

# ALI 677: Comparing Islamic and Secular worldviews Part II 2Session Three

The understanding of modern Western art and its history is important because this art reflects on the one hand the deeper currents of Western culture and many of the crises which the modern West has faced and still faces and has on the other hand itself contributed to the series of elements, forms and forces which have created the modern cultural ambience



# Journey of music in the West

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- Religious music
- Classical music
- Folk music
- Popular music



# Rise of concerts

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As religion swept the Western world and became an important facet of many peoples' lives, churches were frequented by many. The use of instruments like the organ to accompany religious services was started. In some ways, churches became early music venues, a place to experience live performance before it was considered so.

Concerts were originally held in people's homes. Modern concerts as we know them really came into being in the 1960s, and were fueled by the birth of rock and roll. There were concerts before this time, but they tended to be casual, drop-in concerts, and were often based in religious activities.

Around the 1970s, live music and how it's experienced expands further, increasing concert sizes, creating massive musical festivals, and changing the look of concerts.

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By the late 18th century, live music moved out of the churches through composers such as Mozart, who brought his music into the parlors of important Europeans. During this same period, opera singers became superstars as they performed for live audiences.

By the beginning of the 20th century, Jazz had stepped onto the scene and paved the way for live music in the future. But, it wasn't until the '50s and '60s, when Rock and Roll exploded onto the scene, that live performances took on a new life of their own. Musicians rose to celebrity status and the demand for live performances skyrocketed.

# Effect of Secularization of music

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The moral degeneration among youth today can be attributed to the kind of content presented to young people by the entertainment industry. Contents adjudged inappropriate for young people just few years ago, have now been fully embraced and broadcasted to the public.

Music from the likes of Lady gaga, Rihanna, Beyoncé . . . are everywhere. Their songs and presentations affect their fans, who try to copy them in their own lives. All these have contributed to the increase in social vices such as rapes, drug use, prostitution, insolence and rebellion as witnessed in the world today.

# Secularization of Literature

## The History of Reading

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- Clay tablets - the representation of spoken sounds using visual signs inscribed on clay was the earliest beginning of reading.
- Scribes – certain people mastered the cuneiform of writing and were employed by authorities to write for them.
- first works of literature began around 2300 BC
- Public readings took place in courts and monasteries
- Storytellers and author readings became popular

# The Print revolution

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The knowledge of print technology reached the western world around the 13th century, and woodblock printing attained widespread popularity by the 15th century. The increased ease at which books could be produced by printing, the durability of the final products compared to handwritten manuscripts, and the ever-rising demand for books led to further interest in the development of new printing techniques. In the 1430s, Johannes Gutenberg developed the first mechanical printing press at Strasbourg, Germany. The press was operational in Mainz by the 1450s, and was printing copies of what would later come to be known as the Gutenberg Bible.

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Churches all over Europe embarked on a spree to educate the masses, and through the establishment of village schools, literacy grew.

It was around this time that the novel as a literary form took firm root in France and England. When, in 1849, Charles Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* was serialized in a magazine, the attraction of the novel was combined with the affordability of magazines . . .

Colonial rulers tried to ban and prevent the circulation of printed material that would question the legitimacy of their rule in colonies all over the world. The power of the written word has also been misused, and is still being misused, to spread false information and hatred.

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There is a long history of people exploring the relationship between religion and literature. We might go back to sacred texts from different traditions and think, for instance, about why there is such a vast array of literary forms in the Judaeo-Christian Bible. Or we might consider the role that religion plays in the literary tradition, from the clear Christian content of texts such as *The Divine Comedy* and *Paradise Lost*, to the extensive engagement with theological motifs, symbols, and ideas that is such a striking feature of so many modern texts . . .



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If our modern western age is increasingly secular, as many would have us think, then why the ongoing interest?

One way of answering this question comes from the work of Charles Taylor, whose book *A Secular Age* (2007) has proved so pivotal for many scholars working in the humanities. Taylor argues that our secular age is not one in which religion has gone away but is, rather, an era characterised by the new position in which religion now finds itself.

**Whereas pre-modern western thought saw Christianity ensconced as the dominant ideology, our modern age is one in which religious belief is one option among many.**