or of whatever else might count as the value, spiritual or otherwise, of existential gratitude. I am not here attempting to indicate the fuller range of what can count as a spiritual value or as a spiritual approach to life, but at the very least the balancing of extreme entitlement thinking by gift and gratitude thinking would seem to be constitutively important for the 'triumph of spirit over ego' mentioned in the introduction as a common spiritual ideal. A triumph of spirit would not just be a result of existential gratitude, but can be expected to continually involve existential gratitude for its maintenance. Also, if my reflections at the end of the previous section are convincing—that there are important experiences involving creative spontaneity where gift and gratitude thinking is better understood as uniquely capturing what we experience than imposing an arbitrary framework onto it—then the irreplaceable value of gratitude can be understood as *cognitive* as well. Of course, what is intrinsically valuable may also be instrumentally valuable, but it does not in itself degrade the intrinsic value of gratitude if it is also good for, say, one's well-being. Metaphorical gift framing is not crudely instrumentalist if what is achieved is a fundamental reorientation of one's attitude toward life through the genuine cultivation of spiritual attitudes.

A final concern I will consider here is that gift and gratitude thinking is inappropriately cheery or optimistic about life in general. Following Silenus and Schopenhauer, David Benatar's contemporary defense of anti-natalism—the view that it would be better not to have been born—would seem to contain the resources for such a critique.²⁶

²⁶ I'm grateful to an anonymous referee for suggesting that a justification of gift and gratitude thinking would seem to need to contend with pessimism like Benatar's toward life in general.

Central to Benatar's argument for anti-natalism is the claim that life for everyone involves substantial levels of pain, unhappiness and misery, outweighing the positive experiences, though people generally operate on an overly optimistic positivity bias—a 'Pollyanna Principle'—which obscures the fact that the negative outweighs the positive in life (2006, Ch. 3). A full response to anti-natalism is not necessary here. Most important in relation to gift and gratitude thinking is that, while the attitude of anti-natalism is not *derivable* from such thinking, Benatar's nuanced anti-natalism is not clearly at odds with viewing life as gift, even if we accept his argument from excessive life pain. For one, Benatar makes clear that life is not *necessarily* bad. He accepts there could conceivably be lives that are all good (p. 29), so Benatar's problem with life is not with *life itself* but with life as we *actually* experience it. But, even if there is more misery than happiness in actual lives, there are still bound to be truly wondrous moments for most who are actually living, moments for which gift and gratitude thinking are entirely appropriate. Importantly, Benatar is also clear that anti-natalism is consistent both with a commitment to continuing life once it has already started (p. 212)²⁷ and with generally adhering to moral values while alive—for instance, Benatar adheres to his own 'liberal instincts' (p. 110)—so adherence to *spiritual* values through gift and gratitude thinking would also appear to be an option consistent with his position. What's more, Benatar even explicitly allows that 'there is nothing in my view that suggests we should not 'count our blessings' if by this one means that one should be pleased that one's life is not still worse than it is' (p. 210). Agreed. But I think that the account of gift and gratitude thinking I've provided here shows that one can be more than just 'pleased'. One can also be grateful and not merely for being comparatively better off.

It's helpful to see that gift and gratitude thinking is consistent with one of the more pessimistic approaches to life available to contemporary thinkers. In this regard, it would seem that gift and gratitude thinking is also consistent with the strain of spiritual nihilism at the core of Buddhist philosophy that views life as suffering caused by endlessly unsatisfied egoistic craving. The goal then becomes nirvana, from a Sanskrit word metaphorically meaning 'blown out'—it being the clinging *ego* that is blown out, like a candle. If something like sustained nirvana is truly achievable, there may not be a place *within* that particular state of being for existential gratitude (I'm not sure), but one can still be grateful and content with life while working to completely 'detach' oneself from life—ingratitude and discontentment certainly will not help. In fact, the balancing of ego that gift and gratitude thinking supports can operate along a continuum directed toward the eventual *annihilation* of ego, if one were to take up this spiritual aim.²⁸ Existential gratitude is to *appreciate life*, which is something one can do even while

²⁷ In a footnote (p. 32, fn. 4), Colledge responds to an anonymous referee who suggests that gratitude for life (like that expressed by Richard Dawkins) would involve a position against suicide, but, while Colledge agrees with this in passing, I think it's important to see that this is not so straightforwardly an implication. If we take Benatar to be a reasonable pessimist, then on his lights, even extreme pessimism does not imply an obligation of suicide.

²⁸ Of course, Buddhism itself acknowledges that there is a path (an 'eightfold' path) of spirituality, not just an end goal, as Solomon observes: 'The Buddhists (and Schopenhauer in the West) identified compassion as the key to the conjunction of individual self and all of the other selves with which it is conjoined, and for many Buddhists it also signaled the shift to spirituality. Very few Buddhists ever experience the nirvana described by the greatest sages, but every good Buddhist daily experiences the compassion for suffering that ties him or her to the world and to other people' (p. 139).

welcoming death, and it may be near death—egoic or biological—that one is in the best position to appreciate one's life.

While gift and gratitude thinking supports positivity toward life, this is not the same as clinging to life, nor is it the same as being optimistic, if by 'optimism' is meant a hopeful attitude toward the future. Given its emphasis on what *has* worked and what *is* working in life, gratitude helps to reduce obsessive anxiety, serving to support 'cosmic trust', but this does not imply a tendency to project exaggerated positive outcomes. Gift and gratitude thinking may foreground the positive, but judicious application of this kind of thinking would not inappropriately ignore the negative. The wisdom required to balance gift and gratitude thinking with other considerations involves a larger capacity, a capacity which I would suggest is broader than one's spiritual capacity, and I very much doubt that the best wisdom available to us could reasonably exclude gift and gratitude thinking, or spirituality in general, from among its approaches to life.

Conclusion

Here, I hope to have made more clear how we can understand the option of secular spirituality and how secular spirituality can include gift and gratitude thinking. The basic strategy may prove useful in related analyses—there are surely other ways in which metaphysically neutral metaphorical framing allows for attitudes constitutive of a spiritual stance. If spirituality can be understood in this way apart from any particular religion, this provides a basis for social solidarity between all forms of belief and unbelief, among which there can be shared spirituality. Gratitude for the gift of humanity in particular can help to foster this solidarity more directly if the nature and appropriateness of gift and gratitude thinking is more widely understood and accepted.

Acknowledgments I am grateful to Jason Berntsen for his support and critical reflection. Our interaction greatly stimulated the development of ideas for this paper.

References

- Anderson, E. (1990). Is women's labour a commodity? *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 19(1), 71–92.
- Benatar, D. (2006). *Better never to have been: the harm of coming into existence*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Bishop, J. (2010). Secular spirituality and the logic of giving thanks. *Sophia*, 49(4), 532–534.
- Black, M. (1962). *Models and metaphors: studies in language and philosophy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Brown, J. E., & Cousins, E. (2001). *Teaching spirits: understanding Native American traditions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, J. E., & Drysdale, V. L. (1982). *The gift of the sacred pipe*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Colledge, R. J. (2013). Secular spirituality and the hermeneutics of ontological gratitude. *Sophia*, 52(1), 24–43.
- Dewey, J. (1934). *A common faith*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Fan, R. (2010). A Confucian reflection on genetic enhancement. *The American Journal of Bioethics*, 10(4), 62–70.
- Game, A., & Metcalfe, A. (2010). Presence of the gift. *Cultural Studies Review*, 6(1), 189–211.
- Godbout, J. T. (1998). *The world of the gift*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Habermas, J. (2003). *The future of human nature*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Habermas, J. (2008). *Between naturalism and religion: philosophical essays*. Cambridge: Polity Press Trans. C. Cronin.
- Kahane, G. (2011). Mastery without mystery: why there is no Promethean sin of enhancement. *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 28(4), 355–368.
- Kellenberger, J. (2010). Humility. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 47(4), 321–336.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy in the flesh: the embodied mind and its challenge to western thought*. New York: Basic Books.
- McAleer, S. (2012). Propositional gratitude. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 49(1), 55–66.
- Osteen, M. (Ed.). (2002). *The question of the gift: essays across disciplines*. London: Routledge.
- Rosenberg, A. (2011). *The atheist's guide to reality: enjoying life without illusions*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Sandel, M. (2005). *Mastery and hubris in Judaism: what's wrong with playing God? Public philosophy: essays on morality in politics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Sandel, M. (2007). *A case against perfection: ethics in the age of genetic engineering*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Santayana, G. (1955). *Scepticism and animal faith: introduction to a system of philosophy*. New York: Dover.
- Siminoff, L., & Chillag, K. (1999). The fallacy of the 'gift of life.' *Hastings Center Report*, 29(6), 34–41.
- Solomon, R. C. (2002). *Spirituality for the skeptic: the thoughtful love of life*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Solomon, R. C. (2004). Foreword. In R. A. Emmons & M. E. McCullough (Eds.), *The psychology of gratitude* (pp. v–xi). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Strong, C. (2005). Lost in translation: religious arguments made secular. *The American Journal of Bioethics*, 5(3), 29–31.
- Taylor, C. (2007). *A secular age*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Vaughan, G. (2013). Mother sense and the image schema of the gift. *Semiotica*, 196, 57–77.
- Watkins, P. C. (2014). *Gratitude and the good life: toward a psychology of appreciation*. New York: Springer.